BEING AND BECOMING PROFESSIONALLY *OTHER*: UNDERSTANDING HOW ORGANIZATIONS SHAPE TRANS* ACADEMICS’ EXPERIENCES

By

Erich N. Pitcher

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ABSTRACT

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Transgender or trans*\(^1\) individuals are now more visible within higher education contexts than ever before, signaled by campuses hosting speakers on trans issues, trans* inclusion within women’s colleges, and the initiation of trans* studies programs, among many other positive trends. While trans* issues are more discussed, college environments remain unfriendly, and in some cases, overtly hostile. Further, despite a robust body of research about gender equity for faculty, and faculty diversity more broadly, transgender faculty voices have yet to be explicitly included within this research. Moreover, scholars and activists alike agree that trans* people face intense workplace discrimination, yet, with the exception of my pilot study, there have not yet been systematic investigations of the academic workplace experiences of trans* people. Given the increased visibility and widespread discrimination, as well as the noted gap in the literature, this study focused on how higher education organizations shape the experiences of trans* faculty.

Drawing on institutional logics, inequality regimes, and critical trans* politics, in this study I sought to understand how inter- and intra-organizational practices shaped the experiences of 39 trans academics from diverse personal histories, disciplinary backgrounds, institutional

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\(^1\) I use trans* and trans interchangeably throughout this dissertation. Trans* is used to express the broadest possible array of gender diverse identities (Enke, 2011) and is used to “open up” trans for a “greater range of meanings” (Thompkins, 2012, p. 26). I do not use the asterisk in quotes as it is contested and unclear if this would be in concert with participants’ wishes.
affiliations, and personal identities. I used a transformative research paradigm, qualitative interviews, and narrative responses to elucidate the experiences of trans academics.

Findings indicate that the salient institutional logics shaping transgender academics’ experiences are the corporation and the market amidst a declining state logic. Each of these logics converged to create the academic market/workplace. The presence of these intra-organizational logics created a series of tensions for participants. The converging institutional logics created tensions for participants between producing good workers or good citizens, as well as challenges associated with increasing international enrollment. I also identified specific tensions within academic libraries and across institutional types (e.g., community college, private research university). With respect to inter-organizational processes, participants described a variety of experiences with genderism including being misgendered interpersonally and digitally, being hyper-visible and invisible, and exercising agency over disclosures about trans identity/history/status. The intra- and inter-organizational processes created four key tensions for participants’ experiences wherein they experienced isolation, alienation, precarity, and silence but yearned for community, familiarity, security, and voice. Based on the assentation that trans* faculty are and/or become professionally other, I argue trans* academics must engage in coalition building with other minoritized scholars, while institutional leaders engage in substantial organizational change efforts that make trans* identities possible.
This dissertation is dedicated to those who toil within the academy and who have taken enormous risks in daring to resist and subvert the press of the normative within the ivory tower.
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Despite the institutional demand that this be a solo-authored work that serves as the final requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, this is a work of many. My dissertation rests on the shoulders of (minoritized) giants. There are many white women, scholars of color, and queer and trans* intellectuals who graciously and generously offered me gifts over the years. Thank you to all who have felt the sting of oppression, and for staying strong and resilient while encouraging others to do the same.

This dissertation was produced within the spirit of love, community, hope, and heartbreak. Some talk about heartbreak as an extreme and powerful loss, of grief and devastation. This project broke my heart, over, and over, and over again. Sometimes my heart broke in the traditional way, of loss, grief, and devastation. I grieved alongside participants who shared too many painful experiences. However, sometimes my heart broke open. The steely walls I placed around my heart rusted. The voices and experiences of participants created little cracks and fissures along the fault lines of my heart. In the spaces between the steel plates keeping others out, the light, love, and sense of solidarity in a shared struggle and community I felt with participants began to seep in, filling my heart with love, hope, and pride. I am immensely grateful for the 39 participants who welcomed me into their offices, their homes, and their lives. While I did not meet a single one of the participants in this study face-to-face, through Skype, internet, and cell towers, we shared the profoundly intimate experience of the interview. I am thankful for that gift and for all the contributions each of you made to this project.
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Chapter 1: At the Interstice of Trans and Academic

Given that we [trans people] are systematically constructed in ways that run contrary to our own self-identifications, given that we are fundamentally viewed as illusory—as either evil deceivers or as openly bogus—how do we find the moral integrity and realness which has been taken from us?
–Tallia Bettcher (2007, p. 59)

One may also inhabit the limen, the place in between realities, a gap “between and betwixt” universes of sense that construe social life and persons differently, an interstice from where one can most clearly stand critically toward different structures.
–María Lugones (2003, p. 59)

Trans* academics are always already at a series of interstices: possible and impossible, real and imagined, inside and outside, visible and invisible. As Bettcher (2007) noted, in the face of trans violence, trans* bodies and the “realness” of one’s gender become contested, discounted as an illusion. But the identities of trans* people are “between and betwixt,” (Lugones, 2007, p. 59) particularly because gender “embodiment is intersubjective” (Salamon, 2010, p. 46). Gender is ascribed and performed (Butler, 1990). At the interstice of trans* and academic, and the various tensions and thresholds that shape trans* academics’ experiences, is where the story of this dissertation begins.

Twenty years before I became a doctoral student Michigan State University in August 2012, Leslie Fienberg (1992) developed a pamphlet called “Transgender liberation: A movement whose time has come” that used the word “transgender” in written form for the first time (Enke, 2012; Feinberg, 1992). Building off of Virginia Prince’s notion of transgenderist, the word transgender was and continues to be contested. However, with the language “transgender,” it was now possible for me to pair that word with “academic,” thus making this study possible.
Thinking genealogically about the data collected for this study, it was during the 1992-1993 academic year, when “trans” and “academic” first coalesced. Susan S. described a moment when she realized that in order to have a “viable existence” she would need to gender transition. As she rushed to finish her dissertation and thus have the degree of Doctor of Philosophy conferred in 1992, Susan told her committee that she was a male-to-female transsexual and petitioned for a change of name on the title page of her dissertation. In that historical moment, one of earliest records indicating that trans* academics exist occurred, Susan became possible within an institutional record. Susan’s story helps to illuminate through the lens of a single story how this research project focused on the ways organizations shape trans* academic experiences was viable. While certainly not the only lens, Susan’s story is important because the story she tells helps to articulate the history and tensions associated with the possibility and impossibility of being a trans* academic.

Despite possessing the requisite qualifications to secure an academic job, Susan remained outside of the academy for many years. In the intervening years between the completion of her dissertation and securing her first “real” academic job, Susan worked in a variety of adjunct positions, consulted with local universities, wrote as a freelance journalist, and made films. While some would not permit Susan to be part of the academy in the early 1990s, by the mid-2000s she became a sought after trans* academic. In securing her first tenured position, she jumped over being an assistant professor, instead moving straight into an associate professor job. Having worked for 15 years along the edges of the academy, producing “pop historical works for a mass audience,” was, quite frankly, more than enough to ensure a successful bid for tenure.

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2 There are two participants named Susan in this study, Susan S. is referred to Susan hereafter and Susan King is named as Susan King or Susan K. throughout. Participants developed their own pseudonyms and I honored their naming practices because of the significance of that for trans people.
Prior to formally entering academe, the norms of the academy prevented Susan from being possible, her lack of compliance with institutional norms had as much to do with her forward thinking work as it did with her subjectivity as a trans* academic. After garnering national attention for a “controversial, performative piece about transsexual rage,” Susan was unable to secure meaningful paid work within the academy. In the firestorm of right-wing media attention, Susan was dismissed from her adjunct position. After facing discrimination in hiring for three years, Susan demonstrated her resilience and resistance by recognizing that, “You can be in the classroom because you’re teaching history or your work can be in the classroom because you’re making history.” Susan’s plan was to “enact acts that become historically significant.” In so doing, she would be in the classroom, she would be the subject of the history that was taught in classrooms in the U.S. and beyond, because of her involvement in the burgeoning trans movement. Susan described this critical decision point as liberating by recognizing that:

at some level that discrimination has an effect on you, but that there are ways to not let it dominate and contain and crush you. There’s a way to talk back to it. There’s a way to work around it, and it [the work around] totally shapes your work, your thinking, your methodology, it shapes your audience. But, short of death, you can find ways to not be silenced.

That is precisely what Susan did; she was not silent. She dedicated herself to a kind of “entrepreneurial” scholarship with a smart cost benefit analysis that created space for her to begin to develop what would become transgender studies. She worked the college lecture circuit, worked for an archive, and continued making films. All the while, Susan produced books and
articles for pay so that she could continue to write unpaid articles that had value to those within the academy.

Susan described the period between 1992 and 1999 as “survival” by “doing anything that I could do that was related to being trans or understanding trans history or trans politics.” With the understanding that “the world lets trans women do one thing, which is be trans women for other people, and with any luck you can get paid for it.” In recognizing that the kinds of labor that trans* women engage in is only valuable when trans women are trans* for other people, Susan related her work as a freelance academic to trans women doing sex work or working in the media or entertainment sector. She sees “it all as the same kind of work.” But this time in the early 1990s was not without its bumps for Susan, she started out “being really poor” and “making about $10,000 a year,” and she “had children to support.” Then she entered into a time period of “5 or 6 or 7 years in there of being reasonably successful and financially secure, based on the work that I had been doing and the kinds of projects I was able to do.” After securing fellowship funds and winning some awards, Susan got the sense that “all of a sudden…people were more interested in me, and in the topics that I worked on.” It was then that she received two visiting professorships. Susan recalled that, “once I had that professor title and once I had an institutional address, at that point, that was when the academy seemed to treat me as a legitimate scholar, I would say. And the offers started coming in.” The moment Susan just described is being “in the teaching machine” (Spivak, 1993, p. 294). I use Spivak’s (1993) phrasing throughout this dissertation to articulate the academy as a contractual space that trans* academics occupy, even if most academics’ roles involve labor beyond teaching. This phrasing gestures towards the simultaneity of trans* academics being both insiders in some ways (in terms of race in some cases) and outsiders in other ways (being trans*), thus “outside in the teaching
machine” (Spivak, 1993, p. 294). Outside in the teaching machine could just as easily be the research/teaching/service machine, though Spivak’s concerns were largely about teaching and pedagogy. Spivak (1993) advocated for working to understand what happens when historical outsiders enter the teaching/research/service machine through a deconstruction of margin/center politics within academe.

But once she was inside the teaching machine, Susan was still outside. In her first associate professor job, Susan described a conflict with the department chair. She said, that a “cisgender lesbian woman of a certain age and ideology”:

> was starting to mess with my teaching schedule so that I couldn’t go home on the weekends and I said if I’m going to have to choose between my relationship with my wife and my child, it’s like I can work just fine out of the academy if this isn’t going to work. If you can’t accommodate me, I’ll look for other work elsewhere, and she basically dared me to try to do better, and I looked around and there was this position at [another university] and about the time I decided that I wanted to apply [that institution] called me and invited me to apply for it and the interview process went really smoothly. They were a good fit and I took the job and it was a far better job than I had at [the other university] so what was one person’s covert, unstated transphobia actually worked out to my advantage in a major, major way.

Indeed, the experience that Susan described of “cisgender lesbian women of a certain age and ideology” extends through the stories of many participants who faced the virulent opposition to their work, in some cases, from their purported “allies” within cisgender lesbian and gay communities. But Susan, being a resilient, resourceful, and entrepreneurial scholar did in fact

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3 Cisgender refers to individuals whose gender identity aligns with the gender norms associated with their assigned sex at birth (Enke, 2012).
move on, securing a position that launched her into academic stardom, or “rock-ademic,” as she described it.

This telling of Susan’s story illuminates several important aspects of this dissertation study. First, she highlighted the struggle that trans* academics often face in pursuing their projects within the academy, especially if that work centers the lives of trans* people. She also demonstrated how market forces came to govern her experience of work, a skill that served her well out- and inside a neoliberal academy shaped by market and corporation logics. Susan’s story also brings to bear complex social processes of being within and outside the academy. But there is a danger in a single story. Susan is a self-identified white settler, male-to-female transsexual woman, a southerner, who is now appointed in a prominent national role at a university where the administration handles her with “kid gloves,” the students she interacts with often remain star-struck, and her collegial relationships are fraught with the tensions inherent in the contemporary academy.

There are many compelling and interesting stories that demonstrate the variety of tensions and contradictions that trans* academic face. There are also stories of resilience, disruption, and resistance. Within the chapters of this dissertation, I share partial stories from many of the trans* academics who participated in this study. I simply cannot include all the nuances and details of the stories that are now part of my embodied knowledge. Nor do I desire to represent their stories in a unified, monolithic, or cohesive social experience. The stories of trans academics, like trans* people more broadly are impressively heterogeneous.

In an attempt to set the stage for what comes later, I share snippets of stories from participants who help me to illuminate how there is no single story of being a trans* academic. I highlight Joy, Max, Martina, Nick, and Nathan here, not because they are the best storytellers,
though each of them are compelling narrators. I include their stories here to foreshadow why a study of trans* academics is important, what can be learned from their perspectives, and what changes in academia would improve their experiences.

Joy is a 54-year-old white, male-to-female transsexual woman, a full professor, a wife, a parent, a Jew, and a person with a disability. But Joy is more than a string of identity terms. She is a reflective intellectual who works in a small humanities department at a private, research university where she feels, “it is really never appropriate to talk about being trans.” Her sense of humor, her critiques of her institution, and theorizing about what it means to have an identity and to belong to a group were profoundly insightful. Joy, in speaking about her identity said,

What I longed for is a gender that like male and female has depth and resonance to it. It [gender] connects me to people other than myself and to a history and a future. It helps me clarify values and identify an intelligible place in the world. So far that has been in short supply.

Joy expressed wanting a gender identity that, like her Jewish identity, connected her to a community of support, since as trans woman, she so rarely experiences meaningful community.

Throughout my conversations with Joy, now spanning several hours of interviews between the pilot study and dissertation study, I have come to understand that Joy is at the threshold of precarity and security in her academic role and perhaps her life more broadly. She explained, “I certainly can’t count on not being deemed, at one point or another, a liability by the institution.” Joy said, “my life doesn’t feel secure.” Her lack of security relates to the difficult financial situation her college is in and the fierce competition amongst institutions for grants, students, and faculty, all part of the market logic I explore in chapter five. But her sense of insecurity also derives from her negative experiences with her employer, especially her having
been placed on leave following the announcement of her gender transition. She described the situation as follows:

I was discriminated against by being placed on leave, I was maintained on full salary for a year during which I wasn’t allowed to do anything in terms of teaching. [described advancing to full professor] […] On the whole, other than this feeling that I’m living under a don’t ask/don’t tell policy and a feeling of distance from my colleagues, I don’t experience a lot inequity or injustice and I think a lot of that has to do with being a full professor.

Joy had the benefit and protection of being tenured when she announced her intention to gender transition and continues to enjoy the benefits bestowed upon full professors. Yet, she remains in two thresholds I describe more in chapter six: stuck between silence and voice about her trans identity and betwixt precarity and security because of the financial standing of her institution.

Max, like Joy, is between a series of thresholds. Max is a 32-year-old, Black gay, FTM/transgender man. He is a librarian at a community college in the midwest. Max chooses his words carefully, occasionally saying, “how do I want to say this?” or buying some time to think by uttering “tsk-tsk-tsk-tsk” and then sighing. Max is profoundly gifted intellectually, passionate about student success, and an innovative practitioner. He is also a believer in the transformational power of story-telling he said, “[a] core belief I have about social justice, is that our personal stories are our most powerful tools to vet change.” Max was referring to the story he shared about working with his campus safe zone program where he shared parts of his identity. He described the situation in his narrative response,

I was scheduled to facilitate two sessions on back-to-back days. The first one was on a Wednesday afternoon. Roughly 15 people came and I was very nervous since it was my
first time facilitating anything. I had planned interactive activities and discussion
questions and a short presentation, only to find that the attendees weren’t participating
and engaging as much as I would have liked. […] After the session was over, I received
the evaluation forms that the attendees had completed. On one evaluation form, someone
wrote: “This session would have been a lot better if it had been done by a trans person.” I
felt a mix of emotions: amusement, surprise, annoyance. But what I spent that evening
thinking about was: What difference could my trans identity make in this context?
Upon reflecting on that experience Max went to a stock of resources to improve the session for
the next day. What made the session different the next day was “When I did my ‘Can’t Tell Just
By Looking’ ice-breaker, I came out as transgender.” He also, “included occasional anecdotes
about my previous experience as a trans student to elucidate some of the points I was making.”
Here Max is drawing out one of the key tensions that I describe in chapter four about visibility
and invisibility. During the ice-breaker, he told people about being trans*, because most people
assume he (and everyone they meet) is cisgender. But Max also drew out another key tension
and threshold, namely, of having a possible and impossible gender.

In describing his experiences as a Black, gay, trans man and librarian, Max often faces
difficulties in being recognized as a member of the profession. He said, “I guess I don’t look like
the typical librarian, so people assume I am not. A typical librarian being a white female.” In this
brief quote, he illuminates that because his embodiment does not align with the bodily
expectations of librarians, “people assume” he is not one. In continuing to articulate the feelings
he had about not being seen as a librarian, Max said:

[navigating] people’s assumptions, and some of it has to do with race or my gender, or
both. Because people come up to the desk and they ask for a reference librarian. And I’m
at the desk that says “reference” and I have my little nametag that says I’m a librarian, but I’m not the librarian, apparently, in peoples’ minds.

In addition, to not being seen as a librarian when at the reference desk, Max also had to navigate the assumptions from others within his profession about his legitimacy as a librarian. He said, When I go to conferences, people are social and they’re talking to each other, but people don’t necessarily approach me in the same way. It’s just a very, I just feel like being a black man in a profession dominated by white women, it’s just very, I feel like an outsider. I hate going to library conferences because of that reason. […] I was thinking that it [going to library conferences] was just an isolating feeling.

What comes into focus now is that library patrons and fellow librarians do not see him as a legitimate member of the profession, his gender and race are unexpected and he is outside within the profession (Spivak, 1993). As a result, Max has an “isolating feeling” which connects to the threshold between isolation–community, which I describe in chapter six.

In contrast to Joy’s and Max’s experiences, Martina operates within a context where she is possible, her gender is possible and visible, though historically she has dealt with others’ expectations about her pursuing an academic career. Martina is a 56-year-old Latina lesbian female and full professor in the sciences at a liberal arts college in the west. Martina is a creative thinker, dedicated to lifting up minoritized scholars, and matter-of-fact in her explication of the context in which she operates. She is self-assured and self-confident, rarely being disturbed by the kinds of nonsense that others directed at her, dismissing such antics as “pathetic.”

Martina works for an institution where her trans-ness was expected and possible. In her narrative she described having “crossed over” into the “tribe of academic women.” What indicated her belonging amongst women included an invitation to an annual women’s gathering
to celebrate the end of the semester and being invited to a taskforce about gender. She wrote about each of these actions in her narrative as, “indicat[ing] that in ways big and small, I am finally being looked upon as who I am – a tenured Latina full professor who is excellent in service and leadership.” In being recognized by others Martina and her trans-ness are now visible.

Martina also illuminated one of the important rationales I describe later in the chapter, “unique trans perspectives.” Also from her narrative, Martina wrote,

“As a transwoman, I am attuned to detecting the inequities and microaggressions, which are directed toward women in academic settings, but I also know from my time in the male tribe the origin of many of those attitudes and behaviors. I think that unique perspective gives me an edge in trying to foment positive change in this area. Martina described precisely what I mean by “unique perspectives.” In her case, she is more attuned to the experiences of women with respect to microaggressions, but she is also a way of the “origin of many of those attitudes and behaviors.” Ultimately, Martina concludes that this makes her well positioned to “foment positive change.” Her movement across gender spectra gave her an opportunity to develop her own unique trans perspective.

Martina was also attuned to the kinds of race-based microaggressions and inequities that exist. Like Max, Martina was subject to a negative assessment by others based on her perceived race and ethnicity. Martina “saw what people did to my dad because of his skin color and him coming from poor roots and stuff. I was really attentive to that, I was not going to let that happen to me.” She continued to say, “I wasn’t going to listen to the nonsense that I got sometimes. […] … [others were] suggesting that I should get off this [academic] track that I’m on simply because of who I am. She resisted those assumptions by not “listen[ing] to that nonsense.” Martina had
amazingly supportive experiences in her workplace where there is a felt sense of security, not precarity, living a possible life as a trans Latina professor, and as an expected member of the academic community (though, 16 years ago when she joined the faculty, this was not the case).

Like Martina, Nick works in a context that is affirming, even if her trans-ness is unexpected in some ways. Nick is a 29-year-old mixed race, queer, nonbinary/gender nonconforming man. Nick alternates he and she pronouns and I alter my use of these pronouns in text. She works as a librarian for a public research university in the midwest. Nick is a quiet intellectual, who intensively and critically theorized during each of his two interviews with me. Nick’s story highlights several tensions and thresholds of trans academic experiences. She is very interested in deconstructing race, gender, and sexual orientation (and probably everything else, too). The meme, “That awkward moment when your mind is so deconstructed, you don’t even know what gender is anymore,” is an apt description of the complex thinking he offered about gender. Nick said, in response to a question about how to improve the academic workplace for trans people,

Gender presentation…that is something that we have to deconstruct, the expectations we have on, not just feminine and masculine objects, but on feminine and masculine bodies and behaviors.

While Nick was clearly engaged in this work, her co-workers were perhaps less involved in the deconstruction work. In describing a co-worker’s reaction to the gendered boundaries that Nick seeks to push, the coworker said, “Well, we let him paint his nails, I wonder what is coming next.” This small comment foreshadows a number of different kinds of small, everyday interactions that trans academics had with respect to their genders that I describe in more detail in chapter four.
Nick also described in her narrative one of the key tensions that being a trans* academic entails when he wrote:

For me, being a tr-ns-ish [a term used to develop a specifically non-inclusive way of referring to this possibility of such a politics, without pinning down exactly what it will look like or whose voice is at the center] academic means navigating the privileged spheres and circles of academic as someone who is exploring gender both within and apart from the traditional binary model. While I am most assuredly an academic, I also keep in mind that, as a librarian, I am part of a service profession and discipline that provides support to other academic departments and fields. Because of this, much of the work we do is always already, often, highly feminized (and thus invisibilized), and so we do struggle to be viewed as academics/faculty, let alone as experts in the fields we represent.

Through her writing Nick draws out several key issues to understanding trans* academics experiences as shaped by organizations. In particular, there is a need to understand how trans* academics experience simultaneity, in both operating within privileged spheres and identities and marginalized spheres and identities. The simultaneity that Nick gestures towards is about the combination of being both trans* and an academic. Nick also talked about issues of visibility and legitimacy. Nick’s comments raise the idea of being outside in the teaching machine (Spivak, 1993, p. 294) and having a somewhat precarious hold on legitimacy that I describe in chapter six.

The final story in this series comes from Nathan, a 51-year-old, white, intersex trans man with a disability who is androgynously masculine with a “flamboyant gestural repertoire.” Nathan alternates between he and ze/hir pronouns and I use both throughout. Ze is an associate professor in the social sciences at a research university in the midwest. Nathan, like Nick, thinks
a lot about gender and deconstructing it. Nathan, like Joy, also participated in the pilot study and so I have spent many hours interviewing Nathan. For this study, Nathan’s spouse was home during his interview and I had the opportunity to meet her. Nathan is funny, reflective, and, especially over the summer of 2015, served as a scholarly mentor to me. Nathan’s story serves to bookend this brief introduction to the findings presented in chapters four, five, and six. His story also highlights certain trans* academics’ experiences.

Nathan works in a state that is undergoing a substantial shift in logics from a predominantly state logic to a fierce market and corporation driven logic, thus foreshadowing the findings I describe in chapter five. Nathan summarized the effects of this shifts at the state level on the universities, when ze said “there is so much institutional focus on bringing in money, that is really what the university focuses on. Grants.” Thus Nathan sits within a threshold of precarity and security. While hir position is secure because ze has tenure, state support continues to dwindle and the demand to increase grant dollars continues to mount.

What is most revealing about Nathan’s experiences as a trans* academic is what happened after ze gender transitioned at hir institution. His institution issued a “bathroom memo” stating where he could use the bathroom. But the social shifts that occurred following his transition were also dramatic. Following his gender transition, ze said,

I will tell you this. I used to hang out with people in my department outside of work.

Since my transition that is not true. So, it is a collegial, very work focused relationship. There are some people who hang out outside of work. I am no longer among them. So that is worth noting.
While on the surface Nathan is treated in a collegial manner, ze is no longer familiar to his colleagues at least in part resulting from the shift in gender identity. Thus Nathan also sits within the threshold of alienation and familiarity.

Nathan also experienced what I describe in chapter four as interpersonal misgendering. He described the situation as follows, “There are certain people who mispronoun me six years in. A batch of those that just retired, but my chair is one of those that periodically forgets.” Given Nathan’s long institutional history, there were still some faculty colleagues who knew him prior to his gender transition and they never made a permanent switch to using the correct pronoun.

At the outset of this chapter, I included two quotes that elucidate acrossness and betweenness and the variety of tensions that trans* individuals routinely experience. Through each of the stories I just shared from Susan, Joy, Max, Martina, Nick, and Nathan the idea of between and betwixt emerged. But also the idea that embodiment is an intersubjective experience.

**Rationale for Studying Trans* Academics**

As I just described the partial stories of several participants, it is important to develop why a study of trans academics matters. A study of trans* academics must be situated between the larger framework of the significance of studying the academic profession, but also address the evolving nature of diversity within higher education. Because the intellectual capital of faculty is one of higher education’s greatest resources, studying the academic profession is important (Gappa, Austin, & Trice, 2007). Because diverse faculty are important actors in preparing students to work in an increasingly diverse society (Milem, 2003), ensuring that there is a diversity of faculty perspectives can ensure that the wealth of higher education’s intellectual capital reflects the range of society’s needs. Tack and Patitu (1992) argued, “the faculty of the
future must reflect the diversity of the population to be served” (p. iii) and the benefits of a
diverse campus for students are well documented (Chang, 1999; Gratz v. Bollinger, 2003;
Hurtado, 1992). While institutions and students are often the beneficiaries of diverse educational
environments, faculty diversity is critical to the more full realization of higher education
institutions’ potential. By this I mean that heterogeneity (diversity) is profoundly important to a
rich education environment.

An important, but often overlooked element of diversity is that of gender diversity,
particularly examining this form of diversity beyond the gender binary. Also, some scholars
(e.g., Beemyn, Curtis, Davis, & Tubbs, 2005) argued that trans* and gender diverse students are
increasing in number on college campuses. With the increased number of gender diverse
students, there is a concomitant increase in the need for faculty who reflect this diversity. I
extend Tack and Patitu’s (1992) argument that recruiting and retaining faculty who reflect the
increased gender diversity of students is a crucial aspect of faculty diversity. Additionally, trans*
faculty represent an under-researched population (Renn, 2010). Understanding the perspectives
of trans* academics, and the ways in which institutions and departments shape their experiences,
is vital to creating a gender diverse faculty that reflects the students who attend their institutions.
Furthermore, in having a gender diverse staff, the perspectives that trans* academics bring to
academic spaces enriches those spaces.

Despite the value of gender diverse perspectives, persistent genderism, or the belief that
there are two and only two genders, within college environments, often leads to negative
experiences for trans* individuals (Bilodeau, 2009). However, trans* identities are becoming
more visible within higher education environments (e.g., Catalano, 2014; Nicolazzo, 2015;
Marine, 2011; Singh, Meng, & Hansen, 2013), and society more broadly, evidenced by
celebrities such as Laverne Cox, Lana Wachowski, Kye Allums, and Chaz Bono. Within higher education trade newspapers, there are several articles about the experiences of trans* faculty, highlighting contemporary issues inherent in faculty life, and the difficulties of having a marginalized identity (e.g., Huckabee, 2013; Wilson, 2005). Yet, there are few explorations of trans* academics experience beyond my own research.

Although there are now decades of research about racially diverse and other under-represented groups of faculty (e.g., white women), trans* voices have yet to be explicitly included within these conversations. The exclusion of trans* faculty voices within larger conversations about the changing characteristics of faculty work and associated issues of equity, diversity, and inclusion represents a noted gap in the literature (Renn, 2010). To date, existing scholarship about trans* faculty consists of personal narratives (e.g., Boylan, 2003). While these narratives are illuminating, a systematic inquiry, such as this one, yields different insights.

This dissertation study is one of the first systematic empirical inquiries into the experiences of trans* academics. Within this study I use an organizational perspective to understand their experiences within academic workplaces. Thus, in this study, I heed Smith’s (2009) call to study diversity using organizational perspectives.

I issue five warrants to provide a rationale for why continuing to develop a deeper understanding about the experiences of trans* faculty is necessary. In brief, the five rationales are: increased visibility of trans* issues, the need to humanize trans* individuals, the unique perspectives of trans* academics, the widespread workplace discrimination that gender diverse individuals face, and the potential benefits to all faculty that increased knowledge and

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4 I do not capitalize “white” as a racial category in this dissertation in contrast to APA style. I use lower case because white people and whiteness are always already dominant. I capitalize all other racial identifications.
understanding about trans* lives could have. I describe each of these warrants in more detail in the following paragraphs.

First, expanding knowledge about trans* faculty is a worthwhile endeavor because of the increased visibility of this population. As David, a white male and adjunct instructor who recently secured a tenure-track position said,

When I started my Ph.D. I could barely find anyone who was doing trans research and now I’m being interviewed by someone who has a plethora of people… that has too many trans academics to work with. So, I think in a period of like ten years, a lot can change.

Indeed much has changed in the visibility of trans* people and the opportunities afforded to trans people within the academy. This fact, coupled with a lack of existing knowledge about trans* people who pursue the professoriate, makes this study both timely and relevant. However, increased “visibility is a trap” (Foucault, 1995, p. 200). While Foucault described the visibility made possible by the panoptic design of prisons, visibility in the contemporary era often comes in the form of media shining a light on a topic or population. There is a paradox within trans experiences of being either hyper-visible or completely invisible (Pitcher, under review).

I suggest that the recent uptick in media coverage of trans* issues situates trans bodies as objects of information and entertainment (e.g., Caitlyn Jenner). In shining this light of visibility, media outlets often tell sensationalized stories that focus on the “surgery” (e.g., Edwards, 2015) or “being trapped in the wrong body” (e.g., Diu, 2012; Kotb, 2012) or “radically changing genders [sex] from male to female” (Meyerowitz, 2002). By telling and selling sensationalized renditions of trans experiences, a dominant narrative about trans* experiences emerges, namely that individuals are gender transitioning from one side of the gender binary to the other or
opposite end. This sensationalizing and commodification of trans lives and experiences aligns with previous (white) feminist work such as Mulvey (2006) and Black feminist critiques of the commodification and consumption of the other’s culture (e.g., hooks, 1992). This increased visibility of trans* lives is important because while media coverage is illuminating trans lives, these representations occur in ways in which transsexual narratives (a focus on medical, legal, and/or surgical interventions) predominate, and the gender binary remains intact. The problem with visibility is that now, all trans people are assumed to want to transition, and to identify strictly as men or women.

Second, and related to the issues of visibility, popular media narratives about trans* people, both historically and in the contemporary setting, never, or rarely, allow for trans people to determine their actions within these communications. Rather, I argue that the stories are told in ways that do not allow trans* individuals to be subjects, instead reducing their experience into marketable objects. There is a vital need to humanize trans* people by reflecting the heterogeneity within the community, particularly in light of state sanctioned violence against trans* people, especially trans people of color. Resulting from the increased visibility, there is normalizing discourse of what it means to be trans*, resulting in interrogating and policing what is “trans enough” (Finch, 2014). Also, the lack of control of one’s own story occurs when reporters misgender or mispronoun trans individuals, reveal birth/given names, and deny the existence of non-binary trans* people’s experiences (e.g., genderqueer individuals who blend masculine and feminine gender presentations). For example, there is a clear lack of representation of non-binary and decidedly defiant gender non-conforming genders, though Ruby Rose’s character on Orange is the New Black is a noteworthy exception. What gender non-conformity does exist is largely attributable to one’s presumed sexual orientation, or compulsory
heterogenderism (e.g., masculine lesbians, feminine gay men; Nicolazzo, 2015). Therefore, studying the complexities within the identities of trans* experiences is in keeping with humanizing research (Paris & Winn, 2013) and allows for possibilities to proliferate for trans* people.

Third, I argue that trans* faculty members possess unique perspectives about gender. The notion of unique perspectives builds on prior work including feminist standpoint theory (Harding, 2004), but I also address the limitations of standpoint theory. There is no universal trans perspective, thus my use of perspectives. Some trans* individuals have distinctive perspectives about the gender binary from having experienced life in at least two genders, while other trans* people work to subvert the binary and thus understand its operation intimately. These vantage points are important contributions to diversity on college campuses; yet, there is little explicit acknowledgement of these perspectives. In addition to their unique perspectives, trans* faculty possess embodied knowledge, or the notion that knowledge is contextual and embodied (Barbour, 2004, p. 234). As Barbour (2004) argued, the body is a source of knowledge. Here, I extend Barbour’s (2004) argument by stating that trans* embodiment is a productive action in and of itself. Because the body is a site of knowledge and a way of knowing (Barbour, 2004), then the mere presence of trans* individuals within higher education, expands the boundaries of knowable genders and gendered possibilities (Pitcher, under review). Thus my inclusion of participants who through their embodiment and their scholarship expand gendered possibilities allowed me to articulate the importance of these perspectives. Therefore, studying trans* academics to document and understand their embodied knowledge matters.
Fourth, trans* people, especially Black and Latinx\(^5\) trans* people, experience high rates of workplace discrimination (Beemyn & Rankin, 2011; Bender-Baird, 2011; Grant et al., 2011). Ninety percent of participants in a national study of trans* workplace experiences indicated that they have experienced harassment, discrimination, and/or mistreatment (Grant et al., 2011). As a result of this discrimination, trans* people who participated in the survey were four times more likely to have an annual household income of $10,000 or less when compared to the general population (Grant et al., 2011). Despite existing knowledge about trans* workplace discrimination, scholars know little about the degree to which academic workplaces are supportive (or not) of trans* academics. It is entirely possible that there are features of academic workplaces, such as tenure, that could provide a buffer against immediate dismissal. It is equally possible that the collegial nature of academic workplaces might these organizations more or less hospitable to trans* faculty, depending at least in part on the support of their colleagues. It is also possible that, depending on one’s appointment type (e.g., tenure-track, non-tenure-track, adjunct), trans* academics could experience varying levels of support from colleagues. Therefore, analyzing the specific features of higher education institutions that are supportive of trans* faculty is important. Further, identifying which aspects of academic workplaces support or fail to support trans* faculty creates knowledge about, and opportunities to improve, the experiences of this population within the academy.

A final warrant for this study is the potential benefits that all faculty members could reap from more complex, nuanced conceptualizations of gender. Because gender-based oppression, including genderism, adversely affects nearly all faculty (e.g., cisgender faculty who do not conform with rigid gender expectations), complicating notions of gender could potentially

\(^{5}\) I use “latinx” instead of “Latino/a” to ensure the full inclusion of non-binary gender identities (Alzarado, 2014).
improve academic workplace experiences of gender diverse faculty and faculty who do not
comply with a rigid sex/gender system, and/or for individuals who work in non-traditional fields
for their gender. While I am particularly concerned with improving the workplace conditions for
trans* faculty, the indirect benefits for faculty facing unreasonable gender expectations is
certainly a welcome improvement to academic workplaces. In light of these warrants, I now
present my research paradigm, conceptual framework, and research questions.

**Research Paradigm**

This study followed a transformative paradigm that “directly engages the complexity
encountered by researchers and evaluators in culturally diverse communities when their work is
focused on increasing social justice” (Mertens, 2008, p. 10). Crotty (1998) would likely
categorize the transformative paradigm as part of a constructivist epistemology, namely, that the
“meaning-making process occur at the level of the individual mind” (p. 58). A constructivist
perspective is concerned with the unique meaning that each individual makes (Crotty, 1998),
which is part of the complexity that Mertens (2008) described as part of the transformative
paradigm.

As is already evident in the first few pages of this dissertation, I straddle at least three
paradigms: constructivist, critical, and post-structuralist. There is evidence of the critical
paradigm in my concerns about how realities, like Susan, Joy, Martina, Max, Nick, and Nathan
experiences’ are shaped by their positionalities and the powers afforded (or not) to them as a
result (Crotty, 1998). There is also evidence of post-structural paradigm in my use of Spivak
(1993) and Lugones (2003), who hold the idea that there is no unified self. As is evident in my
rationale for the study, I forward the idea that there is no unified self via my argument for the
need to humanize trans* individuals through the proliferation of possibilities and the presence of
multiple trans perspectives. As will become most evident in the final chapter of this dissertation, I seek to alter relations of power through my research, in keeping with a critical constructivist paradigm (Crotty, 1998). In many ways these paradigms are incommensurable, holding contradictory ideas about the world and “truth.” It is between and betwixt these contradictory ideas where I pull at the seams of an already frayed paradigmatic fabric. I rely on the transformative paradigm to stretch ideas across these three ways of knowing.

The transformative paradigm takes a resiliency approach that focuses on the strengths of a particular community (Mertens, 2012) or what some scholars refer to as an appreciative inquiry approach to working with LGBTQ people in higher education (Renn et al., 2013). The way this appreciative approach manifested in this study was through honoring the multiple truths of participants, affirming the various realities participants shared, and placing a high value on the contributions participants made.

The transformative paradigm, uses Guba and Lincoln’s (2005) four part description of a research paradigm as consisting of: axiology, ontology, epistemology, and methodology. In brief, axiology addresses the meaning of ethics and moral behavior (Mertens, 2012). Ontology addresses beliefs about the nature of reality (Mertens, 2012) and the nature of being (Crotty, 1998). Epistemology focuses on the nature of knowledge (Mertens, 2012). Methodology focuses on beliefs about the process of systematic inquiry (Mertens, 2012). In this section, I describe the assumptions that a transformative paradigm makes about axiology, ontology, and epistemology. I describe the methodology in chapter three.

The transformative axiological assumption includes the “importance of respecting cultural histories and norms in interactions” within the research population (Mertens, 2012, p. 3). In response to this assumption, within this study I used names and pronouns for each participant
that portrayed their genders in ways that affirmed their self-identification. I created opportunities for trans* faculty to self-define their gender, names, and pronouns, thus honoring the cultural histories and norms within the trans* community where it is somewhat common to begin conversations with names and gender pronouns. In addition, to the best of my ability, I sought to understand and respect, yet remain humble regarding the cultural backgrounds of participants. As a white researcher, my knowledge of minoritized racial and cultural backgrounds is limited.

The transformative ontological assumption “rejects cultural relativism” but honors that “different versions of what is believed to be real exist.” (Mertens, 2012, p. 5) In this study, I interrogated whose truth and reality counted, as these perspectives are imbued with power-relations (Foucault, 1978; Hurtado, 2015; Mertens, 2012). In particular, I center the truths and realities of participants. Additionally, as in the pilot study, some individuals viewed the same field as being supportive, while others did not. I allowed for these multiple views of the reality of one’s discipline to co-exist within this study. I also honored the respective truths that individuals shared about their experiences of the same event (e.g., attending a conference).

The transformative epistemological assumption raises questions for researchers about who controls the research (Mertens, 2012). Additionally, the epistemological assumptions within the transformative paradigm required me as a research to consider the nature of knowledge in a power and privilege in a conscious way (Mertens, 2012). I created in depth field notes about how my power and privilege affected this research and how larger systems of power and privilege shaped the research process. I used field notes as a way to reflect on this inquiry, but also to formulate my thoughts for conversations with other critical scholars. Related to the final epistemological assumption of the transformative paradigm, I worked to the historical and social contexts of the study (Mertens, 2012). In this study, I valued the historical moment as indicated
by the introduction of this chapter and I describe in rich detail the social context of this study in chapter three.

**Conceptual Framework Overview**

I drew on three theoretical perspectives to develop a conceptual framework for this study, namely, institutional logics, inequality regimes, and critical trans politics. Institutional logics is a meta-theory that examines the process of institutionalization through a cognitive lens; this perspective illuminates how scripts, rules, and classification come to shape organizations and organizational action (Thornton, Ocasio, & Lounsbury, 2012). Looking within organizations, I also use inequality regimes, or “loosely interrelated practices, processes, actions, and meanings that result in and maintain class, gender, and racial inequalities within particular organizations” (Acker, 2006, p. 443). I also used Spade’s (2011) notion of critical trans politics, which he defined as “a trans politics that demands more than legal recognition and inclusion, seeking instead to transform current logics of state, civil society security, and social equality” (p. 19). In other words, Spade (2011) argued against seeking “rights”—including workplace protections, trans inclusive healthcare, or a variety of other legal or policy solutions—CTP calls for shifting logics, which are the practices, assumptions, and beliefs that guide behavior and cognition (Thornton & Ocasio, 1999). Each of these frameworks influenced the development of my research questions, which I articulate next.

**Research Questions**

Within this study, I sought to answer the following research questions:

1. How do within-organizational processes (or microfoundations and inequality regimes) shape trans* academics’ experiences?
2. What are the primary institutional logics that shape the experiences of trans* academics from diverse backgrounds?
   a. How, if at all, do trans* academics resist and/or disrupt the norms created by inter- and intra-organizational processes?

3. From the perspectives of participants, what organizational and policy contexts (consisting of formal policies and informal practices) create supportive, neutral, and/or hostile environments for trans* academics?

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I provided an introduction to how a study of trans* academics became possible. I described stories from a Susan, Joy, Martina, Max, Nick, and Nathan to illuminate and foreshadow the key concepts that this dissertation study addresses. I provided a rationale for the importance of this study, issuing five warrants. I also described the research paradigm and how that manifested within the study. Then, I provided a brief overview of the theoretical framework and finally concluded this chapter with the research questions.
Chapter 2: Literature Review and Conceptual Framework

Because there are no published investigations of the experiences of transgender academics, I draw on several strands of related literature. Through my review of the literature, I link the study of trans* academics to the larger body of research that addresses diversity within higher education and faculty diversity in particular. In this chapter, I first describe the argument that structures this literature review. Second, I provide background information about the experiences of being a minoritized faculty member (e.g., being Black, being a white woman, being Latinx) within a changing academic landscape. Then I describe the benefits of faculty diversity and barriers to realizing these benefits. I also detail trans* workplace discrimination. Finally, I describe the conceptual framework of this study.

In this section, I argue that there are numerous educational benefits of having a diverse faculty. However, the lack of adequate representation among minoritized faculty groups leads to unjust burdens on these faculty members (e.g., through service or teaching, Aguirre, 2000; Harley, 2008; Stanley, 2006). Though, there is evidence that suggests minoritized faculty exercise agency in managing the unjust burden placed on them (Martinez, Chang, & Welton, 2016). Despite the benefits of having a diverse faculty, many barriers remain, including sexism and misogyny, structural racism, heterosexism, and genderism, among other oppressive social forces (e.g., Calafell, 2012; Ford, 2011; Jones & Calafell, 2012; Lester, 2008; McGee & Kazemba, 2015; Turner, 2002).

Because of the interconnection of all oppression (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012), scholars and activists must address each of these barriers simultaneously. While addressing these barriers, it is important that notions of gender expand beyond the gender binary, and more explicitly include trans* voices, particularly given the shifting landscape with regard to gender.
Additionally, based on my pilot study, I contend that trans* individuals face intense discrimination in the workplace, yet little is known about academic workplace discrimination for this population. For example, academic workplaces, as opposed to non-academic workplaces, might be more supportive of gender diverse faculty, especially given that most professors have generally liberal attitudes about social issues, both historically and today (Finkelstein, 1985; Gross & Simmons, 2007).

**Characterizing the Academic Profession**

The academic profession shifted substantially in the last several decades, including a recession of autonomy within faculty roles (Gappa et al., 2007; Rhoades, 1998; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). Moving away from autonomous professionals and towards managed professionals (Rhoades, 1998), appointment types are one manifestation of this change. For example, it is a widely shared concern that non-tenure or adjunct faculty positions now outnumber tenured and tenure-track faculty positions (Gappa et al., 2007). While the number of individuals employed as faculty increased significantly, there was a sharp decline in full-time faculty positions from 77.8% in 1970 to roughly 50% in 2011 (Gappa et al., 2007; NCES, 2013a, see Figures 2.0 and 2.1). These changes in appointment types are not specific to any one discipline or institutional type; all sectors of higher education experienced a marked decrease in percentage of tenured/tenure-track faculty positions from 1987 to 2003 (Gappa et al., 2007).

While the concern about academic appointment types is important, issues of adequate, equitable representation of women faculty, and faculty from historically under-represented racial and ethnic groups is a central concern within the academic profession (Aguirre, 2000; Turner, González, & Wood, 2008). In the following sections, I review the demographics of faculty. I also describe the unique contributions that white women faculty and faculty of color make to higher
education. I conclude this section by describing the limitations of this literature with respect to the topic of trans* faculty.

There is increased presence of women faculty, growing from 20% in 1969 (Gappa et al., 2007) to 36% in 1991, and then to 44% in 2011 (NCES, 2013a). This trend is likely to continue to increase because women are earning an increased share of doctoral degrees (Gappa et al., 2007). The NCES (2013a) reported 789,197 faculty members as men and 734,418 as women, so women faculty members now comprise about 48.2% of all post-secondary instructors. Despite the increasing number of women faculty, the status of women faculty is not equal to that of men (e.g., lower base pay, fewer full professors, uneven distribution across institutional type) (Gappa et al., 2007; NCES, 2013a). The most recent data about gender indicates an under-representation

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6 I use the terms women and men here, and throughout this literature review, rather than the sex-related terms female or male that authors and the National Center for Education Statistics use. I do so in an effort to signal gender as the social construction of one's presumed sex. In cases when I describe previous literature, I am describing the experiences of presumably cisgender women (or men). Rather than list cisgender women/men each time, unless otherwise specified, within this section, women/men means cisgender women/men.
of women in full professorships (128,648 men versus 52,860 women) and over-representation in instructor and lecturer appointment types (instructors 48,130 men versus 60,924 women; lecturers 15,689 men versus 18,788 women) (NCES, 2013b). These figures indicate that the under-representation of women across appointment types remains a concern (see Figures 2.2 and 2.3).

![1991 Distribution of Men & Women Faculty](image1)
![2011 Distribution of Men & Women Faculty](image2)

**Figure 2.2 Number of instructional faculty in degree-granting postsecondary institutions, 1991, by gender. Source: National Center for Education Statistics, 2013a**

**Figure 2.3 Number of instructional faculty in degree-granting postsecondary institutions, 2011, by gender. Source: National Center for Education Statistics, 2013a**

### Faculty of Color

Within the faculty, there is a gross under-representation of faculty of color, even though the percentage of faculty of color increased from 1991 to 2011 (NCES, 2013a). There is also a lack of adequate representation based on sex/gender within particular racial and ethnic groups. There is also uneven representation across academic ranks and across institutional types.

In 1991, a mere 12% of all faculty came from racially minoritized groups including Black, Latinx, Asian American/Pacific Islander, or American Indian Faculty (NCES, 2013a). More specifically, in 1991, there were 456,222 white faculty, 24,516 Black faculty, 11,422 Latinx faculty, 26,510 Asian/Pacific Islander, and 1,654 American Indian faculty. By 2011, the
number of faculty with minoritized racial or ethnic identities grew to 20% of all faculty. In 2011, there were 1,124,745 white faculty, 105,292 Black faculty, 65,271, Latinx faculty, 97,134 Asian/Pacific Islander, and 7,235 American Indian faculty in 2011 (NCES, 2013a). This means that despite a large growth in the overall faculty, the greatest gains were amongst white faculty, and proportional representation among racially or ethnically minoritized faculty remains a key concern (see figures 2.4 and 2.5).

![1991 & 2011 Faculty by Race & Ethnicity](image)

**Figure 2.4** Full-time instructional faculty in degree-granting postsecondary institutions, by race and ethnicity, 1991 and 2011. *Source: National Center for Education Statistics, 2013b*
Figure 2.5 Full-time instructional faculty in degree-granting postsecondary institutions, aggregate race and ethnicity, gender, and academic rank, Fall 2011. Source: National Center for Education Statistics, 2013b

The numbers of faculty of color are slowly increasing, particularly in certain institutional types. Data indicate that faculty of color are disproportionately located in public, two-year institutions (Gappa et al., 2007). For example, of all Latinx, American Indian, and Black faculty, 42%, 40%, and 37%, respectively, teach at public two-year colleges (Gappa et al., 2007), while only 30% of all white and 15% of all Asian American faculty teach at two-year colleges (Gappa et al., 2007). In contrast, research universities employ 60% of all Asian American faculty, but only 25% of all Black and American Indian faculty (Gappa et al., 2007; note: numbers for Latinx faculty were not provided). While the numbers of faculty of color increased, racially minoritized individuals have not yet reached adequate representation (Gappa et al., 2007). It is worth noting that proportional representation is not the only goal in diversifying the faculty in terms of race and ethnicity; ensuring full participation, a sense of belonging, and the ability to exercise agency over one’s experiences are also important (Martinez et al., 2016).
In addition to the issues of institutional stratification that I just described, there are issues of representation regarding gender for particular racial and ethnic groups (NCES, 2013a). Overall, in 2011, Black men were less well represented than Black women, while Latinx men and women were roughly equally represented with regard to gender, assuming a gender binary (see Figure 2.7, NCES, 2013a). Asian-Pacific Islander men were more well-represented than and Asian-Pacific Islander women (see Figure 2.7, NCES, 2013a). American Indian faculty, while under-represented overall, had roughly equal representation based on gender (see Figure 2.7, NCES, 2013a). All of these statistics indicate that, while the proportion of faculty of color increased, the overall representation based on gender is uneven within particular racial and ethnic groups and across academic ranks.

![Gender Representation by Racial and Ethnic Groups](image)

**Figure 2.6 Full-time instructional faculty in degree-granting postsecondary institutions, gender by race and ethnicity, Fall 2011** *Source: National Center for Education Statistics, 2013a*

Understanding the representation of racial and ethnic identities of faculty is important in this study as I sought to recruit a racially and ethnically diverse sample. One of the challenges in accomplishing this goal is that there is such an unconscionable under-representation of faculty
from minoritized racial and ethnic groups across higher education. Given the existing literature, which indicates that trans* individuals who are also persons of color have differential experiences in the workplace (Grant et al., 2011; Schilt, 2006), understanding the academic workplace experiences of trans* people of color is critically important, yet potentially unachievable given the demographics of faculty overall.

**Benefits of Faculty Diversity**

Despite the modest pace of change that increased the representation of women in the professorate, and the sluggish progress of increasing racial and ethnic representation within the academic profession, there is an inherent value in having a diverse faculty with respect to both sex/gender and racial and ethnic identification. Many scholars documented the benefits of faculty diversity (Milem, 2003; Hurtado, 2001; Gurin, Day, Hurtado, & Gurin, 2002; Williams & Wade-Golden, 2013). The benefits of diverse faculty often manifest in the core aspects of faculty work: teaching, research, and service. The existing literature about diversity benefits is more robust in the areas of teaching and service (e.g., Baez, 2000).

Approaches to studying the benefits of diverse faculty include quantitative (e.g., antonio, 2002) and qualitative methods (Baez, 2000). Literature in this area follows a range of theoretical approaches, including sociological and Critical Race Theory. One limitation in some of the existing literature is a lack explicit enumeration of some researchers’ theoretical perspective (e.g., Hughes, Horner, & Ortiz, 2012). While it is sometimes the case with studies about the benefits of diversity that white students are the presumed recipients of those benefits, I intend to use the concept of “benefits of diversity” to refer to a mutually beneficial environment wherein faculty from diverse backgrounds can fully engage their talents in the creation of teaching, learning, research, and service contexts. The full realization of the gifts that diverse faculty offer
ultimately improves higher education organizations, and helps to achieve the diversity mission of many post-secondary institutions (Turner et al., 2008).

**Teaching**

Prior literature indicates that one of the benefits of having a diverse faculty manifests through teaching and learning practices. Active learning strategies have numerous benefits to students’ outcomes, including increasing critical thinking and problem solving skills (Hurtado, 2001; Gurin et al., 2002; Milem, 2003). With respect to teaching, race and gender are predictors for using active learning strategies in the classroom (Hurtado, 2001; Milem, 2003). Women faculty are more likely to use cooperative and experiential learning, and to include readings about race and ethnicity and/or gender issues (Hurtado, 2001). Similar findings about teaching are evident across various racial and ethnic groups. Faculty of color tend to see teaching and learning more holistically, often seeing education as encompassing moral, emotional, and civic development, and as an important vehicle to advance change in society (Antonio, 2002). Latinx and African American faculty are more likely to use cooperative learning strategies, while Native American faculty are more likely to use experiential learning and/or field study techniques (Hurtado, 2001). While Asian American faculty members are more likely to use extensive lecturing, this may be largely attributable to disciplinary differences and institutional contexts (Hurtado, 2001).

Milem (2003) argued that “racially and ethnically diverse campuses provide a perfect environment within which students can develop” competencies like the ability to engage with diverse peers (p. 19). Not only are there direct benefits to students, there are also indirect benefits of having a diverse faculty, which can create a positive campus racial climate (Milem, 2003). As campuses continue to diversify their student bodies in terms of race/ethnicity, and as women
continue to outpace men in enrollment, I cannot overstate the need for a diverse, representative group of post-secondary instructors. Trans* faculty must also be considered as a part of this diversity.

**Research**

Faculty of color and white women expand the boundaries of knowledge through their research (Milem, 2003). Individuals from racially minoritized backgrounds are much more likely than white faculty to engage in research that expands knowledge about race or ethnicity (Milem, 2003; Turner et al., 2008). Despite these contributions, faculty of color often report colleagues undervaluing their research (Turner et al., 2008). Further, Stanley (2007) revealed the difficulties faculty of color face in having their colleagues respect their research. The under and devaluation of race-based scholarship is a matter of peer-review and academic publishing, but can have negative effects on the tenure and promotion processes for faculty of color (Stanley, 2007; Turner et al., 2008).

In the U.S., shifting racial and ethnic demographics demand that scholars/practitioners pay increased attention to issues relating to race. Given higher education’s historical and contemporary role in knowledge production, ensuring adequate representation among historically under-represented groups is essential to the fulfillment of the mission of higher education institutions (Turner et al., 2008). Moreover, the need for knowledge that reflects the full range of society’s needs is a core function of higher education that cannot be achieved without ensuring that racially and ethnically minoritized scholars are fully supported in their faculty roles.

**Service**

Faculty of color and white women are more likely to engage in extensive service, resulting, at least in part, from their minoritized position (Allen, Epps, Guillory, Suh, & Bonous-
Hammarth, 2000; Baez, 2000, Stanley, 2006; Tierney & Bensimon, 1996). There was also
evidence that some trans* faculty engaged in unrewarded service in my pilot study (Pitcher,
2015). African Americans overall have a higher teaching and service load than whites in the
same discipline (Allen et al., 2000). African American women assume a disproportionate role in
service, teaching, and research, which stems from often being severely under-represented
(Harley, 2008; Harper et al., 2001; Turner et al., 2008).

Institutions of higher education benefit greatly from the service performed by diverse
faculty, and often need representatives for committees on racial diversity and/or the status of
women (Baez, 2000; Tierney & Bensimon, 1996). Because individuals who represent
minoritized groups often perform service related to committee work on women’s issues or racial
diversity, some scholars describe the kinds of service provided by individuals from these groups
as cultural taxation (Tierney & Bensimon, 1996). Despite negative characterization of service
responsibilities, Baez (2000) argued that service, at least for some faculty of color, can be
immensely rewarding. Additional service responsibilities may manifest differently for various
groups. For example, African American women assume a disproportionate role in service,
teaching, and research (Harley, 2008; Harper, Baldwin, Gansneder, & Chronister, 2001; Turner
et al., 2008). The service provided by minoritized groups serves to ensure the institutionalization
of diversity (Ahmed, 2012), which in turn creates positive shifts in campus climate (Milem,
2003). While service can be a burden, the efforts of faculty from minoritized groups are vital to
the achievement of the mission of higher education institutions.

Section Summary

In this section, I described some of the many benefits to having a diverse faculty,
including student’s gains in cognitive outcomes, and increasing efficacy in interacting with
diverse peers through the kinds of teaching diverse faculty are likely to engage in. I also reviewed examined literature that demonstrates the important contributions that diverse faculty make through their research and service. Realizing the mission of higher education institution requires the creation of an environment that ensures faculty from diverse backgrounds can fully engage their talents. Given the various benefits associated with white women and faculty of color, it stands to reason that trans* faculty may uniquely contribute to their institutions as result of their lived experiences in similar ways. Despite the numerous benefits of diversity, there are barriers that prevent the full realization; I describe these barriers in the next section.

**Barriers to Realizing the Benefits of Diversity**

Many barriers preclude the full realization of the benefits of diversity within higher education. I describe three here: sexism, misogyny, and racism. I have two key arguments in this section. First, that higher education continues to fail at adequately representing societal diversity within the academic professions. Second, the systems of oppression evident within society are present within higher education. Moreover, higher education can potentially exacerbate systems of oppression, for example, socio-economic status (Pitcher & Shahjahan, under review). When higher education institutions fail to represent societal diversity and do not meaningfully address structural oppressions inherent to society, this adversely affects the ability of colleges and universities to achieve their missions.

**Sexism, Misogyny, and the Treatment of Women in Academe**

There is a robust literature about gender equity within academic professions. This research takes both quantitative and qualitative approaches to understanding women’s experiences in the academy. Sociological perspectives inform most of literature in this area (e.g., Clark & Corcoran, 1986; Maranto & Griffìn, 2011), however there are a number of studies
guided by gender-based perspectives, including feminism (e.g., Lester, 2011). Recent developments in this area of research have turned towards academic motherhood (Martin, 2015; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004) and the role of gender norms in shaping experiences of women faculty (Lester, 2008, 2011).

Campus climate research is ubiquitous in higher education (Hart & Fellabaum, 2008) and researchers find a chilly climate, which is defined as “informal exclusion, devaluation and marginalization” for women faculty (Maranto & Griffin, 2011, p. 141). While much of the literature about the negative climate for women focuses on classroom experiences, scholars have also explored productivity (Nettles & Perna, 1995), workload and satisfaction (Somers et al., 1998; Ropers-Huilman, 2000), and tenure and promotion processes (Buckley et al., 2000; Maranto & Griffin, 2011).

The chilly climate paired with systemic oppression (e.g., sexism, misogyny) disadvantages women academics (Clark & Corcoran, 1986; Cress & Hart, 2009). In describing continued gender bias within academia, Cress and Hart (2009) argued that woman and men within the academy operate differently, and ultimately academic values are deeply masculine-centric. For example, women tend to be more collaborative in their work styles; yet solo-authored publications in highly esteemed journals are viewed as the most valued contributions (Cress & Hart, 2009). While I have a distinct distrust of any and all discourses that indicate that men behave and think in one way and women another, there is some merit to Cress and Hart’s (2009) argument. It is possible that there are conceptually distinct ways of being and knowing that may be more evident among particular gender groups, though these differences are not biologically determined or inherent to any individual. In addition to distinct ways of knowing and being, the exclusion and systematic barriers that women academics face within higher
education are also worth exploring. Furthermore, the rewards associated with supposedly masculine ways of knowing seem to be greater, as at least one study found that men were significantly more likely to receive endowed chair roles than women, even when controlling for publication records (Treviño, Gomez-Mejia, Balkin, & Mixon, 2015). Further, women would have to significantly out-publish men to be as likely to be awarded an endowed chair (Treviño et al., 2015).

As Stalker (2001) argued, misogyny manifests in the daily lives of women and creates substantial barriers to women’s participation in higher education. Misogynistic expectations come from a variety of genders, as no one is immune to the insidiousness of misogyny (Stalker, 2001). Misogyny makes it unsafe for women to venture into territories that are not a “woman’s place” (e.g., to participate in knowledge production) (Stalker, 2001). Further, when women enter places where they are not expected, their presence creates challenges to existing “male norms, values, beliefs, or hierarchies through participation” (Stalker, 2001, p. 301). Further, women academics often navigate contradictory roles and expectations along the way (Acker, Webber, & Smyth, 2016).

Within the context that I just described wherein women are not expected, minoritized academics experiences are more hostile when one’s experiences is at the intersections of sexism, misogyny, classism, and/or racism. Recent edited volumes including Presumed Incompetent: The Intersections of Race and Class in Academia revealed the various ways that minoritized academics are presumed incompetent, in light of the norms described above. Despite widespread evidence that systems of domination and subordination exist within academe, as Presumed Incompetent revealed, “the culture of the academy overall remains not only remarkably blind to its own flaws, but deeply invested in a thoroughgoing denial.” (Gutiérrez y Muhs, Neimann,
González, & Harris, 2012, p. 7). Thus I conclude that there are many obstacles that women face in advancing through academic programs, including stereotypes that seek to undermine their intelligence and competence, disparate rates of mentorships and support on academic pathways that lead to faculty careers, and the lack of developing systematic changes that would reduce or eliminate class, gender, and raced based oppression. Despite the difficulty that women face in academe, there is emerging evidence that women enact agency against the gendered organizational practices of universities (O’Meara, 2015).

The existing literature about women in academe tends to focus rather intensively on heterosexual, cisgender women’s lives and concerns. This emphasis is evident in Gibson’s (2006) research, which showed how some women did not feel comfortable talking with a male mentor about having a baby. The current framing of gender equity, therefore, excludes many individuals, but most relevant to this study, the experiences of trans women. Further, the lack of scholarly research that meaningfully addresses child-free women with a variety of sexual orientations, and gender identities, is of serious concern. Having discussed gender inequity as a substantial barrier to realizing the full benefits of faculty diversity, I now describe how the under-representation of faculty of color\(^7\) also prevents the realization of the benefits of diversity.

**Racism and the Treatment of People of Color in Academe**

The current literature uses the phrases faculty of color (e.g., antonio, 2002; Baez, 2000; Turner et al., 2007; Stanley, 2006) or women of color (e.g., Ford, 2011), but there are also studies about the experiences of individual racial and ethnic groups (e.g., Allen et al., 2000; Chan, 1989; Croom & Patton, 2012; Garza, 1993; Lee, 2002; Tippeconnic Fox, 2005). The

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\(^7\) I use the phrase faculty of color with acknowledgement of the ongoing debates about the utility of this term and that faculty of color are far from a monolithic group. Individuals and groups have disparate experiences. Despite the use of faculty of color, I do intend to specifically include the experiences of particular racial groups.
literature in this area is quite robust and scholars use quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods approaches. Theoretically speaking, the literature in this area utilizes a wide range of perspectives, including Critical Race Theory and perspectives related to the topic under study (e.g., Boyer’s four types of scholarship, antonio, 2002). A recent synthesis of the literature (Turner et al., 2008) about faculty of color identified over 200 studies in this area, exploring a wide range of topics.

The most extensive and exhaustive review of the literature about faculty of color indicates that there are many levels at which support and challenges emerge for faculty of color, namely, departmental, institutional, and national contexts (Turner et al., 2008). Some of the issues common amongst faculty of color that Turner et al. (2008) identified include: a lack of respect for one’s research; reports of lower job satisfaction than white faculty; and experiences with isolation, tokenization, and marginalization. Similar to white women, faculty of color experience difficulties in the tenure and promotion process (Croom & Patton, 2012; Perna, 2001). Further, the lack of institutional efforts to recruit and retain adequate numbers of faculty of color is disheartening and contributes to a hostile climate (Stanley, 2006; Turner et al., 2008). The lack of clarity regarding tenure and promotion is especially frustrating to faculty of color whose colleagues often undervalue their research methods and teaching approaches (Croom & Patton, 2012; Stanley, 2006; Turner et al., 2008). Further, existing policies and procedures for tenure and promotion systematically disadvantage faculty of color who do not work within dominant research paradigms (Stanley, 2006). Difficulties with peer review processes that devalue “non-mainstream” scholarship, further complicate tenure and promotion processes (Stanley, 2007). Turner et al. (2008) concluded that higher education must “dissipate these barriers by helping
faculty, staff, and students understand the nature of the barriers across contexts, as discussed in the literature, that impede the progress of potential and current faculty of color” (p. 159).

Additionally, there are significant personal consequences for faculty of color, as facing racist institutional climates results in stress that is especially harmful (Eagan & Garvey, 2015). The notion of racial battle fatigue refers to the constant discrimination, microaggressions, and stereotype threat that shapes the experiences of individuals of color in higher education (Fasching-Varner et al., 2014). Ultimately, the context of higher education touts the value of diversity, but creates difficult workplaces for all individuals of color, and of particular relevance to this study, faculty of color (Fasching-Varner et al., 2014).

Despite the robust literatures documenting sexism, misogyny, and racism, existing studies make it difficult to speculate about the experiences of trans* faculty. At present, no national or institutional databases collect information about gender in non-binary ways or in ways that acknowledge trans people’s existence. The lack of nuanced data collection methods ultimately limits what is known about trans* faculty. Every study that I reviewed conceived of gender in a binary way and/or relied on data that make trans* voices and experiences invisible. As Turner et al. (2008) noted, there are very few studies that include lesbian, gay, bisexual or queer faculty of color, and no studies that include trans* faculty of color. The lack of empirical research about trans* faculty, particularly trans* faculty of color and the role they might play in creating diverse learning environments, makes the inclusion of these perspectives within this study all the more important. Given what is known about experiences with racism, tokenization, and expectations about under-represented faculty being asked to serve as representatives about diversity issues, I now articulate experiences of being “the Other.”
Being “the Other”

There are many positive attributes associated with diverse perspectives, but being “the Other” has its challenges. Here I am positioning trans* faculty as part of a large number of individuals who do not inhabit the norms of the academy (Ahmed, 2012). By being “the Other,” faculty who do not fit the white, heterosexual, cisgender male/man norms of the academy often cope with a lack of institutional support and face challenges in promotion and tenure (Ahmed, 2012; Martin, 2015; Turner et al., 2008; Tierney & Bensimon, 1996). “Others” often struggle for legitimacy and recognition as authentic knowledge holders and producers (Ford, 2011; Johnsrud & Sadao, 1998; Stanley, 2006). Ironically, the kinds of knowledge that minoritized individuals hold are often the very sources of knowledge most desired by institutions striving to achieve their diversity goals and missions (Aguirre, 2000; Ahmed, 2012; Baez, 2000; Fasching-Varner et al., 2014; Turner et al., 2008).

In being “The Other,” trans* academics may face similar issues as other minoritized groups, but also have some unique “othering” experiences. For example in the pilot study for this dissertation, trans* faculty described experiences of isolation (Pitcher, under review), similar to the experiences of racially minoritized scholars (e.g., Ford, 2011; Stanley, 2006). By extending the existing literature, it is possible that trans* academics face issues with legitimacy because of genderism (Bilodeau, 2009), similar to the experiences of white women and academics of color (Cress & Hart, 2009; Turner et al., 2008). Additionally, trans* faculty in tenure-track positions may experience difficulty negotiating tenure and promotion, especially in a system that disadvantages certain kinds of knowledge production, similar to the experiences of faculty of color (Ford, 2011; Stanley, 2006). Also, preliminary evidence indicates that trans faculty engage in higher rates of service on behalf of the trans community (Pitcher, 2015), as is well-
documented amongst faculty of color and white women (Baez, 2000; Harley, 2008; O’Meara, 2015). Further, Ford’s (2011) concept of bodily misrecognition might be an especially important aspect of trans* faculty experiences, especially given the desire on the part of some individuals to neatly place people into sex/gender boxes of male/man and female/woman. There are many groups and individuals who are situated as “the Other.” I now describe how being the other manifest in the experiences of LGBTQ librarians and the campus climate for LGBTQ people.

**Negative Campus Climate for LGBTQ People**

As stated elsewhere, there are very few empirical investigations about the experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) faculty. There is however a robust literature about the campus climate for LGBTQ people. The current methodological approaches to campus climate are both qualitative (e.g., Evans, 2002) and quantitative (e.g., Rankin et al., 2010). One of the key concerns previous research articulated about campus climate for LGBTQ people is the lack of meaningful connections between the negative climate and associated outcomes (see Woodford, Kulick, & Atteberry, 2015). For example, Rankin and colleagues’ (2010) work describes a hostile climate, but it is unclear how a negative campus climate influences faculty well-being. In this section, I review literature about LGBTQ librarians, campus climate literature, and the limited empirical investigations into the experiences of LGBTQ faculty.

**LGBTQ Librarians as Academics**

Despite holding the status of faculty and having similar divisions amongst tenure and non-tenure line librarians, there is little attention paid to the academic librarian profession within higher education. Similar to faculty writ large, academic librarianship is a predominantly white
field (Chang, 2013; Davis & Hall, 1997). Unlike the teaching and research faculty, librarians are majority women (Chang, 2013; Davis & Hall, 1997).

As is the case with the case about LGBTQ faculty, there is little literature addressing LGBTQ librarians. There now two edited volumes about LGBTQ issues within libraries (Kester, 1997; Greenblatt, 2010). One volume described librarians’ experiences (Kester, 1997), while the other addressed LGBTIQ library and archive users (Greenblatt, 2010). Yet, there are few systematic, empirical studies of the experiences of LGBTQ academic librarians. Notable exceptions include Besant’s (1999) study of white lesbian librarians, Schell’s (2001) study of lesbian and bisexual librarians, and Carmichael’s (1999) comparative study of gay and straight librarians. While there is some attention paid to LGBTQ issues within libraries (e.g., Greenblatt, 2010), Carmichael and Shontz’s (1996) assertion that additional attention to “lesbigay” issues in library school and the urgent need to integrate one’s social beliefs with one’s professional practice as a librarian continues to ring true 20 years later. The present study seeks to elevate the voices of five trans* librarians and despite that modest sample, this sub-set of participants is the largest study to date of trans academic librarians.

**Campus Climate**

At present, there are first-person narratives about being a lesbian or gay faculty member (e.g., McDonough, 2002) and a small number of systematic inquiries about the experiences of gay and lesbian faculty (e.g., McNaron, 1996). The existing research attends only to the experiences of lesbian and gay faculty and does not meaningfully account for the experiences of trans* faculty. The research in this area takes qualitative and quantitative approaches. The existing literature about lesbian and gay faculty is nearly 20 years old (prior to 2000; e.g., Mintz & Rothblum, 1997) and social attitudes about LGBTQ people have changed substantially.
Despite shifts in social attitudes about LGBTQ people, scholars have documented a hostile campus climate for LGBTQ people (e.g., Rankin et al., 2010). Key findings from the largest national study of campus climate for LGBTQ people in higher education indicated that a majority (52.6%) of faculty members reported experiences with deliberate exclusion. Also, trans* faculty and staff were more likely than LGBQ faculty and staff to indicate that they thought about leaving their institution and more fearful about disclosing their identities on campus (Rankin et al., 2010). Additionally, trans* people in higher education report higher incidents of harassment (31-39%) than non-transgender men and women (20% and 24%, respectively) (Rankin et al., 2010). Moreover, individual effectiveness may be compromised when faculty work in an organization where the climate is negative or damaging (Fasching-Varner et al., 2014; Tierney & Bensimon, 1996; Tierney & Rhoads, 1993).

While there have been improvements made to campus climate, there is still overt hostility (Rankin et al., 2010; Vaccaro, 2012). This hostility may manifest in attitudes amongst governing boards, legislatures, colleagues, students, and other groups, resulting from lack of knowledge and misinformation, though it is difficult to determine how shifting attitudes may influence the hostility that LGBTQ faculty face (Bataille & Brown, 2006; Tierney & Rhoads, 1993). Adding nuance to the research about hostile campus climates, a recent study about the experiences of lesbian and gay academics in the sciences and engineering reported bifurcated experiences (Bilimoria & Stewart, 2009). Bilimoria and Stewart (2009) found that some participants reported few issues with being gay or lesbian at work, while others described being invisible, feeling the need to cover their sexual orientation, and facing unwanted personal scrutiny by colleagues. Another area of research that adds nuance to understandings about campus climate indicated that department environments largely shape faculty perceptions of climate, often contrasting the
comfort faculty felt in their department with the climate elsewhere on campus (Vaccaro, 2012). Additionally, faculty whose work involved queer topics described the climate as hostile and unsupportive. Vaccaro’s (2012) study indicated that more research is necessary to better understand if LGBTQ people doing non-LGBTQ research experience the climate differently from those individuals pursing queer and trans research.

**Empirical Studies about Lesbian, Gay, and Trans*8 Faculty**

Though the literature is limited, studies consistently find that gay and lesbian faculty expressed concerns about the potential negative consequences their sexual orientation might have on their career (e.g., being passed over for positions) (Bilimoria & Stewart, 2009; McNaron, 1996). Amongst educators, Irwin (2002) found that 60% of participants reported experiencing homophobic behaviors, harassment, and discrimination and/or prejudicial treatment. These homophobic behaviors included jokes and unwelcome questions about one’s sexual orientation, as well as being “outed,” socially excluded, ridiculed, sexually harassed, threatened with sexual violence, and having one’s property damaged (Irwin, 2002). Transgender educators in at least one study were most likely to experience discrimination or harassment (75%) with lesbians (67%) and gays (57%) reporting slightly lower rates (Irwin, 2002). While Irwin (2002) did not meaningfully disaggregate the data between K-12 and higher education settings, these findings are no less startling.

Similar to Irwin’s (2002) finding that some educators are selectively out, McNaron (1996) noted a paradox about disclosure for gay and lesbian faculty within research contexts. McNaron’s (1996) study included gay and lesbian faculty primarily in humanities disciplines who were hesitant to discuss their sexual orientation with students and within their research.

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8 Bisexual faculty are also an understudied group and the studies reviewed here did not address these experiences.
Even though participants felt that being gay or lesbian influenced how they taught and what they researched, participants were reluctant to publish findings about gay and lesbian topics for fear of facing professional consequences. For example, one participant’s research focused on literature; through the research process, evidence of homo-eroticism emerged, but the faculty member hesitated to publish about this finding, attempting to balance the excitement of the finding with the larger demands of promotion and tenure (McNaron, 1996). What is clear from the limited literature is that “gay and lesbian faculty too seldom feel actively supported by their administrations” (McNaron, 1996, p. 142). Though there is much concern about the effects being gay or lesbian might have on one’s career, this body of evidence is too small, more then 20 years old, thus making it difficult to assume any meaningful conclusions about gay and lesbian faculty today, let alone LGBTQ faculty more broadly. It is also difficult to know the extent to which the positive shifts in the social environment for LGBTQ people influences faculty experiences. Further, there are no empirical studies that look at the experiences of bisexual faculty.

Recently, the acceptance of trans* faculty has proven difficult for many institutional leaders, especially for leaders at religiously affiliated institutions (e.g., DeBolt, 2008; Huckabee, 2013). Also, trans* issues in the professoriate have garnered some attention in The Chronicle of Higher Education, often taking a sensational tone (e.g., Wilson, 1998, 2005). In the pilot study that informed this dissertation, participants described their experience in largely negative terms, reporting experiences with macro- and microaggression and feelings of isolation and tokenization (Pitcher, under review).

In summation, in this section, I reviewed the literature about campus climate for LGBTQ people that indicated an overtly hostile environment. Reports of harassment and experiences with subtle and overt hostility disproportionately affects trans* individuals. I also reviewed literature
about LGBTQ faculty that indicated that some individuals have positive experiences, while others have negative experiences. Further, Vaccaro’s (2012) work indicated that departmental context may be especially important. As indicated in the research questions, I intend to explore the departmental context as a potential source of support/failure to support for trans* faculty. Next, I review a final body of literature about the workplace experiences of trans* individuals outside of higher education.

Transgender Workplace Discrimination

National Survey of Transgender Discrimination

The organization formerly known as the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, now the National LGBTQ Task Force or “the task force,” partnered with the National Center for Transgender Equality in 2011 to conduct the first “comprehensive national transgender discrimination survey” (Grant et al., 2011, p. 10). The significance of this landmark study cannot be overstated. This report, with 6,436 respondents, explored experiences of bias and discrimination across many areas of life including employment, healthcare, education, and government identity documents. A majority of participants (63%) faced discrimination in one or more arenas, including at work (e.g., firing), in healthcare settings (e.g., denial of services), in social services settings (e.g., harassment), in prisons (e.g., sexual assault), and within their personal lives (e.g., loss of relationships). Twenty-three percent of respondents faced three or more catastrophic life events (e.g., rejection from family, loss of employment), which can make resilience in the face of adversity more difficult.

Key Findings. Participants had double the rate of unemployment than the national rate, with people of color reporting almost four times the national rates. There is widespread mistreatment at work, with 90% of respondents experiencing harassment, mistreatment, or
discrimination. Nearly half of the respondents reported having adverse outcomes, including being fired, not being hired, or being denied a promotion because of their status as a trans person, with 26% reporting having been fired. Often trans* workers hide their gender identities to avoid discrimination (71%) or delay transition to avoid difficulties at work (57%). However, those who lived in accordance with their gender identity reported being more comfortable at work after transition, and felt their job performance improved (78%).

**Implications of this Report.** While this report looks at a broad segment of the trans* population, it is worth noting a few areas that are highly relevant to this study: the wide gaps in income between trans* people within the sample, with a substantially lower percentage of participants at the upper end of income, and a considerably higher percentage of participants at the lower end of income. Considering the confluence of trans* individuals being over-represented in the lowest income brackets and under-represented in the highest income brackets given the significantly above average rates of educational attainment, the income figures provided are even more disconcerting. Despite having high rates of education attainment, this survey indicates that there are relatively low wages for trans* workers, which derive at least in part from the high rates of unemployment and workplace discrimination. As the report states, “educational attainment did not provide respondents the protection against poverty” (Grant et al., 2011, p. 33). Moreover, individuals who received mistreatment in schools were often the people who earned substantially less annual income.

In direct connection to my pilot study (Pitcher, 2015), the National Student of Transgender Discrimination also found high rates of harassment directed at trans* individuals faced who expressed their trans identity within educational setting, including K-12 schools. Of participants, 78% reported harassment, 35% physical assault, and 12% sexual violence in school
settings. Within both higher education and K-12 settings, 15% of respondents reported such severe harassment that they nearly left school. One respondent indicated that, “I have chosen to attend college online to avoid harassment” (Grant et al., 2011, p. 39). Some participants in graduate school reported experiencing censure by faculty and being harassed in the classroom. These negative experiences may lead to differences in educational enrollment. There was evidence that trans* individuals in this study had observed differences in educational enrollment across age groups within the sample. For example, comparing the variations in educational enrollment among participants to U.S. Census data indicates that the 18-24 group was under-represented in college, and the 25-44 group was over-represented in college. Taken together, this data indicates that there is an overtly hostile environment for trans people across all educational institutions, and that being a trans person might influence the age at which one pursues post-secondary education.

**Studies of Transgender Workplace Discrimination**

The national report of trans* workplace experiences is not the only source of information about the workplace experiences of trans* individuals. Literature, primarily from psychology, has also explored the experiences of trans* individuals, often using qualitative methods. This literature often examines transfeminine spectrum individuals’ experiences separately from transmasculine spectrum individuals' experiences. One such study explored the experiences of male-to-female (MTF) transsexuals (Brown et al., 2012). Transition can serve as a critical juncture in one’s life and career experiences, and can influence one’s career interests (Brown et al., 2012). For example, participants explored different educational goals after transition, including securing employment that affirmed their gender identity, or moving into more “feminine positions,” for example, the helping professions (Brown et al., 2012). Unique to the
experience of MTF transsexuals, participants within one study expressed the loss of male privilege and increased vulnerability that is common among women’s experiences (Brown et al., 2012).

In exploring the experiences of female-to-male (FTM) trans people, Dispenza, Watson, Chung, and Brack (2012) found that participants’ experiences with discrimination were common. Participants reported experiencing a variety of kinds of workplace discrimination. These kinds of discrimination included microaggressions, such as difficulties navigating expectations about workplace attire, and horizontal oppression, such as cisgender LGB individuals discriminating against trans people (Dispenza, Watson, Chung, & Brack, 2012). The kinds of discrimination described by participants had negative psychosocial health outcomes, including increased stress (Dispenza et al., 2012).

In contrast to MTF experiences where there is a loss of male privilege, some have argued that FTM individuals may receive male privilege in the workplace following transition (Schilt, 2006). Some FTM individuals in one study reported receiving more positive performance appraisal, increased recognition of their efforts, and increased economic opportunities subsequent to their gender transition (Schilt, 2006). Other individuals in that same study, especially individuals who were earlier in transition or were not transitioning, reported feeling that they were read as younger and less competent, which possibly results from having a more boy-ish appearance or being smaller in size (Schilt, 2006). Further, Schilt (2006) found differences in experiences based on race, physical features (e.g., height), and career field.

Studies that explored the experiences of both transfeminine spectrum individuals and transmasculine spectrum individuals found that trans* workers reported both positive and negative experiences within their workplaces (Bender-Bairde, 2011; Brewster, Velez, Mennicke,
& Tebbe, 2014). While some individuals reported their workplace transition processes as easier than expected, many participants described difficulties in the workplace. For example, coworkers’ reactions to transition were sometimes overtly hostile (Brewster et al., 2014). Individuals who worked in environments with specified gender presentations (e.g., different uniforms for men and women) or in worksites with sex-segregated facilities often reported difficulties (Brewster et al., 2014). In workplaces that had generous leave policies and trans-inclusive healthcare, participants reported more positive workplace experiences than those individuals in workplaces where there were no polices or the policies did not include gender confirming healthcare (Brewster et al., 2014).

Bender-Bairde’s (2011) qualitative exploration of trans* workplace experiences helped to build the body of evidence about workplace discrimination for this population. That study included interviews with 14 trans women and 6 trans men. Based on the experiences of participants, workplace discrimination is rampant for trans* people, with four participants having lost their jobs because of their trans identities. The research participants identified impediments (e.g., policies) to securing and retaining meaningful employment and commonplace harassment (e.g., unique discrimination related to identity documents, bathroom access, dress codes).

Bender-Bairde’s (2011) study identified five forms of discrimination that trans people experience: income discrimination, firing and not hiring discrimination (leading to job insecurity and insufficient incomes, which in turn threatened ability to access transition related medical care), harassment, dress code discrimination, and bathroom access discrimination. The pilot study that informed this dissertation also identified bathroom access, hiring discrimination, and dress code discrimination as salient issues for trans* faculty (Pitcher, 2015). Two limitations are worth noting about Bender-Bairde’s study. First, this study did not include non-binary gender
identities. Second, as noted by the author, this study included highly educated individuals, most of whom were white. Despite these limitations, the insights gained from the study helped to provide additional descriptions about the discrimination and harassment that occurs for trans people at work.

Another study emphasized the importance of considering trans* workplace experiences as revolving around three distinct phases: pre-transition, transition, and post-transition (Budge et al., 2010). Similar to studies that explored MTF and FTM experiences separately, individuals in this study also had shifts in career aspirations following transition (Budge et al., 2010). Data from Budge et al. (2010) suggests that trans* individuals may have unique occupational decision making processes, which include perceived careers barriers (e.g., loss of job), new career prospects (e.g., ideal future career), and contextual influences (e.g., gender socialization).

Some scholars seemed to erase non-binary gender experiences either through the research process or their analysis. For example, Budge, Tebbe, and Howard (2010) included two genderqueer individuals and one crossdresser, but then proceeded to develop a model based on the phases of transitioning at work, thus eliding the experiences of individuals who will not transition. Likewise, Brewster, Valez, DeBlaere, and Moradi (2014) collected data from individuals with a wide array of gender identities including women, men, another category (e.g., genderqueer), and androgynous. Also, this study used data drawn from a survey, which did not allow participants to select multiple identities and privileged binary identities such as woman or man versus transwoman, transman, or genderqueer. Brewster Valez, DeBlaere, and Moradi (2014) privileged binary identities by placing genderqueer in the “other” category. In the present study, I invited participants to describe their gender identities in their own terms. I used a similar
strategy in the pilot study and there were eight distinct gender identities amongst the 10 participants.

**Summary of the Literature Review**

In this literature review, I have argued that there are numerous benefits to colleges and universities having diverse faculty. However, there are many barriers to the full realization of those benefits, including a hostile environment for historically under-represented groups on the basis of race and sex/gender. Additionally, the campus climate is hostile towards LGBTQ people. As previously stated, each of these barriers is interconnected and must be addressed simultaneously. While addressing these barriers, it is important to expand notions of gender beyond the gender binary and be more intentional to include trans* voices.

Given the lack of empirical investigations about trans people’s experiences within academic workplaces experiences, I drew on literature about non-academic workplace experiences of trans individuals that indicated high rates of harassment and a mis-match between education attainment and income. Given the preponderance of evidence that trans* people face discrimination in workplaces, and my argument that all barriers to realizing the full benefits of diversity must be addressed simultaneously, exploring the experiences of trans* academics is both timely and relevant.

**Conceptual Framework**

I now describe the perspectives that create the conceptual framework of this study. Specifically, I draw on Spade’s (2011) critical trans politics (CTP), Thornton, Ocasio, and Lounsbury’s (2012) institutional logics perspective, and Acker’s (2006) inequality regimes. Each of these perspectives contributes important components of the conceptual framework (Figure 2.8). Embedded in the conceptual framework and throughout this dissertation I rely on queer
theoretical ideas. Though I do not specifically name queer theory as part of what guides my study, my thinking and development as a scholar is built on a foundation of queer theories.

Figure 2.7 Conceptual framework

Critical Trans Politics

For the purposes of this study, I used Spade’s (2011) definition of CTP, “a trans politics that demands more than legal recognition and inclusion, seeking instead to transform current logics of state, civil society security, and social equality” (p. 19). In other words, CTP is a reconceptualization of the purpose and aims of what some call the trans* rights movement. Rather than seeking rights—including workplace protections, trans inclusive healthcare, or a variety of other legal or policy solutions—CTP calls for shifting logics, which are the practices, assumptions, and beliefs that guide behavior and cognition (Thornton & Ocasio, 1999). I describe these logics in more detail in the institutional logics section of this conceptual framework. Spade’s (2011) work takes the concept of institutional and administrative logics and speaks to the ways in which resistance to those logics is a necessary condition for improving the
life chances of trans individuals. I visually represent this resistance in figure 2.7.

CTP follows critical theoretical traditions and women of color feminisms and resists taken for granted stories about social change, as well as, narratives that may expand suffering and injustice rather than narrow disparities in life chances (Spade, 2011). For example, within higher education, a key recommendation in the literature is passing non-discrimination policies at the institutional level (Beemyn et al., 2005). Many institutions have passed these policies, yet, as participants from my pilot study indicated, these policies did not prevent their institution from discriminating against trans* people within university healthcare, among other settings (Pitcher, 2015).

CTP directs attention away from an individualistic notion of power; rather, CTP conceptualizes power as structural, focusing on how norms govern populations, and how resistance to norms may result in improved conditions for trans* people (Spade, 2011). In shifting attention towards structures that distribute life chances, I am concerned with the ways that institutions, including higher education organizations, administer gender and create normative expectations about gender through identifying documents (e.g., faculty identification cards), sex-segregated facilities (e.g., bathrooms, locker rooms), and healthcare (Spade, 2011). By considering CTP in this study, I focused on understanding how trans* academics navigate processes (e.g., hiring, collegiality) where binary gender is salient and how, if at all, they resist gender norms and expectations. This perspective also influenced the analysis of the data and the implications and recommendations derived from this inquiry. Later, I describe in more detail how CTP influenced the analysis.
Institutional Logics and Inequality Regimes

I draw on both institutional logics (Thornton et al., 2012; Thornton & Osascio, 1999) and Acker’s (2006) concept of “inequality regimes” to connect the experiences of trans* faculty to larger social structures that instantiate the gender binary and privilege cisgender identities. I describe each of these perspectives in the following paragraphs. Institutional logics and inequality regimes extend the arguments that Spade (2011) made about the administration of gender by providing analytical tools to understand how organizations shape individuals’ experiences.

Institutional Logics. An institutional logics perspective examines the processes of institutionalization through a cognitive lens; this perspective illuminates how scripts, rules, and classification come to shape organizations and organizational action (Thornton et al., 2012). Within this perspective, it is important to define institutions and logics. Friedland and Alford (1991) defined institutions as both “supraorganizational patterns of activity through which humans conduct their material life of time and space and symbolic systems through which they categorize the activity and infuse it with meaning” (p. 232). The major social institutions or institutional logics in the modern West are the market, state, corporation, profession, religion, and family (Friedland & Alford, 1991; Thornton et al., 2012). I include a visual representation of each of these institutional orders in figure 2.7.

Logics are “material practices and symbolic constructions” that constitute the organization of society, and which are “available to organizations and individuals to elaborate” (Friedland & Alford, 1991, p. 248). Institutional logics are “the socially constructed, historical patterns of cultural symbols and material practices, including assumptions, values, beliefs and rules by which individuals and organizations provide meaning to their daily activity, organize
time and space, and reproduce the lives and experiences” (Thornton et al., 2012, p. 2). An institutional logics perspective seeks to understand contradictory scripts across social institutions, and to understand interrelationships between individuals, organizations, and larger institutional structures. This perspective is useful in understanding the experiences of trans* faculty because it has the potential to illuminate the ways that logics solidify the binary gender system. The emphasis within the institutional logics perspective on symbolic and material practices has the potential to show the ways that the structures and practices (material) and ideation and meaning (symbolic) of gender occur within the experiences of trans* faculty within higher education.

**Inequality Regimes.** Inequality regimes are “loosely interrelated practices, processes, actions, and meanings that result in and maintain class, gender, and racial inequalities within particular organizations” (Acker, 2006, p. 443). As with institutional logics, inequality regimes link to larger social structures; in this case, inequality regimes produce and reproduce existing social inequalities present in U.S. society, largely created based on race, class, and gender (Acker, 2006). While institutional logics focus on external processes that organizations take up, inequality regimes focus on the internal structures of organizations that create and reinforce social hierarchies. I visually represent inequality regimes in figure 2.7.

Based on a study of six banks, Acker (2006) defined inequality in organizations as “systematic disparities between participants in power and control over goals, resources, and outcomes; workplace decisions such as how to organize work; opportunities for promotion and interesting work; security in employment and benefits; pay and other monetary rewards; respect; and pleasures in work and work relations” (p. 443). In other words, Acker (2006) argued that the everyday activities of workplaces (i.e., organizational processes) produce and reproduce raced,
classed, and gendered hierarchies. Organizational actors create these hierarchies through
everyday work activities like recruitment and hiring, wage setting and supervisory practices, and
informal interactions at work (Acker, 2006). What Acker (2006) developed with the notion of
inequality regimes is similar to what Thornton et al. (2012) referred to as microfoundations.
Powell and Colyvas (2008) argued that microfoundations are “institutional forces [that] shape
individual interests and desires, framing the possibilities for action and influencing whether
behaviors results in persistence or change” (p. 277). Taken together, a critical trans politics
approach, institutional logics, and inequality regimes allowed me to describe the inter- and intra-
organizational processes that shaped trans* academics’ experiences.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I described the current state of the academic profession and discussed the
under-representation of white women and faculty of color. I argued that there are many benefits
of faculty diversity, yet barriers to the full realization of the potential of this diversity remain,
including gender inequity, structural racism, homophobia, and genderism. I also described
studies of trans* workplace discrimination, which indicate that trans* workers face unique forms
of discrimination in the workplace. These forms of discrimination result from prevailing societal
logics about gender. This review led me to describe the conceptual framework. The conceptual
framework draws on three perspectives: critical trans* politics, institutional logics, and
inequality regimes. Together, these perspectives center the experiences of trans* individuals,
highlight the external forces that instantiate the gender binary, and describe the internal
structures of workplaces that create and maintain social inequality.
Chapter 3: Trans*formative Methodology and Methods

I believe that telling our stories, first to ourselves and then to one another and the world, is a revolutionary act. It is an act that can be met with hostility, exclusion, and violence. It can also lead to love, understanding, transcendence, and community. I hope that my being real with you will help empower you to step into who you are and encourage you to share yourself with those around you.
– Janet Mock (2014, p. xvii)

In this chapter, I describe the process of inquiry, as guided by a transformative paradigm (Mertens, 2008, 2012). This is a qualitative study. Qualitative research focuses on rich descriptions of participants’ experiences and the meaning they make (Bogden & Biklen, 2007). I draw from a philosophical position that individuals construct knowledge, and in turn, this knowledge constitutes systems of socio-political power (Lather, 2006).

According to Mertens (2009, 2012) the transformative paradigm necessitates the inclusion of a qualitative component in research, but mixed methods could be utilized, depending on the needs of the community. Given the dearth of research about trans* academics, I followed Mertens’ (2009, 2012) suggestion that, “researchers start with qualitative data collection moments to learn about the community and begin to establish trusting relationships” (p. 8). Through this study I engaged participants in an interpretative practice (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995), wherein participants and I explored organizational events and their meaning (Rubin & Rubin, 2011) through a narrative response and two-interview series. Interviews and a narrative were the appropriate methodological choices because of my interest in understanding how organizational contexts uniquely influenced participants’ experiences within academic workplaces.
Research Questions

The following questions guide this study:

1. How do within-organizational processes (or microfoundations and inequality regimes) shape trans* academics’ experiences?

2. What are the primary institutional logics that shape the experiences of trans* academics from diverse backgrounds?
   a. How, if at all, do trans* academics resist and/or disrupt the norms created by inter- and intra-organizational processes?

3. From the perspectives of participants, what organizational and policy contexts (consisting of formal policies and informal practices) create supportive, neutral, and/or hostile environments for trans* academics?

Methods

In this qualitative inquiry, guided by a transformative paradigm, I explored the academic workplace experiences of 39 trans* academics. Participants had varied disciplinary, institutional, and personal histories. Using interview data and narrative responses, I engaged a variety of different analytical strategies to develop findings that respond to the above research questions.

Sampling

I primarily identified participants using a list-serve for trans*academics (trans-academics.org). I also relied on distribution of the call for participants via social media, through LGBTQ faculty and staff groups, LGBTQ divisions of disciplinary associations, and through participant referrals or snowball sampling (Morgan, 2008). I also created a special call for academics of color for the trans-academics.org email list and distributed the call for participants through racial and ethnic faculty groups (e.g., American Association of Blacks in Higher
Education) and through identity based sub-groups of disciplinary associations (e.g., Gay and Transgender Chemists and Allies Subdivision). In addition, I relied on the existing pool of participants generated from a pilot study on this same topic. I invited all potential participants to complete an interest survey that collected basic demographic and contact information.

In total, between the pilot study and the larger inquiry described here, 85 individuals began the interest survey, of those, 70 completed the survey with sufficient detail to include in the sampling considerations. Of the 70 potential participants who completed the interest survey, I eliminated seven duplicate entries, keeping one entry per potential participant. Of the 63 potential participants, two did not fit the study criteria (having a recent or current academic appointment and being trans* identified). Then I purposefully sampled to ensure (Patton, 2005) adequate within sample diversity. I prioritized contacting participants for interviews based on their racial, ethnic, and gender identities, institution type (e.g., community college, private university), field of study (e.g., social sciences, humanities), and academic appointment type (e.g., academic library, tenured/tenure-track, non-tenure-track).

I invited all participants who identified as a person of color to participate in the study. Through my initial email invitations to participate in the study, three potential participants declined when contacted (including two participants of color) and 10 potential participants never responded to repeated inquiries. Given the overall number of potential participants who were white, transmasculine academics within the social sciences and humanities, I did not contact nine potential participants who completed the interest survey. Through this purposeful sampling process, I developed a final sample of 39 participants.

Despite intentional efforts to recruit a gender and racially diverse group of participants, the majority of interview participants are white and trans*masculine identified and located within
a social science or humanities field or discipline. However, participants are currently employed at a range of institutions including public and private research universities, community colleges, proprietary institutions, religiously affiliated universities, and regional public universities. Also, participants hold, or recently held, a variety of academic appointment types including academic librarians who are tenured or on the tenure-track, post-doctoral researchers, non-tenure-track full time instructors (teaching full-time at a single institution), adjunct or contingent faculty (e.g., teaching part time a multiple institutions), graduate student instructors, and assistant, associate, and full professors. There is a geographic range with midwestern, southern, eastern, southwestern, and western states represented. Additionally, participants have a wide range of ages from 28 to 67 years.

**Data Collection: Approaches and Procedures**

After I purposefully sampled for potential participants, I requested interviews via email, which included more information about the study, and the consent document. Following the first interview, I emailed participants the narrative prompt. In some cases, participants responded to the prompt prior to the second interview (see appendix A). Some participants sent their narrative response after the second interview. All interviews occurred over the phone or via Skype or Google Hangout using video calls in all but one case, and were digitally recorded. Following the completion of interviews, I sent the digital files to the transcriptionist to be transcribed verbatim.

I interviewed each participant twice. In both interviews, I conceptualized participants as active interviewees (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995) or productive sources of knowledge. Active interviewing informed this study and “invests the subject with a substantial repertoire of interpretive methods and stock of experiential materials” (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995, p. 17). In other words, participants are holders of theoretical and experiential knowledge and have the
ability to interpret their lived experiences within higher education organizations in meaningful ways.

The first interview focused on the organizational contexts that the participant navigated (see protocol in appendix A). I began the first interview by having participants discuss their educational background and current role. I also addressed three different kinds of organizations in the first interview: the department, the institution, and the discipline/field, in keeping with existing literature that suggests faculty navigate at least these three microclimates (Austin, 1990; Vaccaro, 2012). In particular, I asked participants to describe the values and the norms of their various organizational contexts in order to draw out the underlying logics, concomitant with the institutional logics perspective (Thornton et al., 2012). I also asked participants about equity and collegiality using definitions from Gappa, Austin, and Trice (2007). I closed the first interview asking participants about how higher education could become more hospitable to trans academics, in keeping with the transformative paradigm (Mertens, 2009, 2012).

The narrative prompt (see appendix A) followed ideas advanced by McAdams’ (2008) recommendations about life story interviewing. In particular, I drew on the idea of a vivid memory and the meaning that individuals make about that memory. I also asked participants to define what it means to be a trans* academic and indicate what broader implications that even might have.

The second interview consisted of three main sections (see protocol in appendix A). In some cases, the second interview addressed the narrative response. The first section of the second interview addressed the multiple identities of participants, drawing on intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991) and the model of multiple dimensions of identities (Abes, Jones, & McEwen, 2007). The second section addressed how the participants navigated their various
organizational contexts. The final section examined gendered spaces, in keeping with Spade’s (2011) articulation of spaces where gender is more highly regulated. I closed the second interview with a discussion of the research study procedures moving forward and negotiated confidentiality and identifiability with each participant. Each interview lasted between 60-120 minutes with the average interview lasting 90 minutes. Narrative responses varied in length from 300 words to 1,200 words with the average being 500 words.

There were a few anomalous situations within the data collection. One participant, Nathan, combined the first and second interview and gave permission for me to use data from the pilot study for questions he had already answered. Nathan has a disability and part of why he wanted to combine interviews was related to his disability.

One participant, Malcolm, completed both interviews via email. When I asked Malcolm why completing the interviews via email was important he said,

I prefer email, not only because I can choose when I work on it, but mainly because it allows me to carefully consider and construct my responses in a way that real-time conversation does not. Also, long cell phone conversations sometimes get dropped, and I do not have a camera on my computer.

While certainly Malcolm’s transcripts were much shorter than real-time conversations, the same logics, tensions, and themes emerged. For example Malcolm described people forgetting he is trans and being subject to market logics, which I discuss in subsequent chapters.

Another participant, Isaac, completed the first interview over the phone but completed the second interview via email. Initially, Isaac “declined the follow-up interview,” because he said, “the emotional nature of the things we would be discussing, I don’t think it is a good idea for me to engage in that either during the work day or after a long day of work.” When I asked if he
would be willing to complete the second interview via email, he agreed and appreciated the opportunity to both “set boundaries” and “still participate” in a way that honored his needs. This is an example of the research paradigm at work. I sought to honor the social and historical context that Isaac navigates.

With respect to the narrative responses, there were also some irregularities in the data collection worth noting. In some cases (Skeeter and Jay), I completed the narrative response verbally during the second interview. Some individuals did not complete the narrative, but 31 participants did send a written narrative response. Including the people who completed the narrative during the interviews, 33 of the 39 participants completed this portion the study. Despite the variations in data collection, these slight differences did not dramatically or negatively affect the overall quality of the data.

**Analysis and Interpretation: Towards Queer Analyses**

In addition to data collected from participants, I kept extensive field notes throughout data collection, interpretation, and analysis. Field notes served several important functions in this study. Following Gambold (2010), field notes served as an initial way of communicating findings to others. Field notes also served as a guide as I retraced my steps through the data collection through the interpretation and analyses of the data (Gambold, 2010). Throughout the nearly forty single paced pages of field notes are the emergent findings, including the notions of precarity, possibility/impossibility, and silence.

In addition to using field notes as an initial data analysis tool, the analytical processes for this study are in keeping with Halberstam’s (1998) notion of queer methodologies used within *Female Masculinities*. My use of queer methodologies is an “[attempt] to remain supple enough to respond to the various locations of information…and [betray] a certain disloyalty to
conventional disciplinary methods” (p. 10). In other words, rather than using singular modes of data collection (e.g., interviews, archival research), queer methodologies use a variety of tools to understand a given topic. Like queer methodologies, the analyses of these data deployed multiple modes, or what I call queer analyses, which belies allegiance to a single kind of analysis. As such, I relied on portraiture (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Hoffmann Davis, 1997), elements of thematic analysis (Ayres, 2008), and thinking with theory (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012).

Each of these modes of analysis arrive out of different qualitative research traditions, research paradigms, and in some way, are in tension and fraught with contradiction. As my analysis will show, the tensions and contradictions in my analytical approach fit the data, which describe a variety of tensions facing trans* academics. Therefore, the deliberate choice of an analytical approach that rejects data reduction strategies, as thinking with theory does, while also using thematic analysis, which is about data reduction, allowed me to accomplish the goals of both reducing data into themes and proliferating and complicating findings. More specifically, I used thematic analysis (Ayres, 2008) to distill the institutional logics shaping trans* academics’ experiences, but then used thinking with theory (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012) to offer dense treatments of data in the chapter on thresholds. I used elements of portraiture to illuminate participants’ experiences in context, resisting a single story, and the intentional use of metaphor to blend aesthetics and empirical analyses (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Hoffmann Davis, 1997). Each of these modes of analysis allowed me to create a text that reflects the tensions that trans* academics experience, drawing out themes where needed, but also capturing and portraying the various actors in this story within their contexts.

Regarding thematic analysis (Ayres, 2008; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2013), I developed story matrices for each of the participants’ key stories. Then, I
“selectively stacked” the data within a single document related to the various institutional logics and corresponding to a particular research question (Miles et al., 2013, p. 108). Next, I developed mental maps (see appendix B) that sought to understand if there were differences by institutional type and academic appointment type. I also sought to ensure that there was representation of various participant positionalities in the development of the themes. Finally, I developed the findings described in chapter five related to the salient institutional logics.

With respect to portraiture methods, I used two key components of this analytical approach: context framing and constructing emergent themes (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Hoffmann Davis, 1997). Within portraiture methods, setting the context, including the physical, temporal, cultural, and historical aspects of context matters within research. The use of extensive description of the context appears later in this chapter, where I describe temporality, spatiality, and materiality. I used framing in chapter one when I articulated and foreshadowed the findings by drawing out more details about the experiences of Susan, Joy, Martina, Max, Nick, and Nathan. Portraiture methodology (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Hoffmann Davis, 1997) is evident in chapter five where I illustrate using emergent themes how genderism, an aspect of inequality regimes (Acker, 2006), manifested within participants’ experiences. Chapter seven follows a portraiture approach (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Hoffmann Davis, 1997) to understanding the ways that participants resisted and disrupted the various norms and logics associated with inequality regimes (Acker, 2006) and institutional logics (Thornton et al., 2012). Also, the notion of “repetitive refrains,” such as “being the only one,” influenced the thresholds I developed in chapter six (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Hoffmann Davis, 1997, p. 193). Additionally, my use of triangulation and the “generic outline” for describing themes throughout this study are both in keeping with portraiture (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Hoffmann Davis, 1997, p. 263).
Concerning thinking with theory, in chapter six, I used a variety of theories, including Black feminist thought and subaltern and decolonial ways of knowing and the extant literature to “plug in” to various pieces of data (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012, p. vii). In keeping with this approach, by using thresholds as metaphor, I sought to open up and proliferate knowledge rather than reduce data into neat, tidy themes (Jackson & Mazzei 2012). I did not develop a coherent, representative narrative of participants’ experiences; instead I sought to draw out the tensions between and amongst participants’ experiences.

In terms of specific analytic processes beyond the use of various research traditions I just described, all participants had an opportunity to member check their transcripts (Creswell, 2009). In some cases, participants substantially redacted portions (e.g., Joy) and then others further clarified their points (e.g., AJ, Hunter). Then I listened to the audio recordings from both interviews and further corrected the transcripts. Next I developed a matrix for each participant that identified their key stories related to each of the research questions and theoretical constructs of interview (template in Appendix B). After that, I began writing in an iterative process moving between field notes, the full interview transcripts, the key stories matrices, and the emerging findings chapters, deploying various theories within the conceptual framework along the way.

Trustworthiness and Credibility

To ensure accuracy, trustworthiness, and credibility of the data, I engaged triangulation and member checking (Creswell, 2009). I used rich, thick descriptions of the findings (Creswell, 2009). I used an analytic triangulation (ThếNguyễn, 2008) process by using peer debriefers in this study to enhance the trustworthiness and credibility of the conclusions derived from the data (Guba, 2004; Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2008; ThếNguyễn, 2008). A peer debriefer is a person who is external to the research project who can enhance the credibility of the study (Leech &
Onwuegbuzie, 2008). Two contributions that peer debriefers made to this study were to give informed feedback and to point to unexplored (or underexplored) aspects of the study (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2008). When selecting peer debriefers, I considered the role of trust and the protection of confidentiality (ThểNguyễn, 2008). I selected four trusted colleagues to serve in this role. Three were familiar with my work and with trans* studies, the field of higher education, and in one case, both. I also engaged a person who has many years of experience in higher education, but whose disciplinary training is in Law, Women’s Studies, and American Culture Studies. Each of these peer debriefers played an integral role is helping me to clarify interpretations and to challenge my assumptions about my findings (ThểNguyễn, 2008). Each peer debriefers prepared a memo that addressed questions including their assessment of the balance of theory, participant voice, and interpretation. Peer debriefers gave feedback about the aspects of the findings that were particularly successful (e.g., silence) or in need of additional clarification or explication (e.g., more on race). I then integrated the feedback I received into each of the three findings chapters.

An integral part of the analytical process for this study was sending the findings chapters to the participants. The participants responded to questions about whether the findings resonated with their experiences, the representativeness of the quotes selected, and the accuracy of my interpretations of their experiences. All participants affirmed that they felt fairly represented. Some participants (e.g., Gabe) offered suggestions to improve the framing of their experiences. In some cases, participants offered a depth of analysis in their reviews of my work, sending extensive emails addressing their thoughts related to this inquiry. For example, one participant (e.g., Tobey) sent more than two pages single-spaced offering a thorough, thoughtful, and deep analysis of how the work could be improved, as well as, articulating the strengths.
In addition to the member checking procedures described above, I also verified understanding directly in interviews. For example, in talking with David, a white male adjunct instructor who recently secured a tenure-track position in the social sciences, the following exchange occurred:

Erich: So some of it is about sort of the, sort of implicit assumption within your field about like what constitutes knowledge or how does knowledge get produced in some way. Is that a fair assessment?

David: Yes, yes.

In some cases my checks for understanding were in accordance with the participants’ comments, others required further clarification. Another example from David helps to illuminate:

Erich: Am I hearing you say you were not being tokenized? What I think I’m hearing you say is that your being trans and doing trans research was seen as a valuable contribution to the department. Is that right?

David: Uhm, a valuable contribution that is a token. [goes on to talk about tokenization]

Each of the procedures described above contribute to the trustworthiness and credibility of this study.

**Ethical Practices and Authenticity Criteria**

In addition to following all standards set forth by the institutional review board (IRB), I considered ethical practices as an ongoing negotiation between the participants and myself. Following the end of second interview, each participant and I negotiated the degree of confidentiality desired. While all interviews are confidential, I carefully negotiated the pseudonyms and confidentiality of participants’ names, institutions, and disciplines. I changed context or locations as desired by participants so as to protect their identities. However, some
participants did not desire this kind of confidentiality, for example, Ardel wanted to use their institution and discipline because it would identify them to others and they are situated in such a “privileged position” to do so. I stored interview files by pseudonym and removed identifying information from transcripts where applicable. Given the organizational approach used, participants are more identifiable in some cases because of the distinctiveness of their organizational settings. As such, I carefully worked with participants to negotiate acceptable levels of confidentiality and identifiability within this study.

My intention with this research was to co-construct knowledge with participants, and in doing so, I aspired to display an ethic of care with individuals’ stories. This ethic of care manifested in following up occasionally with participants about the status of my work. I sent emails to participants when I reviewed their transcripts and shared my reactions to the stories they told. Additionally, I followed Guba’s (2004) initial conditions for authenticity within qualitative research including fully informed consent, nurturing, caring, and trusting relationships, transparency in procedures, and researcher-participant collaboration. I also made the final dissertation available to all participants.

Limitations

Though there is much to be learned from this study and there are procedures that promote trustworthiness and credibility, there are also limitations. First, like most qualitative research, the aim of this study is not to make generalizable claims. Rather, I seek to deeply explore the specificities of the participants’ experiences and make recommendations based on the interview and narrative data to improve the working conditions for trans* academics. Therefore, the inability to generalize to all trans* academics’ experiences is a limitation associated the methods used in this study. Second, it is possible that the recruitment strategies yielded some bias. For
example, only participants who are somewhat public about their identities and subscribe to the listserv, are present on social media, and/or were connected with participants who forwarded my information on could be have know how to be participants. Thus my recruitment strategies potentially limited the inclusion of trans* individuals who are not as public about their identities.

Also, related to the issues of recruitment is the fact that to be eligible to participate in this study, a person had to be either recently or currently employed by a postsecondary institution. While this requirement of recent or current employment was necessary, engaging with employed or recently employed trans* academics means that the voices and experiences of trans people who do not possess the requisite educational/social/cultural capital to be present in the academy and/or those who do possess the credentials but were forced out of academe, are absent from this study. Finally, despite efforts to increase trustworthiness and credibility, my personal idiosyncrasies and biases invariably influenced this study. My influence in this study is not inherently bad, as some of my bias is that trans* people are knowledge holders and producers. However, my desire to represent trans* people in a positive light, while also drawing the contours of the negative aspects of participants’ experiences likely influenced my conclusions. I describe more of my positionality in the next section.

**Positionality**

Describing my positionality is important because of the influence I have within this study. Rather than simply list my social identities (e.g., genderqueer, white, queer, working class) using a “tick-box” approach which “downplay[s] the significance of researchers’ life experiences, biographies, and complex identities,” I instead describe the ways that my identities, worldviews, and beliefs influence this work (Hopkins, 2008, p. 387). I am both an insider and an outsider within this work. I am inside as both a trans person and a burgeoning scholar, but I am
outside of the experiences of established scholars, individuals from different fields or disciplines, and those whose identities are dissimilar to my own. While I certainly perceive there being enough room under the “trans tent” and within trans* communities for a wide range of gender identities, expressions, and theories of gender, trans* identities and communities are contested spaces and this study is a reflection of those tensions.

Throughout data collection, my use of field notes, reflective memos, and discussion of this work with my advisor and partner allowed me to track and trace the shifts (e.g., audit trail) that I experienced in my conceptualization of this study. Throughout my field notes, there is evidence of where my insider and outsider statuses emerged, but I kept my intention of this work, namely to do justice with participants’ stories and experiences, in mind throughout the process. An example of how my insider status emerged in participants’ use of within community short hand (e.g., saying “T” instead of “testosterone”).

One particularly salient aspect of my identity was my being white, which made me simultaneous inside/outside depending on the participant. My being white shaped my data collection in many ways, both positive and negative. For example, a positive trace of my race occurred when I was able to discuss white privilege and the ways that their race shaped participants’ experiences. In one interview, I gently “called in” a participant about why being white was not a salient identity. One negative way my whiteness shaped the data collection was my attempting to perform the role of “the good white person” in an interview with a Black participant. This phenomenon manifested most concretely in interrupting his storytelling while I attempted to prove my goodness.

In addition, the intention to co-construct new knowledge and develop sites for action alongside my participants was and is of the utmost importance to me. I sought to co-construct
knowledge through the use of a critical scholar/activist stance (Apple, 2010). There are nine articulated tasks for the critical scholar/activist. They are: a) to bear witness to negativity; b) to point to contradictions and spaces of possible action; c) to broaden what counts as research; d) to not discard ‘elite knowledge,’ but to reconstruct its form and content to serve progressive needs; e) to keep traditions of radical and progressive work alive; f) to critique radical and progressive traditions, in a supportive way, especially when these traditions do not adequately deal with current realities; g) to act in concert with the progressive social movements against hegemonic policies; h) to act as a deeply committed mentor demonstrating being both an excellent researcher and a committed member of society; and i) to use the privileges one has as a scholar and activist (Apple, 2010).

Not all of these tasks apply to this study. I briefly describe the tasks that are most applicable to this study and in which my positionality becomes more salient. First, I bear witness to negativity in this research, hearing the stories of participants and the difficulties they encountered. At times, I sat sobbing in grief when I read and re-read the negative experiences of my fellow trans* academics. I felt a profound sadness for a participant whose contract was not renewed, another’s grief about the bearing down of genderism on his experience, or the loss of a close friend, or rage when I heard of the trans-misogyny (the intensification of misogyny directed at trans women, Serano, 2007) that some faced. I felt disgust when I thought about the enactments of oppression, but especially racism. At other moments I laughed audibly, with a full belly chuckle at the jokes, throwing up of jazz hands, and use of humor by participants, as they cope with the negative events of their lives.

Through this study, I also sought to understand strategies of resistance and resilience of participants. By naming the resistance of participants, I also identified contradictions, spaces for
action, and developed implications intended to spur action. My commitment to action manifests most concretely in chapter eight. I also seek to use the privileges I have to amplify the voices of trans* academics and to share this work in multiple formats, thus making this knowledge accessible to wider audiences.

Finally, I intended to support the radical and progressive work that came before me and to offer supportive critiques when appropriate. This aspect of the scholar/activist stance is evident in the literature review, the theoretical framing of the thresholds in chapter six, and in the implications developed in chapter eight. Throughout this study, I have returned to the notion of coalitional politics, the interconnection of all oppression, and the imperative that justice advances through seeing trans* academics’ struggles as bound to the struggles of all minoritized scholars.

**Research Context**

In order to advance the queer analysis I previously described, I organized the research context around several strands (e.g., temporality, affect) of thinking developing within queer studies. In other words, I describe relevant aspects of the research context through key subject areas within queer studies including genealogies, sex, temporalities, kinship, affect, bodies (or materiality), and borders (spatiality). Most relevant to this study are time or temporality, emotion or affect, spatiality, and materiality, which I outline in more detail in the following paragraphs.

**Time and Space**

I conducted the pilot study to this dissertation during the summer of 2014. The following summer, 2015, was a mild summer in Michigan with cool summer breezes streaming through the window of my home office. I hardly had to put on the air conditioning. My midwest summer traditions of grilled tofu and ribs, fresh corn on the cob, and that impeccable roasted corn and black bean salsa graced my table. I sat on the porch sipping unsweetened iced tea in a long
purple dress and over sized sunglasses as I attempted to make sense of participants’ experiences. Throughout the summer I read books on qualitative methodologies as I attempted to sharpen my thinking in preparation for this dissertation study. I think of summer as always diminishing, as how Halberstam (2005) described queer time.

Queer time also “produce[s] alternative temporalities [when] […] futures can be imagined according to logics that lie outside of those paradigmatic markers of life experience” (p. 2). Queer and trans* lives have an imagined future that “lie[s] outside those paradigmatic markers” (Halbertstam, 2005, p. 2). So too does a dissertation study, such as this, have a particular kind of temporality.

I conducted my first interview with one of the continuing pilot study participants on May 21, 2015 and thus data collection began. The final interview for this study was on September 15, 2015. Phone, email, and Skype/Google Hangout each created ways for me to connect with participants and to learn about their experiences. While many outside the academy think that summers for academics are a lazy time, I wrote, read, and/or connected with participants for nearly 10 hours every day. I conducted all of the interviews with the exception of one in my home office in Lansing, Michigan (I conducted one interview at the College of Education at Michigan State University). Though participants were scattered throughout the U.S. across four time zones, the advent of modern technology made it possible for us to connect. We were never physically in the same space together, and in some cases, not even in the same time period, for example, calling the west coast at noon in Michigan, and it is morning still there. In some cases, I was at the end of a long day and others were just getting home from work. I also spoke to one participate late at night; starting our two interviews at 9 pm Eastern Standard Time. Despite the
physical distance and differences in time zones, I held space for participants to share in the intimacy of the interview, via phone or through computer mediated video calls.

One of the challenges associated with conducting interviews via phone, perhaps more so than via video calls, is the difficulty of not having body language to read. The following exchange highlights how I negotiated this challenge with participants.

Erich: Okay, but fairly sizable departments, like with 12 folks, fulltime folks. Okay. So that is helpful. So let’s talk a little bit about …

Adam: Yeah.

Erich: … you think – I’m sorry, were going to add something?

Adam: Oh, no, no, that’s it.

Erich: It is very hard on the phone to know if someone is adding something, so if there are times when I am bulldozing you just chime in, because it is hard for me to read [you, your body language] if I can’t see you.

Adam: Oh, I absolutely understand. And clearly I’m pretty chatty, so don’t worry, I’ll just jump in.

Erich: Yes, please do. [interview continues]

Despite the challenges associated with not being physically present with one another, I attempted, though sometimes failed, to avoid interrupting participants. Simultaneously, I was examining my own internalized dominance as it manifests in my speech patterns, especially in interrupting. Interviewing gave me a chance to listen, though at times I could have listened better.

The summer of 2015 was a time marked by several key events in the social history of the United States. On June 26, 2015, the U.S. Supreme Court declared same-sex marriage legal.
Much to the delight of those interested in creating some paradigmatic markers of life experience (Halberstam, 2005; e.g., marriage), same-sex couples could now get married. To those, myself included, who are less attached to those paradigmatic markers, there was a palpable tension between people who had critiques of marriage and those who now found “liberation” or “equality” in the Supreme Court decision. The problematic nature of marriage equality as a goal for LGBTQ+ communities emerged across many interviews as a divisive political issue that ultimately left trans* people behind, while advancing the rights of cisgender lesbian and gay monogamous couples. Such tensions remain unresolved.

The summer of 2015 was also a summer of continued unrest in the face of police violence directed so vociferously, yet poignantly, at Black communities, particularly Black men. The rallying cry of #BlackLivesMatter was heard (at least by some) at the mass murder in a Black church in Charleston, South Carolina in June, the police-facilitated death of Sandra Bland in July, the murder of Samuel Dubose at the University of Cincinnati in July, and the disruption of the presidential candidate Bernie Sanders’ rally in Seattle in August (Eligon, 2015). The juxtaposition of the same-sex marriage ruling and the crisis of police brutality are important tensions to hold because of the way that they shaped participants’ and my temporal experiences during the summer of 2015. In particular, these events are deeply entwined as evidence of so-called progress for (white) LGBTQ people, but also regression and retrenchment of human dignity and survival of Black people and communities.

**Materiality and Intimacy**

Engaging in research with trans* people involves their bodies, voices, and multiple identities, among other aspects of their experiences. While neither the participants nor I dealt with each other’s bodies in person, gender, theirs and mine, was/is projected onto voices, bodies,
and behaviors. Additionally, some of the participants in this study talked explicitly on record about their sexuality. One participant talked about never having had sex with any one other than their spouse, another talked about a woman she recently started dating, and still another recalling hooking up with people from bars and the politics of disclosing one’s trans* status. Some situated their sexuality outside of the official record of the interview—for example—stating their anticipation about attending a sex-positive camp and wondering if I had heard of that event. I had. I interpret these utterances as indicators of rapport with participants, deriving at least in part from on insider status as a queer and trans* person. They also demonstrate that the material body is present even in virtual and audio-only spaces.

I invited participants into my home office. For every interview, I intentionally wore a polo shirt, preferably not one with wild patterns because of how they appear on Skype. I tried to look not overly casual, nor too formal, but offering some level of “professionalism” (a fraught concept with which I continue to struggle). I wanted participants to know I was serious, but not too serious. I sat in my green rocking chair where I do much of my reading. In the background were mental maps of emerging findings and the fox and horse pencil drawings that hangs on the wall to my right.

Another layer of intimacy relates to the traces of partners, pets, children, and the physical spaces where participants sat for our interviews. In many of the audio recordings, one can hear my dogs, Rico and Cinnamon barking, at times loudly and disruptively. Some participants, like Seth, had their cat walked across the Skype call and the gentle purring of their cat can be heard in the background of the audio recording. There are also traces of partners and families in the transcripts and audio recordings, a timer going off at Will’s house as it was near to dinnertime, or Timothy saying goodbye to his partner when she left the house. Ardel’s son lost his helicopter,
named Harold, during our second interview and throughout that interview, like a multitasking academic, Ardel is preparing lunch, searching for Harold, talking to me, and occasionally pausing our conversation to talk to their son. Each of these traces of their more full lives mean that I was invited into the fabric and materiality of their everyday life through the interviews. Each of these everyday noises and occurrences created a kind of intimacy in the interviews, even if we were divided through time and space.

Complicated Visibility: Uneven Material Mattering

As a participant, Jackson, a white trans man and graduate instructor stated, “2015 was a complicated year for trans people.” I could not agree more. During the course of summer 2015 many events in popular media affecting the lives of transgender people occurred. Caitlyn Jenner graced the cover of Vanity Fair and won the Arthur Ashe Courage Award at the ESPYS. Orange is the New Black continued to be a monumental success, creating visibility around queer sexualities and trans* lives (setting aside the rather neutral stance the show takes to racism and incarceration). The final few episodes of the third season depicted severe anti-trans violence that made my and some participants’ stomachs turn, it was “rough” as one individual described it. Netflix also launched a show called Sense8 in the summer of 2015 in which one of the main characters is a trans woman. Transparent won a Golden Globe for best television series, and Jeffrey Tambor won a Golden Globe and Emmy for Best Actor for his role in the show. Nonetheless, I am reminded that Jenner’s and Tambor’s awards were made possible by trans* activists who may never get such prestigious awards, and whose names may never be said to such audiences.

While all this positive media attention and increased visibility about trans* people and trans women in particular continued throughout the summer, there were also several murders of
trans* women of color, including one in nearby Detroit, Amber Monroe. Amber was the 12th trans woman to be murdered in the United States in 2015. The hashtag #SayHerName continued to be a driving force to specify the violence facing Black cisgender and trans women, lost to senseless state violence. Amber’s murder struck me in the gut; I began crying immediately once I received the news. While I had only met her once, I cannot imagine the pain those who were close to her felt. The unspeakable violence facing trans lives at the intersection of racist, classist, and genderist realities matters to this study. It matters because there are lives cut short, lives made impossible to even participate in a study such as this.

I cannot help but be angry, frustrated, and filled with sorrow about the many events and injustices that occurred in 2015. A participant, Jackson, articulated one of the challenging realities that increased trans* visibility brought about, namely that as celebrity trans folks grace the covers of fashion magazines, there are trans* people and communities simultaneously ravaged by violence. While it is important that there be recognition of the beauty of trans* communities, especially for Black trans women who are rarely seen as possessing beauty, there can be a marginalizing effect for trans* people who can never, and may never, be seen as beautiful (e.g., older, fat trans* people). As Jackson stated, increased visibility meant that there was an “odd effect of making people feel really comfortable talking about stuff [e.g., transgender people and issues] that they before, would never speak on.” As an insider, I felt deep resonance with his comments. Similarly, Tobey, a white trans man and adjunct instructor had trouble articulating exactly what was going on for him around all this visibility. I wondered aloud to Tobey that if Caitlyn Jenner’s “coming out,” created a context wherein the general public now seem to understand trans issues. He affirmed that idea.
While some see visibility as always a positive, I do not fully agree. This increased visibility of trans* lives has actually increased the presence of microaggressions in my life. These shifts in visibility also means that there are now strangers who take it upon them selves to educate me about Caitlyn Jenner’s transition, as if I was unfamiliar with the notion of gender transition. Others elide my own trans history, a history felt deep within my bones, bones that grew after having taken testosterone. My memories of girlhood, dykehood, and being awoken by muscle cramps in my legs during the early years of taking testosterone are often discounted. Invisible is my history of having gained a whole shoe size or that I lost my hair to my own gender transition (cursed XX chromosomes). My history of injecting a shot of hormones into my leg every two weeks for more than a decade was, and is, largely invisible. Even my history and current experience of having a fluid gender presentation is erased by both individuals in and out of the trans* community, partially because of my “classically masculine appearance,” secondary sex characteristics, and presumption that any feminine gender expressions I make are because of my ascribed sexual orientation (heterogenderism, Nicolazzo, 2015). Because transgender was, and continues to be synonymous with trans misogynistic tropes of the “man in a dress” or “chicks with dicks” iconography, trans people like me remain largely invisible. Though, the man in the dress is often evoked as a subject of scorn and ridicule, the butt of a joke. Being a joke is not the kind of visibility that is especially helpful. Other trans* people who medically transitioned in the same direction I did, sometimes called female-to-male or FTM, remain largely invisible, yet somewhat represented within the academy. Non-binary trans people continue to be invisible and impossible. But I am increasingly questioning what political goals visibility serves trans* communities. Visibility does not seem to be changing the epidemic of violence against
trans women, nor does it seem to be improving the lived experiences of the vast majority of trans* people.

As the writing of this dissertation continued through the fall, November 20, 2015, often the saddest day of the year for me, as it is the annual memorial of Trans Day of Remembrance, came as I was writing the findings from this study. I joined a crowd of students and community members for the annual memorial at Michigan State’s campus. I brought packets of tissues and let myself cry openly as I looked at the pictures of each of the trans women of color who lost her life in the last year in the eye, affirming her humanity. My anger and rage about this continued violence propels me to do this work. I am guided by the life and field framing question (developed in community with members of the T* Circle): What about higher education institutions would need to change so that trans* women of color could have a sense of belonging and boundless possibility within the academy? My answer is “so much would need to change.”

Turning now to think about study participants, much would also need to change so that trans* academics could be afforded safer passage in the academy as we work together to make possibilities for those not currently well-represented in academe, primarily trans women of color and non-binary individuals.

Participants

These biographies draw primarily on the interest survey data participants provided, with some details informed by the interviews. My intention in providing these biographies is not to fix or stabilize any one participant’s identity, but rather to provide a snapshot of where and how the participant shared their identity with me during the time of data collection, the summer of 2015. In order to provide some uniformity, I formatted each of the biographies similarly, though each participant is certainly unique, and some desired unique formats for their biographies. All
participants currently or recently worked at a U.S. institution of higher education. I do note those participants who have a disability, but do not indicate those who did not have a disability, likewise with intersex and non-intersex individuals. I used an open-ended survey questions to elicit this information from participants, who were then able to name their identities in their own words.

In the interest of confidentiality, I do not provide the specific disciplines (I used clusters like sciences, social sciences, and the humanities), unless participants felt comfortable doing so. I use pseudonyms only for those participants who desired one. Some participants elected to use their real names. A chart that aggregates each of the key demographic variables in this study appears at the end of the biographies.

**Participant Biographies**

**Adam** (he, him, his or they, them, their) is a 37-year-old white transmasculine, genderqueer person with a transmasculine gender presentation and a queer sexual orientation. Adam currently works in tenure-track faculty position at a community college in the west. Previously, he had tenure at another community college in the west, where they worked for nine years. They have a master’s degree in the social sciences.

**AJ** (no pronouns) is a 40-year-old white trans and genderqueer person whose gender expression is masculine of center and more queer. AJ identifies as queer. AJ currently serves as a tenure-track assistant professor at a women’s liberal arts college and has a PhD in the social sciences. AJ served in a non-tenure-track role at the same institution prior to the position being converted to a tenure-track line. AJ is married to a woman; they have two children.

**Ardel** (they, them, their) is a 51-year-old white genderqueer person with genderqueer gender expression. Ardel described their sexual orientation as queer. They are a tenured faculty
member and the chair of LGBTQ Studies at the City College of San Francisco. Ardel served in this same role for 10 years and previously worked at another community college in a similar role in the south. Ardel has a PhD in the humanities. They are a parent.

Arun (he, him, his) is a 30-year-old white and Middle Eastern male with a faggy masculinity that is distinctly queer. Arun identifies as queer and has a disability. He previously served in a number of academic positions in the west, including as a visiting assistant professor at a small liberal arts college for one year and as a post-doctoral fellow for the last year. At the start of 2015-2016 academic year, he started as an assistant professor, also in the west. Arun has a PhD in the social sciences.

Benjamin (he, him, his) is a 30-year-old white male, who is FTM. He does not use trans to describe his gender identity; trans describes what kind of man he is. Benjamin has a masculine gender expression and described his sexual orientation as gay. He served for the last two years in a clinical faculty role that involves instruction and outreach at a large public research university in the midwest. Benjamin has a doctorate in medicine.

Bruce (he, him, his) is a 53-year-old European American, female-to-male (FTM) spectrum, masculine presenting trans person who identifies as gay or asexual. Bruce worked for the last two years as an tenure-track assistant professor at a public mid-sized research university in the south. Bruce has a PhD in the social sciences.

Carey (he, him, his or they, them, their) is a 33-year-old white trans male with a moderately effeminate gender expression and queer sexual orientation. He served as an adjunct instructor and as a college administrator for the last three years at a private research university in the east. Carey has a PhD in the social sciences, but described having a trans-disciplinary approach to his scholarly and administrative practice.
Carter (they, them, theirs) is a 60-year-old white trans-male with a masculine androgynous gender presentation. They described their sexual orientation as pansexual. Carter is a tenured associate professor in the social sciences and worked for the last 18 years at a large, public research university in the midwest. They are also a parent.

Cassidy (she, her, hers) is a 67-year-old Native American female who has a gender expression that is feminine. She identified her sexual orientation as bisexual. Cassidy serves as an adjunct instructor at a large public research university in the west and has done so for the last three years. Cassidy has a PhD in the humanities.

Connor (he, him, his) is a 37-year-old white FTM trans*man with a masculine gender presentation who identifies as queer. Jake currently serves as a post-doctoral researcher at a large, public university in the west. Previously, Jake served as an instructor while completing his graduate degree in the midwest. He holds a PhD in the social sciences.

David (he, him, his) is a 32-year-old white male/FTM trans person. He has a masculine gender presentation and identifies his sexual orientation as queer. David served as an adjunct instructor for three years at a large, public research university in the east. He recently secured a tenure-track position at a medium size, regional comprehensive university in the east. David has a PhD in the social sciences.

Gabe (he, him, his) is a 36-year-old white male whose gender expression is masculine. Gabe identifies as queer. He currently serves as a tenure-track assistant professor at a large public comprehensive university in the midwest. Previously Gabe served in a number of adjunct teaching positions in the west and east before obtaining a tenure-track position in the midwest. During the two years that Gabe served as an adjunct he had to live away from his wife. Gabe has a PhD in the humanities.
**Hunter** (he, him, his) is a 33-year-old white trans person whose gender expression is masculine. Hunter identifies as queer. He served as a non-tenure-track instructor at a large private research university in the midwest for the last five years. At the start of 2015-2016 academic year, he will be a visiting assistant professor at a small liberal arts college in the east. Hunter has a PhD in the humanities.

**Isaac** (he, him, his) is a 34-year-old white male with a non-stereotypical masculine presentation that is more metrosexual. He described his sexual orientation as pansexual. Most recently, he worked as a post-doctoral scholar in a research oriented position at a large public research university in the midwest. Prior to that, Isaac served as a graduate student instructor at a large public research university in the south for three years. Isaac has a PhD in the social sciences.

**Jackson** (he, him, his) is a 28-year-old white southern male with a masculine gender presentation who identifies as heterosexually queer. Jackson worked for the last three years as an instructor at a large, public research university in the midwest. Jackson is a PhD candidate in the social sciences and holds a master’s in the same field.

**Jasper** (he, him, his) is a 42-year-old white trans man with a masculine gender presentation. He described his sexual orientation as gay. Jasper is a university administrator, PhD candidate, and graduate student instructor at a large public research university in the west. He teaches summer courses and has done so for the last 7 years. He holds a master’s degree in the social sciences.

**Jay** (she, her, hers) is a 39-year-old white genderqueer person with a masculine/androgynous gender expression. She identifies her sexual orientation as queer. Jay identifies as a person with a disability. She worked for the last year in a tenure-track position at a
large private research university in the east. She has a PhD in the social sciences and another advanced degree. Jay is also a parent.

**Jesse** (they, them, theirs) is a 36-year-old white, trans and queer person with a masculine gender presentation. Jesse simultaneously worked in several adjunct positions in the midwest over the last few years, including working for a small liberal arts college for one year, a large two-year community college for five years, and a large proprietary research university for one year. Jesse is also a PhD candidate in the social sciences at a large public research university in the midwest, where they also teach as a graduate assistant. Jesse has a master’s degree in the humanities. They are a parent to three children.

**Joy** (she, her, hers) is a 53-year-old white, male-to-female transsexual with a feminine gender presentation who described her sexual orientation as lesbian, though, Joy felt that sexual orientations do not map well onto her experience. Joy has a disability. She is a tenured full professor and worked for the 11 years at a private research university in the east and has a PhD in the humanities. Joy is a committed trans activist with numerous publication regarding trans issues. She is also a parent to three children.

**Justin** (he, him, his) is a 49-year-old white FTM with a male gender expression. He identifies his sexual orientation as gay. He taught as an adjunct for the last three years at a private specialized mission institution in the west. Justin has a doctorate in ministry and is currently a PhD candidate in the humanities.

**Karen** (she, her hers) is 42-year-old European American transgender woman with a femme gender presentation. She described her sexual orientation as lesbian. Karen is a tenured associate professor at a private liberal arts college in the west. She worked at current institution for the last 12 years. Karen has a PhD in the sciences.
Kelly (she, her, hers) is a 43-year-old white tranny who presents an androgynous/masculine gender and identified her sexual orientation as queer. Kelly holds a Master of Library and Information Science with an archival studies specialization and works as a non-tenure archivist at a large public research university in the west.

Malcolm (he, him, his) is a 53-year-old Caucasian man with a reserved, non-hegemonic masculinity. He described his sexual orientation as gay. Malcolm taught for the last five years as a non-tenure-track instructor in the humanities in the southwest. Malcolm’s appointment is an annual contract that carries a heavy teaching load. He has a PhD in the communication studies.

Martina (she, her, hers) is 56-year-old, Latina female with a feminine gender presentation who described her sexual orientation as lesbian. Martina worked for the last 16 years at a private mid-sized comprehensive liberal arts university in the west and is a tenured full professor and has a PhD in the sciences. Martina is a parent to two children.

Mary (she, her, hers) is a 48-year-old white heterosexual female who has a gender expression she described as feminine with some tomboy inclinations. Mary is an associate professor at a large public research university in the west where she worked for the last 13 years. Mary has a PhD in a science field.

Max (he, him, his) is a 32-year-old Black man who identifies as transgender and FTM. Max described his sexual orientation as gay and articulated a queer politics both in relation to himself and his view of issues related to sexuality. Max worked for the last four years as a tenured librarian at a community college in the midwest. He has a master’s degree in the social sciences.

Librarians have academic and non-academic appointments and a tenure system that requires research and service, but generally fewer instructional responsibilities. I include librarians in a study of faculty and academics because they navigate tenure processes and have academic appointments.
Mike (he, him, his) is a 48-year-old white queer (in terms of gender) trans person who has a masculine gender presentation and identifies his sexual orientation as queer. Mike is an immigrant and worked for the last 16 years as a tenured librarian at medium sized public commuter college in the east. Mike has a master’s degree in the social sciences.

Nathan (he, him, his or ze, zir, zim) is a 50-year-old white, intersex trans man with an androgynous masculine presentation with a “flamboyant gestural repertoire.” Nathan described his sexual orientation as pansexual and has a disability. Nathan is a tenured associate professor and worked for the last 15 years at a large public research university in the midwest and has a PhD in the social sciences and another advanced degree. He is also a parent.

Nick (he, him, his and she, her hers) is a 29-year-old brown Native American person with a mixed raced identity who identifies as a nonbinary/gender nonconforming man. Nick described her gender presentation as masculine and feminine. He currently serves in a visiting faculty role at a large public research university in the midwest. Nick has a master’s degree in the social sciences.

Rowan (no pronouns) is a 47-year-old white gender non-conforming Jewish person with an androgynous leaning masculine gender presentation. Rowan identified as queer. Rowan worked for the last 12 years at two large, public research universities in the midwest as a non-tenure-track instructor. Rowan has a PhD in the social sciences and mathematical sciences.

Seth (they, them, their) is a 32-year-old white trans* and genderqueer person with a soft masculine, sometimes feminine gender expression. Seth sometimes describes their gender identity as glitter wonderful. Seth identifies as queer. They currently serves as a post-doctoral fellow at large private research university in the south. Seth has a PhD in the social sciences.
Skeeter, Ph.D, (a)pronouned) holds a doctorate in Education and is an Associate, tenured professor at large public research university in the west. A 45-year-old Jewish trans* person with a masculine, metro(sexual) gender presentation, Skeeter identifies as pansexual and sapiosexual (a neologism that indicates that intelligence is the most sexually attractive feature). Skeeter has taught at two other research universities, primarily in the midwest during the last 10 years.

Stanley (he, him, his) is a 40-year-old white FTM/genderqueer person with a masculine gender presentation. Stanley described his sexual orientation as queer. He previously worked as tenure-track faculty where tenure was not awarded. Stanley most recently was a PhD student and graduate student instructor at a large public research university in the midwest. Stanley also previously served as an adjunct instructor at the institution where he is pursing his doctorate.

Susan (she, her, hers) is a 54-year-old white settler transsexual woman with an androgynous/feminine gender expression. She identifies her sexual orientation as lesbian. Currently, she serves as a tenured associate professor and administrator for a large, public research university in the southwest and has done so for the last five years. Susan previously served as an associate professor at a large research university in the midwest and as a visiting professor at other institutions within and beyond the U.S. She has a PhD in the humanities.

Susan King (he or she) is a 59-year-old African American transgender person with a part-time feminine male gender presentation who was moving towards a full time female/feminine gender presentation. Susan identifies as bisexual. She recently retired and served as an adjunct instructor at a specialized mission liberal arts college in the south for more than 30 years. Susan K. has a master’s degree in the social sciences. She is a parent to two children.
**Timothy** (he, him, his) is a 51-year-old white trans* FTM with a pretty traditionally masculine gender presentation. He identifies his sexual orientation as mostly straight. Timothy teaches a heavy teaching load as an adjunct instructor at a regional comprehensive university in the west. He served in his adjunct role for the last seven years and previously served in a more permanent role in other regions of the US. Timothy has a PhD in the humanities.

**Tobey** (he, him, his) is a 30-year-old white transman/transmasculine with a fey masculine gender expression (not super masculine). He described his sexual orientation as queer. Tobey worked for the last three years in an administrative role and served as an adjunct instructor. He works at a medium size public, regional comprehensive university in the east. Tobey has a PhD in an interdisciplinary field.

**Westley** (he, him, his) is a 32-year-old white trans boy with a feminine gender presentation. He identifies his sexual orientation as queer. He taught as an adjunct instructor at two community colleges in the west. One college is small and largely enrolls students part-time, the other is medium with full and part time enrollment. Westley is also completing a PhD at a large public research university in the west in the humanities. He holds a master’s degree in the humanities.

**Will** (he, him, his) is a 42-year-old white man with a masculine gender expression. Will described his sexual orientation as straight. He served for the last seven years as adjunct instructor and university staff member at a large public research university in the midwest. Will is a parent to two children and described his family as transracial/tranethnic.
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<th></th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender Identities</th>
<th>Gender Expressions</th>
<th>Sexual Orientations</th>
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Table 3.1 Participant chart
Table 3.1 (cont’d)

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Table 3.1 Participant chart

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I defined the transformative research paradigm. I described the overall methodology, methods, and modes of analysis of this study. I also addressed the analytical procedures, ethical considerations, and creditability and trustworthiness. Through my discussion of the critical scholar/activist stance, I described my positionality. Using queer analytical concepts, I also painted a portrait of the research context. I concluded this section by describing the participants in this study.

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<sup>10</sup> Policies of participants’ current institution.
<sup>11</sup> Policies of participants’ current institution.
Chapter 4: Microfoundations of Trans* Academics’ Experiences:

“A Sense of Paranoia and Hypersensitivity”

Living as we did – on the edge – we developed a particular way of seeing reality. We looked both from the outside in and from the inside out. We focused our attention on the center as well as the margin. We understood both.
–bell hooks (1984, p. xvi)

Systems of domination and subordination require oppressed individuals to develop new ways of seeing as hooks (1984) and Hill Collins (2000) previously described. Part of the view of outsiders within (Hill Collins, 2000) and margin/center frameworks (hooks, 2000; Spivak, 1993) more broadly is the adverse affects facing oppression has on individuals and groups (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012). In speaking about not having had her recent grant application funded, Joy, articulated an underlying principle that many minoritized academics likely experience (e.g., Bulhan, 2004; Fanon, 2005; Stanley, 2006), she said, “Structural oppression creates this kind of general sense of paranoia and hypersensitivity.” The sense of paranoia and hypersensitivity is but one effect of living under a system of oppression. Joy asserted,

Part of the problem is if you’re a minority, you can’t actually be sure that this or that person is oppressing you. […] The truth is most people who submitted proposals weren’t accepted and none of them were trans. I submit a lot of things that are not accepted, so there is no guarantee that [being trans was the reason for not receiving the grant] is true…

Joy highlights a key tension that trans academics navigate alongside those who are minoritized for reasons other than gender (e.g., race) or who face multiple forms of subordination. Joy has a sense of “paranoia and hypersensitivity.” For Joy there is a nagging question that lingers in the notification of the grant proposal: was this because I am trans? While Joy may be experiencing
gender-based oppression, it is difficult to ascertain when, if, and how this oppression affects her professional life (e.g., not having a grant funded).

Building on this micro-incident of not having a grant funded, in this chapter, I highlight how within-organization events and conditions shape trans academic experiences. In particular, I focus on how small, everyday occurrences create the sense of “paranoia and hypersensitivity” that Joy felt. As such, I respond to the following research question: How do within-organization processes (or microfoundations or inequality regimes) shape trans academics’ experiences? The answers to this question arrive out of my thematic analysis of situations like the one that Joy described. In particular, I examined participants transcripts for evidence of the ways having a minoritized identity or multiple minoritized identities and corresponding systems of structural oppression created sensitivity and awareness amongst participants of when and how oppression presses, molds, and created contours within participants’ life experiences. In short, I looked for the impressions, marks, and traces of genderism and other systems of oppression in the lives of participants.

I am also drawing on two aspects of the theoretical framework: inequality regimes (Acker, 2005) and microfoundations (Powell & Colyvas, 2008; Thornton et al., 2012). Briefly, inequality regimes are within organizational processes that contribute to and exacerbate social inequalities (Acker, 2005). Microfoundations are “institutional forces [that] shape individual interests and desires, framing the possibilities for action and influencing whether behaviors results in persistence or change” (Powell & Colyvas, 2008 p. 277). These micro, everyday organizational processes manifested most concretely in participants’ experiences with genderism and other systems of oppression. Within microfoundations there are a variety of kinds of “building blocks” (Powell & Colyvas, 2008, p. 278), of which sensemaking is one (Weick,
1995). Sensemaking is the micro-process of how individuals decide to take action based on the meaning derived from organizational action (Weick, 1995). The notion of sensemaking was especially evident in participants’ description of exercising agency over identity disclosure, which I describe in more detail later.

In this chapter, I argue that there is no singular trans experience, nor a singular academic experience, and therefore there is no singular trans* academic experience. Instead of a singular trans academic experience, there are some partially shared contours of experiences because trans* academics work within institutions marked by persistent genderism (Bilodeau, 2009). Genderism emerges through small, everyday processes, much the ways racism, sexism, classism, ableism, heterosexism manifest (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012). Genderism, like the other aforementioned systems of oppression, is endemic to higher education (Nicolazzo, 2015). Bilodeau (2009) articulated four features of genderism, two of which are relevant to this chapter, namely, forced social labeling of genders and social accountability for adhering to binary gender norms (Bilodeau, 2009).

In this analysis, I center genderism, but highlight the ways that other systems of oppression manifested in participants’ experiences. While genderism shapes all participants’ experiences, albeit to different degrees and in different ways, in this chapter, I seek to highlight the various ways that small organizational processes are enactments of genderism, amongst other systems of oppression. I also highlight how genderism and other systems of subordination create the need for minoritized scholars to perform additional labor. How participants ultimately made sense of their experiences also varied. As Tobey, a white trans masculine administrator and adjunct professor stated in response to my question about whether he is being treated differently than cisgender (non-trans) colleagues, he said, “because I’m constantly educating people about
my [gender] identity, I think I am treated differently because that’s not something everybody has to do.” Part of the consequence that Tobey faced in having to perform this additional labor was not being rewarded for it. At the time of our interviews, Tobey was recently notified that his contract would not be renewed; at least in part stemming from the way his identity was taken up in the workplace. While trans* academics perform certain kinds of “extra” labor resulting from genderism, so too do other minoritized scholars, albeit about different issues (e.g., dispelling myths about competency deriving from white supremacy and anti-Black racism). The extra labor minoritized scholars, in this case trans* academics, perform is often in service of attempts to retain one’s dignity, humanity, and ability to feel whole (see Croom & Patton, 2012; Ford, 2012; Stanley, 2006).

In the case of genderism, AJ, a tenure-track assistant professor at a private women’s liberal arts college said, “That gender binary system is always there. It’s always something to navigate around… [the gender binary has a] bearing effect, it’s not a great effect, not a positive experience most of the time.” AJ is talking about how genderism shapes every aspect of the institution, “it affects the way we structure spaces like restrooms and changing facilities. […] It affects everything.” AJ went on to describe how this particular system of oppression has a cumulative effect. AJ, in speaking about the efforts at the institution to support trans faculty and students said,

we’re just constantly hitting that wall. And I can’t imagine any workplace where everybody is on board with this stuff [disrupting the gender binary] and it’s easy for trans scholars. I just don’t think we’re there yet in our society, especially with people who are outside of the binary, like me, in my identity.
In “hitting that wall,” AJ is describing the cumulative effect of attempting to loosen the grip that genderism has on one particular academic institution. Ahmed (2006) previously described how diversity workers hit the wall in their attempts to unsettle racism within higher education organizations. The wall and hitting the wall (Ahmed, 2012) are an important metaphors for understanding the limits placed on minoritized bodies because of the systems of oppression endemic to higher education. Through these everyday practices and processes that instantiate genderism, AJ alludes to a tension. There is a tension between AJ’s push for change, yet, there is an inability to enact change because of the wall. The wall prevents movement beyond a certain point and creates a frustration or internally felt tension.

Like AJ, other participants also described the tension that operating within a genderist environment brought to bear on their experiences in academe. In particular, there are three primary ways that genderism manifested in participants’ experiences: misgendering, hyper-visibility and invisibility, and identity disclosure. First, I describe processes of misgendering, both interpersonally and digitally. Then I describe the ways genderism and racism made certain identities hyper-visible and others invisible. My discussion of visibility then develops into an articulation of the various ways that trans academics exercised agency (or could not) around identity disclosure. Each of these key tensions within trans* academics experiences leads me to conclude that trans academics, like many minoritized scholars are “professionally other.”

In this chapter, I am using tension in two ways, first, in the sense that tension refers to mental or emotional strain. Second, tension refers to being stretched tight, tautness. As I describe each of the tensions participants experiences, I also enumerate the mental and emotional consequences, but also the ways in which bodies and lived experiences are stretched tight by systems of oppression.
**Misgendering: Interpersonally and Digitally**

When Bilodeau (2009) described genderism, one of the key features was the forced social labeling into a binary gender system. One aspect of forced social labeling means that all bodies are read, and assigned a gender pronoun, either he or she. Here I describe the experiences of Rowan, Westley, Ardel, Connor, and Mary who all faced difficulties in getting others to use the correct pronouns. I call this interpersonal misgendering. Gender is also conferred through online systems (e.g., course management software), as I will highlight with Jackson’s and Stanley’s experiences. I call this digital misgendering. While the source of misgendering may be different, the effects on participants were roughly equivalent.

While there is much resonance amongst some participants with others’ difficulties with their pronouns, some participants in this study did not have these issues, or had individuals advocate on their behalf regarding pronouns. I highlight Jackson, Adam, and Cassidy as examples of the ways that some participants were properly gendered through the aid of others.

Before I describe the various ways that Rowan, Westley, Ardel, Connor, and Mary each experienced interpersonal misgendering, I want to note that it is important to temper these findings by the experiences of racial privilege that Rowan, Westley, Ardel, Connor, and Mary each experience. While the sting of misgendering is painful, each of these participants also have privileged racial identities that make them more at home in the academy than scholars of color. For example, Susan King, Martina, Max, Nick, Arun, and Cassidy each navigated genderism and racism (and in some cases transmisogyny also). Because of the ways systems of oppression and privilege intersect and overlap (Hill Collins, 2000; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012), it is important to remember that white trans* academics navigate a majoritized racial identity and minoritized gender, while trans academics of color navigate minoritized racial and gender identities.
Therefore, I urge caution in interpretations of misgendering, which while terrible, are in some cases mitigated by privilege as well.

Rowan is a full-time non tenure-track lecturer in statistics at a research university in the midwest. Rowan is a non-binary, gender non-conforming white person with an androgynous gender expression that tends towards masculine. As a person who “carries extra weight” Rowan described having physical features that “read feminine.” As a result, Rowan often experiences forced social labeling as a woman. Rowan said, “I sometimes feel invisible because of the use of default pronouns [for me] like she or when I get Mrs. Moore. […] Don’t put any pronoun there. Use doctor. That is my title.” Rowan’s desire to not have individuals use any pronouns when referring Rowan is often unrealized. In reviewing course evaluations, Rowan noted that all the students used “Dr. Moore, she was…” Rowan concluded, “it’s just how I am read.” The small action of using pronouns on a course evaluation becomes a much more high stakes event for Rowan when misgendering occurs. This misgendering becomes part of Rowan’s employment record and Rowan must read and re-read, and have others read, the evaluations that misgender Rowan. Seemingly small maneuvers, like pronouns in course evaluations, have much larger effects for Rowan and other participants in this study. Course evaluations are one example of how interpersonal misgendering can also turn into digital misgendering, a concept, I explore more later.

Despite Rowan’s frustration about other’s forcibly assigning pronouns, it never seemed appropriate to say that, “no pronouns work for me” on the first day of class. While no one ever explicitly forbid stating one’s pronouns on the first day of class, the social consequences of doing so operated in the background for Rowan. There is a wall that prevents Rowan from announcing pronouns on the first day of class.
Rowan concluded that, “it doesn’t, for me, seem appropriate in [my] classroom to do that [to specify pronouns]. While Rowan thought about “putting in my office something like my preferred pronouns don’t exist, just so that people thought about it.” “How would the students take that?” was a concern for Rowan. Without anyone ever uttering a word, Rowan is well aware of, and anticipating, the potential social consequences that disrupting the gender binary by saying “no pronouns” might entail. In light of a market and corporation institutional logic (described in chapter five), good course evaluations matter a great deal. If Rowan were to talk about pronouns and students were upset, this could potentially have professional consequences for Rowan, especially as a lecturer without having tenure. In addition to anticipated negative consequences, Rowan did have to deal with the psychological consequence of persistent misgendering, a kind of minoritized stress (Pitcher, under review).

Like Rowan, Westley also struggled to have his gender recognized by others. Westley is a white trans boy who served as an adjunct instructor in the humanities at multiple community colleges in the south and the west. He was pursuing a PhD at a research university in the west and teaching on an adjunct basis at the time of our interviews. Westley has a feminine gender presentation and others did always recognize Westley as “he,” in part because of assumptions rooted in genderism.

Westley described working for a community college that was “quite pleased to have trans faculty, even if [his] pronoun was not necessarily known or respected in most situations.” While his immediate supervisor and dean of the college got his pronouns right, “almost every other faculty person got my pronoun wrong.” Westley described the situation in the following way:

My immediate supervisor was totally fine, had no problem with my pronoun or anything. The dean of the college also totally fine – it was clear he didn’t really know a whole lot,
but he was doing his best. […] This was also before I was fairly significantly read by other people as a man without prompting, and almost every other faculty person got my pronoun wrong, which they didn’t know my pronoun. They were all really nice about it if I corrected them, but I had a fair amount of anxiety around [correcting them] because lots of folks didn’t know me or … get my pronouns right. There was no… training, talking with any other faculty about, “Hey, you need to get this right.”

Westley raises several key issues here. First, his immediate supervisor and dean did use the correct pronoun. Also, Westley felt that while “some folks tried real hard,” his not “being read as male most of the... actually, I would say all of the time I taught there” meant that he was rarely properly gendered outside of his informal interactions with his dean and supervisor. Additionally, the lack of training and awareness about the importance of properly gendering someone was notably absent.

The constant interpersonal misgendering meant that Westley had to “constantly assert” his pronouns. Despite his colleagues being “pretty nice about it when [he] corrected them” Westley had “had a fair amount of anxiety” about correcting others’ inaccurate and forced social labeling of his gender, as conferred through pronouns. Westley’s difficulties with pronouns reflect the ways that informal interactions that rely on pronouns enact genderism. Others’ labeling of Westley occurred through their schemas and assumptions about the sex/gender binary (Bem, 1981), evidence of the ways microfoundations operate (Powell & Colyvas, 2008). Having to constantly remind people of the correct pronoun and experiencing anxiety as a result were the consequences of genderism that Westley faced.

Like Rowan, Westley’s student evaluations were also a place where he was misgendered. Westley said, “On one single evaluation, one student would write, he/she in the same
[evaluation], they could not figure out [my gender], they could not get [pronouns] consistent.”

He concluded that at the community college where he taught, people “didn’t know me” and that there was “not a lot of familiarity.” Ultimately, other’s lack of familiarity with Westley and his pronouns lead to misgendering. While I take up the issue of familiarity in chapter six, at this point, I note that familiarity with one’s identity plays a role in how welcomed or alienated one feels.

Like Westley, Ardel faced difficulties with getting colleagues to use the correct pronouns. Ardel is a white, genderqueer tenured professor at a community college in the west. Ardel teaches within the college’s LGBT Studies program. Despite being in an environment comprised entirely of queer faculty, Ardel faced enormous difficulty in having their gender recognized by their colleagues. Ardel, in an exasperated tone, said,

In describing a cisgender colleague] She’s old school lesbian feminist and refuses, refuses, to be respectful of my pronoun preference, “they,” and also misgenders genderqueer and transgender students. She is particularly horrible–I would say–with trans masculinities, so the genderqueer students and trans men. I can tell you right now I’ve got two former students who actually have fully [gender] transitioned who she still misgenders.

Colleagues’ difficulty with properly gendering Ardel also extends to students. While Ardel did not want the misgendering to sound like a “whining problem,” the issue of misgendering a colleague and students is quite serious. Misgendering is all the more problematic, given that the population served by Ardel’s program is primarily LGBTQ students, including many trans students. Further, Ardel filed a complaint against this colleague for misgendering, amongst other issues. Despite being more “more and more out and vociferous” about their identity and the
importance of respecting pronouns, it is nearly impossible for Ardel, the department chair, to fire the colleague for the hostile climate that this person creates through misgendering colleagues and students.

While Ardel does struggle with this one colleague, there are other colleagues, who are “truly, truly trying to make the attempt to be more inclusive of trans issues but you can also tell it’s difficult.” Yet, “none of them are able to do the ‘they’ [pronoun] with me except for my colleague in [another department].” Despite working in a context where one might expect a certain fluidity with various pronouns, Ardel is misgendered much of the time by their colleagues. But, Ardel described the tension they face with colleagues and the forced social labeling process as “really tiring after a while” and Ardel often had to “pick your battles.” They wondered aloud, “Do I every moment want to have to correct somebody?” In short, Ardel hits a wall around pronouns, leaving them frustrated with the extra labor required.

Like Ardel, Connor found the experience of having to constantly assert the correct pronouns as “exhausting.” Connor is a white trans post-doctoral researcher in the social sciences at a research university in the west. Connor said, “I am tired of telling people over and over what my pronouns are.” At the time of our interviews, Connor was shifting from using “she” pronouns professionally and “he” pronouns in his personal life to exclusively using “he” pronouns. He described the situation in the following way:

I’ve been using male pronouns for about six or eight months exclusively, and but I don’t get read as male ever, and so I’m constantly getting misgendered. And even when I’m getting the right pronouns I know it’s because people were told to use male pronouns, not because they assume that those are the pronouns that I should be using. So it’s just like a lot of just extra labor and sadness, a lot of grief.
Here, Connor raises the notion of “extra labor.” Like Rowan, Westley, and Ardel, Connor also performs additional labor within the academy just to have his gender recognized by others.

Connor further described the sadness and grief he is experiencing. When I asked Connor what he meant by grief he said,

I have this sadness about losing—about giving up my female body and wishing— I wish I didn’t have to. I wish I could live in this body and be read as male and go through my life as Connor and nobody would question it. But I don’t have that option. And so, if I want to be read as male, I have to give up this body. And I have—and so I have a whole lot of sadness about that… I don’t believe trans people should just…trans people in transition should have more options for how they’re read in the world…

Here Connor reveals another tension, namely, that in order for him to be read as “male” he felt that he would “have to give up my female body.” Because others see Connor as “innately female,” he described limits (the wall) on his available gender options. Implied within Connor’s comments is the idea of possibility and impossibility, which I initially described in the first chapter. For Connor, his body and gender identity were an impossible combination for others to comprehend as “male.” While Connor wanted to “go through his life as Connor and nobody question it,” genderism makes his gender impossible, thus hitting the wall.

Related to Connor’s experience with misgendering, Mary, a white woman in the sciences at a research university in the west, also had trouble within her department with interpersonal misgendering. Following a successful bid for tenure, Mary decided to move forward with a gender transition. In Mary’s case, she felt that her other colleagues “had her back” when two of her colleagues refused to call her “Mary” and use “she” pronouns. Mary explained the situation as follows:
[A] faculty member, who over the space of five years would use the wrong pronouns, and it didn’t happen all the time, because not every conversation has pronouns, or he’d use my old name “Mark” which I identify as male. And so, I finally had enough. I tried to work with him on it. […] I had to officially ask a request of my chair to help resolve the issue. It wasn’t about punishment. I just wanted it to stop. And so that opened a whole, an official process that was very slow working with the [equity and inclusion office].

Once Mary asked the chair to help resolve the issue, which resulted in an official complaint, the office of equity and inclusion (a pseudonym) launched an investigation. Initially frustrated by the length of time the investigation took, Mary said, “they didn’t seem to take my accusation very seriously.” At the root of the investigation was the need for Mary and the department to provide “sufficient proof that it [misgendering] was substantial harm” and obtaining this documentation was difficult because of the nature of problem which often occurred in private conversations.

The breakthrough in this case occurred when “this guy…actually brought it up while the investigation was ongoing. He referred to me as ‘he’ during a faculty meeting, at my department faculty” and this “tilted the decision” in Mary’s favor. Eventually, he was “physically removed to a different place. His committee assignments in the department were ended to just minimize contact. […] It was just to separate us so that he couldn’t do any harm.” Thinking that things were finally resolved, Mary then received notice that her colleague was appealing the decision that he be removed from the department. She said:

That letter was prepared by a local lawyer, […] and it was just horrible… very transphobic accusations, speculating about whether am I really a woman or not, if I’ve had surgeries or not. […] And so I had to wait for, god, another six months over the summer, last summer (2014). It finally resolved last November (2014) where I had to
actually testify and I rebutted all these things at the faculty appeals board and everything was upheld.

Mary reveals the additional labor demanded of her in order to get her colleagues to recognize her name and pronouns. Part of the additional labor manifested in having to correct her colleague, file a complaint, and deal with the appeals process. Unlike cisgender academics, trans academics like Mary who transition on the job must contend with other’s expectations of what constitutes a “real” woman. While cisgender women cope with sexism, trans women cope with sexism, genderism, and transmisogyny (e.g., critiquing trans women’s expressions of femininity).

As I just described, misgendering occurs interpersonally, but online systems also confer gender. Westley, Jackson, and Stanley all experienced digital misgendering. Westley, having navigated multiple different community colleges and a research university highlights how different policies about name requirements in online systems can be either beneficial or harmful to trans academics who changed their names. Westley said,

At [one] college, I had not legally changed my name, but their system didn’t require a full first name to go up on a page so my students weren’t aware of my legal first name. At the [research university] you have to legally change your name in order to not have your full legal name appear to students signing up for classes. So until I legally changed my name the [research university] my students always knew my birth name and I had to come in the first day and say, so this system is wrong, don’t use that name. It’s this name. This would mean that students would come [to class] or send emails all the time before they’d met me or if they weren’t paying attention. *It was very irritating.* […] [at a community college] my boss was really cool and waived the legal [name] requirement. The college has a system where their emails use the full legal first name and full legal last name. She
made it my not legal name even though she wasn’t supposed to so that my email wouldn’t be my birth name, which was really fantastic.

Westley highlights how trans academics spanning multiple institutions may have very different experiences with digital misgendering based on institutional policy, individuals’ enactment of those policies, and the privileging of legal name changes over other kinds of name change assertions. Westley described this mix of institutional requirements as ranging from “really sort of lovely” to “all of the bureaucratic stuff.” Westley also highlights how genderism and digital misgendering is enacted within various institutional contexts differently and to different degrees.

Similar to Westley, Jackson also experienced misgendering through online course management systems. Jackson is a white male instructor and PhD candidate in the social sciences at a research university in the midwest. He gender transitioned at the beginning of his graduate program and beyond his first semester faced virtually no issues with interpersonal misgendering. However, Jackson did experience misgendering through data systems. He described the situation as follows:

On [course management software] I am “Miss Jackson” and it will not change even though my gender marker is changed in every other system on campus. My birth certificate has been amended, my driver’s license is changed, and I’m still “Miss Jackson” when I email my students from [the online system]. And I’m out, so that’s fine, but I’m not out to them when I’m emailing them before their class starts!

Despite Jackson being properly gendered interpersonally, which I describe next, the online course management system continuously genders him as “Miss.”

Part of the reason that others properly gender Jackson relates to his masculine gender expression and having medically transitioned. As a person “who has the privilege of having had
hormone replacement and also chest surgery…I have the embodiment [of a man].” Jackson is recognized as a man by others now. However, at the start of his doctoral program others did not recognize him as a man, a circumstance that felt bad to him at the time. Early in his medical transition, Jackson had a professor who refused to use his name. Jackson described the situation as follows:

My name wasn’t changed on documents yet, but he refused to call me Jackson all semester. Then the chair of my department called him on the phone in front of me and said, “this stops today.” Then it never happened again and it was just taken care of, not a problem. That was really awesome, so that kind of thing of interactional problems... if there’s an interactional problem, like a faux-pas, that shit is shut down, like people put a stop to that immediately.

What Jackson is highlighting here is that within his department the kinds of misgendering that others experiences was “shut down…immediately.” Jackson’s department chair put up a different kind of wall, one that disallowed interpersonal misgendering. This small interaction reveals something else about how misgendering operates. In particular, Jackson benefits from having moved from one gender to another and identifies solidly within the gender binary as a man. His name change was already in process, those legal steps cued others to use the correct name, and his access to hormones prompted the use of the correct pronouns. Thus, Jackson’s identity has a kind of authority and legitimacy afforded that perhaps Ardel does not experience. Since Ardel will not pursue a legal name change, and uses a pronoun at which many balk, the remediation of the misgendering they experience is more complex. Similarly, Westley struggled to have his pronoun and name recognized in part because of the lack of legal documentation and because of others’ reading him as “not a man.” Taken together, these stories reveal how
genderism manifests differently within the experiences of binary and non-binary trans academics. Further, these stories reveal that the solutions to misgendering may be more complex than simply advocating for correct name and pronoun usage based on legal statuses or physical appearance/gender expression. I further address potential implications the final chapter of this dissertation.

Like Jackson, Cassidy and Adam both described experiences wherein their colleagues addressed misgendering. Cassidy, a Native American female who teaches on an adjunct basis in the humanities at a research university in the west described an experience of having another advocate on her behalf at a research colloquium. She said,

I remember sitting in a graduate colloquium and there were not very many people there, I would say less than 15 people. And the topic [trans topics] came up, I never made, as I said, I never made any secret of being trans, or my identification as a woman. So when one of the other grad students, and there are all, obviously defining this along the gender lines as a binary, and the student says that there are eight women and nine men or something like that and I realize that that one instantaneous moment, for whatever reason I was being counted as a man. The woman that was sitting next to me stopped [this misgendering], I mean, she said, “wait a minute, that’s not my count.” She went around and named the women in the class, and I was named as another woman, that made me feel so good, that another woman would recognize me as my identified self. And then, of course, the person who made the original comment, kind of stuttered and stammered a bit and didn’t know where to go with that. […] But I felt that [experience] will always remain with me.
Cassidy reveals one of the actions that advocates and accomplices to trans individuals can take in the face of misgendering, namely, correct the problem. The relatively small gesture of correcting the forcible labeling of Cassidy as “not woman” was a particularly powerful moment for her, one that stuck with her for many years.

Related to Cassidy’s experience of being recognized by another woman, Adam also benefitted from colleagues advocating on his behalf. Adam is a white transmasculine genderqueer, tenure-track faculty in the social sciences at a community college in the west. He described how “supportive people were when [he] was transitioning.” They continued to say,

I got lucky that a lot of people, particularly in my department, were great advocates in that they were really good about [asking], “Hey, I just want to check in, are we still using the right pronouns? Or asking, “What pronouns do you prefer? [colleagues would say] “Is there any way that you can help me or any way that I can help you?” And people were pretty good about advocating for that [pronouns, support] and then also being really polite about questions. And so, people checking in about [my gender transition] was giving me some of the support that I needed.

Adam welcomed this support because he was coping with the hyper-visibility that his very public workplace gender transition brought. I describe hyper-visibility in another section within this chapter.

There were participants who did not experience significant misgendering. For example, Nathan said, “I’m most of the time properly gendered. I get misgendered sometimes but most of the time not. I can mostly say, ‘Eh, whatever.’ I can roll with it. It’s a fluke. If you get misgendered a lot, then it’s hard.” In short, microfoundation and within-organization processes can have a cumulative effect. Further, because of the way that genderism operates within higher
education (and beyond), if a trans person does not significantly transgress gendered assumptions (e.g., men having deeper voices, having facial hair, and wearing masculine attire) through their gender expression (outward presentation of gender) then they are more likely to be properly gendered. For example, Nathan, presents in masculine ways (e.g., wears ties, button up shirts, suits, binds his chest), has a beard, a deeper voice, and thus most people attribute the pronoun “he.” Assumptions and attributions of gender rely on physical clues, which may or may not reflect the gender identity of the person in question and this process of gender attribution is a microfoundation process that contributes to the creation of inequality regimes (Acker, 2006). Some participants, like Nathan, described the effect of being properly gendered as positive, whereas constantly being misgendered is exhausting and draining, as described by Rowan, Westley, Ardel, and Connor. Nathan’s experience also demonstrates the ways in which genderism manifests differently in different trans* academics’ experiences. Again, I urge caution in the interpretation of these findings as in each of the participants’ experiences I just described, whiteness buffers them from racialized enactments of genderism.

Hyper-visibility and Invisibility

Earlier, I described Connor’s dilemma about pronouns and being recognized in his gender identity. Because he had to assert his pronouns all of the time, his trans-ness became hyper-visible. For example, Connor often corrected others misgendering as an act of resistance to forced social labeling, a part of genderism. As an impossible category and way of being Connor’s trans-ness was hyper-visible. Trans* academics described a variety of different experiences with visibility. Some like Connor felt simultaneously hyper-visible in moments when he corrected someone about their incorrect pronoun use and invisible when he was misrecognized as not a man. Other participants, like Gabe and Mike, described other people
forgetting about their being trans. Still others were made invisible by others’ expectations about what a trans person looks like, including AJ. Hyper-visibility and invisibility present a variety of tensions for trans academics including when and how to disclose one’s gender identity for those who are invisible. The decisions about disclosing one’s trans-ness in addition to the work performed because of genderism is another manifestation of the kinds of extra labor trans academics must engage in. I now describe these various tensions and forms of labor trans academics perform through my discussion of hyper-visibility and invisibility.

Like Connor, Adam also experienced his trans-ness as hyper-visibility at certain points in his professional career. Adam, introduced above, previously worked at another community college where he gender transitioned. Adam described the climate at his previous institution as “toxic.” The toxicity began almost immediately. He said, “I am moving to my office…and people would come by my office and they are like, ‘oh, I heard we hired someone like you.’ I mean, really, I felt like I was a spectacle.” Adam would later learn that during the hiring process, he was considered a “dangerous candidate” and a member of the search committee, when asked what that meant “gave some kind of answer about unprofessionalism and referenced my attire actually.” Adam’s visibly gender non-conforming presentation made him a dangerous candidate and potentially unprofessional. Adam’s experience is another way that genderism manifests through social accountability for conforming to binary gender norms and doling out punishments to those who do not comply (Bilodeau, 2009).

During his employment at his former institution Adam served as the “vice president for the academic senate and it had been a pretty heated campaign.” By heated, Adam meant that others used “homophobic or transphobic language in telling their colleagues why they should or shouldn’t vote for [him].” He also received “death threats at home and on campus” because of
his candidacy. Many of the objections from Adam’s colleagues were about his “political positions,” but these colleagues made it “personal.” By making it personal, some other faculty members “said really […] nasty things to their classes.” This meant that certain students “no longer felt comfortable” talking to Adam. A specific example of problematic characterizations directed at Adam was that if people voted for him for VP then the “gay mafia would be taking over the campus.” Colleagues called Adam a “he-she” publicly, among other transphobic slurs. Epithets and problematic characterizations were two of the social punishments integral to genderism that Adam faced in his candidacy for the academic senate.

Adam has since moved institutions and into an environment where there are other trans* academics present. Adam said,

comparing and contrasting from my last campus where I was super visible to not being super visible… […] it’s kind of nice to just show up…at work and have people ask me about the other things that I’m interested in, like hobbies, things that I’m doing.

What Adam reveals is that at his prior campus, he was hyper-visible and his trans-ness seemed to be the only aspect of his life worth noting. Within this new environment, he is able to have a more complex personhood where his trans-ness is no more remarkable than any other aspects of his subjectivity and personal interests.

In addition to the kinds of overt discrimination that Adam faced, small, everyday occurrences, such as speech acts or written texts, can make trans-ness hyper-visible or invisible. Tobey, a white, transman/transmasculine administrator, and adjunct instructor in the social sciences at a regional comprehensive university in the east, described how two different kinds of utterances made him either invisible or hyper-visible. When I asked him what institutions of higher education could do to improve the experiences of trans academics, he said,
hearing “you guys” all the time when talking about big groups, hearing things like “ladies and gentlemen.” Those things make me feel invisible. Using gendered language to talk about relationships, too, can be hard, so just incorporating more gender-neutral language into one’s speech.

Here Tobey is describing two ways that gendered language affect his experiences and how integrating gender-neutral language would improve his experiences. As a queer person, Tobey faces both genderism and heterosexism within his work environment.

While the effect of the speech act of “you guys” or “ladies and gentleman” made Tobey feel invisible, there were other times when his trans-ness and his views about trans issues became hyper-visible. Tobey recounted once such event in his narrative. He wrote,

I received my teaching evaluations recently for a class I taught. […] I was reading the comments sections, in which students are encouraged to free write about their thoughts on the class, anonymously. One student had some particular complaints about organization of the class, and some of the content, and also stated that I, as a professor, pushed my views about “transgenders” onto the class. When reading this comment I became saddened and scared about how suddenly vulnerable I was even when in a position of power over this student. In one comment, the cisgender student felt able to question my very identity (and those like me). I was struck because I had decided to specifically not come out as transgender in that class, and I can afford not to because I have passing privilege. Despite my decision to not share my personal history or identity as a trans person, this student still managed to intuitively “pick up on” my “values” related to trans identities. In the course I had simply shown a documentary that highlighted the experience of transgender young people (as I deemed it relevant for future
teachers who may have gender nonconforming young people in their classes) and shared some statistics around bullying that GNC (gender non-conforming) and transgender students face in K-12 educational settings. I also taught students the difference between concepts of biological sex, gender identity, expression, and sexual attraction.

What Tobey’s narrative revealed is that even if he never utters the words “I am trans” the potency of social accountability for adhering to cisgender norms is ever-present. I will address the issue of identity disclosure that Tobey’s writing revealed in another section. At this point, it is worth noting how language practices leave Tobey feeling invisible in one instance, and then at another moment, hyper-visible because of his teaching about trans issues.

Building on the notion of ephemeral moments, or microfoundations, where trans-ness is hyper-visible, I share another story from Cassidy. She described a situation on campus where there was a person from the “Christian industry who stands— in the central corridor that goes right between the buildings—and they are there with their white shirt and tie, and the bible in the one hand, standing and spouting biblical testimony, if you will.” She continued to say,

I’ve had occasion to walk by en route of, because I’m on the way, en route to carrying out my business and I’d get comments, comments from, usually the Christian right, worded in such a manner that if you were me walking by and was proselytizing and I’d hear them say, “the queers and the trans people.” You know, going off and looking over here [gestures away from herself], but obviously highly aware of my presence, you know? So if I were to say that they were looking directly at me and pointing a finger? No. They were very obviously directing their comments at me.

While the person proselytizing in the common area of the university might not have directly addressed Cassidy, a 6’2” Native American female, who no matter what is “always going to be
“clocked” by others (read as not “genetically female”), she did feel they were “obviously directing their comments at me.” Cassidy continued to say, “I have a reputation, although I’m not normally confrontational, if people confronted my identity, I will turn it right back in their face very hard.” Again, Cassidy’s story reveals how certain speech acts can make one’s trans-ness hyper-visible. She also demonstrates one of her strategies of resistance, to “turn it right back in their face very hard,” a kind of labor of resistance in which some trans academics engage.

Sometimes a trans academic might become hyper-visible not because of their gender, but because of their race. Max, a Black, FTM transgender man who works as a librarian for a community college in the midwest, experienced hyper-visibility and surveillance deriving from anti-black racism present in his work environment. While Max said that with respect to trans identity “it’s been good” at work, he dealt with additional surveillance of his work by his white female/woman supervisor. Max said that:

when I first got here, when I was using Prezi, or PowerPoint or whatever, for some of my [teaching] sessions, I noticed that my department chair wanted to look through them and approve them before I would teach, which wasn’t happening with my other [white] colleagues.

What Max observed was that his department chair monitored his work much more closely than the work of his white colleagues. When I asked Max if he had other examples of his boss’s behavior, he described an incident related to a display he created. He said:

I noticed that when I did a women’s history month display… I had books from our collection, and then I also had a PowerPoint that accompanied it… my colleague [the department chair] was like, “There aren’t enough white women in this display.” And so she went through it with a fine-tooth comb, and my response to that was like, “Well,
there’s six white women, six black women, five Latina women.” I broke down [the demographics]. White women were not centered, and I think that white people aren’t used to seeing things in which white women aren’t centered.

She [the department chair] sends me an email [about the display]. […] And… being a person of color, I was very conscious about making it as diverse as possible, in terms of race, in terms of the kind of work that they did, including in terms of…I tried to make it as intersectional as possible. And so she emailed me her critique about it saying that…there weren’t enough white women, or there were too many women of color. And…then my response was “there’s more white women than Latina women. There’s more white women than Asian American women that were in the display, there’s only like three or four of them.” …and then she didn’t have anything to say after that. And it just sort of was allowed to go on.

Here Max described the ways that his “being a person of color” influences his work in the library, in his wanting to make it as “intersectional as possible.” This informal interaction through email from his supervisor also gestures toward how his colleague took up his subjectivity, as manifested through the creation of the display. Resulting from Max’s Blackness, his supervisor situated him as in need of additional surveillance. Through the process of surveillance, Max’s colleague noticed the racial dynamics in the history display. In policing how many women of color were in the display, Max’s colleague is symbolically policing him and his identities as well, thus making his Blackness hyper-visible and subject to scrutiny. The colleague’s desire to center white, presumably cisgender women created a workplace context that centers the experiences of white folks, especially white women, at the expense of people of color. Max noted that, “race is…a touchy topic with this particular person.” Because race is a
touchy topic with this person, Max was subject to a variety of kinds of surveillance, including what I just described. For racially minoritized trans* academics, often there is additional labor stemming from dealing with racism and genderism.

While some trans academics in this study felt, at least some of the time, hyper-visible resulting from their gender, or in Max’s case because of his race, some trans* academics in this study felt invisible and that their colleagues “forget” about their trans-ness. Gabe is a white male tenure-track assistant professor in the humanities at a regional comprehensive university in the midwest. He described a campus environment wherein,

the trans population here is different than the trans population in other places that I’ve lived. Where what I see here is a lot of non-binary identities […] it seems like one effect of it being so hard to access medical transition, especially for students because at my university, the student health service does not cover hormones or surgery…so it’s just a very different flavor here, a lot of non-binary, a lot of they/them pronouns in ways that coming from the west coast I’m not used to.

Gabe continued to describe how the presence of non-binary trans people and absence of others with the same identity category meant “very few of them [other trans people] share my identity category.” This context made it difficult for Gabe to show up as a trans person at work beyond others’ tokenization of his experiences. He said,

It’s very hard for me to show up as trans because people forget I’m trans here. It’s like because I’m passable [read as a cisgender man] and because I’m far along in transition and pretty normatively gendered, I have to work pretty hard to get people to think about the fact that I might be having experiences that are difficult. Because when they look at me, it’s easy for them, like I don’t make them uncomfortable mostly. When I get
pushback is when I say things they don’t want to hear. I haven’t had anyone treat me badly because of how I look or because of my documentation or anything like that. It’s weird to feel like, asked to be the token to speak about trans issues, but then also have very little recognition that, like, maybe I should be protected or maybe people should be worried about how I’m running into invisible barriers…I don’t see a lot of concern about those things.

Because others presume Gabe is just another white cisgender, heterosexual man, his experiences as a queer and trans person are invisible. Gabe remains invisible until someone on campus wants to bring in a trans person to talk about their experiences.

One of the consequences of people forgetting that Gabe is trans relates to an incident with a cisgender lesbian colleague. He said,

When I was having that confrontation with the [cisgender lesbian] librarian…[about transgender issues] I remember very clearly, she said to me, you know, “You’re being violent, you’re saying violent things. You’re committing violence by, you know, expecting us to agree with you about these things.” And I had to take a moment and I realized in that moment that she was just perceiving me, probably just perceiving me as just a man, like, what right do I have to be saying these things about [trans] issues? And I had to stop and I had to look right at her and say, “I am the only out trans faculty member on this campus and you are sitting in this room with me accusing me of violence.” Can we just pay attention to that for a second? You know, how is it possible for a person who is one, like, a minority of one person, how is it possible for me to be enacting violence upon you?
What Gabe highlighted about the negative interaction he had with the librarian is that because of the way that others read him it is presumed that he is part of a system of violent communication, just because of his physical appearance. Despite Gabe’s having been assigned female at birth and his identity as trans, his cisgender lesbian colleague felt Gabe was by default violent in his assertions about trans* politics. The moment where Gabe describes that people forget that he is trans and the work he has to do to help people to remember is part of the additional labor that trans* academics must engage in as a part of their work within higher education organizations.

Mike, like Gabe, also experienced people forgetting about his identity. Mike is a white queer trans person who migrated from Brazil many years ago, and now works as a librarian at a regional comprehensive university in the east. Mike described his participation in the safe zone program at his institution. What motivated him to participate was,

I am one of the trans members and I am out and that’s good, but people keep forgetting that I am trans. They don’t have a lot of exposure with trans people. I feel like I can offer that perspective. I like, my own personal mission is to be out so that the students can see that they can be happy and out and trans. I know it was important to me to see there was someone who had a real job when I transitioned and all of that.

What Mike is describing is a politics of visibility wherein a person could be “happy and out and trans” as a viable life path and possibility. The trouble is, Mike’s colleagues keep forgetting that he is trans. He said,

I never know if people know I am trans. I always feel like I have to remind people that I’m trans. I don’t know if they really actually forget or not because, because probably they are not…so I don’t actually know. […] I don’t think there’s anything physical about
me that would tell anybody that I am trans. Whereas early in my transition there were probably more physical signs.

Mike went on to describe how people make certain assumptions about his history and childhood based on the gender he currently presents. In particular, because he did not “grow up as a boy” he “didn’t do a lot of those things.” Sometimes Mike would challenge others assumptions about his gender as an act of resistance. However, “Sometimes it’s like, ugh… too much I don’t want to get into it.” But, what the forgetting meant for Mike was that he could not always share all his life experiences, for instance that he “studied ballet for many years, which is not a typical experience for a boy.” Mike concluded that others’ forgetting about his trans-ness “makes it complicated to talk” and likely influences his ability to feel a strong sense of collegiality.

While Mike is often unsure if colleagues remember that he is trans or not, his being read as trans* seems to hinge on his physical appearance. Other participants also brought up how others’ assumptions about what a trans* person looks like influenced their visibility. This notion of gender attribution is one of the microfoundations that contributes to the inequality regimes (Acker, 2006) that trans* academics experience. AJ said,

For most people in the US society, it’s two and only two gender system. Even with the increasing visibility of trans people like Caitlyn Jenner and Laverne Cox, people see, “Okay, male to female, okay.” So, even if they are accepting of that, it still fits into the binary framework.

This notion that there is a singular way to be trans, to transition from male to female and to identify as binary pervaded many of my conversations with participants about visibility and their lives as trans* academics. Dealing with others’ assumptions about trans*ness seemed to influence when and how some participants disclosed their trans identity. For instance, Will
described the tensions inherent in disclosing his trans status. Will is a white man who is a non-tenure-track instructor in the social sciences at a research university in the midwest. When I asked him why he did not disclose his identity, he said,

…Because it is very strange to come out at this point. I feel like I need to convince people. Or they’ve known me for seven years and then, “Oh, why is it I’ve never talked about it?” I feel like people might go, “Oh, so you cross dress at night? You put on dresses?” No. There’s a little bit of convincing that needs to go on, or people just don’t get it.

Will addresses the precise problem that AJ described about the current visibility of trans people. Will’s comments serve as a springboard into my discussion of the ways that trans academics exercise agency in disclosing their trans identities within a context of invisibility.

**Exercising Agency in Disclosing Trans Identity/Status/History**

Within this study, some trans* academics expressed a strong desire to exercise agency over whom and how they tell people about their trans* identities. The notion of exercising of agency was especially salient for Will, Arun, Skeeter, and Susan King. Some participants do not view their trans-ness as part of their gender identities; instead, they hold identities as men or women. Benjamin, for example, felt that trans described the kind of male he is. Will, Arun, Isaac, Malcolm, Jackson, and Gabe all described their gender identities as male or men. Similarly, Martina, Mary, and Cassidy all described their gender identities as female or as women. Some participants use language like trans male, as Carey and Carter did, or trans or transsexual woman like Susan and Joy. Thus disclosing one’s trans-ness is already complex because some participants do not see trans as a part of their gender identity, but more of their status or history. Others like Rowan, Stanley, and AJ describe trans, gender non-conforming, and
genderqueer as their identities. Trans academics may use different language, a variety of identity/status/history disclosure tactics, and may have differential access to exercise agency over telling others about their gender, yet, each contend with a social milieu marked by genderism. Genderism creates a context that can make trans identities inaccessible and impossible (Bilodeau, 2009). Exercising agency with respect to trans academics is about having the ability to name the terms of a social engagement and to maintain some level of control over how and who one tells about their identity. Both ways that others’ read gender (e.g., interpersonal misgendering) and participants’ exercising agency over their gender identity disclosures are examples of microfoundations of genderism that contribute to inequality regimes (Acker, 2006).

Building on Will’s comments in the previous section, I now describe more of his experiences with exercising agency over disclosing his trans status. When I asked Will what it was like to not disclose at work, he said,

I have to be very careful with my language, especially with pronouns, and especially with thinking about, “Oh, when I was 17 and I had a boyfriend, blah, blah, blah.” I think if I said that [having had a boyfriend at 17] it would be confusing…so I just have to be careful when I’m talking.

In being “very careful with my language,” Will engaged in additional labor in anticipation of potentially negative events, a kind of minoritized stress (Pitcher, under review). Will said, “I am very careful at disclosing information because I am under the assumption that in general people are more likely than not to be like discriminatory, or be transphobic.” Will’s anticipating negative events represents additional labor and minoritized stress, a kind of sensemaking (Weick, 1995). Sensemaking is a strand of scholarship within microfoundational approaches that describes how interpret their environment (Weick, 1995; Powell & Colyvas, 2008).
Like Will, Arun, a multi-racial/multi-ethnic white, Middle Eastern, Jewish male in the social sciences described the importance of exercising agency over telling his colleagues about his trans history. When Arun served as a visiting professor at a liberal arts college in the west, he described a situation with a colleague where the colleague asked about the motivation to do the work Arun does. He said,

It seemed like he was trying to ask me if I was trans. That was sort of the real question but he was sort of phrasing it in a round about way that seemed to be just academic curiosity. That was awkward. That was the one thing in my whole year with the department that ever really sort of sent up a red flag or sort of made me feel uncomfortable.

While Arun had a wonderful experience during his year as a visiting professor, this one incident with a colleague asking about why he does trans* work “sent up a red flag.” When I asked Arun to elaborate about his experiences, he said,

When I’ve been asked that question of why I do work with trans people, I always sort of feel like... I always sort of freeze up a little bit. I have to decide in that very moment which answer I am going to give. I have my two answers. I have my answer where I say, “Well I am trans and so I think it is important,” but then I have my academic answer, “People aren’t working on this and we can learn x, y, and z from working with trans people.” I feel like I have to kind of assess which question the person is really asking. I feel like usually the question is sort of “Why do you care about trans people?” or “Why would you even think to study trans people?” and they are looking for the “Because I am trans.” answer.
I guess the way that he responded, I ended up telling him. I gave him both answers together, basically. I did tell him that I was trans. His reaction after that seemed like he didn’t quite know how to talk about that, or how to respond, or whether or not it was okay to ask something else or say something else about that. That is what made it awkward. I think he just really didn’t know how to talk to me about those topics but really wanted to for really good genuine reasons of wanting to get to know me and to know more about my work and that kind of thing.

Arun’s comments about a fleeting moment in a colleague’s office reveals several important aspects of trans* academic experiences, namely, the embodied tension about how to answer questions about one’s identity and the inter-relationship it might have with their work. First, Arun describes how a split second decision might influence an interaction or even a series of interactions over a longer period. In that moment, Arun was trying to understand what the colleague was “really asking.” In this case, he gave both answers, the “academic” one and the identity disclosure answer. Second, Arun highlights another form of labor that is somewhat specific to trans academics who do trans* work. Specifically, he needed to provide a rationale for why researching trans people was/is important. Additionally, Arun had to perform additional labor, in this case, dealing with the awkwardness of his colleague and the lack of trans* knowledge, fluency, and language to articulate what he just learned about Arun. While certainly all academics must provide a rationale for the work they perform, when that work aligns with one’s identity as Arun’s does, other’s questioning of the work strikes closer to one’s personhood. The decision-making Arun described is a microfoundational process that aligns with sensemaking (Weick, 1995). Through his sensemaking, Arun is performing additional labor that
ultimately creates an inequality regime (Acker, 2006) wherein trans* academics must perform additional labor regarding their identities that cisgender individuals do not.

When I asked Arun to further describe his experiences when he served in the role of visiting professor, he said,

the big issue for me is always to a degree where I disclose my trans identity and I tend not to be, tend not to disclose at every opportunity. [...] I didn’t feel like it was hiding some important aspect of myself or anything. Or it was important to understand me as a person. So I still, even though I since started coming out as trans a lot more, a lot of that has to do with my research. If I weren’t working with trans communities, probably a lot fewer people who are academic colleagues would know that I am trans, and even then I tend to keep doing an ongoing assessment of people as I make decisions about who to disclose to.

Again, Arun demonstrates the additional labor concept I previously described. Through his assessment of his colleagues, Arun determined that,

most of my colleagues at my former institution unsurprisingly did not pass the test of people I want to disclose to. The main things that factor into that [assessment] are do I think this person is going to start reinterpreting everything about me and thinking “Oh, I though you did this because you were gay, but now I know you do this because you used to be a woman.”

Now Arun is talking about a kind of impression management, another kind of micro-process that contributes to inequality regimes (Acker, 2006), that he does with others in order for him to be interpreted as a queer male and not a person who “used to be a woman,” however, he never was an adult woman, because he began his gender transition at age 16.
To further complicate issues of identity disclosure, Arun described part of his hesitancy about disclosing to some of his academic colleagues. I quote at length to help illuminate the micro-process that Arun navigated regarding identity disclosure. He said,

most of my interactions with other faculty were with the other first year faculty, visiting or tenure-track (at socials). […] On more than one occasion I heard members of that group talking about trans people or gender non-conforming people in ways that I was really unhappy with. For instance, one person had a student whose preferred pronoun she didn’t know and she came to me at first as one-on-one to sort of ask me what to do. I was like, “It’s great that you’re asking me what to do and asking the student what pronoun they prefer would be the best way to handle it.” But she was very reluctant to do this and she ended up never doing it. But she kept coming and talking to this group of faculty about this situation with the student of whose pronoun she didn’t know, and it was always like a funny thing and “Oh, how weird” and “How awkward” and “What do I do, there’s nothing I can do about this situation.” But she was also not willing to listen to me about what she should do. There were a number of moments like that where people were clearly reading as cis[gender] and letting me in on their transphobic commentary basically. So that reinforced the lack of interest of disclosing to those folks.

Here Arun reveals the consequences he faced, stemming from the invisibility of his trans status, other’s assumptions about what trans people look like, and how cisgender individuals behave when they do not think a trans person is listening. Each of the key pieces of information that Arun collected to determine his action regarding identity disclosure is a kind of sensemaking (Weick, 1995) process that relies on his interpretations of the larger workplace environment he
navigated. Arun also showed how he hit the wall, using Ahmed’s (2012) metaphor, with this one colleague who simply would not change her practices regarding a student’s pronouns.

For Arun, the ability to exercise agency over identity disclosure is referred to by some as “passing privilege” (e.g., Lees, 2015). Like Tobey previously articulated about his own passing privilege, Arun also experiences this phenomenon. However, I would urge those who hold this idea of passing privilege to also consider what one becomes privilege to. In Arun’s case, he was subjected to cisgender colleagues being transphobic, this in turn created a kind of inequality regime (Acker, 2006). While being properly gendered, as Arun was, he was also subject to transphobia because it was presumed that there were no trans people in the room.

While Arun is not subject to transphobic violence on the street in the ways that gender transgressive individuals might be, he is subject to something else, transphobic commentary at a faculty social gathering that creates the kind of emotional tension I previously described. This hardly seems like a privilege. Yet, Arun does have the ability to tell people, on his own terms (or not) about his trans* history. What Arun experiences is greater agency, not necessarily a privilege, especially not if one thinks of privilege as conferring structural benefits.

Additionally, the notion of passing privilege hinges on the idea that a trans person is “passing” as something they are not (Serano, 2007). Even if there are benefits associated with being more readily recognized as the gender one identifies with, to call that a privilege seems to misunderstand what one becomes privilege to in the process. Each of the micro-processes that I just described Arun facing create the need for him to perform additional labor, which in turn, contributes to the development of inequality regimes (Acker, 2006). The additional labor that trans* academics perform shapes their experiences in profound ways, installing the kind of sensitivity and paranoia that Joy described at the outset of this chapter.
Because identities are contextual and situated (Hall & Du Gay, 1996), and genderism is endemic to higher education (Bilodeau, 2009, Nicolazzo, 2015), some trans academics in this study found certain spaces as eliciting the need to talk about their trans identity. Trans* academics often performed additional labor to disrupt the cisgender assumption that present within and beyond higher education environments. By performing additional labor, trans* academics experience a kind of inequality regime (Acker, 2006). Skeeter, a Jewish, trans associate professor in a social science at a large public research university in the west, described the classroom as an important space for identity disclosure. When I asked Skeeter about what it means to be a trans academic (a question from the narrative protocol) Skeeter said,

I’ve found though that when I’m in a classroom with my students and LGBT work comes up, it’s like I all of a sudden go in to “trans academic mode.” That’s where I am very aware and I have to kind of tow the line. I usually come out but it’s a matter of context…I always think, “Is this the moment that I’m going to come out?” Am I going to demonstrate that I am the first tenured person in my field? I don’t even know if my [undergraduate] students would understand that. My doc students would. So I would say that’s really where I feel it.

For Skeeter, the classroom, especially when LGBT topics come up, is the time that Skeeter’s trans identity becomes even more salient and there is a need to discuss trans-ness. Skeeter also experienced being in “trans academic mode” when writing and during the faculty senate meetings where there are “queer people present, but none of them are trans.” Skeeter then has some agency, but a sense of responsibility to “toe the line” about making a disclosure.

Having described the various ways individual exercise agency through the sensemaking process (Weick, 1995), I now complicate this microfoundational process (Powell & Colyvas,
2008). Susan King is an African American transgender retired adjunct instructor of 30 years in the social sciences at a historically black liberal arts college in the south. When I asked Susan King if she wished her trans identity was more visible when she was still teaching, she said:

Yeah… I would have because I would have liked to have interacted with more trans students than I have. To help them when they were going through that to teach them when they’re 19, 20, 21. To be able to talk to somebody who is 45 to 50, almost 60 now. Because I’ve had a couple of students and they were having those issues and they came to me and we talked about it. Ultimately I did help them out. It would have been nice but at same time, it would have been difficult.

Susan King’s desire to be more visible is less about her being visible and more about helping her students, especially as an older trans person. When she and I talked about how or why she felt it was not possible for her to gender transition in her teaching role, she said,

To be honest, *I can’t even imagine*. I can tell you that…[I didn’t disclose] because the administration would be upset. They probably wouldn’t let you be involved with anything dealing with the public. They would probably want you to teach your class and go. They would worry about if you were trans, then the students that might be trans but they can’t [students can’t be trans], the students [would] probably [be] supportive of you but also from the standpoint that it helps them.

Here Susan King highlights how agency is unevenly distributed across institutional types and contexts. Susan King’s sensemaking (Weick, 1995) about her organizational context indicates that being trans is utterly impossible. Susan King felt that if she exercised agency by telling her students or colleagues that she was trans that “It would be a problem.”
I urge caution in interpreting her comments and not generalizing to all (or any) historically Black colleges her experiences. Susan King described the various financial difficulties and dilemmas her former institution faced, including the need to protect the image of the school, its viability to continue, and the fierce competition the institution faces in recruiting the best students. All of this competition and institutional precarity results from the logics I will describe in chapter five, namely the rise of corporation and market logics (Thornton et al., 2012). Within her specific department, she said, “we’re a corporate department. We deal with large corporations, a lot of fundraising, its tough enough trying to get a job in corporate America being an African American male, but that [being gender non-conforming] adds another variable to it.” Thus the relative impossibility of being trans at Susan’s former institution is more about the precarious market position of the school rather than some underlying transphobic sentiment. In light of Susan King’s experiences, it seems that, at least for some individuals, institutional context may play a significant role in how much agency can be exercised with identity disclosure.

For some, exercising agency about their identity is not possible because they are publicly known as a trans* person, were hired to be a trans* person, or because some one else removed their agency by disclosing their identity. For example, from the opening vignette in chapter one, Susan described how “society will only let trans women be trans women for other people.” In her case, she made her career on being a “trans woman for other people.” In many ways, her agency is limited by the public nature of her trans-ness. But there are other limits and complications related to exercising agency with one’s identity.
Stanley, a white FTM/genderqueer librarian, PhD candidate, and graduate student instructor shared an experience where his agency to discuss his trans identity was removed. He described the situation as follows:

at the end of my first year in the PhD I wound up filing a discrimination complaint against one of my professors…I identify as male and have a beard and have a relatively deep voice so I don’t get misgendered that often anymore thanks to physical transition. So, I’m not out to everyone in my program. I use my agency to determine when and if I disclose to people. So what wound up happening was one of my instructors outing me to the class when I wasn’t in the room. Basically he misgendered me when talking about my research so that was kind of awkward. That was a really shitty way to end my first year. And so I filed a grievance and we had a mediated hearing with the faculty member and there were these next steps put into place but I have no idea if he ever did any of them.

Here Stanley described how he used agency within his doctoral cohort, but that a professor decided to remove his agency. Stanley also draws out the underlying belief held by some that trans people are not really the gender they present, in short Stanley was made into a make-believer by this faculty member (Bettcher, 2007). He also points out how his physical transition makes him invisible as trans, but visible in his identity as male, but then he is made hyper-visible as trans by the actions of his professor. Thus, I conclude that agency and visibility can be inter-related processes shaped by the genderist environment, at least for some trans academics.

Taken together what each of the experiences I just shared from Will, Arun, Susan King, Susan, and Stanley illuminates how complex agency is with respect to trans identity/status/history disclosures. While context and certain individuals may influence identity disclosure processes, or one’s sensemaking (Weick, 1995), agency was not evenly distributed
amongst the participants of this study. Further, there were anticipated negative consequences for those who are not readily identifiable a trans like Will and Arun. Others’ assumptions about what a trans* person looks likely undergird trans identity/status/history disclosure processes.

**Being and Becoming Professionally Other**

I encapsulate each of the major themes described in this chapter with the concept of “being and becoming professionally other.” This phrase references a quote from a pilot study participant who continued into the dissertation study, Joy, a white, MTF transsexual professor in the humanities at a private research university in the east. She described how her workplace gender transition made her professionally other and the difficulties this change brought into her life.

To be and/or become professionally other entails being subjected to having to perform certain kinds of labor that people who do not share your share identities and/or who diverge from established norms do not have to perform. In the case of trans academics, this means managing one’s identity through complex processes of visibility, logics of possibility and impossibility about trans identities, and navigating the various tensions associated genderism (e.g., misgendering). At the outset of this chapter, I argued that there are no singular trans* academic experiences, yet there are some partially shared contours of experiences. The shared tensions that trans academics are the common thread that “being and becoming professionally other” articulates.

While trans* academics may have unique forms of oppression that they face, they are not alone in being outside in the teaching machine (Spivak, 1993, p. 294). In my own theorizing of outside in the teaching machine, I imagined the central core of the institution holding certain norms (e.g., masculine, whiteness) and identities (e.g., white, man, Christian). Spivak (1993)
would eschew the use of identity, particularly in its more essentialized forms, instead focusing on processes of normalization. Thus, I follow the notion of a machine deriving meaning (work) from what it plugs in to (Delueze & Guatteri, 1988). The center of teaching/research/service machine has a set of norms related to social systems (e.g., heterosexism), but also values that are covert ways to communicate that same system (e.g., valuing linearity and rational thinking). My use of outside in the teaching machine is about the complex relations of power that occur within the academia (teaching machine) and how these relations manifest in the experiences of trans* academics. Through being and becoming professionally other, trans* academics are simultaneously margin/center; inside, but not of the institution, at least in terms of gender.

Given that trans* academics are professionally other, it behooves minoritized academics to develop coalitions and exercise coalitional politics to address the ways that the norms of the center create a margin and center in the first place. As I will describe in chapter eight, I call for a coalitional politics that builds on the work of individuals and groups already combating racism, sexism, ableism, and heterosexism within the academy. The notion of being and becoming professionally other, led me to conclude that despite the perception that there are more people outside in the teaching machine (Spivak, 1993, p. 294) than inside the teaching, trans* academics are not alone in navigating the kinds of tensions that result from navigating oppressive systems described here.

**Chapter Summary**

In this chapter, I described the ways that genderism manifests through everyday organizational practices and processes. I used the metaphor of the wall to describe the limits that trans* academics face. I developed three core tensions within trans academics experiences: interpersonal and digital misgendering, hyper-visibility and invisibility, and exercising agency
with disclosing trans identity/status/history. Each of the experiences I just described led trans academics to having to perform labor that cisgender individuals do not have to perform. By elucidating the various present in trans academics’ narratives, I encapsulated their experiences with the notion of being and becoming professionally *other*. In sum, I described some of what makes trans* academics have certain kinds of paranoia and hypersensitivity, as one participant described it.
Chapter 5: Within the Academic/Marketplace

Academic capitalism involves institutions picking, investing in, and betting on certain winners in the marketplace, in developing interstitial organizations, expanding managerial professions, and managerial capacity, and in reconstituting academic fields. –Sheila Slaughter and Gary Rhoades (2004, p. 308)

In this chapter, I describe findings that address the research question: What are the primary institutional logics that shape the experiences of trans* academics from diverse backgrounds? As previously stated in the conceptual framework section, the institutional logics perspective has eight different logics or ideal institutional orders (Thornton et al., 2012). In this study, these logics or institutional orders influenced the experiences of participants, albeit to different degrees. There are two major logics: the market and corporation logics and one declining logic: the state. Within this section and throughout, I use the language of institutional logics and ideal type interchangeably. The differential impact of these logics is at least partially attributable to institutional control (public or private) and institutional type (community college, regional comprehensive, among others). In many ways the “crisis” in higher education regarding democracy and educational access (Giroux & Giroux, 2004) profoundly shaped participants’ experiences in ways that had little to do with their being trans*. Given the profound shifts afoot within higher education, attending to the ways that the larger institutional orders of the market and corporation are fundamentally reshaping academic life, I must address these issues.

While not all participants’ interviews revealed a definitive institutional order that influenced their experiences, I highlight those participants who most clearly articulated institutional logics and the influence these logics exerted on participants’ experiences. I determined which participants’ narratives to highlight by creating mental maps. To create the mental maps I reviewed the individual and combined key stories matrices to identify the participants’ most salient logics. Then I considered inclusion of participants’ data based on
representation from different regions, institutional types, and identities. My initial mapping also
developed connections between participants and the various logics. A scanned copy of my initial
mental mapping is in appendix B.

**Marketplace as Metaphor**

One need not look too deeply within the Google search results for “best marketplaces in
the world” to uncover the rich tradition of this most ancient form of exchange. Often featured on
travel websites, open-air markets attract locals and tourists alike. Frommer’s, Bloomberg, The
Travel Channel, and foodie and travel websites each offer pictures of vibrant, bustling
marketplaces. Pictures of the marketplaces of the world show off the vivacity of the market
through images of the items that reveal what made a particular market famous. Perhaps it is fresh
flowers of every color at Union Square Greenmarket in New York. Or produce neatly stacked in
brown baskets covered in bright pink cloths at Mercado de la Merced in Mexico City, or the
vivid red, brown, and orange spices piled high at the Spice Bazaar in Istanbul. Perhaps it is fresh
fish staring blankly as they are nestled on top of shaved ice at Pike Place in Seattle. What these
images of the market share—regardless of the particular type of market or location of the
market—is a view from the consumer; the market-goer is almost always the vantage point.
Perhaps the market-goer is staring down from the second floor onto the market floor,
overlooking butchers, bakers, and pasta makers. Perhaps the market-goer zooms in on a
particular bunch of flowers, revealing each petal’s distinctive shape and coloring. Or maybe the
market-goer’s photo focuses on the sign revealing what the item is and what it costs in local
currency.

But, what is the allure of the marketplace? For me, as a little girl growing up in rural
Geauga County, about 45 minutes from downtown Cleveland, the allure of the marketplace, in
particular Cleveland’s West Side Market, were the sights, sounds, and smells of the city. I yearned for the city, the vibrancy that the market held, which was different, and the same every time I visited.

Imagine a market, filled with the smells of familiar and unfamiliar foods wafting through the air—twirling together and combining with the scent of decades old traditions. Listen to the humming sounds of machines running in the background, the compressors buzzing to keep cheese cool at The Cheese Shop, and fans spinning 44 feet high in the air, stirring up the air within the market itself, and the buzz of a heat lamp keeping a falafel sandwich warm at Maha’s Falafel.

Chatter of fellow market-goers floods the market floor, multiple languages spoken, a mother calling to her child, a couple deciding what is for dinner. The sounds of a vendor extolling the virtues of their meat, and the occasional “sorry” for having bumped into some one, the cacophony of voices pierced occasionally by the sounds of a vendor barking “two for one special on…” make the market what it is (McMillan, 2003; Pottie-Sherman, 2011). The marketplace is simultaneously a local and global economic exchange—the produce coming from fields as close as 30 minutes away—or from halfway around the world. The sociability of markets, the mixture of cultures, ethnicities, socio-economic statuses, and varying levels of education is what makes the market a unique and alluring experience (Watson, 2009). The specificity of these various experiences and positionalities, combining, if for only a fleeting moment, is especially the case in the West where populations are arguably more heterogeneous than in the localized cultures in agrarian societies.

In the West, especially the United States, the open-air market is increasingly a space of luxury, not of economic necessity, especially if one takes the vantage point of the consumer. In
other parts of the world, the market remains in its more traditional form, an ancient practice of exchanging goods, primarily out of necessity (McMillan, 2003). As Pottie-Sherman (2011) argued,

the marketplace does not always foster positive exchange beyond the economic. While interaction between diverse groups can encourage a sense of shared identity, hybridity, or appreciation of difference, contact can also reinforce social difference and exacerbate pre-existing tensions, particularly under circumstances of economic competition. (p. 22)

In other words, even if the potential for positive social exchange could occur in a marketplace, these social exchanges are imbued with existing power relations (Foucault, 1978).

The shifts occurring within marketplaces both locally and globally parallel trends occurring within higher education, at least in part because both are shaped by neoliberalism (Giroux, 2014). Neoliberalism refers to the political and economic shifts that gives primacy to the market and the individual, following the notion that “human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills” within a context of unbridled capitalism (Harvey, 2005, p. 2). I argue that shifts including the commercialization of educational products and services, and shifting from the college or university-as-marketer to the student-as-consumer indicates the neoliberalization of higher education (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). The neoliberal agenda fundamentally reshapes the aims and purposes of the educational endeavor (Darder, 2012; Giroux, 2014).

But the market can also serve as a way to describe the institutional logics (Thornton et al., 2012) that ultimately shape the experiences of the trans* academics that participated in this study. Higher education leaders, admissions and recruitment administrators, and institutional brand strategists/administrators especially, are now the vendors peering over the counter at their
consumer, persuading the student/consumer to chose their institution. Maybe the higher education leader-as-vendor sells undergraduate research, like Martina’s institution does, fully knowing there are others in the market that also sell that product or service. Or perhaps, the higher education leader-as-vendor sells a liberal arts curriculum at state school prices, like Gabe’s institution does. As vendors each make their pitch, the market air is flooded with the clamor of video testimonials from current students about why they chose their institution. Glossy admissions brochures line the floors of this market showing young, fit, “multicultural,” and able bodies studying on the quad. Images of rooftop pools, granite countertops, sushi bars, and climbing walls abound. Photos of students of different phenotypes studying and working together, typify the racialized messages conveyed through admissions brochures (Osei-Kofi, Torres, & Lui, 2013; Roediger, 2005).

Within this study there were two salient logics that emerged from the data—the market and the corporation. These logics intertwine like the gentle roar on the market floor with the higher education leader as market manager occasionally barking out demands “get more grants” or “increase undergraduate involvement in research.” Imagine a market place with faculty serving as vendors extolling the benefits of their particular expertise or institution and the workplace outcomes of their graduates and students as consumers snapping photos of the institution with the best amenities or “popular faculty.” The market manager is the college or university administration, orchestrating and executing the marketing and business plans, often holding the view from the top. The market manager gazes out over the market, seeing each of the vending stalls or departments of faculty and determining how to increase the efficiency profit of that unit through increasing class sizes or dictating the learning outcomes of a course.
The marketplace I just described is not some metaphor revealing some dystopian future. This academic marketplace is already in place. I describe this phenomenon as the academic market/workplace. The academic market/workplace is evidenced through participants’ descriptions of their institutions’ and departments’ values and what this has meant for their work as academics.

What is perhaps more startling about what participants’ revealed is the utter lack of a professional logic (Thornton et al., 2012). What lurked in the silences of participants’ comments is a by-gone era of faculty life (if such an era ever existed in the first place), where above all else, the life of the mind is the core. Many participants carved out spaces where they could pursue the kind of life that is dedicated to the pursuit of scholarly interests for the sake of advancement of knowledge and ultimately humanity. However, too often the institutional strategies that accompany market and corporation logics, including the strategies of increasing efficiency profit and the size and diversity of the firm (Thornton et al., 2012), adversely affected participants’ efforts to pursue their scholarly interests. Hiding in the shadowy parts of the academic marketplace are the moldy vegetable remains of the professional logic, a logic with a metaphor of a relational network that finds legitimacy through personal expertise and authority through the professional association of one’s field or discipline (Thornton et al., 2012).

Equally lacking in participants’ narratives is evidence of a community logic which finds legitimacy through a unity of will and belief in trust and reciprocity where the strategy is about increasing status and honor of its members (Thornton et al., 2012). Instead, I find an intertwining of market and corporation logics amidst a declining state logic. In what follows, I further describe this academic market/workplace and the consequences that the shift in the logics from professional and state to market and corporation mean for faculty. Before describing this shift, it
is important to note that what follows arrives out of the subjectivities of participants. This chapter is less concerned with the specificities of trans\* experiences in the academy and is more concerned with how the academic market/workplace comes to shape the experiences of trans academics in this study.

**Academic Market/Workplaces**

Returning to the market with admissions brochures lining the floors and student testimonials playing on a constant loop, I stumble upon participants representing different institutional types, regions, and identities. My conversations with Gabe, Carey, Stanley, and Carter revealed the palpable tension between higher education’s aims: developing good workers or a more educated citizenry. Nick and Stanley both described to me how market logics manifest specifically within libraries, and Martina, Joy, and Seth highlighted the ways that market logics appear within various institutional types, private liberal arts, and private research universities. Throughout the tour of the academic market/workplace, each participant reveled the consequences of market logics on their experiences.

In theorizing about the academic market/workplace, Slaughter and Rhoades’ (2004) notion of *academic capitalism* emerged. *Academic capitalism* views “groups of actors–faculty, staff, students, administrators, academic professionals–as using a variety of state resources to create new circuits of knowledge that link higher education institutions to the new economy” (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004, p. 1). This view focuses on the ways that institutions became marketers of their services to students. Slaughter and Rhoades (2004) argued that students select their institution based on amenities and the services and lifestyle a particular institution may offer. Recall my description of higher education leaders as vendors extolling the virtues and amenities of their campuses including “luxury” residence halls with granite counter
tens, rooftop pools, and tennis courts (e.g., Jan, 2009). Academic capitalism is distinct from neoliberalism. Academic capitalism emerged as an institutional strategy because of the larger neoliberal environment that is profoundly shaping the economy writ large and higher education in specific ways.

A sign above the academic market/workplace reads, “Neoliberalism” with an arrow pointing up, to signal the rise of this way of thinking. Neoliberalism is the political and economic shifts that moved education away from education being a public good to individual and privatized notions of education (Darder, 2012). Evidence of the ways neoliberalism operates in higher education include treating relationships like transactions, focusing on efficiency, and advancing accountability (Levidow, 2002). Neoliberalism also manifests in defining quality through the bottom line and commodifying educational products (e.g., classes). In short, consumption mediates all relationships (Levidow, 2002). Neoliberal logics and processes are part of the larger context of the political economy, while academic capitalism is a way to describe how higher education changed and continues to change in response to neoliberal demands. The market logic, as described by Thornton et al. (2012) is a kind of justification or institutional script by which neoliberalism and academic capitalism advance.

**Good Workers or Good Citizens**

Piercing through the background noise of the academic market/workplace is the voice of Gabe, a white male, pre-tenure assistant professor at a regional comprehensive institution in the midwest. Gabe expressed concerns about the ways that the market logic, academic capitalism, and neoliberalism each influenced his work experiences. In particular, Gabe highlighted the ways that his particular institution marketed itself to students by offering degree completion options for returning adult learners, in keeping with academic capitalism (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004).
He has a dual appointment in two humanities departments and in department A there are “all of these initiatives that are about success and leadership.” He continued to say that department A seemed “very business oriented and [is] about producing graduates that can go into the business world, or go into corporate America, and succeed with a humanities-based degree.”

Part of what Gabe is describing is how higher education leaders as vendors describe the institutional brand as resting on the notion that the university offers a humanities-based education that prepares students to work in a variety of for-profit industries. As a result of the market niche his institution seeks to fill, Gabe’s courses “have to be as open and as generalized as possible to slot into the needs of that type of student.” The result of having to cater to students, and achieve the course objectives dictated by department A means that Gabe feels like he is “fighting for [my] academic freedom.” He views the moves made by department A as being about a “more consumer model, give them what they need to get through the pipeline.”

Gabe continued to describe what the institution expects him to produce through the provision of his educational services, turning him into the marketing partner. He said “promoting student leadership and entrepreneurship and well-rounded workers. Students who can come out of the university with a well-rounded education and be successful in a lot of different areas.” At least for Gabe, this model did not work, and he described being conflicted by the whole notion that the liberal arts are “welded onto corporate success models” that lack a “social justice component.” In particular, Gabe yearned for more conversations like he had in department B, discussions rooted in social justice. In particular, Gabe notes that department A lacked any discussion about “critical thinking for its own sake.” Gabe said in an email providing feedback about his experience that he navigates appeasing the “needs of lots of different stakeholders, who might hold contradictory values and expectations.” Gabe must hold the contradictory
organizational scripts in mind while he navigates departments A and B. He also noted that it is not uncommon for minoritized scholars to have dual appointments, thus creating additional labor that I described in chapter four.

Gabe provided evidence of the lived mission of his institution as being about preparing good workers. Similarly, Carey, a white trans male student affairs administrator and adjunct instructor at a private research university in the east, described the students at his university as “internally driven” with an “individualistic” nature. The focus of Carey’s elite institution was “creating students who are going to have a global impact or to be world leaders.” Further, from Carey’s perspective, the institution prided itself on producing entrepreneurial graduates who will go on to be consultants. He concluded that this drive to produce global leaders, both the institution’s drive, but to a greater extent the students’ understanding of the outcome of attending the university, is “a very individualistic, neoliberal understanding.” As described above, neoliberalism refers to political and economic shifts that influence education in ways that are similar to the market logic as described by Thornton et al. (2012). Within the academic market/workplace this meant that both Gabe and Carey were expected by their institutions to produce good workers in keeping with neoliberal norms.

Like Gabe and Carey, Stanley, a white FTM and genderqueer academic librarian with many years of experience, former adjunct instructor, and current PhD student and graduate student instructor at a large public research university in the midwest, also experienced the tension between producing good workers and good citizens. For Stanley, this played out within his experiences within academic libraries and in library and information science classrooms over the years. In describing materials acquisition, he said, “should we [in the library] purchase resources to turn our students into good workers versus purchasing resources to help our students
become good citizens.” Stanley also articulated a tension between buying materials that please the faculty versus having the core books for a particular field of study. The question then becomes which consumers matter within this particular transaction, higher education leader-as-vendor who wants to increase efficiency profit, or student as consumer, or faculty as service provider? The overall prevalence of a market logic left Stanley to conclude that there is “a lot of focus is on making good workers, having students who can get really highly paid jobs after graduation.”

Likewise, Carter, a white trans-male professor at a public research university in the midwest, said, “For curriculum, a lot of programs are living or dying by whether or not their curriculum and their degree leads directly to job employment.” For Carter, this meant that some students enroll in certain programs because of “a much clearer track from their education right into a job.” Carter’s comments point to the ways market and neoliberal logics turn educational services into a transaction between students and institutions. The assumption is that students will get a job as a direct result of the paid services that higher education institutions offer. As I will describe more in the section on the convergence of market and corporation logics, the implication of some students’ drive towards more vocational programs has budgetary implications at some institutions, especially Carter’s. At this point, I will note that some institutions allocate funds based on transactions, for example, via course enrollment. I describe this notion of budgeting through transaction more later.

**Market Logics within Academic Libraries**

In addition to producing “graduates who are well rounded,” higher education institutions offer a variety of services, including information services within academic libraries, as I will discuss by sharing more of Stanley’s comments. I use the academic library as an example to
demonstrate how far and wide reaching neoliberal market logics extend within higher education institutions. Because I interviewed five academic librarians, I highlight the academic library as one example, though there are many potential other examples.

Stanley described the phenomenon in librarianship that there is “this whole ‘libraries are dying’ thing…[and] libraries are morphing in response.” According to Stanley, all libraries changed in responses to the so-called death of libraries, but academic libraries, in particular, reframed what they do in terms of the services that they provide, including “information literacy.” Rather than libraries serving the public good, libraries increasingly take a transactional approach, operating within a “services provided” model. In addition to services, courses within “librarian school” are also offered in a model of transaction, where “professional skills” acquisition becomes the services that educators provide. Both in libraries themselves and within classroom spaces that create future librarians, neoliberal market logics prevail.

In addition to shifting from a model where libraries are seen as inherently good, academic libraries increasingly need to attend to developing ways to prove their value. According to Stanley, libraries now prove their value by “emphas[izing] assessment, [and] creating a culture of assessment where everything is quantified.” He said that library administrators now develop reports for any number of quantifiable metrics including the number of patrons, volumes purchased, and questions answered at the reference desk. While Stanley felt that the quantification was necessary, he also felt that more qualitative measures such as “the level of users’ abilities after that [attending a workshop]” also mattered. Stanley is gesturing towards the fact that there is an underlying logic of assessment, advanced by library directors and administrators that views library services as a transaction, the root metaphor of the market ideal
type (Thornton et al., 2012). Even the metrics used to provide evidence of the utility of the library rests on the notion that a library is a place where transactions occur.

Other academic librarians also addressed issues related to the view of libraries as sites of transactions. Nick, a nonbinary and gender non-conforming Native American man and academic librarian at a public research university in the midwest, in speaking about the values of his department said,

The only other thing I would mention is—which is true in academic institutions more generally—is the business model. Trying to find ways to market, promote, and sometimes even monetize our services is interesting in the library context because we are non-profits or at the least not for profits. We have a business mentality, we have a business manager here for the library, not all libraries do, …but that’s a change, seeing the library as a business.

Nick described the business model, symbolized by the business manager and materially manifested in the efforts to market, promote, and monetize services. This is indicative of what I described earlier as academic capitalism. In particular, Slaughter and Rhoades (2004) described this as pursuing market and market-like activities that blur the lines between markets, the state, and higher education. The use of a market logic is the organizational script that advances academic capitalism I discuss the intertwining of each of these logics in a later section about the convergence of market and corporation logics.

Market Logics within Different Institutional Types

The predominance of the market logic not only affected certain parts of the university differently, it also manifested in various institutional types differently. I describe Martina, Joy, and Seth’s experiences at three different institutional types, a private liberal arts college and two
private research universities, including one with a specialized mission (e.g., religious, serving Black students). Martina, a Latina female full professor in the sciences at a liberal arts college in the west described the shifting logic of the market within her institutional type. Martina worked at several liberal arts colleges in the midwest and western parts of the U.S. over the course of more than 20 years, having taken her first academic appointment in 1991. Based on her rich experiences within liberal arts contexts, she noted that there was a move towards a “teacher/scholar” model that emphasized hiring “people that were successful in the classroom but were also scholars doing original research […] with undergraduates usually involved in the process.” The student involvement in research is an especially important point that her institution highlights in its marketing, partially derived from the large number of institutions clustered in her immediate geographic area. Martina said,

We’re [faculty, administrators] well aware that those families [visiting our school] have gone to those other institutions and probably heard them making the pitch that students will be able to be involved in scholarly work from the time they’re freshman if they choose to. […] We know we have to play that game to be competitive with those schools. While Martina maintained, “that’s not obviously the only reason we do that [hire teacher/scholars] but as I said, that’s the context that we live in [the western U.S.]. Those other institutions are out there, and they do that teacher/scholar game, like we do.” Martina is very clearly describing how her institution markets itself to students and the awareness that the teacher/scholar approach is not unique. Martina’s comments highlight both the ways that liberal arts institutions make themselves unique, but also how her particular institution attempts to be viable within a competitive region. Responding to the market conditions in her region, Martina developed a program of research that involved undergraduate students. But Martina was not
alone in having to make decisions about her work based on the ways that her institution marketed itself.

Joy is a white, MTF transsexual woman who works as a tenured full professor in the humanities at a private research university with a specialized mission in the east. When asked to describe her department, Joy talked about how small it was, stating that, “it has gotten progressively smaller.” Because her institution has had a hiring freeze for a number of years and because faculty have been encouraged to retire and then those positions are not filled, she is now one of four faculty in her department. The shrinking department size is particularly attributable to the unique educational environment at Joy’s institutional type. Joy’s institution made many moves to increase the “efficiency profit” (Thornton et al., 2012) of its educational services by hiring adjunct labor. In so doing, there is a “strong pressure” to “hire faculty who will have high enrollments. This is one of the problems that I’ve had in my department… I’m not highly valued as a teacher because I don’t have high enrollments.” Because of the demand for high enrollments as part of a strategy to increase efficiency profit, Joy said that:

when we’re interviewing people, we talk about how we think our students will respond to them in the classroom. Will the classes fill up and will the students like the professors? Not will they be challenged by them, will they be stimulated by them, although that would be nice also, but a challenging, stimulating professor who is not charismatic, who is not going to be seen as likeable and interesting by our students, we tend to shy away from that because we don’t know what their enrollments will be like.

Her being trans, an unfamiliar identity to her students, who are often coming from “sheltered communities” ultimately shapes Joy’s experiences at her institution. Because Joy does not have high enrollments, at least in part because some students see her as “scary” a notion that derives
from her trans* status, her colleagues undervalue her contributions. Because of the prevailing logic of the market, the emphasis on efficiency at her institution through high student enrollments in courses, and the dire and precarious financial standing of her institution, Joy’s experiences at her institution are largely negative, and in many instances, unsupportive. As such, Joy provided evidence of a contradiction between the market demands of high enrollments and her sense of self as a trans woman, which is perceived by others as a problem that leads to lower enrollments.

Like Joy, Seth is also teaching at a private research university in the east. Seth is a trans* and genderqueer post-doctoral fellow and lecturer who works at an institution with a very clear “brand.” Seth described the situation as follows, “[administrators] have used the term ‘institutional brand,’ [in faculty meetings] and I wanted to kind of puke in my mouth.” They continued to say:

I think that my institution is an institution that thinks very highly of itself. And I think that they do put an incredible amount of time and energy into their branding and their public face. I think though that the on the ground experience is very different. [then describes racist incidents that occurred on campus]

The gut reaction Seth described is yet another example of the kind of disjuncture that some trans academics feel between their views of education and the institutional goals. The concern about the “public face” of the institution where Seth works points to the notion that within the market logic the basis of attention is status in the market (Thornton et al., 2012).

The way that the basis of attention manifested most concretely in Seth’s experiences was in an interaction with his supervisor about the title of a course, which helps to highlight the ways in which protecting the institutional brand occurred at their university. They said,
I really wanted it [the title of my course] to be, “gender fucking gender.” After I submitted my proposal, the assistant director pulled me aside and was like, very cautiously, “We certainly don’t want to tell you what you can and can’t call your classes, but if you can be mindful of the fact that the institution uses a lot of our course offerings in their recruitment materials, and some parents might be upset about that word.”

The assistant director continued to wonder if Seth would be willing to consider changing the course title. Seth described this as a kind of situation where the director would not “tell you what to do, but I’m telling you what to do.” The idea that Seth would need to change a course title because of potential marketing is clear example of how the market logic as taken up through academic capitalism operates and affects their experience (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004; Thornton et al., 2012).

While the strain on academic freedom that Gabe and Seth described is disheartening, perhaps the most egregious consequence of the market logic was what Seth described with respect to preserving the institutional brand. Seth’s institution takes great care in preserving the brand of the institution, as described above. The brand preservation strategy manifested in many ways, including the administration distancing itself from racist acts. Seth described a racist incident on campus and the institution’s response, they said,

Several weeks go by [after the incident] and my institution administration released a press release, saying that they had done an investigation, a student had come forward to admit to being the person who hung the noose, and that it was absolutely not a racially motivated incident. [The press release stated] that the student was making a joke and had
no knowledge of the symbolic meaning of a noose. And that [press release] therefore, it’s almost like relieving themselves of accountability.

What is more, the institution positioned itself as a place where “racism doesn’t exist” despite the fact that students of color from that campus released numerous statements to the contrary, similar to what Ahmed (2015) called “damage limitation.” Damage limitation describes how institutions distance themselves from the damage of racism, wherein naming racism would be damaging to whiteness/white institutions, and the rhetoric of diversity creates a limit on damage (Ahmed, 2015). In “relieving themselves of accountability,” Seth’s institution is putting up the wall that makes it impossible to name racism.

What is even more telling is that I can write about the noose incident and still not unintentionally reveal Seth’s institution, as these kinds of events are all too common on college campuses. Despite the concern about preserving a positive institutional brand, distanced from current and past racist practices, Seth concluded that having an institutional brand “doesn’t allow room for critique. And that’s really troubling, cause it’s an academic institution.”

Given the post-civil rights and “post-racial” context of the U.S. institutions have a vested interest in preserving their institutional brands as “not racist,” as being overtly racist is seen as politically incorrect and bad for business (Ahmed, 2012; Carter & Tuitt, 2013). Seth’s comments punctuate some of the more serious consequences of the market logic and academic capitalism: brand preservation and unconditional positive marketing. Taken together, Gabe, Carey, Stanley, Nick, Carter, Martina, Joy, and Seth all provide evidence of the ways that the market logic manifests within the contesting of the purposes of education, market logics within specific departments, and within particular institutional types. The market logic is the justification or the
organizational script used to engage in *academic capitalism* that the larger neoliberal environment requires.

**Corporate Academic Market/Workplaces**

In the U.S., open-air markets often compete for customers with corporate businesses, like big box grocery store chains. Big box grocery stores supplanted smaller family owned markets and grocers in many parts of the U.S., which provides a clear parallel to higher education institutions. Large, research universities are like the big box grocery stores, offering hundreds of majors, high-end amenities, and sprawling campuses. Smaller, niche grocers are similar to smaller liberal arts colleges. While my characterization of big box stores and niche grocers might be an oversimplification, there is differentiation amongst higher education organizations that parallels larger market trends. Various institutional types, like different kinds of places to acquire food, often compete in an environment where the values of (student) consumerism and (academic) capitalism reign supreme. The language of competition and hierarchy creates a kind of corporate academic market/workplace, again the organizational script follows logics of the market and corporation, which advance neoliberalism.

Many participants gestured towards the corporation logic, especially to hierarchy, in their comments about their institutional context using language like “the higher ups” or “at the top.” The higher ups are the sources of authority within a corporation (Thornton et al., 2012). Market position provides legitimacy within the corporation logic and the basis of strategy is to increase size and to diversify the firm (having multiple kinds of activities). Open-air markets, smaller grocers, and big box grocery stores each compete within the food purveyor market, yet, some stores and markets are better positioned to succeed. Again, a parallel to higher education is evident. In particular, liberal arts colleges and institutions with specialized missions struggle
within the current context of higher education that looks increasingly like big box grocery stores and less like the historical liberal arts institution with smaller communities of faculty and students. In this section, I describe the corporate academic market/workplace again tapping participants who help highlight this logic. I selected participants’ stories using the mental map analytic process I previously described.

Nick, introduced above, described his university’s “growth agenda,” a symbolic gesture towards increasing size and diversifying the “firm.” She described the university’s “growth agenda” in the following way:

…just from the President’s remarks in the strategic plan, growth would be a big one. […] that’s growth both in terms of the student base, but also on the size of the campus and departmental connections. One of the things we have going right now is establishing a health sciences campus, here on our campus, so you see health sciences is becoming a big priority to the university. A lot of that is because health sciences are worth a lot of money, when you see the university acquiring various hospitals in the area. So, that is a big and really growing part of the academic mission.

What Nick described illuminates several important aspects of the corporation ideal type. First, she shows that the vision from the top, the source of authority within the corporation logic. Next, he talked about the importance of growth, not just any kind of growth, but growth in lucrative fields, like the health sciences. Finally, the basis of the strategy is to diversify the campus. Nick went on to describe that there are already prominent programs in a humanities field and business and the university is diversifying into the health sciences by “acquiring various hospitals.” At least at Nick’s institution, the diversification is about growing through the health sciences.
As Nick just described, the growth agenda of some universities centers on potentially lucrative fields. Similarly, Susan, a white settler, male-to-female transsexual woman and associate professor at a public research university in the southwest, described how her university thought that her field, focused on the study of trans lives, was somehow related to health disparities and a potential new revenue stream for the university. She explained the situation as follow:

My university thinks of [my field] as something that’s related to health… the people who are the highest in the administration, who are most supportive of it, frame [my field] completely within a health disparities model. And it’s like the assumption is that transgender is a medical issue, there’s a certain kind or type of person called “the transgender person,” they have health disparities. NIH [National Institutes for Health] has recently said, “LGBT health is one of our funding priorities.” [some administrators think that] the “T” is the least funded part of this, so we’ve got an opportunity here to kind of get in on the ground floor of federal funding on transgender issues, so go for it.

Susan’s comments highlight two key features of the corporation logic. First, her comments showed that the basis of attention derives from a firm’s status in the hierarchy. As Susan described, those “highest in the administration” view the potential role of her field as a way to “get in on the ground floor.” Being in on the ground floor means that Susan’s institution can acquire additional value by being the first or only institution with a particular field of study. Related to attention being on status in the hierarchy, the strategy in the corporation logic is diversification and growth. The decision to advance Susan’s field at the university is also about increasing the size and diversifying the firm. But Susan’s institution is also trying to link her
field of study to new circuits of knowledge, in keeping with *academic capitalism* (Slaughter 7 Rhoades, 2004)

When Susan talks about her post-structural theoretical approach, the response from administrative leaders is often, “yeah, but how about those grants?” Some administrators go so far as to suggest that, “NSF [National Science Foundation] gives interdisciplinary grants.” Susan felt “pressure” to have the research institute that she runs be a “revenue center” and not a “cost center.” In short, the university sees itself as “funding an emerging field of research that could potentially be lucrative.”

Susan went on to describe how there are already movements towards developing a health center, medical tourism, and a plastic surgery complex at the various campus locations throughout the state in which her institution is located. At the end of Susan’s comments about the corporate growth agenda, she described not feeling like the critical knowledge production work that she does is particularly valued by the institution. The way this shapes her experience is that there is the university agenda and her own research agenda, which are in some ways at odds. As long as Susan’s research institute is not a cost center, the administration is likely to leave her alone, though it is yet to be known if that is in fact the case.

Another way that the corporation logic, especially the growth agendas and push to diversify “firms” manifested in this study, not specific to trans issues, is the increased enrollment of international students. Stanley, introduced above, indicated that his institution has a really large international student population, which the university prizes in a lot of ways probably because it makes us feel more diverse. But, also because it makes a lot of money for the university. As I’m sure you know, international students pay really high tuition and are limited by their visas to the type of work they can do and how many hours
they can work as students and so on. A lot of those students are really wealthy, I mean, you have to be just by definition if you can afford to come to the U.S. and pay very exorbitant tuitions.

Stanley highlights yet another way that institutions seek to grow and diversify the university campus. While certainly research universities often enroll large amounts of international students, this is not the only institutional type that pursues a growth agenda through international student enrollment.

Westley, a white trans boy and adjunct professor at two community colleges described how one of the institutions he taught at grew enrollment through recruiting more international students. He said, “The college was internationalizing in the last five years or so. There’s a high population of international students that are pretty much paying for the college.” The challenge that this change in enrollment pattern presented for faculty was that the other faculty were ill-prepared to support the new student populations. He said this change in enrollment happened, “without giving any of the faculty the tools that they need or requiring the faculty to attend the classes they need to fully understand the population of students.” Westley went on to describe the faculty as being “behind” and not “having the tools or resources they needed for significant change in the college.” Westley’s comments show how a corporate-type growth agenda within academic institutions, including admitting large numbers of international students, often creates other needs. At least in Westley’s case, the institution did not provide the tools necessary to support a new student population. Here Westley is gesturing towards what Levin (2007) described the ways in which groups of students, in this case, international students, do not receive justice within community college settings.
Likewise Kelly, a white tranny who is an contract archivist at a public research university in the west described the corporate model of higher education and the growth agenda within library and information science more specifically. Kelly said:

this model of corporate education here the university just tries to make—I mean it’s the goal to make as much money as possible. I mean that’s why we have so many international students at [my university] too, because they’re paying more… [My institution] used to be a university that was set up for free public education for residents, and now it’s becoming […] less students from [the state] are admitted and more international students…because it’s about making money for the university.

Kelly highlights the same issues that others did around the increased enrollment of international students as a form of increasing and diversifying revenue sources. Stanley, Westley, and Kelly each described the various growth agendas pursued by their institutions and highlighted how the organizational script related to the corporation logic reflects the larger context of academic capitalism as a way to create revenue circuits demanded by larger political and economic demands of neoliberalism.

The final way that the growth agenda manifested was at the department level and two academic librarians spoke to this issue. Isaac, a white male post-doctoral researcher and former graduate teaching associate described his previous institution as “moving towards this distance education and distance learning.” He felt that this was “response in some way to all of the other… online universities that have been cropping up” and offering degree programs in his field. Online education met the need to create new and diverse streams of revenue for Isaac’s department, but it also served a pedagogical purpose in the sense that “online classes…get
students into a digital mindset.” The digital mindset is an important skill set for 21st century academic librarians who are often in “need of a lot of digital training” according to Isaac.

Stanley, introduced above, also mentioned that his department is trying to grow the enrollment numbers within his program. In that growth, competing programmatic aims emerged between “developing professional skills and the theoretical and historical underpinnings” of the field. Because of the tension within his program between theory and practice as described above, Stanley often faced opposition to including theory in his courses, with “half of them complain[ing] that there is too much theory.” A potential parallel to Stanley’s experience with the tension between developing skills and providing theoretical grounding occurs across fields (e.g., social work) and within specific courses (e.g., utility of general education) within universities. While Stanley wants to give “students a theoretical and historical underpinning for the work that they do, as opposed so emphasizing so much of what the skills are,” his sentiments do not necessarily align with the current values in his program. He felt that:

master’s students tend to view [the program] as a sort of a skills training program. They have mindset that they will take these courses [that build] a skill set and then they’ll get jobs that play on those skills, which may or may not be true.

Stanley shows how the corporate mindset of growth fosters particular kinds of growth that align with neoliberal market demands.

Taken together, Nick, Susan, Isaac, Stanley, Kelly, and Westley all pointed the various ways that institutions and departments take up the corporate logic. The basis of attention is on the status in the hierarchy and a key way to increase one’s position in the status hierarchy is through securing external grant dollars, as Susan demonstrated. Additionally, I described the basis of attention on status in the hierarchy, conferred through increasing the size and
diversification of the “firm.” Institutions accomplished growth and diversification through adding health sciences campuses in Nick’s and Susan’s cases. Departments also contribute to strategies of diversification and growth agendas through online programs in the case of Isaac and Stanley. Susan and Stanley both articulated how this growth-minded corporate logic and agenda influenced their experiences. For Susan, the corporate logic meant that there was a gross misinterpretation of her work as being somehow about health. In Stanley’s case, the tension between theory and practice meant that his students often complained about his use of theory. Finally, Stanley, Westley, and Kelly all described the ways that international students also represent a corporate growth agenda for higher education institutions. Having just described market and corporation logics, I now describe three instances where these logics converged.

**Convergence of Market and Corporation Logics**

The notion of the corporate academic market/workplace signals the intertwining of the market and corporation institutional orders. As Gumport (2000) argued elsewhere, there is a move away from viewing “higher education as a social institution, and moving toward the idea of higher education as an industry” (p. 70). In viewing higher education as an industry, I find evidence of the intertwining of market and corporation logics occurring. The differences between the market and corporation logic are many. For example, the corporation logic has a metaphor of hierarchy, while the market uses transaction as a metaphor (Thornton et al., 2012). The source of legitimacy within the corporation logic is market position, while in the market logic legitimacy is garnered through share price (Thornton et al., 2012). Yet, there are commonalities between these two logics or organizational scripts which ultimately result in higher education being treated like a business.
AJ is a white, trans and genderqueer tenure-track assistant professor at a women’s liberal arts college. In describing the growth of the institution because of its amenities, AJ illustrates the convergence of market and corporation logics. AJ said,

The highest higher ups are more focused on the dollar sign and growth and even as a women’s college, we have been growing enrollment every year I’ve been here, so we’re not about to close doors any time soon at all, which is great. We’re building new buildings all the time, multi-million dollar buildings, so, on one hand it’s great. On the other hand there are low paid faculty, that’s not so great.

When AJ’s institution is “focused on the dollar sign,” this is a reflection of the basis of strategy within a market logic (e.g., increased efficiency profit, Thornton et al., 2012). Whereas the emphasis on continued growth, rooted in the desire to increase size, is the basis of strategy within the corporation logic (Thornton et al., 2012). AJ also pointed out the ways in which the market and corporation logics affected faculty members, primarily through the low wages that AJ and other faculty receive. Additionally, the corporation logic appears in the emphasis on hierarchy with the top management serving as the authority within AJ’s institution. Further, the building of large expensive buildings is part of academic capitalism (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004) and part of the larger marketing and branding strategies of the institution.

Similarly, Mary, a white female associate professor in the sciences at a public research university in the west, described the converging logics within her institution. She said, “the last two presidents, including this one, wants to grow the enrollment by about a third or 50%.” Mary said, “They see it as a way to survive.” The conflict and tensions amidst the market, corporation, and state logics becomes immediately apparent in Mary’s comments:
the reduction in state support of higher education over the last several decades, was pretty severe. We’re one of the largely [state supported] ones still, apparently [state appropriations] at 25% to 30%. However, the tuition keeps going up and it’s just shifting the burden to the students themselves. In our state, we have -- the legislature tells you how much money we’re going to get and then the state board of education decides whether or not we’re going to raise tuition to compensate enough, so two different entities. And so the higher education systems get caught in between.

Here Mary describes the conflicting and converging logics that her institution must contend with. Her comments clearly point to the reduction in state support, and the continued role of various state entities vying for bureaucratic domination with the state’s institutions of higher education being caught in the middle. The president of her university is pursuing a growth agenda in keeping with a corporation logic, while the state logic continues to be overshadowed by competing notions about who is responsible for paying for a college education. Mary is gesturing towards the privatization of education costs, a key characteristic of the neoliberal state (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004).

Carter further described the convergence of the market and corporation logic amidst the declining role of the state logic as signified by:

not hiring tenure-track faculty but hiring teaching faculty non-tenure-track is happening everywhere, and that certainly is happening here. That has an impact on the kind of academic you can be, and the kinds of programs, and the amount of time you can have for shared governance. For example, I am the only tenured faculty member in my program area, the other two are teaching faculty and their teaching load is so heavy plus they don’t have an expectation to direct dissertations or master’s theses so in that sense
the larger institutional trend of doing away with more tenured/tenure track faculty is a tension at [state] university. Part of that tension Carter just described meant that they experienced very little intellectual community and felt like their program area was undervalued, at least in part because of sagging enrollments. These conflicting logics are at least in part related to the fact that Carter teaches in a humanities-oriented program that has an ambiguous workplace outcome. At least at Carter’s institution, the concern with enrollments has a budgetary impact as described earlier.

Collectively, AJ, Mary, and Carter demonstrated the consequences and lived realities of academics amidst the shifting institutional logics present within the higher education “industry.” Higher education has largely shifted away from a logic that centers democratic participation. While there are exceptions to democratic participation (e.g., college access programs), many institutions now focus on status in the market and growth and diversification, two characteristics of the market and corporation logics. Now I will turn toward focusing on the declining role of the state logic, which occurred alongside the rise of the market and corporation logics I just described.

**(Declining) State Logic**

While the market and corporation logics rise, the role of the state logic declined within higher education. Returning to the market metaphor, parallels between publicly supported open-air markets and privately operated markets mirror the changes also occurring within higher education. While there was a period of declining support for publicly support markets, this trend is reversing (Visconti, Minowa, & Maclaran, 2014). Unfortunately, the declining in public and state support for higher education (Barr & Turner, 2013; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004) does not appear to have the same positive trend as state and federal support for public markets.
Concomitant with the rise of private ownership at the expense of the public good is the view of educational capital as a private good, another hallmark of the neoliberal state (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004).

In the previous two sections, I talked about logics as both material and symbolic. In this section, I focus primarily on the material aspect of the state logic. As such, the declining role of the state manifests materially, especially in the loss of revenue, and the changes that those losses in state support meant for higher education. In response to the declining state support (among other reasons), public universities emphasize bringing in grants and other revenue generating strategies (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). The logic of the state manifested most concretely in the experiences of faculty at regional comprehensive universities and institutions that aspire to be research universities. It is the case that part of the corporation logic is about bringing in grants, as Susan described. However, grants and other revenue generating strategies are also about back filling public universities’ budgets as state legislatures decreased support for public higher education (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). Grant getting has two functions then: securing diversified funding sources to support growth agendas within the corporation logic and securing financial support for institutions that are experiencing a constrained resource environment.

Nathan is a white intersex trans man and associate professor in the social sciences at a regional comprehensive university mired in a difficult financial environment. He described the basis of attention for his institution, “Right now, there’s so much institutional focus on bringing in money, that is really what the university focuses on. Grants.” While Nathan’s university has a “monomaniacal focus” on grant getting, his department was less concerned with this. Given the contemporary fiscal issues in his state, Nathan reflected on the proposed budget cuts in the following way,
How are we supposed to deal with that [large state budget cut]? Something scary is going to happen. We all know it. And we will have to come up with some way to give all this money back to the state. Not even bringing money in… but giving it back. What are we supposed to do? Sell off a building?

Nathan clearly articulates how the kinds of cuts that states have made to higher education systems across the U.S. affect academics. I describe this phenomenon in more detail in chapter six as “academic precarity.” At this point, what Nathan’s sarcastic comments illuminate is that the reductions in state support are now so deep that infrastructure is all that remains to be cut.

But the reductions in state support are not just a contemporary concern at Nathan’s university. One of the ways that the declining logic of the state affected him historically was through the certificate program he runs as a “volunteer service for the university…[which] can’t have faculty teach our classes anymore.” He said that since the initiation of that certificate program in 1993, which has modest budget of $1500, in the last ten years, that budget has decreased twice. For Nathan, this meant “we run the thing on a bake sale.” It also means that unless one is deeply committed to the certificate program, most scholars at his institution are largely uninterested in donating their time to the program. This leaves graduate students being the only ones willing and able to take up the important work of this certificate program.

Another way that Nathan’s story illustrates the declining logic of the state was through changes in labor patterns amongst instructional staff. Nathan said:

a few years ago the theory was we need to get rid of all our non-tenure faculty and have graduate teachers and us [tenure-track/tenured faculty] teach all the classes. Get rid of all of the lecturers and replace them with graduate students. Okay, so we started doing that, and now suddenly graduate students are too expensive because they get tuition remission.
So now we should not have any classes taught by graduate students, they should be
taught by extremely poorly paid contract laborers. And to make as many faculty leave
and not replace them, which is what has happened.

The shifts Nathan described in the academic labor market at his institution, moving away from
tenure-line faculty to more contingent labor, including graduate instructors, is a higher education
system-wide problem (Gappa et al., 2007; NCES, 2013b). This shifting balance of appointment
types signals the move away from a state logic to market logic where efficiency is the basis of
the strategy. In the pursuit of budgetary efficiencies, universities exploit the labor of some
academics, particularly non-tenure line instructors.

Likewise, Timothy, a white trans man and adjunct instructor at a regional comprehensive
institution in the west is also at an university that is searching for budgetary efficiencies.
Timothy provided one of the most glaring and longstanding examples of the kind of exploitative
labor practices that the declining logic of the state gave way to. Timothy described his
employment situation in the following way:

My department used to have many more tenure-track people; it used to have closer to 10.
But with budget cuts and a lot of what is going on with higher education lately, that has
been whittled down to five. My department is very supportive of my work and has been
trying to get me a tenure-track position for pretty much the nine years I’ve been here, but
they have been unsuccessful.

Not only has Timothy been unable to secure a tenure-track position elsewhere, he is unable to
secure a more permanent position within his current institution and is also dealing with salary
inversion.
Carter, introduced earlier, like Nathan and Timothy described the effects of the state budget reductions and the loss of faculty within their department. Carter’s institution is a research university with an aspirational drive that has grown since they served there during the last 18 years. The focus shifted away from teaching to being a research university. They said,

Again, like most universities, public universities’ budgets are a huge issue. So the programs here that get attention are programs that bring in grant dollars or programs that are of such quality that they bring national attention to the university or at least have national prominence in their field. We have a couple of programs that meet that and those ones are supported by the sources.

In Carter’s case, their institution did not direct resources towards their humanities oriented program. Carter, like Timothy and Nathan, also lost faculty members of the years. Carter’s institution also closed the doctoral program in their department some years ago because of the lack of revenue.

Returning to Timothy’s case, when I asked him whether the budget reductions were particular to his college or institution wide, he said:

I’d say both. I mean there have been faculty positions lost throughout the institution. Our institution, as part of the university system, they did a recent study on the institution, and have found that– as was pretty easy to be noticed by us– that while the faculty positions have diminished, we have…they haven’t diminished the administrative positions […] with fairly comfortable salaries and have not hired tenure line folks.

Losses of faculty lines were mostly due to retirement, a phenomenon also occurring at Nathan and Joy’s institutions. Timothy continued to say that the rationale for why there are not more tenure-track positions was because of a “lack of funding on the state level” and “less money.”
Given Timothy’s situation, he felt that this “doesn’t make much sense when one recognizes that they are still filling quite a few administrative positions.”

Timothy, like Nathan, also experienced budgetary pressures. Timothy said, “there’s a constant pressure to save money” and “pursuing everything that will reduce costs” and that in order to save money for the college, they have considered increasing class sizes. That last option is a particularly frightening option for Timothy because he teaches in a writing intensive program, so to increase class sizes by 10% would be even more work on top of a 5-5 teaching assignment. In the absence of state support, market and corporation logic prevails and the focus becomes about increasing efficiency profit and firm diversification.

The pressure to have high enrollments was a way that institutions responded to dwindling state support in both Nathan and Timothy’s case. Nathan said, “student credit hours is always important. You have to be good at teaching so students take your classes.” The effects of dwindling state support, a material manifestation of the decline of the state logic and subsequent rise of market and corporation logics, means that faculty employed at public/state supported institutions are feeling the squeeze of these mounting pressures.

Taken together Nathan, Timothy, and Carter each revealed the ways that declining state support made their overall work more difficult. The pressures to save, coupled with continued state disinvestment from higher education, leaves academics few options. In particular, the dwindling state logic makes it difficult to fully support and realize the teaching and research missions of their institutions.

**Chapter Summary**

In this chapter, I described market and corporation logics, amidst the declining state logic that influence participants experiences using the metaphor of an open-air market. I developed
findings in response to the following research question: What are the primary institutional logics that shape the experiences of trans* academics from diverse backgrounds? The institutional logics I described in this chapter had powerful roles in shaping how trans* academics conceptualized their work and their working conditions. In some participants’ experiences, the market and corporation logics converge to create unjust working conditions. The market and corporation logic serve as organizational scripts that advance academic capitalism in connection with neoliberalism. The predominating logics, namely the market and corporation, had effects for participants in terms of the curriculum as Gabe and Stanley described, enrollment as Joy articulated, procuring grants as Susan indicated, and the viability of programs as Carter demonstrated. I also described the effects that the academic market/workplace had for academic libraries with the pressure to quantify outputs and for institutional types including Joy’s and Westley’s experiences at a private research university and at a community college, respectively.
Chapter 6: “A Threshold Across”:

How Organizational and Policy Contexts Shape Trans* Academics’ Experiences

That is the strangeness of language: it crosses the boundaries of the body, is at once inside and outside, and it sometimes happens that we don’t know until the threshold has been crossed. –Siri Hustvedt (2009, p. 16)

In this chapter, as previously described, I take up a “thinking with theory” approach (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012) to better understand how the previous two findings chapter create passageways or thresholds for the trans* academics in this study. Having worked with the metaphor of the marketplace, I now describe four thresholds of trans academic experiences shaped by institutional logics, inequality regimes, and individuals’ subjectivities. The thresholds between two spaces that emerged from these data include: isolation and community, alienation and familiarity, precarity and security, and silence and voice.

Returning to the West Side Market in Cleveland, Ohio, there are numerous doors and passageways that serve as in-between spaces to the streets and sidewalks, to the parking lot, and to the produce vendor stalls located along the edges of the indoor market. Thresholds derive their meaning in part by what they are connected to—the interior of the market or the produce vendors located in two buildings along the edges. The thresholds make meaningful the distinction between the outside and inside, yet, the numerous thresholds between inside and outside can be utterly disorienting to unfamiliar market-goers. Whether one is inside or outside is a matter of perspective. The produce vendors are literally in a threshold, neither fully inside nor outside. While the produce buildings are enclosed, they are not heated or cooled like the interior building of the market. Depending on where one starts, the passageways between the produce market and the indoor market are entries or exits. Prying open one of the heavy green doors reveals from the produce side of the market I previously described. Pushing that same heavy green door quiets the
sounds and smells behind one in a brief moment of silence before being swept up into a new mixtures of sights, smells, tastes, and sounds.

Recall, also from my previous discussion the sounds of machines buzzing in the background in the interior market keeping cheese cold or a falafel sandwich hot. Those machines come to have meaning through what they do, what they plug in to. The same idea applies to a “thinking with theory” approach to data analysis (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012).

**Thinking through Thresholds**

I use the idea of thresholds because they are both/and spaces, spaces of possibilities. My draw to the notion of thresholds derived from a participant, Cassidy, a Native American woman and adjunct faculty member in the humanities who described trans* as a threshold. She said that she, “think[s] of trans as a temporary state of being, a threshold, if you will.” Cassidy continued to say,

I think of trans like that [as a threshold], moving then to the expression of one gender to another, leaving a biological sex in favor for an inner understanding of self represents, to me, a threshold across. So, to say that people express gender and referring then–let me rephrase that–expressing a gender that perhaps they weren’t born to, but that their genome does not necessarily express, represents a crossing of a threshold.

At least for Cassidy, she felt that, “You’re only trans when you move through, through this identification process.” As data from participants showed, not all trans* individuals experience their identities in this way. While it may be Cassidy’s way of being as having been on one side of threshold, standing in the threshold during transition, and now being on the other side of the threshold, this metaphor elides the experiences of those who did not and do not identify within strict binary gender notions, those who are literally in the threshold, between and betwixt.
There are certainly participants who would align with Cassidy’s understanding of trans as a threshold. For example, Arun, David, and Benjamin, three participants who do not think of their gender identities using the word “trans,” but instead inhabit the identity of man. Some participants felt that they lived in the threshold, across or outside of the gender binary, like Ardel, Rowan, Jesse, Jay, Seth, and Westley. There are others like Connor who have not yet crossed the threshold, but expect to at some point. The notion of the threshold has much more to offer beyond conceptualizing gender identities.

Threshold as metaphor helps to draw out the key tensions in trans* academics experiences. Drawing on Spivak’s (1993) notion of outside in the teaching machine, I am articulating the simultaneity and tensions within trans academic experiences (p. 294). Participants previously described being simultaneously in/out [of the closet] and hyper visible/invisible. Here I respond to the third research question: From the perspectives of participants, what organizational and policy contexts (consisting of formal policies and informal practices) create supportive, neutral, and/or hostile environments for trans* faculty? This research question situates the three levels of organizations, or contractual spaces in Spivak’s (1993) language, of which participants were a part—the department, the institution, and the discipline—as the spaces that shape their experiences as trans academics.

In this section, I draw on Black feminist thought and subaltern and decolonial ways of knowing. I am grafting these perspectives onto trans* academics’ experience. By grafting I mean placing a living thing (e.g., tissue, shoot of a plant) within another living thing (Oxford, 2015). Theories are living entities (Koro-Ljungberg, 2015). In my grafting of living theories into lived experiences of trans academics, I am not suggesting that the experiences of Black and subaltern cisgender women academics are the same as participants, many of whom in this study are white.
and masculine. Rather, I am suggesting that the outgrowths of oppression emerge from similar roots, the roots where all oppression is interconnected (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012).

I return to the notion of the threshold. The threshold is, as Cassidy described, an artificially constructed threshold between female/woman and male/man. The threshold is also the in-between of margin/center, in/out, and visible/invisible. Each of these concepts emerged from a single participant but linked into a larger network or assemblage of experiences that emerged across participants. Once a participant raised the issue of isolation, I saw threads moving towards and away from other participants who also described these same concerns. In this chapter I think through four thresholds: isolation–community, alienation–familiarity, precarity–security, and silence–voice.

**Threshold: Isolation–Community**

Isolation, derived from isolated, is the process and state of being where a person is alone or apart from others (Oxford, 2015). Isolation, particularly social isolation is a central concern within communications, psychology, and sociology, even more the case with the rise of social media technologies (Cacioppa, Hawkley, Norman, & Bernston, 2011; Hampton, Sessions, & Her, 2011; McPherson, Smith-Lovin, & Brashears, 2006; Putnam, 2001; Weiss, 1973). Evidence supports the notion that people in the U.S. are more socially isolated in the early 2000s than in the mid-1980s as measured by core networks (Hampton et al., 2011; McPherson et al., 2006). While some scholars are concerned with isolation overall, I am concerned here with the ways that layering identities that may be unfamiliar to many within academe may increase feelings of isolation in a society marked by increased isolation. Because trans academics are likely “to be the only one,” the repeated refrain of many academics in this study, feelings of isolation often resulted.
Tobey, a white transmasculine administrator and adjunct instructor at a regional comprehensive university in the east illuminates one of the challenges associated with being the only one. He said, “to my knowledge no one else has ever worked at this institution who was out as trans. So I feel like…it’s isolating.” He continued to describe a consequence of isolation which is that,

There isn’t anyone that I can kind of talk to about [being trans]…I can’t compare notes with anyone. I do a lot of explaining about my identity. It’s been very hard for me to pin down whether I’m being treated differently based on my trans-ness or not, again, because it’s just me. […]

Tobey and I went on to discuss how his contract was not renewed, leaving him precariously employed. In his discussions about not having his contract renewed, he felt that “there’s just - there’s no other comparison, so it’s just really hard to know.” Part of the consequence of being the only one is the palpable isolation felt by participants, but also the inability to ascertain the bases for perceived mistreatment. Ultimately, Tobey felt like he was like other “underrepresented minorities where I can’t slip up…I have to over-perform.” As referenced in a previous chapter, trans academics perform certain kinds of minoritized labor deriving from genderism, but in so doing, also must navigate profound feelings of isolation.

Gabe, a white male tenure-track associate professor said, “As far as I know I’m the only trans faculty member on campus and the institution has 25,000 people. So you know, I feel pretty isolated a lot of the time.” The isolation pervaded not just Gabe’s work environment but also the larger community. Gabe observed about his institutional context,

all of the other trans people I know locally, very few of them are professionals. …there’s a lot of poverty and just I have so much privilege in comparison to these people. That’s
really sobering. [...] It’s kind of an odd thing to straddle where I don’t [fit], in both my communities, my professional community and in [...] the community of transgender people in the region I live in, I don’t have any peers in either group.

Gabe is describing being a trans* academic and professional class, but having no academic peers and no professional class peers within the trans community. Gabe’s accounting of being the only also addresses issues of social class and the ways in which being trans sets him apart from his professional class peers and his being professional class sets him apart from his trans community. Even if Gabe has his race in common with many of his academic peers, his trans history sets him apart. The “sobering” reality about his class status, coupled with gender and race make the threshold of isolation–community quite complex.

Similar to Gabe, Martina, a tenured Latina female professor in the sciences at a liberal arts college in the west, noted, “being the only one” when she said, “I’m the only openly trans person on the faculty of, what– you can count it up–three hundred? I don’t know what the number is right now but it’s a couple hundred.” Martina mentioned, “being the only one” in both interviews. “Being the only one” is a “repetitive refrain” and my attention to it reflects my use of portraiture (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Hoffmann Davis, 1997, p. 193).

In the first interview, Martina described all the support available for LGBTQ students and faculty and then noted that she is the only trans* faculty member. Though she acknowledged that it is possible that there are other trans faculty, it is difficult “to say there aren’t other people like me, who were quiet about it [being trans] for a long time.” In the second interview, Martina raised this issue again, but added that “As I said… [I am] pretty much functionally… I’m treated as a woman in many cases.” Even if Martina does not have other professional colleagues at her
institution who also openly identify as trans, she is treated like other women on campus and this has allowed her to cross a threshold into community within those networks.

Martina did not make negative characterizations associated with her being treated like any other woman on campus. She did however note the negative experiences of other women on campus revealed through a recent campus climate study that described “feeling put upon, feeling not rewarded or compensated at the same rate as their male colleagues.” It is possible that Martina’s experiences of having begun publicly identifying as trans within the last two years and having advanced through tenure long ago creates a kind of institutional legitimacy that buffers experiences with sexism, misogyny, and transmisogyny. However, Martina also does not position herself at the margin either. She sees her background as driving her forward towards success. Whatever isolation she might feel, the strong sense of community and possibility counteracts those feelings, pulling her across the threshold of isolation–community.

Martina’s comments are not nearly so negative about being the only one, often couching her experience in the positive and supportive aspects of her institutional context. Martina works in a university context where there is a logic of possibility about trans* identities, whereas Gabe works in a university context where he is always impossible, as his institution has a logic of impossibility about trans identities. In these two accounts of being the only one, the contours of logics of possibility and impossibility are drawn (Spivak, 1993). While both individuals occupy outsider spaces, once infiltrating the institution, the underlying logic of possibility or impossibility ultimately comes to shape their shared experience of being the only one.

In thinking about isolation at the disciplinary level, Connor, a white FTM trans*man post-doctoral researcher in the social sciences described his field as “not awesome.” Part of what explains his field being not awesome is “the field does not really publish stuff around– they don’t
publish queer theory stuff. It’s just not viewed as valid stuff.” In short, in Connor’s discipline, he is the only one “doing any kind of scholarship around trans issues.” While being the only one working on trans* issues in the field, “would be a good thing because I’m filling this niche and I should be highly marketable then. But, actually the field doesn’t particularly care that much about these issues. They want somebody to take care of it for them.” Connor concluded that:

> It [the field] feels sort of isolated. I feel tokenized a lot. I feel -- which is, in some ways it’s good because I’m getting publications out of it, right, because nobody knows who to call, so they call me. But, tokenization only goes so far before it feels a little bit gross.

The isolation that Connor feels is part of the particular contours of the experiences that he has at the field level which ultimately result in tokenization. Connor alluded to the market logic, which in theory should create opportunities. By filling a niche, he should be “highly marketable.” Yet, others in Connor’s field do not find his marketable niche especially valuable.

Jesse, a white queer adjunct instructor in social science at multiple institutions shared a similar sentiment about being undervalued in their field as a queer and trans person when they said, “It’s a little isolating.” They continued to say that this isolation was not entirely negative. Jesse said:

> On the other hand, I feel really lucky or privileged or glad because I don’t think that many of the insights that come to me would come without that being, occupying that [isolated/outside] space. […] I feel like it’s [being queer and trans] actually made me a stronger scholar, a stronger researcher. I see things often that I don’t think [others do and] I’ll bring it up and people are like, “Oh, wow, you know, I never thought that that whole panel was all men,” like, “It never occurred to me.”
Jesse is describing how having a critical queer and trans perspective enhances their experiences within the academy. Both Jesse and Connor demonstrate through their comments what is at the center and what then, is at the margin. Connor described how particular kinds of work are important based on the values of those at the center of the field. Jesse described the benefits of having a view from the margin, but not in a way that “clings to the margin,” but that they value the luckiness/privilege/gladness that their perspective brings. In short, Jesse and Connor must keep a view of both the center and the margin (hooks, 1984).

It is easy enough to see isolation as unfair or unjust. Even easier is to remain fixated on that isolation, but doing so elides the privileges that accompany the lives of some of the participants. Radclyffe Hall’s (1928/2014) character Stephen in *The Well of Loneliness*, cries out in exasperation about “spiritual dryness” or writer’s block, “It’s unfair, it’s unjust. Why should I live in this great isolation of spirit and body–why should I, why? Why have I been afflicted with a body that must never be indulged, that must always be repressed.” (Kindle loc. 4058-4065).

Isolation can be a kind of repression of connection, a dryness of human contact. At least in Gabe, Connor, and Jesse’s cases, there is a great sense of isolation, but to be caught in the space of isolation ignores the alignment they each have with white, masculine norms in the academy. However, isolation is also one side of the threshold with community being on the other side of the threshold.

While academic communities for trans* faculty are rather limited, some participants talked about their attempts to identify other individuals who are trans* within their field to counteract their feelings of isolation and the pervasive belief of trans as an impossible category of being for some participants. Hunter, a white trans visiting assistant professor in the humanities at a liberal arts college in the east said,
In my field, I know the first time that I started the job market scene, all of my faculty told me you won’t get it [a faculty job], you just won’t because no one is trans in our field. That ended up not being true, I’ve been trying to track them down. So far I have 12 trans people in my field.

Hunter attempted to identify trans* faculty in his field with some success and to build community amongst them. The challenge that building community brings is that “trans is not visible.” Hunter explained that he wanted to “start the first trans [discipline] group somehow.” His attempts to build community arrive out of the context of his discipline where “there’s absolutely no visibility for the trans people who do exist in [my discipline] and that ends up trickling down to the advice that professors are giving their students.”

The advice that he is referring to was about not getting a job, as Hunter described elsewhere. Hunter’s advisor asked him if he could “stop being you” while on the job market, demonstrating the advisor’s view that trans* people are just make-believers (Bettcher, 2007). The idea the advisor had was “You can be trans in grad school, but you can’t do that for the job market until you get tenured. So you come back out when you get tenured, I guess.” Even while Hunter is attempting to build community to fight the isolation he feels, it is easy to see how Hunter is in-between isolation and community. He is stuck in multiple thresholds: notions of good students/professor and isolation/community.

There are however values at the center of the academy that make community building difficult. Mary, a white female associate professor previously described the “lone cowboy researcher” as being a highly valued form of scholarly practice in her field. The lone cowboy researcher follows the ideal worker norm (Drago, 2007; Kelly, Ammons, Chermack & Moen, 2010), an idea at the center of colleges and universities. The ideal worker norm within the
academy rewards those who dedicate their entire lives to their work and those who are willing to “trumpet their own work” and be “self-promoting” as Mary observed. Additionally, the market and corporation logics pit academics against one another in a competition for scarce resources. This competitive atmosphere creates a barrier to community, while also creating conditions that lead to isolation. Yet, a potential barrier to community is the possible underrepresentation of trans* individuals within academic positions, though data systems make it difficult to know this for certain. Either way, nearly every trans* academic is “the only one” at their institution. These barriers to community also result from the norms and inequality regimes in the academy, especially around race, class, gender, sexuality, and ability. Therefore, the threshold of isolation–community is about how participants’ experience loneliness in academe resulting from their minoritized genders. In Gabe’s case his social class and his gender created a sense of isolation. Furthermore the larger logic of impossibility of trans* genders created isolation and negatively influences the experiences of participants. While some, like Martina did have a sense of community, the contours of her community are largely with other women academics, not necessarily other trans* academics. Moreover, the norms that Mary described about the inner workings of the research enterprise and the market and corporation logics I previously described often keep trans* academics on the isolation side of the threshold, preventing movement across into community. In addition to isolation, some participants also described the academy as alienating, the kind of alienation that erupts out norms, inequality regimes, and prevailing institutional logics that prevent trans* identities from being familiar. I describe this threshold next.
Threshold: Alienation–Familiarity

Alienation derives from the word alienated or conditions that make someone feel isolated and estranged from a group or place or that which may make someone unsympathetic or hostile to a cause or group (Oxford, 2015). In the case of trans* academics, I am using alienation to describe both aspects of the definition of the word. More specifically, there are conditions within the academy that make trans academics feel estranged or isolated, some of which I just described. There are also conditions that make trans* academics unsympathetic or hostile towards the academy. The state or experience of being alienated–alienation–in Marxist discourses is the condition of workers in a capitalist economy that results from a lack of identification with the products of their labor along with feelings of being controlled or exploited (Oxford, 2015). More simply, “Alienation is the process whereby people become foreign to the world they are living in” (Marxists.org).

hooks (1990) also wrote of alienation in relation to Black underclass individuals within the academy. I quote at length from hooks’ writing here because she describes the notion of the threshold between alienation and familiarity with her discussion of home, she wrote:

I had to struggle and resist to emerge from that context and then from other locations with mind intact, with an open heart. […] Indeed the very meaning of ‘home’ changes with experiences of decolonization, or radicalization. At times, home is nowhere. At times, one knows only extreme estrangement and alienation. Then home is no longer just one place. It is locations. Home is that place which enables and promotes varied and ever changing perspectives, a place where one discovers new ways of seeing reality, frontiers of difference. One confronts and accepts dispersal and fragmentation as part of the construction of a new world order that reveals more fuller where we are, who we can
become, an order that does not demand forgetting. “Our struggle is also a struggle of memory against forgetting.” (hooks, 1990, p. 148)

Again, my attempt here is not to co-opt the experiences of Black underclass academics, but rather to graft shared experiences that trans* academics in this study described.

Some participants spoke directly about alienation and I amplify their voices here. This threshold simply needed my pointing it out for participants to reveal the ways they experience alienation. Alienation occurred within all three organizational spaces at the departmental, institutional, and at the disciplinary level. Again, as before in chapter five, the library is a more clearly defined department space that helps to illuminate the experiences of trans* academics.

At the departmental level, as I alluded to in my discussion of Nick’s (introduced previously) experience with the neoliberal market logic, especially the business ethos within the library, she found this alienating. He said,

seeing the library as a business. That is very alienating, personally. That is not how I understand what I do at all. That is not how most librarians see how they do either. It’s when you get into the administrative level those kinds of values are really evident.

Here Nick is talking about the first use of alienating—to feel estranged. Nick is also pointing to about how she is controlled by some larger institutional logic. When I asked her to elaborate more on this feeling, Nick said:

when I think about what I do, and I think many librarians feel this way, when we think about what we do we don’t think about the cost. We don’t think about how that fits into the financial structure of the institution. We do what we do, I do what I do, because I enjoy it. […] I think the most librarians think that way… they don’t have a cost benefit analyses for every individual interaction or every kind of service or support service that
we offer. We do it because we want to support people. [...] We don’t think about it that way.

As is evident from the above quotation the business-minded market logic creates conditions where some librarians feel controlled by a discourse that is not taken up through their own volition. The discourse of quantifying and justifying is an unfamiliar discourse that separates librarians from the work the managers think they should do, from the work they feel they do. Nick lamented that within her library there are often conversations about how many people will use a particular resource as part of the justification of a purchase. What Nick described is the second kind of alienating experience, that kind that makes one unsympathetic, since she does not see her job in business terms. Here the market logics are what are creating conditions that lead to alienation for some participants.

Alienation also occurred at the institutional and departmental levels. David, a white male adjunct instructor in the social sciences at a research university in the east, spoke about the professionalization of higher education institutions and the alienation that results. He said, “There is [...] professionalization in higher education, where you as a student are professionalized for the job market if you’re a Ph.D. student. Most working class students, students of colors, queer students, don’t get that professionalization.” He went on to say that this kind of professionalization occurs at research universities where faculty have the time and freedom to engage in the professional socialization of their students and that this often leads to stronger workplace outcomes (e.g., getting a tenure-track job). David said:

It would have been exceptionally helpful if I had had that [professional socialization] as someone who doesn’t come from a background of parents who went to grad school or parents who went higher ed. It’s [graduate school, higher education] an alienating
experience to be in. So, I say that as someone who is read as a white, gender normative
guy…for that to still feel alienating in a lot of ways [is telling].

What David revealed was a central aspect of my argument, specifically, that as an academic who
is read as white and as a “gender normative guy,” even David finds higher education and
graduate education alienating. David, at least in terms of other’s readings of his privileged
gender and racial identities should be at the center, yet he is propelled to the margins in part
because of his growing up working class, being trans*, and the market logic that emphasizes
professional socialization in graduate school.

When I asked David to talk more about alienation, he described another kind of
alienation, particularly within classrooms.

There’s a kind of posturing that happens in a classroom sometimes with white male
students who will talk over or attempt to use their position to kind of shut down other
people. And it’s been very strange and disconcerting to me that in those moments, I
deploy my white male privilege where I am in a position where I can, my authority is not
questioned. There’s multiple [aspects to] the nature of the alienation and [that] kind of
has a lot to do with me individually. Has a lot to do with my personal sense of politics
about what is appropriate or inappropriate but then also the way that I am engaged with is
strange.

Then I attempted to understand what David meant with his comments, I said:

What I think I’m hearing you say is that part of what you experienced is the ways in
which people interacted in the classroom, this posturing you talked about in the
classroom. But then now you have some authority, particularly as you’re the person at the
front of the room with the Ph.D. that you can shut down others’ bad behavior, but that
often is done in a way that is the same kind of behavior, that use of white male privilege kind of behavior.

To which David replied:

Well right…it’s a series of domination. It is shutting down, it is, it’s not a radical form of transformation. It’s enacting the same bullshit that they are enacting. I think alienating, the alienation is really, it’s an internally experienced thing rather than physically, I’m among the least alienated of many people in these departments because of the way that I’m read. I think I have a lot more leeway to talk about certain things, to act a certain way, to talk about certain kinds of topics, because I’m read the way that I am. I think there’s a material alienation that I don’t experience because of white, male privilege but then the internal sense of conflict of “wow this is very strange that this is sort of happening around me.”

I quote this exchange at length because of the theories already plugged into this data and David’s ability to tease out the complexity of his experiences. David feels alienated because of the professionalization of higher education, part of the marketization of higher education. In his teaching, David then asserts a “series of domination” in response to students who enact white, male posturing in the classroom and his feelings of alienation as “internally experienced.”

David also talked about how in his own desire to challenge white male posturing in the classroom, he falls into the same traps as the white men he is challenging. In so doing, he straddles the threshold of alienation and familiarity. David uses the tools available to him to assert himself in the classroom. In this case, he used the familiar white male posturing to shut down other white men. But, in having done so, his actions leave David feeling alienated. Even as
he tries to resist, he does so in ways that fail to live up to his own radical, transformative potential.

While shaped by other’s reading David as a white male, his feelings of alienation are not just an individual problem. Higher education alienates individuals writ large. David described this phenomenon when he said, “I think that the sense of alienation and the discomfort is more than just being trans, it’s the institution of higher ed. It’s what reinforces a whole gamut of things.” Here David signals the “gamut of things” I describe as inequality regimes (Acker, 2006), specifically the raced, classed, and gendered norms of the academy.

While some participants like David spoke specifically about alienation, Susan did not, yet she did describe a kind of alienation. Susan King, an African American transgender retired adjunct instructor in the social sciences at a liberal arts college in the south described the second definition of alienation—the feeling of being unsympathetic towards the academy. In particular, Susan King talked about how she needed to wait until she retired from classroom teaching in order to begin her gender transition. Susan King said, “That [gender transition] is one reason why I had to retire now. If I am thinking about transitioning, I can’t do it or I don’t want to do it at the university. I don’t want to fight that.” Part of what Susan would have to fight against is the logic of impossibility of trans identities within her particular institutional context.

In the second interview, Susan King and I talked more about her trans identity. She described having known of her gender identity at the age of eight, but it was 1965 and there were pressures she felt as an African American male to be successful. She said her dad wanted her to be “[a] successful, family person. My dad wanted me to be a doctor or lawyer.” Susan King went on to explain that “After about 50 years, I’m now going out [dressed] a lot more.” She went on to say, “I’ve had electrolysis to remove my beard and I’m kind of moving in that direction.
[…] So that’s one reason I retired and doing something different… transitioning to living more fulltime as a woman.” When I asked Susan King why she did not feel she could transition on the job she said,

[The institution] has, well, first of all, they had implemented a dress code. They had a couple of [students], around 2007, that began to cross-dress and they came up with a dress code to stop that and [the institution] always kept pushing against that [cross-dressing] in that it’s not a school for homosexuals even though trans, cross-dressing, and transgender doesn’t much have anything to do with sexual orientation, most people perceive [it] that [way].

Even though Susan King acknowledged that the students “were ahead of where the institution is” is terms of embracing trans* identities, she still felt that she could not transition on the job and thus retired and continued her gender transition. Susan’s comments about leaving the academy to go live more “fulltime as a woman” shows the profound power that the academy has in shaping the lived experiences of some trans* academics. Her comments also show how deeply alienating her particular institution was, at least with respect to her expressing her gender. As David said, the university reinforces a “gamut of things.” Part of that gamut is compulsory cisgenderism, or the idea that individuals must hold cisgender identities. Having described alienation at the institutional level and department levels through Susan and David’s experiences, I now turn to describing alienation at the disciplinary level.

In thinking about alienation at the discipline level, Hunter and AJ (among others) both described alienating experiences at academic conferences. The academic conference is a physical space where the discipline becomes more concrete. In the academic conference setting, AJ described alienation in the following way:
I was in a paper session, someone was presenting on trans issues. I was in the audience. And people in the audience did not understand anything about trans so the questions they would ask would be like, “Well, what is a transsexual woman? Does that person have a penis? Does he have a penis?” Like just really inappropriate like trans 101 questions when the presenter was presenting about findings unrelated to this 101 type of stuff. And those kinds of incidents were alienating. And they weren’t directly at me personally, so it’s not that I personally felt unsupported as a trans scholar in academia. But, it was just the sign of this is how much work there is to be done.

While the colleague did not direct the “101 type” questions at AJ directly, the presence of these questions themselves is alienating for AJ. Thus, AJ elucidates how the unfamiliarity of trans identities leads to alienation, even, or especially, when colleagues discuss trans topics in ways that reveal just how little they about trans lives and experiences.

Building on AJ’s experience at the academic conference are Hunter’s comments about the alienation he experiences at his discipline’s conference. Hunter provides a particularly vivid example of theorizing about his own experience when he described introducing himself to conference session moderators and telling them about his pronouns. He said:

What immediately jumps to mind is philosopher Martin Heidegger [refers to Heidegger’s Nazi history and ideology, but] some of his theories are helpful. He talked about the fact that you don’t notice a tool until it breaks or you don’t notice your surroundings until you’re alienated from them. It’s at that moment where connection is missed or where a function is frustrated that suddenly you get drawn back into the moment, you are brought back into your consciousness, and you start to see what’s actually happening. I think for the most part, conferences and being at home in conferences means there aren’t any
glitches. All of the norms can be fulfilled, expectations are met accordingly and it’s just closed.

But when I think of being alienated from a space, it’s because an expectation has been broken or needs to be broken or will be broken. Just having to announce pronouns to a moderator is a break in the norm. They shouldn’t have to be told that or there isn’t a norm of doing that. Doing that feels like there’s a break in the fabric of the event.

Hunter is talking about the way he experiences alienation, as a break in the norms and expectations of an event, prohibiting feelings of familiarity or being at home. Through his efforts to avoid being misgendered, Hunter often introduces himself to session moderators so that when he is introduced they use the correct pronoun. However, Hunter’s efforts to avoid misgendering represent a break in the social fabric. This rupture in the normal course of events makes him notice the glitch that his identity and embodiment brings to that space. Rather than his specifying pronouns being a familiar act, Hunter is alienated in the academic conference space. Hunter went on to say that he notices how much work he has to do in academic spaces because of others’ lack of familiarity about trans* identities. Hunter contrasted alienating academic spaces with times when queer and trans kin surrounds him; there is an ease and familiarity. In short, the antidote to the alienation that Hunter experiences at conferences is soothed by being in spaces where his identity is familiar to others, where he can be at home.

Familiarity is the space on the other side of the threshold of alienation. Returning to hooks (1984), she wrote, “home is no longer just one place. It is locations.” (p. 148) Some of the locations where Hunter feels familiar and not alienated are with other queer and trans individuals, he said,
I think that I don’t notice the effect on me until I’m in a space that’s predominantly queer and/or trans and then I realize I have a lot of protective mechanisms and ways of navigating social situations that are just implicit in an everyday setting, suddenly I can let them all go.

Hunter has a number of “protective mechanisms” and “ways of navigating social situations” that are the kind of additional labor that trans* academics perform. Hunter notices this labor when he exits spaces where this work is required, locations where he can his protective mechanisms go.

While Hunter described a non-academic community of familiarity, AJ (introduced previously) described familiarity amongst queer academics. At a conference AJ attended, a self-identified queer fat femme scholar stood up and named her identities and said that she, “does scholarship on trans relationships and gave a long disclaimer how she has this cis[gender] privilege and gets this kind of attention.” In this moment, amongst queer academics, AJ described these “fleeting moments” where a person working in solidarity with trans* people owned her privilege in front of audience that “really needed to hear it.” In that location, AJ was not alienated; AJ was made familiar. Familiarity and home comes in fleeting moments and locations (hooks, 1984). Part of what is making AJ feel supported is a colleague naming their privileges, especially those privileges that align with the center. This is especially the case in AJ’s field where, “[trans academics are] all marginalized and not getting prestigious jobs. And then there are cis scholars doing trans [studies/research] who are getting major publications, major university appointments, and aren’t having problems with promotions.” AJ draws the contours of the margin and center, which in turn creates conditions that lead to alienation and a desire for familiarity.
Taken together, Nick, David, Susan King, Hunter, and AJ each point to the ways in which the academy can be alienating. Through market discourse about librarianship to classroom dynamics and conference sessions, each story brings to bear the various ways alienation manifests in trans academics’ experiences. David offered an insightful analysis when he said, “it’s hard to know who higher education does not feel alienating for. […] I definitely see myself as an outsider who has gotten a job on the inside.” David’s comments crystallize the notion of alienation and struggle for familiarity and home amongst the scholars in this study. David also connects with the idea that Spivak (1993) forwarded that outsiders can infiltrate the academy and in so doing are outside in the teaching machine (p. 294).

Threshold: Precarity–Security

Precarity, for lack of a more official dictionary or encyclopedia citation, is a condition of existing within a labor market without predictability or security that affects the material and/or psychological well-being of workers (Wikipedia, 2015). During (2015) defined precarity in three ways: first, insecurity of those without reliable income, identification, or residency papers; second, those with unstable, or no, access to institutions or communities that afford legitimacy, recognition and/or solidarity; and finally, those whose work served work does not align with capitalism. While During (2015) takes up the intellectual and creative works of those in arts and humanities, Sigl (2012) used the concept of precarity to describe research cultures in academic life. In defining the term precarity by describing “uncertainty experiences,” Sigl (2012) demonstrates the ways precarity is context specific. Sigl (2012) argued that young researchers within the life sciences experience “embodied anxiety” (p. 14).

Sigl (2012) builds on Ross’ (2009) work that charts the instability and contingency in contemporary labor markets through the notion of precarious livelihoods. The more global
experience of precarious labor manifests within the experiences of trans* academics in rather specific ways. While academic precarity may be seen by some as a kind of elite precarity, there is evidence within this study that this is simply not the case, at least not for all. Recall that David, a person with a Ph.D. taught as an adjunct for three years, worked a side job as a bike mechanic, and was still eligible for government subsidized healthcare and food assistance. Recall Cassidy works as an adjunct instructor on a pay per course basis, making substantially less than she did before entering the academic labor force. Thirteen of the 39 participants taught classes on an adjunct basis—either full or part time. Some, like Rowan were in much more stable positions, while others, like Westley were much more precarious. Gone are the days (if such days ever existed) where the Ph.D. confers one with a permanent academic position, lifetime employment, and a robust set of benefits, including a pension.

Building on the idea of academic precarity is Polster’s (2015) work about academic insecurity, or the idea that academics now experience “discontent, stress, alienation, and fear in relation to various aspects of their work, parties associated with their work, and the academic calling itself.” (p. 1). In particular, Polster (2015) was concerned with the ways in which the affective dimensions of faculty life are instrumental to, not separate from, the changes occurring within Western universities, primarily the forces of neoliberalization and privatization.

Academic precarity or insecurity manifests in a variety of ways, including pursuing lines of inquiry likely to yield external funding and publications in top-tier journals, as well as treating colleagues as potential threats (Polster, 2015). Part of what Polster (2015) described as academic insecurity manifests in intensification. In the redoubling of academics’ efforts to comply with institutional expectations and norms, early career academics, including graduate students and post-doctoral researchers, as well as academics later in their career, cope with the neoliberal
market and corporation demands of the academy by prioritizing more highly valued activities, primarily externally funded research activities (Polster, 2015). Hunter’s brief musing about whether, “having chosen to come out as trans academically will eventually push me out of the academy” brings together all of the threads of academic precarity and insecurity.

Taken together, academic precarity and insecurity affect all faculty members, but those engaged in what Susan called “critical knowledge production” are all the more affected by these trends. In this section, I focus more intensely on the experiences of participants who engage in “critical knowledge production” related to trans* lives. Specifically, I center the voices of Joy, Arun, and Westley because of what they reveal about the precarity that “trans academics that do trans things” experience.

Joy (previously introduced) works for an institution with serious financial challenges. At the outset of our first interview, she said, “I am going to have to be seriously on the job market in the fall. And taking a hard look at my myself from that perspective and that is scary.” I asked if she felt any comfort in having tenure. She said, “No, it doesn’t seem like that at the moment. Nobody ever knows what’s going to happen but my life doesn’t feel secure.” Joy went on to describe some positive changes for “gay students” that are occurring within her institution, but that these changes “make me feel my position might be even more precarious.” What is going on at Joy’s institution with respect to its own precarious financial standing means that every class needs to have high enrollments, as discussed previously. Because Joy is seen as “scary” by some of her students, a feeling that results directly from her trans* identity, her enrollments are often lower than her colleagues. These circumstances create a condition where Joy embodies an ongoing and pervasive level of anxiety about her ability to remain inside the teaching machine.
As Joy approaches the job market, she talked about how she will market herself, she said, “I will be trying to convince people that I should also be taken seriously in gender studies or transgender studies or Jewish studies, but it’s going to be an uphill fight.” Joy’s inability to connect with the traditional disciplinary boundaries within her area leaves her in academic precarity. Joy’s sense of precarity coupled with the overall sense of academic precarity, perhaps most acutely felt amongst those with advanced degrees in the humanities, left her concerned about her future. Joy concluded that she did not “think that there are very many institutions […] where gender diversity is one of the kinds of diversity that’s named and valued.”

In Joy’s second interview, she talked about her “mythical next job.” In that forecasted future position, Joy would,

…actually be able to be a trans academic, which is an academic where trans is acknowledged and a part of my professional identity. Something that can be expressed within the institution in one way or another. I don’t feel that within any of my roles at [my university] that it is really ever appropriate to talk about being trans.

Joy imagined a future where she might be able to intertwine her professional and personal lives where she would be able to draw on the “full range” of her life experience. This intertwining of her personal and professional lives could potentially provide a certain kind of security, an antidote to the precarity and insecurity she so often feels in the classroom at her current institution. Joy wants to cross the threshold from precarity to security.

While Joy has a deep desire to express both a trans* and academic identity, Arun did not share that sentiment. Arun is a multiracial/ethnic male who identifies as white, Middle-Eastern, and Jewish who previously taught as an adjunct instructor in the social sciences at a liberal arts
college in the west. When I asked Arun to describe his perspective about being trans within his disciplinary context, he said:

I don’t want to be known as trans by [people in my field] in general. […] In my sub-discipline I feel like there’s much more understanding and positive feeling toward trans people. [Some people in my discipline] don’t pay attention to social things [and] are really a lot like other old fashioned scientists.

Arun indicated concern for telling others’ about his trans* history because of what their assumptions. For example, Arun said he does not disclose his history all the time because he wanted to avoid people “reinterpreting everything about me” and inaccurately attributing mannerisms based on his prior gender, rather than his queerness.

Arun also navigated other’s readings and assumptions of his racial identity. He described this as follows:

There’s a lot of polarized reading [about race or ethnic identity] I’m not, I’m never really sure how people are reading me, which adds to the uncertainty of identity itself. I just know that lots of people read me as both white and a person of color.

Arun is describing how the inter-subjective reading of his racial identity means different things at different times. In further describing the “polarized” reading he navigates, Arun said,

People are equally confident, whatever they think. People who see me as white are like “you’re kidding, I could never imagine someone thinking that you’re not white.” And the people who don’t see me as white “What? People think you’re white? That makes no sense at all.”

Thus Arun sits in a threshold with respect to his racial and ethnic identity. He does not hold securely to white privilege, as he was subject to “hav[ing] a lot of experiences with racism
directed at Latino folks being directed at me” despite his not being Latino. Depending on other’s reading of him, Arun might be part of a dominant group or part of a minoritized group, and through other’s reading his credibility may increase or decrease based on underlying racist assumptions.

Further complicating matters, Arun also talked about the way that being an “old fashioned scientist” played out in others’ construction of his credibility in doing trans* work in his field. Arun described a situation where he had an “unpleasant conversation with a colleague” at a recent discipline-based conference. He said:

[A] colleague who was sort of pushing me and saying that it must be very emotionally difficult to work with trans people because they going through such hard things. I tried to ignore the question and she kept pushing me on it. Eventually I was like, “Well actually I am very familiar with the issues and challenges that people experience because I am trans too,” and then immediately she came back and said, “You have to be really careful because as a trans person you are way more likely to be biased in whatever you have to say about the community. You really need to watch yourself and be very cautious.”

I was just blown away. I didn’t even really know how to handle it. I ended up saying, “Actually, I think as a trans person I have to think about things like how my identity influences the research that I am doing, which I think is important for everyone to do.”

Here Arun is made precarious by his colleague in her assertion that he needs to “be very cautious” in his work with trans communities. In particular, he needed to be careful because of the presumed biases that he holds as a trans person. Yet, this cisgender colleague did not seem to think that she needed to also be cautious in her interpretations of data resulting from her cisgender woman identity. What is more is that Arun was pushed on the issue of his being trans,
an identity he explicitly state he did not want to be known as. Exacerbating Arun’s situation further is the neoliberal, market, and corporation driven academy and the changing role of research, which now emphasizes certain standards of publication and advances the idea that research should be able to be monetized. Those operating in spaces that take up their same identity group must be “cautious” as Arun’s colleague stated, especially in light of this context.

While Arun felt this kind of attitude was anomalous, what he is describing is a feature of precarious work. Particularly, Arun is describing issues of legitimacy associated with the academic research enterprise and the values of his discipline. Within Arun’s discipline there is a high value placed by some on positivistic and scientific ways of knowing and knowledge production. These ways of knowing emphasize objectivity and appropriate “distancing” from one’s topic. Being a member of the community with which one engages in work is a clear challenge to the ways of knowing that are valued within Arun’s field.

While Arun has successfully secured a tenure-track position, his precarity is not eliminated. However, those academics teaching off the tenure track, like Westley, often find themselves in the most precarious situations. Westley is a white trans boy who taught on an adjunct basis for two community colleges and as a graduate student at the nearby research university. Westley is in a humanities field. When I asked Westley in our first interview about equity in his adjunct teaching role, he said:

> I feel like I had it at [the community college] so long as I sought it out. It was there for me if I wanted to take it but I was really only contracted per class right? so any additional anything I did was me going above and beyond. There was no I don’t know, there was no fulltime-ness even when I was fulltime. There was only an expectation that I would teach
these particular classes so anything else I did they were happy to have me but was not required. I was consistently told that.

Westley’s comments above do two things. First he shows how even when he taught a full-time load, he still occupied a marginal and precarious position. He is not at the center, thus he is outside in the teaching machine (Spivak, 1993, p. 294). Moreover, I question whether one is experiencing equity, if it must be “sought out” as Westley described. Then he also shows how “I had [equity]…so long as I sought it out” plays on the notion that precarious workers do not have the same access to legitimacy and recognition as more secure workers do. Secure workers do not need to attend to legitimacy, in the ways that precarious workers like Westley do.

The precarity Westley experienced, through his lack of legitimacy and recognition by virtue of his appointment type, also influenced Westley’s collegial relationships. He said, “there is always a power differential.” Despite their being a mantra at the community college where Westley worked that “you’re just like one of us;” he was not. Westley described this experience in the following way:

It kind of meant that I always felt like I was on an interview. Like everything was being checked consistently. I don’t think it was necessarily [being checked] but I think a lot of adjuncts, myself included, have hoped they will get kept by the place that they adjunct for, in taking the extra class on the fly the week before it starts. They [adjuncts] go above and beyond in some fashion. [The hope being] that should a tenure line or a full time position open, they’ll get it or would be in a good position to get it. I think that that is used by fulltime faculty, and I know that I had multiple conversations with full-time faculty who told me to do things like that to get a job there, and that was ultimately not particularly helpful or actually accurate.
Through the feeling of “constantly being on an interview” and sense that “everything was being checked,” Westley demonstrates embodied anxiety (Sigl, 2012). Westley’s precarity is further exacerbated by not fully inhabited the gender norms of the academy, as evidenced by his previous comments about pronouns in chapter four. Precarious academic appointments, like adjunct positions, leave those outside in the teaching machine with little predictability, legitimacy, and security in their work (During, 2015; Spivak, 1993, p. 294). Precarity has an antidote in security; yet, there were few participants who felt secure. Perhaps Martina and Mary were the most secure of the participants with respect to their positions and institutional contexts. Even so, the precaritization of academic workers, as manifested in the experiences of trans academics in this study is a disturbing trend amongst the participants.

**Threshold: Silence–Voice**

Voice is a topic and source of much debate in qualitative inquiry as charted in books like, *Voice in Qualitative Inquiry* (Jackson & Mazzei, 2008). Yet, until recently, there was little discussion of the absence of voice, namely silence. As I described in the chapter on institutional logics, Mazzei’s (2007) framing of silence is not something to be dismissed as an omission or absence of empirical materials, but rather engage in the silences as meaning full and purpose full (p. 2, emphasis in original). Here, I use both the inhabited silences of participants and my own, as well as the ways that the silences of others shaped participants’ experiences (Mazzei, 2007).

Stories are often told in place of another (Cixous & Calle-Gruber, 1997). Details of stories that are included are also meaningful and purposeful. Participants occasionally tell stories based in part on what they assume I want to hear. Evidenced by comments like Cassidy, who said at the end of a response to my question, “Did that at all answer your question?” Yes, Cassidy, you did.
Before I draw out silences across this data set, I offer some theoretical grounding. Foucault (1978) wrote, “silence itself—the things one declines to say, or is forbidden to name, the discretion that is required between different speakers—is less the absolute limit of discourse…(p. 27). Foucault characterized silence as not a binary between what is and is not said, nor singular. Rather, there are many silences that “are an integral part of the strategies that underlie and permeate discourses” (Foucualt, 1978, p. 27).

Departing a bit from Foucault, Mazzei (2007) theorized about silence in several different ways, primarily drawing on post-structural theorists. In particular, Mazzei (2007) was less concerned with the press of the normative that keeps some stories silent and more interested in thinking about silences as data, especially transgressive data (St. Pierre, 1997). Silence occurs between words, where participants answer embedded questions, speak the unspeakable, or as a haunting (Mazzei, 2007). A participant offered her own theorizing about silence. Joy said, “Being silenced about difference is a pretty standard way of marginalizing it.” Indeed, silence served as a way to marginalize trans* identities, drawing the line that trans* is not part of the center of the teaching machine (Spivak, 1993).

There are some profound silences in this text and the transcripts from the interviews, others’ and my own. Two silences include a lack of a robust discussion of socio-economic status and ability status. The lack of attention to social class and ability status emerged in my analysis of participants’ interviews. In some cases, I did not prompt participants to describe these aspects of their identities. But, as I described in chapter four, the academy is a space marked by dominant identities and norms of all types, including race, class, gender, ability, and sexuality. Discussions about social class and ability status were also absent as institutional norms and values. No one specifically stated that their institution followed ableist assumptions, though
ableism is widespread within higher education (Evans, Broido, Herriott, & Wisbey, 2016). Additionally, few participants talked about the norms and extension of middle class values through educational processes.

Also absent from the data from trans women in this study (Cassidy, Susan King, Martina, Joy, Susan, and Mary) are extensive or explicit discussions of sexism or transmisogyny. Overt discussions of sexism and transmisogyny were few. There are two exceptions to the relative silence regarding sexism and transmisogyny. Mary described the “very transphobic things” her colleague said about her in a letter, including questioning whether she was in fact a woman. Karen spoke only briefly about sexism when she said that maybe she is:

- Reaping the benefits of male privilege because some of my colleagues aren’t making the mental switch. At other times, I think I’m getting the “woman treatment,” and I never quite know. I think you never quite know when you're facing very subtle sexism. But doubly so because you don’t even really know if this person in their heart of hearts even sees you as a woman.

Even more telling is that none of my conversations with the trans women in this study described experiences with transmisogyny. In fact, the only time transmisogyny came up was in my interviews with Connor, Carey, and Westley. Connor described transmisogyny in relationship to medical coverage, Carey talk about how in-fighting within trans communities keeps the focus off transmisogyny, and Westley talked about Serano’s (2007) book, *Whipping Girl*, in his discussion of the devaluing of femininity (his and others’). These are meaningful silences.

One potential meaning that I could make of these particular silences is that the women in this study did not feel comfortable sharing these experiences with me, especially as a person who
holds white, masculine privilege. Another reading could be that my interview protocol did not elicit a recounting of these experiences. Still another is the uncertainty that some might have in trying to understand others’ enactments of oppression. Perhaps, as a peer debriefer suggested, a final explanation could be that “this [silence about transmisogyny] is a powerful enactment of how internalized transphobia can manifest—in silence.” Regardless of the reasons why, there are silences here and those silences mean something. These silences could also be indicators that like white institutional presence (Gusa, 2010), sexism and transmisogyny, along with other oppressive social forces, are part of the backdrop of higher education. Jay described this idea, when she said, “part of being successful in academia is being able to field what is the basic truth of the world…that there is sexism.” She went on to say, “There’s institutionalized sexism and one of the ways that sexism plays out is in particular forms of transphobia.” Perhaps there is an expectation that there are oppressive forces in the world.

Having charted the silences of sexism and transmisogyny, I also chart the silences around race. As I described in chapter three in my methodology and in chapter four in my discussion of Max’s experience with becoming surveilled and hyper-visible, there were times that race and white supremacy were silent but also animating particular processes and vantage points. For example, when I talked with Bruce about his salient identities he talked about being queer and a sports fan, yet his racial identity did not get mentioned. In my gentle calling in, the following exchange transpired:

Erich: I wonder about racial identity also. How do you sort of think about that?

Bruce: Uh…white. European American. And because of that, I don’t have to think about that. Which is why it wasn’t something that I mentioned before. And I get that that is the privilege that I carry in this world. I don’t have to think about the color of my skin.
Erich: Yeah, So when you think about privilege, especially white masculine privilege... […] one of the things I’ve been thinking a lot about is…I wonder why that would be. Is it that white trans guys, tend to find themselves in the academy? How is that privilege functioning to benefit masculine presenting folks who are also white? Wonder if you have any thoughts about that, it’s a thing I’m really puzzled by.

Bruce: I’m not sure I know how I would exactly answer that. Um, because I’m thinking about... I’m thinking about the other trans people I know in academia; certainly I know trans women and I think most of them are white. Um, but I can think of at least one, and there’s only one right now that’s coming to my mind, trans man of color who’s in academia.

I share this exchange not as a way to “call-out” Bruce, but rather to show how privilege functions as a way to silence the saliency of a privileged racial identity. Certainly Bruce thinks about being white, yet it is not salient. When I asked the rather difficult question about why white masculine trans* folks are arguably more present within higher education than feminine presenting people and trans people of color, Bruce was unable to voice why that might be. In this subtle way, the norms of the academy, rooted in a fundamental valuing of whiteness and maleness are simultaneously absent and present. Bruce was not alone in having difficulties in articulating white and male norms. I highlight Bruce because our dialogue highlights the difficulties of drawing out the way white, male norms operate. Based on this exchange, I conclude that the academy sits in a kind of threshold of silence about white, male norms making it difficult for Bruce to have voice on the topic.

In addition to the silences I just shared, there are silences from others that participants’ endured. I share experiences from AJ and Joy. Again, as in other sections, I share these stories
because they illuminate the notion of silence and in particular how others’ silence affected participants.

AJ works at a women’s college that recently addressed trans inclusion in its admission policy. Like many women’s colleges, AJ’s institution garnered much media attention as the institution’s board of trustees attempted to create a policy. AJ explained the situation as follows:

when we had the trans [admissions] policy discussions, I did a lot of education around that both with the campus community, internal faculty meetings, one on one with people, you know, these are things that need to happen to make a trans affirming space. […] I will say that I felt very unsupported during the media attention that happened that I talked with you about. The complete silence was deafening. No one reached out to me. No one said anything to me. I’m sure people talked about me and the issue and being quoted in the paper away from me. I’m sure that that happened. That no one came to me when I’m the only faculty member doing this research, the only faculty member who is out and no one said one word to me, not anything positive, let alone negative with even acknowledge that it was happening. There was nothing. There was nothing.

Even the folks who were in my department who I thought would say, “Hey, I saw that. Good work,” or, “I saw that, hope you don’t get in trouble.” It was just silence. […] It was frustrating. It was a little bit scary. It was confusing. I didn’t know if people just didn’t have the words. I mean, they have to have some concept of the issue. It was a big deal on our campus. It’s not like it was a minor issue. It was a huge, months long crisis level situation.

AJ, repeated that phrase, “there was nothing” twice. While AJ’s colleagues said nothing, their saying nothing did say something. It was not the lack of awareness of the issue or the media
coverage, as AJ noted, the discussion about trans inclusive admissions was a “huge, months long crisis level situation.” But in AJ’s colleagues’ saying nothing, there is a meaningful and purposeful silence. That silence created a departmental climate wherein AJ did not feel that AJ could “rely on any of these people.” AJ lamented feeling vulnerable when no one responded. The silence of AJ’s colleagues is haunted and inhabited, perhaps by transphobia and fear of how the college would change when more trans students arrived on campus. Perhaps the silence AJ felt was about the risky move of speaking out on the issue of trans inclusion.

But AJ was not the only one who dealt with the silence of others. Joy described a publication she had about another scholar’s portrayal of identity and the teaching she did around that. Joy and I were talking about times she felt supported or unsupported in her discipline when she described what happened after the publication of that piece, she said:

I was misrecognized by people who would know me, I’d been teaching [at a special institute dedicated to this scholar’s work] for a long time but some people didn’t realize that I was the same person that they had studied with when I was teaching as a guy. It was very interesting to be teaching about the ways [scholar]’s theories of identity while I’m thinking about my own theories of identity. I turned [my theorizing] into an article that was published in the [Scholar’s Name] International Society bulletin, but there was no response to it. Nothing. So I have no idea what that means about the discipline or even the sub-discipline. Certainly it doesn’t suggest to me that there is a great craving, […]

But I was a little bit surprised by that.

Joy, like AJ, experienced a kind of silence that was telling. In this case, Joy was working with a group of scholars who all study a particular scholar. When she offered a trans* interpretation of another scholar’s text, there was silence. By saying nothing, others in Joy’s field were indeed
saying something. Perhaps what they were saying was that her analysis was outside the expected interpretations of this particular scholar’s work.

In addition to the silences I just described, several participants talked about the silent responses they received about their identities. Carter described a mostly supportive environment at their institution, but felt that there was a “strange silence” about their trans* identity. Similarly, Stanley said that his trans identity was invisible unless he disclosed to his colleagues, his identity is shrouded by silence. Jackson, also experienced a silence and negation of his trans* identity and any marginalization that might be associated with that. He said:

[Trans is] not really seen as a legitimate identity category or a minority status, so everybody sees me as a white man. How can I complain about anything because I am a heterosexual white man and even like queer faculty members or faculty of color have said similar things to me like “oh you’re the white man now.”

Some experienced silence as forgetting. Gabe said, “I find that it’s very hard for me to show up as trans because people forget I’m trans.” Similarly to Jackson, Gabe felt that he had to “work pretty hard to get people to think about the fact that I might be having experiences that are difficult.” Nathan described a situation where others’ use the incorrect pronoun for him. He said, “There are certain people who mispronoun me 6 years in. A batch of those that just retired, but my chair is one of those that periodically forgets.” A final example of this kind of silence as manifested in forgetting comes from Mike who said, “I am out and that’s good, but people keep forgetting that I am trans.” He continued to say, “I always feel like I have to remind people that I’m trans.”

Silence as forgetting derives from the fact that Carter, Stanley, Jackson, Gabe Nathan, and Mike all transitioned medically with the use of testosterone. In many instances each of these
academics are read as “just one of the guys.” Yet, each of these participants walks through the world as a trans* person. Further, others’ notions of what a trans* person look like play into the forgetting that happens, evidenced by participants’ and my comments about stereotypes of trans people. As participants and I both discussed, there is an expectation that people would be able to tell that a person is trans*, an image conveyed through the transmisogynist trope of a “man in a dress;” often others forget that trans men are trans, as Jackson, Gabe, Stanley, Nathan, and Mike all indicated in their interviews. The act of forgetting often leaves trans men feeling invisible.

The opposing space of silence is voice. While voice is present throughout this chapter, the lack of voice from institutions and colleagues left trans faculty in silence. That silence keeps trans lives and experiences outside in the teaching machine (Spivak, 1993, p. 294). I am making the silence of others visible, so as to point to the danger that remaining silent meant for trans* academics. As with the other thresholds, voice can be a kind of antidote to silence.

In her call for “rhizovocality” Jackson (2010) calls for a “refusal of voice as a guarantor of essential truth” (p. 705). Here, Jackson is resisting any singular notion of truth that voice might reveal. Instead, thinking of voice as “performative utterances that consist of unfolding and irrupting threads” (Jackson, 2010, p. 707). The movement beyond simplistic rendering of research texts into polyvocal texts necessitates that voice not be seen as some decisive action or indicator of truth. Rather voices are multiple, contingent. Voices are discursively formed through particular social and historical conditions, but so is silence.

**Coda on Thresholds**

By taking up the contractual spaces (the institution, Spivak, 1993) where trans academic operate, the notion of thresholds becomes a powerful way to show how the academy creates supportive, neutral, and hostile environments for trans academics. Through each of the
thresholds, I attempted to tease out the tensions of thresholds that placed trans academic outside in the teaching machine (Spivak, 1993, p. 294). I sought to explore what makes trans* academics experience isolation, silence, precarity, and alienation. One source of the negative conditions trans* academics experience derives from the neoliberal governmentality I previously described in chapter five. I described the academic market/workplace that creates conditions for neoliberal subjectivities. Neoliberal subjectivities hinge on individualized, autonomous notions of the self, the importance of consumerism, customization, and marketing one’s self (Bondi, 2005; Foucault, 2004). This neoliberal subjectivity thrives on individualism, leading to isolation and alienation. This same process of neoliberal economic policies that eliminated or greatly reduced the government safety net and created neoliberal subjects allows for precarity to emerge. Isolation, alienation, and precarity are a recipe for silence.

In this analysis, I am creating multi-layered accounts of the effects of institutional logics and inequality regimes. In my efforts to answer the question for what precisely makes for supportive, neutral and hostile environments for trans academics in this study, I return to Jackson and Mazzei’s (2012) discussion of thresholds as being meaningless until they are connecting two spaces. In this chapter, I attempted to connect the two spaces that each of the thresholds I described straddles: isolation and community, alienation and familiarity, precarity and security, and silence and voice lead to hostile environments. As previously stated, thresholds are both/and spaces, spaces that are both entries and exits, like the heavy green doors of the market.

My sincere hope is that the thresholds of isolation, alienation, precarity, and silence will not serve as exits for the knowledge producers who participate in this study. As I will take up in the final chapter, there are no easy fixes to be found here. Yet, I will attempt to offer some ideas about how to move from spaces of struggle to spaces of support as trans* academics navigate the
teaching machine. In a kind of warning at the end of our second interview, Cassidy said, in a rather poetic ending to our time together, “If you become stuck in the threshold you cannot cross the threshold from your adolescent way of thinking to your more expansive way of thinking.” Now she is referring not only to trans* identities, but also of politics, citizenship, national identity, and what it means to be a trans* academic. I will take up how institutional leaders can help trans* academics and the institution as a whole to cross certain thresholds in the final chapter of this dissertation.

**Chapter Summary**

In this chapter I took a thinking with theory approach to understand the experiences of trans* academics in light of the following question: From the perspectives of participants, what organizational and policy contexts (consisting of formal policies and informal practices) create supportive, neutral, and/or hostile environments for trans* faculty? I plotted my response to this question across four thresholds: isolation-community, alienation-familiarity, precarity-security, and silence-voice. In so doing, I grafted black feminist thought and post/decolonial subaltern theorizing into trans academics experiences. In this chapter, I relied on the metaphor of the teaching machine and notions of the threshold, drawing out another layer to the market metaphor. These two metaphors help me to demonstrate how trans faculty are simultaneously center/margin and out/in. I sought to complicate my analysis of trans academics experiences by making the dangers that lurk within the academy visible.
Chapter 7: Finding Trans* Academics’ Resistance

Resistance hardly ever has a straightforward public presence. It is rather duplicitous, ambiguous, even devious. But it is almost always masked and hidden by structures of meaning that countenance and constitute domination.
–María Lugones (2003, p. x)

Lugones (2003) argued a “central movement” in her book Pilgramages/Peregrinajes was about “resistance to inter-meshed oppression as an ongoing activity from which to understand liberatory possibilities” (p. x). In this chapter, I seek to find the acts of resistance and disruptions of trans* academics and answer research question 2a: How, if at all, do trans* faculty resist and/or disrupt the norms created by institutional logics and inequality regimes, especially genderism? In looking for the acts of disruption and resistance to dominant norms and ideologies that trans* academics engaged, Lugones’ (2003) words rang utterly true: resistance does not always have a straightforward presence.

In my analysis of trans* academics’ experiences, I sought to untangle and interpret what resistance to the norms created by institutional logics and inequality regimes might entail. Resistance is a refusal, an attempt to block something by action or argument (Oxford Dictionaries, 2016). Lugones (2003) argued for a “reading” of resistance as “crucial for an alternative understanding of the realities of the oppressed” (p. x). Rather than hold a view of trans* academics as duped by a system of oppression, I conceptualize trans* academics as actively resisting the conditions that seek to enclose their being, reducing them and their experiences into objects, and/or that constraining their possibilities.

In this chapter, I describe the ways that trans* academics resisted the various norms of the academy. First, I address the ways that participants resisted and disrupted institutional logics. Then I describe how participants resisted cisgender expectation through their presence and disrupted cisgender norms. Next, I articulate the ways that trans* academics resisted various
facets of inequality regimes within higher education organization, particularly around race and national belonging. Finally, I describe participants’ resistance and disruption through their traditional roles of teaching, research, and service.

**Resisting and Disrupting within Academia**

In what follows, I offer a multitude of ways that trans* academics resisted through their work *outside in the teaching machine* (Spivak, 1993, p. 294). Within this section, I emphasize strategies of resistance that focus on “exposing disciplinary norms as norms and proposing alternative ways of being as legitimate” (Spade, 2011 p. 108). Building on the work of Foucault’s (2004) articulation of biopolitics and resistance to neoliberal governmentality, here I analyze the ways that trans academics call into question the neutral and independent nature of organizational actors and actions.

Biopolitics are internal and external mechanisms for population level controls (Foucault, 2004). A population level control refers to the ways that social institutions create classification systems for identifying individuals (Scott, 1999), which are then used to distinguish populations that are marginal or central (Foucault, 2004; Spade, 2011). “The disciplinary mode of power establishes norms for being a proper productive citizen, worker […] that are enforced on individuals while the population-management mode of power mobilizes those same standards and meanings to create policies and programs that apply generally (Spade, 2011, p. 111). For example, when trans individual fret about their attire this is an internal control mechanism that aligns with external biopolitical demands that necessitates that in order to be recognized as a certain gender, one must properly enact that gender through outward expression (i.e., genderism). It is because of the consequences that one faces for not adhering to the existing gender norms (e.g., being questioned about gender) that fretting about attire occurs in the first
place. In other words, while the classification and definition of a norm occurs on the individual level (disciplinary mode of power), it is through biopolitics or population-level mechanisms that the individual norms of gender, race, class, ability, and sexual orientation creates what I call population level controls (e.g., racism, sexism, heterosexism, ableism, genderism).

Related to the discussion of biopolitics is neoliberal governmentality, or the governing of subjects through the subordination of state power to marketplaces (Foucault, 2004). For example, in chapter four, I described the various ways that higher education is now subject to neoliberal market logic and the way that logic influenced the curriculum at Gabe’s institution. Neoliberal governmentality creates a kind of subjectivity wherein individuals must be responsible for themselves as the state moves aware from a welfare state (Foucault, 2004). Under neoliberal governmentality, in exchange for a reduced social welfare state, individuals are promised greater freedom, consumerism, and customization (Foucault, 2004). However, the population level controls I previously describe ultimately limit who is free and under what circumstances individuals experience freedom.

It is within a context of biopolitics and neoliberal governmentality through which I describe the various ways that trans* academics within this study resisted and disrupted inter- and intra-organizational processes, including microfoundations, inequality regimes, and institutional logics. With respect to institutional logics, I provide two examples of the ways that participants resisted or leveraged these logics within their traditional faculty roles of teaching and research. In chapter five, Stanley (a white FTM/genderqueer librarian and PhD candidate) described the tension in his library and information sciences department between teaching theory and workplace skills. In describing the tension he said, “I think that the tension is about this whole sort of “grad program versus professional program.” Within this tension, Stanley noted,
“A lot of master’s students tend to view [the program] as a skills training program.” Even though there is an external market logic and demand that individuals be “career-ready,” Stanley’s pedagogical approach focused more on the “theoretical and historical underpinning for the work that they do, as opposed to emphasizing so much what the skills are.” In focusing on theory and history, Stanley is disrupting the market logic that prioritizes marketable skills over certain kinds of knowledges. My discussion of Stanley’s experiences helps to reveal that a master’s degree in library and information science has a norm of providing marketable, workplace skills. Even the students, through neoliberal governmentality, desire these skills. The demand to have workplace skills appears to be neutral; yet, this norm prioritizes certain skills over theory, history, and contextual understandings of librarianship. Furthermore, the demand for skills serves as code to enact one’s own efforts to customize education and turn courses into spaces to acquire marketable skills, in keeping with neoliberal governmentality.

Related to market logics that Stanley resisted through his teaching, Susan (a white settler MTF transsexual woman) leveraged this logic to advance “critical knowledge production.” In chapter five, I explored the ways that Susan’s institution sought to “get in on the ground floor of a potentially lucrative field of study.” Despite having spent many years as an independent scholar, Susan felt that there are “some things you can do with a university that you can’t do without a university.” In particular, Susan S. to “build a program in [my field], […] to hire faculty, …to start a journal, …to train graduate students, […] [and] to create programs [of study].” These goals would be unrealizable outside the teaching machine, so she came into the machine (Spivak, 1993).

Once inside the teaching machine, Susan used market logics to accomplish her goals. Because of market logics, nearly every aspect of education is now a transaction (Thornton et al.,
As a result, organizational actors court and “lure” faculty away from another institution. Susan experienced this process of luring away several times. Most recently, she used market logic to leverage her larger goals I previously described. She explained the situation in the following way:

I went to the provost of the university here and said “Look I’m being lured away, it’s a very tempting offer, would you give me the opportunity to do something here that I couldn’t do elsewhere” and he said “What?” I said, “I want to start a program in [my field]. He said okay, I’ll give you four faculty lines and you can hire four faculty, and if you want to start a degree program, go ahead and here’s some money to start your program. We like what you’ve been doing, we want to keep you here.

Susan’s comments illuminate that because higher education institutions operate in a model of transaction, part of the market logic, it is possible to negotiate for new opportunities within one’s current institution by using the offer of another institution. Susan is simultaneously leveraging the market logic but also subverting it by engaging it in ways that ultimately suit her larger goals for critical knowledge production about the lives of trans people.

**Being Present as Disruption**

In addition to resisting and leveraging institutional logics, trans* academics disrupt within the academy by being present; “showing up” as trans* academics in and of itself is a challenge to the larger gender norms within academe. Being present ultimately reshaped the norms, showing the reciprocal relationship between microfoundations (Powell & Colyvas, 2007) creating norms and trans faculty reshaping those norms. Jay, a white genderqueer assistant professor, described resistance through presence in the following way:
we all had queer teachers growing up that mattered to us, that mattered emotionally in ways that were incredibly significant, often not because they were doing anything in particular, but just because they existed. [...] That’s the way in which I want to be visible on campus. That’s the form of activism that I want to engage in.

Jay highlights that through being present and by being a queer teacher, her work becomes activism. Being queer and genderqueer disrupts the norm that professors be straight and cisgender. The idea of disrupting by being present derives from hooks (1990) assertion that, “Our very presence is a disruption.” While hook (1990) discussed the experiences of underclass Black professors, there is a parallel worth noting about the presence of trans individuals as disruption to certain norms of the academy, especially gender norms.

However, being present can bring certain complications into the work experiences of trans* academics. For example, Mike, a white queer tenured librarian said in reference to being perceived as a cisgender man that “Another interesting thing to me is how identity and power work together.” Mike went on to say the following:

Now I find myself in places where it’s assumed that I’ve had the same experiences that other cisgender men have. I haven’t, and usually don’t explain that to them. [For example, there is this assumption] that I don’t understand women at all because I am a man. Especially when these assumptions are related to power, it feels like do you speak up, do you not speak up, at what point do you speak up? When is it too much? I just know gender and power is baffling and difficult to navigate.

Others assume Mike is just like cisgender men, yet his experiences are quite different. Mike simultaneously reveals two cisgenderist assumptions, first, that trans is not possible, and second, that one permanently occupies a gender associated with one’s sex assigned at birth or one’s
current perceived sex. Mike’s trans-ness goes against the grain of expectations of others about his gender, particularly the notion that as a man, he is unfamiliar with women’s experiences. Except, because of Mike’s lived experiences, he knows quite a bit about being a woman, since he experienced female socialization and used to identify as a woman. Further, Mike remains attuned to sexism in the workplace in part because of his prior experiences in another gender. However, others’ assumptions about Mike are also power laden, leaving him unsure when he should speak up and what to say when he does. Most telling is Mike’s comment of “when is it too much,” meaning when is his resistance too much. Building on what Mike shared about disrupting gendered norms, I articulate three other ways that trans academics disrupted norms about gender.

**Disrupting (Cis)Gender Norms**

There are three ways that I find participants disrupting gender in this study: various kinds of pronoun usage, gender presentations, and changing genders. Within this study, participants used many different kinds of pronouns that were associated with many different kinds of gender presentations. Cassidy, Martina, and Joy all use she/her/hers pronouns and present in feminine ways. Susan uses she/her/hers and presents in androgynous and feminine ways. Susan King and Nick both use he or she pronouns and present in multiple different genders. Westley uses he as a pronoun, but has a feminine gender presentation. Others use he pronouns and present in androgynous and/or masculine ways, like Bruce, Jasper, David, Benjamin, and Isaac. Some participants, like AJ and Rowan who both present in more masculine ways, do not use pronouns at all. Still others use they pronouns, like Ardel who presents in a genderqueer way. Some participants use multiple pronouns, like Nathan who uses he/him/his and ze/zir/zim and has an androgynously masculine presentation. Tobey uses he/him/his and they/them/their pronouns and presents in a fey masculine fashion, meaning, “not super masculine.”
Each of these combinations of pronouns and presentations creates a disruption within a genderist system that negates trans* as a possible identity and privileges binary cisgenders (Bilodeau, 2009). All organizational actors within higher education institutions learned subtle and not so subtle rules and norms about gender (Bem, 1981; Tierney & Bensimon, 1996; Lester, 2008). Through socialization, individuals learn at a very early age that differences exist between boys and girls, as two and only two possible gender options (Acker, 1990; Alvesson & Billing, 2009; Bem, 1981). Further, there are codes and cues that people use to make gender attributions (Kessler & McKenna, 1978). One trouble with gender attribution is that it is not always accurate, as was revealed through the stories of Rowan and Westley.

The various ways that participants use pronouns and the ways that pronouns attach to and are projected upon certain bodies is another kind of disruption. Individuals often expect certain kinds of gender identities based on their gender schemas (Bem, 1981). Even when trans* academics actively disrupt gendered expectations, these disruptions are not always recognized by others. As I previously described, Rowan (white, gender non-conforming) is often misgendered because of others’ readings of bodily features, like the presence of fuller hips. Westley (white, trans boy) also had a difficult time with misgendering until he had facial hair. Similarly, AJ, a white, trans and genderqueer professor, is often called a “lady.” Others misgender AJ because of their assumptions about gender, AJ described gender misattribution as follows:

This one woman was an adjunct in our department for a while and she just would come into my office and be like, “Hey, girl. What are you doing up in here, lady?” And I was just mortified and I was just like, “I don’t know why you are reading me in this way because I’m wearing a tie.” It was just so weird.
While AJ wanted this colleague to recognize that “lady” is not the appropriate word, the colleague failed to see AJ’s disruption to the term lady. AJ continued to describe the situation:

[shared colleague’s problematic assumptions about AJ’s kids] I think she probably would have called me gay, a gay woman, a gay lady and it was like -- I was just so bothered by the way she treated me. It was just so offensive and she just didn’t get it.

What AJ’s colleague did not seem to understand was that continuing to assign a gender that AJ does not identify with is offensive. AJ is trying to give gendered clues to others about pronouns and gender identity, yet AJ is continually situated as a “lady.” Even if AJ’s colleague does not see AJ’s gendered disruptions, AJ has disrupted normative gender. While Rowan, Westley, and AJ, among others, actively disrupted gendered expectations through their identities, mannerisms, and gender expressions, others erased these disruptions when making incorrect gender attributions.

Another way some trans academics disrupt gender norms in through their workplace gender transitions. Whether one engages in bodily and/or legal modification of their sex/gender, when a trans academic transitions on the job, doing so reveals a variety of norms. By going through a gender transition at work, Mary (white female academic) revealed the cisgender norm of occupying the same gender category for the entirety of one’s employment with a university. Similarly, Nathan, Skeeter, Joy, Martina, Jackson, Carter, Karen, Benjamin, and Westley all remained within their institutional contexts through their gender transitions.

Like Mary, Benjamin (white male/FTM) also revealed norms unearthed by one’s gender transition. Benjamin is a white, male clinical professor in medicine that “was someone who transitioned during med school, so it’s been a really interesting experience now being employed there and having [a] different population of people who knew me at different times.” Part of
what is interesting for Benjamin is that he does not always know if others are aware of his trans history or not. Further, Benjamin, like other participants including Stanley, Max and Timothy, have their agency taken away regarding identity disclosure, as was described in chapter four. He said, “I’ve been ‘outed’ by references to potential employers. [References explain] how I overcame all of these challenges, but not really understanding what they are doing when they tell potential employers that I’m trans.” Because Benjamin “do[es]n’t really have a good grasp of who is aware that [he is] trans, [this situation] is actually pretty stressful on a daily basis.” Benjamin reveals the consequences that others talking about their transitions creates, a “stressful” situation. Benjamin disrupted the cisgender mandate to identify with one’s assigned sex at birth, which in turn created a stressful situation for him.

Additionally, there are two norms revealed. First, Benjamin’s colleagues saw his gender transition as some kind of triumph over adversity. While Benjamin may have overcome a great deal, what he overcame was a system that rendered trans as an impossible category of being. Second, Benjamin’s experiences further solidify some of the difficulties and impossibilities that trans* academics face: the expectation that one be cisgender and remain in the same gender identity throughout their tenure at an institution. If one fails to remain cisgender there are consequences like being “outed” and dealing with the stress of having one’s agency removed. Each of these experiences with pronouns, gender presentations, and gender changing reveals certain norms and proposes new ways of being as legitimate (Spade, 2011).

**Resisting and Disrupting Inequality Regimes: Race and National Belonging**

Some participants also resisted enactments of racism and perceived notions of national belonging. Building on Mike’s earlier comments about resisting sexism, he also spoke of dealing with anti-immigrant sentiments. He said, “A lot of times people will say really nasty things about
immigrants and you know, really I am one of them. So I feel like I’m traveling this line.” The line that Mike is often traveling is one of fleeting privilege and belonging, especially as a light-skinned immigrant perceived as male (Ahmed, 2006). With respect to belonging, Mike described what Ahmed (2006) theorized about her own experiences as being out of place or out of line, oriented toward a lost home, and to a place that is not yet home. Mike’s comments further elucidate the tension in his life when he said that he felt that “people don’t expect me to be in those categories” because he is perceived as white and because “some people…are really anti-immigrants or think all immigrants are black or darker skinned.” Mike felt a responsibility as an immigrant to “dispel this myth that it’s other people [immigrants] who are bad people… whatever that means.” Mike raises an important point, related to critical trans politics. He is naming the fact that population level controls situate some subjects as “good” and others as “bad” (Spade, 2011). In Mike’s story, white and non-immigrant are associated with good and dark and immigrant are associated with bad. As with his resistance to others’ sexism, Mike found spaces to resist anti-immigrant ideology structured around anti-Blackness, even if he did so from a precarious position. Mike resisted by verbally challenging others’ assumptions about immigrant populations and disrupted others’ expectations about what an immigrant looks like and experiences.

Unlike Mike, Jackson, a self-described anti-racist white male, holds securely to the lines of white and male/masculine privileges. Jackson’s philosophy was “there is not friendship without accountability.” This commitment manifested in a variety of ways. A particularly generative example of his anti-racist identity was Jackson’s description of how he holds “people accountable in particular ways.” He said:
I make people uncomfortable. Because I think if you’re going to make me uncomfortable, as a queer, trans person I’m not going to have to be the person who holds the burden of discomfort when you say something inappropriate. I make it a point to say, “Okay I’m going to give it right back to you and push you to think through these things.”

Jackson also described how he resisted others’ dismissal of women of color in the classroom. His efforts in the classroom could be seen as an effort to engage in the kinds of critical trans politics and coalitional movement building that Spade (2011) articulated. He went on to describe a situation where he offered a critique similar to one that a woman of color in his class made. He said:

[A prominent theory in his field] It’s this really shitty, racist thing, and she would question it, and people would all look at her as if she were complaining about this theory and just taking it personally. But when I complained about it, they were like “Those are good theoretical points.” I was like, “Yeah, Cailyn said the same thing.”

While Jackson’s rhetorical actions in the classroom could be perceived as removing the agency of his colleague Cailyn, by specifically naming the dismissal of a woman of color, Jackson attempts to work in solidarity with his colleague.

Martina, a Latina professor, provides a final example from these data about the ways that some trans faculty resisted race-related inequality regimes. In particular, the ways that Martina resisted race-based inequality regimes through her own presence and persistence in academe was especially powerful. Given her background, growing up in abject poverty in a community where “Anybody who came out of that community and amounted to something was not really common,” Martina described the lived reality of population level controls, built on racist, sexist, xenophobic assumptions that distribute life chances (Spade, 2011).
While I am cautious in feeding into a damaging narrative of Latina exceptionalism (Espinoza & Harris, 1997), Martina’s story does reveal resiliency and resistance to the “nonsense that I got sometimes,” nonsense like racism. In defying others’ urging that Martina “get off this [academic] track […] simply because of who I am,” she resisted attempts to engage in the exercise of disciplinary power (Foucault, 1978). Rather than take a deficit approach to her own life Martina saw her class background, cultural identity, and color of her skin as driving her towards greater success. The measure of her success is “turn[ing] around and help[ing] people behind me rise to a greater level as well.” As a result of her “turning around and helping people,” Martina said, “a lot of my alums, they’re out there being successful. […] As I said, I have a legacy.” That legacy is one of lifting up first-generation college students, white women, and/or students of color. Martina concluded that,

My deal was how many [white] women and students of color have I placed in high places because of what I did. That’s always been the biggest thing in my life. That’s been my barometer of success, and it still is. Because of that whole story, I was really resistant, as I talk to people [about my transition] it’s kind of like I’m very bulletproof, there’s really nothing much that will stop me or slow me down because of that background that I described.

Martina demonstrates the deep commitment she sustained over the 24 years she has been a faculty member. Her resistance through being present and making sure that others with partially shared experiences could also find a place of success is a powerful reminder of the kinds of change that an individual can make. Martina’s efforts were to increase the life chances of those with which she worked (Spade, 2011). Yet, individual solutions are insufficient; structural changes are also needed, I describe these in chapter eight. Connecting the section about race to
the previous section about gender reveals that there are particular norms related to gender and race. By making that connection, I argue that trans* academics can and must resist and disrupt the problematic aspects of racism, sexism, and gendersim while carrying out their work within higher education organizations.

**Resisting and Disrupting through Teaching, Research, and Service**

The final way that trans academics resisted and disrupted the academy was through their traditional roles: teaching, research, and service. Several participants talked about the ways in which they disrupted normative understandings of what constitutes good teaching. For example, Adam, a white, transmasculine genderqueer assistant professor, spoke of the importance of culturally relevant and sustaining pedagogy though his work in contextualized learning communities. Adam saw his teaching role as being about “helping students understand how my class fits into the story of their life.”

Another example of disruptive teaching comes from Benjamin (introduced earlier), who at the time of our interviews was developing a course about social justice in the medical profession. While in some fields this might not seem very radical, within his field, this was practically revolutionary. In contrast, within Carey’s (a white trans male) field, which examines power, privilege and oppression, his disruption in teaching came in the form of emphasizing intersectional approaches and “being intentional and mindful of decolonizing” the canonical knowledge. Carey explained how this decolonial approach manifested “in the curriculum” and in his work with the “academic faculty side” offering a “really critical…way in which our classes, the content, the message is/has been defined and continues to be defined, especially within my program, by [certain dominant groups’] issues.” Carey wanted to push his fellow faculty colleagues not to simply “add-on” but to “really re-write…the curriculum.”
David, a white male/FTM adjunct instructor takes an intersectional approach to teaching. He said that when he teaches about gender and sexuality, “We’re talking about it from a global perspective, we’re talking about it as a racialized thing, as an embodied thing, as a class thing.” He continued to say that, “All of these things are difficult for students to take on. They're difficult for anyone to take on.” In some cases, David’s use of a global perspective that takes seriously issues of race elicited strong reactions from students which “ranged from benign to… the more extreme end.” For example, David had a student accuse him of advancing a “homosexual agenda” by bringing up gender and sexuality in a course. This student was so upset about the situation, she wrote a letter to the department chair, but the chair declined to investigate, which David felt was “fortunate.”

Relatedly, Cassidy, a Native American female teaches gender from an indigenous perspective that “[is] an entirely different paradigm than non-indigenous gender.” Through her teaching, Cassidy helps to show the ways that colonization “replaced… traditional understandings of gender [that] have died off with the elders.” Finally, Rowan, a white gender non-conforming, non-binary adjunct instructor, challenged binary notions of gender and the various assumptions that the field makes. Each of these approaches has the potential to disrupt normative understandings of what makes for good teaching, a belief that rests on the image of a “sage on the stage” who “spouts off knowledge,” as one participant described teaching. Each of these examples provides evidence of how participants diverged from expected, normative understandings of their fields. In addition to formal teaching, many participants were involved in informal education efforts about queer and trans communities. Carter, AJ, and Max all participated in and developed informal education opportunities for students, faculty, and staff to learn about queer and trans lived experiences.
With respect to research roles, 22 of the 39 participants study the lived experiences of trans people and produced knowledge about this population. For example, Arun a white, Jewish, and Middle-Eastern male described the importance of doing trans affirming research within his social science discipline. Likewise, Justin, a white FTM academic wrote the first and only book in his humanities field about trans topics. Similarly, Joy, a white MTF transsexual woman is developing the genre of trans* poetics, while Susan (introduced earlier) is developing an entire field of knowledge that centers the lived experiences of trans* people. Additionally, Jay and Jesse, two white, trans and genderqueer faculty, conduct research that is counterhegemonic both in terms of methods and topics (Gramsci, 1971). A final example of disrupting through traditional roles comes from Stanley (introduced previously) whose research describes the contours of “institutionalized bigotry.”

A final way that trans people resisted the press of the normative was through service. For example, Karen (European American transgender woman) and AJ (introduced above) both engaged in extensive service efforts at women’s colleges to develop trans inclusive admissions policies, albeit to varying degrees of success. Another example comes from Bruce who worked with his disciplinary association to advance the way his field addresses trans issues. Over several years Bruce worked to develop practice guidelines where there had previously been none. Each of these examples of teaching, research, and service ultimately seek to leverage these academics’ skills and expertise to make important contributions to their respective fields.

**Chapter Summary**

In this chapter, I responded to the research question: How, if at all, do trans* academics resist and/or disrupt the norms created by institutional logics and inequality regimes, especially genderism? In response to that question, I used Lugones’ (2003) notion of coalition and
resistance to identify the ways that trans* academics resisted, disrupted, and leveraged prevailing institutional logics and disrupted norms related to gender, race, and national belonging. Finally, I described the ways that participants resisted and disrupted through their research, teaching, and service roles.
Chapter 8: Identifying “Spaces of Possible Action”:

Implications for Policy, Practice, Theory, and Research

Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced. –James Baldwin (1964, p. BR11)

In this final chapter, I will summarize the findings from this study and develop implications for policy and practice, theory, and future research. The research questions that guided this study were:

1. How do within-organizational processes (or microfoundations and inequality regimes) shape trans* academics’ experiences?
2. What are the primary institutional logics that shape the experiences of trans* academics from diverse backgrounds?
   a. How, if at all, do trans* faculty resist and/or disrupt the norms created by inter- and intra-organizational contexts?
3. From the perspectives of participants, what organizational and policy contexts (consisting of formal policies and informal practices) create supportive, neutral, and/or hostile environments for trans* faculty?

In response to the first research question, which I addressed in chapter five, I used the metaphor of the open-air market to describe my findings. In response to this question, I developed the notion of the academic market/workplace, signaling both the rise of academic capitalism (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004) and advancement of neoliberalism. Through my analysis I identified the saliency of the market and corporation logics amidst a declining state logic. The market logic affected trans academics’ experiences in the following ways: reductions to academic freedom and tensions about the aims and purposes of education. The corporation
logic was also evident in participants’ experience, most notably manifesting in references to hierarchy, growth agendas, and various revenue generating strategies such as procuring grants, increasing enrollments of international students, and offering online educational programs. The strategies associated with the corporation logic were alienating to at least some participants. The declining state logic was evident in the declining support for higher education from state governments. Throughout my discussion of the logics, I described how various institutions took up these logics and how the logics affected academic libraries. The logic of the profession was notably lacking in all but one participant’s experience (Jackson). While certainly many academics could articulate the logics operating within higher education organizations, these logics have particular implications for minoritized scholars, and trans* academics in particular. Within a market logic, those who unsettle norms in any way (e.g., are gender non-conforming) may become precarious by operationalizing and mobilizing processes that establish certain norms in keeping within this logic (e.g., demand for research funds, but little available funding for certain topics).

With respect to the second research question, which I addressed in chapter four, I developed three themes related to within-organizational processes. Using inequality regimes (Acker, 2006) and the notion of microfoundations (Powell & Colyvas, 2008), I described the ways that genderism (Bilodeau, 2009) manifested for participants. More specifically, I described participants’ experiences with interpersonal and digital misgendering, hyper-visibility and invisibility, and exercising agency over identity/history/status disclosures.

Regarding the third research question, addressed in chapter six, I developed four thresholds to describe the tensions felt by participants. The four thresholds span isolation–community, alienation–familiarity, precarity–security, and silence–voice. In describing these
various tensions, I drew on the theories that undergird critical trans politics including Black Feminist Thought and Feminist Anti/Decolonial theorizing (hooks, 1990; Spade, 2011; Spivak, 1993). I encapsulated the felt sense of each of these thresholds in the notion of being and becoming professionally other.

Finally, I addressed the sub-question about resistance and disruption to the norms created by institutional logics and inequality regimes in chapter seven. I described the various ways that participants resisted and leveraged the prevailing institutional logics and how participants disrupted and resisted gender norms and expectations. I also addressed how participants disrupted inequality regimes related to race and national belonging. I concluded the findings related to this question by describing how participants disrupted and resisted through their teaching, research, and service roles. Having briefly summarized the findings, I now describe the implications for policy and practice based from this study.

**Developing Implications for Policy and Practice**

One of the key tasks of critical/scholar activists as defined by Apple (2009) is to “bear witness to negativity” and to reveal the connections between educational policies and practices that connect to larger social struggles (p. 248). In chapters four, five, and six, I witnessed or “faced” the negativity that shaped trans* academics workplace experiences and described the connections to larger systems of oppression. Apple’s (2009) second task for critical scholar/activists is to “point to contradictions and to spaces of possible action” through the analytical and research processes (p. 248). In chapter seven, I described the various ways that trans* academics resist from where they are, outside in the teaching machine (Spivak, 1993, p. 294).
Through my analysis in the previous chapters, I developed several contradictions, tensions, and thresholds, which are in keeping with Apple’s (2009) second task for critical scholar/activists. Part of Apple’s (2009) argument is that identifying spaces where counterhegemonic actions are already occurring and building on those, as well as identifying new potential sites of action, are important tasks for critical scholar/activists. By documenting in chapter seven the various ways that trans* academics already resist and disrupt, I now describe the spaces where higher educational leaders could engage in organizational change work in support of ongoing efforts of trans* academics. In short, through this chapter, I propose strategies to change what was “faced” in the previous findings chapters.

The oft-repeated management phrase of “If you want something new, you have to stop doing something old” (Drucker in Shore, 2014, para. 5) typifies the implications of this study. Colleagues and institutional leaders need to stop doing some things (e.g., misgendering) and start doing some new things (e.g., self-education) in support of trans* academics. However, non-trans* people are not the only organizational actors who need to identify and engage in action. Trans* academics themselves also have work to do and perhaps some work to stop doing, as I will describe more later.

As I detailed in chapter four, there are many within-organizational processes that enact genderism (Bilodeau, 2009), including interpersonal and digital misgendering, hyper-visibility and invisibility, and exercising agency with trans* identity/status/history disclosures. Many of the recommendations that trans* academics in this study offered in response to my question about how to improve the current organizational conditions result from the ways that genderism came to shape their experiences. In tallying each of their ideas for how to improve the academy in support of trans* academics, participants coalesced around 11 changes. The chart on the
following page indicates the suggested change, a brief description, and the frequency with which participants identified a particular site of action. I briefly describe the importance of each of the changes from the perspective of participants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trans* Academics’ Suggested Changes</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Offering trans-inclusive health insurance and care</td>
<td>Include gender confirming surgeries, hormone replacement therapy, and other gender confirming procedures</td>
<td>18 (46%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementing trans-inclusive non-discrimination and harassment policies</td>
<td>List gender identity and expression in non-discrimination statements, include anti-trans bias in harassment policies</td>
<td>8 (21%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creating name change policies</td>
<td>Ensure that online systems can be easily updated with names and gender markers without requiring legal documentation</td>
<td>8 (21%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing diversity and human resources (HR) training</td>
<td>Ensure that HR professionals are trained about trans employee needs, ensure all faculty, staff, and students attend diversity training that includes trans issues</td>
<td>13 (33%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Altering everyday language practices</td>
<td>Increase fluency with various pronouns, avoid projecting gender, and exercise caution in making interpersonal gendered attributions (e.g., assuming someone’s pronouns or gender)</td>
<td>13 (33%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hiring and mentoring trans academics</td>
<td>Increase mentoring opportunities and hiring trans academics</td>
<td>11 (28%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leading institutional change efforts</td>
<td>Conduct a trans academics needs assessment, holding individuals accountable for incidence of bias, advancing complex understandings of gender equity</td>
<td>11 (28%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing trans-related programming and resources</td>
<td>Ensure that representations of trans people extend beyond Trans Day of Remembrance, ensure LGBTQ faculty groups are inclusive, and “Don’t tack on the T” as Will described</td>
<td>11 (28%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creating trans-inclusive forms</td>
<td>Create options on forms to reflect many gender identities and pronouns</td>
<td>4 (10%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8.1 Participants’ recommendations for changes in higher education

Before describing the implications and spaces of possible action that would develop more supportive academic workplaces for trans* individuals, I advance two caveats. First, as Marine
(2011) and Nicolazzo (2015) previously argued along similar lines, a “check-box” approach and
the use of “band-aid” solutions will not lead to the kinds of lasting changes that are most
pressing for this population. Instead, Nicolazzo (2015), following Spade (2011), called for
“trickle-up” social justice work, a concept I will explore in more detail as I describe participants’
desired changes. Thus, my theory of change is that check-boxes or band-aids will not accomplish
liberation, instead these approaches may ease some tensions, but could also produce unintended
consequences for trans* academics.

A second caveat to my discussion of the implications of this study relates to how power
and privilege function within institutions. For the purposes of this chapter, I follow Sensoy and
DiAngelo’s (2012) definition of power as “the ideology, technical, and discursive elements by
which those in authority impose their ideas and interests on everyone” (p. 52). In other words,
dominant norms and expectations condition populations to think and behave in particular ways
(Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012). This understanding of power then influences what kinds of
strategies are worth pursuing in an effort to improve organizational conditions for trans*
academics. Given my understandings about how power operates, and my desire to advance
“liberatory possibilities,” I seek to advance a coalitional politics in light of the theory of change I
just described (Lugones, 2003 p. x; Spade, 2011).

**Within-Organizational Processes: Addressing Genderism**

As I argued in chapter seven, I emphasize “exposing disciplinary norms as norms and
proposing alternative ways of being as legitimate” (Spade, 2011 p. 108) and follow a biopolitical
understanding of population level controls (Foucualt, 2004). To work against population level
controls that accompany the biopolitical view of how change, resistance, and power operates, I
seek to highlight how some of the changes that participants desired may not have the intended
effect. To interrogate the efficacy of such proposed changes is in keeping with critical trans politics (Spade, 2011).

While the above changes to policy and practice recommended by trans* academics resonates with the suggestions advanced elsewhere (e.g., Beemyn, Domingue, Pettit, & Smith, 2005b), the caveats I previously articulated must temper one’s approach to change within academe in support of trans* academics. Further complicating matters, the list of suggestions range from technical fixes like name change and non-discrimination policies, to fundamental alterations to everyday language practices. While the technical policy changes would reduce many of the concerns facing participants, I question whether population level controls would be fundamentally altered even if institutional leaders addressed each of the above ideas. In short, improving the academy for trans* academics requires more than implementing a few policies and practices. Rather, unsettling deeply and widely understood concepts about sex and gender, race, class, sexuality, and ability may ultimately create the kind of work environments where trans* academics might experience greater possibilities, hopefulness, and ultimately liberation.

In complicating the above recommendations, my point is not to undermine participant voices, but to shift the conversation about institutional change in light of the theoretical framing of this study. What I am advocate for here is a both/and strategy where higher education leaders engage in incremental change efforts, while also attending to the larger issues at hand, for instance population level controls including racism, genderism, and sexism. In order to demonstrate what I mean by a both/and strategy, I develop two examples of the importance of the issues outlined above and offer a heuristic to understand what trans* academics articulated as necessary change. Finally, I argue for change strategies that engage critical trans politics (Spade, 2011) as praxis.
Complicating Trans-Inclusive Healthcare

There was the greatest consensus around the need for trans-inclusive health insurance and care with 18 of 39 participants identifying this policy change. Yet, advancing trans-inclusive healthcare would do little for participants whose primary struggles within higher education were about pronouns and invisibility. Here, I make a distinction between healthcare, or the treatment that individuals receive, and health insurance, the institutionally provided policy that creates the terms and conditions that dictate healthcare options. There are three aspects of healthcare and insurance that participants articulated as important: inclusive coverage for faculty, staff, and students; adequate same-sex benefits; and availability of providers that are trans inclusive.

Despite my concerns about how developing health insurance and care policies might dismantle population level controls (e.g., situating trans people who pursue medical intervention as more “legitimate”), Nathan, a white, intersex trans man and associate professor, provides a powerful rationale for why trans-inclusive healthcare would be hugely important to him. Nathan punctuates this point because of the need for him to travel to fulfill his duties as a professor (e.g., going to conferences). Nathan, like many academics, travels regularly for conferences and to give lectures, key aspects of zir role as a faculty member. Nathan said,

I have a lot of trouble flying and I do travel a bunch all the time from this [local] airport, but I know it’s not just here, but anytime I have to go through one of the body scanners and [my local airport] uses body scanners exclusively, they always go off. Because I bind, I have not had top surgery. Which some day I would like to do, but there is nobody that does it here [there are no providers] and it’s expensive, and we have two gender transitioners, and three disabilities in a family of three. Anyway...I have to put 45 minutes to an hour of extra time because I am always going to set off the machine. I am always
going to be taken away and have to be in that little room with two or three guys with weapons who are patting me down, and making me take off my shirt, and it’s always super uncomfortable.

Generally, they don’t even understand when I tell them [I am trans]. They are like “well, there is a sticky area” and it’s the velcro [on the binder] but it could be like a bomb vest or something. Then they have to go swab it. Then they ask why am I wearing it. And, I say I am a transgender man and they never know what that means. So, there comes a minute when they are like take off your shirt (which by the way they are not supposed to do, but they always do) and, I do it, and, they see the binder and they can figure out I have breasts that are under the vest and it’s always a moment of just like horror and I have to endure that. Then they realize what I mean when I say I am a trans man.

What can my university do about that? They could recognize it. They could do something about my healthcare so that I could have coverage for this surgery. There are so many ways they could be involved. They could realize every time they send me out for travel I need to include all this extra time. Things that are specifically relevant but that wind up [not being addressed]. I get invited to go places and I have to deal with this yet another time.

Here Nathan brings to bear several important points, including the potential role that zir institution might have in reducing the negative effects ze faces in performing zir job functions that cisgender academics and trans* academics with adequate healthcare do not have to experience. In other words, Nathan is performing additional, unacknowledged labor. As Spade (2011) argued, by virtue of being trans, Nathan is exposed to a particular “vector of vulnerability” because of the inadequate healthcare ze received (p. 150). Nathan wants to have
chest surgery, but would have to pay out of pocket because zir institution does not have trans-inclusive health insurance.

Nathan also highlighted the fact that even if the university did provide trans-inclusive health insurance, there are no surgeons in zir geographic area to perform the surgery. Therefore, Nathan would have to travel, potentially out of state, to gain access to the surgical procedure. Other participants including Skeeter, Seth, and Connor also identified the problem of there being a lack of trans-inclusive providers. For example, Skeeter’s institution began offering trans inclusive benefits but did not notify the campus community about the policy change. Even if employees knew about the policy change, there were no providers in the healthcare network able to work with trans* individuals.

However, as Enke (2011) argued, the majority of trans* individuals may never seek medical care related to their gender identities. The models and possibilities that are offered through health insurance and care will ultimately create new norms and/or reify existing norms by which trans* individuals must adhere in order to access care. There is evidence from this study that individuals like Seth, who has a non-binary gender identity ultimately “presented” a more “binary narrative” to a physician in order to be seen as legitimately in need of medical care. What this ultimately means is that the solutions regarding healthcare are more complex than simply removing the exclusions for gender confirming care that are too common in health insurance policies. Further, access to healthcare continues to mobilize a rather small segment of trans* communities, namely employed trans people who have health insurance. While the changes to health insurance plans are vitally important to many participants, including Nathan, in order to advance the ongoing social justice work that follows a critical trans politics (Spade, 2011), caution must be exercised in the procurement of the changes outlined above.
Even if there is a risk of normalizing particular ways of being trans* through health insurance, for those academics who need access to gender-confirming care, ensuring the health insurance provided by the institution acknowledges trans* health needs matter. It is especially important at institutions like Nathan’s that claim to not discriminate based on gender identity and expression that leaders align policy with practice. Nathan’s story highlights how the issue of non-discrimination policies relate to healthcare and insurance issues. Additionally, trans academics including Mary and Max engaged in extensive additional labor as they attempted to obtain coverage for scheduled or completed procedures.

**Human Resources and Diversity Training**

Thirteen of 39 participants identified the need for changes in how human resource (HR) staff are trained. Many participants identified issues with HR, including having to explain their gender identities to the staff and HR staff “outing” them. Gabe, a white male assistant professor, when asked what he would suggest said, “HR people who are trained on trans* issues for Christ’s sake. It’s exhausting having to constantly explain myself to HR.” Other participants also expressed issues with the lack of knowledge that HR staff had about trans issues, but also a lack of understanding of confidentiality.

A perhaps more egregious example of the lack of confidentiality of HR staff comes from Max, a Black transgender/FTM man and librarian, who was outed by the HR person. He said,

She (HR person) I guess saw the paperwork, and she saw a different name on it, and what she did was she went around the department and was talking to people about it. Isn’t this funny? This other name is on this paperwork. And she did it to everyone. And so she outed me to everyone in the department, and I had not known about it at all until a little
less than a year ago. I also heard that people in the HR department were like saying things like…just…gossiping about it [my being trans].

In addition to training on trans* identities, Max highlights the need to develop a deeper understanding of how removing the agency of trans individuals to disclose their identity/status/history affects trans individuals is also necessary. While making changes to HR staff training may only benefit a narrow population of trans* individuals, it is still important to make these kinds of changes because of the difficulties trans* academics within this study faced.

In addition to training for HR, trans* academics wanted to see trans issues included in diversity training. For example, Seth, a white genderqueer post-doctoral fellow said,

building into the ways in which institutions define diversity and including trans people would open up access to opportunities and resources that currently don’t exist. And, I’m always hesitant about making parallels to other social justice movements. But I think that there are some overlaps in like, the structural barriers that faculty of color and like faculty with disabilities have to navigate that are similar enough to trans faculty that having scholarships, professional development opportunities, research lines, awards, those kinds of things, and also opening up that access to trans folks would be helpful.

Here Seth begins to gesture towards a precise strategy that trans academics might pursue. While there certainly are some specific issues facing trans academics, like misgendering and healthcare, ultimately, as 13 participants indicated, humanizing and legitimizing trans identities, while aligning with other minoritized scholars might improve the institutional conditions that trans academics navigate. Thus, I call for a coalitional politics in keeping with Spade’s (2011) articulation of critical trans politics as a vital strategy to build communities and connections where trans* academics can flourish.
In the list below, I develop a variety of change strategies that could improve the academy for trans* academics. I make these recommendations even though a critical trans politics (Spade, 2011) might suggest that this approach ultimately re-centers those already with the most privilege. Because I am taking a both/and approach, these efforts would reduce or eliminate the “thorns in the sides” of trans academics. However, they do not lead to liberation and may inadvertently further processes of normalization (e.g., demand to pursue medical transition). While these changes were important to participants, they must not advance at the expense of larger social changes that address population level controls.

- Provide trans inclusive health insurance options, but not assume that all trans* people desire accessing medical options
- Educate medical professionals about trans* communities
- Provide adequate health insurance, regardless of relationship status, without requiring legal documentation
- Educate HR staff about trans issues and associated issues of confidentiality
- Create a point person for trans* healthcare related questions, who is committed to ongoing education
- Develop name change policies that do not require legal documentation
- Create mechanism for individuals to communicate about their pronouns
- Establish intentional, ongoing efforts to recruit, hire, and retain trans* academics, especially trans-feminine individuals and trans people of color
- Develop research grants that support the critical knowledge production of trans* academics
• Create ways to document trans experiences through institution specific human resource systems, gender equity initiatives, and within national data sets

• Increase the number of all-gender spaces and ensure that trans* academics can use gendered bathrooms that align with their gender identities

• Provide trans-related programing and resources for students, faculty, and staff for the purposes of ongoing self-education and community building amongst minoritized scholars, especially trans* academics

• Include gender identity and expression within non-discrimination statements and anti-bias/harassment policies

• Use gender autonomy as a framing heuristic for institutional leaders to respond to the above recommendations

Each of these changes listed above will not lead to liberation necessarily, but would ultimately address the desire that trans* academics in this study had regarding gender autonomy (Weiss, 2010).

Gender autonomy derives from a legal argument regarding the right to privacy for trans* people (Wiess, 2001; 2010). While I am less concerned with the civil rights discourse Weiss (2001) advanced, the notion of gender– or even bodily–autonomy is vitally important to trans* academics. Having the ability to express one’s self and to have others recognize and honor that gender expression would improve the employment experiences of trans* academics. Government and institutional policies assume that sex/gender is fixed and unchanging (e.g., on birth certificates, driver’s licenses, and employment records), thus developing ways for trans* academics to define their genders for themselves, and for those identities to be seen as legitimate and valid is a pressing matter for participants in this study (Weiss, 2001). Moreover, as Weiss
(2001) argued, governmental and institutional interference is not needed with respect to gender. For reasons related to gender autonomy, it is vitally important that institutions advance policies in keeping with centering trans* individuals as experts of their experiences and all efforts to educate and train members of campus communities must follow suit. Thus, I advocate for a framing heuristic of gender autonomy as institutional leaders respond to the above recommendations (Weiss, 2001).

With respect to the issues of changing everyday language practices, humanizing and legitimizing trans* identities, and leading institutional change efforts, I contend that advancing coalitional politics would best address these issues. The above changes will not be effective in advancing liberation, only reducing the number of, and magnitude of the proverbial thorns in the sides of trans* academics. Again, the both/and strategies advanced here are necessary to improve the everyday experiences of trans* academics, but more wide sweeping changes are also needed.

**Pulling Across the Thresholds: Re-Shaping the Academy in Support of Trans* Academics**

In this section, I return to the two central ideas that critical trans politics (Spade, 2011) offers activists, namely “trickle-up” activism and coalitional politics. As indicated in this study, there most certainly are trans* academics present in within higher education. However, the vast majority of individuals who both expressed interest in the study and who ultimately participated in the study are white and trans masculine, evidence of population level controls at work in academe. As I argued elsewhere, white masculine people are already closer to the center of the academy than white women and people of color are. As Adam, a white transmasculine, genderqueer professor said, “my concern would no longer be about just getting trans folks to show up, but getting trans folks of color, trans feminine folks to show up and feel safe and supported.” Adam expressed skepticism that there was much institutions of higher education
could do to fundamentally reshape the academy in support of those who are navigating multiple systems of oppression within trans communities, namely trans women of color from lower socio-economic backgrounds. Adam said, “Without totally dismantling the pipeline to prison…the high school dropout to prison pipeline for trans women…I am not sure.” Adam went on to describe the difficulties of access, even to a community college, individuals from lower income backgrounds face, let alone the possibility of transferring to a four-year institution and then completing an advanced degree.

While there were three women of color in this study, Cassidy, Martina, and Susan King, each of their stories reveals something about the barriers within higher education. Martina transitioned after becoming a full professor and having a full career. Susan King was never able to be trans on the job (i.e., she never came to work dressed in feminine attire or told anyone about her identity), and Cassidy remains underemployed as an adjunct instructor. Even though Cassidy, Martina, and Susan King each possessed the credentials and experiences needed to be trans women of color in academia, it is clear that their life chances, as shaped by multiple systems of oppression, were simply not as expansive as the experiences of white masculine trans folks. Thus, engaging in “trickle-up” approaches that center the lived experiences of those subject to multiple forms of oppression is an important starting place for institutional leaders committed to advancing organizational change.

Additionally, while some participants vitally needed recognition and to be humanized, as Spade (2011) argued,

we are invited to demand that trans people are “human” when “human” is still defined through norms of race, indigeneity, gender, ability, and immigration status that actually the invitation to a very small part of the trans population. We must build a trans politics
that refuses these invitations and that boldly resists the regimes of abandonment and imprisonment that neoliberalism requires. (pp. 223-224)

In other words, the very ideal of being “human” rests on a series of dominant identities and associated norms, including, but not limited to, being white, masculine, able-bodied, middle-class, and a native English speaker. Spade (2011) also described what happens to those who deviate from normative expectations, namely a politics of disposability (Giroux, 2006) through incarceration, deprivation of resources, and deportation, amongst other population level controls (Spade, 2011). In short, the resistance to the invitation to be human instead makes possible the advancement of working and building solidarity, thus widening who can be human. Here I make a distinction between humanizing identities and the invitation to which Spade referred (2011). As Cassidy illuminated in her discussion of the neoliberal market demands on higher education,

The reality is what they [institutional leaders] gravitate to is their finances: cutting salaries, and, the provost has even come out and said as much…you’re expendable, you’re a dime a dozen, we get as much of you as we want. We don’t have to be nice to you, we don’t have to do these… treat you like a human being, you’re just grist for the mill.

The invitation to demand to be seen as a human, to lay legitimate claim to being human is a seductive one. But, resisting that invitation may be a way to resist neoliberalism and population level controls. Instead, a strategy of expanding who gets to be a human might be a more important strategy for the broadest coalition of minoritized academics and institutional leaders invested in supporting trans* faculty.

Following Spade (2011), who advanced a politics that is “rooted in questioning how those norms come to be and how they impact—and extinguish—the lives of trans people” (p. 27), I
argue along similar lines. Thus, just as some trans academics in this study desired for individuals to increase their fluency in language about gender, so too must trans* academics unsettle their beliefs about race and racism (e.g., meritocracy as undergirded by white supremacy), ability and ableism, class and classism, and other systems of oppression that create vectors of vulnerability and reduce life chances for individuals present in the academy and those who are not allowed to be present (Spade, 2011).

While my primary concern is about honoring the ideas advanced by participants, it is more useful to act on the both/and strategy I advance here. Additionally, non-discrimination policies, inclusive healthcare, and increased training are all ways that institutions might symbolically demonstrate their commitments to trans-inclusivity, especially for individuals scanning their environments for such clues. In the search for evidence of the relative safety of a given campus, looking for the markers of progress described above clearly matters to participants. Yet, these proposed changes might not have the intended effect. Therefore, I follow Spade (2011) in calling for taking a resistance approach to population level controls that create the needs for the policies and trainings outlined above in the first place. For example, forming learning communities with members of shared dominant identities (e.g., white, masculine, and/or middle class) dedicated to unsettling racist, sexist, and/or classist ideologies is one potential strategy. Developing working groups with the charge of engaging in multi-issue, intersectional efforts to understand issues of equity, diversity, and inclusion amongst academics is yet another idea. Conducting a cultural audit that identifies spaces, policies, and processes that prove difficult for minoritized scholars could also advance critical trans politics (Spade, 2011). Minoritized academics, including trans* academics, could also align with existing resistance efforts on campus (e.g., unionization efforts, gender equity initiatives, resisting racism).
Throughout the efforts I just described, situating those facing multiple systems of oppression at the center is critical to the success of these initiatives.

**Spaces of Possible Action for Trans* Academics**

In my call for a coalitional politics, I again draw on Lugones (2003) who wrote that “reading resistance” occurs within “enclosures and crossing that attest to a need for company” (p. x). Many trans* academics described profound isolation and thus urgently need company and community. In writing of the notion of “women of color” as a coalition, Lugones (2003) argued that a “coalition in formation against significant and complex odds that, though familiar, keep standing in our way. The coalition or interconnecting coalitions need to be conceptualized against the grain of these odds.” While Lugones (2003) is speaking about the coalitional potential of the phrase “women of color,” her words and observations about what makes resistance coalitions difficult has resonance for my implications for trans* academics, and higher education, more broadly. More specifically, as Lugones (2003) articulated, systems of oppression work in ways that seek to socially fragment individuals and create conditions where systems of domination are perpetuated by and through minoritized subjects.

While Lugones (2003) was focused on how Women of Color may not “understand the spatio-temporal differences among us,” a similar argument could be made of trans* academics. In other words, to what extent do trans* academics perpetuate systems of domination amongst themselves, reifying the very structures that caused harm in the first place. By way of example, Stanley described his experience with being constantly misgendered prior to starting hormone replacement therapy. Other trans people told him that he would “not be taken seriously” until he started hormones. In the delegitimizing of Stanley’s claim to using he, him, and his pronouns until he began hormone therapy, the very system of oppression that situates trans* people’s
gender identities as less legitimate was used against him. If liberation and coalitional politics are the goal than policing the genders of other trans* people is unhelpful in advancing collective liberation.

The very significant and complex odds that Lugones (2003) described in coalition building manifested within these data. Throughout my analysis, I found several places where trans* individuals used ableist language to describe their experiences, for example, people being “blind” or an experience being “deafening.” While I am sure that these incidents are a result of the collective conditioning to situate “disabled” as bad and “able” as good, the use of ableist language will make it difficult to build coalitions across multiple forms of oppression. Further, the lack of fluency around issues of race as demonstrated by some participants could also make coalition building challenging. Thus, I call on my fellow trans academics to critically reflect and engage in the ongoing work of unsettling the oppressive language found in speech patterns and the actions one takes in support of dominant ideology. I too must continue this work.

If trans* academics want to see a re-shaped academy, then being part of the change that would address what Seth (introduced above) described as “overlaps” in the “structural barriers that faculty of color and faculty with disabilities have to navigate are similar enough to trans faculty that having” supports (e.g., mentoring, research funds) could “open up that access to trans folks.” More than just opening up access, trans academics can and must work alongside other minoritized scholars because of the inter-related nature of all oppressive systems (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012), thus working within a framework of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989, 1990). Through an intersectional, coalitional politics, trans* academics must work as advocates and accomplices to other minoritized academics (Indigenous Action Network, 2015). As the Indigenous Action Network (2015) articulated, “An accomplice as academic would seek ways to
leverage resources and material support and/or betray their institution to further liberation struggles. An intellectual accomplice would strategize with not for and not be afraid to pick up a hammer” (p. 5). While not all academics are in a position to betray their institution entirely, as many occupy marginal and precarious positions, taking risks when and where possible are necessary conditions for collective liberation and a realization of coalitional politics.

Therefore, just as some trans* academics in this study would like to have research support or mentoring, so too must academics and intellectuals be willing to “leverage resources and material support” to advance collective liberation. Advocates and accomplices to trans* people must make material support available, and trans* academics in turn should do the same for other minoritized individuals. Building on this point, Spivak (1993) wrote about the kinds of actions suggesting that academics “not ignore their obligation by claiming a spurious marginality, and declare the desire for revolution as its accomplishment” (p. 294). Spivak (1993) argued that “the teacher, while operating within the institution, can foster the emergence of a committed collectivity by not making her institutional commitment invisible: outside in the teaching-machine” (p. 294, emphasis in original). Take together, Lugones (2003), Spivak (1993), Spade (2011), and the Indigenous Action Network (2015) described the practice of coalitional politics as a commitment to being engaging in the process with no clear end-point or moment of arrival to advance collective justice and liberation for minoritized individuals. Key steps in the process are constant reflection, leveraging material support, and building intersectional coalitions to advance change within higher education. Even if one is working from a precarious position, using the privileges that one possesses is critical to the advancement of liberatory possibilities (Lugones, 2003).
Implications for Theory

In addition to the implications for policies and practices that I just described there are important implications for theory. While the use of the institutional logics perspective (Thornton et al., 2012) advanced here allowed me to illuminate the findings related to the prevailing institutional logics, this perspective does not account for systems of power, privilege, and oppression. Instead the various institutional logics have an embedded assumption of power neutrality regarding institutional actors’ identities.

The institutional logics perspective does advance the idea that history (e.g., historically contingent) and culture (e.g., cultural turn) are important aspects of understanding organizations. However, the description of history and culture is devoid of discussions of power, privilege, and oppression (Thornton et al., 2012). For example, Thornton et al. (2012) stated, “conflicts in identities, goals, and schemas serve as barriers to cooperation and generate conflict and power struggles in social interactions” (p. 94). Rather than taking a social hierarchy conscious approach to the ways that social stratification and differential access to power influence organizations, Thornton et al. (2012) seem to assume equality in social positioning. It appears in the above quote that conflict and power struggles are not a matter of social identity or positioning, but about some other concept of identity. Furthermore in their discussion of social identities, they describe the fact that individuals have multiple identities, but Thornton et al. (2012) view identities like race and gender as commensurable with voluntary-organization affiliations. Moreover, this study revealed the various ways that population level controls operate and dictate who can be a trans* academic. Yet, an institutional logics perspective offered no guidance about how to discuss data dealing with issues of social stratification. Discussions of power appear to be
related to organizational function, not the larger social structures that ultimately shape so many aspects of organizations.

A second critique of the institutional logics perspectives rests on the lack of exploration or accounting for neoliberalism and the larger political and economic systems. The authors do not address the changes occurring under neoliberalism, especially the wide sweeping changes being made to the economy and workplaces. Additionally, scholars developing the institutional logics perspective never call into question the efficacy of capitalism. Instead, the various institutional logics have different varieties of capitalism (e.g., cooperative, managerial), in part derived from the predominance of this economic model in the West. Addressing these larger economic systems seems vitally important given the argument that the authors make about the institutional logics perspective being a meta-theory and their collective attempt to explain the how and why of processes of institutionalization and organizational functioning. Given the powerful explanations that trans* academics offered within this study about how neoliberalism shaped their experiences, attending to larger political and economic forces influencing organizations is a vital part of organizational analyses. Future studies engaging the institutional logics perspective might be well served by pairing this perspective with theories of power, including the one advanced here (e.g., Foucault’s notion of biopolitics).

With respect to inequality regimes, a theoretical perspective that does take into account power, privilege, and social hierarchies, Acker (2006) offers a social hierarchies conscious approach to organizational analyses. However Acker (2006) advances a binary cisgender assumption (e.g., organizational conditions are different for men and women). While Acker’s scholarship (2006) is foundational in understanding how gender operates within organizations, the inherent assumption of all gendered beings having cisgender and binary identities ultimately
limits this perspective in particular ways. Most notably, the notion of inequality regimes (Acker, 2006) does not account for the ways that genderism (Bilodeau, 2009) manifests within organizations. Given the saliency of genderism for participants in this study, future studies engaging the notion of inequality regimes would be best served by a more complex view of gender and the associated systems of gender-based oppression, especially sexism, misogyny, transmisogyny, and genderism.

The final theory used within the conceptual framework for this study was critical trans politics (Spade, 2011). Critical trans politics offers an important disruption to the commonplace narratives of civil rights and the development of subjectivities under neoliberalism. Further, critical trans politics rests on a theoretical underpinning that proved ultimately useful in this study. For example, my use of Black Feminist Thought (Hill Collins, 2000) enhanced my analysis of participants’ experiences. Thus future studies employing critical trans politics should develop and further articulate the perspectives that undergird the theory in the first place. For instance, returning to the primary sources of Cheryl Harris, Kimberlé Crenshaw, and Derrick Bell is vitally important to the appropriate application of critical trans politics.

What ultimately proved difficult within this study was developing implications that aligned with critical trans politics and honored the desires of participants. Spade (2011) advocated for resistance to population level controls and participants desired some of the very changes Spade eschews. Rather than discount the lived experiences of trans* academics and their articulated needs, further developing the both/and strategy that takes serious critical trans politics (Spade, 2011), as well other theories of organizational change is an important area of growth.
Implications for Future Research

In addition to the implications for policy, practice, and theory, I offer implications for future research. Despite the fact that there are now two systematic studies of the experiences of trans* academics (my pilot study and the present study), the literature regarding trans* academics remains sparse, thus, further study is warranted as there remains a dearth of research about this population. Regardless of one’s methodological inclinations or theoretical approaches, there are many potential studies still needed to advance knowledge about trans* academics.

Deriving primarily from unresolved issues from this study, I encourage researchers to address trans* academics’ teaching and learning practices, especially within and across disciplines and fields of study. Because teaching and learning are core missions of higher education organizations, studying the teaching and learning practices of trans* academics and the unique ways they contribute to that mission is important. Also, engaging in research that examines the career advancement and development of trans* academics over a longer period of time would allow leaders to understand the critical points in education journeys that prove especially helpful or harmful to the advancement of trans* academics. Part of a study of trans* faculty careers should engage individuals who desire to fill academic roles, including trans* identified undergraduate and graduate students. Such a study could identify supports and barriers to pursuing an academic career. Also I encourage research that examines the ways in which trans* academics contribute to and develop new knowledge both about trans* topics but also non-trans* topics.

In addition to the aforementioned lines of research, engaging in a more thorough study of some of the sub-populations within this study is also needed. Because trans* academics are heterogeneous in many ways, delving deeper into the specificities of experiences or particular
groups could yield important insights missed by a larger inquiry such as this study. For example, a study of trans* faculty of color is needed. Further understanding how trans feminine spectrum individuals uniquely experience the academy is also a worthwhile endeavor. Also, understanding the experiences of academic librarians, administrators, and non-tenure-track faculty are three employment categories warranting further study because trans* people are understudied populations within the literatures addresses these workplaces. Also, studying the aforementioned groups is important because of the meaningful contributions they make to higher education organizations.

Additionally, continued exploration of resistance and resilience of trans academics is needed. For instance, further exploring how trans* academics resist and disrupt through their traditional roles of researching, teaching, and service would be helpful to expand upon the initial findings I developed. Increasing understanding of the coping mechanisms and practices of resilience that trans* academics use would also be beneficial. Further, working through a participatory framework that examines alongside participants how resistance and resilience are enacted would help to provide more in-depth knowledge of these processes.

Using survey methods and statistical analyses, future research might explore the organizational conditions identified in the findings of this study and develop new knowledge about how these conditions influences workplace satisfaction. Also, scholars could document trans* academic experiences with microaggressions and the psychological outcomes of those experiences. A final proposed line of inquiry using quantitative and experimental methods would involve conducting a survey of administrators and human resource professionals that gauges their knowledge and experiences with trans* employment issues. Then, researchers could
develop a targeted educational intervention based on the survey results and then test the efficacy of such an intervention.

Finally, developing coalitions to advance critical trans politics and communities of support and then studying the efficacy of such efforts as mechanism to enact change, reduce feelings of alienation, isolation, and precarity, is an important next step in this line of inquiry. Understanding the challenges and successes associated with developing coalitions and communities of support would generate important knowledge about engaging in this work and illuminate ways to this work well. Further, if higher education hiring trends continue as predicted, there will be more alienation, isolation, and precarity, not less. Thus, inquiries about how to build supportive communities would be especially important given the changing higher education landscape. In addition, identifying institutions that have made efforts to advance the recommended policies here and then using case study methods to understand how those changes influenced the experiences of trans* academics on those campuses would also be helpful. In closing, regardless of one’s methodological or theoretical approach, there are many potential ways to expand this initial line of inquiry about trans* academics experiences.

**Conclusion**

While certainly many of the findings I developed described negative and difficult experiences, I also sought to show spaces of resilience and resistance. Even though the academy may be hostile to trans* academics, and seemingly impermeable to change, it would be incorrect to understand that I am without hope. In fact, all three of the theories that make up the conceptual framework used in this study have change as an explicit part of the thinking about organizations. In the case of institutional logics, inequality regimes and within critical trans politics, the logics, regimes, and unjust social features are all changeable and malleable. The question for me and
ultimately for higher education leaders is not whether change will occur, but when, and at what pace. Certainly change is inevitable, though it will not necessarily be fast, however, retaining hope is vitally important.

As Susan S. said,

I remain convinced that the university is actually a place to struggle within […] as always having an undercommons to it, like a shared subaltern space of people who are in the space who are not necessarily, endorsing the goals of the master of the house. […] I think that using the resources that are at the university to do the political good of empowering an oppressed minority through how you help produce and reproduce knowledge out to them, and by them and for them…I’m committed to that.

May those who sit under the press of the normative be committed to the undercommons, that subaltern space where an intersectional coalitional politics may blossom.
Appendix A: Narrative Prompt and Interview Protocols

Narrative Prompt

Please respond to the following prompt with about 500 words (more if you wish).

- What does it mean to you to be a trans* academic?
- Can you describe a particularly vivid or meaningful memory you have of being a trans academic? This memory could be a particularly positive, negative, or meaningful moment.
  - Please describe this moment or memory in detail, tell me what happened, when and where, who was involved, and what you were thinking and feeling.
- What does this memory say about you or your life?

Understanding the Organizational Context, Interview 1

Introduce study: I am currently conducting my dissertation study. I am trying to learn more about how organizations shape the experiences of trans* identified faculty at U.S. higher education institutions. This interview focuses on your program/departmental, disciplinary, and institutional contexts. The second interview will explore how you, as a trans* person navigate that context. I am interested in this topic because I feel trans voices are under-represented within higher education and society more broadly. I hope that through dissertation study, I can create a way for trans* voices to be heard. Can I answer any questions about that?

Today, we are going to talk about three levels at which one can think about organizations: program/departmental, institutional, and disciplinary.

Program/Departmental Context

- Tell me a bit about yourself, your current role, and institution.
  - What lead you to your current work and role?
- Tell me a bit about your program or departmental context.
  - Prompt for size, appointment types, diversity in race, gender, and other social identities.
- What is it like to be a trans* person at your institution?
- If you had to describe the department’s values, what words would you use to do that? What words would you never use to describe the department?
- If you were going to welcome a new faculty member, what would you tell that person about how to be successful in the department? What behaviors, if any, might you warn a new person about? What are some of the unspoken rules of your department?
• Does your department/program have a faculty handbook? If so, what polices and procedures does it contain. If not, what would be on the table of contents? Why do you think that is?

• How would you describe your relationship with your colleagues? Prompt for department chair, dean, administrators.

Institutional Context

• Tell me about your institutional context.
  o Prompt for political climate, geographic location, LGBTQ friendliness, kinds of students it attracts.

• What do you think are your institutions most important values? How well do you feel that the institution lives up to those values? What makes you say that?

• What do you think is unique about your institution?

Disciplinary Context

• Tell me about your disciplinary context.
  o Prompt for size, legitimacy, key issues.

• What do you think are your disciplines most important values and assumptions? How well do you feel that the discipline lives up to those values and assumptions? What makes you say that?

Institutional Change

• What can institutions of higher education do to be more welcoming to trans* people? How would institutions need to change in order to create more space for trans* voices?

• Are there any other experiences that you would like to share with me about being a trans* academic and what that means to you?
Understanding Participants’ Perspectives as Trans* Academics, Interview 2

In our first interview, you talked about your organizational contexts, your department, institution, and discipline. Do you have anything you would like to add since our first conversation? In this interview, we are going to focus on you and your identities and how that plays out at work.

Understanding Trans* Being
Trans* is an evolving category of identification and associated gender practices. I am trying to understand a bit about your identity as broadly and inclusively defined. On the interest survey you indicated that you identified as ______.

• What does it mean to you to identify in that?
• Can you tell me a little more about how you think about that identity?
• How did you come to understand yourself in that way?

Intersections of Identity
Can you talk about your salient identities? Prompt for: race/ethnicity, religious, social class, ability, sexual orientation. What makes that a salient identity for you?

Supportive, Neutral, Hostile Contexts
• What is it like to be a trans* person at your institution? Department/program? Discipline? Follow-up for clarification.
• How supportive of trans* individuals do you feel your department is? Institution? Discipline? What does that support look like? Can you tell me about a time that you felt especially supported?
• How do prevailing views about gender influence your experiences?

Sites of Gender Regulation
I am interested in understanding the places where gender is more highly regulated on-campus.

• Tell me about your experiences with gender in physical spaces on campus. Can you tell me about a time when you felt like your trans identity was especially salient?
  o Prompt for bathrooms, locker rooms.
• How does your institution handle university/college issued identification?
• How inclusive would you say that your university’s healthcare is with respect to trans* or gender confirming healthcare.
• What did I miss? Is there any place else where you feel your trans* identity shows up at your university?
• Are there places where you wish your identity was more visible, but isn’t? What makes you say that?

Are there any other experiences that you would like to share with me about being a trans* academic and what that means to you?
Figure B1 Mental map of institutional logics
**TEMPLATE Key Stories & Ideas**

What are the primary institutional logics that shape the experiences of trans* academics from diverse backgrounds?

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How do within-organizational processes (or microfoundations and inequality regimes) shape trans* academics experiences?

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<th>Inequality Regimes</th>
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<td>Race</td>
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1. From the perspectives of participants, what organizational and policy contexts (consisting of formal policies and informal practices) create supportive, neutral, and/or hostile environments for trans* academics?

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<td>Stories</td>
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How, if at all, do trans* faculty resist and/or disrupt existing intra- and supraorganizational logics and norms?

**Figure B2** Key story matrix


http://doi.org/10.1177/0196859912443382


http://doi.org/10.1080/10665680903284523


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Pitcher, E. N. (under review). “There’s stuff that comes with being an unexpected guest”: Experiences of trans* academics with microaggressions.


