

A RHETORICAL, DECOLONIAL, AND CULTURAL CRITIQUE ON CISTEMATIC  
ACADEMIC SCHOLARLY PRACTICES: MOBILIZING QUEER AND  
TRANS\*/FORMATIVE BIPOC RESISTANCE FOR INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE

By

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## ABSTRACT

In my dissertation *A Rhetorical, Coalitional, and Decolonial Critique on Cistematic Academic Scholarly Practices: Mobilizing Queer and Trans\*/formative BIPOC Resistance for Institutional Change*, I engage in participatory action research and collected data from queer and transgender BIPOC scholars in Rhetoric and Writing studies and similar fields. I interviewed these scholars to consider how to engage in ethical queer and transgender practices in the academy in relation to pedagogy, scholarship, and community engagement. Building from scholarship in areas of Queer and Transgender Rhetorics, Ethnic Studies, and Women and Gender Studies, my project exemplifies how to 1) resist perpetuating harm in academic organizational practices in relation to queer and transgender pedagogy, research, and community engagement; 2) create a collaborative digital activist statement with queer and transgender scholars through a user experience method; participatory action, and 3) assert that queer and transgender rhetorics needs to cross disciplinary boundaries. As I argue, queer and transgender rhetorics remains a predominantly white field and lacks BIPOC representation to support intersectional scholars. Thus, this dissertation project develops a formative example and illustrates a coalitional and decolonial trans\*/formative social justice approach to urge higher educational institutions to better support queer and transgender BIPOC lives within the academy.

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This project is dedicated to my mom.  
I miss you.

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## Chapter 1:

### Resistance As Practice: A Rhetorical, Decolonial, and Cultural Approach to Institutional Change

A theory in the flesh means one where the physical realities of our lives—our skin color, the land or concrete we grew up on, our sexual longings—all fuse to create a politic born out of necessity. Here, we attempt to bridge the contradictions in our experience:

We are the colored in a white feminist movement.

We are the feminist among the people of our culture.

We are often the lesbians among the straight.

We do this bridging by naming our selves by telling our stories in our own words.

- Cherrie L. Moraga, (Anzaldúa & Moraga, 2015, p. 19)

### A ~~Story~~ Testimonio

On February 15th, 2022, I became a doctoral candidate at Michigan State University's Writing, Rhetoric, and American Cultures department. I remember the moment clearly: I was nervous, anxious, and exhausted; I rushed through my exams as I wanted to make sure I was on track to complete the PhD program in three years. My body was drained, but I was excited that I kept up with the academic demands necessary to complete the PhD in a timely manner. For my original dissertation project titled "Trans\*/Formative Approaches to Transgender Medicine: Cultivating Rhetorical, Cultural, and Ethical Life-Affirming Digital Resources," I wanted to focus on conducting actionable scholarly research to support transgender individuals in the ways they navigated transgender medical and health services. In my prospectus, I wrote about the potential project and working across multiple disciplines. I argued that I wanted my dissertation to center

Transgender Medicine, User Experience Design (UXD/UX), and Social Justice to understand 1) medical encounters between practitioner(s) and transgender patient(s); 2) to conceptualize how trans patients encounter trans medical care at Michigan State University (MSU) and the surrounding community partners; 3), to signify the barriers to access; and 4) to incorporate UX design methods and strategies to develop a tool kit for medical practitioner(s) and patient(s) to utilize and conceptualize the complexity of

transgender medicine.

This project was meaningful to me in a lot of ways, but particularly as my research project actively engaged with real world issues that revolved around my personal life. Through this research, I hoped to find solutions to support transgender medicine through actionable approaches to create institutional change.<sup>1</sup> Although my project held importance, I felt uneasy about this project for several reasons: 1) I felt that this project represented a larger project that needed to be conducted over several years; 2) I felt uncomfortable with collecting data from participants who might have experienced real harm; 3) I felt uneasy working with communities when I actively was not a part of the community in Lansing/East Lansing, Michigan. Although I knew the directors and working professionals who worked for medical spaces and non-profits, I felt uncomfortable that I had not done enough work to engage with this community directly for me to have the ability to listen to their experiences and stories about navigating medical and health care violence. A faculty member informed me that this was an important project, and my work had real implications for supporting the transgender committee. Even with that reassurance, I still felt uncomfortable by this project and these questions continued to circulate as I dealt with those tensions: how do I actively engage in this work when I am not working with the participants I want to engage with directly? And, why do academics feel that they have the ability to decide whether or not to examine a community when they are not entirely engaged with them? Why do we think we hold the power to make decisions for a community in need when we

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<sup>1</sup> To position myself: I am a queer, non-binary, transfemme Chicane person, and my entire life I had to often survive rather than thrive in all the spaces I occupied. I am a product of two undocumented parents, raised by a single mother, and my family and I dealt with housing and food insecurity, substance abuse, and interpersonal and institutional violence throughout the majority of my life. I am a high school dropout, I was kicked out of my home for being “queer,” and most of my life I was homeless. My entire life I struggled. My mission in life as an educator, scholar, and cat-parent is not about economic success and/or accolades, but to critically and strategically mobilize the tools I learned throughout my educational journey to help students and surrounding communities who are impacted by institutional oppression in whatever ways possible.

are not actively a part of their network? As time moved on to the months of March and April, I still grappled with those very questions and tensions. During those months, I spent considerable time with my very good friend Dr. Constance Haywood, who was finishing her dissertation project at the time. As she wrapped up her work, we used our collective time to support each other with our dissertation projects. More specifically, Dr. Haywood had her defense scheduled for April and had last minute work/revisions to get done, and I wanted to have three chapters for my dissertation written and completed by May 2022. However, what I did not expect during that time, was that the conversations with Constance and her research would make me think more critically about ethics in regards to research, design, and collaboration. For those who are unaware—and need to be, Dr. Haywood’s (2022) “dissertation examines how Black women and Black feminist-identifying digital researchers’ personal, cultural, and professional identities inform methodological and ethical decision-making in their work” (p. ii). Hearing her work and how her work emerged from tensions with research practices that are violent in digital spaces from her own personal experience, I began to wonder: how ethical is it to continue this work when I know in my gut that this work is not right? Am I about to contribute to epistemological violence against a community I felt that I did not have direct ties to by not actively being a part of their interpersonal network? Was I going to conduct research that might be possibly violent for the sake of a degree? These considerations impacted me so much, I made a radical decision: I wanted to change my entire dissertation project a year before I was set to graduate.

In order to move in a direction that was important for my work, I decided to radically change everything about my dissertation, including the makeup of committee members as I removed two individuals, added members, switched my chair (the previous was great by the way), and kept those who are really important to me. Grappling with these ethical tensions

created emotional, physical, and mental uneasiness but I knew that I made the right decision. Again, I had an idea for a project, but it did not become clear until my presentation at the 2022 Computers and Writing Conference where I began to think critically about a new project. When I approached my dissertation chair about this new topic, she was not only supportive, but excited as she thought this work was integral for the field at large. From her wholehearted support, a project emerged.

#### A Project: Resistance in Pedagogy, Research, and Community Engagement

*We need to think about implementing moments of resistance by highlighting intersectional epistemologies that are disempowered in [higher educational and institutional] spaces in order to support {intersectional} LGBTQ+ identities.*

- Ruby Mendoza, (Mendoza, 2022)

The above epigraph illustrates a section of my 2022 Computer and Writing Conference presentation *Wording and Worlding the Colonial Internet*, concluding statement. For context, I had the immense privilege to collaborate with Dr. Wilfredo Flores (a colleague and friend), who invited emerging and existing scholars to come together and bring their own personal expertise to critique settler colonialism and its Eurocentric impacts on the internet.<sup>2</sup> Dr. Flores led this project to existence by their ambition to critique colonizing aspects of the internet that impact our lives as humans, particularly bodies who are multi-marginalized and intersectional. Dr. Flores gathered scholars to model how we must work together collaboratively and coalitionally to address colonizing and imperialist desires.

At the conference, we had scholars such as Dr. Laura Gonzales who spoke about *Language* and its connection with translation digital work with community partners

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<sup>2</sup> As Arun Kamar Pokhrel (2011) asserts, Eurocentric/ism “is generally defined as a cultural phenomenon that views the histories and cultures of non-Western societies from a European or Western perspective. Europe, more specifically Western Europe or “the West,” functions as a universal signifier in that it assumes the superiority of European cultural values over those of non-European societies.”

internationally; Dr. Dustin Edwards who spoke about *Data Mining* and the impacts it has on actual lands and technology that impacted his homelands; PhD student Seth Graves who spoke about *Users* in digital spaces; PhD student Hannah Hopkins who spoke about *Energy* in connection with ecofeminism and data infrastructures; Dr. Flores who spoke about *Anti-Colonialism* and how the internet represents land which also reflects an exact enactment of settler colonialism and how particular identities, perspectives, and lives are impacted by this digital space; and myself who spoke about digital activism and discussed the epistemological violence LGBTQ+ students face within Predominantly White Institutions (PWI) in higher education in virtual, digital, and physical spaces. From our group presentation, our three respondents, Dr. Kristen Arola, Dr. Angela Haas, and Dr. Alexandra Lockett saw a connection with our scholarly practices as we challenged educational and institutional scholarly practices to critique Eurocentric tendencies that impact our own personal communities both digitally and virtually. Simply put, we as scholars considered how to attempt to decolonize the colonial internet to liberate our communities and to challenge the field of rhetoric and writing about the impacts of the internet.

From these presenters and respondents, our scholarly research exemplifies a throughline about how scholars *resist systematic* systematic approaches to scholarly engagement by critiquing Eurocentric institutional practices that are ingrained and saturated in White Supremacy and settler colonialism.<sup>3</sup> From this acknowledgment and building connection with my epigraph statement, I realized that I continue to grapple with harmful scholarly practices enacted in higher education as a queer, transgender femme, and non-binary Mexican-American scholar at my

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<sup>3</sup> In this dissertation, I refer to Cistem to articulate cistems of oppression against queer, trans, non-binary, and BIPOC lives and its direct connection to Eurocentrism and White supremacy that attempt to prescribe heteronormative labels on non-normative queer and transgender bodies.

graduate program at Michigan State University. Through active engaged and embodied resistance, I am often trying to survive rather than thrive in these educational spaces as there is no room for my epistemological embodied knowledge. From my personal experience, I have faced pushback for *resisting* to whiteness adhere to harmful scholarly practices in relation to scholarly, pedagogical, and community-oriented practices that my department has reinforced.<sup>4</sup> From this point, I began to wonder how queer and/or transgender BIPOC individuals have navigated harmful scholarly practices in their graduate school affairs and as well as their current "professional" occupation. This thought has become the precedent and large general questions for this project ask:

- 1.) Have other queer and transgender BIPOC individuals *resisted* harmful academic practices in their academic and professional careers?
- 2.) If so, how have they navigated these harmful cistems to protect themselves from these processes as well?

These questions represent the central focus of my project, and, fueling my need to understand how other emergent and exciting scholars have navigated cistematic in their current positions, but also in the ways in which they navigated these institutional spaces as graduate students.

Although resistance is a term that is salient across many academic disciplines and activist movements, the term resistance has been underdeveloped and has been neglected to be considered more deeply about its rhetorical significance to the field of rhetoric and writing

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<sup>4</sup> When I refer to white resistance, I draw on Lawrence Glickman (2020) who talks about white backlash: In 1966, a commentator, speaking of "the grand new word, backlash," claimed without much exaggeration that "just about everything that happened could be (and was) attributed to some form of backlash." The word came to stand for a topsy-turvy rebellion in which white people with relative societal power perceived themselves as victimized by what they described as overly aggressive African Americans demanding equal rights. Backlash, as the *New York Times* columnist Tom Wicker wrote, "is nothing more nor less than white resentment of Negroes." Glickman's point exemplifies how white bodies view equality and inclusion as an attack on their livelihoods, neglecting to allow for multi-marginalized communities to integrate to move them from survivance and thrivance. This means these resistant practices by white individuals are intentional and both explicit and implicit.

studies (RWS) and technical and professional communication (TPC). Particularly, the term is often used but not grounded in what resistance actually means and embodies in scholarly practices across both RWS and TPC. Specifically, there has not been an examination of literature that defines resistance and how to consider its applicability to research, teaching, and community engaged work through an intersectional perspective towards institutional change. From this realization, this represents the opportunity to examine conversations to begin mobilizing and conceptualizing how resistance can be loosely defined and can be applicable to future scholarly practices. Thus, this introduction will be structured in these three critical ways: 1) examine current literature that discusses resistance in rhetoric and writing studies and technical and professional communication, indigenous studies, and intersectional activist movements such as feminist, queer, and transgender; 2) exemplify how resistance represents a critical embodied practice; 3) how resistance needs to be examined within institutional systems such as higher education (among others). From this vantage point, this introduction will tie in how these critical epistemologies are critical in the ways we consider resistance as a rhetorical, decolonial, and cultural practice, and how this work can support to create institutional change within higher education.

This research attempts to contribute to the larger rhetorical landscape, which directly builds from Black feminist rhetorician Jacqueline Jones Royster (2003), who argues that “if we shift perspectives to anchor our views of rhetorical terrain in counter discourses instead of always anchoring them in the discourses of power and prestige, we might notice, perhaps for the first time, features of the landscape that we just have not noticed before, or have not perceived to be meaningful, useful, or instructive” (160). This articulation by Royster represents an opportunity for me as a researcher to not only counter dominant majoritarian discourses directly



related to Eurocentric values and structures, but to move away from traditional rhetorical moves that anchor and support disempowerment against minoritarian populations and continue to add to the rhetorical landscape. Thus, as a researcher and scholar who is building from Royster (2003), it is imperative to implore scholarly practitioners to be mindful about our due diligence to reimagine the field at large and to provide opportunities to build and continue provide opportunity for emerging and existing multi-marginalized scholars to create produce research that attends to their communities, which is always grounded in justice.

### Resistance is Rhetorical

Resistance is rhetorical. Scholars have referenced and used resistance in their work and who have been vocal in the ways in which resistance emerges in their scholarship (Symon, 2005). Although there are several scholarly conversations to examine, I will attend conversations that discuss resistance in primary the field of RWS and TPC that centers on topics that are central to this dissertation project and exemplify the opportunity to expand on scholarship to imagine resistance as more than just a word and a gesture against power. Through this collective examination, this will showcase resistance as a critical term that expands across different areas of research that is applicable to disciplines housed outside RWS and TPC as well.

I begin with Jeffrey Ferguson work who has addressed issues about race and resistance in scholarship that pertains to African American history and literary traditions. In “Race and The Rhetoric of Resistance,” Ferguson (2008) examines how African American scholarship and social movements have used resistance as a “deal closer” and misses an important component of resistance in relation to race and resistance. As Ferguson writes, “[q]uite often in these articles, resistance serves more as a rhetorical deal-closer than an analytical concept, more of an answer that ends or suspends the conversation than a problem that opens it to new territory” (p. 8).

Ferguson's assertion focuses on a particular point: resistance across history and literary traditions focus on an abrupt solution rather than an analytical approach. This acknowledgment portrays resistance as an approach to resolve issues rather than imagining. However, Ferguson acknowledges how resistance has been integral for the African community, but writes that when resistance is discussed as a critical framework "the resistance promotes a melodramatic logic of perpetrators and victims, or of righteous freedom fighters and evil masters. (p. 9-10). This perspective shows the limited ways resistance and race has been discussed, but signifies how racial identity is integral to consider how race and resistance work together. This work is paramount to exemplify that when thinking about resistance, intersectional perspectives are an integral component to this term and the way it is used.

In addition to resistance and race, scholars have conducted research on rhetoric and resistance in higher education. In "Rhetoric and Resistance in the Corporate Academy," Christopher Carter (2008) explains that the academy represents a capitalistic institution that "depends on relations of domination and consent" (p. 1). Particularly, Carter focuses on rhetoric and resistance and makes the point to highlight that academic capitalistic conditions of labor between non-tenure track faculty do not only negatively impact instructors, but also students. Moreover, their book "counts tropes of *accountability* and *flexibility* among those rhetorics, while paying particular attention to how agendas for *excellence* privilege global economic competition and managerial prerogative over fair labor practices" (p. 3). This book exemplifies academic institutions and their unfair labor practices that impact those who do not hold tenure track positions. As Carter posits, "[s]uch defamiliarization vitalizes the project of resistance in the corporate academy—no mere solitary rejection of its logic, but the sort of resistance Patricia Bizzell describes as an 'impediment to a smoothly operating process,' a 'check in the flow'" (p.

3). Carter's book discusses resistance in three sections: administration, educators, and graduate students, labor unions, and non-tenure track faculty perspectives to critique the capitalistic cistems of higher education. However, Carter neglects to highlight that institutions are a by-product of colonization.

Resistance and agency has also been discussed in the field of rhetoric, particularly around how people have navigated breastfeeding discursively and bodily to disrupt. In "Rhetorical Agency, Resistance, and the Disciplinary Rhetorics of Breastfeeding," Amy Koerber (2006) writes and theorizes "rhetorical agency and resistance by analyzing how breastfeeding advocates and their clients resist medical regulatory rhetoric" (p. 87) and the need to incorporate cultural practices in our work. This scholarship is paramount as she encourages TPC researchers that when examining the effects of her participants resistance acts, one can "see something more than the occupation of preexisting subject positions; [one can] see that resistance can 'defy translation, throw sense off track, and, thus, short-circuit the system through which sense is made'" (p. 88). Koerber's work exemplifies the complexity of how resistance and rhetorical agency work together. More specifically, she writes that

resistance might initially involve a form of rhetorical agency in which subjects simply occupy preexisting subject positions, but the effects of this agency—the acts of resistance—can disrupt the sense established by disciplinary rhetoric, exceeding the boundaries of these subject positions in unpredictable ways.

The proclamation by Koerber exemplifies the maneuverability of resistance, and that it can exceed boundaries by the subjects in a variety of complex ways. This work is significant because it exemplifies the ways in which participants navigate their resistance practices and rhetorical agency against dominant cistems of power. More importantly, Koerber's work reminds us that the integration of cultural work in our studies is paramount to understand resistance and rhetorical agency to understand the complexities of social and political situations.

Rhetorical agency and resistance has also appeared in conversations related to queer conversations. For instance, in *Reclaiming Queer: Activist and Academic Rhetorics of Resistance*, Erin J. Rand (2014) discusses queer resistance practices and rhetorical agency as synonymous towards subverting power. In her work, Rand builds from Karlyn Kohrs Campbell (2005) and Cheryl Geisler (2005) to discuss rhetorical agency as a critical component to resistance practices (Barbara Biesecker, 1992) as a person and/or community's efforts attempt to address institutional powers (p. 14). Rand expands on this notion of rhetorical agency by including queer agency as another critical component to resistance. As Rand asserts from the examination of the Queer Nation activist group, "defining queerness as resistance presents a theoretical quandary: agency's queerness can be conceptualized and identified only to the extent that resistance can be detected (p. 23). This statement signifies how resistance and agency is powerful as it can be detectable and undetectable, and this assertion also signifies that rhetorical agency and resistance can combat against dominant systems of power. Although this work is important, Rand's book examines academic scholarship and popularized activist queer social movements, missing the opportunity to hear directly from scholars how resistance engages in all their scholarly practices.

Resistant practices have also been researched in technical and professional communication that focused on LGBTQ+ communities. In "Resistance as Participation: Queer Theory's Applications for HIV Health Technology Design," McKinley Green (2020) builds on participatory action research (scholars) and "theories of resistance in the context of a community-based partnership with the HIV and Youth Program (HYP)" (p. 332) and "led an initiative to include end-users as participants in the design process, enacting TPC's commitments to user advocacy and participation" (p. 332). Particularly, he questions "how people living with

HIV engage in subversive and resistant rhetorical practices within digital systems designed to promote discussion of HIV” (p. 334). This inclusion of participatory work with community members is imperative as it signifies an ethical stance to allow individuals and communities to have access to the design processes that impact their communities. This work forefronts participants in a stance where they can address cistematic oppression where structures of power often exclude these types of voices in the design process (Costanza-Chock, 2020).

Additionally, and significantly important, is how McKinley draws on conversations that discuss resistance practices in scholarship. For instance, he incorporates technical and professional communication scholars that have discussed transgender DIY resistance strategies in digital spaces and queer theory’s importance to that work (Edenfield et al., 2019) and how LGBT individuals have navigated the professional workspace that include working professionals employing tactical “closetedness” (Cox, 2019, p. 4) where professionals can “negotiate, challenge, and disrupt dominant discourses” (p. 4) in the “professional” work space which also represents a resistance practice. More importantly, McKinley incorporates Cathy J. Cohen’s (2004) work on resistance which is inherently tied to Black queer movements who continue to negotiate, subvert, and resist dominant cistems of power. Particularly, McKinley asserts that intersectional perspectives on resistance is imperative to align with participants identities: “theories of resistance specifically reflect the embodied experiences of BIPOC and people living with HIV, and they offer a coalitional political formation supporting the digital and rhetorical practices of those who bear the burden of health care and social inequities” (p 335). This sentiment by Green signifies that leading and incorporating scholarship by ignored, devalued, and marginalized populations is integral to doing resistance work.

These collective conversations in both RWS and technical and TPC are important as it signifies how resistance has existed in scholarship and how resistance is portrayed. Meaning, resistance is not a new topic. More importantly, these conversations have shown how resistance works in a variety of spaces, and how resistance is always tied to an individuals' agency as they grapple with cistems of power. Although these conversations have addressed power, there seems to be an opportunity to expand on this notion as scholars have not explicitly (of course implicitly) that these cistems of power derive from colonizing and imperialist desires. This provides an opportunity that when we discuss power, we have to include conversations related to decolonial and indigenous work to exemplify three important things: 1) settler colonialism impacts the very institutions we inhabit and navigate for multi-marginalized communities; 2) indigenous scholars have done communal and resistant work historically and presently; 3) addressing power must be relied on indigenous communities who have experienced significant harm. From listening to these important conversations, scholars can begin reckoning with how resistance is not only rhetorical, but decolonial as well.

### Resistance is Decolonial

Resistance is decolonial, and it is imperative that scholars and practitioners engage, listen, and learn from the indigenous community as they have discussed the implications of settler colonialism and its relation to biopolitical power that impact disempowered, devalued, and ignored indigenous communities. In Morgensen's (2011) "The Biopolitics of Settler colonialism: Right Here, Right Now," he discusses this very notion and illustrates in his research the "genealogy of the biopolitics of settler colonialism [and] explain[s] that the colonial era never ended because settler colonialism remains the naturalised activity projecting Western law and its exception along global scales today" (p. 54). From this, Morgenson addresses that "we must

confront our inheritance of settler colonialism as a primary condition of biopower in the contemporary world” (p. 52-3). He asserts this notion as he recognized the laws and transitions that impact communities derive from colonizing desires.

In recent years, decolonization has been a term that has been used quite extensively to address colonization and its desires, but has been recognized as a gesture that moves away from indigenous communities and towards settlers. Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang (2012) elaborate on this idea when they address the implications of when the metaphor invades decolonization it kills and recenters whiteness and entertains settler future (p. 4). Thus, the authors’ write that “Decolonize (a verb) and decolonization (a noun) cannot easily be grafted onto pre-existing discourses/frameworks, even if they are critical, even if they are anti-racist, even if they are justice frameworks” (p. 4). This assertion by Tuck and Yang (2012) signifies decolonization is not a term that should be used in a way that can be used to support settler colonialism. These two conversations make a cognizant point to understand the need to be resistant to power structures and resistant toward performative gestures of the term decolonization. From this call, I take this seriously and I aim to focus on my own unique tie to my own indigenous communities and how active resistance has been central to navigate settler colonialism: the Chicana community.

Although decolonization scholarship exists and important conversations indigenous methodologies and methods (Wilson, 2008; Smith, 2012), I want to hone in on the Chicana community and their commitment to community empowerment which has derived from the need to critique imperialist desires for the betterment of deeply ignored lives. To make a significant point, there are scholars who have talked about Chicana work and the direct ties it has to decolonization historically, institutionally, and rhetorically (Perez, 1999; Nájera, 2015; Leon,

2010). However, I want to examine Chicanx conversations that have grappled with colonization and imperialist desires in two specific areas: higher education, the personal, and research.

In conversations regarding higher education, Mari Castañeda et al.'s (2017) "VOICING FOR SPACE IN ACADEMIA: Testimonios of Chicana Communication Professors," represents an important conversation that combines a communal practice to address harm within higher education. Particularly, Castañeda et al.'s (2017) research demonstrates how testimonios of Chicanx professors encounter cistematic harm in their roles in communication studies.

Particularly, the authors' address how the field of communication studies represents a white dominant space and pushes more academic labor on women. As the authors' articulate in their work, "[b]ecause of their dual status as women and as members of an underrepresented group, Latina/os are more likely to encounter racism, stereotyping, lack of mentoring, tokenism, uneven promotion, and inequitable salaries entering the academy" (p. 160). To address this institutional disparities, the authors include testimonios of their lived experiences to address this cistematic harm and how often is representative that latinos are not welcomed in the academy (p. 160).

Through this acknowledgement, the authors encourage the need to use a Chicanx feminist approach toward decolonization and activism to encourage and support emerging scholars:

[A] Chicana feminist approach within a Latinx-centric communication framework can become points of connection that encourage other emerging Chicana/Latinx scholars to consider communication as a serious and meaningful field in which decolonized knowledge production and activism is possible. (p. 161)

Castañeda et al. indicate that imperativeness to include critical frameworks as a strategic method to support scholars in communications to know they can include their embodied and wholistic self in their research. This call to action is imperative for several key points: 1) research should never be objective and one's perspective, identity, and whole self should be included in their work; 2) representation should be present for emerging scholars to radically imagine their self in



a field; 3) scholarship in communication has neglected to amplify the Latinx/Chicanx perspective. This conversation is critical as this highlights how research testimonios can combat against higher education institutions, and support emerging and existing scholars through scholarly representation.

Aimee Carrillo Rowe's (2017C) "Settler Xicana: Postcolonial and Decolonial Reflections on Incommensurability," also demonstrates an important scholarly contribution to signify how Chicanx perspective is decolonial. In her work, Rowe reflects "on [their] own positionality as a 'settler Xicana' in an effort to sense the political and epistemic stakes for centering decolonial approaches in conversation with postcolonial/transnational feminisms" (p. 525-526). Rowe integrates their own position to exemplify the complicated relationship between identity and community. Particularly, she reads her "family history within the broader context of the settle-ment of Alta Mexico to consider how Mexicans have both participated in the violent displacement and conquest of Native peoples *and* been subjected to violent displacements and conquest at the hands of Anglos" (p. 531). The work by Rowe, with the consideration of Postcolonial theory and transnational feminisms, is imperative as self reflexivity and familial relationality and memory work signifies how her own familial and self can contribute to native and indigenous displacement. In this decolonial work, there seems to be an ethical grounding to consider our embodied selves and our familial history are representative of displacement and violence, and how scholars have constellated amongst other disciplines to mobilize towards and understanding of this ethical grounding.

In rhetoric, writing, and composition studies, there are scholars who have addressed the absence of Chicanx scholarship and perspectives within the larger discipline. For instance, Iris Ruiz's (2021) "Critiquing the critical: The politics of race and coloniality in rhetoric,

composition, and writing studies (RCWS) research traditions,” exemplifies through an epistemic decolonial act, “epistemic disobedience—it becomes clear that current critical methods are embedded in traditions of Whiteness and Western oriented epistemologies” (p. 39). Ruiz’s assertion highlights a particular point about (RCWS), the field “also relies upon Eurocentric histories to legitimize its disciplinary status, which is colonial and marginalizes certain groups” (p. 46). Ruiz’s critical point exemplifies how western epistemologies are not only dominant within the field’s history, but illustrates how this directly impacts and marginalizes particular bodies, identities, and perspectives. Through this acknowledgment, she incorporated a decolonial anti-racist methodological approach titled, “Historical Curanderismo.” Ruiz writes that Historical Curanderismo derives from Mexican and Latin tradition, and represents a healing epistemic, particularly how Curanderismo refers to an act of indigenous healing performed by one who has dedicated themselves to the arts of holistic medicine and natural homeopathy (p. 45) Ruiz’s methodological framing is imperative as it begins to represent a calling in against the exclusionary practices that have amplified whiteness. Through this healing, Ruiz asserts that the “historical curanderismo [represents] an opportunity to present more accurate representations of multicultural knowledge production and, by consequence, provide an ethical engagement with the field’s tendency towards racist epistemological exclusion” (p. 46). Ruiz’s assertion provides a clear indicator why Chicana, Latina, and Mexican decolonization practices are integral to disrupting systematic scholarly knowledge that is entrenched in White supremacy.

These collective conversations grounded in Chicana, Latina, and Mexican tradition shows that decolonial approaches have existed within these traditions and have discussed them in several categorical areas (among others of course): higher education, the personal, and scholarly practices. Additionally, these readings make a cognizant point: our work has constellated

testimonies from collective background, engaged in relationality, stories, and decoloniality to exemplify tensions with settler colonialism and Eurocentric frameworks that negatively, inaccurately, and intentionally exclude our embodied consideration about our embodied experiences. Meaning, disempowered, devalued, and ignored scholars have used critical culturally informed practices to address Eurocentricity. Meaning, our research is also always tied to our cultural heritages.

### Resistance is Cultural

Resistance is cultural. With this acknowledgment, resistance has been integral for cultural communities to navigate, address, and critique institutionalized cistematic oppression through their personal stories and experiences. In addition to the cultural, resistance connects to the social, political, and material impacts by dominant Eurocentricity and reflects an important component as stories of resistance signify larger societal issues. The entry of cultural perspectives has entered the field of technical and professional and communication to amplify cultural communities. For instance, in “Disrupting the Past to Disrupt the Future: An Antenarrative of Technical Communication,” Natasha Jones, Kritsten Moore, and Rebecca Walton (2016) have written an antenarrative to interrogate the dominant narrative that often excludes particular voices, identities, and perspectives which exposes “the need for and the history of a more inclusive technical communication that [scholars] might be better positioned to pursue inclusivity as a central goal” (p. 3).<sup>5</sup> Through an antenarrative, Jones, Moore, and Walton

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<sup>5</sup> Jones, Moore, and Walton emphasize that an antenarrative resembles an approach to look to the “future by examining the past ... [and the] pragmatic actions are necessary to create effective change going forward” (p. 2).

encourage to develop research that attends to intersectionality and to support scholars. As the authors urge the field,

we call for increasing attention to the ableist foundations of technical communication that imbue it with normalcy that can be exclusionary; we call for the integration of theories of race and ethnicity, and, as importantly, the experiences of people of color as we work to diversify the field; ... we call for any work at all that acknowledges the need to queer technical communication and resist the binaries that continue to dominate the field. In short, we seek any and all TPC research and pedagogy that embraces perspectives and knowledges that do not necessarily assume an anticultural, Westernized, heteronormative, and patriarchal positionality. (p. 13)

The declaration illustrates how technical communication scholars have addressed institutional oppression that at times excludes multi-marginalized researchers work, calling in the field at large to embrace perspectives and knowledges that differ from dominant narratives: westernized and colonizing desires. Through this work, they amplify culture and identity as an integral part of research and teaching practices to not only support researchers, but students as well. In regards to rhetoric and writing studies, culture has been an emergent field that has discussed culture as rhetorical.

For instance, Malea Powell et al. (2014) describes cultural rhetorics, an emergent field, containing four particular areas that are strong components to cultural rhetorics research: story, decolonization, constellating, and relationality. Phil Bratta and Malea Powell (2016C) also expand on this notion when they describe “all rhetoric is a product of cultural systems and that all cultures are rhetorical.” Moreover, Bratta and Powell address that “cultural rhetorics is a *practice*, and more specifically an embodied practice, that demands much from the scholars who engage in it.” Although their work is important, the scholarship has also neglected to think more expansively outside of the field of rhetoric, and it has neglected to account for communities who have conducted similar work outside the field of rhetoric and writing studies. With this acknowledgment, scholars have argued for more diverse, multivocal, and expansive perspectives

that include intersectional perspectives regarding gender, race, sexuality, disability, class, citizenship, and transnationalism (Cobos et al., 2018). It is imperative to highlight that there have been women of color, particularly Black women, who have actively addressed power and the absence of acknowledging Black women bodies in a dominant Eurocentric cistem through cultural personal testimonies, such as Sojourner Truth's *Women's Rights* (1995) powerful address in the 19th century, "And a'n't I a woman?." Through this reckoning and now acknowledgement, when I examine cultural resistance practices through personal stories and experiences, I draw on the Chicana and Latina community that has been integral to the ways in which I navigate the world.

In the epigraph at the opening of this chapter, I begin with queer Chicana scholar Cherrie Moraga's "Theory in the Flesh" for an intentional reason: their written and storied experience highlights how intersectional cultural identities are never welcomed in dominant white spaces. As Moraga writes, "[a] theory in the flesh means one where the physical realities of our lives—our skin color, the land or concrete we grew up on, our sexual longings—all fuse to create a politic born out of necessity" (p. 19). Moraga's iterative words signify how Chicana communities are resistant to the "heteronormative" aspects of whiteness and have pushed against normative ideologies to not only demonstrate we belong, but how our cultural experiences are never welcomed in predominantly white spaces. As Moraga further posits:

Here, we attempt to bridge the contradictions in our experience: We are the colored in a white feminist movement. We are the feminist among the people of our culture. We are often the lesbians among the straight. We do this bridging by naming our selves by telling our stories in our own words.

Moraga illustrates that stories, perspectives, and identities are always negotiating whiteness, and the marginalized communities have used cultural stories to highlight cistematic harm and oppression. In other words, our cultural stories represent a method to address harms to highlight

how marginalized bodies—queer, transgender, Black, Indigenous, and People of color—negotiate to be seen, heard, and valued. Even with our stories, they are oftentimes deeply ignored.

In “To(o) Queer the Writer—Loca, escritora y chicana,” Gloria Anzaldúa (Anzaldúa, G., & Keating, A., 2009) critically pushes against the normative ideological and Eurocentric terms that are often naturally prescribed on queer Chicanx bodies through her own story. Anzaldúa uses a cultural practice of storying through written words to illuminate the tendencies of queer theory—a notably white dominant field—as a place of epistemological violence. Most notably, Anzaldúa challenges the notions of a “lesbian writer” by highlighting that term representative of dominant white queer scholars. She explains in her work, “It follows the tradition in which white middle-class lesbians and gay men frame the terms of the debate. It is they who have produced queer theory and for the most part their theories make abstractions of us colored queers” (p. 165). Recognizing the epistemological violence that is prescribed on bodies who are non-white, she also acknowledges that white queer theorists “control the production of queer knowledge in the academy and in the activist communities. Higher up in the hierarchy of gay politics and gay aesthetics, they most readily get their work published and disseminated” (p. 165). Anzaldúa illustrates that the tendency of queer theory (and for me queer rhetorics) are plagued by white perspectives that exclude voices, perspectives, and identities, which intentionally creates exclusionary practices that neglect to amplify QTBIPOC lives.

Gloria Anzaldúa also recognizes queer theory’s whiteness reinforcing exclusionary practices by not centering and including QTBIPOC in the inclusion of this theory in the 1990s. Building from the notion about white queer theory’s dominance in academic spaces, Anzaldúa also communicates that the research in queer theory inherently ties from the direct extraction from QTBIPOC communities which reinforces colonizing desires. She writes that,

[white queer theorist] enter the territories of queer racial ethnic/Others and re-inscribe and recolonize. They appropriate our experiences and even our lives and “write” us up. They occupy theorizing space, and though their theories aim to enable and emancipate, they often disempower and neo-colonize. They police the queer person of color with theory. They theorize, that is, perceive, organize, classify, and name specific chunks of reality by using approaches, styles, and methodologies that are Anglo-American or European. Their theories limit the ways we think about being queer.

Gloria Anzaldúa emphasizes that the scholarship produced by white queer theorists has appropriated experiences from the QTBIPOC community and have policed multi-marginalized experiences. Furthermore, she also emphasizes the “approaches, styles, and methodologies that [derive from] Anglo-American or European [perspectives]” limit queer theory (p. 165). This cultural critical framework and critique by Anzaldúa pinpoints the exclusionary practices that exist in queer theory, and emphasizes the need to understand cultural ways of navigating cis-heteronormativity that derives from Eurocentricity. Her powerful story and critique exemplifies how this method reveals systematic harm and oppression.

In the field of Rhetoric and Writing, Latinx perspectives have also entered white dominant scholarship about queer theory/rhetorics by emphasizing the importance of cultural storied perspectives. In “‘The Dirt Under My Mom’s Fingernails’: Queer Retellings and Migrant Sensualities,” Alejandra I. Ramírez and Ruben Zecena (2019) compose a multimodal research article that proposes rhetorics of the flesh as a critical method. Ramírez and Zecena articulate that rhetoric of the flesh represents “an analytic framework and queer writing method that (re)tells stories about Latina migrant mothers within and against the violent, dominant, and forceful narratives of U.S. citizenship that criminalize their existence” (2). Their work addresses Eurocentric epistemological violence on migrant bodies who are depicted violently in mass-media and provide concrete methods to address this harm. Additionally, their research exemplifies that the “theory of rhetorics of the flesh [represents] a strategic writing act rooted in

the assumption that *el cuerpo sabe*, the body knows, and it is through the senses and embodied knowledge wherein one remembers and can retell stories” (2). Their work encourages the need to understand that bodies and communities hold knowledge, that bodies feel and react and respond as a strategic method to counter violent Eurocentric epistemologies that attempt to govern multi-marginalized bodies.

As the authors’ conclude, they make an important and cognizant point about collaborative work: “[w]e realized that in the performance of co-creating meaning, there is a space for generative growth and new understandings” (19). Although not explicitly, Ramírez and Zecena highlight that collaborating collectively through coalitions is imperative to generate growth and understanding; an important critical cultural approach that is grounded in QTBIPOC communities, which reflects coalitional learning (Jones, 2020). Thus, these collective cultural Chicanx and Latinx perspectives highlight that our cultural experiences always embody and enact resistance practices through storied experiences. As seen through Moraga, Anzaldúa, and Ramírez and Zecena, these scholars exemplify how their cultural identity, sexuality, race, and citizenship—the personal— is grounded in their scholarship to address cistematic harm and oppression. More importantly, these personal stories and testimonios have been integral to illustrating ways of seeing, being, and living in a settler colonial world.

Overall, through the examination of literature, resistance, then, represents the ways in which bodies maneuver complex institutional spaces that are saturated in White Supremacy. More, institutions are more than institutional habitable and physical locations, institutional cistematic oppression operates in the infrastructural, institutional, structural, and interpersonal levels that can impact the embodiment of a person and/or community. Thus, resistance represents a practice to subvert institutional and cistematic oppression to move away from survivance and



into thrivance. As an emergent scholar, resisting cistematic harm through practice is integral in the work I conduct presently and in the future. The scholarship I examined highlighted how resistance is not only a rhetorical practice, but a decolonial and cultural one too. Thinking about resistance as practice, scholars must acknowledge that it is represents an intersectional (race, class, gender, sexuality, citizenship etc.) and trans\*formative rhetorical, decolonial, and cultural approach to amplify and liberate communities who are disempowered, ignored, and disregarded by cistematic and institutional oppression which is saturated in White Supremacy.<sup>6</sup> Meaning, resistance reflects an approach to critique Eurocentricity and its violent epistemologies that are placed on QTBIPOC bodies.

#### Methodological Framework and Chapter Contents

The dissertation's methodology is grounded in participatory action design. This method reflects a collaborative process that allows participants to have control over the narratives and design for this project. Participatory design represents an integral research approach in both rhetoric and writing studies and technical and professional communication. For instance, Donnie J. Sackey (2020) has encouraged the need for participatory work in design processes and emphasizes that this has been a call “community activists have asked institutional bodies for access to decision-making processes that impact the spaces where they work, live, learn, and play” (p. 41). Laura Gonzales (2018) has also encouraged the field of technical and professional communication to lead with interdependent and intersectional collaboration with multi-marginalized communities as it leads to imperative considerations for researchers “who seek to

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<sup>6</sup> I must imperatively declare that resistance is maneuverable and should not pertain to one singular or definable notion. As I exemplify through my definitional work, resistance can and should look different amongst scholars who use this term in their work when positioning the self. For instance, when I think about resistance related to my own identity, I think about my own positionality as a Chicax, queer, and transgender person who is inherently tied to the Chicax indigenous community. This means that a Black feminist scholar or an indigenous scholar from Asia would view resistance differently in the ways in which they and their communities navigate resistance in the local and national landscape.

work collaboratively with participants to design and disseminate accessible and ethical tools and technologies that purposely decenter standardized notions of language, culture, and ability simultaneously” (p. 43). Furthermore, McKinley Green (2021) has also encouraged the field to engage with participatory design as it reflects a methodological framework that is integral when working collaboratively, collectively, and coalitionally with communities impacted by systems of oppression. Building from Blythe et al. (2008), McKinley asserts that “participatory frameworks[, then,] necessitate collaboration among researchers, designers, users, audiences, and/or community members to motivate change within community-based or organizational contexts” (p. 333). Meaning, collaboratively working with multi-marginalized communities is integral to create institutional and organizational change; this work cannot be simply done alone.

To be transparent, participants of this research project have an immense power to address any accurate statements or representations of their words within this dissertation project. For the participatory design component of this project, participants received transcriptions of their interviews and had the opportunity to redact any statements that might “risk” outing their identity. Second, participants received the entire drafted dissertation to edit, change and/or remove any inaccurate claims or assumptions about the statements they have made. Additionally, for the design component of this project, participants had the opportunity to contribute to the design in any necessary manner to reflect a communal design where all participants can have a voice to address institutional and organizational oppression. Through this participatory design methodology, this project places participants first and foremost, and allows them to control their narrative. In many ways, I resist the “normative” approaches to research by not adhering to publishing for the sake of research: I simply am taking time (which is a more stressful and extensive process) to make sure this work truly represents my participants and their

stories/testimonios. As I begin to outline the project's chapters, readers will understand why I am careful about how participants are represented in this work.

In chapter 2, "Testimonios Towards Institutional Change: Queer and Transgender BIPOC Individuals *Resisting* Cistematic and Institutional Oppression," I discuss and engage with participants testimonios in regard to resisting harm in scholarly practices—teaching, research, and community engagement—in regards to their positions in both graduate school and now their professional endeavors. To exemplify why testimonios represents a critical framework to engage in participatory collaborative research with participants, I will illustrate the historical relevance of testimonios as a literary tradition and then exemplify why this work is integral for both rhetoric and technical and professional communication studies—work that is already being conducted. Testimonios, as Lindsay Pérez Huber (2009) writes, "*testimonio* can provide an important methodological tool for critical race theory (CRT) and LatCrit researchers ... [and] can contribute to the growing scholarship on critical race methodologies" (640). With this understanding, using testimonios as a critical method to give the agency for participants to describe institutional oppression is an integral component of this project. Particularly, listening to various perspectives, identities, and bodies represents a critical approach to begin conceptualizing strategies to create institutional change to support QTBIPOC lives.

In chapter 3, "Resistance as Practice: A Rhetorical, Decolonial, and Cultural Technology," I continue with the method of testimonios to illustrate how resistance as practice is articulated through participants' own testimonios and how these stories, experiences and narratives are representative of a technology of survival, amplification, and liberation for individuals' communities. To exemplify this point, I draw on Angela Haas (2012) to disrupt the traditional notions of technology and I engage with participants testimonios further to signify

what resistance practices radically looks like as a technology. The purpose of this chapter is to highlight that individualized needs are completely different, and that practitioners who engage in this work can imagine how to begin mobilizing support for emerging [and existing] scholars who enter and/or are working within a university, college, and departments. The chapter emphasizes the need for those who do align with our identities to listen and value our experiences.

In chapter 4, I begin mobilizing participants' testimonios into a design: an activist manifesto. Building from chapter 2 and 3, I turn participants' testimonios into a critical design—manifesto—that declares for institutional change within higher education. Furthermore, I begin the chapter by examining several manifesto practices in both activism and academic to highlight the importance of the genre, and to understand the rhetorically savviness of these design types. Moreover, I will use a landscape analysis as a critical tool and method to examine statements by scholars in the field of rhetoric and writing studies and technical and professional communication. Through the landscape analysis, it will highlight this method as a communal practice where we can learn from communities who have and continue to do activist work for the betterment of marginalized, disempowered, and ignored lives. From this point, I design my own manifesto to urge the field of rhetoric and writing studies and technical and professional communication to radically rethink how we support Queer, transgender, Black, Indigenous, and People of Color in the ways they navigate and occupy spaces in higher education and to begin creating institutional change.

In chapter 5, I conclude this dissertation project to exemplify three major points. One, I situate how scholars in rhetoric and writing studies and technical and professional communication have addressed institutional and cistematic oppression within higher education who urge for institutional change and how this work adds to these conversations. Second, I

discuss how this research is tied into communal reciprocity to support the communities I am a part of within and outside higher education. Lastly, I discuss how this research is grounded in justice through rhetorical healing, a Black feminist and Chicana practice that highlight the need to understand this work as not just a calling-in, but rather a space for me and existing scholars to heal from institutional and systematic violence faced by QTBIPOC scholars and practitioners. As I conclude with this chapter, I add my own counter narrative to highlight the scholarly pressure and violence I experienced.

Through this dissertation project, this research attempts to create an avenue where scholars in both rhetoric and writing studies and technical and professional communication can create real world connections and interventions to begin supporting, protecting, and amplifying communities who are disregarded by systems of oppression through scholarly practices: research, teaching, and community engagement. Through this research project, I hope this can lead to conversations where we can support emerging and existing scholars whose bodies are always being violently treated by systematic oppression within higher education.

*This project is for them.*

## Chapter 2:

### Testimonios Towards Institutional Change: Queer and Transgender BIPOC Individuals *Resisting*

#### Cistematic and Institutional Oppression

“President Obama, release all L.G.B.T.Q. immigrants from detention and stop all deportations!”

- Jennicet Gutiérrez (Stack, 2015)

In 2015, transgender immigrant Latina activist Jennicet Gutiérrez interrupted then President Barack Obama during a White House event that celebrated Pride Month. During the former president’s speech, Gutiérrez loudly voiced, ““President Obama, release all L.G.B.T.Q. immigrants from detention and stop all deportations” (para. 2). In a video by Democracy Now (2015), once Gutiérrez vocally urged Obama to release transgender detainees, the entire room of individuals immediately smothered, blocked, and silenced her voice with “shhhhhh” and “shame on you.” As Liam Stack (2015) describes in their *New York Times* article, “President Obama displayed little patience with the heckler, telling her, ‘You’re in my house’ before having her removed” (para. 3). Gutiérrez’s vocal response stemmed from the need to address the violence that transgender immigrant individuals face at detention centers as they were exposed to abuse. For context, Obama’s presidency had one of the highest deportation numbers of the most recent presidents with 3 million being deported (Guerrero, 2021).<sup>7</sup> Although Jennicet Gutiérrez’s body—literally and physically—was removed from the White House, her testimonio on the impacts on deportation on migrant bodies was significant: her testimonio created national attention and

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<sup>7</sup> Jean Guerrero (2021) makes a point to exemplify that former President Barack Obama did not portray harmful depictions about undocumented individuals such as former President Donald Trump, who did. However, Guerrero writes that Obama’s administration removing undocumented individuals due to minor offenses had significant harmful impacts to families, particularly families who lost a parent and forced remaining family members (often a now single parent) to survive while supporting an entire family without their significant other. These situations resulted in families and communities to struggle further while navigating a new “country” alone. The social, material, political, and economic impacts on these communities were significant.

shed a light to protect her community she is affiliated with. Simply put, her testimonio addressed institutional and cistematic harm that negatively impacted multi-marginalized bodies dominated, controlled, and governed by white supremacy.

I situate Jennicet Gutiérrez's testimonio for a particularly intentional reason: stories, perspectives, and voices such as Gutiérrez's have the power to disrupt and challenge institutional cistems of oppression. Building from Gutiérrez and a lineage of scholars (Delgado D. B., et al., 2012; Espino, M. M. et al., 2012; Delgado D. B., 2018) who exemplified testimonials as a critical method, I use this approach within this chapter to exemplify Queer and Transgender and Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (QTBIPOC) testimonios and how those stories, voices, and perspectives hold power to address institutional harm and oppression. Particularly, I incorporate this critical method of testimonios to highlight how the participants I interviewed and their wholistic embodied selves have navigated higher education and its institutional practices. Thus, this chapter hones into the testimonios of QTBIPOC individuals to exemplify the institutional harm that exist within higher education (and industry) in order to support intersectional lives and their scholarly practices, such as pedagogy, research, and community engagement.

To exemplify why testimonios are imperative to the work one conducts in rhetoric and composition and technical and professional communication, this chapter will work in three critical points: 1) to establish how testimonios as method/methodology is a tenet to critical race theory and has direct ties to indigeneity, and to illustrate how this work is already entering both the field of rhetoric and writing studies and technical and professional communication; 2) to introduce the QTBIPOC participants and to share their personal testimonios and responses about navigating and resisting harmful institutional practices by positioning their wholistic selves; and

3) to rhetorically constellate their testimonies to signify the relationality amongst the QTBIPOC participants to signify how their voices, perspectives, and stories are so rhetorically similar and yet so distinctive. The purpose of this chapter is to exemplify the need to listen and hear testimonios from QTBIPOC about navigating harmful cistems within the university and research practices through coalitional learning. As Natasha Jones (2020) discusses coalitional learning as a process of coming together to create civic change, Jones writes that, “coalitional learning is an epistemic (and ultimately, ontological) shift in the ways that we think about disciplinary boundaries and academic contact zones and in the ways that we make meaning as well as make and legitimize knowledge” (519). Building from Jones (2020), this work attempts to bridge between rhetoric and writing studies and technical and professional communication to exemplify that these fields can incorporate testimonios as critical approach to address institutional harm and oppression that impact QTBIPOC bodies, lives, and perspectives.

#### Testimonios: A Tenet to Critical Race Theory and an Indigenous Method/ology

Critical race theory represents an imperative framework to conduct coalitional and transformative research to liberate and amplify communities who are impacted by white supremacy. Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic (2017) has described critical race theory as a critical framework that addresses race, racism, and power which emerged in both legal studies and radical feminist movements (p. 3). As Delgado and Stefancic write, critical race theory has entered various academic disciplines that address social, political, economic, and material consequences that impact intersectional multi-marginalized lives. As critical race theory has maneuvered across different academic disciplines, this critical framework has emerged in the field of rhetoric and writing studies. Most notably, scholar Aja Martinez (2020) has produced foundational research on the ways counterstory, a tenet of critical race theory, represents both an



imperative method and methodology for the field. As Martinez asserts, counterstory “serve[s] the purpose of exposing stereotypes and injustices and offering additional truths through a narration of the researchers’ own experiences” (17). Martinez’s assertion highlights that counterstory as both method and methodology holds significant power to support a researcher’s own personal experience to illustrate the impacts of white hegemony: a critical approach to address white supremacy and cistematic oppression. Simply put, this signifies the critical need for critical race theory to be more actively present in both rhetoric and technical professional communication studies.

Although counterstory represents an imperative method and methodology, testimonios—a Latinx, Chicanx, and Mexican practice—reflects another critical method/ology grounded in critical race theory as well. In the article “Disrupting apartheid of knowledge: *testimonio* as methodology in Latina/o critical race research in education,” Lindsay Pérez Huber (2009) builds from Chicana/o/x scholars stating that the apartheid of knowledge is grounded and rooted in “Western epistemologies that maintain white superiority through the production of knowledge” (640). Through this understanding, Huber describes a need to disrupt this apartheid of knowledge and argues that

*testimonio* can provide an important methodological tool for critical race theory (CRT) and LatCrit researchers ... [and] can contribute to the growing scholarship on critical race methodologies which seeks to disrupt the apartheid of knowledge in academia, moving toward educational research guided by racial and social justice for Communities of Color. (640)

Huber describes the methodological tool of Chicana/o/x feminist theory, which is grounded in critical race theory. The methodology tool should be considered in the field of rhetoric and writing and technical communication as Huber’s work attends to forefront communities of color who are impacted by white supremacy and its oppressive logics. More importantly, Huber

declares that “it is important to recognize *testimonio* as a tool for the oppressed, and not the oppressor. *Testimonio* should not function as a tool for elite academics to ‘diversify’ their research agendas or document their personal stories” (pg. 649-650). Huber’s declaration signifies testimonios as a methodological tool that centers communities and not those who wield positions of power within dominant organizational systems; Huber’s methodological consideration exemplifies this work should be conducted by those who are seemingly doing the work to create institutional change.

Additionally, testimonios as a critical race theory method and methodology has been significantly present within the last decade among research related to education. For instance, Latina scholars Judith Flores and Silvia Garcia (2009) articulate that testimonios represent a critical approach to address systematic and institutional oppression in predominantly white campuses (PWI), especially when scholars and students are the minority in those white dominant spaces. Scholar Virginia Necochea (2016) writes about testimonio reflecting an approach to make a point about post-racial fallacy within the U.S. education system to address oppression. Moreover, scholars such as Maria Castañeda et al. (2017) utilize testimonios to address and decolonize systematic oppression within the academy in relation to tenure and promotion within their profession as communication scholars. Furthermore, in the field of rhetoric and writing, scholar Cruz Medina (2018) has incorporated, utilized, and encouraged “testimonio [as it] rhetorically communicates a narrative with a social justice agenda that addresses the issues affecting a particular community” (Storytelling, testimonio, and LatCrit Methodology, para. 1). More, technical communication studies scholars Laura Gonzalez, Kendall Leon, and Ann Shivers-McNair (2020) have incorporated testimonios as methodology to understand “understand the various approaches, affordances, and challenges that TPW [Technical and

Professional Writing] programs at HSIs [Hispanic Serving Institutions] navigate when developing responsive programs for Latinx students” (p. 67). This collective scholarship exemplifies how testimonials represent a critical methodological and method in research which is grounded in social justice to support disempowered communities and has been a critical framework that is crossing disciplinary boundaries.

More recently, one particular scholar has encouraged the field of technical and professional writing to understand testimonios as a practice deeply connected with User Experience. Nora Rivera’s (2022) “Understanding Agency Through Testimonios: An Indigenous Approach to UX Research,” argues that testimonios represents an indigenous method that is imperative to gather “narratives that trace a user’s experience through a collective voice. Testimonios also trace users’ social and cultural contexts while prompting participants to exercise their agency and promote social change” (online). This important assertion highlights that testimonios can be utilized as a critical method to create institutional change through a user’s experience from their own narrative. Rivera support this by arguing that

Testimonios are narratives that emphasize an individual’s wholistic relationship with a product, service, process, or content. Through a testimonio, an individual narrates a wholistic experience that links a personal account to the collective experience of the community to which the individual belongs, which yields valuable information to examine the cultural and social roots of an issue. In other words, this method yields information about the user’s full experience, hence the value of testimonios to UX research. (Online)

From Rivera’s point, testimonios reflect a method that is important as it captures an participant’s experience navigating a service/product, which then highlight existing pain points that User Experience Designers and researchers can then examine and identify ways to improve the experience and make the experiences better. Additionally, this method is grounded in the rhetorical, decolonial, and cultural approach that is paramount as this work is derived from

Indigenous and cultural background. Meaning, this method represents an imperative framework to address white supremacy and colonizing desires that exclude, marginalized, and ignore populations.

Collectively, these Chicanx, Latinx, rhetoric, and technical communication scholars have exemplified that testimonios represents a critical race theory method grounded in creating change to support multi-marginalized communities who are deeply and severely impacted by cistems of oppression. Through the incorporation of this method, I will exemplify with my c0-participants on how to begin conceptualizing areas where institutional change can happen to support emerging QTBIPOC students and faculty who often encounter epistemological embodied violence in higher education and industry; a constant recurrence that happens to BIPOC scholars and students (Mendoza, et al., Press). I do acknowledge this: although three participants identify as Latinx and/or Chicanx, the three other participants did not. Although testimonios are referenced as a Chicanx, Latinx, and Mexican tradition, I used this method as all our communities share cultural practices that connect us all: we tell stories and perspectives that shape who we are. Particularly, this is how multi-marginalized individuals make sense of the violent world through sharing testimonios about their lived and embodied experiences which represents a co-creational practice. Thus, through these collective testimonios, understanding first-hand experience about these obstacles from QTBIPOC participants will illustrate why institutional change to support these students and faculty represents an incredible need that is grounded in justice.

#### Project Design: Introducing the QTBIPOC Participants

For this dissertation, the project design focused on these three critical areas to create the project into existence. I interviewed six (6) queer and/or transgender rhetoric studies scholars

who identify as Black, Indigenous, and People of Color. For the selection process, I selected BIPOC scholars whose works I have read. From there, I contacted them directly through their academic emails and asked if they would participate in the study. Participants who participated in the study were given the opportunity to select a pseudonym of their choosing to keep their confidentiality.

I conducted two rounds of semi-structured interviews for each participant to give participants time to think and respond over a period of time between their first interview. Particularly, conducting semi-structured interviews represents an important part of the data collection process for me as a researcher: it allows participants to have agency of their experiences, stories, and narratives to revise any statements but to also reflect on their statements. The method to collect and conduct these interviews draws on scholar Nora Rivera, who encourages Testimonios as a User Experience method grounded in community empowerment. More importantly, this method reflected an integral approach to this research as it allowed me to build genuine, lasting, and honest relationships with my participants. Additionally, interviews were conducted between the months of June 2022 and to December 2022. Participants signed up for the two interviews in advance and scheduled their interviews a month apart to allow me the opportunity to transcribe and send them their first interview two weeks before the second interview. This process allowed participants to redact any information they stated in the interview process and it also allowed them to reflect and listen on the previous conversation before participating in the second and final interview.

Additionally, the participants I selected represent a range of scholars from various academic positions and one industry person. As seen in table one, participants range from various ethnic and racial backgrounds, queer and trans identities, and disabilities. For safety—as

to prevent any retaliation—participants' identities have been protected with a pseudonym of their choosing.

| Participant | Professional Position | Intersectional Identity  |
|-------------|-----------------------|--|
| William     | Assistant Professor   | Latino, Chicano, and Queer   |
| Trans       | Associate Professor   | Black, Indigenous, Non-Binary, Queer & Trans                       |
| Valentina   | Assistant Professor   | Latino, Chicano, Queer   |
| D'Angelo    | Industry              | Black, Non-Binary, Queer   |
| Queer       | Full Professor        | Latina, Chicana, Queer   |
| Monica      | Assistant Professor   | Asian American, Trans, Queer, Non-Binary, Disabled, Neurodivergent |

Table 1: Scholars' pseudonyms, professional title, and intersectional identities.

Furthermore, as seen in figure one, I asked questions about queer and transgender resistance practices in their *pedagogy*, *research*, and *community engagement*. These questions asked how this work of resistance practices showed up in the graduate careers and now professional positions. These three main questions that I considered:

- 1.) What do you believe that it means to be a queer and transgender scholar and researcher, in general?
- 2.) Can you tell me how your marginalized, overlapping identities have assisted you in resisting harmful academic practices in relation to teaching, research, and community engagement as a graduate student?
- 3.) How has resistance as practice changed now that you are a faculty researcher?

As we move into individuals' stories and narratives—*testimonios*, I must point out the fact that these participants' stories, experiences, and lives are completely and wholeheartedly different. There are individuals who answer questions quickly and concisely, and there are answers that are long and nonlinear—queer perhaps—that venture to reflections about situations and institutions

that impact them directly. More importantly, the responses from these participants have only been revised and edited with the approval of participants; I wanted to engage in a practice that focused on community accountability participatory means by allowing individuals to control their own narratives while also co-constructing narratives with participants as well. Meaning, as these testimonios are read, I will add my own interpretation and commentary after each major section.

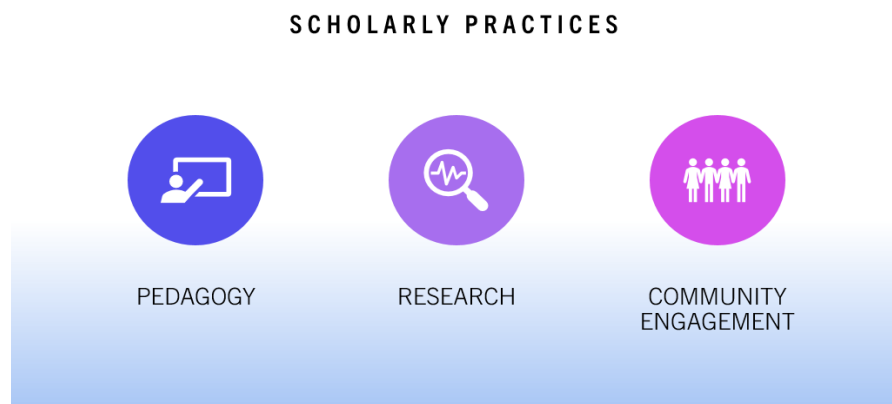


Figure 1: Scholarly Practices: Pedagogy, Research, and Community Engagement

As you read the passages that these individuals have spoken out loud, I want you, reader, to honor them as these individuals wholisitic selves are embodied in their responses: they simply were honest, genuine, and transparent about navigating cistematic and institutional oppression as QTBIPOC individuals. The testimonios by these participants will signify a throughline about the harm and violence many encounter in their professional endeavors; even though all these participants attended and now work at different institutions. More importantly, following the need for linguistic justice (Baker-Bell, 2020), I did not edit the language and words to fit in the problematic ideas of standard English. Simply put, I honor their language vernacular and keep

their words exactly as stated by them. As mentioned, honoring participants is central to this project.

Dear Scholar, What Does It Mean To Be A Queer And/Or Transgender Researcher?

In the following section, I detail the exigence of each of my three research questions and share the detailed narratives provided by participants. The general structure of this section will contain several parts: 1) a brief written statement that explains the importance and relevance about the questions asked; 2) the question that was asked to participants; 3) the participants transcribed responses to the question; and 4) my response/making sense of participants response to engage in the co-creational practice with my participants. The design of this section will help illustrate the general structure and also contribute to co-creational practices that I have set out to do.

**Question context:** the question listed below is from the third question asked and the second follow up question. I begin with this question to understand what it meant for participants to be a queer and transgender scholar in the field. Here is the question:

*What do you believe that it means to be a queer and transgender scholar and researcher, in general?*

*William*

Like, what does it mean to be a queer scholar? What does it mean to be a queer scholar? That's a good question.

For me, I think it means. I don't want to be mean. But I think it means knowing that actions speak louder than words. And identifying a particular way. Like I'm a queer scholar, is one statement. And another is, I'm a queer scholar who does queer work, and adheres to the idea of queer being incommensurable with these systems of power. So, like, Qwo-li Driskill, Scott Morgenson, and a couple of other folks talk about the way that queerness itself is imbricated in systems of colonization. So, a lot of the times what I see are people saying, it's a radical act that I need in the university, because I'm queer, but it's like, no, there's a bunch of queer people, and a lot of them are in the business program. They're in economics departments; they're the ones you know, who are



advancing these settler systems, through their teaching and work. So, what does it mean to do actual queer work, and say no to these systems, and interrupt them in specific ways? So, it can't just be. like, as grand as like, just like bombing university or something, which is, like terrible, don't do that. But it can be like throwing a wrench in the way that your programming takes resources and makes community events for queer kids of color to actually celebrate their identities. And that is a way of disrupting those systems in small waves, because there's no other than like, outright revolution, and like upheaval—nothing will change. So, we have to do these small band aids here and there on these wicked problems. So, I think for me, that is what it means to be a queer scholar is actually doing something with your queerness versus just couching your state of comfort into the identity itself. Because not to be shady. But there's some people who are like, I'm a bisexual, white woman married to a Marine, and I'm queering the US military by being queer and being married to him.

And Mama does that, like the math is not mathing there? You know, like, what, girl, but a literal Marine? So yeah, when I see—and that happens a lot. It's everywhere, where people were like, I'm a bisexual woman so just me being queer means I'm doing great work for my students. Meanwhile, they're like, terrible, and they are, like, actively hostile to people. So yeah, for me, being a queer scholar means doing queer work. And knowing what that queer work versus just a note taking a shit and calling it queer. Because you're queer. You know?

### *Scholar P*

What does it mean to be a queer trans scholar researcher in general? Hmm. That's a harder question than you think.

Uhm, I don't know, like, well, let me try. I'll try to answer it by saying what I think I'm supposed to say. And maybe I'll eventually get to what the actual answer is, but I think I'm supposed to say is that, you know, like, oh, it means to research that specific community, or like, you know, it means to, you know, do work that's going to make lives better for queer and trans people in some way, right, and all those things. Um, and I think that those are things that like, that often do happen, right? Just because we just get so tired and exhausted, and not seeing ourselves and hearing our stories told, and, you know, people constantly creating educational policy and all kinds of stuff without us being considered. So, like, we do it, so that we can stop being overlooked and passed over.

What I think it really means, you know, then, it's like, I kind of resist that. And I feel like to be a queer trans scholar, is to be able to sort of take up the space that we want to take up. So even if that work doesn't look like something that is clearly sort of making an impact, you know, that's like, situated in a very overt way, as queer and trans studies scholarship. If I'm a queer trans person of color, then it is queer and trans scholarship, right? It doesn't mean that it can't be, it's not going to have to be sort of like, held accountable in other ways. Like, you can't just like, you know, make claims that don't consider queer and trans people and say, Well, I'm queer and trans, it's okay. No, but I just think like, if you're being honest about who you are, it's, it's going to come in, in

every way, because it's about like, if you hold that intention, it's going to be there, right?

So in the questions that you ask, and the arguments that you make, and who you imagine the audience being for it, you know, even if it doesn't, you know, sort of, like get taken up by queer and trans studies or rhetorics, you know, directly, you know, it will be in everything if you held that intention. So, I guess what it means then is to be able to take up space for the thought for the projects that you want to do. That's it, like and I think if we're doing that, in the academy that I've come to know, um, it's always going to be doing something that hasn't been done before. You know, just because the nature of the academy is just that basic, to be honest, right? Yeah, just like to be engaged in like these components, these very limited normative, dry, facile. You know, Like, sets of interest. And I just think that like queer trans people show that it can be so much better. You know, it has to be like, not that it can be, but like, it has to be otherwise.

I mean, it's like, what are we doing here? Like, we asked the same sets of questions over and over and over, I mean, talk about confirmation bias, like, you know, people are just completely, you know, objectifying and fantasizing the same questions about the same people over and over and over again. So, to be queer and trans, a queer and trans researcher, I guess I would add an addendum and say, you know, maybe it's also just about, you know, asking a different, like, be like, speaking from a position that sees another part of like, what's happening, you know, and, and being persistent and insisting that, like, there's another set of concerns, right, and questions and issues.

To go back to that thing with Jackie,<sup>8</sup> you know, and thinking sideways. I'm thinking also like about her article. And like, she has an article called Disciplinary Landscaping that I cite in my book. And the whole point of that is like saying, like she taught us it's like, it's a geographic metaphor. And so, I think being a queer and trans scholar is also doing that, right, not just taking up space, but also like, where you are on the landscape. You know, it's such that it reminds people that are in different positions, right? Like, I can't stand in the same place as everybody who came before me and ask the same questions and do the same thing. So yeah.

*Valentina*

Whewww, that's a tough one. And I think it's a tough one, because I don't think we were supposed to be here, right?

These institutions were not made for us. So, I think to be here means creating space, in claiming space. It is that is the dual work of creating and claiming spaces, because we have to show that our research does matter. And students are actually more interested in it. But also creating spaces because when you get to these positions of power, you can't just take the space and move on. Like, for me, I have commitments to the communities I serve. I'm not loyal to institutions, but I am loyal to my people. And I say that in like, at least for me, like, a lot of my mentors, like, have given me professional

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<sup>8</sup> The participant referred to Jacqueline Jones Royster and their work on the Disciplinary Landscape, an article referred to in Chapter 1.

advice. And for me, like a lot of it has come down to don't be loyal to institutions. Do as much as subversive work as you can and know the worth that you have. Because I think a lot of time queer and trans people, we are not taught our worth, like, I feel like we're made to feel like we need to have the crumbs. And I'll give an example.

So, for me in my academic department, our curriculum is like, really old, and everybody is aware of it and wants to have changes. And I proposed a class on queer and trans texts. And I thought that, you know, it's 2022, I didn't think that was going to get any pushback for a queer and trans texts, since our department didn't even have a gay and lesbian literature, rhetoric, nothing course. And I knew that we actually have a lot of faculty who do queer and trans studies, but nobody has ever made a queer and trans anything in our department and our department is huge. And after I submitted the proposal, there were Cis/Het, white men, older scholars, older professors who had issues, who called them who called this class and identity studies class that didn't belong in an English Department. And I'm summarizing, in their email threads even. And you know, I got really heated at one point, because I think, you know, like, when you do this research, and when you do this work, like, I don't know about you, but sometimes I cry when I'm looking at like, like, if I'm reading a novel, if I'm reading some text that I'm analyzing, and it has a lot of violence, I can't just read it and analyze it, like my body takes it in, I have to feel the feels and I have to sit with the violence. And I think this is something that particularly when you're a queer and trans person of color, and you're doing work on queer and trans studies, the work is personal so for me to propose a class on queer and trans texts, that for me, it's a class for my survival for what I get to teach and the survival of the students that I work with and to have two senior professors say this is identity studies that doesn't belong in the English department.

You know, it, it, you know, I mean, *it showed me their true colors*. So, I appreciated that. But at the same time, I didn't stay quiet. So, I pushed back. And I was like, there's research from our own students who asked for more queer and trans studies classes, because we don't have any. And I was like, you know, I am wary of what this pushback against a queer and trans texts class is, if the research shows that students want it, if we have the faculty, we have a lot of faculty that are qualified to teach it. And I just put an email: I'm concerned by what this might suggest. And then the two white men buddied up, and they were like, you know, this, this type of comment. And they quoted me, a tenure track professor in this big email thread with all the faculty in the committee. And they were like, this shuts down the conversation, and the email thread got very ugly. And it got shut down by a professor within my department, who was the chair of the committee for curriculum. And then we ended up having a meeting about this, and the class got the votes, it got approved.

Yeah, and we had to, we had to be strategic with it. Because a lot of the concern is that initially, we had the name, the title, LGBTQ2AI, to LGBTQIA2S+. And they didn't like the long alphabet. And I know that there's issues with it. But a lot of my colleagues and I, since I was spearheading it, the effort, we really wanted to be inclusive and to signal to students that the department cares for all students. So, for us, we were very strategic and wanting to have the A for asexual and 2S for two spirit in there. And plus,

for all the multiple identities that our students take and claim. And we then change that to queer and trans texts to be like, Okay, fine, cool, who don't want this, but we'll have it in the description to still signal. So, we did keep the acronym in the description, but the title is queer and trans texts. And at the next faculty meeting, I just had to speak up for one, I just gave the facts. I was like, you know, these are the facts. Students want it, we have the people to teach it. There's no absolute reason I wanted to say, aside from homophobia and transphobia, that there should be pushback for this class, and they got approved.

But I think the fact that I had to do this on my first year as a tenure track faculty and stand up against full professors who are going to be voting on my tenure in a few years, I think that speaks to the location of what it means to be a queer and trans studies scholar within academia. The bridges that we have to build that are for our own survival, because you know, I could have like, just been like, you know, what, fine, don't do the class. But I was like, you're going to judge me anyway? So yeah, so for me, I think this is what it means to be doing queer and trans studies in academia is to claim our spaces and make our spaces because nobody else will for us.

Yeah.

*D'Angelo*

I mean, I think it means that unfortunately, you have to do that much more work to do your work. Given that you have to, again, as well, my research is about, like the literate knowledge. For example, this is how I feel about it for myself. I walk into a room, people perceive me as straight, whatever the kind of norm, quote, unquote, is. [When I] open my mouth, you know, the pearls and things fall out, or there is an expression for it. That stuff happens. And so, it becomes, then a matter of that's like, that's work that I'm doing now, like, even me thinking about it, having to think about it is work, me having to this is what I'm looking at with the literacy stuff. Because like how I'm looking at institutional ethnographies, and how work is a big component of it, and how work is done for people, even though our work is often mediated through text in the text or reflecting more kind of standardized or more or not standardized, it's not the right word is there reflecting institutional logic of society.

And so, the logic of how you're supposed to behave in a certain role as a researcher, as an instructional designer in my case, that stuff, I have to figure out how to fit my square peg in that circle hole. So that's work that I have to do in order to get my paycheck. How do I navigate and do that? So that's why I call it work. On the other end, it just opened me up. I think it kind of opens up opportunities, like I was saying early, engage in a community in a way that is outside of the sometimes the pressure of a more Cis, straight, hetero, whatever paradigm. And what I mean by that is, I don't have to worry. For example, I'm not a cis straight woman who's married, like I'm married to a man. Right? So, but if I was a woman, a cis woman married to a man, there would be questions around: Oh, you know, you're 33, do think about kids, you know, the clock's ticking and all that stuff, and there'll be a lot of pressure. But like me being queer, like some of that stuff, it's kind of, you know, you know, for me, it's good or bad. But I get to

kind of leave that over there. I can figure that out. Over there.

My family only asks me about that stuff. And I'll just keep doing my thing over here. Now there is something you lose, because maybe you want that, maybe you want to be in it because that is how you were socialized and raised. I mean, I was raised as a, you know, this straight man. And you, some of these things are put into you. That and some of these things, maybe you do want. But maybe they're not clickable to you. So, there's a certain warning that happens, but then there is also sort of relief, you know, so it definitely mixed. Yeah, that's not what it means. It's like current affordances, certain costs mixed up and jumbled up. But it's all work.

*Scholar K*

Um, I don't know necessarily that possessing that identity means much at all. Although I know a lot of people do. I think in terms of being the kind of scholar and I would say that that's especially true for queer in the sense that anybody can be queer. You know, a lot of straight, what I would describe as straight, right? They identify as queer, even though I don't know of anything they've ever done that would qualify them as queer, right? So that way, I don't know how much queer as an identity matters. I mean, I think when we start to complicate that with someone who might also be disabled might also be a person of color. And so queer is not the central or only identity marker, I think, then things get more complicated because of the ways that intersectionality works, the way power works. You know, I think to be a trans scholar in this moment is vexing for people. Because even well-meaning folks can't seem to wrap their head around how to create space, how to shift things they used to do, so that their colleagues can actually do their work. I think especially for trans folks of color, I think academia is a very violent space.

*Monica*

So kind of a two-part answer. One, I think it's unfair to apply pressure to marginalized scholars in a way that we don't apply to the dominant, you know, people from dominant identities. But also on the other hand, I don't think we've applied enough pressure to people who come from dominant identities, I think. I mean, by nature of where we are, the institutions that we work for, we are working for the historically elitist colonizing institutions. And that's something that all of us have to grapple with, with the fact that we're here. Kiese Laymon's memoir *Heavy* is one of the most moving, transformative books I've read probably in my lifetime. And he has this line in there about how when he's talking about his teaching gig, and he's talking about how at the end of the day, my job is to certify the next generation of like liberal white students, and it just like hits you like a punch in that, you know that a lot of what you're doing in your classroom is to make these the best liberal white people that you can, but also because of who gets to go into the academy, who gets to be in your classrooms, that is a part of your job. And so, I think, in general, for all of us, we don't put enough pressure into this question, right? Like, I work for these institutions, a lot of which are in existence because of land theft, a lot of which are in existence because of, I don't know, oil money. And

what do I do? Like, what do I do in this space that makes it worthwhile to be here.

And so for me, as a trans, queer, disabled person of color, with all of my sort of internal graph grappling in terms of what I do with my life, this job gives me a lot more resources than I have in a lot of other possible positions. And sort of the promise I made to myself is I will inhabit that job for as long as I feel like I can use it to do the work that's important to me. And for me, that is, again, creating a more livable world for my communities. And the moment that it stops letting me do that, I will go look somewhere else, right. So that is the boundary I have drawn, that is the hill I will die on. And it helps me make my decisions at each turn, right? Like, does this get me closer to being able to do that work or does it not? And I think that, I think that should be a sort of interrogation we all have coming into the academy, right? Like, who are your people? Who are you doing work for? Not necessarily, like, who are you writing to? That's a different question like who your audiences are, but like, what, who does your work serve? Who benefits from it? Why? And what do you need to do in order for that to be the actual thing that happens? Rather than, you know, accumulating a CV, not that we all shouldn't be celebrated for what we do, but also beyond that? What does your, like, who has benefited from the work that fills your CV? And how do you do that in a way that feels responsible?

*Ruby*

From the participants' responses, being a queer and transgender scholar is means different things among these scholars. What I got from their responses signifies a major point: queer and transgender scholars are navigating institutional cistems that are oppressive and harmful. I understood from their perspectives that QTBIPOC individuals navigate the world differently than many of our cisheteronormative counterparts, that one's intersection in addition to be queer and transgender are often not considered, including disability. These responses were meaningful in a lot of ways, they exemplified how queerness seems to be taken by the cisheteronormative counterparts, the obstacles and challenges we face individually and personally are representative to colonizing desires, and that our work attends to our communities to further provide avenues for support. Being a queer and transgender scholar is more than just those identities, it is an act of survival in a colonizing world.

## Navigating Institutions as a Graduate Student

**Question context:** the question listed below is the follow up question after the previous question asked above. I ask this question to begin to understand in addition to their notions of being a queer and transgender scholar, how have these individual participants navigated resistance in their academic practices with their overlapping identities as graduate students. Here is the question:

*Can you tell me how your marginalized, overlapping identities have assisted you in resisting harmful academic practices in relation to teaching, research, and community engagement as a graduate student?*

*William*

I think, for me, it's tricky because I know I'm a little lighter, so safer to some people, because of the way that people are socialized to see dark skinned people as scary. But yeah, the minute I talk, the minute I, the minute, they have to say my name, the minute like I talked about the things that I do, I always got the sense that they're, like, scared, you know? Like, for a lot of the times as a graduate student, I was perceived as angry, even though I was just talking in class. I would just like, somebody would say something, and I'd be like, well, what about whatever this scholar is saying, like, just engaging in the readings as graduate students doing. And then rumors started spreading about me that I was angry all the time. And that I was, like, mean to people. And I was like, I can't like y'all haven't seen me be mean, like, I can be mean, I've like made, I've made customers cry at old jobs because I was mean to them, you know, like, I can be mean. So, I was like, that's very interesting.

So at first, I just kind of leaned into it and I was like, well, I'm just gay and gay people are catty, so like, you're just straight and you can get it. But eventually I was like, this is actually going to be a problem because I can't talk to these people because they're like, on edge around me because they think that they're going to make me angry. When I'm, I'm just like pointing it out. Like, I remember one time during planning—people were planning like a Halloween event—and they're like, we can do a day of the dead thing, too. And then I had to be the one to say those aren't like, commensurable holidays, like the Day of the Dead is not a Mexican Halloween. And it's not even just Mexican, you know? So, I had to be like that. And people were like, that's like, why am I being treated [this way]? Like I'm saying something offensive? When I'm just pointing something out and trying to like, not make y'all look like fools, you know? So, yeah, I dealt with a lot of that.

And it's interesting, too, because being in a program with a lot of white women, some of the things that another colleague, another Chicano colleague of, and I would talk about, is the way that our actions were perceived from the white women, like we were called sexist, because we wouldn't partake in some of the service opportunities for graduate students. But, and mostly the women were, but we pointed out that it was mostly the white women who did that. And we pointed out that there were no real women of color in those positions, either, because nobody felt comfortable being around groups of all white women, because of the issues that I just talked about. So a lot of it was having to do, like, explanatory work. And I remember, in one class, a white woman said, fag, she was reading it out loud, which is like, okay, whatever, but she said it out loud. And she had just come out as whatever, I don't know, like some white queer thing. Not to be, mean—not to diminish anyone's queerness. But she was like, my partner is trans. And now I'm queer, too. So she said that, and I was like, I don't feel comfortable. And I wasn't the only queer person in the room who got uncomfortable with her saying it.

So the next week, because of what happened, and I tweeted it out, too. I didn't name any names. But I, my [online] community, I find more often than not, and it's why I study is online, like, online communities where I find it. So I didn't find it in the department. So later, it turned into this big *hullabaloo* in the class and a white woman in the department, a graduate student in my cohort, was crying. Like, she just started the class by crying and saying, I don't know why he would say that, like, I don't know why you wouldn't come to us for your community, blah, blah, blah. And I was like, first off, now I know the story is that [William] just made a white woman cry. And immediately she was like, oh my God, like, I didn't call her out. But I called her in and was like, this is going to be the narrative now. Like, we can't control what happens, because what's going to spread from this classroom is that I made you cry. And that's gonna reinforce particular stereotypes that I mean and angry. And she was like, that wasn't my intention. And I was like, it doesn't matter what you intend. It's what you do, you know.

So, it was a lot of explaining things to people to the point where I just kind of gave up at by the end and just let people say whatever they wanted, or talk however they wanted. Then, I almost dropped out of ... my department, like, three times, I think. And each time the only reason I stayed was because of my mentors. And my, like, colleagues, who were like, just stick it out, like we're here for you. So yeah, I definitely had to find community outside.

### *Scholar P*

Yeah. Okay. So yeah, as a grad student, that was big for me, I knew that I wasn't the only, that I wasn't the first [Black queer student]. My advisors had Black students before me, and also Black queer students actually before me. And so that made me feel like, okay, like, I actually have some, you know, sort of shoulders, you know, to not stand on. I don't like, but like, you know, I had some grounding, I have some support, you know, I think also connected to that is like, the sort of spiritual, like, as well as, like, bulk knowledges and grounding to, you know, like, the reason why ancestorship became such an important part of my intellectual practice, as well as my sort by intellectual practices,



because it was a big, it became a part of my sort of spiritual practices that helped to ground me. Like, through my graduate school experience. And so I think the specificity of being Black and queer, you know, Indigenous, right, like those they gave me, again, the tools, the technologies to sort of hold like, on to those things that became a part of like, what helped me to sort of, you know, face the realities, right of harmful practices, you know, and experiences during my graduate school years. So, yeah, that's that was, that's for me that was major.

*Valentina*

Yeah. Okay, during my time as a grad student, yeah. Um, so I remember I think it was like, my first year, and you know, how like grad departments have, like, travel funds that you apply to. So, I applied to an internal one with my department. And I remember I was filling out my application, and it asked for, if you're a citizen, it was check citizen, if you're not a citizen, add your residence number, and the rest, like, have you ever had a green card, the residents number you used to be called your alien registration number. And, my department was cute and called it registration number. But, you know, I asked the department, what are you going to use this number for? There was no answer. So I was like, why do I have to go through my green card because I got my green card, like the summer before I went to grad school. And I'll say I went to grad school in Arizona, I will not have gone to that program. If I didn't have a green card. If my green card hadn't been given to me, like right before I moved.

Yeah, because I got it spring 2016. And fall 2016 is when I started grad school, I wouldn't have gone to Arizona just because it wouldn't have been safe for me. Because I was undocumented. My partner is white, we always had the plan. I was like, hey, I'll marry you for papers, if ever, ever comes to that point. *Survival*. Like I know, in queer theory, we can be critical of gay marriage. But when you're undocumented, it's you know, survival comes first, over theory. But I will say why do I need to, like, because for me, I'm like, this consumes my time of having to go through my documents for a number that you don't need, like, why would you put you need your registration in order to apply for funds? And that was my first year, I remember. I was like, really frustrated. And the faculty were like, they were really cool about it. And they were also surprised that they were like, oh, why is this here? Like, there was absolutely no reason. But I think for me, since you know, I wasn't a citizen at the time, like, it was that something that just stood out to me? Because I was like, wait, this is not normal. Why are you asking this, you really don't need this number.

And, yeah, but for me, I think like these experiences, as at the time, a non-citizen really shaped my work, which focused on the imaginaries of queer and trans migrant communities in the United States. Because I think a lot of the times, like, citizenship is a big privilege. And I speak this now as a citizen. But you know, even on the job market, I remember being annoyed because I was preparing for a campus visit. And I was also studying for my citizenship test. Because I got my citizenship, like, three weeks after I got my first offer. But I was also like, in the process of applying, which is very expensive. I think [people] spend probably like \$1,000, or maybe plus applying to citizenship, and we all know, grad student stipends aren't cute. So, you know, these

experiences, at least for me, as a formerly undocumented migrant, really showed me the privileges of academia and how these institutions again, are really not built for us.

You know, it would have been cool to have some assistance from my university or from anyone, honestly, to at least pay for my green card for my citizenship application. But also, like, you know, like, as I mentioned, like I was studying for the citizenship test while preparing for campus visits. And I remember when I went to get the test, they tested me. They test you on your English, can you speak English? My bachelor's is in English. And I was a published scholar by that time, so you know, to be tested on my English. It, it wasn't necessarily traumatizing, but it was frustrating to have to prove that I speak English. And I know I have a slight accent.

And that's another thing that shapes me as a scholar that, you know, when you go to conferences, like I usually only read eight double spaced pages. And I do that because I know that like when I read out loud, my accent comes out more. And I actually love my accent. Um, but I also know the stigmas that accents have. So these are like, and I know that they're little things, but they're also like everyday things that shaped me like knowing that, you know, like, oh, my accent is going to be thick. When I read a paper. So, I'm going to write double-spaced pages so that I make sure that time, and that I have the time to enunciate my words. And I guess, I think that, you know, sorry, if I'm rambling, this reminds me—and now my dogs are rambling, [screams dog's name]!

Um, so when I was in high school, I was in speech and debate. And I remember, before tournaments, our coach would pull me aside and be like [Valentina], here is a pencil, I want you to practice by putting it in your mouth. And then read your speeches with the pencil in your mouth so that you enunciate. And, you know, when I was a student, like, I was in high school, and I was like, oh, cool. She's just really helping me. She's my coach, she cares about me, she's doing this for my own good. And then in college, I was like, that was racist. And it was disgusting too because imagine grabbing a pencil, putting it in your mouth. And then like reading a script, and practicing that, like it was really disgusting. And I would do it like, quite literally. So when I read "How to Tame a Wild Tongue," like wild tongues can't be tamed, [says] Gloria Anzaldua.

And, you know, these are little things, because when I think of like, what it means to be an academic, like public speaking is one [practice]. And I think of scholars who have accents, and what does it mean? And I even say this as somebody who's light skin, and I know my accent is not too thick. Except like, if you do hear me read out loud papers, and I'm like, speaking quick, it does come out. But you know, like, this does shape me as a scholar that I am. Because I also think of what it means to be an English professor when I learned English when I was 10. Or at least I started learning English when I was 10.

So like, in the back of my mind, even when I'm teaching, I'm like, I do wonder what the students are thinking of like, oh, why is he teaching us American literature? These are things that you think about. But also, I think this is also where the resistance comes in. Because I will go up and I will speak, and I will speak with my accent. And I will speak with these glossy mementos of what I know because I've lived it. And yeah,

but I, yeah. So I hope that somewhat answer[s] your question.

*D'Angelo*

Wow, I mean, I think it's given me this, this is depending. So depending on the person, depending on the situation, you know, folks be scared. Like, folks who don't look like you who don't have a body as you would often experience as you come off the gate. Kind of you bring that up? Sometimes they are like, oh, yeah. Okay, yeah, I don't want to, I don't, you know, I like the good white person, I want to be respectful. So just, I will co-sign whatever you need. So I've had that. And that being an affordance, I guess, is like, I get to do what I want. I think about my work or my chair.

And basically, like, she has no background in what I do specifically, and what I'm doing, she lets me do anything I want, like, I explained to her what I'm gonna do, and she even told me when I asked her to my chair, actually, if she thought our research, we're related enough to make sense. And she was like, I don't know if that matters, which I think says I don't, that doesn't matter. She said, My job is to get you graduated. Like that's, that's my role here. And so, if you need to provide your committee with others who are like content area experts, and we talked about committee makeup, but her philosophy around being a chair, it is my job is to push you to get to the end. So whatever you need to do whatever you need to fit what you need. And I do think part of that is from I think so I don't want to say it's a mixed bag, it's not 100%, so it's not black and white is gray. So I definitely believe that. She believed that.

But I fully believe that there were some, if I've mirrored her, and I had some identities that she had, she would feel a bit more forthcoming or pushy about how to do this and how to do that, suggesting sort of more specific thing, because right now she's hands off. But I know from other grads who have been also her, you know, like other advisees and people who've graduated, you know, they've had much more hands on. Also, maybe the research is more related, but again, there's no one in my department whose researcher, really... at the time when I started, right? I'll say that.

There have been people who have come in since then, and there were some people who left, right? Since when I came in and then I wanted to potentially work with them and then they left so I know that answers the question, but they assisted me in resisting. Yeah, so I guess it is helping. They see me like I'm Black clearly. Like I'm not ambiguous. And I also think my gender expression, right. [Presenting as a] man, people think, you know, there's a certain cachet that comes with that. And so when they, plus is that plus that they understand your intellect, and your confidence. So there's the layer, of course intersectionality, right? There's this layer that builds up to make it so then I can take certain [things and] I can leverage that.

And people kind of leave me alone. That's basically what I've experienced. They leave me alone. Because I think they know too, because I am too vocal. So I'm not like, Oh, leave me alone I am in a corner. I'm still pretty pointed. But I'm pretty intentional

about when I say things when I do stuff. And I think at least this is my, my instinct. And again, this is kind of the flip of being left alone.

And so now I'm like, is one thing if my eyesight over like away from you? But as soon as I turn that gaze or to you, like, oh, no, I don't want that heat. We don't want that. So the best thing to do is to like, let them do what they're doing over there, or not kind of get that over their? Yeah, so then I pick when I pick when I use that, like, I literally will decide, I did a class when [I was in] my history class, but my history professor and Rhetoric of History and there was a whole thing. It's an article I wrote about it. But it's, I've mentioned it that I literally mentioned there, like I was very vocal in that class, not happy. And then when it came to doing my final project, I said, this isn't really part of what he gave us some options. It wasn't really, it was loosely connected. But I thought, so I spelled it out for him or like, this is how I feel connected to the pilot project. This is how I want to do it. He said go do it. Fine like, hey, no, and also, I knew who I would working with it. So it's also you know, there's other things there too, of, you know, knowing your own positionality and where you're at, but yeah, I mean, use what you got to hand over dealt kind of thing. And I play the game to get what I want and what I need.

#### *Scholar K*

Yeah. I mean, I think you know, even if you're a, you know, scholar color like me, who's mixed race who's, you know, very light skinned? Who grew up around a lot of white people, so I speak white really, really well. You know, I think I learned very early on that the biggest way to survival was to build relationships with other scholars of color. I'm not, I'm not in grad school, I didn't have any indigenous colleagues. So I had white colleagues, Latinx colleagues, think some, maybe one or two Asian American colleagues. And, you know, trying to foster coalitions frankly, was the way for all of us to survive to identify the ways that divide and conquer politics were used against us, and particularly how that facilitates anti-Blackness. You know, so there's lots of things that light skinned Latinos can do that Black women can't. Because there's different punishments that get passed around, right? As just one example. And so I think, like, being aware of that building relationships, so as not to foster resentments, to be able to have really real conversations about, for example, you know, my participation in white supremacy. Jared Sexton calls all non-Black people of color to the junior partners to white supremacy. And there's a reason for that, right? Because the proximity away from blackness means proximity towards whiteness, and so what are you going to do with that relationship. So those were, you know, some of the most important relationships to me in grad school, and I, you know, especially in a kind of model where departments like to bring in, you know, one of this, one of that, one of that, and create competition and etcetera, I think it's important to really not do that to actively work against it.

#### *Monica*

Sure. Um, so I touched on this a little bit earlier. I'm pretty much all POC literary traditions in trans and disabled and queer studies, there's always a traditional personal writing, because when your own existence is written out of possibility, personal writing is

the way to write it back in, right. And it's not that I'm also a heavy critic of personal writing, I think personal stories are appropriated and misused and weaponized all of the time. But also, the sort of core foundation of that that is still very powerful is that the way you move through the world is embodied knowledge. It's not inherently resistive, especially not in the wrong hands, but it is insight into the limitations of those structures when you want when you as like a non-binary person walks into a binary space, you are encountering the boundaries of that, you know, gender division, right? And your lived experience is proof of how the gender system that we have renders particular identities inarticulable places those people into positions of precarity or danger. And done correctly, when we tell those stories well, and when people listen to them when they're told, we can change those systems.

So how my identities have assisted me in resisting harmful academic practices? First, I had to learn to trust those experiences, you know, academia, the world has a lot of gaslighting in general. But when I did learn to listen to them, I also learned that that is a site of knowledge. That's sort of what I was taught by like Anzaldua and Lorde and those other authors. I was citing that, that the reason the academy tells you those things that tells you that this is not knowledge that your experience is not knowledge, is because it's threatening, right? It's not because it's not powerful. It's because it's so powerful that it shakes the foundations of what this space is built on. And so being able to find that and hold on to it has been really important to me. And it's been a thing to return to particularly because like you said, imposter syndrome, like this space is made to make you feel small, and useless and helpless. And being able to return to interlocutors, communities who will remind you of the power of what you do, is sort of crucial to me. So I think first is communities who sort of not necessarily share my identities, but see them can honor them, can make space for them, can make me feel present in them. And then leaning into that, right that all these things that the outside world tells me to be ashamed of is actually a sign of power. And how do I use that well?

*Ruby*

The participants' testimonios exemplify how their QTBIPOC intersectional identities have navigated resistance practices differently as graduate students. From their responses, I began to understand that resistance practices looks very different amongst them. As Valentina, points out, in addition to QTBIPOC identity, citizenship became a real issue and the ways they resisted against an institution that required them to give their "alien registration number," they responded to their department and actively voiced their disdain on the inequitable and frightening practice to require this action. However, as William has shown, with their practice to voice and call-in other graduate students, the responses were negative and William's resistance

response was to pull away from institutional engagement and rely on their communities outside of the academy. From all these testimonios, I begin to understand that resistance looks completely different amongst these participants and how they negotiate institutional harm and oppression. The responses by participants are meaningful in a lot of ways, they continue to exemplify that resistance as a graduate student is not linear or similar, there are different ways to navigate higher education.

### Navigating Institutions as a Professional

**Question context:** the question listed below is the follow ups on the question after the previous question asked above. For this next question, I asked participants how they navigated resistance in their academic practices with their overlapping identities now in their current academic/industry positions. Here is the question:

*How has resistance as practice changed now that you are a faculty researcher?*

*William*

Yeah, I think one thing that's that I've done, especially because I'm teaching upper-level undergraduates, is recognizing those dynamics play out in my classroom, in giving support to the students of color. And I'm fortunate enough to teach at a university where the majority of the students are Black and Latinx students, like both of my classes are primarily Black and Latinx students, which is great. So I'm recognizing the way that the dynamics are playing out with the students. Like I'm deliberately pairing some students up with others, because I know like white woman X, who's already complained about me, is going to you know, steamroll her Afro Latino, or Afro Latina, like co-student that's in her group, which I've recognized immediately. And I was like, let me fix this. So I think understanding the way that, I as a student were wound up and the way that those enter the way that oppression manifests and like interpersonal stuff, I've been able to do that work for my students and just deliberately instead of just being like random groups, here you go, just like actively putting like the Latinos in the group together and the Black students together so that we didn't have to deal with white bullshit.

So yeah, in terms of like, the other faculty and stuff, just because it's only been really two months since actually like a little more than a month since I've started this job. I don't really know how that's played out yet. I mean, I've already been misnamed. But I think I've gotten so used to that by now that I'm like, okay, it's whatever, like you're learning like, I have to give some kind of grace to them. Versus being like, "you dumb

white bitch." Like just being like, oh, it's William or like, yeah, like the last part is like the sauce, but it's a different beginning. And then as you can just say, Will or William, you know? So, yeah, it's just been like hand holding a little bit, which is frustrating. And I know, I'm going to give that up at some point. But yeah...

*Scholar P*

I don't think it has changed for me. Um, one thing that has changed is I think I am able to practice more discernment around what is worthy of my time in terms of resistance and what's not, I think that was part of my sort of like, you know, growing up or evolving in relationship to the university, to universities period. Like, when I was in graduate school, my resistance was always like about, like, this is how you reform things. This is how you can change things. This is how you, and I think that those things are true. I'm a very optimistic person. And so, I do think that change is possible, I wouldn't do the work I do if I didn't think that. But I also feel like I've become, over the now what ... I started, it's been 20 years! I started grad school in 2002. So it's been 20 years over the 20 years of my sort of like postgraduate to faculty, you know, life, what I now know is I'm able to have discernment over things that are worth my time and things that are not people who are, who are going to be like, actually about it, and collaborate and people who are just talking.

And, you know, I've become unapologetic, right about not giving my time away, and giving my talent away to situations that really aren't about nothing, you know, so I, you know, I'll give you an example like so, you know, the endless diversity, equity, inclusion committees, right? That's never gonna, that's not for me. It's that I've been on committees that have actually done work, that is really good, that are adjacent to that. But by and large, my experience has been that the investment in those committees are not about effort. Those committees are actually about the performance, no, outside of them that they actually are only about effort. They're not about outcome, right? So the point is to always be saying, like we are doing something? Well, if that's the thing, the point of the committee, then you never actually do the thing, right? And I'm out, I'm about doing the thing. So I, so I think that's one thing that has changed for me, over my time as a resistance practice. I think a lot more about time. And I practice more discernment. And I'm more unapologetic about what I get, like, I don't feel like I have anything to prove to people. You know, where I was, when I was in grad school. I felt like I had something to prove. If I haven't, if I was about it, then I had to constantly show up for all the things. And what I realized was like, No, this is actually exhausting. Right? This is not in this, this actually isn't what I'm here to do. You know, so, yeah.

*Valentina*

Um, yeah, and, you know, resistance. I also think it comes with coalition, right? So, as I mentioned, my department's like, going through curriculum changes right now. And one of my colleagues who got hired at the same time I did, you know, we always talk about how interesting it is that they hired somebody for, like Black literature and culture and Latinx literature and culture at the same time, but they're in like, systems set,

you know, do what does it mean to support a faculty have a new faculty of color, right? Like, there has been little, almost, like no mentorship from the department.

But, um, you know, in, like, they brought up that the current like that Black studies have a very small space in our department. And what that means is that there's only one class that focuses on Black literature and culture, anything. And they have like a really weird title. It's like, Africa, I forget what it was. But it was like the African American it had, it was a weird title. And she's like, I want to put the word Black in it. And she's like, let's call a Black literature in the like, oh, it was like, African American literature in the Americas. I think that was the official title. And she's like, can I just call it Black literature? Because she's, and you know, in a faculty meeting, they were like, you know, Blackness is not limited to the United States. Blackness reaches across the hemisphere and across the globe.

So they were like, can we do this? And, you know, this is where the coalition comes in. Because I noticed that the faculty that immediately, like on the Zoom chat, were like, yeah, we need to do this, there were a lot of women of color, even the white woman and the department, me included. We were like, yeah, we need to change this. And there was some hesitation over, because, you know, like, changing course titles is really hard. But all of us were like, we can at least try like we're not going to be like no, because, oh, we might not get approved, it's like at least try, particularly for classes that are worth it. Because as I mentioned, we are in a, at least for me and my colleagues, we are in Texas. So the work we do, we're also being very purposeful, because we know that at least the spaces for ethnic studies, and queer and trans studies within our English department is very limited. And that means not even having a class on queer and trans text on the books until the future which is coming. But you know, resistance also looks like doing coalition. And I think resistance also looks at us in checking in with my colleagues.

And I think the beauty, and I'll go back to kind of your question about my experiences as a grad student. You know, a lot of the grad students of color and me, we felt that a lot of us were going through similar things in our respective departments. And at one point, we were like, why don't we create a coalition? So I work with some grad students and [a colleague] was one of them. And we found that the grad students of color collective at the University of Arizona, I think it died down. But for a little while I was there, it was alive. But we did this because we wanted to be there for each other when shit happens. The shit always happens in academic departments.

And you know, like, you lived it, but shit always happens in academic departments. And nobody speaks for us. Like usually, I think the people that speak the most progressives are usually tenure track faculty, not full professors. And we did this because when things would happen, so in the Black Lives Matter, we write letters from a university, there was a really racist incident where the university president sided with Border Patrol because Border Patrol would come. The University of Arizona works with Border Patrol a lot in terms of research for technology for border surveillance, and they brought in border patrol to campus. And then there were two Latina students who literally



kicked them out. They were like “*afuera ICE, afuera ICE!*”<sup>9</sup> And you know, they left because the students were quite literally using their bodies to protest their presence. And the university sided with Border Patrol. So when things like this will happen are in and our university president also mentioned some like Native Heritage. Yeah, he's off like that precedent. But he did an Elizabeth Warren.<sup>10</sup>

But, you know, like when these things would happen, we will, like, create letters, will get done. Like we need to write letters to show not only your support, but also make demands for a university. And we did this just because we wanted to make sure if anything happens, we're going to show up for that student, because we just wanted, we knew that there's strength in numbers. So we created the graduate students of color collective, just kind of like a safe space. But just to make sure, like, if anything goes down, at least somebody's going to care, somebody's going to show up. And I mentioned the collective because even now, as faculty, it's something that I kind of miss. And I know, like, in my university, there's like a, there's like a faculty of color groups. But it seems, um, I don't know, like, you know, when a group has like, a political edge, and when it doesn't, and this seems more like a social thing, which is fine, I think it's needed too, right? Um, but it's something that I kind of miss as a faculty.

And perhaps it's something that right now I'm like, really busy and tired. But perhaps in the future, it's something I would like to create, kind of like a more collective group, for faculty of color to show up for each other when things happen, because like I mentioned, things happen in every department sadly. And the people that are going to show up for you, is uhm, your communities. So it's something that as faculty, I think, creating these spaces of resistance.

So it's something that I hope to do. But it's interesting that you know, when you're in the tenure track, the publisher perish, mindset really gets to you. So sometimes I wonder if these systems are also created, so that we don't have time to create our collective spaces of resistance, because the university demands so much from us. It's like a very toxic relationship and abusive relationship that we have. But I also wonder if part of the reason for these structures is because the university doesn't want us to be well enough to create these collective spaces of resistance.

*D'Angelo*

Yes. So I think it taught me a lot about how to watch out for people who want to use you as their, like. When I was younger, maybe in my master's program. Specifically, in undergrad for sure, undergrad. They see you, they see what you look like, they see what you're doing and see how you are. Oh, look, diversity, we love diversity. That's what we want, right? And so, you get put on different committees, intern positions, and

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<sup>9</sup> Translation: they were like, Immigration and Customs Enforcement outside, Immigration and Customs Enforcement outside!

<sup>10</sup> References former presidential running candidate and Senator Elizabeth Warren and the controversy surrounding her indigenous identity, who received backlash by the nation and indigenous communities for identifying as indigenous during her law profession.

all these things. When I came into my job a year ago, my boss, who is a colleague, who dated a friend from grad school— that's my friend from my MA program, my new boss, that is his wife. So we know each other, we are cool, we are chill, ya know, we are cool. I won't call us friends, but we are cool. She thought I would be good, and I explained my research to you, and I explained it to her, she said, you would be perfect for our DEI initiative, council, whatever. And I said, actually, no, I wouldn't.

And you know, I think if I was at a different part of stage in my life I would have felt pressure to do that. Hey, I got this new job in industry; I'm switching career, it happened very fast. I wasn't like applying to a bunch of stuff. He reached out to me so I thought it'd be a good fit for him to make sure to submit your material. I put together a website over a weekend and submitted it, they said it was great, they said they loved it. My resume was still a very academic resume and she even told me later on like they were having trouble like, navigating it. I just didn't have time to like, rework it to like an industry resume, [the job ad] was closing in like three days and [they said,] I need you to apply like, right now.

But like with all that, you know, I made a move forward to feel some pressure to acquiesce, because although you gave me the opportunity da da da, but it's not worth it. The cost of doing that is way too high. The cost is higher than me getting this job. Thank you. I appreciate, you know, the hook up so to speak, but I also have to like, you know, I'm different. I was not given the job, I had to have the skill set, I came in and showed out, which I think also is part of my literacies of being a Black person and growing up and being queer, right? And to come out a certain way, I gotta come up with show out and be. Yeahhh.

So I think that one instance where I learned how to say no, basically what that sums up to be, and be like, actually, I need to... and, I can strategically I didn't say," I ain't do that DEI shit, that shit is bullshit." I did not come in, guns blazing. I said I need to focus on learning my job as a new industry person. I use the obvious ones that maybe somebody who does not have this body. And it made sense.

But yeah, this is the person coming in that's new to their role to industry, right? I wasn't going to stress myself out learning a new role, learning a new industry, and learning a new company. Oh no, I'm probably a little bit busy. So maybe taking on a DEI initiative isn't the best thing for me to do right now. Maybe it should be someone who's already on the team that does it, or somebody else is more appropriate. Even though I'm now the only Black person on my team. And there's ten people, ten or eleven people plus my manager on my team. There's five of us who are people of color. And only like, three of us are visibly people of color. You know, so I'm the only Black person.

So in my department is only three Black people. In total out of the fifty. So they're looking at us, right? DEI folks, yeah, Black person, let's grab you. So you know, but there have been moments where I've spoken up about using my background, or my knowledge is to build that because I do believe like, this is my community in my workspace, I want to make it better. But I cannot carry this on my back. There's been a

couple of times when I've been in group conversations, or educational moments where I have spoken up for the benefit of the group. So I definitely believe in that. But yeah, I think that's how that's moved into my now Industry work.

*Scholar K*

You know, ever, if you're lucky, and you land in a tenure track position, and then you end up getting tenure, and then eventually end up getting promoted. And those are all big ifs, right? Because the way the academy is, right now, there's, there's not those guarantees. But if you are lucky, like I have been, then every step of the way, you actually gain power. You gain job security, you gain institutional knowledge, you gain credibility, you gain respect, you gain access to additional resources. And so, it's, you know, really easy to just get very comfortable with that power. And just enjoy it and not really worry about anybody else.

I've tried very actively not to do that, of course, you could speak to students in my department or the faculty, my department, and they can tell you whether that's true or not. But I still really focus on building coalitions trying to foster a climate where power dynamics can be discussed and addressed. You know, where people have an understanding of their place within the institution, structurally. And what are their resources that they can get access to, to intervene in that, should they want to so I guess, you know, in that way, I try to continue to do a little bit of the same thing, but with more power in you know, I think the research part of that, I mean, it gets easier too, you get better at it. You know, publishers you're on editorial boards, you've read a ton of stuff, so you know what good scholarship looks like and yeah, I don't know if that answers your question.

*Monica*

Yeah, and I'm sure this day will come for you not too, not too far in the future, which I'm excited about. So, as you know, coming up to the end of your PhD time, at every point in time in this journey, you're kind of figuring it out as you go, right? Particularly those of us taking paths that you know, this space was not made for, we are literally making our own way. Which means that a lot of the time you still feel like you are floundering and that you're just sort of like, you know, making things up as you go, grasping at whatever works, learning along the way, constantly a student.

But one thing that I do, keep in mind, this was actually written by Ryan Skinnells, on his blog, but it's stuck with me about not being an accidental monster. So something I think about a lot in academia is that a lot of academics, I mean, just in general, were not necessarily the most popular or influential people. At the end of the day, our interests and specializations are pretty niche, a lot of us are used to feeling marginalized, and in faces of marginalized scholars even more so. But what it leads to, and you can see this in a lot of feminist spaces, for example, is folks who have been historically on the defensive, don't necessarily recognize when they have moved to a position of more power, and end up wielding that defensive posture in a way that hurts people with less power in a way

that hurts people that should have been their allies or their communities. So at every point in time, I'm trying to keep in mind, sort of what have I attained? What resources do I have access to? And how do I be as you know, generous, as, as open as possible with those resources.

And sometimes that means that I get myself in positions where I'm screwed over or scammed or hurt. And I would rather make that mistake than the one where I assume ill will and end up, you know, hurting someone who's like, a younger version of me. So I guess the resistance practice that has changed is just sort of awareness of I mean, I'm still pre-tenure I'm still me, whatever. But awareness of as I move into positions with more stability, what I do in those spaces, and making sure that I am not what Ryan calls an accidental monster, that I am not so caught up in self-protection that I do not create space for others, that I ended up, you know, severing bonds before they're able to form that sort of stuff.

### *Ruby*

The testimonios about navigating higher education and the one participant on industry highlights the resistance practices are completely different compared to their graduate experiences. For some takeaways, William brings attention to how this resistance practice appears in their classrooms, resisting to place students with potential white students who may cause harm on BIPOC students. However, as I began to listen to their testimonios, I began to understand that resisting to adhere to cistematic tendencies that continue to marginalize QTBIPOC scholars, colleagues, and students. As Valentina states, it meant for them to advocate and coalitionally work with their Black colleague to support them through curriculum change and design to advocate for that faculty's community. What was meaningful and threaded in this conversation is Monica's statement about not becoming an accidental monster; they continued to practice reflexivity by reflecting on their own experiences and position and determine not to leverage their power as faculty to marginalize students, colleagues, and communities. Meaning, they were resistant and willing to allow them to hurt themselves by not hurting others. This truly showed that their critical embodiment and their attunement to community reflected a humility

approach. Because as the scholars' testimonios illustrate, they understand the academy can be a violent and turbulent space.

### Making Sense: Constellating Relationality Amongst QTBIPOC Participants

The testimonios of these participants highlighted the colonizing and imperialist desires enacted by institutions (la paperson, 2017), while also pointing out the strategical, critical, and rhetorical ways QTBIPOC individuals resist harmful scholarly practices enacted by complex organizations as graduate students to now working professionals. Although this chapter highlighted resistance practices from these QTBIPOC individuals as graduate students and now working professionals, the resistance practices enacted working in both professions (graduate school and the work is a job) signals how they individually enacted in their occupational careers now. For instance, *William* imagines resistance as an opportunity to generously provide support to students of color as those resources and support were not afforded to them; *Scholar P* discusses resistance as practicing more discernment by not giving their time away for things that do not mean nothing; *Valentina* asserts that resistance represents a coalitional practice that works together and collectively with multi-marginalized colleagues to address cistematic inequalities within colonizing organizations; *D'Angelo* views resistance about doing the thing, setting boundaries by not adhering to the pressures to "invest" in programmatic areas when are harm can be done to our bodies; *Scholar K* views resistance also as a coalitional practice, especially by understanding institutional power and distributing resources to those with less power, which reflects a communal practice to support emerging scholars/practitioners who are entering hostile environments; and *Monica* makes a significant point about the strategic ways they jeopardize their own position and privileges in the ways they negotiate power by not becoming an

“accidental monster.” Constellating these various ideas of resistance sets the tone for how these practitioners mobilize this work within their scholarly practices.

Although the participants' ways of resistance being enacted personally are important, understanding how to enact QTBIPOC resistance within scholarly practices is imperative to begin creating institutional and cistematic change to support students and scholars. The conversations amongst these scholars highlighted three critical pain points that must be considered to create equitable and mindful spaces for emerging and established QTBIPOC scholars, particularly around the areas in pedagogy, research, and community engagement.

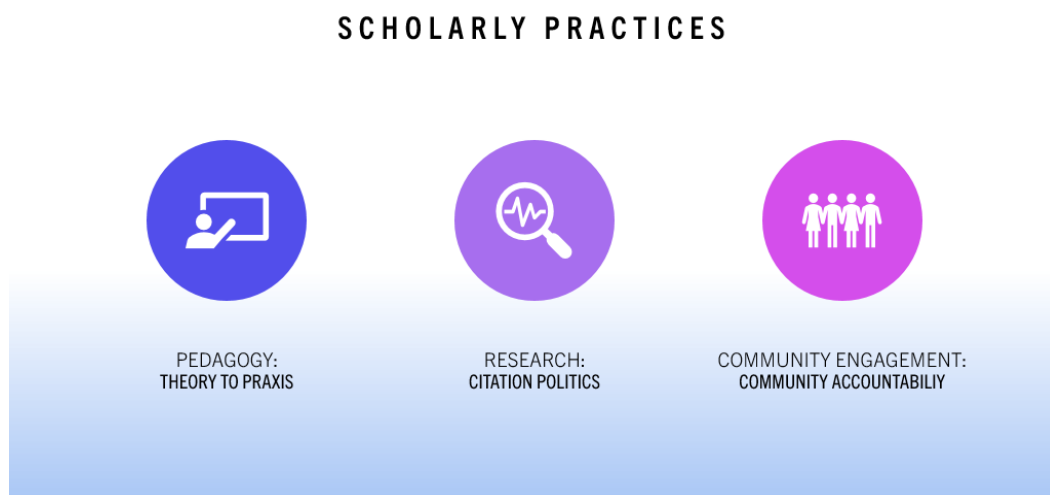


Figure 2: Pedagogy, Research, and Community Engagement Revisited

As seen in figure 2 when compared to figure 1, the addition to *Pedagogy*: with *Theory to Practice*, *Research*: with *Citation Politics*, and *Community Engagement*: with *Community Accountability* signifies how these participants view the ways in which we can implement practices now. These are the three critical ways that were implicitly mentioned by these scholars to the ways in which individuals can implement change in their pedagogy, research, and community engagement:

- 1.) Learning and leading with intersectional epistemologies as a critical approach to navigate institutional oppression.
- 2.) Reflecting on our positions and privileges and knowing how to address power for the betterment of disempowered community members.
- 3.) Moving away from effort and towards ***Doing***: enacting change through praxis.

Although participants did not directly verbalize these sentiments, their collective perspectives, ways of knowing, and who they learned from signify how they navigate higher education and their professional endeavors.

Pedagogically, the scholars all collectively disclosed what critical epistemologies they learned from and have shaped their academic experiences. For instance, participants' testimonios showed that learning from critical and intersectional scholars (Black, Chicanx, Asian, and Indigenous feminism, queer, and transgender perspectives) showcases how those knowledges have guided them to navigate this complex world rooted in white supremacy. In considering pedagogy, it is imperative to include these perspectives, voices, and stories for several reasons: 1) to create space for QTBIPOC students to see their communities within academic spaces; 2) to lead with epistemologies who have and continue to address collective organizing through cultural movements, and 3) to learn from these scholars create assignments that create actionable and tangible work to support communities outside higher education. These contributions by participants provide a blueprint where our pedagogy can move considering these perspectives and mobilizing towards creating change through the incorporation of these perspectives and assignments that are designed for change.

Regarding research, the participants make it clear that our research should always include epistemologies that are often excluded from research. Although all participants have vocalized

who they have learned from, they mention that building from the existing scholars who have historically done this work is imperative. In many ways, this enactment of doing represents citation politics. As this scholar writes, citation politics is one approach, but continuously integrating intersectional perspectives in navigating teaching and administration is also significantly important. Additionally, in connection with community engagement, the QTBIPOC participants make it clear: the community does not need engagement, they need accountability. The collective responses by the participants have all signified that higher education, the academy/university, is an institution that tends to want to hear our stories and not do work to support multi-marginalized identities.

When engaging with QTBIPOC communities outside the confines of higher education, we must be mindful to work along with them. Additionally, in relation to community engagement, we must continue to think about not being engaged with communities but being accountable. I am reminded by this when Valentina spoke about her fellow colleagues who warned other students by shouting: “*afuera ICE, afuera ICE!*”<sup>11</sup> Valentia’s co-conspirators did not stop and ask whether students were undocumented, they did not assume whether there was undocumented students, they simply warned their fellow communities because Immigration and Customs Enforcement is an agency that has violently treated those who are not considered “citizens,” whatever that means. Thus, as we think and work within the confounds of these three scholarly practices, it is imperative that we follow the three critical perspectives the scholars encourage us to consider and the ways we can move forward within higher education. As a field, we must remain accountable to our communities in our research, teaching, and community service.

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<sup>11</sup> Translation: Immigration and Customs Enforcement outside, Immigration and Customs Enforcement outside!



## So What? Why Does This Matter?

Overall, this chapter seeks to showcase that testimonios are a cultural practice that allows participants to have agency and autonomy to describe navigating harmful practices that impact their lives and their communities, which are practices that are needed and useful in rhetorical practice and User Experience Design. Additionally, this chapter does the double work of not only informing audiences about the real consequences of QTBIPOC individuals engaging with these harmful institutions, but will also provide those who are QTBIPOC an opportunity to understand that they are not alone. Furthermore, I imagine this chapter will provide individuals who are a part of my community ways to address and resist institutional oppression, and understanding approaches to subvert harmful institutional practices that impact their lives. And drawing from Scholar P, this work is not about effort. This work is about doing the thing. In order to begin creating institutional change, in order to enhance our scholarly practices, and in order to protect ourselves, we must be willing to understand our positions and privileges and how we wield power.

### Chapter 3:

#### Resistance as Practice: A Rhetorical, Decolonial, and Cultural Technology

You all better quiet down! I've been trying to get up here all day for your gay brothers and your gay sisters in jail that write me every motherfucking week and ask for your help, and you all don't do a goddamn thing for them! Have you ever been beaten up and raped in jail? Now think about it. They've been beaten up and raped after they've had to spend much of their money in jail to get their self home and to try to get their sex changes. The women have tried to fight for their sex changes or to become women of the Women's Liberation and they write STAR, not to the women's groups, they do not write to men, they write STAR because we're trying to do something for them.

I have been to jail. I have been raped, and beaten. Many times. By men, heterosexual men that do not belong in the homosexual shelter. But, do you do anything for me? No. You tell me to go and hide my tail between my legs. I will not put up with this shit. I have been beaten. I have had my nose broken. I have been thrown in jail. I have lost my job. I have lost my apartment for gay liberation and you all treat me this way? What the fuck's wrong with you all? Think about that!

- *Sylvia Rivera*, (LoveTapesCollective, 2019)

In the above epigraph, Sylvia Rivera's testimonio represents an embodied and culturally informed practice that refuses to acquiesce against dominant discourses that neglect to hear experiences of those who have had to often navigate a harmful world. In her 1973 speech, Rivera vocalizes her distaste to a predominantly white group of gay men and lesbian women, advocating about the need for the LGBTQ+ community to support transgender women. As she yells and urges her audience after positioning herself with examples, she screams, "I have lost my apartment for gay liberation and you all treat me this way? What the fuck's wrong with you all? Think about that!" (LoveTapesCollective, 2019, 3:28). Gabby Benavente and Jules Gill-Peterson (2019) have situated Rivera's testimonio as anger over the queer exclusionary practices enacted by transphobia. As Benavente and Gill-Peterson write, "Rivera expressed righteous anger in 1973 over these experiences, frustrated by a nascent queer rights movement that was building momentum from the activism of black trans and trans women of color but did not

actually fight for their lives, particularly in these most violent circumstances” (26). This active embodied moment ~~presented~~ by Rivera signifies the historical tendencies of social movements to disempower transgender women of color. Although the authors note the anger Rivera manifested in her speech, Benavente and Gill-Peterson do articulate that “Rivera shows us that utilizing anger as a tool for action is not exclusive to the cisgender women of color feminisms of our contemporary moment, but that anger has a home in the long-standing activism of trans women of color” (27). This critical acknowledgement reflects multi-marginalized bodies—queer and transgender bodies—enacting praxis historically as well as intersectional feminist. Through a person’s verbalized truth (testimonios, stories, narratives), Rivera for example, embodies and argues against dominant discourses to highlight cistematic oppression that impacts devalued communities.

Additionally, moments of testifying like Rivera’s are representative of resistance practices; these stories and experiences shape our lived experiences and individuals use these culturally informed stories as a technology which can mediate a practice to address cistematic harm and oppression. As Angela Haas (2012) has informed scholars in both rhetoric and technical and professional communication, historical perceived notions on “technology as a thing has affordances and limits” (p. 289). Particularly, scholars continue to think of technologies as a device or physical thing, but Haas informs scholars to think more critically on what constitutes as a technology. More importantly, Haas highlights that technologies can be representative of colonizing desires that “have been unequally delegated and prescribed along gender, ethnic, class, and ability lines” (p. 291). Meaning, “technology is not just what does the work, it is the work—and that work relies on an ongoing relationship between bodies and things” (p. 291). Thus, stories represent a significant technology that can attend to colonizing and imperialist

desires, a tool and method that acts a way to showcase an individual and their communities' harm enacted by white supremacy as a means of survival. More importantly, I want to continue to build with the theme of this chapter by building from Angela Has (2012), we need to disrupt the ideas of what constitutes as a technology. The testimonios, stories, narratives, and suggestions from participants are technology, especially as these discourses provide a method on how to navigate higher education.

As scholars across the field of rhetoric and writing studies and technical and professional communication have noted, there are culturally informed approaches to research that amplifies communities impacted by colonization that are not Westernized. For instance, Angela Haas (2007) discussed the theory and practice of Wampum as an American Indian traditional multimedia practice. As Haas writes, she provides a counterstory about the Westernized claims to hypertext and media and emphasizes that “wampum belts have extended human memories of inherited knowledges through interconnected, nonlinear designs and associative storage and retrieval methods long before the "discovery" of Western hypertext” (p. 77). Additionally, Haas also highlights that “wampum is a living rhetoric that communicates a mutual relationship between two or more parties, despite the failure of one of those parties to live up to that promise” (p. 80). Meaning, the communicate and hold purpose even though they are non-western approaches to design and communication. Wampum as a technology also “signify a surviving intellectual tradition that communicates living stories of a living culture” (p. 92). Angela Haas' work reinforces that non-western approaches to design and research are valuable and hold significant transitional power through performance and memory. In consideration to testimonios, stories, and narratives, they can also mediate into a technology as both performance and cultural memory as enactment of survival. Particularly, sharing our stories, narratives, and truths is a

vulnerability that multi-marginalized individuals often have to use to be heard and seen in white-centered or white-dominant spaces. Moreover, QTBIPOC individuals use testimonios to address white supremacy (as seen by Rivera) to showcase why particular bodies are often ignored and devalued to their communities to navigate harmful and oppressive spaces.

Participant Valentina has also shown that stories, narratives, and testimonios can be used for extraction and other purposes. For example, Valentina has asserted that there are individuals who have told them that their “story is going to sell so well with our donors” (Valentina, personal communication, August 15, 2022.) as their lived experiences are deemed worthy by colonizing and imperialist desires.<sup>12</sup> This sentiment highlights how some see stories as only worthy when monetary means can be used as a gain to support an institution. In addition to Valentina, Monica describes stories as a critical resistance practice against institutions and are often excluded because our stories hold power. As Monica states, they assert that institutions believe “that your experience is not knowledge because it's threatening, right? It's not because it's not powerful. It's because it's so powerful that it shakes the foundations of what this space is built on” (Monica, personal communication, August 8, 2022.). Stories as a culturally informed technological approach grounded from lived experiences, which showcases how our perspectives hold so much value that many perceive these types of perspectives as threatening.

This chapter does two things: 1) it highlights how participants view their resistance practices means to them and how emergent and existing scholars can use these types of practices on their own; and 2) it encourages the need to value stories, narratives, and testimonios in both rhetoric and writing studies and technical and professional communication. As noted in chapter

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<sup>12</sup> This harmful engagement is the norm for many QTBIPOC and marginalized bodies when our stories are often sensationalized or extracted for the academy by “those who want to monetary support us.” As Valentina mentions, our forced responses are often thank you. But, as Valentina states, “I wanted to say, fuck you” (Valentina, personal communication, August 15, 2022.).

2, the responses by participants have not been edited for clarity or to fit in standardized English, participants wholisitic selves are embodied in these responses. Additionally, after their testimonios on resistance as practice, I will elaborate into why these approaches are integral for both rhetoric and writing studies and technical and professional communication and the need to value stories, narratives, and testimonios as a critical point to addressing institutional harm grounded in white supremacy which represents a technology of survival, amplification, and liberation of ignored populations.

### Resistance as Practice: Towards Addressing Cistematic Harm

Similarly to Chapter 2, this chapter is organized in a particular way to showcase participants' testimonios wholistically. The general structure for this section follows these four particular points: 1) a brief written statement that explains the importance and relevance about the questions asked; 2) the question that was asked to participants; 3) the participants transcribed responses to the question; and 4) my response/making sense of participants response to engage in the co-creational practice with my participants. The design of this section will help illustrate the general structure and also contribute to co-creational practices that I have set out to do.

**Question context:** this question derives from the first interview. Although the second interview questions will be followed, these questions about resistance as practice is central overall to see how participants' testimonios highlights how they enact this approach in their lives. Here is the question:

*In discussing resistance as informed through your overlapping identities, can you tell me what resistance means to you as a practice personally and professionally?*

*William*

Yeah, I think resistance to me is recognizing those moments, those spaces for slippage is of anti-colonial intention, and I know you cannot decolonize university. But

decolonization is an entirely different conversation to anti-colonial action, versus recognizing how these systems of oppression manifest through the academy as a system, and in saying, I can't let that continue. So learning how to funnel resources, planning a class so that way, the students of color primarily succeed are able to flourish and not have to deal with white bullshit, basically. And just researching in a particular way that foregrounds my community commitments, I think, is my active resistance. Because too, particularly as a tenure track, Professor, so much of the tenure track is built on quick scholarship, and quick engagement, like here's a community project, here's some quick publications, without the time and space needed to do that work ethically.

And responsibly, it would say, and, again, I got lucky in that my publications are coming from a dissertation project, which came from my committee allowing me to do certain things. So I don't have to play catch up in these ways. So I would say that's, that's like my active resistance is just kind of going my own way in academia and hoping that it works out because we'll see if I get tenure in five years, or whatever. So yeah.

*Scholar P*

Yeah, I would say for me, resistance is the practice of freedom. Right. Alexis Pauline Gumbs says in her book, *M Archive*, that freedom is not a secret. It's a practice, right? So people often talk about freedom and being free is something that's like, you know, like, how, like, how do you do it and something that we have to figure it out. And what she's basically saying is like, you don't have to figure it out, you just have to start doing it. Right? So for me, resist resistance. You know, means to me, both personally and professionally, the practice of my freedom.

Any time where I feel like I cannot be fully who I am. If I'm coming from a place of fear, around my identities around, you know, hierarchical structures and things within the university setting. I know it's an opportunity for me to get free. And I treated that way. My next step, the next decision I make is the difference between me practicing my freedom and not, right? So that's what that's what it is for me. And I look at every decision I have to make, now as an administrator, right? As a, you know, teacher educator, as a scholar, as a colleague As a mentor, as a mentee, right, like, you know, every aspect of my job are really, in many ways a training ground for my freedom. And I just am very clear about that, and gentle with myself through that. It actually makes things I think, feel. Now I will say easier, but like, I recognize it for what it is, right that like I'm I'm, I'm being given opportunities to practice the thing that I say that I value, which is, you know, my freedom as a person and as an as an as an intellectual and as a teacher.

*Valentina*

Can I talk about a diva that I love?

*Ruby:*

Absolutely.

*Valentina:*

Okay, because she's a person I go to when I think of resistance, and it is the trans Latina activist Jennicet Gutiérrez and she, um, interrupted Barack Obama at a White House pride reception in 2015, when he was celebrating the progress of the LGBT community under his leadership, and during his speech, she interrupted him at the White House reception, and she said things like President Obama release all LGBTQ people from the tension. President Obama, I am a trans woman, I'm tired of the abuse and tired of the violence. And I've, what it's like the videos on YouTube of her doing this, and a lot of white gay media and media at large call, they're a heckler. And at this reception, like, it was mainly white men, I think I saw like a few brown and black people within the audience.

Um, but it was, but I will argue that even they perform white affect, in the sense that they also booed and shamed her instead of listening to her. And one of her main tag lines that she's known as she says, "my existence is resistance." Because I think of you know, what does it mean for an undocumented trans Latina woman, to interrupt the President of the United States, who was seen as quote unquote, progressive, but who was also known as deporter In Chief.

So when I think of like, what does it mean to resist, it means resisting at all stakes, it means, you know, sometimes it means putting your body on the line. Other times, it means doing the work of what it means to listen, to view the differences in the humanity of somebody else. And to create these coalitions to support people, I also view this as another form of resistance. For me, at least in my first year, on the tenure track, resistance meant going up against the full, what full professor white, white men who were doing bro thing, and supporting each other, and speaking up against them. And also speaking up for the work that I came here to do, and not backing down. And, at least for me, when I think of what resistance means, it means considering the political stakes of what we do, and doing the work just because it really matters, and it's needed at this time.

But for me, when I think of resistance, like I, my mind immediately goes to Jennicet Gutiérrez, just because I think of like the power of what did it mean to interrupt the President of the United States, and then also be called a heckler even by dominant queer communities? Yeah, and what does it mean to again, to think of my existence as resistance? How the bodies of and I will argue here, particularly trans women of color, who are, who are a group that is one of the most marginalized in our country, and in the world, particularly in terms of violence, like even killings, I think of what does it mean to think of the bodies of women like Jennicet for their own bodies to be resistance? And also, what does it mean to not view them as like, people who have no agency, because even in a in a space of little agency, they resist.

*D'Angelo*

I can articulate again, it's just strategy. Strategy. All strategy. What do you want? How do you get it? What is the card with the hand you have been dealt? What are the



pieces on the board? That's literally it. And, you know, art and I think the work for me is figuring out what the pieces are. And what the cards I have... so because it's not just like, screw it I have my identity being queer being black? Being, you know, whatever. Those are cards, those are pieces, but even my own like, mental state, my own what am I have to cope with? Just like, even how I process information, like it's all that stuff comes in, like, like, a personality, even. Those are also cards. Ok so there are being strategic. And like, it's just, it's a lot of work, work, work, work. It is exhausting. But it's like, it is either that, or I could, again these are the goals I want. It's what I want from my life. So it's like, what's the alternative? Just not exist? I don't know.

And part of the strategy is strategic break, right? I'm not saying like work isn't like the work of saying I'm gonna be away from this. I'm taking break and recharging at work too. Because you have to plan that out versus just kind of like nothing just come. There's nothing in this body. These are, these are my experiences, I can't just exist in the world and have things just come to me. Right? You have to plan it to be strategic, including rest.

*Scholar K*

Yeah, I mean, you know, I think, I can't think right without a, you know, queer Chicana consciousness, right? I can't think without having grown up, working class poor, I can't. You know, I can't think also without the skin privilege I have without the fact that I'm currently not disabled. You know, all these kind of things that constitute our identity. And so you can't think outside of who you are. But what you can do is work hard to be able to try to do that. And so on the one hand, so what does that mean for me, that means really deeply understanding settler colonialism and indigeneity really deeply understanding Black social thought, Black political thought, so that I understand my implication in the power structure that exists in racial capitalism instead of settler colonialism, right.

And so I'm compelled to do that because of my you know, Q-POC consciousness, because of my working class background. And so on the one hand is really taking it to educate ourselves and then on the other hand, is to being prepared to intervene. Knowing when to pick your battles, but being prepared to intervene in ways that disrupt power disrupt structures. And I think that's constant work. And that's kind of I think, I think of that as both kind of my personal and professional task.

*Monica*

Yeah, so, personally, and this is the thing I do less well, quite poorly, if you ask my partner is not to measure myself by the job. It's an all-consuming job. And it's very hard to sort of, especially pre tenure, especially as a grad student, when the stakes are so high, and it feels like you might lose that stability at any point in time, it's really hard not to let that, you know, that fear drive you that's kind of the role of that fear, unfortunately, by design, but for as much as I can. Trying to articulate who I am as a person beyond, you know, [Monica] in the field. And I think that's, you know, healthy for all of us to

figure that out, and sort of who I am, and have people who value you, not for what you write, but like all of my closest friends in the field. I love their work. I think they're brilliant, but I also would love them just as much if they did not write anything ever again, you know. And having those people is really grounding, in terms of personally.

And in terms of professionally. I had a real light bulb moment with the book project when I read Audra Simpson and Eve Tuck and Wayne Yang's work on refusal.<sup>13</sup> They're talking in the in about ethnography, particularly, but it's more helpful, it's helpful, more broadly thinking through people who work with communities that are meaningful with communities that are rightly suspicious of academic institutions, and they're working in the context of decoloniality but thinking through, there are things that the Academy has not earned, there are things there are moments when it is more productive, to tell the academy that then to actually show them what they expect to see. Right?

So for me in the context of like, trans queer people of color, there are moments of like, you know, rejection and isolation and sorrow and, you know, queer sadness that you anticipate and that you know, and that I don't need to tell you about because you know, and it's actually much more useful for me to point to that, right? Like, why is this the only story that you know about me and the one that you expect to hear from me, then for me to actually just tell you it? And so, I really love that as a way to think through how do I do this research responsibly, right? Like, if I'm talking about a harm, or if I'm exposing the harm? Who does it serve? Right? And what purpose does it serve? And if it doesn't serve a purpose, or if it just perpetuates that harm? What else can I do around this information that actually creates the critique or the intervention that I'm trying to make?

### *Ruby*

The testimonios illustrate how resistance both personally and professionally are different. From the responses, I interpret that resistance is situational, it can appear in classrooms, the way QTBIPOC individuals navigate spaces, and practicing one's freedom by engaging in institutional spaces that are fitting for them. I begin to understand that resistance is a way to make sure we remain safe while protecting ourselves and others, while also looking out for those who may encounter or face similar institutional harm and oppression. These perspectives are meaningful as the participants highlight how resistance looks differently, it's a strategy as D'Angelo states to make sure we can get what we want and need within our personal and professional endeavors.

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<sup>13</sup> Monica refers to Eve Tuck and Wayne Yang's article "Unbecoming Claims: Pedagogies of Refusal in Qualitative Research."

## Resistance As Practice: Suggestions for Existing and Emergent Scholars

**Question context:** this question derives from the second interview. Additionally, this is not the first question asked and represents the fourth one. However, this question is integral to following the thematic theme of resistance from moving away from how participants can do this work both personally and professionally and into how to support emerging scholars. Here is the question:

*Can you describe how we can properly support emerging (students) and existing scholars to enact resistance in research, teaching, and community work?*

*William*

Yeah, I would say it's incumbent on the established scholars, who not to shit on anybody, but like who've done the work already, and sometimes more not need to get out of the way. Particularly once you're tenured, I mean, tenure and in and of itself, won't be very, like men given much protection for very much longer if a lot of GOP legislators have their way. But yeah, I would say it's incumbent on them to, for one, hopefully, they will have made those material conditions more receptive to that kind of work that upcoming scholars would want to do.

But also, they're able to speak the double language of the university to say, well attended to the University of Michigan, here's why we want to do these social justice moves, versus just saying it's a good idea to just not be terrible people, essentially. Right?

So yeah, I would say that's one thing, like shut up and get out of the way, because it's very much like going back to the idea of identity politics, like the way that it's been captured. I think that that falls within that of like, listening to those most effective, but it's also just like, being highly aware again, of those material conditions.

And then saying, okay, here's what we've done so far. Here's the space. That's the space for slippage, which is an idea from Maria Novotny, like rhetorical slippage,<sup>14</sup> where you recognize the work that's happened, where's that moment where I as a person can go in and do good work now. And then locating those moments and spotlighting it to those students, or to the upcoming students and scholars and saying, Hey, here's a space for you to do that. I've done the work already to get you here right now. Go for it.

So yeah.

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<sup>14</sup> William refers to Maria Novotny's article "Intervening in #Access2Care: Towards a Rhetorical Framework for Relational Advocacy."

I think we start with, like, whatever the thing is, that's most, like, makes you excited, right? So for me, that's writing, I love to write, writing is hard, writing makes you sweat. But I love it. I've always loved it. You know, I, you know, I knew this my whole life. My mother knew it. You know, she brought me typewriters and writing utensils from age, you know, like seven and eight years old. Right? So that is where I begin to practice. So what does that look like, for me? That means for me developing rituals for where I can actually, you know, continue to, like, make space to do that thing I love to do to be successful like that, but also to fail at it. Because if I'm doing that, then I'm actually, you know, growing, you know, the, I want to say like the muscle, but like, you know, I'm developing, you know, the sort of the technology, you know, that is necessary, you know, to be that is called that is practice, right? And I can only do that, about something that I love, right?

Maya Angelou said that, like, you know, you can only be consistent at something that you love, you know, like you have to care about it. So even if it's something that's detrimental to you, right, you will be consistent in your engagement with that thing that is detrimental. Because there's something about it that is seductive, right? And so, I just think that people have to think about what's the thing that you love so much, that you're willing to develop rituals around it, whereby you can just start getting at doing and that you're willing to fail at it. And not even the fact that you don't even have to start with other people, but with yourself, know, for yourself? That like, I don't quite have the answer for this. I don't quite know how to do this yet. Or some days. It's like, oh, I really did that thing. And no, I don't have to go Instagram Live with it. But it's enough for me to know for myself that I did the thing.

So, you know, show rather than tell let me think so for me, you know, dedication is a big thing, right? Which is something that I did learn from Alexis Pauline Gumbs like, which is you know, I never write without dedicating my writing to someone that I love, right? Because at times in the writing process, it gets so hard that even though I might be enough and writing this thing might be enough for me, I don't always know that I'm a human being. But what I do know is that I can care so much about the person, the ancestor, the elder, the colleague, to whom I've dedicated this time, and I can show up for them in ways that I may not show up for me, that is me practicing you know, that specific ritual, right?

For writing, there might be days where I do my dedication, and I still just don't got the juice that day, right? Ah, and that is me failing at that, right? But that is me failing in the dedication that is not the person who I dedicated to failing, right? And, and so yeah, I just think people need space to kind of just like, you know, be serious about the work, but also to play at it, too. You know, like, we just lose play, like as a, as a form of like, of just like the doing. So I think that's another kind of thing. I mean point I would say to answer your question is like, how do you sort of move or get about doing it is to play a little more, you know, I think, again, people are just so serious, the stakes just feel so high in academic life and intellectual life, that we're just not willing to be like, just to

play at it. And you can, and you have to, because to be think about, like a kid, like, you know, to play is to be like, in the space of, like, your greatest moment of like, creativity, you know, and that is really what we're talking about here, right? It's like, the movement from this theory, like to practice, or I forget the language you use, but like you said, about how to actualize, right? Our inability to do that is because of lack of imagination, right?

So we have to, like make space for us to, you know, be able to imagine things to try at it, and to keep coming up with different ways to do it. So that's where I would start and, you know, I can't tell people how to do that for them. But I can say what that looks like, for me, you know, I'm looking at right now a paper doll, I play with paper dollars, whenever I get to a sort of moment in my writing, but I just feel like I'm just too, you know, just kind of like the stakes of feeling so high. I get my paper doll, her name is Rosemary, she's right there. And I change Rosemary, slow. You know, I, you know, have like coloring books, right. And I love color therapy. And so I'll just, you know, sometimes like, you know, pull out my coloring books, which are right here behind me on the side, you see also my doll up there that's quality, quality. You know, I play with my coloring books. And that's therapeutic for me. You know, that is essential to the practice of imagination, right, and then also the actualizing of inactivating of this movement from an idea to a doing of the thing. So that's all I can say, I guess.

*Valentina*

Money? No, no, I say that because like, particularly with like, QTBIPOC, like scholars and students, like I'm sorry, But like, and if I'll like if I'm being honest, like when people look at my CV, they'll be like, Oh, dang, like, like you like write a lot. Um, the other thing, if you look at my CV, I had fellowships to be able to do it. Because fellowships give you the time necessary and the financial resources necessary in order to do the work. And at least for me, like when applying to grants and scholarships, like sometimes like, like, some of the work I do is like lowbrow, like the texts that I analyzed. They're not like, what you necessarily think of like highbrow art and aesthetics like this, like I like look at working class sensibilities in queer and trans, Latinx, cultural texts.

So like, for me, when I apply for, like, grants and stuff, like I'm like, Okay, how do I make this sound good? Because already, I know that reviewers are going to be judging my work in a very specific way, where I'm gonna have to prove why this work matters. Right? And everybody has to do so.

But I do think it's important to recognize that, like, let's say you're like, working on something that engages sex work, and you know, how reviewers are going to look that look at that type of work. And I don't do that work. I just brought that example in. But like, that's what I'm saying, like, I think something to support students, but I think at a very materially grounded level, it would just be paying this work at the University is going to extract stuff from this work and be like, advertise it later on, like I know, you mentioned, then you better at least financially support this type of work. If you're gonna be like, oh, yeah, cool. We have a student that we have, as faculty who's doing this amazing, were gay. Yes. I'm like, Okay, did you pay that person? At least?

Just because I think in academia, we have this culture of like reimbursements, or this culture where, you know, it is believed that you come from middle class, upper class backgrounds. But if you don't, it really limits your ability to do scholarship, because it does take money, and it does take time. So for me my very basic answer, but just because I believe in funding, and providing compensation, particularly for queer and trans communities of color, it will be to fund the scholars in order to do the work.

*D'Angelo*

Yeah, I think is to just see where this is just practice, I think, from intention, mindfulness, we're healthy enough to see the opportunities where we can like, all of the stuff we were just talking about, I think, to do that, I am repeating myself again, but you if you have nothing to give, you don't have energy, wherewithal, or if the whole time are you doing it's complaining about your own situation, that you never have even time to get to? Building to find joy with others? Yeah, it's not great. You just feel stuck. And you it's like a kind of positive feedback loop, which means it builds department stuff and just gets like, either better and better and better or worse, and worse, and worse and worse, whichever direction. So positive doesn't mean like, it's good.

But it's compounding in, you know, you have to kind of find a way out of that, you know, and make a way out so you can build that's what I'll say, taking care of ourselves first. So we can then have, like, you have that conversation. So actually, think you have a conversation. So we can keep building organizations, groups that can support each other and build. But we first have to make sure we're mentally, physically to, and materially like money wise, like, it's a part of this is like making sure that you have a look, take care to keep the lights on, you know, because you can't, it's hard to do this stuff when you're living in squalor, and you can't afford to eat. It's too hard to worry about joy when you're worried about survival. You know, it's just so and I'm not saying it's possible, but because some people survive. Unfortunately, it is what it is. That's what you got to do.

But I just know that it's so easy to do. So.

*Scholar K*

So I think, you know, the concern with the we not withstanding, I think, the whole project of thinking about what one does within the university as a practice of resistance, I think it has to come with a lot of intention and a lot of reflexivity. And I think that if one wants to fashion themselves as an activist scholar or a public intellectual or an engaged scholar, any of these terms, I think, one, really getting a handle on what that means for you. And to just, being really principled and disciplined about how you want to enact that and also very realistic about what you're capable of doing from the position you are in.

And so it's it again, it just comes with, I think, a lot of study and a lot of relationship building. A lot of work right before Are you even ready to think of the work in this way, and in some instances, but you know, increasingly, and thankfully a number

of students are kind of not the kind of students that are maybe, you know, straight out of their private liberal arts school, and into the PhD program, but more students who are, you know, from their junior college, to their State University, and now, the PhD, and it's a different trajectory. And so, you know, students like that have already done their study in many ways. So there's a different set of risks there to think about the work as resistance.

*Monica*

Yeah, so one of the big things is reciprocity. So, creating, it's not linear. And we know this in theory, we're one of the fields that talks about students aren't, you know, there's no banking model where there aren't repositories for our knowledge. But there aren't enough models of professionalization that will enable newcomers to shift this space in a way that they need it to, to do the work that they want to do. I mean, it's one of the reasons that cluster hires are really important, you can't just hire one person of color and expect them to revolutionize your department, you need them to have people who are going to understand them, who are gonna make them feel comfortable, who are going to work with them, toward those goals. And so one of the big things is honoring the knowledge that emerging/existing scholars bring into this space and creating resources, dedicating resources to the shifts that they can introduce.

One of the big problems is that we'll ask people for what we should be doing differently and be like, well, that's really hard. We don't have the funds for that. But we do it this way. And that, like, if you don't, if you're not going to devote the resources to it, don't ask me, right. So in order for this to change, it's one of the big things comes down to money. A lot of the times like you have to be willing to put material resources into, into doing things differently. One of the big things too, especially with capitalism, working the way it is, right now, we need models of professionalization that aren't about creating new professors, I think, especially rhetoric, and you know, I'm biased because it's my field. But I think rhetoric has a lot to say about what's happening right now. Sort of in the world, and it has a lot of important work to do in terms of what's happening right now with political deliberations with, you know, shifting cultures. And we need to be training people to engage that in ways that aren't necessarily within the university. And to do that we need to make connections with people who are doing that work who aren't necessarily within the university, I think academics could stand to learn a lot from people who do other types of work.

*Ruby*

The participants' testimonios have brought a critical moment and realization for me: there are several ways to provide advice to emerging scholars and the institutions that are meant to serve them. William states that this responsibility to support emerging scholars directly connects with existing scholars to provide space for those who are entering, providing opportunities to

support them. Scholar P and D'Angelo encourage finding cultural sustaining practices outside of the institution to resist having their lives be consumed by the academy. Monica and Valentina also implore the need to financially support scholars so they can move away from survivance to thrivance. I began to understand that resistance practices are more than one singular approach, and the testimonios implore academic institutions to understand they are responsible to monetary support QTBIPOC scholars. These statements by the scholars are meaningful in a lot of ways, resistance as practice is not only about being disruptive, but finding opportunities to care for one's self protection.

#### Resistance as Practice: Queer and Transgender Possibilities

**Question context:** this question also derives from the second interview. Additionally, the question asked represents the sixth one. For this question, I wanted to know how we can radically and queerly imagine enacting resistance in the future for both existing and emergent scholars. Here is the question:

*How do you see a queer and transgender resistances -- particularly one that centers the needs of Black and brown people -- continuing and/or shifting the work of resistance in our future academic endeavors?*

*William*

Oh, I would see, how do I see it shifting? That's a good question. I don't know but Because yeah, I would say it's probably going to shift beyond just always being in this bind with talking about cis-heteropatriarchy and just kind of living a full, full queer trans life. Rather than being like this is queer phobic, this is transphobic. And then just for grounding well I'm going to celebrate my queerness, I'm going to celebrate my transness because always being in that dialectic bind again with cis-hetero patriarchy, white cis-hetero patriarchy is only ever going to give you, put you into a rut. Because you're constantly going to be looking at the world and seeing how it's not made for you.

But from what I'm seeing for young people, particularly, is that they're building that world that they want to live in. Like they're crafting the language for their identities. And they're, they're for like, well, I mean, this practice has been done since time



immemorial. But they're forming those networks of care to keep themselves happy and healthy. So yeah, I would say that's probably going to be the move forward is just leaving kind of the shit world that we're in behind. And, like, the world, like the actual planet Earth, but like, the social systems that have been put into place, and just kind of saying, you know, that's not for me, but work.

So yeah.

### *Scholar P*

I see mostly, in continuing to take up space. You know, I mean, I think that that's really ultimately what has led to, like, the real change is that, you know, queer, trans, non-binary, you know, people of color, you know, and all of the things that make us who we are, including, you know, those of us who identify as people with disabilities, as people who are immigrants, you know, and so on, and so forth, that, you know, us continuing to take up space for who we are, is also, you know, making a huge difference in the sort of scholarly terrain and the pedagogical practices we have, in the ways that, you know, people, you know, engage and disengage from, you know, university life. I just really think there's a big strong correlation between that and what changes we do see, and so I don't underestimate the value of that, I think sometimes, like, be really can, you know, I'm not wanting to dismiss really change any I don't have any time. I don't think that all changes, like equal, you know, you know, I don't think everything costs the same.

But I do think it's all valuable, you know, and so, what I would say, you know, in response to your question is really just to grab the simplest, and therefore, again, in my view, the most radical thing, you know, at its root, which is when we insist upon ourselves, you know, when we insist that there's nothing else to be other than ourselves, you know, in spaces that we know, were not created for us, will not recreate themselves for us, you know, that there is an alchemy that takes place, right, there is a shift that does happen, does it completely make the entire sense, you know, State University crumble into dust? No, I wish it would. Because then we'd be able to do something, we finally be able to get to work, right. Um, but I do think it like it does, you know, make space and make changes, and, and stretch, you know, those spaces and institutions, far beyond, you know, what they wanted to, and I'd say stretch, because I want to recognize, as we're seeing in this country, there's always the opportunity for something that is, if it's elastic, it can, it can pull away, but it can snap back. Right.

So I want to recognize that, but, you know, I do think there's something to be said for what happens that lets people pull that elastic in the first place. And, you know, in pulling it like, it also can break, right, you can, you can break, you can break that, you know, that that's that situation to use the rubber band, you know, metaphor here. So I just think that like, to continuing to take up space, for who we are, is, you know, the most important thing in terms of shifts, and it's the thing we will be doing with or without a job, with or without a classroom, with or without publications, with or without service obligations and mentors and mentees, you know, because I think that's the fundamental thing we're all here to learn in our lifetimes is really, to learn who we are, and so fall in

love with who we are. And, you know, I think that's, that has led to change: queer trans people of color falling in love with who we are, right? Simply because of that has, you know, made shift happen, in whatever ways it's possible.

*Valentina*

Um, sorry, that's a big question. I think what I've learned the most is that I'm still hustling. And I think something I probably mentioned in the last interview is that if the university won't be loyal to me, then I will also be very promiscuous with the university. So for me, like I'm like, I do look at job ads here and there, and I'm like, gotta be better than I'm like, why not the fuck? Like, no really. And I remember my mentor when I got this job, and she was like, Oh, do you think you're gonna stay? And I'm like, if they treat me right, and if they don't, and I'm already looking. I think something I've learned is to keep one foot within and one foot out, and always be looking out for opportunities. Because again, I do not believe the university cares about us. And when that happens, the people that will care about us is your people, it's your communities.

So something I've learned as a scholar is that really the only reason I'm here is not because of the University. I'm here for the communities that have created spaces for me to be able to thrive and survive. But it's something I learned about myself is that I do keep this hustle mindset of like, you know, I don't know if it's like the immigrant hard working fucked up mindset. But I do keep myself working. I do keep myself like looking for opportunities, just because they know that institutionally, these institutions do not look out for us. So they're not going to look out for us, we're going to look out for each other.

*D'Angelo*

I just think it's just this one, I won't be as long I think, literally, depending on what's happening in the world, or what's happening around us and as that shift, but being strategic about how we leverage what we have, it's continuous. Playing with the hand that you're dealt, so, you know, if you find yourself playing poker, on one hand, suddenly, suddenly the game was UNO. You know, what I'm getting from UNO cards? How do you get a hand, whatever it is that you, you know what I mean? Whatever it is, then you can think about okay, so I've got these cards. And I am playing UNO now that I got a hand of all reverses. You know, so what can I do? What's within my realm of possibilities? How do I process emotions about that reality? To be okay with what I have? And then leverage that, to continue to produce potential joy, again, that emotional processing is that solace, the joy is then leveraging what I have to produce something that I want.

Now that I've reconciled, that this is the reality is that ongoing is a one word I've learned in my research recently, or in my work is an iterative, iterative process of development. And so you brainstorm, draft, you know, try something out, didn't get good feedback, and go back to the drawing board to take what worked, design the draft, try it out. Instead of going through an implementation process that's too linear and done. Like we're constantly going to be iterating over time, as long as we're kind of the oppressed.

You know, the power dynamic or whatever they are. And again, in our lifetime, I don't see that changing. So that's going to be what we have to keep going.

*Scholar K*

I think it's an open question. Because I think there's, there's still a lot of queer and trans work, say, in our field, which is woefully white. I think a lot of queer and trans folks of color are, this has been a long beef that I have, are not trained by scholars who actually are the experts in the areas of you know, queer and trans BIPOC work. And so a lot of people are coming out of these PhD programs having had to teach themselves, which is not fair. And sometimes shows, right, because that's the point of kind of the apprenticeship that is a PhD is you're learning from people who've been studying it longer.

And so I think that has, it impacts scholarship, it impacts our ability sometimes to, to be able to do more. Not to mention all the bullshit we're dealing with just being who we are. So I think it's an open question. I, you know, I'd like to be optimistic and say, we just keep pushing, and we're gonna change this thing, we're gonna make it, you know, whatever, we'll make it but it's a lot of work to do that. So I think it's important to have small unrealistic goals and expectations for what any one of us or any group of us are capable of doing inside fields and institutions that are woefully, you know, phobic and racist and everything else.

*Monica*

So, I mean, right now you can see a lot, every academic I talked to you right now, it's like, I think the next thing I'm going to do is more like public facing work or more public writing, and how many people end up doing that? We'll see, I hope that we do.

As somebody who's you know, trans, queer, disabled, Taiwanese American. These past like since 2020, these past three years of being somebody who writes on sort of racism, transphobia, particularly the ways that transphobia ableism and all those things are embedded in our politics, riding on that in paywall journals, and then watching it happen in the world outside, I like, I've reached a breaking point at this point, which was, I can't, I can't have this be the center of my work, right? Like I believe in what we do. I do think that disciplinary spaces create important knowledge that circulates back out into sort of our external politics and our social relations in ways that are important.

But I also want a more direct line to the things that are happening. Because for me, it's, it's too much to like, write about this to a bunch of white-collar Professor, white people, and watch my communities being targeted by a bunch of legislation by like actual violence in the streets. It just didn't feel sustainable doing it that way.

So I think one of the things that needs to happen is that we need models of professional quote, unquote, work, quote, unquote, productivity, that empower us to do the work that materially impacts our communities immediately, I think, I think we need

to do that, or we're going to start hemorrhaging more scholars of color and marginalized scholars than we already do.

*Ruby*

As I conclude this section, a major takeaway about how to continue and shifting resistance makes me nervous. A few participants amplify the point of taking time to enjoy life, to take up space, and to find a community outside these dominant cistems that will support us. I understood from these responses that enacting resistance by removing and protecting ourselves represents a critical approach. I also understood what both Valentina and Monica discussed as well. Valentina always talks about being accountable for ourselves and our communities, to find the space to leave if needed if our personal and professional environments do not serve us. Monica encourages for more facing public work, but acknowledges that this work needs to be coalitional and not just the responsibility of QTBIPOC community, because hemorrhaging them is a real thing. With these statements spoken from the participants, I found these responsibilities meaningful: there is no real way of what resistance will look like in the future. However, through collective co-creational action, we can begin to radically imagine what we can do to address cistems of oppression.

Resistance in Action: Towards Liberation and Amplification of Disempowered, Ignored, and Devalued Communities

These testimonios exemplify how stories and testimonios are technologies that mediate the survival practices, amplification practices, and liberation practices of disempowered communities. In the following section, I return to the testimonios of my participants, highlighting how they enact their agency by harnessing the mediating potential of their stories to do work to resist, deconstruct, and reimagining cistems that are not made for them and have not considered their lived and embodied experiences. To illustrate this argument, I'll review how my participant

stories highlight survival, amplification, and liberation practices mediated by their stories. To reach this point, I will add definitional work to illustrate how I define survivance, amplification and liberation. More importantly, these structures for each of sections will define the terms, provide examples, and talk about the significance of these three different resistance practices.<sup>15</sup>

### *Survival Practice*

As indicated by the testimonios, survival practices are the ways that QTBIPOC navigate oppressive cistems in order to live in a colonizing world. Drawing on the concept of survivance by Gerald Vizenor (2008), he writes that “survivance is an active sense of presence over absence, deracination, and oblivion; survivance is the continuance of stories, not a mere reaction, however pertinent. Survivance is greater than the right of a survivable name” (p.1). Ha’ani Lucia Falo San Nicolas (2021) builds on Vizenor’s definition and writes that survivance semantically connects with the verb survive to “remain alive or in existence” (p. 22). However, San Nicolas acknowledges that the direct survivance “is entangled with white settler colonial remnants that have contributed to the vanishment of Indigeneity” (p. 22). These indigenous scholars establish that survivance is directly related to the impacts of colonization and the removal of one’s communities’ cultural identity. Additionally, rhetorical scholars have also introduced the need to consider survivance. For instance, Lisa King et al. (2015) substantiates this idea as they have written that “[s]urvivance is resisting those marginalizing, colonial narratives and policies so indigenous knowledge and lifeways may come into the present with new life and new commitment to that survival” (p. 7). Meaning, survivance represents an indigenous practice to

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<sup>15</sup> It is important to note that it is nearly impossible to expand on all six participants for examples. For the sake of the length of this chapter, I will only highlight a few examples from participants to highlight the connection amongst these three terms: survivance, amplification, and liberation.

survive against colonizing logics to support cultures that have been impacted by cistematic oppression.

These acts of surveillance are highlighted in my participants testimonios. For instance, Monica provides concrete suggestions about resistance as practice personally that highlights the need for survivance with an academic context: “do not let the academic job consume an individual as it can.” When addressing personally, they build from indigenous scholars Eve Yang and Wayne Tuck's (2014) work on refusal: do not adhere to practices that are often non-supportive to QTBIPOC communities and continue to practice reflexivity by asking oneself:

how do I do this research responsibly, right? Like, if I'm talking about a harm, or if I'm exposing the harm? Who does it serve? Right? And what purpose does it serve? And if it doesn't serve a purpose, or if it just perpetuates that harm? What else can I do around this information that actually creates the critique or the intervention that I'm trying to make?

These questions highlight the need for multi-marginalized scholars to always consider reciprocity and ethics when engaging with communities who are disempowered and ignored. Moreover, Monica provides concrete guiding questions to consider how to engage in work professionally, to support emerging and existing scholars to understand the critical need to do research that is oriented in protecting communities. More importantly, their advice highlights strategies to survive within an academic institutional context to have self-protection while also highlighting the criticality many multi-marginalized scholars can enact to protect themselves when doing research pertaining to them and their communities.

William intentionally places the responsibility for the survivance not on multi-marginalized scholars as they argue that existing and established scholars need to create space for new emerging scholars while also getting out of the way. As they state, "I would say it's incumbent on them to, for one, hopefully, they will have made those material conditions more receptive to that kind of work that upcoming scholars would want to do." This assertion removes

sole responsibility on multi-marginalized scholars and places the accountability on those who have occupied these spaces historically so they can begin to and support those by educating themselves while also to implement enactments of cultural humility. Meaning, do not be offended by our stories, perspectives, and identities; existing scholars must leverage their privileges and affordances to support emergent multi-marginalized scholars.

The two testimonios are significantly different and yet extremely important. First, Monica provides an example of how to enact survival practice within an academic context for self-protection. As noted throughout all the testimonios, being QTBIPOC scholar has numerous challenges and finding practices to prevent extraction and over exhaustion, implementing this strategy is integral for survival. Additionally, William posits that this work should also not be placed on multi-marginalized scholars and existing scholars need to find critical approaches to support and mentor new emerging scholars. The significance of these ideas is important: 1) it highlights that scholars are always enacting practices for self-protection and 2) it signifies how this work needs to be done collaboratively, collectively, and coalitionally. Meaning, this work cannot be done alone.

### *Amplification Practices*

Amplification practices are integral for QTBIPOC communities that center and highlight disempowered communities. Temptaous Mckoy (2019) discusses amplification rhetorics and writes that it represents an embodied discursive and communicative practice enacted by Black/African-American people and other marginalized communities who center their epistemologies and knowledges (p. 28). Additionally, Temptaous McKoy provides three critical tenets to illustrate the complexity of amplification rhetorics: “(1) the reclamation of agency (ownership of embodied rhetorical practices), (2) the accentuation and acknowledgement of

narratives (validated lived experiences), and (3) the inclusion of marginalized epistemologies (that add to new ways of learning)” (p. 28). McKoy urges the field of technical communication to acknowledge how “culture influences research and pedagogical practices” (p. 28) and the need to incorporate such critical perspectives. As McKoy asserts, “Amplification Rhetorics asks how elements of embodiment can make our field more inclusive in our knowledge-making practices and does not rely solely on the marginalized to explain or do the sole labor of making the field more inclusive” (29). Thus, amplification rhetoric also provides a critical point to highlight stories, narratives, and testimonios as not a method for survivance, but an enactment to highlight how individuals can amplify themselves and their communities who are marginalized by institutional logics.

For instance, the testimonios by my participant have illustrated amplification of their individualized selves and their communities. For instance, D’Angelo provides amplification resistant practice representative of strategy. As D’Angelo states, “What do you want, how do you get it?” D’Angelo encourages emerging scholars to intentionally and strategically position themselves to obtain what they need to amplify themselves and their communities. Additionally, Scholar K also adds that amplification as a resistance practice needs to contain reflexivity to educate one’s self and understanding how to intervene in particular situations to amplify their selves and their communities. As Scholar K asserts, “[k]nowing when to pick your battles, but being prepared to intervene in ways that disrupt power, disrupt structures. And I think that's constant work. And that's kind of I think, I think of that as both kind of my personal and professional task." Meaning, in order to amplify one’s self rhetorically, emerging scholars should understand how to amplify one’s self in a rhetorically strategic way that is resistant to institutional logics and their oppression.



In relation to amplification as a resistance practice, Scholar K further acknowledges that institutions and those who occupy spaces that teach queer and transgender rhetorics remain predominantly white. Meaning, these scholars are often disafforded by not knowing critical epistemological perspectives that ground QTBIPOC views. From this acknowledgement, they encourage as the field moves forward that "it's important to have small unrealistic goals and expectations for what any one of us or any group of us are capable of doing inside fields and institutions that are woefully, you know, phobic and racist and everything else." Meaning, be radically imaginative about the futurities of thrivance for QTBIPOC lives to amplify our epistemologies in ways that can center them.

Monica also asserts that individuals must begin mobilizing towards public facing work—coalitionally working with communities to address institutional oppression not just within higher education, but outside the confines of those walls to amplify our communities. As they state, "I think one of the things that needs to happen is that we need models of professional quote, unquote, work, quote, unquote, productivity, that empower us to do the work that materially impacts our communities immediately." This declaration signifies that our work needs to begin impacting those who are also being impacted by institutional powers that include policy and law to support QTBIPOC individuals. Meaning, that these responsibilities to support multi-marginalized communities are important for those to who are not affiliated with these identities, not just QTBIPOC individuals. As Monica further mentions, "I think we need to do that, or we're going to start hemorrhaging more scholars of color and marginalized scholars than we already do." This connects with Williams statement on survivance where this work to amplify disempowered, ignored, and devalued multi-marginalized communities is representative of a coalitional practice.

These conversations highlight Temptaous Mckoy's three critical tenets of amplification rhetorics: giving one agency, acknowledging stories, and centering multi-marginalized epistemologies. The scholars testimonios highlighted the different amplification practices emerging scholars can enact by having agency to select battles, to share stories/testimonios as a critical strategy to disrupt institutional logics, to intervene both within and outside the academy to amplify epistemologies that are ignored in dominant educational spaces that neglect to support emerging scholars. These scholars illustrate that amplification is central in disrupting cistematic harm and oppression.

### *Liberation Practices*

Liberation practices are intended to provide direct spaces and avenues to allow QTBIPOC communities to move from survivance to thrivance. This means this can provide emerging scholars to find approaches to navigate academic spaces that can help support themselves fully. Liberation represents a significant approach that derives from activist places where disempowered communities used this term to demand equality within institutional spaces where multi-marginalized lives face severe oppression and harm. For instance, in the Combahee River Collective (CRC) statement, the authors (1995) write that

the liberation of all oppressed peoples necessitates the destruction of the political-economic systems of capitalism and imperialism as well as patriarchy. We are socialists because we believe that work must be organized for the collective benefit of those who do the work and create the products, and not for the profit of the bosses. Material resources must be equally distributed among those who create these resources. (235).

The authors of the CRC highlights the intentional and strategic approaches to dismantle cistematic institutions and their logics to liberate disempowered communities. The authors make a cognizant effort to highlight that resources are needed to support communities who are impacted by these cistems to address institutional harm and oppression. When thinking about

liberation as a practice, this represents addressing these harmful cistems for the betterment of disempowered, ignored, and devalued communities.

As illustrated in the testimonios by my participants, the participants have illustrated the need for liberation for QTBIPOC individuals and their communities through several different approaches. For instance, Scholar P asserts that resistance is the practice of freedom; placing boundaries, understanding and giving grace when navigating complex institutions to the point of value as a person, intellectual, and educator. As they assert,

I would say for me, resistance is the practice of freedom. Right. Alexis Pauline Gumbs says in her book, *M Archive*, that freedom is not a secret. It's a practice, right? So people often talk about freedom and being free is something that's like, you know, like, how, like, how do you do it and something that we have to figure it out. And what she's basically saying is like, you don't have to figure it out, you just have to start doing it. Right?

Scholar P acknowledges that in order for liberation to occur, one must practice freedom to liberate oneself for self-protection. Also, it is important to highlight that Scholar P draws on scholarship that pertains to their community, listening and enacting this practice of liberation by implementing moments from their communities who are actively doing this work.

Additionally, Monica asserts that monetary means is another important aspect to supporting change to include diverse participants and represents liberation practices as resources are needed for liberation. As Monica states, "So in order for this to change, it's one of the big things [that] comes down to money. A lot of the times, like, you have to be willing to put material resources into, into doing things differently." Monica highlights that for institutions wanting to create change, money for emerging scholars, their communities, and students is an integral component to doing the work. One cannot liberate themselves if monetary support is not present. Furthermore, Valentina also makes a strong argument about the need to financially compensate emergent scholars as well. As Valentina argues,

I think in academia, we have this culture, of like reimbursements, or this culture where, you know, it is believed that you come from middle class, upper class backgrounds. But if you don't, it really limits your ability to do scholarship, because it does take money, and it does take time.

Valentina urges the need to recognize that compensating individuals is necessary to support multi-marginalized scholars. Meaning, do not assume that individuals have privileges and affordances to access economical and material resources. Emerging scholars often have to expend time to exhaust themselves to support their lives while attending higher education—which at times supporting loved one's as well. Thus, to aid in the liberation of disempowered communities trying to do the work, monetary support is integral to sustain individuals to thrive in academic spaces.

The scholars' collectively highlight different approaches that can aid towards liberation. As Scholar P states, freedom and discernment are imperative to liberating oneself from overexerting their embodied self. Additionally, Monica and Valentina also call on institutions to recognize that aiding in one's liberation requires monetary support, that this work is truly collective for QTBIPOC individuals to thrive. This means that instead of using performative gestures, do the actual work to provide resources for those who can face barriers to resources.

### *Takeaways*

The seamless threading of these conversations highlights the complexity of resistance as practice: survivance, amplification, and liberation. The participants' testimonios illustrate how resistance can manifest itself in different ways within institutional cistems. More importantly, these scholars provide concrete examples about how to move forward to support existing and emerging scholars. In many ways, these sentiments also ties in with José Esteban Muñoz's (2009) work about queer futurities, where he argues that the context of the world, "that thing that lets us feel that this world is not enough" (p. 1). QTBIPOC individuals often feel no hope as they

navigate complex institutions, and these participants testimonios provide comprehensive ways to survive, amplify, and liberate one's self.

### The Need to Value QTBIPOC Technology of Survival, Amplification, and Liberation

Yeah, so for me, at least, as I mentioned, I'm interdisciplinary and within rhetoric, the field really engages cultural rhetoric. And for me because of that, then the work is about story. And I think queer and trans rhetorics, they bring about non-normative stories, stories that are not necessarily viewed as normal, and maybe perhaps shouldn't be so because there's a subversive aspect because when you speak these stories out loud, they do shaken the foundations of hetero-normative and cis-normative institutions, and perhaps academic fields, like canonical rhetoric. I'm thinking of rhetoric, not just in terms of publications, but also in terms of our bodies, thinking of how our bodies navigate space ...

And I say this, because when I think of like queer and trans rhetorics, I think it's about the rhetoric stuff, our bodies, the stories that our bodies have to tell, and the location of our bodies within systems of normativity and how our bodies are transgressive to these systems.

- Valentina (Valentina, personal communication, August 15, 2022)

Valentina reminds us that stories hold significant power to disrupt cistems of oppression and harm. Valentina illustrates in their statement how QTBIPOC stories and perspectives are subversive in nature, a tactical approach to disrupt dominant ideologies that can shake “the foundations of hetero-normative and cis-normative institutions, and perhaps academic fields, like canonical rhetoric.” In many ways, their attunement to understanding how stories can challenge institutional spaces is important. Particularly, they are representative of someone who has been disempowered, ignored, and devalued by cistematic oppression and institutional logics. As Valentina substantiates this point, they state that “our bodies, the stories that our bodies have to tell, and the location of our bodies within systems of normativity and how our bodies are transgressive to these systems.” Simply put, our bodies were never meant to exist within these academic spaces.

Additionally, these collective testimonios that were rhetorically discussed illustrate how our bodies, positions, and privileges in relation to power manifested by white supremacy often face major disaffordances in the ways in which we attempt to survive in the neoliberal academy. The testimonios from these participants highlight how these forms of discussion represent a critical technological survival strategy for multi-marginalized individuals and their communities to articulate the injustices they and their communities endure. Meaning, the field of rhetoric and writing studies and technical and professional communication must consider these critical definitions of survivance, amplification and liberation to understand how multi-marginalized lives attempt to support themselves and their communities, and how they are resistant against dominant and harmful western ideologies. Simply put, those who advocate and express disdain on institutional violence, harm, and oppression are not being negative and/or dramatic, they are simply advocating for the need to be seen, heard, and valued in places where our bodies feel like they do not exist.

## Chapter 4:

### Building an Activist Statement for QTBIPOC Support Through a Landscape Analysis:

#### A Critical Method/ology Grounded in Community Activism

One issue that is of major concern to us and that we have begun to publicly address is racism in the white women's movement. As Black feminists we are made constantly and painfully aware of how little effort white women have made to understand and combat their racism, which requires among other things that they have a more than superficial comprehension of race, color, and Black history and culture. Eliminating racism in the white women's movement is by definition work for white women to do, but we will continue to speak to and demand accountability on this issue.

- Combahee River Collective (1995)

Activist statements have always reflected a tool to address cistematic oppression within society for the betterment of disempowered, ignored, and devalued communities. As seen through the above epigraph, the Combahee River Collective (CRC) reflects such a statement grounded in Black feminism. The statement is a declaration that calls on those who excluded Black women's voices, identities, and perspectives to create institutional and cistematic change. Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor (2017) amplifies this point that the Combahee River Collective reflects Black women who spoke against these cistems and built on these "observations by continuing to analyze the roots of Black women's oppression under capitalism and arguing for the recognition of society based on the collective needs of the most oppressed" (3). More importantly, Taylor recognizes the contributions of CRC by stating that the statement "stands tall among the many statements, manifestos, and other public declarations ... and it is an important document not only as a statement of radical Black feminism but also in its contribution to the revolutionary left in the United States" (p. 7). Building from Taylor's assertion, statements act as a critical collaborative and coalitional document to begin addressing institutional harm Meaning, declarative and imperative statements are not only resourceful, they are doing activist work. This

directly ties with how testimonios and stories aid in the design of these statements, it represents a collective and coalitional practice to address cistematic oppression that perpetuates in ableist, racist, homophobic, and transphobic tendencies

In rhetoric and writing studies, statements have been incorporated and used as well to address cistematic oppression that continues to impact scholars and students who are multi-marginalized collaborate through their own testimonios and stories to address cistamatic oppression. For instance, the “Student’s Right To Their Own Language, (1974)” the statement represented an opportunity for scholars to support diverse students' languages and disrupted the normative idea of the standard English Language. As the collaborators wrote,

We affirm the students' right to their own patterns and varieties of language -- the dialects of their nurture or whatever dialects in which they find their own identity and style. Language scholars long ago denied that the myth of a standard American dialect has any validity. The claim that any one dialect is unacceptable amounts to an attempt of one social group to exert its dominance over another. Such a claim leads to false advice for speakers and writers, and immoral advice for humans. (pg. 1)

The direct response attempted to address dominant notions but has recently been acknowledged as a faulty statement that has not been enacted in the field. Even though the scholars wrote this response nearly fifty years ago, the dominant ideology of Standard English continues to impede on the field of rhetoric and writing studies and technical and professional communication and scholars have critiqued this performative gesture of a statement.

Recently, another critical culturally informed statement was developed to address anti-blackness and its impact on students and Black lives. In “This Ain’t Another Statement! This is a DEMAND for Black Linguistic Justice!,” April Baker-Bell et al. (2020) collaboratively, collectively, and coalitionally composed and published a demand on the *Conference of College Composition and Communication* to address the historical and social political landscape that still continues to negatively and violently impact Black Linguistic speakers and writers. The authors’



recognize that the performative gestures of language diversity were not instilled and exemplified as an organization focused on writing and communication have failed with the SRTOL. The exigency of this statement derives from the 2020 Black Lives Matter movement where George Floyd was brutally murdered by the police, a violent problem that is historical and still occurs today. In the collective statement, the authors build on Carmen Kynard's work who "reminds us that 'the possibilities for SRTOL [were] always imagined, and yet never fully achieved [and this] falls squarely in line with our inadequate responses to the anti-systemic nature of the '60s social justice movements'" (p. 74). More importantly, the authors' remind the field that the value of Black Linguistic Justice are intentionally diminished within education and society at large, and "is not separate from the rampant and deliberate anti-Black racism and violence inflicted upon Black people in society" (Baker-Bell, 2020) From these realities of violence enacted on the Black community, the authors deliberative clear about their statement: "This Ain't Another Statement! This is a DEMAND for Black Linguistic Justice! PeriodT!" (online)

I draw upon the "Combahee River Collective" and "This Ain't Another Statement! This is a DEMAND for Black Linguistic Justice!" as the statements represent critically culturally informed texts that are doing the work to address cistematic harm and oppression. More importantly, I intentionally use these texts as critical examples: their work exemplifies that our work is always deeply personal, and that these scholars and activists have a stake in the work they are doing as they are also implicated by these violent cistems. This point is important as it highlights that a statement response derives from a collective experience. This means that testimonios can aid in the development of statements through for actionable change. As Nora Rivera's (2022C) argues, testimonios "trace[s] a user's experience through a collective voice. Testimonios also trace users' social and cultural contexts while prompting participants to

exercise their agency and promote social change” (online). Testimonios then create the ability to mobilize in strategic approaches—what the collective community decides—to address institutional oppression, such as activist statements. Through these activist, coalitional, and collaborative documents, this chapter seeks to create a statement to address the cistematic harm and oppression that impacts QTBIPOC scholars in both the field of rhetoric and writing studies.

In 2023 alone, the attacks on the LGBTQ+ community through legislation proposals has significantly increased which results in conditions for QTBIPOC of navigating personal and professional spaces violently challenging. To exemplify the urgency for a statement for the field at large, Ella Ceron (2023) illustrates that “[b]etween 2018 and 2022, state legislators introduced at least 361 anti-LGBTQ bills total” (para. 2). As of this year alone, the American Civil Liberties Union (2023) has illustrated oppressive legislation through tracked data that exemplifies that 452 anti-LGBTQ have been proposed in 2023 alone. This year alone amounts to more anti-LGBTQ bills than combined in the years between 2018 and 2022; a significant attack on LGBTQ+ individuals within American society. Thus, the need to call in the field of both rhetoric and technical communication to protect students, educators, and staff has never been more direly needed today in our political landscape.

Thus, this chapter attempts to work to develop an activist statement to implore and encourage the fields to begin mobilizing coalitionally to address cistematic harm and oppression within the institution and outside its confines. To develop this design, this chapter works in three critical sections: 1) I will develop a consideration for Landscape Analysis, a critical community-oriented method that can be used to develop resources for disempowered, devalued, and ignored communities; 2) I will conduct a landscape analysis on one activist statements from Michigan State University’s Writing Rhetoric, and American Cultures (WRAC) graduate student statement

of demands. These statements exemplify coalitional and collaborative practices that are also doing the work; and 3) I will develop an activist statement for the field of rhetoric and writing studies that illustrates critical approaches to support QTBIPOC scholars, students, and communities. This work is integral and encourages that research can begin designing and creating approaches to address institutional harm and oppression. More importantly, the design emphasized that the labor and pressure on QTBIPOC to *do the work* needs to be disrupted and challenged, it is everyone's responsibility to begin providing resources and mentorship to support those whose identities do not align with "the normative" white, cisgender, heteronormative sexualized body.

#### Landscape Analysis: A Critical Method for Community Action and Support

I conduct a landscape analysis as it represents a method to support communities by providing resources to those who are impacted by systems of oppression. Particularly, I will use this method as a critical tool to examine activist statements to generate my one statement to amplify QTBIPOC communities. Additionally, landscape analysis is a critical method that is largely absent in technical and professional communication scholarship. Although there are methods such as content analysis which can be assumed as closely related to landscape analysis, there are significantly distinct characteristics between the two methods. Regarding content analysis, Klaus Krippendorff (2013) defines this method as "a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from text (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use" (p. 24). As he further elaborates, "[a]s a research technique, content analysis provides new insights, increases a researcher's understanding of particular phenomena, or informs practical actions. Content analysis is a scientific tool" (p. 24). Although content analysis represents an important method in technical and professional communication that can be applied through

digital and physical artifacts, the method misses the opportunity to center, empower, and amplify communities who are disempowered, ignored, and devalued by dominant institutions and organizations. Thus, the concern is not necessarily with the method, but scholars that do not use this approach in inclusive ways.

Landscape analysis also reflects a critical method that attends to communities impacted by systems of oppression which is both participatory and inclusive. For instance, in “Analyzing the Landscape: Community Organizing and Health Equity,” Jennifer J. Garcia et al. (2020) establish that landscape analysis represents a community oriented collaborative method to support communities through a particular need through interventions and praxis. Although Jennifer J. Garcia et al.’s research attends to community organizing surrounding health equity, the authors provide a comprehensive definition of this method. As the authors write, “[w]e define landscape analysis as a participatory data collection and assessment process useful for understanding the broader context, evaluating strengths and challenges, and identifying field trends to inform actionable next steps” (p. 3). Garcia et al. signify that this method reflects a strategic and critical approach: this method not only “analyzes and assesses” community resources and needs but implements strategies and approaches that are actionable for the betterment of communities.

Furthermore, Jennifer J. Garcia et al. (2020) exemplify that landscape analysis also reflects a critical approach to address power differences from dominant oppressive systems. As the authors assert, “landscape [analysis] also informs an analysis of power – who benefits from the problem, who loses, how the organized power works toward the agenda, and how the organized power works against the agenda (p. 4). This attention to how power is enacted provides a perspective about the affordances and disaffordances of this method, showing the

intrinsic details that goes into negotiating against power through the analysis and its impact on the analysis actionable agenda. In addition to realizing what landscape analysis reveals about power differentials and how it can impact one's agenda, Garcia et al. also illustrate three critical approaches that can best support landscape analysis:

- 1) facilitate networking and alliance building and strengthen the movement by connecting organizations (i.e., by geographic region or by social justice issue area) that might otherwise not know about each other;
- 2) support shared-learning, collaboration, and maximize the use of existing resources to support collaborative efforts, which can be significant for community-based organizations (CBOs) that are typically operating with limited resources; and
- 3) track trends and identify best practices for effective organizing and advocacy strategies across the field. (p. 4)

These critical points exemplify a strategic and critical approach to conducting landscape analysis. Particularly, the guiding approach the authors offer about landscape analysis also encourages collaboration among participants and other community-based organizations.

Meaning, this method truly needs to reflect a participatory approach to allow participants to have voices in the design/research process, and to also collaboratively work with community-based organizations who have also done/doing the work.

As I move into the next section, I will use landscape analysis to examine one activist statement produced by emergent scholars in both rhetoric and writing studies and technical and professional communication. In particular, I will analyze "The Graduate Student Statement of Demands," a statement written by Michigan State University's Writing, Rhetoric, and American Cultures graduate students (2020) who responded to the exigency of anti-blackness within their

department. In their statement, the authors and I situated “this letter to demand action for racial justice in our department’s cultures, practices, pedagogies, and policies” (p.1). Rhetorically examining this letter and conducting a landscape analysis will reflect the genesis of the statement. Furthermore, I will illustrate why statements are an effective method to address social inequalities that exist within a Eurocentric dominant society.

#### Landscape Analysis: Examining an Activist Statement

As I conduct a landscape analysis of the activist statement produced by Michigan State University’s graduate students, I will continue to follow the three critical approaches outlined by Jennifer J. Garcia et al. (2020). More specifically, I will focus on queer and transgender social justice issues that have been proposed within legislation which deeply impacts educators, students, and communities. As I wrote earlier, oppressive legislation in 2023 includes more than 460 anti-LGBTQ proposals, which is more than the years 2018 to 2022 combined. More terrifying, 211 of the 460 proposals are target-education: this means nearly 47 percent of the bills are targeted towards students, educators, and disempowered communities. Additionally, I will use the legislation data provided by the ACLU, my participants’ stories, and additional online resources point to the exigency of these issues and then list of resources needed to begin a design for actionable change.<sup>16</sup> Lastly, I will examine a statement of demands as a best practice and an advocacy tool. From this, I will analyze the rhetorical savviness of the collaborative statement written by Michigan State University graduate students—which includes me—to understand an effective approach to design a statement that demands the need to recognize how to advocate and support LGBTQ+ communities.

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<sup>16</sup> The resources that I will add will be located in the statement. Although I conduct a landscape analysis of an existing design (a statement released in 2020), I do not go into detail about how I obtain the links and accounts for particular places that I compose in the written statement. The links and resources are attached to the statement in a footnote.

Before the analysis of the activist statement, it is imperative to establish the emergence of the statement of demands that was collaboratively written by graduate students and I at Michigan State University's Writing, Rhetoric, and American Cultures department. The statement was heavily influenced by April Baker-Bell et al.'s statement that addressed Black linguistic justice to the field of rhetoric, writing, and composition studies. At the time, WRAC graduate students collectively met over the summer 2020 to address the Anti-Blackness that occurred within the department and program. As April Baker-Bell et al. (2020) reminds us, the violence on Black lives faced within the national landscape directly impacts the Black community within education as well. Furthermore, in addition to understanding the national issues faced within American society on Black lives, graduate students gathered together to share stories and testimonios about the direct violence that students of color faced by white administrators at a predominantly white institution.<sup>17</sup>

My collaborators and I (Mendoza et al., Press) have written about the emergence of the statement by "graduate scholars [who] called for 1) the immediate attention to anti-Black racism and 2) action for 'racial justice in [the] department's cultures, practices, pedagogies, and policies" in several institutional locations, including pedagogy and writing program administration" (p. 2). Even through the actionable document, the graduate students recognized that the response to the demands were performative at best. As Mendoza et al. write, the "department's response(s) to graduate student knowledge and lived experiences have been inadequate—revealing an on-going dilemma of the conflicts that arise when anti-racist initiatives

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<sup>17</sup> As Ore et al. (2021) write, higher educational institutions are representative of white dominant spaces running on colonial time which leads to rhetorical violence. As the authors write, "we run on 'university time,' which like white time, national time, colonial time, and slave time, is driven by market aims, the rhetorical stand-in for white desires" (p. 601). This dominant space of whiteness precludes to violence as white bodies and colonial perspectives can never fully understand QTBIPOC embodiment. As Mendoza et al. (2023) state, "BIPOC embodied knowledge ... [is] lost in translation by white administrators."

are presented within white organizations” (p. 3). The scholars further acknowledge that the translation of QTBIPOC perspectives failed and were lost in translation. However, the authors recognize the translation work can move beyond just one institution: “translation *can* work if we consider the act of speaking amongst ourselves and to others—the coalitional potential of sharing our stories beyond one specific institutional context—to rhetorically heal from testimonial silencing and smothering” (p. 3). Even though Mendoza et al. recognize the limits of the statement within one institutional space, the scholars recognize that sharing the document to other institutional spaces can create more generative conversations of institutional oppression that impact multi-marginalized lives.

Moving away from the exigency and context of the statement, the document design was strategically written, organized, and influenced by April Baker-Bell et al.’s statement of the demand. The Graduate Student List of Demands (2020) shows the statement organized in five sections: introduction, demand 1, demand 2, demand 3, and conclusion. In the introduction, the authors make several critical moves to strengthen their argument. First, the authors build on secondary sources in their local community that have addressed anti-blackness. Second, the authors position themselves as they are impacted by institutional logics, harm, and oppression. And lastly, the introduction acknowledges the inadequate support and anti-blackness that has existed historically within the department and how those logics still exist in the present. In Demand #1, the scholars begin with a declarative and imperative demand statement to begin their second main header. As the authors’ assert in their statement: “Demand #1: We DEMAND that WRAC radically revise departmental governance procedures to more explicitly affect systemic change around racial justice in policy, department transparency, bylaws, and police reliance” (p. 2). In this demand, the scholars provide a list of actionable items to begin



addressing this demand. For instance, the scholars demand for policies that reflect anti-racist frameworks, for the need of developing and designing culturally sustaining support structures and practices, and for the department to have transparency about the justice and equity initiatives within the department. As the authors assert, “WRAC needs to interrogate the ways [they] incorporate, promote, or contribute to carceral policies that may harm the very lives of our fellow marginalized community members” (p. 3).

The writers continued to build on these demands to address institutional oppression that occurs at the university level. In demand 2, the scholars add to their statement by addressing issues related to anti-blackness and institutional oppression that impacts faculty and students. As demand 2 states,

WE DEMAND transparent practices that demonstrate WRAC’s commitment and action to address issues concerning (1) support structures for Black faculty, (2) the recruitment, hiring, and retention of Black faculty and students, (3) the emotional labor of Black people in the department, and (4) community-building with Black colleagues.

In this demand, the scholars provide four subheaders to build on their larger point and argument in regard to anti-blackness within institutional logics and oppression at the department, college, and university level. These subheaders include approaches and methods to address anti-blackness and violence: 1) support structures; 2) recruiting, hiring, and retention; 3) address emotional labor of Black people; and 4) be in community with Black colleagues. The intentional choices to address these particular points is due to graduate students seeing an emergence of Black faculty and students disassociating and actually removing themselves from the department to protect their bodies, perspectives, and identities. Although the department articulated that they were

actively engaged in anti-racism, the students recognized that the anti-racist initiatives were performative at best and relied on graduate students' intellectual labor.<sup>18</sup>

In the fourth main header, the demands began to address curriculum that impacts both undergraduate and graduate students. In demand 3, the authors write that “WE DEMAND that both the graduate, undergraduate, and first-year writing curriculum adopt anti-racist values, practices, and pedagogies as a cornerstone of curricula” (p. 5). As the scholars demand for antiracism to be implemented in curriculum, they also demand the curriculum revisit its values and practices to anchor antiracism epistemological frameworks that also include queer, transgender, and feminist rhetorics, a tangible long-term plan for teacher development, and the program adopts a sustainable and accessible way to offer anti-racism practices that do not solely rely on graduate students intellectual labor. As we have noticed within higher education, students are often sought after for their intellectual labor and never compensated for that labor. In addition to these demands and outline of support, the scholars also acknowledged that graduate curriculum needed major revisions as critical culturally frameworks were (and still are) visibly absent, conversations on assessing the program was needed annually, and the need to have all students (including white students) needed to reflect their positionalities to understand their

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<sup>18</sup> In the *Black Lives Matter* statement written by the WRAC department, it states that the department “stands against state-sanctioned anti-Black violence and racism, and in solidarity with protestors around the world who seek justice. We also call for action against systemic and structural racism in the U.S. broadly and in our local communities. As teachers, researchers, and writers, we are committed to educating ourselves and others about anti-racist pedagogy and self-work, and to providing resources for students, faculty, staff, and the larger community to engage in a movement for change. Such change seeks to recognize and celebrate the personhood of each and every member of our local and global communities.” In the statement, the department attempts to illustrate its commitment to anti-racism. However, with a closer read, the statement contradicts their stance as they position themselves as “committed to educating [themselves] and others about anti-racist pedagogy and self-work, and to providing resources for students, faculty, staff, and the larger community to engage in a movement for change.” However, as the statement writes several actionable steps the department is actively doing, they substantiate this contradiction by openly relying on graduate students intellectual labor to do this work: They write, they will “[c]ontinue supporting, funding, and expanding our anti-racist pedagogy workshops series (led by two PhD students, Eve Cuevas and Nick Sanders).” This contradiction is clear and generates an important question: how are students being taught anti-racism when students are actively educating faculty, staff, other students, and the department?

privileges and how power is wielded. As the statement concludes in the final and fifth section, the scholars write that “[t]he above demands represent urgent matters of transforming the department’s cultures to more radically reimagine a department that is in community and actively makes the work a better place” (7).

The statement’s design is highly effective as the scholars worked extensively to use secondary sources to aid their argument, position their vulnerable selves to defend their larger argument, and provided actionable suggestions to improve department policies, procedures, and governance. Although the statement was ineffective in translating to faculty and administrators, the document will always remain a reminder about the institutional logics, oppression, and harm enacted by the college and department. As I move into the next section with this design, I will use these strategies to develop a comprehensive design to support scholarly practices—teaching, research, and community engagement—for QTBIPOC individuals within higher education. Additionally, it is important to make a note that this design will be proposed and submitted to the *Association for Teachers of Technical Writing* (ATTW) with an attempt to be published on their blog. Even though the goal is to publish through ATTW, the design will not be published unless all participants of this dissertation agree on the design. If one individual objects, the design will not be published.

#### An Activist Statement: A Call to Action

As this statement is written, it is imperative to describe where the statement will be a call to action, “hypothetically” written and presented. For this statement, I am tailoring this statement to be written on the Association of Teachers of Technical Writing’s blog page. In their blog section of their website, there is a history of past written statements that have addressed societal issues that have focused on statements on reproductive health, mourning Black violence, and

Anti-Asian racism and a call to action.<sup>19</sup> This forum provides a space where members of technical and professional communication can read, adopt, and implement these calls to action in their research, teaching, and community engagement.

As individuals read the written statement, they will recognize the statement is designed in several sections: 1) I begin with a title and a note about the where the statement derives from; 2) I include an introduction to the issues that are impacting QTLGBTQ+ communities across the country to establish the exigency, purpose, and argument for the statement, and encourage the need to implement resources in our teaching, research, and community engagement to support this community; 3) I do definitional work of survivance, amplification, and liberation as important tenets to this work; and 4) I conclude by describing how we can go about doing this work with resources listed at the end. This statement will be written in a concise manner, with the need to compose the statement in a thousand words. As noted throughout the dissertation, this statement has been reviewed by participants who had the ability to offer suggestions and changes to accurately reflect a community's call to action, and not just my own. Meaning, this work really attempts to be participatory by allowing participants the agency to comment and change any sections to make sure this statement is representative of the actual need by QTBIPOC scholars in rhetoric and technical and professional communication.

### *The Designed Statement*

ATTW Statement on Anti-LGBTQ+ Legislation: A Call to Action

June 5th, 2023

Blog

**Note:** This statement was originally written by Dr. Ruby Mendoza and their participants front

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<sup>19</sup> These statements can be viewed here: <https://attw.org/category/blog/>

their dissertation research.<sup>20</sup> As a collective community, we share this statement widely with the ATTW community to support emerging and existing scholars to encourage the field across the country to take action on LGBTQ+ discrimination to attend to institutional oppression and harm. We *demand* educators, researchers, and community members of technical writing and rhetoric to read and share the document to support LGBTQ+ faculty, students, and community members.

#### ATTW Statement on Anti-LGBTQ+ Legislation: A Call to Action

We collectively write to address the Anti-LGBTQ+ violence that continues to impact our students, colleagues, and community members. Particularly, these violent proposed and enacted bills impact Queer, Transgender, and Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (QTBIPOC). In 2023, the American Civil Liberties Union (2023) has indicated that in the last few years, the attacks on QTBIPOC individuals have astronomically increased. More troubling, in 2023 alone, Anti-LGBTQ+ legislation has reached a new record high (461 legislation proposed) that has surpassed legislation that has been proposed in 2018 through 2022 combined (361). More frightening, these attacks are mostly proposed against transgender individuals—primarily youth. With the current bill proposed, 218 of those bills are targeted to education which represents 47 percent of the total legislation proposed against LGBTQ+ individuals who work and attend these educational spaces. Thus, the need for the field of rhetoric and technical communication to protect students, educators, and staff has never been more direly needed today in our political landscape.

The anti-LGBTQ+ legislations are representative of historical attacks on the LGBTQ+ community that attempt to govern bodies to acclimate to heteronormative cultural values: white supremacy. These enactments of violences have existed well before the Stonewall, including

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<sup>20</sup> By the time this statement is hypothetically published, I will be referred to as Dr. Ruby Mendoza.

legislation in the 1950s<sup>21</sup> and the Compton Riot<sup>22</sup> in San Francisco. In 1966, the Compton Riot reflected a moment in time where transgender women responded and resisted against police sanctioned violence. Simply put, trans women used their bodies to fight against institutional logics that penalized and governed these women (physically, emotionally, and mentally) for “impersonating women” and “obstructing the sidewalk.” In 1969, the Stonewall riots<sup>23</sup> occurred where continuous police sanctioned violence occurred against LGBTQ+ community as well, where members who finally defended their livelihoods by also responding and restating these institutional logics. Since the 1960s, there are historical moments where LGBTQ+ have been impacted by state sanctioned violence, including the AIDS epidemic<sup>24</sup> that began in the 1980s, Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell<sup>25</sup> in the 1990s, and now transender health. As noted by research, these policies attempt to govern LGBTQ+ communities which impacts deeply impoverished communities. Meaning, these legislation and enactments by state sanctioned violence is representative of ableist, racist, homophobic, and transphobic responses by the government.<sup>26</sup> The consequences of these state sanctioned violence is real as we continue to see hate crimes—gun violence<sup>27</sup> and the murder of transgender women of color<sup>28</sup>—significantly increased over the years.

As rhetoric and technical and professional communication scholars, we have a responsibility to support these causes as they deeply impact our students, colleagues, and

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<sup>21</sup> Hyperlink: <https://www.hiv.gov/hiv-basics/overview/history/hiv-and-aids-timeline/>

<sup>22</sup> Hyperlink: <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2019/jun/21/stonewall-san-francisco-riot-tenderloin-neighborhood-trans-women>

<sup>23</sup> Hyperlink: <https://www.history.com/topics/gay-rights/the-stonewall-riots>

<sup>24</sup> Hyperlink: <https://www.hiv.gov/hiv-basics/overview/history/hiv-and-aids-timeline/>

<sup>25</sup> Hyperlink: <https://www.hrc.org/our-work/stories/repeal-of-dont-ask-dont-tell>

<sup>26</sup> Hyperlink: <https://www.hrc.org/our-work/stories/repeal-of-dont-ask-dont-tell>

<sup>27</sup> Hyperlink: <https://www.npr.org/2022/12/06/1140897116/colorado-lgbtq-club-shooting-suspect-set-to-return-to-court>

<sup>28</sup> Hyperlink: <https://reports.hrc.org/an-epidemic-of-violence-2022>

communities. This means we have the obligation to provide students with the resources who enact resistance practices to survive, amplify, and liberate themselves. To understand survival, amplify and liberate, we will briefly define these terms from scholars across the discipline. Then, we will provide suggestions to integrate this work in our teaching, research, and community engagement within our fields to find actionable ways to address harmful state sanctioned violence and then conclude by listing resources for those to continue this work.

### *Survivance*

Survival practices are the ways that QTBIPOC individuals navigate oppressive cistems in order to live in a colonizing world. Drawing on the concept of survivance by Gerald Vizenor (2008), he writes that “survivance is an active sense of presence over absence, deracination, and oblivion; survivance is the continuance of stories, not a mere reaction, however pertinent. Survivance is greater than the right of a survivable name” (p.1). Moreover, Ha‘āni Lucia Falo San Nicolas (2021) builds on Vizenor’s definition and writes that survivance semantically connects with the verb survive to “remain alive or in existence” (p. 22). However, San Nicolas acknowledges that the direct survivance “is entangled with white settler colonial remnants that have contributed to the vanishment of Indigeneity” (p. 22). These Indigenous scholars establish that survivance is directly related to the impacts of colonization and the removal of one’s communities cultural identity. Additionally, rhetorical scholars have also introduced the need to consider survivance. For instance, Lisa King et al. (2015) substantiate this idea as they have written that “[s]urvivance is resisting those marginalizing, colonial narratives and policies so indigenous knowledge and lifeways may come into the present with new life and new commitment to that survival” (p. 7). Meaning, survivance represents an Indigenous practice to survive against colonizing logics to support cultures that have been impacted by cistematic

oppression. This critical term is imperative for scholars to acknowledge as QTBIPOC communities are often trying to survive.

### *Amplification*

Amplification practices are integral for QTBIPOC communities that center and highlight their epistemologies that are often excluded in curriculum and dominant educational spaces. Temptuous Mckoy (2019) discusses amplification rhetorics and writes that it represents an embodied discursive and communicative practice enacted by Black/African-American people and other marginalized communities who center their epistemologies and knowledges (p. 28). Additionally, Temptuous McKoy provides three critical tenets to illustrate the complexity of amplification rhetorics: “(1) the reclamation of agency (ownership of embodied rhetorical practices), (2) the accentuation and acknowledgement of narratives (validated lived experiences), and (3) the inclusion of marginalized epistemologies (that add to new ways of learning)” (p. 28). McKoy urges the field of technical communication to acknowledge how “culture influences research and pedagogical practices” (p. 28) and the need to incorporate such critical perspectives. As McKoy asserts, “Amplification Rhetorics asks how elements of embodiment can make our field more inclusive in our knowledge-making practices and does not rely solely on the marginalized to explain or do the sole labor of making the field more inclusive” (29). Thus, amplification rhetoric also provides a critical point to highlight stories, narratives, and testimonios as not a method for survivance, but an enactment to highlight how individuals can amplify themselves and their communities who are marginalized by institutional logics.

### *Liberation*

Liberation practices are intended to provide direct spaces and avenues to allow QTBIPOC communities to move from survivance to thrivance. This means this can provide emerging



scholars to find approaches to navigate academic spaces that can help support themselves fully. Liberation represents a significant approach that derives from activist places where disempowered communities used this term to demand equality within institutional spaces where multi-marginalized lives face severe oppression and harm. For instance, in the Combahee River Collective (CRC) statement, the authors write that

the liberation of all oppressed peoples necessitates the destruction of the political-economic systems of capitalism and imperialism as well as patriarchy. We are socialists because we believe that work must be organized for the collective benefit of those who do the work and create the products, and not for the profit of the bosses. Material resources must be equally distributed among those who create these resources. (19-20).

The authors of the CRC highlights the intentional and strategic approaches to dismantle cistematic institutions and their logics to liberate disempowered communities. The authors make a cognizant effort to highlight that resources are needed to support communities who are impacted by these cistems to address institutional harm and oppression. When thinking about liberation as a practice, this represents addressing these harmful cistems for the betterment of disempowered, ignored, and devalued communities.

### *Intervening In Our Teaching, Research And Community Engagement*

The seamless threading of these terms highlight the complexity of resistance as practice: survivance, amplification, and liberation. As the field grapples with these terms, we urge the field to begin to provide support to alleviate the often sole reliance many QTBIPOC students, colleagues, and community members enact to feel heard and seen in academic spaces. As we conclude, we urge the technical communication and rhetoric scholars to integrate curriculum that not only include QTBIPOC voices, identities, and perspectives that are often excluded in

curriculum, but to begin developing assignment types that are public facing writing to consider how our work can be actionable to support our communities who are directly impacted by violent legislation. In relation to research, we urge the field to allow students to have the autonomy to research areas that are pertinent to their identities, cultures, sexualities, and communities to empower them. This means members and colleagues to do the work to find opportunities and resources that can support students who are interested in conducting life-saving research. Additionally, we also encourage the field to reckon with the idea to rethink community engagement to community accountability. Simply put, these communities do not need “engagement,” they need accountable co-conspirators. If our field wants to begin supporting QTBIPOC communities outside of the educational institution, we must reckon that these contributions must be lasting and not just for performative gestures.

Thus, we call on ourselves, members, colleagues, and friends to:

- Learn more about LGBTQ+ History<sup>29</sup>
- Learn more about active Anti-LBGTQ+<sup>30</sup> legislation occurring nationally
- Learn about the epidemic violence impacting transgender and non-conforming people<sup>31</sup>
- Learn about ongoing resources nationally by organizations<sup>32</sup>
- Learn about ongoing scholarship in our field<sup>33</sup> and organizations<sup>34</sup>

The resources listed are not representative of an exhaustive list. However, we invite those to begin understanding these conversations more critically and begin to find approaches to integrate these conversations in their scholarly practices.

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<sup>29</sup> Hyperlink: <https://www.lgbtqhistory.org/lgbt-rights-timeline-in-american-history/>

<sup>30</sup> Hyperlink: <https://www.aclu.org/legislative-attacks-on-lgbtq-rights?impact=school>

<sup>31</sup> Hyperlink: <https://reports.hrc.org/an-epidemic-of-violence-2022>

<sup>32</sup> Hyperlink: <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/resources/>

<sup>33</sup> Hyperlink: <http://www.presenttensejournal.org/volume-4/an-annotated-bibliography-of-lgbtq-rhetorics/>

<sup>34</sup> Hyperlink: <https://www.cccqueercaucus.org>

### *Notes on Statement*

The statement composed is directly related to the conversation I had with participants about how to integrate scholar practices—teaching, research, and community engagement—within our academic spaces. Many notice that the exigency is pertinent to existing scholars to work coalitionally to create actionable change within academic spaces as this work should not be solely relied on by those who are impacted by cistematic oppression. This statement attempts to showcase how our research can move beyond the theoretical and move into praxis: we can use the epistemologies we know and learn towards public facing writing.

### *Towards Co-Conspiratorship and Community Empowerment*

This chapter highlights the need to begin to consider activist statements as a critical tool to address institutional harm and oppression. More importantly, this chapter highlighted that 1) activist statements are critical tools to combat against institutional logic; 2) landscape analysis represents a critical tool to engage community empowerment to develop resources and designs; and 3) that collective participation through analysis and testimonios can create a design that can address ways to create institutional change. As this chapter concludes, it is important to remember that activist statements have been integral to urge to counter dominant discourses. Particularly, as the Eurocentric world we occupy has never included QTBIPOC embodied and lived realities in the creation of the society we live in.

## Chapter 5:

### Concluding Thoughts: Towards Justice, Healing, and Freedom

Revealing injustices and oppression to others is the next step toward addressing social justice in the field of TPC (and more generally), and it is difficult to articulate clear and straightforward strategies for revealing, since so much about how, when, whom we reveal unjust practices depends upon context and our own positionality. (p. 139)

- Rebecca Walton, Kristin Moore, and Natasha Jones (2018)

Rebecca Walton, Kristin Moore, and Natasha Jones argue that to conduct social justice work, revealing injustices and oppression is integral to support disempowered, ignored, devalued communities. From their assertion, this research is grounded in justice as this dissertation project sheds light on injustices that QTBIPOC individuals experience within academic institutions. Furthermore, this project also aims to support existing and emerging scholars across all academic disciplines, helping them to understand that they are not alone, that there is a light at the end of the tunnel when dealing with cistematic and institutional oppression in higher education. This work is grounded in coalitional action to address oppression and work together to create institutional change (Chavez, 2013; Walton, Moore, Jones, 2018).

In a collaborative co-author manuscript, I (along with fellow colleagues) have worked to shed light on injustices through written stories about our experiences through coalition. For instance, Constance Haywood, Floyd Pouncil, Stephie Kang, and I (Press) collectively wrote about our graduate student experiences as BIPOC graduate students who worked in some capacity in first-year writing at MSU, and how our positionalities, privileges, and the dynamics of power have shaped our real lived and embodied experiences. In the article, we talk about how our epistemological experiences as BIPOC individuals were lost in translation by white administrators, who neglected to hear and support us and our fellow graduate students in the ways we need them to. When we originally talked about how the conversation over Zoom while

composing that article, we noticed many moments of anger and sadness as our bodies, perspectives, and lives are often excluded in predominantly white institutional spaces (PWI). With those moments of anger and sadness, we realized that our discussions, reflections, and emotions turned away from those feelings and towards a moment of rhetorical healing (Carey, 2016).

I mention our collaborative article because we noticed that sharing our experiences was integral for us to heal. In relation to healing, Black feminist rhetorician Tamika Carey has discussed rhetorical healing and how these practices are integral for multi-marginalized scholars to grapple with cistematic harm and find ways to reclaim their agency. In *Rhetorical healing: The reeducation of contemporary Black womanhood*, Tamika L. Carey (2016) conveys that rhetorical healing “makes clear which ways of reading, knowing, and being—or literacies—writers expect individuals to recognize and demonstrate or acquire as a means for healing” (p. 7) and that “rhetorics of healing have...emerged out of the concerted efforts Black women have made to focus on their own self-preservation and survival” (p. 43). This cultural practice grounded in Black feminism highlights how multi-marginalized bodies often have to heal through rhetorical means through violence encountered by systematic harm and oppression which derives from white supremacy. However, Carey makes a point that language can restore us from the oppression that multi-marginalized individuals face in a Eurocentric world. As she writes, “Healing can involve verbal warfare and should result in a woman’s rhetorical agency. Among Black women writers of this period, acquiring knowledge of cultural memory and developing a command of language are steps to reclaiming and restoring the self” (p. 20). Using this approach through my own cultural memory and language, I attempt to reclaim and restore

myself to move beyond the traumas I encountered during my Doctoral program through my own testimonio.

I use my own testimonio to conclude this dissertation project (while co-creating with my participants work) to showcase the academic pressures, violence, and obstacles many QTBIPOC individuals face while navigating higher education. In many ways, this dissertation project enacted the same process; engaging with my participants, listening, hearing, and sharing stories of violent encounters in institutional spaces highlighted a recurring theme that our bodies and existences often struggle to be seen, heard and valued. I use my testimonio to not ridicule or demoralize a department, individuals, and the field. Rather, I call attention to highlight that these experiences are not singular, and that we need to continue to listen to testimonios and stories of individuals who share their perspectives to highlight oppression. Simply put, writing my testimonio is moving towards my own liberation and freedom. I need to share my testimonio to archive this experience while I also try to move on with my life. Although this does not fit the general move a normal conclusion chapter follows, regurgitating the whole project, I want to use this section to highlight a few experiences to showcase to my readers why this project exists. As readers read this chapter and now testimonio, I hope they understand that this work is integral to create institutional change: our stories, narratives, testimonios are worthy to critique dominant structures and organizations. In many ways, this work aims for the amplification and liberation of our disempowered communities, we are tired of surviving, we want to thrive.

In the following section, I will share about the academic pressures I faced. I will share a bit of conversation between Valentina and I and how their response to this research impacted me dearly. I discuss the grief I faced when my mother passed, the time to complete my PhD in three years instead of five due to the traumatic and turbulent experiences I faced, and I will illustrate

how my story is not singular, through my participants testimonios, I will highlight this is a institutional problem.

#### A Testimonio: The Struggle is Still Real!

*Ruby:*

Okay. All right. So interview two. So, based on the last interview, is there anything that you would like to add to your comments slash interview answers? Are there any questions or moments that you would like to revisit?

*Valentina:*

Yeah, okay. So, starting there, um, I guess something a comment that I would like to say from the interviewer is that, like, and I even emailed you after, it was easy to talk to you. And the sense that, no (reacts to my smile), and I say that because, you know, like, I'm, like, you know, like, when you apply to like, when you write those diversity statements, or like scholarship applications, like, Oh, my God, here's my trauma, and there's something that's off putting about it, right? But like talking with you, it was like, a real moment of like, you know, like, even us sharing stories.

And it was like a moment of connection. Where like, answering your questions, there was like, some, I don't want to say authenticity. But let's say like Janet Mock, there was realness, right?<sup>35</sup> To like, sharing these experiences that you know, like, there are times when I feel when I don't feel comfortable sharing these stories, when I'm like, what's the purpose? What are the stakes of sharing these experiences? Is it for like, a brochure or something? This is, I don't, I think, I probably, I mentioned that in the last interview about how like, something like add, like, this person from my undergraduate University, tell me your story is going to sell so well with our donors. (*My eyes Widened*) No, yeah, for real. And I was like, Thank you, as I wanted to say, Fuck you.

But you know, like, there's some beauty I think about like QTBIPOC connections, that it's like, it gives you a moment to breathe, and like, it really makes you feel less lonely. Um, so I guess, like, really like the comment on the interview after it's like, that's why, you know, there was like, you know, like, you were such a good interview, like, I felt that ease. And I feel like I saw you and you saw me. And it was like a beautiful moment. So I'll say that.

Relistening and re-reading these words spoken by Valentina have literal tears running down my face. I am an emotional mess for many reasons: In our interview, I finally felt seen by

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<sup>35</sup> Valentina refers to Janet Mock, Transgender writer, activist, and producer's book *Redefining Realness: My Path to Womanhood, Identity, Love & So Much More*.

another scholar who had dealt with similar issues, tensions, and violences from an academic institution; they simply and unapologetically spoke about the academic harm and oppression that exist for bodies that look like mine. More importantly, Valentina wholeheartedly allowed space to share and to listen to the ways in which they have and continue to navigate academic and scholarly harm. More incredibly, the advice by them on how to heal and protect myself once I reached the milestone of graduating and obtaining an academic job is something I will never forget.

One thing many participants did not know about during this time of interviewing and conducting research was that my mother died the day before I conducted my first interview with Valentina. I can imagine people reading this saying, “why did you not take time to grieve?” My response, re-read my dissertation. I do want to point out that although I did not take time to grieve like everyone else, I did pull away from several projects to focus on my mental health, and to grapple with the idea of death and what it means; that is how I grieved. In many ways, during this entire process, I had an existential crisis about life: I began to wonder what is the purpose of my career and moving forward knowing that my mother is no longer with me, and will I be reaching a point where I will face the same fate. Although I did not rest, I did consider it and almost took time away.

When I considered stepping away to take time to heal and to potentially take another year in the PhD program, I remembered I did not have familial and institutional support to protect me during this difficult time in my life. My family, who would do what they could to support me, also live a very impoverished life where they can barely afford to pay their rent and eat. Institutionally, meaning academically, I was reminded that my experiences at my PhD program were traumatic. I remembered I faced inadequate transgender medical support from Michigan



State University's student health center, I have been removed from teaching first-year writing at my department because I advocated for QTBIPOC students, and I have been called a loose cannon by a senior white faculty member who said the department administration viewed me this way. These occurrences had a significant impact on me professionally: I was viewed as hostile and I was removed from all teaching opportunities. Knowing that I could have taken time away, I knew that I could not remain another year and endure a potential turbulent and traumatic experience. Personally, I could not mentally, physically, and emotionally deal with this potential hypothetical situation where I would feel unsupported by my academic institution. As mentioned in the introduction, it was already challenging enough to do the PhD in three years instead of five. Thankfully, I was able to obtain a year remote by receiving my University Enrichment Fellowship in my third year while the department paid for the remaining units, resulting in me having time to be near my family while finishing the PhD in California instead of Michigan.<sup>36</sup>

Although I went home to be closer to family to attempt to heal, I faced severe challenges as the cost of living was astronomical compared to Michigan. I lost money as I had to move several times as I could not afford to rent an apartment, I had to work odd jobs because the money awarded was not enough to cover my expenses, and I had to rely on my network to sleep on their couches and/or spare rooms. I struggled.

In addition to this situation, I had to continue with my academic and personal endeavors: I had to interview participants for my dissertation, I had to participate actively in my departments job group, I had to apply to over twenty academic jobs, I had to develop materials for those job, I

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<sup>36</sup> The University Enrichment Fellowship is a prestigious award awarded to entering PhD students in the College of Arts. The fellowship recognizes academic achievement, research goals, contribution to a diverse educational community, and a record of overcoming obstacles. Those who receive the award receive full financial support their first and fifth year in the doctoral program without any commitments to an assistantship. This allows for those to focus on their coursework their first year and their research during their final year.

had to conduct research, I had to partake in numerous interviews, I had to travel for job interviews across the country, I had deal with familial and personal relationships, I had to take care of my cat, I had to give up my exercise routine because I did not have time to focus on my studies, and I had to compromise my emotional, mental, and physical health for the sake of graduating to hopefully obtain a job, and I had to remain polite and grateful to keep up appearances because I felt if I complained, I internally knew I would be deemed ungrateful and a complainer by my academic department. In my academic year of 2023-2024, I had no time to grieve my mother's passing and all the experiences I had to endure in my final year in my doctoral program as surviving outweighed everything else.

With all that said, my story is not new and it is not rare, many QTBIPOC individuals are always trying to survive to find some sort of security to stay afloat. However, the circumstances and the lack of resources are visibly present within academic institutions, and they can make QTBIPOC individuals feel as if there is no safety to find the resources needed to relieve a few tensions in one's life. Even as I conclude and share briefly my experiences, I still have to enter survival mode before entering my academic job. I simply do not have the financial resources to stay afloat with my funding and I now have to find odd jobs to alleviate the financial burden I will face. Instead of celebrating this milestone in my life of earning my doctoral degree, I have to wait as my new academic job is unable to support me during the summer. Meaning, I have to work to make sure I can live, eat, and survive before I enter my new role as an Assistant Professor.

My story highlights several things: the cistems that operate tend to vocalize how they are committed to Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Accessibility, and Justice, but how so when my testimonio and my participants' testimonio showcase that this is not true, we are still struggling

to survive within the academy. We as a field, educators, and individuals need to mobilize and find approaches to support QTBIPOC students who are trying to survive. This issue is more than a personal issue, this issue is a historical one that highlights how academic institutions are representative of colonizing desires to protect and support bodies that do not look like mine: we need to survive, amplify, and liberate QTBIPOC communities. We are tired, we deserve to be here, we deserve to succeed, we deserve to thrive.

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