

TOWARDS THE INCLUSION OF TRANS* IDENTITIES
MAKING SPACE AND CREATING CHANGE IN POSTSECONDARY INSTITUTIONS

by

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Abstract

This thesis examines the current climate of colleges and universities for trans* students in Canada. In accordance with poststructural theory, it is argued that meaning is constructed and maintained within the postsecondary social structure. An assessment of the language employed in administrative procedure, student documentation, and discrimination policies within thirteen Canadian institutions will show how the identities of trans* students must be recognized and respected to avoid systemic erasure. It will also illustrate how the gendered division of space serves to restrict access and render trans* bodies invisible. There is a dire need for linguistic and structural change in order to ensure the acknowledgement of trans* identities in all aspects of postsecondary life. This thesis calls upon postsecondary establishments to work towards the affirmation and inclusion of trans* identities while simultaneously working to address the underlying binarist, heterosexist, and cissexist structures that shape the institution.

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to the memory of Leighann Wichman, a *real* superhero whose commitment to improving the lives of queer and trans* youth in the Maritimes will never be forgotten. Her spirit and her passion live on in all of us whose lives she touched.

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Introduction

In recent years, the Western world has experienced a surge of scholarship exploring the burgeoning field of transgender studies. This surge reflects the slowly changing political climate and the rising visibility of trans* identities in various forms of media. There have been earnest attempts to protect Canadians on the grounds of gender identity for over a decade. In 2005, Member of Parliament (MP) Bill Siksay introduced the first “Trans* Rights Bill”, Bill C-389. This bill sought to amend the Human Rights Code and Criminal Code to include gender identity. Siksay continued his fight until leaving federal politics, when he passed the torch to MP Randall Garrison, who subsequently introduced Bill C-279.¹ To date, Manitoba, Newfoundland and Labrador, the Northwest Territories, Nova Scotia, Ontario, Prince Edward Island, and Saskatchewan have amended their respective human rights codes to include gender identity.²

The majority of these legal documents and proceedings use the term ‘transgender’. This is often used as an inclusive term to signify an individual who identifies psychologically and/or physically with a gender that does not correspond to the gender they were assigned at birth on the basis of biological characteristics and medical norms.³ For the purpose of this thesis, I utilize trans* where possible in an effort to encourage self-

¹ Bill C-279 is an Act that would amend the Human Rights Act to include gender identity as a prohibited ground of discrimination. It would also amend the Criminal Code to protect gender identity under section 318 and classify it as an aggravating circumstance under section 718.2.

² The Northwest Territories was the first to enact explicit protections in 2002.

³ I intend this term to be respectfully inclusive of transsexual individuals and those who identify as men and women, and not to signify solely those who wish to challenge the gender binary.

identification and signify the constructed nature of the language of gender identity. Trans* is an all encompassing term that seeks to include all individuals whose gender identity is in some way inconsistent with the socially constructed norms for their gender by virtue of their biological characteristics. I have chosen to include the asterisk as a way to signify that there is a vast continuum of gender identities (many of which are excluded by dominant terminology), and that these terms, definitions, and identities themselves are neither static nor universal.⁴

The news media has drawn some attention to the ongoing struggle for the protection of gender identity and occasionally highlights articles which capture a glimpse of trans* rights and politics. Entertainment media has tentatively begun increasing trans* visibility over the past decade as well, from controversy surrounding trans* Miss Universe Canada contestant Jenna Talackova to the addition of a trans* character on Canadian television teen drama *Degrassi*.⁵ Despite these modest advances, there is still a definite lack of trans* visibility, specifically that which explores the personal lives and experiences of trans* Canadians. Reports on issues such as Tanya Bloomfield's contentious deportation case and the public outcry surrounding Toronto couple Kathy Witterick and David Stocker's

⁴ I have chosen to use the asterisk symbol specifically for three reasons. The asterisk is used for a research technique known as 'stemming', as a search function command that automatically includes any and all additions or endings of the root word; e.g., transsexual or trans man. Similarly, many operating systems such as DOS and Linux utilize the asterisk to denote unspecified characters. Previous to these technological uses, the asterisk was used to show the passage of time or the omission of a character. In using trans*, I wish to signify that the term is inclusive of all personal and linguistic variations of trans identities which have developed over time and continue to be created. The asterisk seeks to symbolize the many identities that are often omitted or silenced without privileging dominant Anglocentric terms.

⁵ Canadian model Jenna Talackova made headlines when she became the first openly transgender contestant to enter the Miss Universe Canada pageant in 2012. She was disqualified before the competition when her trans* status was revealed; however, an ensuing legal battle won her the right to compete as she met the requirements to be legally recognized as a woman under Canadian law.

youngest child Storm are briefly in the spotlight, but content addressing the implications of living as a trans* individual in Canada and navigating social and governmental institutions is scarce.⁶

In line with the struggle for equal rights and protections across North America, the field of trans* studies and scholarship devoted to issues of gender identity has risen dramatically over the past two decades. Works addressing youth sexuality and sexual orientation remain at the forefront of anti-discrimination work and school reform; however, research and resources addressing the specific needs of trans* youth are still woefully lacking. As the collective efforts of trans* theorists, scholars, researchers, and activists continue to increase the visibility and social understanding of the trans* subject, there remains a dearth of work that recognizes the experience of trans* persons and the many challenges they face as an increasingly visible segment of society. Furthermore, there is a definite lack of research and resources which address the current personal, social, medical, and political needs of trans* communities, specifically youth. While there have been a handful of studies conducted on the experiences of trans* children in the K-12 system, the lives and voices of trans* youth in postsecondary school remain invisible and silent.

Post-secondary pursuits are often viewed to offer the opportunity to reinvent oneself. Attending college or university is largely considered an emancipatory and liberating step in Western culture and society, allowing youth the possibility to further develop their identity

⁶ Tanya Bloomfield is a transwoman who unsuccessfully attempted to obtain refugee status to avoid deportation to her hometown in Northern Ireland, where she feared she would face severe harassment and potentially violence due to her gender identity. Kathy Witterick and David Stocker made headlines due to their intent to raise their youngest child without imposing a gender identity upon them. Storm's gender as assigned at birth was not shared with their family and friends, and parents Kathy and David intend to allow Storm to self-identify when they wish. When their eldest child, Jazz, requested to be referred to with female pronouns, her parents respected and supported her decision.

and situate themselves within the world around them. University and college students may find that they are granted more anonymity, in addition to more autonomy, when pursuing higher education. The college campus is widely regarded as a diverse and accepting environment, and for many students this is a reality. However, there are some individuals whose identity is erased or delegitimized from the very start of their post-secondary experience. Transgender and non-binary students are often an invisible minority in higher education institutions.

The university is, like most social institutions, built on a heteronormative, binarist system which is, in part, upheld through gendered language. Many aspects of the institution serve to reinforce the gender binary, from identification cards to housing arrangements. This system does little to acknowledge the existence of trans* students, whose bodies and identities are subsequently silenced through the use of gendered language and space. By addressing this foundational problem in the institution through the study of language, I hope to show how this knowledge can be utilized to create inclusive spaces and services for trans* students and work to destabilize systemic maintenance of the gender binary.

This thesis is comprised of eight main sections. The first three sections seek to provide historical context, explain relevant terminology, explore existing literature, and introduce methodological frameworks. Sections four and five introduce discussions of language, intelligibility, gender attribution, and trans* bodies. The final three sections examine student documentation, accessibility, and inclusion in Canadian postsecondary institutions, providing insight on the trans* student experience, current issues, and recommendations for moving forward.

Chapter One: In the first chapter, I will explore the history of both sexual and gender identities focusing on the linguistic and medical advances of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Special attention will be paid to the contributions of European psychoanalysts and sexologists and the origins of enduring trans* vocabulary. I will then endeavour to expose the primacy of the gender binary and discuss the ways it affects the creation and use of language, the formation and validation of identity, and the structure of social institutions.

Chapter Two: The second chapter is comprised of a literature review, which will examine the diverse experiences of trans* individuals, specifically students, in social institutions. The first two sections will examine the availability of research relating to trans* students in K-12 and postsecondary programs, the prevalence of American sources, and the dearth of contributions from Canadian scholars. The third and fourth sections will seek to address the pathologization of the trans* subjects and the patent tokenism evident in a significant amount of the literature and research reviewed. I hope to show how exclusively medical and queer frameworks cannot sufficiently address the specific needs and experiences of trans* persons.

Chapter Three: The third chapter will contend that a feminist poststructural methodology provides the most constructive approach to understanding the ways in which language can be used productively to create inclusive policies and spaces and support the acceptance of diverse identities. I seek to introduce the main tenets of a poststructural approach and accordingly, I will present the contributions of French Feminist thought and several key figures in poststructuralism, namely Judith Butler and Michel Foucault. I will assess the strengths and weaknesses of various modes of inquiry often used to inform discussions of gender and sexuality.

Chapter Four: The fourth chapter will seek to explore how the social construction of language and gender impact identity formation and social inclusion. I will do this by examining the constitutive and pervasive power of gendered language through discussions of linguistic theory, simulacra, and cultural production, followed by a critique of its inherent Anglocentrism. I will undertake the contentious topic of pronouns, elucidating upon on alternative gender-neutral pronouns and questions of social intelligibility.

Chapter Five: In this chapter, I will focus upon the trans* body and problematize the traditional sex/gender binary. In so doing, I will address concepts of biological essentialism, medicalization, intersexuality, and cisgender (cis) privilege, scrutinize the practice of gender attribution, and discuss gendered intelligibility.⁷ I then hope to expose the regulation and exclusion of trans* bodies in public, gendered spaces, with a focus on the way this impacts trans* youth within social institutions.

Chapter Six: The sixth chapter will investigate the inclusion, validation, and protection of trans* students, staff, and faculty within Canadian postsecondary institutions. Having surveyed thirteen schools across Canada, I will present findings on the topics of application materials, student and faculty documentation, and gender identity protections within school harassment policies. I will also present statistics relating to harassment, discrimination, and student retention, while identifying the ways in which administrative staff and faculty can improve institutional conditions for trans* students through language and policy.

Chapter Seven: This chapter will explore issues of space and embodiment within postsecondary establishments, revealing the exclusion and invisibility of trans* bodies. I

⁷ ‘Cisgender’ and ‘cis’ refer to individuals whose gender identity is congruent with the biological sex they were assigned at birth, in line with socially constructed gender binary.

will pay particular attention to the need for gender neutral facilities and will discuss the accessibility of gendered spaces and ways to facilitate safe, respectful inclusion of trans* bodies and identities.

Chapter Eight: The final chapter will address the effects of institutional erasure and exclusion on gender identity formation, affirmation, and validation. I will attempt to show the importance of self-definition, bodily agency, and most importantly, comprehensive structural change within the institution. I will close this chapter with a discussion of ways to create effective, lasting change, including recommendations and resources to address the underlying heterosexist and binarist structures that regulate all aspects of the postsecondary establishment.

Conclusion: I plan to readdress my question of the current state of Canadian postsecondary institutions for trans* students, staff, and faculty, showing how gendered space and language render trans* bodies and identities invisible in the institution. I hope to draw new connections between educational establishments, identity formation, and the erasure of trans* identities, and shed light on the ways in which the institution can advance positive change for students of all identities.

I. Situating Trans* and Building a Vocabulary

“Complicating any discussion of transgender issues is the lack of a sufficient vocabulary. Only now are words being developed to describe the diversity of gender identity and expression.”⁸

Historiography and Early Beginnings

Over the past century there has been steady progress in the field of gender identity as reflected in the proliferation of unique and specific terminology and identity categories. In order to fully understand the modern concept of gender identity and the importance of social and institutional change moving forward, it is necessary that one recognizes the social and medical evolution of sexual and gender variant identities.

The medical understanding of gender identity grew alongside its linguistic evolution. Due to the limited understanding of sex, gender, and sexuality among both medical professionals and the public at large, many of the earliest advances in gender identity research were in the fields of sexology and psychoanalysis. Understandings of gender were innately tied to sex and sexuality, and research surrounding ‘deviant’ sexualities served to socially reinforce the emerging binary. While modern academics and activists often prefer more accessible and inclusive vocabulary to earlier, medicalized terminology, which can often denote an oppressive history, the language of the time reflects an important historical context. Through historical inquiry one can observe how sex, sexuality, and gender have been variously understood and judged in different times and in different cultures.⁹ The

⁸ Beemyn, “Serving the Needs of Transgender College Students,” 35.

⁹ Louis Crompton, *Homosexuality & Civilization* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), xiii.

modern conceptions of male and female arise from a complex history with roots all over time, space, and from across disciplines and are but a fragment of the larger picture.

To better understand modern queer and trans* identities and terminology, one must examine their roots.¹⁰ The term ‘homosexual’, derived from Latin, was intended to denote either same-sex attraction or relations and was first used publicly in 1869 along with ‘heterosexual’.¹¹ Unlike homosexuality and heterosexuality, bisexuality goes largely unmentioned in the history of sexuality research, prior to the work of Austrian neurologist Sigmund Freud [1856-1939].

Sigmund Freud is responsible for some of the most historically influential psychoanalytic research on gender and sexuality. Freud’s hypothesis was that feminine and masculine aspects and attractions were naturally present to some degree in all persons. In his words, “instinctive masculinity and femininity are present in all members of the human species, but in different proportions.”¹² Freud’s theories on homosexuality, including the positive and negative versions of the Oedipus complex, were integral to early explorations of sexual and gender identity.¹³ His psychoanalytic theories of identity formation introduced the concept that gender awareness was developed at a young age and informed by one’s perceptions of biological sex difference, based primarily upon genitalia.¹⁴ His idea

¹⁰ The terms queer and trans* are largely anachronistic in this historical context, and are used in the modern sense as an umbrella term, being regarded as more comprehensive and allowing for further self-definition.

¹¹ Susan Stryker, *Transgender History* (California: Seal Press, 2008), 37. The terms homosexual and heterosexual were coined by Karl Maria Kertbeny.

¹² Deborah Rudacille, *The Riddle of Gender* (New York: Pantheon, 2005), 106.

¹³ The term ‘Electra complex’ was coined by Freud’s contemporary Carl Jung. Despite its popularity in modern psychology, Freud used the term ‘female Oedipus complex’.

¹⁴ Victoria DeFrancisco and Catherine Palczewski, *Communicating Gender Diversity: A Critical Approach* (California: Sage Publications, 2007): 37. While Freud is commonly known to be the father of psychoanalysis, his contributions to the field have been criticized for promoting

that ‘deviant sexuality’ was a product of the process of sexual maturation held that sexual identity was not purely physiological, but influenced by many different social factors.¹⁵ Mid-nineteenth to twentieth-century conceptions of masculinity and femininity, and consequently the social construction of male and female identities, draw their roots from emerging ideas surrounding sexuality.

Like Freud, the works of Prussian-born German sexologist Magnus Hirschfeld [1868-1935] provide important historiographical context to a poststructural analysis of identity formation and gendered language. Hirschfeld’s seminal writings approached gender identity on a biological basis, which he posited was then recognized through societal structure.¹⁶ As theorist Susan Stryker writes:

His most important theoretical contribution to the study of gender and sexuality was his concept of ‘sexual intermediaries,’ the idea that every human being represented a unique combination of sex characteristics, secondary sex-linked traits, erotic preferences, psychological inclinations, and cultural acquired habits and practices.¹⁷

Hirschfeld was open about his personal sexual preference, was an advocate for people of varying gender identities and an early supporter of transgender persons and issues, writing extensively on the subject. His work *Die Transvestiten* (The Transvestites) was the first book on what would become known as the “transgender phenomenon.”¹⁸ He developed four main criteria for determining identity, which were based on: i. sexual organs; ii. physical characteristics; iii. sexual drive (libido); iv. emotional characteristics, and proposed

masculine bias and perpetuating sexist beliefs due to his controversial theories, including his Seduction Theory and the Oedipus Complex.

¹⁵ David F. Greenberg, *The Construction of Homosexuality* (Chicago: University Press, 1988), 424-425.

¹⁶ I have purposefully used the term ‘seminal’ to illustrate how many common terms and expressions draw from sexualized language and roots.

¹⁷ Stryker, *Transgender History*, 39.

¹⁸ Stryker, *Transgender History*, 39.

the concept of ‘sexual intermediaries’ as chronicled in his periodical of more than twenty years, *Jahrbuch für sexuelle Zwischenstufen* (Yearbook for Sexual Intermediaries). The purpose of this journal was to record the immense variation of possible gender identities between the oppositional poles he described as ‘absolute man’ and ‘absolute woman,’ which gave way to the rise of a plethora of new terminology and categories including psychic transsexualism, pseudo-hermaphrodites, transvestites, and androgynes, among others.

A contending term which emerged alongside Hirschfeld’s ‘transvestite’ was ‘sexo-aesthetic inversion,’ as introduced by Havelock Ellis [1859-1939] in 1913.¹⁹ Despite linguistic reference to sexual inversion in the works of Ellis, Freud, and their contemporaries, some scholars contend that historical reference to sexual inversion refers not exclusively or specifically to LGB persons but rather gender inversion, a larger category of individuals who may or may not have included some homosexuals.²⁰ Ellis considered there to be two categories of trans* persons: those whose desire ends at the point of dressing as the opposite gender and those who feel they truly belong in another body and gender entirely. This marked one of the earliest distinctions between the term transvestism and what would become known as transsexualism.²¹ This distinction would be expanded upon in the works of endocrinologist Harry Benjamin [1885-1986]. Benjamin developed a diagnostic scale to chart the continuum of gender identity from ‘pseudo transvestite’ to ‘true transsexual’. The ‘Sex Orientation Scale’ (SOS) mirrored the first sexual orientation

¹⁹ This term would later become known as ‘Eonism’. Vern Bullough, “Transgenderism and the Concept of Gender,” in *International Journal of Transgenderism* 4:3 (2000); Harry Benjamin, *The Transsexual Phenomenon* (Düsseldorf: Symposium Publishing, 1999):10.

²⁰ Prosser, “Transsexuals and the Transsexologists: Inversion and the Emergence of Transsexual Subjectivity,” in *Sexology in Culture: Labelling Bodies and Desires*, eds. Lucy Bland and Laura Doan (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998): 117. This concept of ‘gender inversion’ referred to individuals who identified with a gender inconsistent with their gender assigned at birth.

²¹ Benjamin, *The Transsexual Phenomenon*, 22.

continuum developed in 1948 by Alfred Kinsey.²² Benjamin is also responsible for developing some of the first sex reassignment surgery (SRS) standards and procedures as well as clinical resources.²³

Benjamin, Ellis, Hirschfeld, and their contemporaries worked with academic and scientific institutions in order to increase education, awareness, and tolerance on the topic of sexual and gender variance. Hirschfeld was one of the founding members of the Scientific-Humanitarian Committee in 1897, which was the first LGBT rights organization in the world, which worked for "...social reform on behalf of sexual minorities."²⁴ In 1919, he founded the Institute for Sexual Science in Berlin, and in 1928, he founded the World League for Sexual Reform.²⁵ These organizations, specifically the Berlin Institute, were exceedingly important in the progression of social movements and academic research surrounding gender identity in the early twentieth century.

Hirschfeld was just one of numerous individuals studying sexology and psychology who were exploring the theory of the "third sex" around the turn of the century.²⁶ His 1904 publication *Berlins drittes Geschlecht* (Berlin's Third Sex) further popularised this term, which would advance the study of non-binary identities and show that the idea of the third sex has been characterized in many different ways across cultures and throughout history.

The theory of the third sex first surfaced in the West in Plato's *Symposium* and was explored

²² Bullough, "Transgenderism and the Concept of Gender."

²³ Nikki Sullivan, *A Critical Introduction to Queer Theory* (New York: New York University Press, 2003): 102; Benjamin, *Transsexual Phenomenon*.

²⁴ Stryker, *Transgender History*, 39.

²⁵ Stryker, *Transgender History*, 39.

²⁶ Greenberg, *The Construction of Homosexuality*, 410. Around this time the concept of the third sex was fluid and unstable. It was used at times for individuals who may be considered trans* or non-binary in modern terms, as well as those with ambiguous biological sex characteristics who would later be termed 'intersex'. The support and interest surrounding this premise is exhibited in Hirschfeld's annual journal.

further by Théophile Gautier in 1835.²⁷ Writer Karl Heinrich Ulrichs is traditionally credited with the academic and scientific popularization of the term, which he used to describe individuals thought to exist in the space between heterosexual man and heterosexual woman, combining emotional and physical aspects of both sexes.²⁸ He proposed the term ‘Uring’, which referred to an individual who had a ‘female mind’ trapped within a male body, “*anima muliebris corpore virili inclusa.*”²⁹ His theories on sexuality helped influence his interpretation of the third sex. Inspired by the discovery that the developmental tissue of reproductive organs in embryonic humans was homologous in early developmental stages, he deduced that sexual preference was both innate and biological, just like these organs.³⁰ He named persons belonging to the third sex with a new term, ‘Uranians,’ a term that encompassed both males ‘Urnings’ and females ‘Dailings’.³¹ From his studies, Ulrichs concluded that individuals were born with a predisposition to what might be considered deviant sexual attraction or behaviour; therefore, they should not be punished nor ostracized for their identities or actions.³²

²⁷ Greenberg, *The Construction of Homosexuality*, 406.

²⁸ Ulrichs’ concept of the third sex appears to have combined elements of homosexual desire as well as gender variance.

²⁹ John Money, "Androgyne Becomes Bisexual in Sexological Theory: Plato to Freud and Neuroscience," *Journal of the American Academy of Psychoanalysis* 18:3 (1990): 392-413. ‘Urnings’ and female ‘Dailings’ were individuals who fell within the category of third sex. Their psyche was considered to be inconsistent with their gender assignment, and they also exhibited homosexual desire or behaviours. In modern terms, ‘Dailing’ may correspond to a female identified person assigned male at birth who is attracted to other women, e.g., a queer or lesbian transwoman.

³⁰ Greenberg, *The Construction of Homosexuality*, 408.

³¹ Scott Lively and Kevin Abrams, *The Pink Swastika* (Fifth Edition for Internet, 2002), 20; The term was adapted from Plato’s *Symposium* in which same-sex activity was protected under the jurisdiction of Urania, the ninth muse.

³² Greenberg, *The Construction of Homosexuality*, 409.

The concept of a ‘third sex’ was and is integral to the study of gender constructs and dimorphism and is still considered an identity category in a variety of cultures worldwide.³³ It is important to acknowledge these historical roots in order to understand how early theories of gender identity have played a constitutive role in shaping modern trans* politics and language.

Evolving Language and Trans* Terminology

trans. from latin *trāns* / trɑ:nz/ adj. change, across, beyond

gender. from latin *genus* /'dʒɛndə/ noun. the state of being male or female

As the European and Western world witnessed the birth of inaugural terminology such as transvestism and eonism, debate surrounding the meaning of sex and gender surfaced. Gender, deriving from the Latin *genus*, is a term that has been used for centuries in linguistic discourse. Nouns in the Romance languages (among others) were designated as feminine or masculine, and sometimes neuter.³⁴ Until the mid-twentieth century, this understanding of gender was predominantly found in the realm of linguistics. Parallel to up and coming theories of sex and gender put forth by feminist intellectuals, medical advances highlighted the need for an expanded vocabulary.

³³ See: Amara das Wilhelm, *Tritiya-Prakriti: People of the Third Sex*, (Philadelphia: Xlibris Corporation, 2003); Gilbert H. Herdt, *Third Sex, Third Gender: Beyond Sexual Dimorphism in Culture and History*, (New York: Zone Books, 1996); Evan B. Towle and Lynn M. Morgan, “Romancing the Transgender Native: Rethinking the Use of the ‘Third Gender’ Concept,” in *The Transgender Studies Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 666-684.

³⁴ The Romance languages were derived from non-Classical sociolects of Latin. Examples include French, Italian, Spanish, and Romanian.

The earliest documentation of rudimentary methods of medical and surgical intervention for sex reassignment was in the late nineteenth century.³⁵ The first recorded hormonal and surgical “full sex transition” was in early 1940, preceding the rise of the term ‘transsexual’, first used in 1949.³⁶ This gradual development of medical options for individuals seeking to transition physically is largely due to the efforts of Harry Benjamin.³⁷ The development of hormone replacement therapies and various surgical procedures (such as sexual reassignment surgery) during the second half of the twentieth-century produced the need for new medical terminology and prompted the creation of additional labels and corresponding sub-classifications for trans* and transitioning individuals.³⁸ In 1955, controversial sexologist John Money became one of the first to define ‘gender’ in the social sciences and medicine. His adoption of gender as a comprehensive blanket term to extricate biological sex from concepts of femininity, masculinity and embodied conduct gave rise to a new social meaning of gender. This distinction differentiated biological sex from somatic and social aspects of gender, with the former being comprised of genetics, hormones, and external genitalia.³⁹ Money’s research led him to the treatment of David and Brian Reimer, now renowned as the “John/Joan” case.⁴⁰ In 1955, he introduced the term ‘gender role,’

³⁵ Zachary Nataf, *Lesbians Talk Transgender*, (London: Scarlet Press, 1996).

³⁶ While Christine Jorgenson’s 1952 transition is often cited as being the first, Dr. Michael Dillon completed what medicine considered ‘full’ SRS in 1945, having undergone hormone replacement therapy and thirteen surgeries. Jorgenson is arguably the first female transsexual documented to obtain full SRS. Prosser, “Transsexuals and the Transsexologists: Inversion and the Emergence of Transsexual Subjectivity,” 118; Sullivan, *A Critical Introduction to Queer Theory*, 103-104.

³⁷ Prosser, “Transsexuals and Transsexologists,” 118, 123; Sullivan, *A Critical Introduction to Queer Theory*, 102.

³⁸ Many of these medical procedures were developed in part by Harry Benjamin.

³⁹ Bullough, “Transgenderism and the Concept of Gender.”

⁴⁰ For further information on this case as well as Money’s medical practice see Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender* (New York: Routledge, 2004): 59-79; Terry Goldie, *The Man Who Invented*

which later broke into three concepts: gender role, gender identity, and sexual orientation. The term ‘gender identity’ was first used in the early 1960s and was simultaneously adopted by several prominent figures in the medical community. The earliest known definition of ‘gender identity’ was “a young child’s developing a fundamental sense of belonging to one sex, and not the other.”⁴¹

As the use of gender increased in both medical and social contexts, so did the need for distinction between sex and gender as well as between gender identity and sexual orientation. Canadian professor Viviane Namaste is among several scholars exploring the intertwined early understandings of sex and gender, meanings that put forth masculinity and femininity as “natural, complementary extremes of heterosexuality.” They posit that this dichotomous view has lead homosexuality and other non-heterosexual identities to be historically associated with gender inversion.⁴² The muddling of these concepts undoubtedly encumbered their move into common language. In her work “Transgendering”, Kimberly Tauches presents a clear and concise breakdown of these interconnected ideas:

Sex refers to a biological categorization based upon examination of the genitals, chromosomes, and/or hormones. Gender is the social traits and behaviours that are expected to be on display depending on your biological sex. Sexuality can be either an identity or an act. As an identity, it is based on an individual’s object of sexual desire. As an

Gender, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2014); *Dr Money and the Boy with No Penis*, (London: BBC Horizon, 2004).

⁴¹ Kenneth Zucker, “Biological Influences on Psychosexual Differentiation,” in *Handbook of the Psychology of Women and Gender*, ed. Rhonda K. Unger (New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, 2001), 102.

⁴² Viviane Namaste, *Invisible Lives: The Erasure of Transsexual and Transgendered People* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000): 143; Gayle Rubin, “Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality” in *Culture, Society and Sexuality: A Reader*, eds. Richard Parker and Peter Aggleton (London: UCL Press, 1999); Gill Valentine, “(Hetero)Sexing Space: Lesbian Perceptions and Experiences of Everyday Spaces,” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 11:4 (1993): 410.

act, it is based on sexual acts performed whether for pleasure or reproduction.⁴³

As the divide between sex and gender became clearer, feminist voices began exploring the sex-gender relationship and the concept of social construction in lieu of causality.

The popularized idea of gender as a social construct as opposed to the biological construction of sex grew in the mid twentieth century through the work of feminist theorists.⁴⁴ This differentiation was used to challenge existing gender roles and question the inherent stability and meaning of the concept. While the concept of gender may appear stable, its meaning has varied through time and space. Its social construction is evident when one considers the mutable meanings assigned to the word throughout history and across different cultures. The polarized understanding of gender can be examined by exploring past and present ideas of masculinity and femininity. Professor of Sociology Kimberly Tauches illustrates this as follows: “the definition of what is considered feminine has changed. White middle-class women are now able to work outside the home without having their femininity questioned, whereas in the 1950s such women would have been considered non-feminine.”⁴⁵

Considering the idea of gender as a social construction and distancing the concepts of sex and gender is beneficial when discussing what I term the ‘language of gender identity’. Any discussion of trans* identities and issues is complicated by debate surrounding the roots and etymology of these terms in addition to vague and lacking

⁴³ Kimberly Tauches, “Transgendering,” in *Handbook of the New Sexuality Studies*, eds. Steven Seidman et al., (New York: Routledge, 2006): 186.

⁴⁴ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990).

⁴⁵ Tauches, “Transgendering,” 187.

vocabulary and terminology. The language of gender identity is expanding even now and is in constant flux as terms are reclaimed, resignified and reappropriated. In his work on trans* students, Genny Beemyn posits this challenge, explaining that “it is not simply the absence of terminology that has been problematic; existing language also fails to capture the complexities of gender.”⁴⁶ Two of the most universal existing terms are ‘transsexual’ and ‘transgender’, neither of which quite captures the complex nature of trans* identities according to their etymology and modern definitions. Despite their integration into the greater English vocabulary, few people outside of the trans* community appear to comprehend the difference between these two words. This is evidenced in the persistent use of *transgendered* as well as the frequency with which they are used interchangeably.⁴⁷ The term *transsexual*, as previously discussed, emerged from the world of medicine and psychology. In the words of scholar and activist Susan Stryker, “transsexuality is considered to be a culturally and historically specific transgender practice/identity through which a transgendered subject enters into a relationship with medical, psychotherapeutic, and juridical institutions in order to gain access to certain hormonal and surgical technologies for enacting and embodying itself.”⁴⁸ As trans* knowledges emanated from scientific and medical discourse, the understanding of *transsexual* was intrinsically tied to medical intervention and clinical diagnosis. At the opposite end of Benjamin’s identity spectrum

⁴⁶ Beemyn, “Serving the Needs of Transgender College Students,” *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Issues in Education* 1:1 (2003): 35.

⁴⁷ *Transgendered* is used frequently in the media, within activist communities, in medical contexts, and even in academic works. Transgender must be understood as an adjective, describing who one is. It is not a condition or disease one is afflicted with, and it is not a verb. An individual does not and cannot ‘transgender’, nor are they ‘transgendered’.

⁴⁸ Stryker, “My Words to Victor Frankenstein Above the Village of Chamounix: Performing Transgender Rage,” 252.

from cross-dressing, transsexuality was quantified in terms of ‘treatment’ and mandated hormonal and surgical intervention, specifically SRS.

While initially viewed as a more absolute or authentic trans* identity, it became clear that not all trans* persons experienced the same desires to modify their bodies, much less in terms of a ‘full’ SRS transition. Taking into account the burgeoning definition of gender, the term transgender was introduced to encompass trans* identities elsewhere on and outside of Benjamin’s SOS spectrum. The term transgender began to gain traction in the 1980s in response to the increasingly narrow criteria of transsexuality. Many academics and activists consider it to be an inclusive term that embraces all gender identities. Phyllis Frye, a law scholar, long-time activist, and the first openly trans* judge in the United States, explains ‘transgender’ as a “political term created to fill the need for self-definition by the transgender community.”⁴⁹ In her work *A Critical Introduction to Queer Theory*, scholar Nikki Sullivan discusses the adoption of transgender to refer to:

A wide range of gender-ambiguous identities including cross-dressers, drag queens and kings, intersexed people, hermaphrodykes, people who modify their bodies in a variety of ways and to varying degrees with or without hormones and/or surgery, [...] bi-gendered individuals, those who see themselves as belonging to a 'third sex', androgynes, transsexuals, cyborgs, queers, and so on.⁵⁰

I use transgender as an inclusive term to signify an individual who identifies psychologically and/or physically with a gender that does not correspond to the biological sex to which they were assigned at birth. Two decades following its publication, Stryker’s succinct definition of transgender as “an umbrella term that refers to all identities or practices that cross over,

⁴⁹ Phyllis Randolph Frye, "Facing Discrimination, Organizing for Freedom: The Transgender Community," in *Creating Change: Sexuality, Public Policy, and Civil Rights*, ed. John D'Emilio, William B. Turner, and Urvashi Vaid (New York: St. Martin's, 2000), 460.

⁵⁰ Sullivan, *A Critical Introduction to Queer Theory*, 112.

cut across, move between, or otherwise queer socially constructed sex/gender boundaries,” serves as my ultimate reference point. I refrain from using the term transsexual due to the politics and prescriptive identity it embodies. Likewise, I avoid use of the term ‘sex’ to avoid privileging biological gender above other defining aspects, instead using biological gender or ‘sex as assigned at birth’ where necessary.⁵¹ I also introduce gender nonconforming, which generally refers to an individual whose identity is incongruent with their sex as assigned at birth.⁵² This may mean that their gender identity is fluid and changing or that their identity falls outside or in between the two socially prescribed gender categories.

Carrera et al. discuss further that non-normative gender experiences, which do not conform to the binary, are evidence of the inadequacies and shortcomings of the system.⁵³ In addition, throughout much of history, one can find traces of cultural identities that fall outside of the accepted binary as well as individuals who have challenged social gender norms.⁵⁴ Two-spirited individuals are largely recognized and celebrated in First Nations cultures, despite their crossing of traditional gender boundaries.⁵⁵ Similarly, one can find

⁵¹ Exceptions will be made when referencing sex as commonly used terminology or citing research sources. Scholars such as Bornstein and Beemyn also employ this strategy.

⁵² Gender nonconforming is meant to be inclusive of a variety of terms of self-identification including gender bending, genderqueer, and agender.

⁵³ Carrera et al., “Sex/Gender Identity: Moving Beyond Fixed and ‘Natural’ Categories,” 995-996; Suzanne Kessler, *Lessons from the Intersexed* (Piscataway: Rutgers University Press, 1998).

⁵⁴ See: Bullough, 1975; Feinberg, *Transgender Warriors: Making History from Joan of Arc to RuPaul*. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996); Stryker, 2008; and Towle and Morgan, 2006.

⁵⁵ See: Horizon, 2004; Jessica Hutchings and Clive Aspin, *Sexuality and the Stories of Indigenous People* (Wellington: Huia Publishers, 2007); Sabine Lang, “Lesbians, Men-Women and Two-Spirits: Homosexuality and Gender in Native American Cultures,” in *Female Desires: Same-Sex Relations and Transgender Practices Across Cultures*, eds. Evelyn Blackwood and Saskia E. Wieringa (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999); Towle and Morgan, 2006; Sue Ellen Jacobs, Thomas Wesley, and Sabine Lang eds. *Two-Spirit People: Native American Gender Identity, Sexuality, and Spirituality* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997).

many other such identities worldwide, such as the *xanith* in Oman, the *muxe* of Isthmus of Tehuantepec in Mexico, the *hijras* of India, and the *kathoeys* of Thailand.⁵⁶ These are all examples of identities that do not conform to the traditional binary yet have been named and legitimized nonetheless.⁵⁷

‘Intersex’ is a medical term that refers to individuals whose sex at birth does not fit into current medical classifications of biologically male or female bodies.⁵⁸ While intersex is at times added to the LGBTQI acronym and often included in broad definitions of trans* identities, it is important to remember that intersex individuals may not identify within queer or trans* communities. As the concept of trans* is still relatively new today, it is not surprising that some individuals made the choice to use the early terminology of hermaphroditism, and later, intersex in order to make sense of their condition and help make it comprehensible to others. Some transsexual persons went so far as to portray themselves as intersex in an attempt to determine a biological basis for their identities and in hopes of pursuing surgical treatment.⁵⁹ While adults may have claimed intersex in order to obtain medical intervention, there is a long history of controversial surgical intervention in intersex infants and children in an attempt to force their bodies to conform to biological sex norms. This shows that even medical science is, to some extent, socially constructed.⁶⁰ Over time,

⁵⁶ Carrera et al., “Sex/gender Identity: Moving Beyond Fixed and ‘Natural’ Categories,” 997; Oralia Gómez-Ramírez, “Trans Rights in Mexico and Canada: Queering the Geopolitics of Privilege,” (Teaching Equity Matters E-Book Series, 2012): 42-44; Miriam Meyerhoff, “Claiming a Place: Gender, Knowledge, and Authority as Emergent Properties” in *The Handbook of Language and Gender* (Maiden: Blackwell Publishing, 2003) 302-326; Tauches, “Transgendering,” 190.

⁵⁷ Though this discussion deserves further attention it falls beyond the scope of this paper.

⁵⁸ Dean Spade, *Normal Life* (Brooklyn: South End Press, 2011), 16.

⁵⁹ Joanne Meyerowitz, “A ‘Fierce and Demanding’ Drive,” in *The Transgender Studies Reader* (New York: Routledge), 367-368.

⁶⁰ Carrera et al., “Sex/Gender Identity: Moving Beyond Fixed and ‘Natural’ Categories,” 997.

many intersex persons, doctors, and scholars have deemed this practice unethical and consequently, there has been extensive advocacy work in order to preserve an individual's right to self-identify and choose whether or not they will pursue medical procedures.⁶¹

There are several phrases that may be employed to include 'sexual minorities' and 'gender minorities' without using terminology which assumes either identity or orientation. Sexual minority is a catch-all term that was first used in the 1960s and has experienced a resurgence of late.⁶² Canadian political science instructor Alexa DeGagne explains this term from an academic perspective: "Following liberal equal rights-based politics, the concept 'sexual minorities' emulates the concept of ethnic minorities: both terms are used to demonstrate that their respective minorities are in need of state protection against the interests and wills of ethnic and sexual majorities."⁶³ Gender minority is relatively newer and is most often used in the neologism gender and sexual minorities, GSM, which provides inclusive categorization without labelling or naming identities therein.

Trans/Gender Politics and Gender Binarism

As this terminology shows, reducing gender to biological sex categories reinforces biological determinism, which does not consider or recognize other aspects of gender construction nor the way in which individuals experience biological gender.⁶⁴ For this reason, it is important to consciously extricate gender from sex as well as sexuality.

⁶¹ Spade, *Normal Life*, 16.

⁶² Alexa DeGagne, "Queering the Language of 'Sexual Minorities' in Canada," (Teaching Equity Matters E-Book Series, 2012): 24.

⁶³ DeGagne, "Queering the Language of 'Sexual Minorities' in Canada," 24.

⁶⁴ Kate Bornstein, *Gender Outlaw: On Men, Women, and the Rest of Us* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994): 30; Victoria DeFrancisco, Danielle McGeough and Catherine Palczewski, *Gender in Communication: A Critical Introduction* (California: Sage Publications, 2014): 9.

There has long been confusion over the relationship between sexuality and gender identity, namely the misconception that they are related or mutually dependent in some way. Once it is acknowledged that gender identity and biological sex are not interdependent, one must question the basis of this supposition. This can be partially explained through society's 'need to know' and discomfort with persons or concepts that cannot be easily categorized or understood. The need for intelligibility is a key factor when considering society's understanding of trans* identities. Kimberly Tauches seeks to explain the basis of such thought processes: "Since sex is seen as binary, and male and female genitals are necessary for heterosexuality, gender differentiation is seen as desirable. If there was no way to distinguish between men and women, then it would be nearly impossible to tell whether a person is engaged in heterosexual or homosexual relations."⁶⁵ The primary binary conceptions of what constitutes a 'real' man or woman are based on heteronormativity; therefore, femininity and masculinity are seen as being mutually exclusive. Equally, the view that femininity and masculinity are mutually exclusive and complimentary implies that heterosexual orientation is normative, thus maintaining both heteronormative and cisnormative social structures.⁶⁶

One of the earliest discussions of the importance of denaturalizing the gender binary and recognizing the sex/gender divide was put forth by Simone de Beauvoir in her essential work, *The Second Sex*.⁶⁷ First published in French in 1949, *The Second Sex* asserted that

⁶⁵ Tauches, "Transgendering," 189.

⁶⁶ Tauches, "Transgendering," 189.

⁶⁷ Simone de Beauvoir, *Le deuxième sexe* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1949). While Foucault and Beauvoir should not be considered contemporaries, it is notable to mention they were known to have a rather cold and tenuous relationship. Foucault criticized Beauvoir's Marxist beliefs and was known to "actively dislike her," while Beauvoir considered Foucault's ideology to be *bourgeois*. See: Kelly, *Foucault's 'History of Sexuality Volume I, The Will to Knowledge,*

individuals were not born men or women, but rather became such through their experiences in a society where the nature of one's gender was socially constructed. This suggestion was revolutionary and extremely influential in the soon-to-follow Second Wave feminist movement as well as early notions of gender identity. Her introductory sentence sums up the problematic nature of the gender binary quite well, showing the narrow, constructed understanding of the genders that plagues our history: "Woman? Very simple, say the fanciers of simple formulas: she is a womb, an ovary; she is female – this word is sufficient to define her."⁶⁸ This work set a precedent in challenging the idea that biological gender creates the basis for gender identity.⁶⁹

One must also recognize the usage of the term 'gender' as a site of contest for political interests, among others. Butler explores the way that the United States perceives gender as a tool to mollify feminist politics by reducing gender to "discursive marking of masculine and feminine, understood as constructions that might be studied outside a feminist framework or as simple self-productions, manufactured cultural effects of some kind."⁷⁰ Gender can also be used as a tool to shake the foundations of societies and cultures built upon the dimorphic gender system. Challenging binary structures can serve to destabilize oppositional understandings of man/woman, masculinity/femininity, and heterosexuality/homosexuality and, in so doing, undermine structures of gender both politically and institutionally.⁷¹

(Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh Press, 2013): 122; and Macey, *The Lives of Michel Foucault*, (London: Hutchinson, 1993): 32, 173-7, 446.

⁶⁸ Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 3.

⁶⁹ To explore ways in which gender and social norms can be conversely used as a basis for sex as well as what constitutes 'normal' genital appearance see Kessler, 1998.

⁷⁰ Butler, *Undoing Gender*, 184.

⁷¹ Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, 33-38, 187-188; Judith Lorber, "Using Gender to Undo Gender: A Feminist Degendering Movement," in *Feminist*

In this thesis I hope to propose ways in which language can be used as a tool to disrupt binarist, heterosexist, and cissexist structures within post-secondary institutions in order to create safe, inclusive, and nurturing environments for students of all gender identities.

Theory 1:1 (2000): 88; Namaste, Namaste, Viviane. "Addressing the Politics of Social Erasure: Making the Lives of Transsexual People Visible," 32-33.

II. Literature Review

“Gender is the poetry each of us makes out of the language we are taught.”⁷²

Starting a New Chapter

Perhaps the most relevant finding in my quest for literature on gender identity in postsecondary institutions was simply the lack thereof. While not necessarily surprising, it was interesting to see that the vast majority of research, resources, and procedural guidelines were oriented towards K-12 school systems. While it is heartening to see the substantial increase in literature devoted to creating safe and inclusive school spaces and encouraging the adoption of policies surrounding gender identity, preferred names, and gendered access, there remains a notable lack of resources which focus on university and college climates. While certain aspects of school policy reform can be adapted for use in postsecondary institutions, there are scant studies or recommendations that focus exclusively on the chapter of a student’s life following their high school graduation.⁷³

Studies show that the number of trans* students pursuing postsecondary education is rising.⁷⁴ However, there are few publications which address this fact in relation to findings that place trans* students at a considerably higher risk of experiencing physical violence and

⁷² Leslie Feinberg, *Trans Liberation: Beyond Pink and Blue*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1998): 10.

⁷³ This applies to those individuals who desire to pursue postsecondary education.

⁷⁴ This statement may also be in part attributed to a greater number of students feeling comfortable disclosing their identity in documentation or research due to an increasingly tolerant social climate. Beemyn, “Serving the Needs of Transgender College Students,” *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Issues in Education* 1:1 (2003): 33-50; McKinney, “On the Margins: A Study of the Experiences of Transgender College Students,” *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Issues In Education* 3:1 (2005): 63-75.

other forms of discrimination in comparison to their cisgender peers.⁷⁵ Despite evidence of the prevalence of institutional transphobia in both the United States and Canada, there is a notable lack of empirical research on discrimination, intolerance, and violence, specifically within the educational context.⁷⁶

Within the K-12 setting, there is a profusion of guides, published primarily by provincial school boards, that tackle the LGBT student experience. While the majority of these are focused almost entirely on a student's real or perceived sexual orientation, a handful of guides addressing the specific topics of gender identity and gender expression have emerged over the past decade. The first official Canadian publication which focused on gender identity in schools was *Questions & Answers: Gender Identity in Schools*, released in 2010 by the Public Health Agency of Canada. *Questions & Answers* serves as an introduction to gender identity and creating a safe and welcoming environment. This brief administrative handbook, available in both French and English, provided an excellent foundation for subsequent provincial and school board guides. Two key examples of such texts include *TDSB Guidelines for the Accommodation of Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming Students and Staff*, published by the Toronto District School Board in 2011 and *Guidelines for Supporting Transgender and Gender-Nonconforming Students*, a comprehensive publication from the Nova Scotia Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. These inaugural policy guidelines are devoted exclusively to issues of gender identity and gender expression and build upon *Questions & Answers* by delving deeper into the ways in which schools can create safe, accessible spaces and respect,

⁷⁵ Darryl Hill and Brian Willoughby, "The Development and Validation of the Genderism and Transphobia Scale," *Sex Roles* 53:7/8 (2005): 531-544.

⁷⁶ Hill and Willoughby, "The Development and Validation of the Genderism and Transphobia Scale."

affirm, and support a student's identity. The overall themes and policy suggestions explored in these K-12 guidelines lay the groundwork for the adaptation and implementation of successful postsecondary policy.

With the proliferation of literature concerning queer students over the past few decades, the discussion of gender identity has slowly begun to gain traction within the greater context of LGBT works. However, the bulk of these comprehensive studies still focus on the K-12 system. As stated, while the main ideas of these works can be adapted to better suit the postsecondary institution, there remains a dire need for university-specific texts. Unlike provincial education systems that govern their respective school boards and publically funded schools, universities customarily have full authority over their institution's priorities, academic standards, and student policies.⁷⁷

Neighbouring Knowledges

From its inception, the field of trans* research has been dominated by American studies. Only recently have an increasing number of Canadian texts begun contributing to the discussion. The key works I utilize in this dissertation are mainly of American origin due to this dearth of current Canadian literature. The founding members of the academic field of transgender studies are primarily from the United States. Trans* pioneer Susan Stryker published her first article, "My Words to Victor Frankenstein Above the Village of Chamounix: Performing Transgender Rage" in 1994.⁷⁸ Twenty-one years later, Stryker remains a monumental figure in the field and has contributed award-winning anthology *The*

⁷⁷ Orton, "Statistics Canada's Definition and Classification of Postsecondary and Adult Education Providers in Canada," 16.

⁷⁸ This pivotal work was one of the first to argue that the term transsexual was not necessarily meant to reinforce or adhere to the dominant male/female binary.

Transgender Studies Reader, among additional articles, books, and films. While Stryker does not examine the lives of trans* youth exclusively, no exploration of trans* issues would be complete without reference to her works, which provide essential historical and academic context to any discussion of gender identity.

The key studies utilized in this thesis are almost entirely focused on American schools and colleges. The majority of Canadian sources focus broadly on LGBT students, and even then there are few that discuss the postsecondary experience explicitly. The principal source of Canadian knowledge has been drawn directly from institutional policies and application documents along with relevant articles, the majority of which have been published in student newspapers. From the many articles and books consulted, the numerous works of Genny Beemyn stand out for hir dedication to exploring trans* issues exclusively.⁷⁹ Beemyn's contributions to this field examine issues of documentation and facility access primarily from both university and community college perspectives. I have consulted several other valuable articles which explore various aspects of supporting trans* youth in postsecondary spaces, in addition to five small-scale studies completed within the past decade which zero in on the trans* postsecondary population.⁸⁰ While there were few Canadian sources to be found, there was also a remarkably small fraction of international scholars among the English body of knowledge. The limited reports from outside of North America were predominantly Nordic in origin.

⁷⁹ See Beemyn 2003, 2005a, 2005b, Beemyn et al. 2005c, and 2012.

⁸⁰ For articles see: Bilodeau 2005, 2009; Marine and Chase 2015; and Seelman 2014. For studies see: Dugan, Kusel and Simounet 2012; Krum, Davis and Galupo 2013, McKinney 2005; Pusch 2005; and Singh, Meng and Hanson 2013.

The Pathologised Subject

The large majority of research I have encountered pertaining to trans* youth and students is specific to the fields of medicine and psychology. This speaks to the endurance of the historical medicalization of trans* identities and bodies. It is important to be aware of the proclivity to pathologisation present in this context, and therefore the content of such texts, in order to address the inherent bias. This point is discussed further in the works of Viviane Namaste, who explains “most of the academic approaches to transsexuality argue that transsexuals are produced by the medical and the psychiatric establishment.”⁸¹

Many studies of gender identity and identity formation rely on pathologised models of development that do not accurately reflect individual experience or diverse identities.⁸² This mirrors the dominant discourse which often pathologises trans* persons on the basis of Gender Identity Disorder (GID) and considers this diagnosis to be necessary for an individual to transition or be considered an intelligible trans* subject. Aaron Devor’s article in *Transgender Subjectivities: A Clinician’s Guide* is an example of a text that acknowledges the fluidity and differing degrees of transition and personal identification without medicalizing the subject. His work introduces a fourteen stage model of transsexual identity development which acknowledges social context and explores its application to transgender identities.⁸³

⁸¹ Namaste, “Addressing the Politics of Social Erasure: Making the Lives of Transsexual People Visible,” 31.

⁸² Bilodeau, “Beyond the Gender Binary: A Case Study of Two Transgender College Students at a Midwestern Research University,” *Journal of Gay and Lesbian Issues in Education* 3:1 (2005): 29–44.

⁸³ Aaron Devor, “Witnessing and Mirroring: A Fourteen Stage Model of Transsexual Identity Formation,” in *Transgender Subjectivities: A Clinician’s Guide*, edited by Ubaldo Leli, and Jack Drescher (Binghamton: The Haworth Medical Press, 2004): 41-67. Devor also acknowledges the inherent biological essentialism present in many past works regarding identity formation.

While the majority of research appears to stem from the field of health, resources that address the unique needs of trans* students in terms of health, wellness, and counselling is scant. While these issues may be touched upon in a larger discussion of school climate, the works of Genny Beemyn stand out as the only in depth discussions surrounding trans* health in the postsecondary institution.⁸⁴ In research on LGBT student health, the inclusion of the ‘T’ is usually rare, and the health interests of queer individuals are addressed exclusively. It is important to encourage a move away from what one might term a ‘treatment mentality’ in order to avoid pathologising trans* identities and silencing the voices and experiences of said identities. I would argue that by distancing trans* health from its medicalized roots, we can create space in which to address the immeasurable need for trans* positive health resources and service providers and simultaneously work to change this narrow mentality.

The Token ‘T’ and Intersecting Oppressions

Despite both societal and institutional tendencies to agglomerate queer and trans communities, it is vital that the distinct issues faced by each of these diverse populations are recognized and addressed. Lawyer and academic Dean Spade argues against the pervasive assumption that effective trans* advocacy and inclusion should be based on the principally rights based approach of queer (primarily lesbian, gay and bisexual) activism. Instead, he proposes a “more transformative” approach in his comprehensive book *Normal Life: Administrative Violence, Critical Trans Politics, and the Limits of Law*, specifically “one

⁸⁴ Beemyn, “Making Campuses More Inclusive of Transgender Students,” in *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Issues in Education* 3:1 (2005a): 77-87; Beemyn, Curtis, Davis, and Tubbs, “Transgender Issues on College Campuses,” in *New Directions for Student Services* 111: Fall (2005c): 49-60.

that more accurately conceptualizes the conditions trans people face and more directly strategizes change that impacts the well-being of trans people.”⁸⁵ While the pool of literature addressing the specific needs of ‘LGBT’ youth in Canadian schools is growing steadily, there are few texts that address the unique challenges encountered by trans* students.⁸⁶

Trans* individuals face clear tokenism in academic discourse. While several studies I consulted contained rich information pertaining to LGB youth, trans* students were referenced merely with an incidental ‘T’. One Canadian K-12 study that stood out more positively was Loutzenheizer’s “‘Who Are You Calling a Problem?’: Addressing Transphobia and Homophobia Through School Policy,” as it spoke to the differing requirements for supporting LGBQ students and trans* students. This recent report offers insight into school policy in Vancouver, British Columbia and its provisions for both transgender and genderqueer students. Gender identity is often mentioned in K-12 and postsecondary studies, yet unlike in Loutzenheizer’s work, it is merely paid lip service. The term ‘gender identity’ infallibly follows ‘sexual orientation’ and a coordinating conjunction. Any mention of transphobia is merely tacked on to homophobia, and the terms LGBT, ‘lesbians and gays’, and sexual minorities are frequently used interchangeably.⁸⁷ While this

⁸⁵ Spade, *Normal Life*, 15.

⁸⁶ The small amount of literature which focuses on the trans* student experience, specifically within postsecondary education, is predominantly American.

⁸⁷ The most recent Canadian example I consulted is Liboro, Travers, and St. John, “Beyond the Dialectics and Polemics: Canadian Catholic Schools Addressing LGBT Youth Issues.” This 2015 publication is supposed to show findings regarding the importance of acknowledging LGBT student needs in Canadian Catholic schools and explore successful strategies and program implementation. However, the mention of trans* students is limited to ‘tack on’ terms and there is no mention of key ways an institution can acknowledge their needs. This study may also speak to the intersecting oppressions faced by many trans* students, in this case specific to religion and gender identity. While this is perhaps unsurprising due to the slow progress of acknowledging queer rights and identities within Catholicism, it is interesting to note that this study is perhaps more inclusive than many others I consulted, and does not contain misinformation regarding gender identity. A 2014 ‘LGBT’ Canadian study included mention of

acknowledgement and reference to trans* individuals is crucial in order to move towards greater understanding and inclusion, it is important to ensure that trans* issues are simultaneously recognized as separate from those of sexual minorities. Here, the danger lies in the potential assumption that trans* issues are adequately addressed within publications or organizations that include relevant terminology without a clear understanding of the differing needs and experiences of trans* individuals. Through an assumption that LGBT will unerringly include adequate representation and acknowledgement of trans* persons and their lived experience, the substantial need for trans* specific rights, services, and resources is eradicated.

This tokenism is further problematized by the fact that most literature does not acknowledge the discrimination trans* individuals face from within the GSM community. Discriminatory practices are not limited to heteronormative, cisnormative institutions. Combining queer and trans* communities as a single entity in academia or in university policy may imply a symbiotic relationship; consequently, the unique challenges faced by each are effaced by the idea of a collective struggle. An in depth discussion of LGBTQ transphobia and rejection of trans* identities can be found in Zachary Nataf's book *Lesbians Talk: Transgender*. This work explores current and historical tensions between the queer and trans* communities with specific focus on the longstanding friction between some self identified lesbians and transmen.⁸⁸

the inaccessibility of restrooms for some trans* youth yet presented the terms transgender and androgynous as synonymous.

⁸⁸ One particularly inflammatory article which articulates this conflict is the transphobic piece "FTM Transgenderism and Grief" by Sheila Jeffreys. There are also several works that address the enduring tensions that exist between transwomen and some feminists. See: Enke, *Transfeminist Perspectives In and Beyond Transgender and Gender Studies*; Namaste, *Invisible Lives: The Erasure of Transsexual and Transgendered People*; and Scott-Dixon, ed., *Trans-Feminist Voices Speak Out*. Titles that embody the conflict between trans* and feminist

While this tenuous relationship remains largely untouched in literature on trans* student experiences, there is also a notable shortage of work which addresses the complications faced by students who experience personal conflict and potential discrimination on the basis of multiple intersecting identities. The experiences of individuals with multiple and potentially conflicting identities plays a role in both identity development and one's place within the postsecondary institution. While effective study of the specific, individual needs of trans* students must disconnect these identities and experiences from their entanglement in the LGB community, one cannot disregard the fluidity and multiplicity of identity as proposed by poststructural theorists. The experiences of trans* students who also identify within the queer community has received little attention, and cannot be adequately addressed through current LGBT approaches which do not speak to both queer and trans* experiences.⁸⁹ Furthermore, there is a marked scarcity of research or literature which speaks to the unique experiences of trans* persons of colour, those with disabilities, and those who hold religious beliefs.⁹⁰ It is important to recognize the voices that are missing from current research.

While it is crucial that further works centred on lived experience and not the medical and psychiatric production of trans* subjects continue to add to the discussion, one must avoid the fallacy of privileging only white, Western, middle class, able-bodied accounts of trans* lives. Research shows that queer youth of colour experience higher rates of

communities include: Raymond, *The Transsexual Empire: The Making of the She Male* (1980); and Jeffreys, *Gender Hurts: A Feminist Analysis of the Politics of Transgenderism* (2014).

⁸⁹ However, an approach that fully addresses topics of sexual orientation and gender identity both separately and collectively would have much to contribute.

⁹⁰ Renn, "LGBT and Queer Research in Higher Education: The State and Status of the Field," *Educational Researcher* 39:2 (2010): 132–141. There are many additional marginalised identities and communities who similarly face intersecting oppressions and are further silenced. However, this salient discussion falls beyond the scope of this dissertation.

harassment and (perhaps consequently) feel increased pressure to hide their true identities.⁹¹

It is likely that these findings hold true for trans* youth of colour as well. It is also important to note that some indigenous trans* youth and persons of colour do not feel welcomed by the greater trans* community, further proving the need for inclusive research which addresses the lived experience of all trans* youth and their intersecting identities.⁹²

While this dissertation is notably lacking in both sources and statistics that reflect the unique experiences of these minority populations, the analysis and recommendations herein seek to be inclusive of all students, regardless of gender identity and expression, sexual identity and orientation, culture, race, class, age, spiritual affiliation, health, or ability.

⁹¹ Rankin, "Campus Climates for Sexual Minorities," *New Directions for Student Services* 111: Fall (2005): 19-20.

⁹² Roen, "Transgender Theory and Embodiment: The Risk of Racial Marginalisation," *Journal of Gender Studies* 10:3 (2001): 253-263; Wilchins, *Queer Theory, Gender Theory: An Instant Primer* (Los Angeles: Alyson Books, 2004).

III. Framework and Methodology

“‘Intelligible’ genders are those which in some sense institute and maintain relations of coherence and continuity among sex, gender, sexual practice, and desire.”⁹³

Postsecondary Premise

There have been notable advances in trans* rights and visibility in Canada over the past decade. Despite the slow progress of Bill C-279 and its recent setback, six provinces and one territory have explicitly introduced ‘gender identity’ as a prohibited ground for discrimination in their respective human rights codes.⁹⁴ Bill C-279 is a private member’s bill first introduced by NDP MP Randall Garrison in 2011, which seeks to add ‘gender identity’ to both the Criminal Code and Canadian Human Rights Act.⁹⁵ While Canadian trans* politics are making headway, albeit slowly, there are many institutions nation-wide which have the power to disallow discrimination on the basis of gender identity and gender expression within their establishments.

Social institutions play a key role in the construction of gender and societal understanding of difference. Gender is embedded in individual, institutional, and interactional elements of society, and social difference is consequently informed by cultural values, politics, economics, family structure, and history, among other factors. This informs and maintains a gendered social order and feeds a perpetual cycle of creating and upholding

⁹³ Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, 23.

⁹⁴ Mike Hager, “Gender identity bill sent back to the House of Commons,” *Globe and Mail*, February 25, 2015, accessed February 29, 2015, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/british-columbia/gender-identity-bill-sent-back-to-the-house-of-commons/article23209284/>.

⁹⁵ The bill was recently amended to add a legal exemption, allowing trans* individuals to be denied access or effectively banned from any gender segregated space or service. Examples include restrooms, shelters and crisis services, correctional facilities, and health facilities.

meaning through social institutions and social construction.⁹⁶ The institution of education is vital to this equation and youth are particularly subject to its effects. I have chosen to focus on postsecondary as opposed to secondary schools due to their increased autonomy and capability to create meaningful and systemic change within their institutions. One must also consider their immense influence on the personal development of teens and young adults and their clout in the field of academic discourse.

To preface further discussion of postsecondary education, I wish to provide context regarding the Canadian distinction between universities and colleges. ‘College’ refers to an institution that primarily grants certificates and diplomas and may also specialize in continuing, distance, and professional development education.⁹⁷ The length of college programs generally vary between ten months and three years, with the majority requiring one to two years of study.⁹⁸ According to Statistics Canada, their mission statements often emphasize economic goals and do not focus on student or faculty research. Conversely, a university is understood as an institution that offers four-year degree programs and emphasizes academic goals within its mission statement. Universities will customarily have full authority over their institution’s priorities, academic standards, and student policies. Furthermore, “universities contribute to knowledge through research, which is part of university mandates; all faculty are expected to participate in research. Academic freedom is a cornerstone of university operation.”⁹⁹ For the purpose of this dissertation, the focus is

⁹⁶ Lorber, “Using Gender to Undo Gender,” 82; West and Zimmerman, “Doing Gender.”

⁹⁷ Also colloquially known as community, technical, vocational, or career colleges. In Québec, the acronym CEGEP stands for ‘Collège d’enseignement général et professionnel,’ and refers to public pre-university institutions.

⁹⁸ Orton, “Statistics Canada’s Definition and Classification of Postsecondary and Adult Education Providers in Canada,” 17.

⁹⁹ Orton, “Statistics Canada’s Definition and Classification of Postsecondary and Adult Education Providers in Canada,” 16.

narrowed to Canadian post-secondary institutions, with emphasis on undergraduate experience. While this study applies to both university and college institutions, the term university will be used primarily and can be interpreted to signify both degree and diploma granting post-secondary institutions.¹⁰⁰

For many young people in Western countries, leaving home to attend university or college marks an emancipatory ritual or rite of passage. Joining a new community, where one can start fresh and potentially reinvent their identity, can be an exciting prospect for many teens, and perhaps especially for those who have faced harassment from their school peers or family members. Former St. Thomas University student Mitch Rayner recalls his emotions on his first day on campus: “I was fairly excited because I finally became a part of a community that was really open-minded.”¹⁰¹ The transition to university life can be an empowering experience as well as a time of self-discovery. One’s experience as part of the institution has the potential to play an important role in identity development. Therefore, it is imperative that universities provide a safe, inclusive atmosphere with knowledgeable staff, appropriate resources, and strong support systems for each and every student.

¹⁰⁰ The reason I have chosen to utilize ‘university’ as opposed to ‘college’ to signify institutions of higher education is based on the fact that there is a clear distinction between two colloquial meanings of ‘college’ in American and Canadian English. While American research and sources regularly refer to various post-secondary institutions, the Canadian meaning of college generally refers to community and career colleges and not degree-granting universities. For more information on the classification of Canadian post-secondary institutions see Orton, “Statistics Canada’s Definition and Classification of Postsecondary and Adult Education Providers in Canada,” 20.

¹⁰¹ Mosher, “Out of Spectrum,” In *The Aquinian* 75:10 (2010): 1,3.

Feminist Poststructuralism

I seek to explore the ways in which socially constructed language and gendered space impact identity formation and social inclusion. My focus on gender identity will draw primarily on feminist poststructural critique, informed by the works of Michel Foucault and Judith Butler among other scholars.¹⁰² As an extension of Foucault's teachings on the productive capacity of discourse and power relations, I believe that feminist poststructuralism provides the most constructive approach to understanding the ways in which language can be used productively to create inclusive policies and spaces and support the acceptance of diverse identities.

The category of poststructural theory and critique is diverse and encourages further investigation and scrutiny by its refusal to be confined to a constant definition or a clear-cut universal rubric.¹⁰³ A key figure in the poststructural movement, Judith Butler, explains that the characterization of poststructuralism at times unites elements of postmodernism, deconstruction, French feminism, and Lacanian psychoanalysis.¹⁰⁴ Drawing its beginnings from the diverse works of Jacques Derrida, Louis Althusser, and Michel Foucault, among others, poststructuralism displays a plurality of meanings and applications.

According to poststructuralism, meaning is constructed through the social structures and processes shaped and reproduced by social institutions, institutions which are regulated by a specific 'discursive field' that exists in a quasi-symbiotic relationship with the structure

¹⁰² Despite the fact that Foucault is not generally regarded as a feminist, I hope to interpret his works in a way that will add to a feminist poststructural critique.

¹⁰³ Adams St. Pierre, "Poststructural Feminism in Education: An Overview," 478; Butler, "Contingent Foundations: Feminism and the Question of 'Postmodernism'," 4-7.

¹⁰⁴ Butler, "Contingent Foundations: Feminism and the Question of 'Postmodernism'," 4.

of the institution.¹⁰⁵ Language and discourse ascribe meaning to social institutions and practices, and the institution plays host to subject positions within its system. As part of the institution, and a participant in its social practices, individuals are subjected to ‘subject positions’ through the means of discourse. Yet feminist Chris Weedon argues, “language, in the form of socially and historically specific discourses, cannot have any social and political effectivity except in and through individuals who become its bearers by taking up the forms of subjectivity and the meanings and values which it proposes and acting upon them.”¹⁰⁶

An individual’s sense of self is constructed by language and located in the environment which language provides. Social institutions and discursive practices are created, defined, and challenged in this space, where meaning is continuously rearticulated through power struggles and relations. Subjectivity is thus socially produced and is in constant fluctuation. The structure of language, constitutive of conscious subjectivity, is established through the linguistic expression of the subject, their speech acts, thoughts, and other means of disseminating information.¹⁰⁷

The education system is one of many social institutions that must be explored to understand the ways in which language plays into the construction and maintenance of the gender binary. This knowledge can then be used productively to effect change for trans* students, staff, and faculty within the university. To do this, I seek to employ a poststructural critique of language, informed by what is commonly termed French Feminism.

¹⁰⁵ The discursive field is a concept used to understand and investigate the relationship between social institutions, power, subjectivity, and the ordering of social processes. Discursive fields offer a multitude of modes of subjectivity and are comprised of competing ways of constructing and assigning meaning to the world. The term was first introduced by Michel Foucault and is discussed in depth in his work *The Archeology of Knowledge*. Weedon, “Feminism & the Principals of Poststructuralism,” 179.

¹⁰⁶ Weedon, “Feminism & the Principals of Poststructuralism,” 178-179.

¹⁰⁷ Weedon, “Feminist & the Principals of Poststructuralism,” 179.

French Feminist theory is deeply entwined with poststructural methodology and is closely aligned with psychoanalytic feminism. Drawing from linguistic theory, key intellectuals in French Feminist thought and *l'Écriture féminine* have undertaken a deep analysis of the gendered nature of language. Its foundational theorists have written primarily in French and include Monique Wittig, Hélène Cixous, Julia Kristeva, and Luce Irigaray.¹⁰⁸ Literary theorist Cixous argued that societal notions of masculine and feminine are defined and understood in opposition to each other, thus strengthening the binary construct of gender. Her research put forth that this relationship is unequal, where masculinity is privileged and normalized, rendering femininity depreciated and muted.¹⁰⁹ French Feminism acknowledges the Freudian concept that sexual identity and gender identity are mutually influential; however, they seek to emphasize the importance of cultural and societal influence and reject the notion of a causal relationship between sex and gender.¹¹⁰ By challenging essentialist conceptions of sex categories and valuing the many factors which may play a role in identity formation, the work of French Feminist theorists offers an important perspective on “why gender, sex, and sexuality are more fluid and diverse than cultural stereotypes suggest; and how race, class, and culture create multiple variations of gender, sex, and sexuality.”¹¹¹ Cixous argues further that one should refrain from attempting to speak for others.¹¹² French Feminism largely rejects metanarrative explanations and

¹⁰⁸ These key figures hail from France, French Algeria, Bulgaria, and Belgium, respectively.

¹⁰⁹ Cixous, *‘Coming to Writing’ and Other Essays*, ed. Deborah Jensen, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991; Cixous, “The Laugh of the Medusa.”

¹¹⁰ Cixous, Kristeva, and Irigaray have worked extensively with the psychoanalytic theories of Freud and Jacques Lacan. The works of Lacan will be discussed further in Chapter 4.

¹¹¹ DeFrancisco and Palczewski. *Communicating Gender Diversity: A Critical Approach*, 38.

¹¹² While Cixous cautions against essentializing persons, specifically minorities, she does engage in strategic essentialism in some instances to further a theory or goal that would be beneficial. This concept was first introduced by Gayatri Spivak in 1988.

prescriptions of what constitutes gender and argues the importance of resisting essentialist conceptions of so-called universal categories such as ‘women’ and ‘men’. Such categories are instead considered political categories, and are thought to be founded upon heterosexual and cisgender norms.¹¹³

Foucauldian Discourse Analysis

French philosopher Michel Foucault has produced numerous pivotal works, many of which inform a poststructural critique and have revolutionized social and academic conceptions of gender.¹¹⁴ By applying his theories of confession, repression, and identity formation, one may gain further insight into an institutional regimentation of identity. Sexuality is central to Foucault’s work, and I feel that the theme is inextricably linked to discussions of gender identity, as these movements and communities are largely intertwined historically. These marginalized groups have experienced enduring oppression and have been subject to societal rejection, both of which can be further explored through discussions of power, power relations, resistance and experiential knowledge. Foucault’s famed *The History of Sexuality* begins with a discussion of Victorian era sexuality and builds upon early twentieth century understandings of sex and gender as brought forth by key individuals such as Hirschfeld, Freud, and de Beauvoir. He explores rituals associated with sex and sexuality, the construction and nature of repression and perversion, and a focus on the power relations and dissemination of identity throughout modern society. Foucault’s theory can be

¹¹³ Monique Wittig, “The Straight Mind,” in *Out There: Marginalization and Contemporary Cultures*, ed. Russell Ferguson et al. (New York: The MIT Press, 1990), 55.

¹¹⁴ Mills, *Michel Foucault*, 123. Despite Foucault’s significant advances in the realm of gender, his work is not immune to the influence of discourse, specifically that of androcentrism, which shaped much of his work over time.

used to illuminate the repression of trans* identities as well as the experience of being forced to share one's identity to achieve intelligibility in contemporary Western society.

The early discussion of the repressive hypothesis sets the stage for Foucault's inquiries. This concept of repression can be traced through the past three centuries and embodies both secrecy and social tensions.¹¹⁵ While often believed to create silence, Foucault showed how this concept instead created stigma, leading topics such as sexual orientation and gender identity to be considered guarded, shameful forms of knowledge. Repression cannot be boiled down to censorship or even concealing truth; however, its effects, namely producing new ways of speaking about that which is unspeakable, are responsible for inciting discourse. By stigmatizing these topics, repression led to the rise of confession and other institutional discourses, outlets that allowed for the articulation and discussion of these stigmatized subjects and knowledges. Therefore, confession became one of the key ways individuals were able speak of, and make sense of, their repressed feelings and identities.

One can track the emergence of confession, which stems from the Christian pastoral tradition and blooms into a mode of self-examination and identification. However, the secretive roots and very need for a ritual of confession necessitates that one has done something immoral. Sex thus becomes something that needs to be confessed: "the Christian pastoral always presented it as the disquieting enigma: not a thing which stubbornly shows itself, but one which always hides, the insidious presence that speaks in a voice so muted

¹¹⁵ Foucault, *Madness*, 61. Here, I wish to refer to Foucault's *Madness* (formerly published as *Mental Illness and Psychology*) in which he discusses repression (and deviancy) in additional detail, specifically citing it as a mode of self-defense. Though salient, further discussion of this point is beyond the scope of this paper.

and often disguised that one risks remaining deaf to it.”¹¹⁶ This discussion should be extended to include its implications on the understanding of both biological sex and gender identities.

Foucault cites that confession dates back to the Middle Ages, and traces how this ritualistic practice became one of the methods of choice in the West to produce truth.¹¹⁷ This method of production also encouraged self-reflection, which in turn allowed the individual to find personal truths and gain heightened consciousness. A key aspect of this early precursor to the coming-out narrative is the power relationships that are intrinsic to the practice of confession. In order to have confession, there must be someone to confess to. Foucault posits that this person is “... not simply the interlocutor but the authority who requires the confession, prescribes and appreciates it, and intervenes in order to judge, punish, forgive, console, and reconcile.”¹¹⁸ Here, we see that both the repressive hypothesis and the confession (which may be understood as interconnected and relational) are part of larger power structures (arguably struggles) at play. The individual who represses can also be the one who commands the confession of repressed truths and knowledges, and who holds the power to judge the discourse.

The confession shows the progress of discourse surrounding sex as it counters issues of language and verbal dissemination. Foucault notes that in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, many persons were “...deprived of a certain way of speaking about sex, a mode

¹¹⁶ Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 35.

¹¹⁷ In this sense, truth speaks to the one’s personal identity and reality, which one may have repressed. By acknowledging one’s own ‘truths’, often through the process of confession, the individual is able to acknowledge that which is a part of themselves or the world around them. Foucault argues that truth is something that is produced, not simply ‘discovered’. Foucault’s ‘regimes of truth’ speak to historically specific methods of gaining access to unrealized meaning and producing discourse.

¹¹⁸ Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 62.

that was disallowed as being too direct, crude, or coarse.”¹¹⁹ The discussion of who can and cannot speak, in addition to the accessibility of language, underlies Foucault’s discussion of repression. Confession, therefore, becomes a more accepted mode of speaking about sex, giving many more persons the ability to speak.¹²⁰ By speaking, I would argue power is both gained and given. As Foucault states, “power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere.”¹²¹ By having the ability to speak of sex and identity, one is empowered, but by participating in the ritual of confession, one acknowledges an unequal power relationship and thus uses their identity to try and gain legitimacy. However, speaking runs the risk of allowing oneself to be understood as a deviant, while not speaking serves to foreclose the ability to speak within a culture of repression. Not speaking would defy the tradition of confession, which Foucault regards as obligatory.¹²² Foucault posits that in his modern day, the evolution of the confession had begun to allow for individuals to work towards alleviating their repression as well as challenging stigma in an effort to produce and disseminate truth.¹²³

In much of Foucault’s work, specifically *The History of Sexuality*, we see the growing need for self-examination that emerged during the latter half of the twentieth century. This move led to a heightened importance of ‘finding oneself’, which included examining one’s own sexuality and experiences, and I would argue, by extension, one’s conception of oneself as a gendered being. This understanding is key to a healthy identity

¹¹⁹ Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 30.

¹²⁰ This statement must be much more qualified. This is true for the West, and would be more acceptable discussion for persons of a consenting age and heterosexuals. ‘Who’ can speak is an important query, but is beyond the scope of this paper.

¹²¹ Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 93.

¹²² Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 33.

¹²³ Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 130.

formation. Often, gender variant youth go through a period of denial where they may take unnecessary risks in order to fit into a category with which they do not identify. Part of the process of forming their true gender identity requires a period of exploring modes of self-expression and new ways of conceptualizing the self.¹²⁴ For Foucault, the importance placed on discovering the most intimate realities of one's being and self, the truth, is a key factor in placing oneself in the greater societal context and claiming a space in the relations of power that create this space. He argues "if I tell the truth about myself ... it is in part that I am constituted as a subject across a number of power relations which are exerted over me and which I exert over others."¹²⁵ Here we see what may be understood as a call for individuals to produce knowledge through uncovering self-truths.

To build upon this examination of repression, confession, and the surrounding discourse, I would like to pose the idea of 'otherness' as a way to better understand the effects of these rituals and truths on trans* populations. The notion of 'othering' allows us to better understand how identity and visibility are both central to a person's power position.¹²⁶ Foucault's discourse on sex shows how many identities are defined in opposition to each other, thus stigmatizing deviance. Nowhere is this clearer than in the binary understanding of gender. The prevalent cisgender identity far outweighs all other forms of gender identification, and all others are understood primarily through opposition. They are therefore, the 'other'. Through history, Foucault explains that early on, sexual "irregularity"

¹²⁴ The period is extremely important and often youth who pass the denial stage feel the need to move directly to full-time presentation as their true gender, which may not allow for this necessary self-exploration. This is one reason why support and resources (and ideally hormone blockers) are so integral for trans* youth.

¹²⁵ Raullet, "Interview: Critical Theory/Intellectual Theory," 39.

¹²⁶ This concept deserves reference to Edward Said's concept of *Orientalism* and his work of the same name.

was attributed to mental illness.¹²⁷ The modern concept of gender dysphonia or GID (gender identity disorder), a common diagnosis for trans* persons, has been similarly medicalized.¹²⁸ Foucault's discussion of perverse or 'unnatural' identities (specifically homosexuality in his formative work) furthers this stigmatization of what is outside the 'norm' – the 'other'.¹²⁹ Foucault cites that any form of deviancy becomes a central component of one's identity. He writes "... nothing that went into his total composition was unaffected by his sexuality. It was everywhere present in him."¹³⁰ I wish to extend this understanding to include gender identity, as both show how the body, and its inherent sex, must be acknowledged as a significant site of power, and more abstractly, a significant factor in the power relations within the discourse surrounding identity politics.

The Revolutionary Works of Judith Butler

Gender theorist, scholar, and philosopher Judith Butler is responsible for some of the most revolutionary and influential gender theories of the past century. Her work has introduced and cemented major theories including gender performativity, first explored in her 1988 article "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory." Butler was an early critic of traditional concepts of gender essentialism as well as the notion of a causal relationship between sex and gender. Butler argues that conceptions of both sex and gender exist in a perpetual state of change and are

¹²⁷ Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 36. See also *Madness: The Invention of an Idea*.

¹²⁸ GID is the DSM (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders) diagnosis of gender dysphonia, which is characterized by the incongruent or oppositional relationship between an individual's biological sex assignment and their gender identity.

¹²⁹ Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 39.

¹³⁰ Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 43. Specific reference to the nineteenth century homosexual.

both constantly reiterated and reinscribed through social and institutional language. Her writings denounced the gender binary and stressed the importance of deconstructing these hegemonic structures and norms. She was also an early proponent of social construction theory and much of her work has focused on exposing and confronting the performative and constructed aspects of gender norms. Much of Butler's later work centers around challenging what she terms 'New Gender Politics' which encompasses issues of transphobia, violence on the basis of gender identity, and the interventionist treatment of intersex individuals.

In Butler's work *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, she challenges the suggested social prominence of binary gender construction. While she considers sex and gender social constructions, her work ponders whether the dichotomous social understanding of gender is as immutable as the entrenched binary conception of sex.¹³¹ She proposes that while the concept of gender is both created and maintained through social and institutional interaction and is thus omnipresent in society, through resistance and disruption of these pervasive ideas of who and what gender signifies, this meaning can be reshaped over time.

The theoretical contributions of Judith Butler are of great importance to any feminist poststructural analysis. Much of her work draws on the concepts introduced by Michel Foucault. Embracing the Foucauldian notion of productive discourse, she encourages the deconstruction and reconstruction of the concept of gender as well as language as a whole. However, if one is to understand gender as a socially conditioned and produced concept, there exists no point at which to begin this process; therefore, this precludes the possibility

¹³¹ Butler, *Undoing Gender*.

of deconstruction and reconstruction. Butler criticizes gendered labelling of both the body and identity, explaining that language is a performative iteration which (re)constructs that which it is meant to signify or describe. Tobias Raun, an eminent Danish trans* studies scholar, argues that this insight is particularly relevant for trans* individuals, “as trans bodies are often not reducible to non-trans characterizations, either because these bodies look different or because individual trans people perceive and identify their bodies very differently, often relabeling body parts, or inventing new labels that seems more adequate.”¹³² This speaks to the constructed nature of the medical foundations which underlie the gender binary, and emphasizes the importance of trans* agency. I would argue that individuals may be able to achieve greater intelligibility and inclusion through self-definition, denouncing terminology which may serve to erase their bodies and realities.

Theory Overview

Past research has employed numerous frameworks to explore the institutional language of gender identity and trans* inclusive strategies. In addition to feminist and poststructuralist approaches, other theoretical frameworks engaged include ethnomethodology, disability studies, and queer theory. While I have chosen to concentrate on the tenets of feminist poststructuralism, each additional theory offers unique strengths that may contribute to the greater discussion.

¹³² Raun, “Trans as Contested Intelligibility: Interrogating how to Conduct Trans Analysis with Respectful Curiosity,” 21.

In ethnomethodology, gender is understood as a traditional designation of the ‘normative’ cultural, social, and psychological aspects of being either female or male.¹³³

Ethnomethodological inquiry might help to illuminate the social meaning that is attached to bodies and which orders them into one of two binary categories. This opens up a discussion of gender cues, gender attribution, and the ways in which society determines and assigns gender, such as the presence or absence of a phallus.

Disability studies has established an astute precedent through discussions of non-normative bodies and bodily agency, cautioning individuals and scholars alike to be critical of potentially oppressive discourse. Oppressive and exclusive regimes of knowledge establish and instill ideas of what constitutes ‘healthy’ ability, bodies, and minds, and condemn perceived deviation, which historically led to social rejection and possible confinement.¹³⁴ The field of disability studies has contributed works that tackle the classification of persons who do not necessarily fit predetermined categories with specific regard to physical and bodily norms. It also explores systems of classification, their ideology and assumptions, and ways in which to challenge and expose potential weakness in their underlying structure.¹³⁵ Some scholars argue that a relationship between trans* discourse and critical disability studies may foster mutually productive thought surrounding non-hierarchical physical difference and social expectations of health and normative bodies.¹³⁶

Queer theory offers a theorization of how language is used to describe and categorize queer persons. Advocates and scholars of queer theory argue against essentializing sexuality

¹³³ Kessler, Suzanne J., and Wendy McKenna. *Gender: An Ethnomethodological Approach*, 7.

¹³⁴ Spade, *Normal Life*, 23.

¹³⁵ Spade, “Documenting Gender,” *Hastings Law Journal* 59:1 (2008): 745.

¹³⁶ Stryker, Currah, and Moore, “Introduction: Trans-, Trans, or Transgender?” *Women’s Studies Quarterly* 26: 3/4 (2008): 16.

and identity and put forth that rigid categorization of identity cannot reflect the fluidity of sexual and gender identities and the way in which meaning has varied across time and space.¹³⁷ Discussions regarding the performative nature of identity underline the instability of vocabulary and question what is considered normative.¹³⁸ Some queer theorists espouse the Butlerian concept that gender is an illusionary fabrication that is sustained through the imitation and reiteration of societal norms.¹³⁹ Elisa Abe's study shows how queer theory can help students explore and come to terms with their own intersecting identities, with specific reference to sexual and gender identities. As queer theory has become entrenched in academia, this may suggest that it offers a comprehensive and inclusive framework whereby scholars can tackle current issues of social exclusion and institutional discrimination. However, scholars such as Susan Stryker have voiced the apprehension that this theoretical framework may at times entitle sexual identities, privileging 'queerness' at the expense of trans* identities.¹⁴⁰

As a discourse, queer theory is not always sensitive to that which may intersect with self-proclaimed queerness, threatening to validate certain knowledges and identities at the expense of others. By favouring literary and cultural objects without satisfactorily acknowledging the social and institutional relations in which these objects and identities are embedded, queer theory threatens to "authorize a political agenda" which silences trans*

¹³⁷ DeGagne, "Queering the Language of 'Sexual Minorities' in Canada," 25; Sullivan, *A Critical Introduction to Queer Theory*, 145-146.

¹³⁸ Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory," *Theatre Journal* 40:4 (1988): 519-531.

¹³⁹ Butler's concept is not uncontroversial within queer theory. A poststructural reading of this theory acknowledges that the subject is not a cause but rather an effect of this phenomenon.

¹⁴⁰ Stryker, "Transgender Studies: Queer Theory's Evil Twin," in *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 10:2 (2004): 214.

voices and disregards personal knowledge and experience.¹⁴¹ As a bodily discourse, queer theory has the potential to erase trans* bodies and lived desires.¹⁴² Through the paradox of privileging sexuality and gender above race and other aspects of identity, queer theory may effectively silence colonial and racist histories and fail to acknowledge indigenous or cultural considerations.¹⁴³

¹⁴¹ Namaste, *Invisible Lives: The Erasure of Transsexual and Transgendered People*, 22-23, 39.

¹⁴² Namaste, *Invisible Lives: The Erasure of Transsexual and Transgendered People*; Prosser, "Transsexuals and the Transsexologists: Inversion and the Emergence of Transsexual Subjectivity," in *Sexology in Culture: Labelling Bodies and Desires* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998): 116-131; Roen, "Transgender Theory and Embodiment: The Risk of Racial Marginalisation."

¹⁴³ Roen, "Transgender Theory and Embodiment: The Risk of Racial Marginalisation." *Journal of Gender Studies* 10:3 (2001): 253-263.

IV. The Power of Language and the Construction of Gender

“A language, as a set of habits, is a fragile thing, subject to minor modification in the slightest breeze of circumstance; this, indeed, is its great source of power.”¹⁴⁴

Gendered Language and the Construction of Meaning

For the purpose of this thesis, I wish to explore the ways in which language reinforces the binary discourse and maintains institutional structures that marginalize, delegitimize, and obscure trans* identities using a feminist poststructural approach.¹⁴⁵ Cultural theorist Chris Weedon explains, “feminist poststructuralism makes the primary assumption that it is language which enables us to think, speak and give meaning to the world around us.”¹⁴⁶ While some might consider language a means of signifying or representing reality, we must interrogate this system further, exposing language instead as a discursive construction.¹⁴⁷

Poststructuralism is particularly concerned with language due to its inability to construct the world completely and accurately. Language can, to a degree, attach meaning to objects with boundaries one can clearly delimitate; however, “for concepts located on a continual scale (such as identity continua), it is questionable whether a certain designation provides an adequate way of conceptualisation.”¹⁴⁸ By predicating an understanding of

¹⁴⁴ Charles F. Hockett, *The State of the Art* (The Hague: Mouton, 1968): 89.

¹⁴⁵ For a more in depth poststructural analysis of (gendered) language from a typological approach focusing on the mechanisms of linguistic gender construction see Heiko Motschenbacher, *Language, Gender and Sexual Identity: Poststructural Perspectives*.

¹⁴⁶ Weedon, *Feminist Practice and Poststructuralist Theory*, 32.

¹⁴⁷ To explore theories of language as reflective and representative of truth and reality, see the works of Stuart Hall, specifically “Representation, Meaning, and Language.”

¹⁴⁸ Motschenbacher, *Language, Gender and Sexual Identity: Poststructural Perspectives*, 14.

gender and embodiment upon linguistic identity markers such as woman, lesbian, or MTF, one assumes coherence between gender identity, biological (somatic) makeup, and often, sexual practice.¹⁴⁹ Linguistics scholar Heiko Motschenbacher explains that language cannot adequately conceptualize gender identities due to the inconsistency of gender categories, referencing how biological designation is imprecise as sexed bodies cannot necessarily be distinctly ascertained or inserted into a dichotomy.¹⁵⁰ Similarly, a feminist poststructural model of inquiry refutes “singular and monolithic” gender categorization, as identity is understood as being subjective and contextually bound instead of developing through a singular, linear process.¹⁵¹

Semiotics and Sociolinguistics

Language serves not only to reflect meaning or act simply as a sign, but also takes on a productive role in the actual creation and acquisition of meaning. Linguist Ferdinand de Saussure [1857-1913] was a key figure in the development of semiotics and structural linguistics. His work *Course in General Linguistics*, a compilation of his lectures while teaching at the University of Geneva, was published posthumously in 1916. Despite being considered a key figure in the birth of structuralism, his innovative approach to linguistics influenced the evolution of poststructural views on language.¹⁵² Saussure argued that language was a structured system and that the underlying structure assigned both abstract

¹⁴⁹ Valentine and Wilchins, “One Percent on the Burn Chart,” 215.

¹⁵⁰ Motschenbacher, *Language, Gender and Sexual Identity: Poststructural Perspectives*, 14. Dominant, medicalized binary modes of classification and the underlying dimorphism of this gender categorization preclude the possibility of being able to accurately conceptualize identity linguistically.

¹⁵¹ Jaime Lester and Frank Harris III, “Engaging Undergraduate Women and Men,” in *Student Engagement in Higher Education*, ed. Stephen John Quaye and Shaun R. Harper (New York: Routledge, 2015): 158.

¹⁵² Tyson, *Critical Theory Today*, 212-213.

meaning and a location in power relations. From a poststructuralist perspective, one must examine the fixed structures that provide meaning and power.

Applying Saussure's theory to the question of gender in the English language, the dichotomy of gendered language (female/male, Ms./Mr., Sir/Madame) exposes the underlying binarism. This dualistic structure serves to reinforce the oppositional conception of gender as well as power relations predicated upon gender difference.¹⁵³ This regime of power produces social concepts of sex and gender that are neither static nor definite and are better understood as complex, fluid concepts that are culturally and historically located and produced in discourse. To quote scholar Chris Weedon, "while there can be no essential qualities of femininity or masculinity, given for all times and reflected in language and the social relations which language structures, different forms of poststructuralism theorize the production of meaning in different ways."¹⁵⁴ We understand that the meaning of gender is produced socially; therefore, this meaning cannot be considered static as it will vary across time, space, and different discourses.

Saussure's innovative work in linguistics influenced later scholars including Jacques Lacan [1901-1981], who undertook psychoanalytic study of gender and identity.¹⁵⁵ His ideas surrounding identity formation influenced many academics, including French Feminist theorists and Judith Butler.¹⁵⁶ Lacan argued that communication played an essential role in

¹⁵³ Monro, "Beyond Male and Female : Poststructuralism and the Spectrum of Gender," 4.

¹⁵⁴ Weedon, "Feminism & the Principals of Poststructuralism," 174.

¹⁵⁵ Saussure and Lacan both worked with the idea of the signifier. While Saussure posited that the signifier and that which is signified are interdependent, Lacan disagreed, arguing that the signifier actively produces the signified. Furthermore, the signifier becomes increasingly powerful and entrenched in society the more it signifies *nothing*. In terms of gender construction, gender signifiers become gradually more indestructible as the concept they represent becomes less meaningful through cultural assimilation and binary structures.

¹⁵⁶ These scholars provide insightful and progressive critiques of both Lacan and Saussure.

identity and personality formation as language allowed individuals to access the unconscious. He put forth the idea that individual identity is a construction that exists solely in language and subsequently, one's thought processes to express language become gendered.¹⁵⁷ His claim that sexual difference is established through language and is not biologically intrinsic is particularly salient, though it must not minimize the patriarchal, phallogocentric undercurrents in much of his work.¹⁵⁸ A feminist application of Lacanian psychoanalysis contributes to the discussion of trans* issues and vocabulary by prompting questions such as how gender identity can play a role in producing subjectivity, and what qualifies an individual as a man or woman. If one considers that language has the ability to linguistically construct identity, it stands to reason that this power could be harnessed to increase the intelligibility of one's identity. The productive power of language, specifically within social and cultural institutions, can be used to carefully construct a comprehensible public identity.¹⁵⁹

Any discussion of the constructed nature of language would be incomplete without brief reference to the central tenets of the "Linguistic Relativity Hypothesis," commonly referred to as the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis.¹⁶⁰ This hypothesis puts forth that the form of

¹⁵⁷ DeFrancisco and Palczewski, *Communicating Gender Diversity: A Critical Approach*, 37.

¹⁵⁸ Emily Zakin, "Psychoanalytic Feminism," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2011/entries/feminism-psychoanalysis/>.

¹⁵⁹ This is illustrated in the case of Turkish musician Bülent Ersoy, who rose to fame while male-identified and subsequently transitioned to female while remaining in the public eye. When Turkey did not legally recognize Ersoy's gender identity, she left the industry in protest, returning only when the Turkish government began legally recognizing MTF persons as women. See: Ertuğ Altınay, "Reconstructing the Transgendered Self as a Muslim, Nationalist, Upper-Class Woman: The Case of Bulent Ersoy."

¹⁶⁰ What is commonly referred to as the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis is the collective work of linguist Edward Sapir and his student, Benjamin Lee Whorf, informed by Sapir's influential work "The Status of Linguistics as a Science," published in 1929.

language is linguistic, while the content is cultural. Language both reflects and shapes social reality, thus our world view is essentially fabricated by the structure of our language.¹⁶¹

Linguist Edward Sapir [1884-1939] conceives that language is above all a social and cultural product, whose meaning and significance rests on “considerations of a biological and psychological nature.” He proposes that individual language systems have the power to shape thought and world view, arguing “We see and hear and otherwise experience very largely as we do because the language habits of our community predispose certain choices of interpretation.”¹⁶² He therefore cautions that one must be aware of the power of language and how it influences human interaction and the interpretation of human comportment.¹⁶³ In 1966, Berger and Luckmann introduced the ‘Social Construction of Reality’ theory, which similarly posits that individuals understand the world around them through linguistic communication. They argue, “the language used in everyday life continuously provides me with the necessary objectifications and posits the order within which these make sense and within which everyday life has meaning for me.”¹⁶⁴ If one applies these theories to a question of gendered language and pronouns, it becomes increasingly clear how non-binary gender identities and gender-neutral pronouns disrupt social norms and can further dismantle categories of male and female.

I would argue that languages with a neuter grammatical gender, such as German, open up greater space for questioning the gender binary and adopting gender neutral structures.

¹⁶¹ Linguistic morphology, especially syntactic relations and grammatical forms, inform the structure of language and therefore serve to influence one’s language ‘habits’.

¹⁶² Sapir, “The Status of Linguistics as a Science,” in *Selected Writings of Edward Sapir in Language Culture and Personality*, ed. David Mandelbaum (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968): 160.

¹⁶³ Sapir, “The Status of Linguistics as a Science,” 166.

¹⁶⁴ Berger and Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*, 21.

Recently, the German justice ministry called for state bodies to utilize gender neutral formations in their documents.¹⁶⁵ This follows the University of Leipzig's decision to adopt a radical approach to gender neutrality. The University has chosen to begin feminizing all nouns that refer to persons. German has feminine, masculine, and neuter articles: *die*, *der*, and *das*, respectively. Nouns are also gendered accordingly, so student would become *die Studentin / der Student*. In German, similar to many other languages, the masculine form has been privileged throughout history. This undertaking would mean that the feminine form would be used to refer to all persons, regardless of gender. Feminist linguistics scholar Luise Pusch considers this to be an important step towards a gender neutral future, through recognizing the phallogocentrism of language and generating further discussion of linguistic bias and identity politics.¹⁶⁶ The University plans to use this purported "generic feminism" as a stepping stone to the introduction of exclusively gender neutral forms.¹⁶⁷ I would suggest that the existing neuter article in German may serve to make this transition smoother. In *Niederdeutsch* (Low German), gendered articles have already been discarded for some time and the neutral article *de* has been adopted.¹⁶⁸

Simulacra and Cultural Production

¹⁶⁵ Philip Oltermann, "Germans Try to Get Their Tongues Around Gender-Neutral Language," *The Guardian*, March 24, 2013, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/mar/24/germans-get-tongues-around-gender-neutral-language>.

¹⁶⁶ Marie Todeskino, Interview mit Luise Pusch, *Der, die, das Professor*, Deutsche Welle 7. Juni 2013, <http://dw.de/p/18IEy>

¹⁶⁷ While I understand this premise, I would argue that despite being symbolic and meaningful, adopting the feminine generic serves to further uphold the binary structure of the language. I would also note that it delays the move towards the end goal of gender neutral structure and downplays the importance of this concept. From my reading, it appears that the nouns themselves will be the only structure changed, with the preceding gendered articles remaining a clear indication of gender: *die Student / der Student*.

¹⁶⁸ Oltermann, "Germans Try to Get Their Tongues Around Gender-Neutral Language."

The implications of regimented, binarist representations of gendered identities and bodies cannot be thoroughly examined without consideration of the cultural conditions that have facilitated this production. When discussing culture, it is important to define what is meant by this broad term. In this context, I put forth that culture is comprised of discourse, (learned) behaviours, practices that generate and express meaning and identity, human relations, and material production.¹⁶⁹ The cultural and institutional production of dominant understandings of both gender and trans* can be explored further through the works of poststructural philosopher Jean Baudrillard and his concept of simulacra. Simulacrum is understood as a representation or illusion of reality which replaces that which is no longer real or present. This theory explains how signs may be substituted for what is real, and can be explored in relation to the concept of stereotyping.¹⁷⁰ Considering this concept in relation to educational discourse, I would argue that dominant understandings of gender and identity can be interpreted based upon signs. Think, for instance, of gender-specific restrooms and the signage that communicates who is permitted access. Worldwide, the pictorial figures of ‘man’ and ‘woman’ remain the dominant mode of segregating and marking restrooms, transcending language and cultural barriers. The methods and signs our culture has acquired in order to understand and characterize LGB bodies and individuals have in turn become truth, and have thus effaced their objective basis.¹⁷¹ This holds true when it comes to trans* bodies and identities as well. The prevalence of heteronormativity and cisnormativity in media, in addition to the growing prevalence of a specific brand of homonormative,

¹⁶⁹ Durham and Kellner, “Adventures in Media and Cultural Studies,” xiv.

¹⁷⁰ While it falls beyond the scope of this paper, the works of Dick Hebdige discuss the relationship between semiotics and culture, providing key insight on the role of signs. See: Hebdige, “From Culture to Hegemony; Subculture: The Unnatural Break.”

¹⁷¹ These so-called methods of identification range from the plethora of stereotypes of LGB people (visual, behavioural, auditory, and others) to the rainbow motif.

stereotyped images and portrayals of queer* populations has created a simulation upheld through societal institutions and discourse.

To build upon Baudrillard's concept of simulacra, psychiatrist R. J. Lifton argued that the postmodern era has created a culture of uncertainty, where the individual's sense of self has become less and less stable, causing persons to take hold of whatever modes of identity formation are available. Mass media, stereotypes, and the simulacrum all play a key role in this phenomenon, where individuals use representations of 'hyperreality' as a way to define their own reality.¹⁷² 'Hyperreality' is a concept put forth by Baudrillard to differentiate between that which is real and that which is a simulation of that which was once real. Hyperreality refers to this simulated reality, but it may be argued that it is actually one of the "autonomous organizing forces" of our world.¹⁷³ Simulacra can be seen to play an important role in alternative modes of identity formation. I do not wish to argue that stereotypes of the minoritized communities have no basis in reality, however, I posit that the proliferation of these representations of reality are a powerful force in the cultural portrayal and understanding of trans* populations. Studies such as the "The Simulacra Effect" show the ramifications of generalized representations of identity.¹⁷⁴ The ways in which representations of subcultures influence the cultural understanding of minority identities, particularly trans*, can be understood through relationships of power and intersecting oppressions. Judith Butler's notion of gender as a construct implies that the binary

¹⁷² Taylor and Goodfriend, "The Simulacra Effect," 108-109.

¹⁷³ Baudrillard, "The Precession of Simulacra," 467-471; Durham and Kellner, "Adventures in Media and Cultural Studies," xxxiv. While hyperreality is largely synonymous with simulacrum, it is particularly associated with the autonomous simulacra.

¹⁷⁴ Taylor and Goodfriend, "The Simulacra Effect," 117-120. This study presents evidence that shows how queer males have increased levels of disordered eating as a result of their identification with hyperreal projections of queer male identity in modern media and culture.

conception serves as a model of socially and culturally idealized performance, behaviour, and appearance. She argues that one's embodiment and experience are unavoidably tied to and informed by these cultural ideas, which are in turn upheld through this mutually constructive relationship. In this sense, one can equate this conception of gender with that of simulacrum, viewing gender as a norm which persists in hyperreality where it can freely exercise power.

The works of Marx and Engels have laid the groundwork for this understanding of social and cultural relations and hegemony. The use of structural analysis can help us to understand how minority groups fit in to the power struggle, which determines the ruling class and ruling ideas. If we acknowledge that the base of our capitalist society rests in material production, controlled by those who own and run the means of production, we see that it determines the superstructure of social relations and culture. The ruling classes thus produce the ruling ideas and gain hegemonic power through this mutually informing relationship. In our society, the ruling classes are largely heterosexual and cisgender (cis), forcing gender and sexual minority groups to assert their claims to cultural space and recognition in the form of counterculture, thus resisting dominant, heteronormative ideologies. In his work on stereotypes, Richard Dyer explores this further:

The establishment of normalcy through [...] stereotypes is one aspect of the habit of ruling groups [...] to attempt to fashion the whole of society according to their own world-view, value-system, sensibility and ideology. So right is this world-view for the ruling groups, that they make it appear (as it does to them) as “natural” and “inevitable” – and for everyone – and, in so far as they succeed, they establish their hegemony.¹⁷⁵

Counterculture exerts great strength in the formation of hegemonic ideology. In this case,

¹⁷⁵ Dyer, “Stereotyping,” 356.

queer and trans* counterculture can be seen as a way of influencing ideology, and over time, the intelligibility of trans* identities in the cultural practices of social and educational institutions, thus gradually creating space and inclusion in post-secondary institutions.

There is a great need for structural changes aside from the inclusion of these voices and acknowledgement of the power relations between these individuals and the educational institution. Mulé et al. draw attention to the normative structures that pervade documents such as trans* oriented health and academic literature and resources, or intake forms, which “...are frequently exclusive of gender and sexually diverse experiences which may discourage the disclosure of gender identity, sexual orientation, and health-related behaviour or circumstances.”¹⁷⁶ This is exemplified in patient medical forms that provide only male and female gender options and limited sexual orientation.¹⁷⁷ Such structural discrimination and the invisibility of diverse identities have dangerous consequences, as trans* individuals may opt to delay or downplay medical issues and concerns if they feel their needs and identities will not be adequately acknowledged or respected. Canadian scholar Rinaldo Walcott’s work “Black Queer and Black Trans- Imagine Imagination Imaginary Futures,”

¹⁷⁶ Mulé et al., “Promoting LGBT Health and Wellbeing,” 4.

¹⁷⁷ These options leave little room for truly understanding a patient’s health needs. Nova Scotia amended their Vital Statistics Act in April of 2015, becoming the fifth province to allow trans* persons to change their gender marker on their identification to reflect their gender identity without requiring SRS. If an individual were to obtain the requisite letter from a professional and change their gender marker, their identification would correspond to their gender identity, thus allowing them to choose this gender (if within the binary) on various forms. To illustrate, a male-identified patient who had not undergone a hysterectomy and oophorectomy fills out a binary form as ‘male’, consistent with his identity and identification. If this form does not allow for further self-identification or information, he would need to ‘come out’ as there is a risk that potential health issues may be automatically overlooked. In terms of sexual orientation, questions must be comprehensive and focus primarily on sexual behaviour instead of using identification labels. While a man may identify as heterosexual, he may also engage in sexual acts with other men. Filling out his sexual orientation as ‘heterosexual’ may mean this is automatically ruled out, despite its relevance to his health.

explores this invisibility, asserting that even in the attempted representations of diversity, one must engage the subject beyond stereotypes and simulacra, and stretch our imaginations further. How does one determine when an identity is made invisible and when it is twisted into a representation of reality that has been created through simulation over years of the ruling classes defining normalcy? It is crucial that we do not jump to understandings of diverse identities without regard for the human subjects who hold them. To legitimize the identities and experiences of subjugated persons, one looks to what they produce – cultural capital. The circulation and dissemination of the cultural productions of invisible individuals can therefore be seen to legitimize their cultural value and identity.

Translating Identity

When discussing the role of language within an institution, specifically in terms of including and acknowledging trans* identities, it is vital to consider the cultural bias underlying both the institutional framework and dominant trans* discourse. The language used to make sense of gender identity is inherently Eurocentric. For those whose first language is not English, or those who may not be familiar with Anglophone queer politics, it is more difficult to make sense of trans* theory and identities.¹⁷⁸ The language used to speak of gender identity and related issues is predominantly English and may not adequately translate culturally or linguistically. When language plays such a central social role in the creation and affirmation of identity in the Western world, it is vital to acknowledge that neither this process nor terminology is universal.

¹⁷⁸ Namaste, *Invisible Lives: The Erasure of Transsexual and Transgendered People*, 21-22.

The Eurocentrism of current trans* terminology serves as a reminder that there is a linguistic element to intelligibility. Japanese scholar Mia Nakamura discusses how terms such as “gender identity” do not always translate in Japanese and introduces a term she coined to help fill this void. ‘Gender creative’ is meant to embody the idea that one must be inventive in creating and recreating one’s own gendered life and navigating social, cultural, and institutional norms.¹⁷⁹ Regardless of one’s gender identity (whether it be FTM, genderqueer, or something else entirely), she maintains that an individual should create and embrace their own gendered being which will allow for self-fulfillment and reflect how one interacts with the world around them. Nakamura cites concepts of self-autonomy as being particularly unfamiliar to Japanese culture, and argues that an inclusive term such as gender identity must be reconfigured to reflect and accommodate social and cultural gendered reality. She conceives that this would allow for greater multicultural understanding, as in Japan, identity is better understood as how one relates to the world around them instead expressing a sense of self or “who one is.”¹⁸⁰

Like the concept of identity, binary categorizations themselves are largely Eurocentric and do not consider cultural modes of assigning meaning. Anglocentric terminology not only limits intelligibility in other languages and cultures, but may also silence the many unique cultural terms and concepts which may not align with English identities, thus simultaneously silencing their colonial past. Scholar Finn Enke explores this concept further, citing “decolonial negotiations of gender identities and sexualities counter

¹⁷⁹ Muñoz et al., “Transpedagogies: A Roundtable Dialogue,” *Women’s Studies Quarterly* 36: 3/4 (2008): 288-308.

¹⁸⁰ Muñoz et al., “Transpedagogies: A Roundtable Dialogue,” 289. In its cultural specificity and inability to translate smoothly to other languages, one might argue that the Western concept of identity is in some ways hegemonic.

the Christian/Western project of reducing the multiple ways of being gendered and having sex to single letters in the English alphabet (i.e., LGBTQ).”¹⁸¹ Reference to this common acronym is particularly significant as I would argue the identities included therein are privileged in Western discourse, particularly within the fields of queer theory and sexuality studies. LGB refers to three comparatively clear-cut identities which have an established history. The ‘T’ and sometime the ‘Q’ are often included to pay lip service yet do not receive the same attention or intelligibility as LGB identities. I would argue that an acronym can never be all-encompassing or inclusive. Enduring cultural identities such as the Maori *takatāpui*, Indian *hirja*, and Omani *xanith* are all but unknown in Western queer and trans* communities and discourse and cannot simply be equated with the terms privileged in ‘umbrella’ acronyms.

‘Two Spirit’ is often understood in the Western context as an Aboriginal equivalent to transgender; however, this term has deep cultural significance and allows the individual to frame one’s self in relation to one’s history and spirituality.¹⁸² Canadian artist Adrian Stimson is a member of the Siksika Nation and has written about the importance of this cultural identity:

With the recognition and reclaiming of Two Spirit people comes the opportunity to further explore aboriginal ideology or ways of being. Integrated connections that once existed for aboriginal people may again be acknowledged and valued. Two Spirit people are playing a role in changing paradigms.¹⁸³

¹⁸¹ Enke, ed. *Transfeminist Perspectives In and Beyond Transgender and Gender Studies*, 32.

¹⁸² ‘Two Spirit’ is a self-chosen term which replaced the earlier *berdache*, which was primarily used by non-Native anthropologists and scholars. Two Spirit peoples are commonly understood to feel they embody both feminine and masculine spirits whether simultaneously, at different times, or simply in a unique balance which sets them apart from cisgender peoples.

¹⁸³ Adrian Stimson, “Two Spirited for You: The Absence of ‘Two Spirit’ People in Western Culture and Media,” in *West Coast Line* 40:1 (2006): 78.

This identity is often forgotten, despite Aboriginal peoples' deep roots in the Western world and its primarily English expression. Different tribes and communities have unique terminology and distinct cultural gender and social roles, such as the Navajo *nádleehé*.¹⁸⁴ There are countless other identities and terms from around the world which negotiate cultural history, family, and spirituality, and allow individuals to express their authentic identity. This speaks further to the limitations of language and the importance of allowing and recognizing self-identification.

Pronouns and Power

The disjuncture between individual identity and the language available to speak of it is especially evident when it comes to the use of pronouns and preferred names. Pronouns in the English-speaking, Western context are almost exclusively based on binary assumptions. Persons are separated into male and female and assigned language that renders their gender intelligible through everyday speech. In English, third-person singular pronouns are gender-specific, and designate individuals as either he or she. While a neuter pronoun exists, it is generally reserved for concepts, inanimate objects, and the indefinite pronoun 'one'. The oppositional she/he, hers/his, and her/him do not leave room for gender non-conforming persons, and also attach cultural and social assumptions to the individual referenced. There have been many gender neutral pronouns proposed over the past century and a half.

Linguistics professor Dennis Baron has written extensively on the history of gender neutral

¹⁸⁴ For further reading see: Sue-Ellen Jacobs, Wesley Thomas, and Sabine Lang, eds., *Two-Spirit People: Native American Gender Identity, Sexuality, and Spirituality*. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997); Sabine Lang, "Lesbians, Men-Women and Two-Spirits: Homosexuality and Gender in Native American Cultures," in *Female Desires: Same-Sex Relations and Transgender Practices Across Cultures*, eds. Evelyn Blackwood and Saskia E. Wieringa (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999): 91-116.

and alternative pronouns.¹⁸⁵ His resource *The Epicene Pronouns: A Chronology of the Word That Failed* chronicles almost one hundred unique pronouns proposed from 1850 – 1992. His book *Grammar and Gender* cites that the first known neutral pronouns, ‘ne’, ‘nis’, and ‘nim’, were introduced in the mid-nineteenth century, though little is known of their origin. In 1884, lawyer Charles Crozat Converse came up with ‘thon’, a rough combination of ‘they’ and ‘one’. While the term never gained significant popularity, it remained in some dictionaries until the mid-twentieth century.¹⁸⁶ Since 1884, various neologisms have been introduced every few years at minimum. While these attempts to imbue gender neutrality into greater society appear to challenge cultural doxa, similar ideas have existed for centuries. Eighteenth century philosopher and early feminist Mary Wollstonecraft [1759-1797] spoke of her hopes for the future “I do earnestly wish to see the distinction of sex confounded in society.”¹⁸⁷

Canadian scholar Lee Airton runs a website entitled “They is My Pronoun,” which explores the singular use of ‘they’ as a gender-neutral personal pronoun. Airton, who has utilized ‘they’ since 2011, explains the importance of respecting an individual’s choice to use ‘they’ or perhaps an alternative pronoun such as ‘ze’:

Using a gender-neutral pronoun like singular they can be a way to signal to others that a user does not want to be automatically grouped along with people who use she or he – usually women/girls/ladies or men/boys/gentlemen – for activities or invitations, etc. It can be a request that one’s preferences or habits or dis/likes or comfort not be assumed based on one’s (perceived) assigned sex. It can also be a way of making

¹⁸⁵ Baron, “The Epicene Pronoun: The Word That Failed,” *American Speech* 56:2 (1981): 83-97.

¹⁸⁶ Baron, *Grammar and Gender* (London: Yale University Press, 1986): 201.

¹⁸⁷ Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (Project Gutenberg: Coradella Collegiate Bookshelf Edition, 2002): 103.

one's felt gender apparent in everyday life by bringing it into immediate language.¹⁸⁸

In the Western context, knowledge surrounding gender-neutral pronouns is rising. Like Airton, Canadian musician Rae Spoon and American poet Andrea Gibson prefer the pronouns 'they' (subject), 'them' (object), and 'their' (possessive). Academics including Leslie Feinberg, Kate Bornstein, and Genny Beemyn have expressed their preferred pronouns to be 'ze' (subject), 'hir' (object), 'hirs' (possessive).¹⁸⁹ In "Neutral Pronouns: A Modest Proposal Whose Time Has Come", scholar Linda Wayne introduces a discussion of English diminutives in the not-so-distant past.¹⁹⁰

The majority of the English-speaking world has abandoned the use of diminutive feminine endings, e.g. 'aviatrix' and 'poetess' in favour of a more gender-neutral linguistic model; however, much of our everyday language is still explicitly gendered. Gendered pronouns are particularly problematic as many activists feel they imply that trans* subjects must fit into this two-sex dichotomy, thus linguistically reinforcing the normative system. Bodies and identities that do not neatly align with these terms or the greater binary system are broadly viewed as defective. While greater society may argue that the individual is at fault, such incidences expose the deficiencies of a restrictive, binary pronoun system.¹⁹¹ In his book *Queer Theory, Gender Theory: An Instant Primer*, Riki Wilchins criticizes society's reliance on gendered pronouns, arguing "what does gender identification mean if it

¹⁸⁸ Airton, "Why Would Someone Use Gender-Neutral Pronouns?," *They Is My Pronoun* (blog), accessed November 18, 2014, <https://theyismypronoun.wordpress.com/why-would-someone-use-a-gender-neutral-pronoun/>.

¹⁸⁹ Pronounced: ze | sie; hir | hēr; hirs | hērz.

¹⁹⁰ Wayne, "Neutral Pronouns: A Modest Proposal Whose Time Has Come," in *Canadian Woman Studies* 24: 2/3 (2005): 85.

¹⁹¹ Wayne, "Neutral Pronouns: A Modest Proposal Whose Time Has Come," 87.

doesn't tell us about a person's body, gender expression, and sexual orientation?"¹⁹² Despite its irrelevance, this system is upheld to a great extent through social institutions. While a minute faction of universities and colleges has introduced a third gender category on their applications, students' preferred pronouns are not mentioned among any registration or administrative materials.

Particularly in the case of non-binary individuals, intelligibility is a dominant barrier in one's ability to access safe, inclusive spaces and appropriate support systems within the educational institution. I would argue that outside of queer and trans* organizations and relevant theory and scholarship, there is minimal understanding of gender identity when it is disentangled and independent of sexuality and identity. This is due to fact that sexual identity, gender identity and sexual expression and gender expression are so tightly interwoven in social and cultural discourse. Concepts such as neutral pronouns disrupt the dominant discourse and underlying binarist structures, which may be understood as a threat to a predominantly heteronormative, cisnormative discourse.

¹⁹² Wilchins, *Queer Theory, Gender Theory: An Instant Primer* (Los Angeles: Alyson Books, 2004): 131.

V. Binary Bodies and Gendered Spaces

“Bodies are not only biological phenomena but also complex social creations onto which meanings have been variously composed and imposed according to time and space.”¹⁹³

Legible Bodies

As the pathologization of trans* and intersex persons demonstrates, sexed bodies are legible bodies. Bodies are medically and socially policed, reinforcing the idea of the biologically natural, normative binary. Wittig explains this social regimentation and its effects over time: “We have been compelled in our bodies and in our minds to correspond, feature by feature, with the *idea* of nature that has been established for us.”¹⁹⁴ Failure to correspond is considered deviancy and renders one’s being unintelligible. Those who flout societal gender norms and roles have historically been assumed homosexual or otherwise deviant. Doctors often attempt to ‘fix’ babies born with ambiguous or atypical sex characteristics through medical intervention. Trans* persons have long faced social ostracization and invisibility and face great barriers in accessing appropriate health care.¹⁹⁵ These narrow and prescriptive ideas of what constitutes a ‘real man’ or ‘real woman’ are deeply engrained in society.

“Not only do many people establish various facets of their identities during college, but living away from home for the first time can provide gender-variant students with an

¹⁹³ Karkazis, *Fixing Sex: Intersex, Medical Authority, and Lived Experience*, 287.

¹⁹⁴ Wittig, “One is Not Born a Woman,” in *Writing on the Body*, ed. Katie Conboy, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997): 103. Original emphasis.

¹⁹⁵ While not all trans* persons desire to pursue hormone therapy or surgical procedures, those who do are faced with restrictive guidelines and must undergo extensive therapy to ‘qualify’.

opportunity to explore their gender identity in ways they were not previously able.”¹⁹⁶ In this chapter I hope to show the ways in which trans* bodies are both oppressed and erased through language.

Foucault puts forth that the extensive study of the body has shown “to what extent historical processes were involved in what might seem to be the purely biological base of existence.”¹⁹⁷ Further, he speaks of the body as a site of power and claims that it is deeply entwined with politics, where it is useful if it is both “a productive body and a subjected body.”¹⁹⁸ The body is subject to power relations, and its performance and actions are thus partially informed by this control.¹⁹⁹ A Foucauldian understanding of the body rejects the notion that human bodies are purely natural phenomena. While the material body is considered natural in that it has come into being through natural biological processes, the ways in which physical flesh and bone are categorized and interpreted cannot be considered ‘natural’ in the same way. These supposedly ‘natural’ understandings of the body are instead socially constructed entities, produced through social and historical subjection.²⁰⁰ As Salamon argues, “understanding bodies is necessary if we are to understand power because bodies are both produced by and bear the evidence of a power that is nonlocalized and dispersed; it is recognizable only through its effects, which are often bodily effects.”²⁰¹ In

¹⁹⁶ Wendy Schneider, “Where Do We Belong? Addressing the Needs of Transgender Students in Higher Education,” *The Vermont Connection* 31 (2010): 97.

¹⁹⁷ Rabinow and Rose, *The Essential Foucault: Selections from The Essential Works of Foucault 1954- 1984* (New York: The New Press, 1994): 173.

¹⁹⁸ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 25-26. Foucault argues that this subjection may be achieved in different ways, including through instruments of violence and ideology within an institution.

¹⁹⁹ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 25.

²⁰⁰ Salamon, *Assuming a Body*, 87.

²⁰¹ Salamon, *Assuming a Body*, 87.

his comprehensive book *Normal Life*, Dean Spade explores the relationship between the body and power further:

The disciplinary mode of power refers to how racism, transphobia, sexism, ableism, and homophobia operate through norms that produce ideas about types of people and proper ways to be. These norms are enforced through internal and external policing and discipline. Institutional locations such as medicine, the social sciences, and education—where standards of healthfulness, proper behavior, and socialization are established and taught—are key technologies of disciplinary power. In such locations, we learn how to view our bodies, how our actions make us into certain types of people, and how to practice techniques to modify ourselves to better fit the norms.²⁰²

Spade connects power to the social norms that govern the intelligibility of gender within social institutions. In order to better understand the dispersion and effects of this disciplinary power, one must investigate the norms it enforces and their origins.

Through the progression of modern science and medicine, biological sex and sexed bodies were increasingly portrayed as oppositional categories which established the male-female gender binary that is today a near universal axiom. Valentine and Wilchins discuss the sexing of the body in medical discourse, citing that as medicine progressed, countless parts of the body “from bones to brains” were codified through oppositional binary language, even if initially known by the same name.²⁰³ As gender has historically been understood as synonymous or interdependent with sex, and sex traditionally linked to sexuality, it is interesting to note that the association of sex with specific bodily parts has not proven constant through time and space. From the twelfth to the sixteenth century, many European women considered breasts to symbolize their inferiority to men. During this

²⁰² Spade, *Normal Life*, 104.

²⁰³ Karkazis, *Fixing Sex: Intersex, Medical Authority, and Lived Experience*,” 34.

period women tried to conceal and flatten their chests, inventing constricting garments such as the bodice.²⁰⁴ Breasts were not widely sexualized until the sixteenth century, with both small and large chests being particularly desirable at different points in history.²⁰⁵ Across cultures, different body parts are valued as standards of beauty and attractiveness. The female buttocks are particularly desirable in Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean, while the Japanese find the neck especially erotic and consider crooked teeth to be an attractive quality.²⁰⁶ Small and dainty feet have been tied to feminine beauty since 1125 in China, while prominent cheekbones are considered to denote a negative personality and potentially bring bad luck in both Korea and Japan.²⁰⁷ On the Island of Ponapé, long, extended labia are considered highly attractive, leading to the rise of stretching and artificial lengthening procedure.²⁰⁸ Researchers have found that a variety of bodily parts have been considered ‘sexual’ or ‘sexually desirable,’ mirroring the differing cultural and historical norms and ideals of femininity and masculinity.²⁰⁹

The fact that anatomically and biologically, ‘male’ and ‘female’ sexed bodies are not always distinctly formed, upturns the basis of the longstanding binary. In her work *Undoing Gender*, Butler discusses the prevalence of medical ‘correction’ when bodies are not

²⁰⁴ Iwan Bloch, *Anthropological Studies on the Strange Sexual Practices of All Races and All Ages* (Honolulu: University Press of the Pacific, 2001): 147-9.

²⁰⁵ Tauches, “Transgendering,” 188. In times of economic growth and prosperity larger bosoms were preferred by prospective partners, while tough financial times saw small chests become considered more desirable.

²⁰⁶ Bloch, *Anthropological Studies on the Strange Sexual Practices of All Races and All Ages*, 133; Victoria Pitts-Taylor, *Cultural Encyclopedia of the Body: Volume I and II* (Westport: Greenwood, 2008): 41.

²⁰⁷ Pitts-Taylor, *Cultural Encyclopedia of the Body: Volume I and II*, 70. This is particularly interesting due to the Western view of the cheekbone which is a feature often associated with models.

²⁰⁸ Bloch, *Anthropological Studies on the Strange Sexual Practices of All Races and All Ages*, 13-14.

²⁰⁹ Tauches, “Transgendering,” 189.

‘adequately’ sex-distinct. In these cases, surgical intervention is used to alter the body and anatomy to conform to the dominant binary gender discourse.²¹⁰ Leading bioethicist Katrina Karkazis explains the social repudiation of intersexuality, explaining that “gender-atypical genitals raise issues beyond the individual: if one cannot stabilize the sex of another person, one’s own sexuality may become destabilized.”²¹¹ This preoccupation with biological gender impedes effective communication between service providers and trans* individuals.²¹² This is particularly problematic within health contexts, as services required by trans* patients can be very different from those offered to cis persons.

In order to fully conceptualize the challenges faced by trans* individuals whose bodies are considered unintelligible, one must acknowledge cis privilege. Tobias Raun defines this concept as “the gender entitlement and legitimacy that non-trans people are given and assume in their gender identification, which at times can also be extended to trans people when addressed in one’s chosen gender or being allowed into gender-segregated spaces that one feels one belongs in – restrooms, for example.”²¹³ Recognizing the sexism and cissexism present in the bodily distribution of power and the ways it is exercised, one is better able to acknowledge other cissexist structures and better understand the unique barriers trans* individuals face.

²¹⁰ Butler, *Undoing Gender*, 4, 10, 63. This intervention is not practiced exclusively on intersex persons; however, for information on intersex medical practices please see: Karkazis, 2009; Kessler, 1998; Hird, 2000; and Chase, 2006.

²¹¹ Karkazis, *Fixing Sex: Intersex, Medical Authority, and Lived Experience*, 147.

²¹² Namaste, *Invisible Lives: The Erasure of Transsexual and Transgendered People*, 45.

Information and research on health services and SRS is often disproportionately focused on MTF individuals, despite the vast differences between medical procedures for MTFs and FTMs. This threatens to erase the experience of many transmen and speaks to the social and medical ignorance of their unique needs.

²¹³ Raun, “Trans as Contested Intelligibility: Interrogating how to Conduct Trans Analysis with Respectful Curiosity,” 37.

Gender Attribution

Enduring social norms of ‘male’ and ‘female’ cause many people to categorize the world around them on the basis of gender, whether consciously or not; “through interaction, gender attribution occurs, which serves to place a person in an interaction into one sex category or the other, even though the actual sex of a person has not necessarily been determined.”²¹⁴ This process of gender attribution maintains and reinforces the oppositional classification of the dominant discourse of gender. Bodies are transformed into something socially meaningful and consequently intelligible through the processes of historically and culturally specific construction. Stryker writes:

Gendering is the initial step in this transformation, inseparable from the process of forming an identity by means of which we’re fitted to a system of exchange in a heterosexual economy. Authority seizes upon specific material qualities of the flesh, particularly the genitals, as outward indication of future reproductive potential, constructs this flesh as a sign, and reads it to enculturate the body. Gender attribution is compulsory; it codes and deploys our bodies in ways that materially affect us, yet we choose neither our marks nor the meanings they carry.”²¹⁵

Susan Stryker explains how gender attribution is omnipresent and pervades all aspects of life from the moment a medical professional proclaims ‘It’s a ____!’²¹⁶ This system reinforces the notion that there exist only two genders, which are not only different but are primarily defined through their difference, in opposition to each other. Karkazis notes that this difference is habitually attributed directly to reproductive organs; “men have penises,

²¹⁴ Tauches, “Transgendering,” 189.

²¹⁵ Stryker, “My Words to Victor Frankenstein Above the Village of Chamounix: Performing Transgender Rage,” 249.

²¹⁶ Stryker, “My Words to Victor Frankenstein Above the Village of Chamounix: Performing Transgender Rage,” 250.

women do not.”²¹⁷ This analogously implies that male and female bodies are considered incommensurate, as the category of ‘women’ is defined by the absence of a phallus.²¹⁸

Kessler and McKenna liken the concept of gender attribution to that of flipping a coin. They explain that a large majority of people see gender as a dichotomous fact, much like the two options of heads and tails, and assume that there exists only male and female. Generally, one can easily surmise an individual’s gender through observation, just as one recognizes the coin as being heads or tails. However, if the coin is worn or beat up, it may require additional inspection. If a person’s gender is not easily ascertained through visual cues, most people assume that they will be able to designate a person as male or female through further inspection and do not acknowledge the possibilities beyond this binary.²¹⁹ This process facilitates the perhaps arbitrary attribution of gender and often culminates in disrespectful speculation or inappropriate questioning.²²⁰ When individuals identify or exist outside of the prescribed binary in some way, gender attribution becomes increasingly difficult.

The inability to determine gender unsettles the foundation of binary discourse. When a body is observed to exist outside of these norms, it may be read as unnatural or

²¹⁷ Karkazis, *Fixing Sex: Intersex, Medical Authority, and Lived Experience*, 147.

²¹⁸ This immense importance placed on genitals is detrimental to many individuals, whether cisgender, trans*, or intersex. In a world where penises have been historically valued above other organs and are considered a key aspect of ‘being a man’, male-identified individuals (both trans* and cis) face additional pressures, and in turn biologically ‘female’ bodies are devalued. A large majority of transmen do not pursue ‘bottom surgery’ (which refers primarily to either phalloplasty or metoidioplasty) in part due to the steep cost and often-unsatisfactory results. Pursuing bottom surgery is also stigmatized in some FTM communities. Many cisgender men also suffer due to societal pressures, especially when they feel their genitalia does not meet normative expectations.

²¹⁹ Kessler and McKenna, *Gender: An Ethnomethodological Approach*, 1.

²²⁰ Upon disclosing their trans* status, many individuals are subject to questions regarding their genitalia, surgeries, sex life or sexual attraction, and other invasive topics.

undesirable. Until recently, many doctors saw intersex babies as needing to be ‘fixed’ and sexual reassignment surgery is still regularly referred to as a ‘corrective’ procedure.²²¹ The body has become highly politicized and there remains great resistance to understanding non-normative bodies and identities as anything but biologically ‘broken’, hence requiring treatment.²²² Reproductive organs are considered especially contentious despite their relative invisibility to the general public. In their ethnographic study, David Valentine and Riki Ann Wilchins explore the immense importance placed on genitalia in the medical context. According to their findings in medical practice, an individual’s genitals account for only one percent of the entire body in terms of surface area.²²³ When one considers the social and cultural significance placed on genitalia and their assumed importance in the social and medical intelligibility of an individual’s sex, this percentage is highly disproportionate. This apparent social need to be able to categorize others speaks to the permeation of gender norms and attribution.

This desire to maintain systems of classification is in part symptomatic of the perceived threat of ‘not knowing’, as discussed by Maritime educator and activist Adam Myatt. Myatt argues that Western culture is obsessed with ‘knowing’ the other, and often feels discomfort if this other is in some way unintelligible.²²⁴ I would expand this argument

²²¹ Valentine and Wilchins, “One Percent on the Burn Chart,” 216. The neologism ‘Intersex Genital Mutilation’ (IGM) is now being used in some academic and medical fields to denote unnecessary and harmful surgical intervention performed on intersex babies. Surgery may be necessary in cases where the infant’s physical health and comfort would be negatively affected, but surgeries intended to make the infant’s genitals conform to gendered norms should be avoided completely.

²²² Karkazis, *Fixing Sex: Intersex, Medical Authority, and Lived Experience*, 287-8. Treatment is often considered vital to make the body conform to biological and social norms, despite the fact that the surgery may not be in the best interest of the patient and may be harmful.

²²³ Valentine and Wilchins, “One Percent on the Burn Chart,” 215.

²²⁴ Thorpe-Gosley, *Social Media Beyond the Binary*.

to add that this apparent preoccupation with knowing the intimate details of those who surround you speaks to Edward Said's concept of the 'other' as something that is often defined in opposition to what is considered the norm. In order to feel legitimate and understand one's self and identity in relation to others, one might compare oneself to that which is considered deviant or abnormal to reaffirm both agency and identity. By defining the other in opposition to oneself, they are pushed further out of the intelligible realm and their voices silenced. French feminist Wittig explores this creation of difference in her work "The Straight Mind." She argues that the structure of society is based on the necessity of maintaining a dominated 'other', by creating difference and subsequently controlling it.²²⁵ The binary concept of gender difference ontologically constructs an 'other'. Given that the maintenance of exclusion and dominance is predicated upon the archaic gender dichotomy, this serves to reinforce arguments to deconstruct the binary and address its structural power over language and space.

The Regulation of Bodies in Public Space

Public spaces are frequently segregated using either visual signs or binary language, which maintains a culture of policing both identity and space. Viviane Namaste argues that "the demarcation of public space is intimately related to the articulation of culturally sanctioned gender identities."²²⁶ Exclusive spaces are constructed through the repeated performance of hegemonic binary gender identities. The exclusivity of this space is maintained when the persons accessing the space perform in a way that is consistent with

²²⁵ Wittig, "The Straight Mind," 55.

²²⁶ Namaste, *Invisible Lives*, 143.

the cissexism of institutional discourse. When space becomes cisnormative, this in turn delimits access, dictating which bodies are permitted to enter and extend into it.²²⁷

To fully understand the creation and maintenance of gendered space, one must consider how gender functions on multiple intersecting levels, primarily personal, interactional, and institutional. Within the postsecondary establishment, one can explore the structural control exerted through bodily regulation. By controlling access, the institution exerts power over those who actively monitor the space and those who are systematically excluded. Gendered spaces cause their occupants and those excluded to police their personal identity and that of those around them. This is particularly common in facilities designated for ‘women’.²²⁸ This division encourages the practice of gender attribution to regulate the bodies therein. In so doing, behavioural characteristics and physical characteristics are thus compared and contrasted with stereotypical social norms for either males or females.

At the personal level, the construct of gender operates primarily within the cultural tenets of masculinity and femininity at a given point in time. Bodies are gendered and regulated according to perceived biological and cultural norms. These norms are determined and recognized predominantly on the basis of appearance, mannerisms, and verbal communication. Physical appearance is often focused on an individual’s hair length and style, the use or absence of makeup, and attire, specifically the choice of culturally gendered items. Visible secondary sex characteristics also provide a basis for stereotypical assumptions of sex and gender. Mannerisms include social cues such as hand movement,

²²⁷ Ahmed, “Orientations: Toward a Queer Phenomenology,” 563.

²²⁸ Women’s restrooms can be dangerous territory for trans* individuals as well as cisgender women who may be perceived as masculine in some way. Any masculine characteristic may be taken as threatening in private spaces designated for women. This relates to the idea of transwomen in particular as ‘imposters’, who are often cast as predators using a ‘fake’ identity to gain access to an exclusive space. This will be discussed further in Chapter VII.

body language, and facial expressions, and make up the basis of stereotypically gendered nonverbal communication. Mannerisms can be included as an aspect of gender performativity, as first posited by Judith Butler in *Gender Trouble*.²²⁹ Finally, verbal communication can refer to speech patterns, vocal register and pitch, and the use of language.²³⁰ Social psychologist Phillip Smith's pioneering study on gendered attributes of speech found significant correspondence between gendered speech-based attributes and the speakers' self-assessed masculinity and femininity.²³¹ Despite the fact that these characteristics are often presumed to be universal, it is vital to acknowledge that there are "none that are *always* and *without exception* true of only one gender."²³² Gender specific spaces reinforce practices of gender attribution and silently encourage gender assimilation and regulate performativity. These spaces also make unmitigated assumptions about their occupants, thus reinforcing the oppositional binary.

Gendered public spaces can be both exclusionary and dangerous for trans* and non-binary persons as well as cisgender individuals whose appearance may not conform to gender norms. When a space is gender segregated, such as a restroom or locker room, the individual is put in a position where they must make a choice. To do so, many trans* individuals must take into consideration whether they 'pass' well enough to enter a restrictive space in line with their gender identity, or perhaps whether they pass too well to access a space they may currently feel more comfortable in. Gender queer and non-binary

²²⁹ Butler is known for coining the term "gender performativity" in her 1990 book, *Gender Trouble*, which problematizes the meaning of gender, identity, and the subject.

²³⁰ Talbot, "Gender Stereotypes: Reproduction and Challenge," 468, 478. See also: Aries, 1996; Kramer, 1978; and Mulac et al, 1998

²³¹ Weatherall and Gallois, "Gender and Identity: Representation and Social Action," 489. For additional information on gendered speech-based attributions, speakers' self-identity, and listeners' perception of gender, see Smith's 1985 publication *Language, the Sexes and Society*.

²³² Kessler and McKenna, *Gender: An Ethnomethodological Approach*, 1-2. Original emphasis.

individuals are faced with a similar dilemma, where they are forced to choose ‘male’ or ‘female’ despite the fact that they may identify outside of or in between these categories. One must also take into consideration the fear of rejection or harassment and the ever-present threat of physical violence.²³³ Viviane Namaste illustrates that transgender persons are “in jeopardy” not only in what might be considered ‘normal’ public spaces, but also in spaces designated lesbian or gay.²³⁴

Trans* bodies are systematically pathologised, delegitimized, and excluded as shown through this discussion of intelligibility, gender attribution, and bodily regulation. The path towards the inclusion and recognition of trans* and atypical bodies requires social, structural, and institutional change. In order to facilitate change and tackle exclusionary spaces, it is vital to acknowledge cissexual privilege. We can begin to deconstruct the dichotomy of gender by addressing the medicalization of trans* and intersex persons, consequently disrupting the norms of gender attribution as gender becomes further estranged from biological and sex characteristics. French Feminist Cixous reflects upon bodily censorship in her works, and proposes the way in which writing and speaking from the body may allow one to overcome silence and erasure through bodily signification, the sharing of lived experience, and the denunciation of binarist standards.²³⁵ This tactic would incite individuals to reject the norms enforced through disciplinary power structures and gendered spaces and encourage them to speak up and share personal narratives in an attempt to make their voices heard and their bodies visible.

²³³ This issue will be discussed in greater depth in Chapter VII.

²³⁴ Namaste, *Invisible Lives*, 147.

²³⁵ Cixous, “The Laugh of the Medusa,” 883-884.

Once an establishment has determined available options on campus, the residence application form should be modified to reflect these accommodations. By once again using a gender ‘box’ that allows students to self-identify, residence staff will be better able to grasp a student’s specific needs. I would also argue that it is necessary to include a space that permits students to detail any specific requests or needs, a feature which would be beneficial for many students regardless of gender identity. A student from Krum, Davis, and Galupo’s study introduced the term ‘individualized accommodation’. He suggested, “The individualized accommodation could then ask what the student needs to feel safe in their housing situation and on a reasonable basis, this individual request could be accommodated.”²³⁶ By designating someone on the residence staff to handle specific inquiries and requests relating to gender identity and other factors, students may be reassured that their needs will be taken into consideration and may feel less apprehensive about reaching out. The application form should also include this individual’s contact information and encourage students to communicate their questions or specific housing needs with this contact directly. This information should also reference gender identity explicitly to convey that residence staff are aware of trans* students’ needs. As a final note, I would strongly suggest that when finding a student safe and appropriate housing due to special requirements, be it identity or disability, the university and residence staff should ensure that extra charges incurred due to residence location or option will not fall on the shoulders of the student.²³⁷

²³⁶ Krum, Davis, and Galupo, “Gender-Inclusive Housing Preferences: A Survey of College-Aged Transgender Students,” 77.

²³⁷ Beemyn et al., “Transgender Issues on College Campuses,” *New Directions for Student Services* 111: Fall (2005c): 53. Insisting a student pay more for a space when it is the only option available to them would be effectively punishing the student for something outside of their control, just as wheelchair accessible rooms should not cost the student more.

Resources and Recommendations

These recommendations are but a few ways that a university or college can work towards greater trans* inclusion while concurrently addressing the binary foundations upon which it has been built. This is vital undertaking that requires persistence and commitment from all levels of administration. Postsecondary institutions must be consistent in their message and accountable for their actions. In order to benefit trans* individuals within the institution as well as prospective students, these initiatives should be prioritized and an action plan developed and initiated as soon as possible.

I would argue that all staff and faculty, regardless of their position on campus, be required to attend either an educational session on gender identity or undergo specialized diversity training. While exceptionally important for all individuals, it is particularly crucial to ensure service providers within the institution are knowledgeable to the nuances of trans* needs within their respective fields. Health centre staff, counsellors, and any on-site or visiting health professionals should have a strong understanding of the diversity of all students and their unique health requirements. Affirmation of trans* identities has been shown to have a significant effect on psychological and emotional well being. This affirmation is particularly important within specialized services, and refers to “the extent to which transgender identity is disclosed to others so as to be recognized by them, performed in the presence of others, and supported by others”²³⁸ Similarly, the research of Nuttbrock, Rosenblum, and Blumstein finds that “identity validation and personal empowerment are

²³⁸ Nuttbrock, Rosenblum, and Blumstein, “Transgender Identity Affirmation and Mental Health,” 5.

critical factors in mental health functioning.”²³⁹ These spaces should reflect student diversity by ensuring materials are neither cisnormative nor heteronormative and language is not unnecessarily gendered. These centres should also ensure they have a variety of resources specific to trans* individuals, instead of requiring the students to educate the staff.

²³⁹ Nuttbrock, Rosenblum, and Blumstein, “Transgender Identity Affirmation and Mental Health,” 9.

VI. Trans* Students, Postsecondary Language, and Policy

“Bigenderism is witnessed in the plethora of bureaucratic forms that have two boxes or spaces offering the choice of male or female for sex and/or gender, with exceptions being few and far between.”²⁴⁰

Postsecondary Education in Canada

In order to provide a broad overview of the current climate in terms of trans* inclusive terminology and practices, I will present findings from my exploration of application and policy material from institutions across Canada. I have chosen one postsecondary institution from each province and territory in Canada and collected application and policy data which is freely available online and could be accessed by prospective students. The most recent statistics show that the number of students enrolled in Canadian postsecondary programs in 2012 was 2 023 191; this figure includes Canadian students (90.1%) and international students (9.9%). Of these students, 63.4% were enrolled in university programs and 36.4% were enrolled in college programs.²⁴¹

I have selected thirteen postsecondary schools based on 2014 enrolment statistics as reported by the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada. One institution was chosen for each province and territory, which resulted in a selection of ten universities and three colleges (private schools were not considered). Of these institutions, six rank within a ‘Top 10’ category in MacLean’s 2015 Annual University Rankings, and two place within a

²⁴⁰ Gilbert, “Defeating Bigenderism,” 95.

²⁴¹ Statistics Canada. “Table 477-0019 - Postsecondary Enrolments, by Registration Status, Pan-Canadian Standard Classification of Education (PCSCE), Classification of Instructional Programs, Primary Grouping (CIP_PG), Sex and Immigration Status, Annual.” *CANSIM (database)*. Last modified November 24, 2014. Accessed December 10, 2015. <http://www5.statcan.gc.ca/cansim/a26>

‘Top 20’ ranking.²⁴² This is particularly relevant for two reasons: first, many students consider university rankings when choosing where to apply; second, the schools that place high within MacLean’s coveted rankings are often considered to set the national standards and exemplify institutional ideals. I approached each institution from the perspective of a prospective student and analyzed application materials in addition to information provided online.

An American study conducted by Rankin and Beemyn explored specific types of harassment trans* students might face in the postsecondary setting, surveying fourteen postsecondary schools. These statistics reflect near half of the students surveyed experiencing harassment, with 86% reporting verbal abuse. They found that 52% of trans* identified participants felt pressured to be silent and 43% had encountered transphobic graffiti on campus. Close to half of these students had been threatened verbally, almost a quarter had been threatened physically, and about one fifth had been physically assaulted. When contrasting the results of lesbian, gay, and bisexual participants, they found that less than two percent had experienced physical violence and less than one third had been harassed in any of these ways.²⁴³

In a ground breaking report entitled *Injustice at Every Turn*, American researchers found that nearly one sixth of trans* identified persons were forced to leave their education program due to severe harassment, reflecting the statistics provided by Rankin and Beemyn. Eleven percent were either denied financial aid and scholarship opportunities or

²⁴² Mary Dwyer, “The 2015 MacLean’s University Rankings,” in *MacLean’s*, November 6, 2014. Accessed December 10, 2014, <http://www.macleans.ca/education/unirankings/university-rankings-2015-methodology/>. These ranked categories include ‘Reputational Rankings,’ ‘Undergraduate Rankings,’ and ‘Comprehensive Rankings.’

²⁴³ Beemyn, “Trans On Campus,” 2; Rankin and Beemyn, “Beyond a binary: The lives of gender-nonconforming youth.”

lost held scholarships due to their gender identity or expression. One student shared their experience: “prior to being out at school, I received about \$18,000 in financial aid, several awards, and scholarships. The year that I decided to be “out” on my applications, I received one scholarship out of 18 that I applied for despite having a 4.0 and an excellent application package.”²⁴⁴ Perhaps in consequence of these situations, 15% of respondents were forced to leave before completing their program due to financial troubles related to the high cost of medical aspects of transitioning, which are rarely covered by insurance.²⁴⁵

Application Procedure and First Impressions

Many scholars and philosophers have articulated the importance of self-definition and self-identification for those who have been oppressed or silenced.²⁴⁶ Trans* individuals should be permitted to self-define and self-identify within any social institution and have their identities acknowledged, respected, and protected. Expressing one’s authentic identity can be particularly difficult within the confines of postsecondary schools. This is a time when a student should be able to focus on their studies and becoming part of university community instead of taking on the role of an activist and educator, required to advocate for their voice to be heard and their rights to be protected.

In order to gain a sense of an institution’s knowledge surrounding gender identity, I explored the language used in their application and registration materials. I compared the

²⁴⁴ Grant et al., *Injustice at Every Turn: A Report of the National Transgender Discrimination Survey*, (Washington: National Center for Transgender Equality and National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, 2011): 41.

²⁴⁵ Jaime M. Grant et al., *Injustice at Every Turn: A Report of the National Transgender Discrimination Survey*, (Washington: National Center for Transgender Equality and National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, 2011): 40.

²⁴⁶ Cixous, “The Laugh of the Medusa,” 882; Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?.”

gender options, name options, and pronoun options on each form in order to ascertain whether or not these materials were inclusive of trans* identities or showed acknowledgement of the concept of gender identity. Of the thirteen schools surveyed, I encountered three distinct modes of asking a student's gender on application materials. The most prevalent mode gave the student two binary options categorized as M or F, or Male or Female. The student is given these two options and is instructed to select one. Eleven out of thirteen schools formatted the gender question on their application in this way. Of those eleven schools, six explicitly listed these options under 'gender' and one French application used the word *sexe*.²⁴⁷ The remaining two schools left room for identification outside of the gender binary. School Four added a third category to choose from, which is designated as either 'Undeclared' or 'Other' dependent on the application form accessed.²⁴⁸ The only application form that did not provide pre-selected gender terms to choose from was School Thirteen. Thirteen instead provided an empty box entitled 'Gender' in which students could self-identify as they saw fit.

Following the gender query, each application form requested the student's first and last legal names. Many of these schools had the additional option of providing a former legal last name (eight out of thirteen, or 61.5%). Applications that allow solely for a student's legal name prohibit the student from including their preferred name unless they have completed a legal name change. This often means that a student is registered under a

²⁴⁷ The distinction between sex and gender is difficult in the French language. In the context of describing humans, both 'sex' and 'gender' translate directly to *sexe*. While gender is at times translated as *genre*, the true meaning of this term does not correspond to the English notion.

²⁴⁸ This school hosts two separate application PDFs in different areas of its website; the first uses the term 'other' while the second uses 'undeclared'.

gendered name that may not correspond to their gender identity.²⁴⁹ Out of thirteen schools, seven included a space for the student to record their ‘Preferred Name’. Two schools included options for an additional first name: ‘Commonly Used Name’ and *Prénom Usuel*; however, these options were clearly not to be considered in the same manner as a ‘preferred name’.²⁵⁰ The inclusion of a preferred name category is extremely important for trans* and non-binary students who have not undergone a legal name change. While roughly 58% of applications included this option, there is an additional name category that is important for the accommodation of trans* students. If an individual has completed a legal name change, it is possible that necessary application materials or documentation may be in their birth name. While requirements vary across Canada, generally an individual must wait until they are nineteen years of age to change their given name.²⁵¹ If a student changes their name following high school graduation, their secondary school transcripts will reflect their birth name and not their legal name. Inclusive application forms should include a section where students can list their previous name in full, without requiring the student to take extra measures to explain their situation and potentially ‘out’ themselves unnecessarily. 31% of applications surveyed included a space for previous names. Three schools included a variation of ‘Former Name’, and one school included a space for recording a ‘Birth Name’.

²⁴⁹ A legal name change is both time consuming and expensive. American professor Finn Enke has made note that they spent 26 hours and \$350.00 so far on the process to change their name legally. Once an individual pays for a name change and new birth certificate reflecting this change, they must then change their name on other forms of identification such as passports, health cards, driver’s license, and bank accounts. This incurs further fees and puts the individual in the compromising position of having to ‘come out’ repeatedly.

²⁵⁰ From consulting the application guide and other assistance materials, I ascertained that ‘Common Name’ was meant not meant to imply preferred name and therefore would not be utilized in the same way.

²⁵¹ In some provinces, youth between 16 and 18 can change their given name with parental consent. For youth younger than 16, some provinces and territories will accept requests for a legal name change when completed by a parent or guardian.

Of the postsecondary schools whose application forms included one or more of these elements – an inclusive gender option, a space for a student’s preferred name, and a space for one’s former legal name if applicable – none featured all three elements. Of the thirteen schools, four forms did not contain any of these characteristics. An additional linguistic element that would allow students to better express themselves and their identity on application forms is preferred pronouns. While few applications took into consideration gender identities outside of the traditional male/female options, those that included a space for self-definition or the category ‘other’ did not address the question of pronouns. When recognizing an individual’s gender identity, it is important to acknowledge that this identity may be complex and not self-explanatory. By allowing identification outside of the binary, this means that an individual’s preferred pronouns may also exist outside of the male/female dichotomy. To acknowledge one aspect of identity is important but the institution must show dedication to acknowledging this identity as a whole.²⁵² In order to ensure a student’s identity is fully recognized and respected, I would argue that a preferred pronoun question should be posed alongside the gender section.

Student Documentation and Identification

The documentation of student identity begins with application forms and extends much further. If a student is accepted, the information collected from the application form is

²⁵² For instance, if a student were to write ‘transman’ on their application, it does not necessarily go without saying that their preferred pronoun is ‘he’. Many trans* identified individuals choose gender neutral pronouns for a variety of personal and/or political reasons. Further, trans* terminology is not necessarily static or universal and I would argue that attempting to place an individual’s gender identity within the gender binary in order to determine their preferred pronoun is both unnecessary and disrespectful. If an individual were to write ‘genderqueer’ or ‘agender’ in this box, there is arguably no way to establish their preferred pronoun without consulting them directly.

generally sufficient for enrolment, and the institution offers no further opportunity to specify how they desire to be addressed. Students are assigned a student number, a university email account, and an identification (ID) card. After registering for classes, their name is placed on appropriate class lists, and sometimes in a database with contact information for current students. Of the institutions that offer students the chance to record their preferred name, the large majority still use one's legal name for student documentation. This can be very challenging for students who have not legally changed their name. University email accounts often include a first name or initial. If a student is using a preferred name, specifically one that begins with a different letter than their birth name, any communication using this account risks outing them or raising questions that may be uncomfortable.²⁵³

Scholar Genny Beemyn explains the immense personal and legal importance of allowing trans* identified students to alter their documentation:

Not only does having the appropriate name and gender reflect and validate their identities, but it may also prevent transgender students from being placed into uncomfortable and dangerous situations where they would have to explain why they use a name different from their birth name and why their appearance does not match a photo or gender designation on an identification card. Moreover, updated records and documents ensure that transgender students will not be forced to disclose their gender identities and thus be subject to discrimination when they apply for jobs, seek admission to graduate and professional schools, or at any other time when they must show a college document.²⁵⁴

For most students within institutions that recognize their preferred name, the majority of documentation will remain under their birth name until they acquire a legal name change.

²⁵³ Schools generally require students to use their official email account for corresponding with faculty and staff and prohibit use of alternative accounts for academic purposes.

²⁵⁴ Beemyn et al., "Transgender Issues on College Campuses," 58.

This creates a distressing situation where some records reflect their true identity and some do not, leaving the student in charge of their own documentation, left to wander in uncharted territory alone. In institutions which do not recognize an individual's identity in any official way, the situation is even more disconcerting as they try to find ways to navigate school administration, services, and classes in the safest and most discreet manner possible.

Student ID cards are one of the most problematic aspects of student documentation as they are generally required to state a student's legal name. When one considers the many situations that require use of this student card, it becomes clear how detrimental this can be to a person's sense of self and identity. This Student ID is made to verify and delimit access to school facilities and services. On-campus students are often assigned mailboxes and use their Student ID to pick up their mail. If mail is addressed to a preferred name, these conflicting names may make it difficult for a student to collect their mail without being required to explain their situation and personal identity to a staff member, perhaps in the presence of other students. Similarly, students use their ID card to access library materials, to enter fitness facilities, and to access health and counselling services. Students enrolled in a meal plan will be required to show this card multiple times each day in order to eat, risking a situation where they are forced to come out or explain themselves. In many schools, students are required to have their Student ID visible while they sit exams (even if their school work and exams are completed using their preferred name), thus potentially outing them to their peers, professors, and invigilators. Student ID cards are also meant to benefit students outside the institution, allowing them to obtain favourable student rates at attractions such as museums and on public transit. In these instances, student ID cards may

force trans* students to come out or ‘prove’ their identity, consequently putting them at a greater risk of harassment.

Schools that offer a preferred name option generally use this name exclusively for class lists. This is an excellent step forward, as the student is often automatically referred to by the correct name by a professor without the need to explain oneself or hear an incorrect name called on the first day of class.²⁵⁵ While this is an excellent system in theory, it is not always effective in practice. Despite the use of a preferred name, many trans* students find themselves incorrectly gendered in front of their peers. At times, some professors have been known to deliberately misgender students, using pronouns that do not align with the student’s preferred name or gender identity and presentation.²⁵⁶ Bridget Liang, an Ontario university student, has experienced this reality more than once. She expresses that although “it’s painful and unpleasant ... It’s something I’ve learned to put up with because there are worse things that could be happening to me.”²⁵⁷ Dr. Trish Salah of the University of Winnipeg speaks to the importance of addressing students respectfully, reiterating that the refusal to use a student’s preferred name and/or pronoun can be painful. She states “it effectively dehumanizes the student to have their identity disregarded in a public way and by an authority figure and someone they’re hoping to make some kind of learning connection with.”²⁵⁸ Two of the best methods to prevent students like Bridget from having similar damaging experiences are educational training seminars and changes in policy. All staff, faculty, and service providers should be required to attend educational sessions on

²⁵⁵ If the preferred name is traditionally gendered, this may also encourage the use of gender appropriate pronouns for individuals identifying within the binary.

²⁵⁶ Gessell, “Universities For All Genders,” *University Affairs*.

²⁵⁷ Gessell, “Universities For All Genders,” *University Affairs*.

²⁵⁸ Gessell, “Universities For All Genders,” *University Affairs*.

gender identity and school policy should explicitly forbid harassment and discrimination on the basis of gender identity and expression.

While these considerations are exceedingly important for creating a safe, affirming, and welcoming space for incoming and current students, one must also acknowledge the diverse identities of faculty and staff. The experience of Dr. Finn Enke, an American professor and trans* studies scholar, provides much needed insight. Finn Enke began their transition while teaching at the University of Wisconsin, an institution without a preferred name policy or any policies concerning gender identity. After completing a legal name change, Enke approached Human Resources at their university to have their name updated within the institution. Enke immediately encountered resistance and was told there was no protocol for such situations. After eight separate appointments, their name has been changed in some parts of the university system, yet “parts of the system still use the no-longer legal name.”²⁵⁹ This puts Enke in a difficult position, forcing them to continually come out as trans* and express their legal name and preferred pronouns to their students and colleagues. If a school is unwilling to recognize and respect a professor’s identity, this will undoubtedly send a clear message to current and potential students.²⁶⁰ Policy changes that seek to validate and accommodate trans* identities must be universal and apply not only to students, but to the entire university community. The goal must be meaningful structural change and not simply an overhaul of application materials.

²⁵⁹ Finn Enke, “What’s in a Name?: ‘I Am a Situation Like This’.”

²⁶⁰ Genny Beemyn cites a 2001 lawsuit put forth by a MTF professor who was terminated after being denied access to appropriate facilities without ‘proving’ she had undergone complete SRS. See: “The Experiences and Needs of Transgender Community College Students” *Community College Journal of Research and Practice* 36 (2012): 505.

Rationale and Recommendations for Self-Definition

One of the main critiques I put forth of the bigender options on applications, documentation, and the institution's administrative system lies in the students' inability to self-identify using personal terms and preferred language. From a poststructural perspective, one acknowledges that language is not neutral, but rather serves an important role in one's comprehension of reality, as well as one's ability to exert power. If language provides a means of communicating reality, pre-set terminology that dictates identity effectively limits one's ability to express their reality (identity and self) to the world around them.²⁶¹

Therefore, if we argue that language constitutes reality instead of being neutral ground through which reality passes, trans* identities and bodies and their intelligibility are created through language.²⁶² The immeasurable authority of language must not be overlooked, nor taken lightly, as "words are complex entities that may simultaneously subjugate and injure while also inaugurating the subject."²⁶³ If language is productive, we must question who produces this language. Queer and trans* communities are unique in that they are known to create their own terminology, introducing terms such as genderqueer, pangender, and genderfluid. One might regard this language to be in a steady state of evolution as terms are created, negotiated, and reclaimed. These neologisms lack stability and inherent meaning outside of their community and act as sites of "social and political struggle."²⁶⁴ Even the words 'other' or 'undeclared', a potential third choice aside from the original male and female boxes, may be viewed as politically charged. 'Other' may be seen to imply that one

²⁶¹ Rosenberg, "An Introduction to Feminist Poststructural Theorizing," 41.

²⁶² This is similar to the way in which Foucault posited that social practices were constitutive of reality.

²⁶³ Secomb, "Words the Matter," 152.

²⁶⁴ Rosenberg, "An Introduction to Feminist Poststructural Theorizing," 43.

either falls outside of what society recognizes as ‘normal’, or even that they are not certain of their identity. To trans* individuals, these options may feel delegitimizing or alienating.

I would argue against adding explicit terminology to application forms and documentation as it may force an individual to share more than that which they feel comfortable. To identify as transgender may provoke questions about if or when the individual will ‘complete’ their transition, as the historically dominant term transsexual implies one has undergone sexual reassignment surgery. Even within trans* communities there is a great deal of controversy over the legitimacy of experience and identities.²⁶⁵

In a context where reality is largely found through rituals of confession and sharing experiential knowledge, one can find a number of competing and conflicting truths, which further problematize accepted notions of gender and transgender. The following quote from academic K. L. Broad is particularly appropriate in this discussion:

These distinctions about who fits under the umbrella “transgender” were reflected in transgender organizations: some male- to-female cross dressing groups embraced the term, others rejected it ... some argued that taking hormones qualified one to be transgender, others argued that it signified that you were transsexual and not transgender; time and again FTM/transmen argued that their experience fit the definition, countering the notion that because society accepted tomboys and women wearing pants, the truer transgender expression was male-to-female; some argued that if you passed as a man or woman you were not transgender, while others argued that being able to live in a new gender is actually what qualified you as more transgender.²⁶⁶

²⁶⁵ Alaina Hardie, “It’s a Long Way to the Top: Hierarchies of Legitimacy in Trans Communities,” in *Trans-Feminist Voices Speak Out*, ed. by Krista Scott-Dixon (Toronto: Sumach, 2006): 124.

²⁶⁶ Broad, “LGB +T?: Gender/Sexuality Movements,” 248-249.

This notion of being more or less qualified is an interesting concept that I seek to take one step further, and question what makes one ‘qualified’ to speak, and to be heard. Whose voices are considered valid and therefore have the power to influence discourse? This question of legitimacy is one that has fraught the trans* community since its inception and is all too familiar in discussions of language construction. Canadian Alaina Hardie, a decorated Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu grappler, shares her experience upon first entering a community of other trans women:

As I watched and participated in social events, I observed a hierarchy of gender presentation taking shape. This hierarchy was established and reproduced in patterns of social interaction among trans people. Surgical status, “passability,” attractiveness (by conventional standards) and heteronormativity were the criteria. Being “normal” was the ideal.²⁶⁷

Similar hierarchies form in many sections of the trans* community. Youth who have been transitioning for a longer period, or who have achieved more ‘benchmarks’ in their transition, often set themselves apart as more legitimate than their counterparts.²⁶⁸ Broad supports this observation, citing tensions within the many sub-groups of the greater trans* community and the longstanding debates as to which behaviours and identities constitute a ‘truer’ transgender identity.²⁶⁹ A focus on the semantics and small variations between identities could be seen to exacerbate this friction instead of encouraging an open and inclusive space where no one feels pressured to identify or prove their identity.

The option of self-identification would be especially effective in addressing language and cultural barriers and exclusions. While my research examined only English and French

²⁶⁷ Hardie, “It’s a Long Way to the Top: Hierarchies of Legitimacy in Trans Communities,” 124.

²⁶⁸ Benchmarks may include a legal name change, HRT, or full-time presentation.

²⁶⁹ Broad, “LGB+T?: Gender/Sexuality Movements,” 250. In these situations, pressures are often exerted by those who have undergone medical procedures in their transition upon those who have not yet done so or do not plan to do so.

applications, I would argue that predetermined categories aside from male and female, such as undeclared or other, are potentially confusing concepts for those whose native tongue is other than English, specifically international students. This further supports the idea of using an open box that allows the student to articulate their identity without automatically classifying them as ‘other’. By denying the opportunity to self-identify and use one’s preferred or culturally specific terminology, students are inhibited from exercising their power and making themselves and their identities intelligible to the institution and those within it.

Protection and Validation

To address the discussed issues and make meaningful change to protect trans* individuals within the institution, it is first necessary to examine and potentially revise discrimination policies. All thirteen schools I surveyed had some form of discrimination or harassment policy. Of these, only two stated explicitly that persons were protected from discrimination and harassment on the grounds of both gender identity and gender expression. Three additional schools stated explicit protection on the basis of gender identity. Of the remaining eight schools, three included vague, implicit protection of gender identity or gender expression.²⁷⁰ The final two schools did not include these protections but made reference to their respective provincial Human Rights Codes in addition to listing

²⁷⁰ In these cases, gender identity was mentioned in some way, but was not included in all policies surrounding harassment despite the inclusion of other grounds such as sexual orientation, ethnicity, and religion. One school mentioned gender identity on the school website in the context of a human rights office, while one made reference to gender identity in the context of creating a safe space for students. Another had two separate policies; gender identity was mentioned in the sexual harassment policy but was not listed as protected grounds in the discrimination policy.

explicit protections for all other minority groups listed within said codes.²⁷¹ As gender identity and transsexuality were included respectively under prohibited grounds for discrimination in these two Codes, the law thus arguably protects these students if a situation were to arise. The remaining three schools included no provisions for the protection of staff, students, or faculty against harassment on the basis of gender identity or gender expression.

In the American context, roughly 10% of postsecondary institutions are known to include “gender identity and expression” in their anti-discrimination or student protection policies.²⁷² When research clearly shows that trans* students face significantly higher levels of harassment, marginalization, and even violence than their cisgender peers, these numbers are unsatisfactory.²⁷³ Professor Aaron Devor suggests that transgendered people comprise between 0.5 to one percent of the general population, based on the research he has encountered.²⁷⁴ If this percentage is applied to the Statistics Canada enrolment rates, we see that at the very least there are likely to be roughly between 10 125 – 20 250 trans* identified students enrolled in public Canadian postsecondary schools.²⁷⁵ If these students do not experience the same validation and protections as their peers, I would argue that the

²⁷¹ The Code for one province listed explicit protections while the other provides protection to transsexuals under the category of sex (and is the only province to explicitly do so).

²⁷² Beemyn, “The Experiences and Needs of Transgender Community College Students,” 506.

²⁷³ Beemyn et al., “Transgender Issues on College Campuses,” 56.

²⁷⁴ Gessell, “Universities For All Genders,” *University Affairs*.

²⁷⁵ Due to the scarcity of comprehensive statistics regarding trans* populations, those who are not out or who are struggling with their identity, and those who may identify outside of the specific language used in such studies, this number is likely to be higher. I would argue that the percentage for adults could be reasonably applied to young adults as well, based on the fact that youth today have greater access to comprehensive resources and language, thus allowing them greater freedom to explore their identities.

institution is failing them. Every institution has the ability and thus the duty to protect their staff, faculty, and students.

These statistics are extremely troubling and speak to the overwhelming need for institutional change. Every individual within postsecondary schools deserves to have their identities acknowledged and supported. Professor Enke cautions that this can be a life or death issue for some trans* persons.²⁷⁶ For trans* students starting their first semester *and/or* those experiencing discrimination, it is vital that the university or college have clear policies in place to support these students as best as possible. In some cases, administrative staff have very little training if any, and “only become cognizant of the needs of transgender students when a crisis arises.”²⁷⁷ If the administration and staff have only a limited understanding of the express needs of trans* students, they may unwittingly continue to engage in exclusionary practices. For these reasons, all postsecondary institutions should create explicit codes of student conduct and harassment policies that protect individuals on the grounds of gender identity and expression and provide comprehensive educational training and resources to all those employed within the establishment. These considerations are the first step in addressing administrative inclusion and protection in terms of language and documentation. The second aspect which must be addressed is institutional inclusion in terms of space and access, which will be discussed in Chapter VII.

²⁷⁶ Enke, “What’s in a Name?: ‘I Am a Situation Like This’.”

²⁷⁷ Beemyn, “Serving the Needs of Transgender College Students,” 34-35.

VII. Trans* Bodies Navigating Postsecondary Space

“Policies that segregate students by gender, such as restroom designations, residence hall assignments ... ignore and stigmatize individuals who transcend binary notions of gender.”²⁷⁸

Gendered Space and Denial of Access

The issue of trans* inclusive policies and terminology extends further than administrative structure, limiting access to institutional spaces and services. In order to gain an impression of the gendered dimensions of the establishment, I explored the gender specific facilities and student services through institution website and resources, as well as an analysis of current work broaching this topic. Universities and colleges play host to a number of traditionally gender segregated spaces, from restrooms to dorm rooms. Gendered spaces are not only uncomfortable for many trans* individuals, but they can also increase one’s risk of harassment or assault.

Most social institutions are built upon a system which requires individuals to choose from identities that would seek to render them comprehensible in society within what Rosenberg terms as “the regime of a gender dichotomy”.²⁷⁹ This strict social demarcation between male and female delegitimizes trans* identities, erasing trans* bodies and attempted self-definition. I question how the chosen criteria of intelligibility might constitute and regulate trans* bodies through creating and enforcing these ‘universal’

²⁷⁸ Beemyn, “Serving the Needs of Transgender College Students,” 41.

²⁷⁹ Rosenberg, “An Introduction to Feminist Poststructural Theorizing,” 45.

identities in the institution, much as Butler posits in *Gender Trouble*. Butler explains how boundaries of what is considered intelligible serve to keep non-normative identities and bodies both bound by and constituted through sex and gender politics.²⁸⁰ Instead of endeavouring to make trans* identities intelligible through inclusive and accessible space, many vital facilities and services impose boundaries that limit access and contribute to the erasure of gender identity. This is a known problem in both secondary and postsecondary schools, as touched upon in a wealth of scholarship with reference to restrooms. However, this issue runs much deeper than ‘bathroom bill’ and ‘right-to-pee’ headlines, as making all spaces inclusive and accessible for students of all gender identities is a vital component of creating a safe and inclusive environment for trans* individuals and challenging structural binarism and cissexism.

Restrooms: A Question of Access, Health, and Safety

Restrooms are a particularly appropriate example as they are a basic human requirement and a permanent fixture of any social institution. One of the most inveterate examples of gender bifurcation is found in the segregation and labelling of public restrooms. These facilities should be safely and easily accessible by all persons; however, they are often the site of great discomfort, fear, and danger. Traditionally, washrooms have been consistently separated on the basis of the gender binary. Scholars and activists in the field of gender identity have discussed the issue with varying terminology for decades. In 1979, Canadian sociologist Erving Goffman coined “toilet segregation,” prominent author and activist Kate Bornstein adopted Jacques Lacan’s term “urinary segregation,” scholar Jack

²⁸⁰ Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 129.

Halberstam calls it the “bathroom problem,” and scholar Catherine Connell appropriately terms it the “bathroom question.”²⁸¹

University facilities can be viewed as a prime example of the “gendered architecture of exclusion,” as termed by scholar Sheila Cavanagh.²⁸² The binary conceptions of gender are mutually defined through opposition and, through gendered spaces, they are excluded from each other. These two exclusive spaces thus lead to a rejection of all those who do not comfortably fit within the confines, thus creating and distancing the ‘other’. As Butler teaches, the subject is constituted through the process of exclusion, therefore the trans* or gender non-conforming subject is relegated to a position of abject ‘other’.²⁸³ While the restructuring of facilities is integral to addressing this process of ‘othering’, it must be acknowledged that this undertaking is important not only for trans* and gender non-conforming students.²⁸⁴ It is important not to lose “sight of the nuances, complexities, and interlocking disciplinary devices through which we are subjugated to networks of power.”²⁸⁵ Restrooms and locker rooms can be challenging and restrictive for many students, staff, and faculty, including those who are queer, those who have disabilities or may require an assistant, and those who require a private space for health, medical, or religious reasons.²⁸⁶

²⁸¹ Connell, “The Politics of the Stall: Transgender and Genderqueer Workers Negotiating ‘The Bathroom Question’,” in *Embodied Resistance: Challenging the Norms, Breaking the Rules*, eds. Chris Bobel and Samantha Kwan. (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2011): 175; Gilbert, “Defeating Bigenderism: Changing Gender Assumptions in the Twenty-first Century,” 95.

²⁸² Cavanagh, *Queering Bathrooms: Gender, Sexuality, and the Hygienic Imagination*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010): 32.

²⁸³ Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*.

²⁸⁴ Bilodeau (2007); Markman (2011): 314-327.

²⁸⁵ Cavanagh, *Queering Bathrooms: Gender, Sexuality, and the Hygienic Imagination*, 19.

²⁸⁶ Beemyn et al., “Transgender Issues on College Campuses,” 55.

Accessing safe and gender appropriate facilities can be a challenge for many individuals within the postsecondary institution. Gender neutral washrooms remain few and far between on the majority of campuses, and if they do exist, students may be forced to run to another floor or building during classes to access an appropriate restroom. As evidenced in Connell's study, students deal with these issues in different ways. Some put off using the restroom until they can 'sneak out' and run to their place of residence.²⁸⁷ Others try to strategically time their restroom trips to avoid interacting with others, often checking multiple restrooms to find one which is entirely empty, a procedure which is both time consuming and stressful.²⁸⁸ One student from Nova Scotia spoke to their experience with campus restrooms, saying: "if I had to pee I would hold it until all of my classes were done – a total of about six hours."²⁸⁹ Many individuals who have experienced discrimination or expect to be questioned and/or harassed using the facilities which correspond to their identities feel that their safest option is to avoid the space altogether. On top of being uncomfortable and stress-inducing, restricting one's bodily functions can lead to health consequences. Lower urinary tract infections and other complications are often brought on by 'holding it', not to mention the effects on one's mental health and sense of self.²⁹⁰

Restrooms represent precarious territory for many trans* and genderqueer individuals. Due to societal expectations of gender expression and presentation, choosing a restroom can be a difficult and dangerous task. While an individual may wish to use the

²⁸⁷ This option assumes mobility, and is further dependent on where one resides, and that their residence has appropriate facilities (if they reside on campus).

²⁸⁸ Connell, "The Politics of the Stall: Transgender and Genderqueer Workers Negotiating 'The Bathroom Question'," 181.

²⁸⁹ Lee Thomas, "The Battle for the Bathroom," *The Brunswickan* 5:147, accessed January 12, 2014, <http://thebruns.ca/batrrale-bathroom-brunswickan-feature/>.

²⁹⁰ Connell, "The Politics of the Stall: Transgender and Genderqueer Workers Negotiating 'The Bathroom Question'," 181.

facilities that correspond to their gender identity, this may be problematic dependant on their gender expression and/or ability to ‘pass’. Conversely, while in the process of transitioning, some individuals may feel more comfortable using the facilities that correspond to their sex as assigned at birth but find that they no longer feel welcome in said space. To illustrate, a male identified person such as a FTM may wish to use the ‘men’s’ facilities but be wary as to whether or not he ‘passes’ well enough to enter and use a ‘men’s’ restroom without arousing suspicion or putting himself in danger. He must consider whether or not there will be stalls in addition to urinals and whether the stalls will have adequate privacy. If for any reason using the men’s restroom is not a safe or viable option or he would simply prefer to utilize the ‘women’s’ facilities, he must then face the question of whether or not he will be able to pass as female and must also consider whether or not he might be perceived as masculine or male-identified. A seemingly masculine identity might label him as a threat or ‘sexual predator’ upon entering the ‘women’s’ facilities, and put him in a dangerous position. Salamon explains that for some male-identified, non-binary, and genderqueer individuals, using the women’s restroom “risks stares, hostile commentary, or getting chased right out by women alarmed that a ‘man’ has entered.”²⁹¹ This risk can also extend to violence, as evidenced by incidences documented on a liberal arts university campus in New Brunswick. Student Mitch Rayner was in his first semester when he was physically assaulted in a campus washroom. Rayner was known by their birth name and used female pronouns at the time of the incident, which transpired in the ‘women’s’ facilities.²⁹² Due

²⁹¹ Salamon, *Assuming a Body*, 88.

²⁹² Not long after the incident, Rayner changed his name and adopted male pronouns. He worked with the campus pride organization for some time and organized successful advocacy and education initiatives. He left the university before finishing his degree and moved away from the Maritimes, where he pursued other interests.

solely to physical appearance, Rayner was called a “fag” and subsequently punched in the face. Not long after, Rayner discussed the incident in the campus newspaper, expressing that he did not feel comfortable approaching administration. He believed that the incident would be seen as a simple matter of harassment and be addressed with the end goal of justice, instead of recognizing the incident as part of a much larger structural issue.²⁹³ He articulated the struggle to access facilities as follows: “it simply comes down to a basic question of safety rather than which gender I identify with; if an altercation occurs in a male washroom then I would be far more unlikely to defend myself than in a female facility. By having washrooms clearly marked by gender lines it becomes a safety issue for those who fall between.”²⁹⁴ The building in which Rayner was assaulted had no gender neutral options. like many campus buildings across Canada.

The fear of harassment on campus is all too real and is not limited to postsecondary facilities. Trans* students from grades K-12 also cite discrimination and verbal abuse when choosing or using a restroom. A Canadian study of trans* youth in Toronto secondary schools shows alarming rates of harassment, as 79% of students surveyed reported there to be at least one unsafe location in their school.²⁹⁵ Seventy-eight percent of youth reported feeling unsafe in their schools, and 52% noted they felt unsafe in restrooms and locker rooms.²⁹⁶ While not specific to gendered spaces, almost half of the students surveyed reported at least once incidence of sexual assault within the past year, and 90% shared that

²⁹³ Alyssa Mosher, “Out of Spectrum,” in *The Aquinian* 75:10 (2010): 1,3.

²⁹⁴ Alyssa Mosher, “Out of Spectrum” in *The Aquinian* 75:10 (2010): 1,3.

²⁹⁵ Taylor et al., *Every Class in Every School: The First National Climate Survey on Homophobia, Biphobia, and Transphobia in Canadian Schools*, Final Report (Toronto: Egale Canada Human Rights Trust, 2011): 80. This number was significantly higher than that of the LGBTQ students surveyed.

²⁹⁶ Taylor et al., *Every Class in Every School: The First National Climate Survey on Homophobia, Biphobia, and Transphobia in Canadian Schools*, 18- 23.

they heard transphobic comments from their peers daily or weekly.²⁹⁷ Thirty-seven percent reported physical assault because of their gender identity or expression, and levels of violence rose considerably for trans* youth of colour and Aboriginal youth.²⁹⁸ An American study of students from K-12 to graduate programs reported that just over one quarter of respondents had been denied access to appropriate restrooms.²⁹⁹ A male-identified student from a university in British Columbia expressed how "trans students and gender-non-variant folks carry a lot of anxiety about accessing washrooms because of a real fear of violence and rape."³⁰⁰ Many students are forced to drop out of secondary or postsecondary school due to severe harassment and the threat of violence. Professor Dan Irving of Concordia University states, "The university remains quite a violent place."³⁰¹ The report *Injustice at Every Turn* cites that 68% of students forced to abandon higher education due to discrimination have attempted to commit suicide.³⁰² Safe and accessible spaces and services play an important role for trans* students in the institution. A student from the Toronto District School Board's *Triangle Program* described that the key reason they were able to return to the classroom to finish their high school education was the environment, specifically gender neutral washrooms.³⁰³

²⁹⁷ Taylor et al., *Every Class in Every School: The First National Climate Survey on Homophobia, Biphobia, and Transphobia in Canadian Schools*, 17-23. This is particularly significant as this percentage was higher than any other identity category surveyed.

²⁹⁸ Taylor et al., *Every Class in Every School: The First National Climate Survey on Homophobia, Biphobia, and Transphobia in Canadian Schools*, 16.

²⁹⁹ Grant et al., *Injustice at Every Turn: A Report of the National Transgender Discrimination Survey*, 35.

³⁰⁰ Laura Kane, "Transgender Students Protest as Canadian Schools Grapple with Washroom Debate," *CTV News*, accessed March 2, 2015, <http://www.ctvnews.ca/canada/transgender-students-protest-as-canadian-schools-grapple-with-washroom-debate-1.2242819>.

³⁰¹ Gessell, "Universities For All Genders." *University Affairs*.

³⁰² Grant et al., *Injustice at Every Turn: A Report of the National Transgender Discrimination Survey*, 48.

³⁰³ Fumia, "Desiring and Doing Equity: The Triangle Program for LGBTIQ2S Youth," 100-101.

A study conducted by professor Catherine Connell explores the ‘bathroom’ experiences of trans* persons in the workplace. Her findings show that rates of harassment were significantly higher in female designated restrooms, regardless of the status or identity of the trans* individuals utilizing them.³⁰⁴ Connell’s research reinforces the social protections placed upon ‘women only’ spaces and the idea that women are threatened when sharing this space with someone other than who they perceive to be cisgender women. This speaks to the extent to which society is habituated to dominant gender norms. While being perceived as trans* has been proven statistically significant in terms of access to restrooms and other gendered spaces, many trans* individuals are not visibly or otherwise identifiable.³⁰⁵ A transwoman may ‘pass’ without worry in gendered spaces, often through compliance with social expectations of what a ‘female’ should embody (such as having long hair, wearing traditionally feminine clothing, and having a slighter higher voice or shorter stature). She may be able to use a ‘female’ facility without inciting discomfort or distrust from other (predominantly cis) occupants, who might react otherwise if they were aware. Similarly, if the appearance or mannerisms of a cisgender woman utilizing the same facilities did not correspond to that which is socially expected of her, perhaps appearing more masculine, she would likely arouse suspicion and perhaps face harassment from those who would otherwise object to sharing the space with a trans* individual.

³⁰⁴ Connell, “The Politics of the Stall: Transgender and Genderqueer Workers Negotiating ‘The Bathroom Question’,” 179. This held true for transwomen, transmen (often early in transition or who felt safer in the women’s room), and gender non-binary individuals who used these facilities.

³⁰⁵ Seelman, “Transgender Individuals’ Access to College Housing and Bathrooms: Findings from the National Transgender Discrimination Survey,” *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Social Services* 26:2 (2014): 198. Seelman’s gender-related predictor models showed perception of trans* identity as a direct indicator for transphobic discrimination or harassment. The significance of the correlation between trans* status and access is a clear indicator that other students, staff, and faculty actively police and limit access to gendered spaces on campus.

Campus Facilities and Restrictive Residences

As mentioned, restrooms are not the only gendered space on campus that is cause for concern. Genny Beemyn has contributed several works on the topic of the college experience of trans* students in the United States. Ze explains the breadth of the issue:

Colleges and universities need to give thought to how their very structure – physical and social – upholds a binary conceptualization of gender. Examples of institutional features that exclude or place transgender people at risk for discrimination and harassment are the predominance of sex-segregated bathrooms, locker rooms, and housing where transgender people regularly are denied access, harassed, and challenged about their gender identity.³⁰⁶

The structure ze cites in hir work exposes the institutionalized binarism which regulates all aspects of campus life. Athletics facilities generally have gender specific locker rooms and showers. Aquatics facilities are often accessible to users only by way of locker rooms, which are most often gendered. Due to having segregated facilities, shower and changing areas are often communal and there are few options for privacy. The majority of residences do not offer many more choices, creating a problematic environment for trans* students

For first year students, living in residence is often considered to be a valuable and rewarding experience. Students are expected to make new friends, build community, and engage in ‘frosh’ residence parties and team-spirit activities. Residence can be an excellent choice for some individuals living on their own for the first time as it usually includes access to a meal hall or cafeteria, on-site laundry, common areas for socialization, and

³⁰⁶ Beemyn, “Transgender Issues on College Campuses”; Seelman, “Transgender Individuals’ Access to College Housing and Bathrooms: Findings from the National Transgender Discrimination Survey,” 2014

supervisory staff to keep everything and everyone in order. Living in residence often allows students to better integrate with the university community and their fellow students, and generally bestows a sense of ‘belonging’. For many trans* students, however, this sense of ‘belonging’ does not necessarily develop, as the majority of residences are highly gendered and lack personal privacy. Furthermore, some universities find that reports of transphobic verbal harassment are significantly higher during the beginning of the year festivities, especially ‘frosh’.³⁰⁷ Some trans* individuals do not have the opportunity to live on campus regardless of their preferences. In Seelman’s study of college aged trans* youth, 19% of respondents who had attended college or university reported being prohibited from accessing gender-appropriate housing accommodations, while 5% were denied housing any kind.³⁰⁸

Residence applications usually mirror university documentation, giving two binary gender options. In most cases, these options dictate where a student will live and with whom. Shared rooms with one or two other students are common and roommates are traditionally assigned based on gender. Some institutions segregate entire residences by gender or have gender specific wings or floors. Beemyn explains the anxieties many trans* students face in these spaces: “A transgender student’s ability to ‘pass’ may be more difficult in a same-sex living environment, where residents are expected to conform to a particular set of gender expressions.”³⁰⁹ This worry persists in co-ed residences as well, particularly when one is assigned a roommate.³¹⁰ Gender segregated public restrooms and

³⁰⁷ Gessell, “Universities For All Genders.”

³⁰⁸ Seelman, “Transgender Individuals’ Access to College Housing and Bathrooms: Findings from the National Transgender Discrimination Survey,” 198.

³⁰⁹ Beemyn et al., “Transgender Issues on College Campuses,” 53.

³¹⁰ Co-ed residences generally consist of same-gender rooms in a mixed gender space.

shower facilities are common within residences, as are co-ed restrooms. As previously discussed, this is not an appropriate option for many trans* students. Shared facilities often lack privacy, showers may be separated only by curtains, and stall toilets leave little room for privacy.

This common gendered distribution of living space is reminiscent of Foucault's writings on partitioning in disciplinary space. He writes, "Discipline is an art of rank, a technique for the transformation of arrangements. It individualizes bodies by a location that does not give them a fixed position, but distributes them and circulates them in a network of relations."³¹¹ By organizing residences into fixed 'places' denoting gender or even sexual orientation, this disciplinary division creates a space that is both "functional and hierarchical."³¹² He suggests that segregated spaces serve to position students within an institution; they "carve out individual segments" and allow movement, while simultaneously denoting place and relative value.³¹³ This system serves to further position students oppositionally, by gender and other underlying classifications such as age, class, and sometimes sexual orientation. While some institutions have adopted residence programs that allow students to select a 'LGBT' wing or floor, this option can distance students who may already be considered as the 'other'. While this may create a safe and comfortable space for some queer identified persons, these spaces generally pose many of the same barriers to trans* students as co-ed arrangements. Furthermore, many trans* individuals do not identify as LGB or queer which marginalizes them once again.

³¹¹ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 146.

³¹² Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 148.

³¹³ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 148.

There is scant research on the experiences of trans* students in residences. Krum, Davis, and Galupo published a study in 2013 that explored gender-inclusive housing options specifically. Gender-inclusive housing refers to a relatively new structure that allows students to ‘opt-in’ to a residence which is not gender segregated. This means that students can choose the identities they would be comfortable rooming with and are assigned accordingly. Of the students they surveyed, 80% were in support of this opt-in residence structure. The research explored the preferred housing arrangements of college-aged trans* individuals, based on the dominant options available at institutions in the United States. The options were somewhat vague and included i) two students of any gender with varying bath and shower facilities from private to shared; ii) single rooms with private ensuite bath; iii) roommates assigned based on gender identity with no bath and shower information; iv) apartment style housing for several students of any gender with ensuite private bath. Unsurprisingly, they found that the two preferred accommodation styles were those that did not require gender identification and had private facilities. Thirty-four percent preferred apartment style housing and 28.2% preferred single rooms.³¹⁴ Of the students surveyed, nearly 70% of students who chose apartment style accommodations expressed that if this were not a residence option at their school of choice, they would likely reconsider applying there. They also found that trans* identified students were significantly more likely to attend an institution which offered one or both of these living arrangements.³¹⁵ Canadian undergrad Bridget Liang is one of those students, expressing that she chose her Ontario university because of its broad availability of gender neutral single stall restrooms and the option of a

³¹⁴ Krum, Davis, and Galupo, “Gender-Inclusive Housing Preferences: A Survey of College-Aged Transgender Students,” *Journal of LGBT Youth* 10 (2013): 64-82.

³¹⁵ Krum, Davis, and Galupo, “Gender-Inclusive Housing Preferences: A Survey of College-Aged Transgender Students,” 75.

private single room in residence.³¹⁶ However, many trans* students regard the residence option as an insurmountable obstacle and choose instead to live off-campus.³¹⁷

For those students who find appropriate housing in residence, there are additional spaces to consider. Student Jessica Dempsey experienced many problems on her campus in Nova Scotia. Aside from being misgendered repeatedly in school documentation and forced ‘out’ when professors used her birth name in class and refused to address her by her chosen name, Jessica faced recurrent harassment at her meal hall. Food service employees argued that ‘Jessica’ was not her name, asked if her breasts were ‘real’, and even refused to serve her.³¹⁸ After her school repeatedly ignored her protests, she lodged a human rights complaint against the dining services provider. Jessica has expressed that she did not want to be an activist, she simply wanted to be a student and complete her degree.³¹⁹ Following the incidences and her lengthy and costly battle with both the university and the food services provider, Jessica lost her funding, developed stress and anxiety-related health issues, and became homeless for some time, continuing to study while living in a shelter.³²⁰ Jessica’s experience of harassment and lack of legal recourse is not unlike that of many other trans* postsecondary students across North America.

³¹⁶ Gessell, “Universities For All Genders.”

³¹⁷ Beemyn et al., “Transgender Issues on College Campuses,” 49-60.

³¹⁸ Natasha MacDonald-Dupuis, “Jessica Dempsey Awaits Result of Discrimination Complaint,” *The Dalhousie Gazette* 147:04, accessed January 12, 2015, <http://dalgazette.com/news/jessica-dempsey-awaits-result-of-discrimination-complaint/>.

³¹⁹ Stephanie Taylor, “Jessica’s Story: The Fight for Trans Rights on Campus,” *Halifax Media Co-op*, accessed January 12, 2015, <http://halifax.mediacoop.ca/story/jessicas%C2%A0story-fights-trans-rights-campus/31683>.

³²⁰ MacDonald-Dupuis, “Jessica Dempsey Awaits Result of Discrimination Complaint.” The Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission dismissed Dempsey’s case and although campus staff and faculty underwent sensitivity training early on in her struggle, she maintains that nothing has changed.

A Gendered Campus: Student Services

The final element to address when discussing the gendered structure of the postsecondary campus deals specifically with access to services. Most institutions have their own health and wellness centres, a campus doctor or nurse, counselling services, and disability services. Women's Centres and queer student groups are also a common aspect of the establishment. Aside from the gendered language and documentation students will likely encounter in these spaces, there is also the question of knowledgeability and sensitivity surrounding trans* issues. Viviane Namaste explores the reality of the trans* experience further, explaining, "They are required to justify their choices, describe their genitals, provide an autobiography upon demand, and educate their service providers. This framework locates transgendered people within a social relation that neither accepts nor understands the validity of transsexual bodies."³²¹ This illustrates the lives of many trans* students within the postsecondary institution, showing the burden they carry while pursuing higher education alongside their peers.

Trans* students face challenges accessing necessary services on campus, despite studies showing that trans* identified youth are more likely to have a disability or mental health condition. In a sample of the *National Transgender Discrimination Survey*, researchers found that nearly a third of trans* identified respondents reported having a disability compared to one fifth of the overall population.³²² Suicide rates are significantly higher for trans* persons. Statistics show that attempted suicide rates for trans* youth are

³²¹ Namaste, *Invisible Lives: The Erasure of Transsexual and Transgendered People*, 45.

³²² Grant et al., *Injustice at Every Turn: A Report of the National Transgender Discrimination Survey*, 23.

twenty five times that of their cisgender peers.³²³ Overall, 41% of trans* youth surveyed by Grant et al., reported having attempted suicide. Taking into account the harassment faced on campus, these percentages rose alarmingly. Fifty-nine percent of students who reported harassment from administrative staff or professors had attempted suicide, as well as 61% of those who reported physical assault, 64% who reported sexual assault, and 68% of those who were forced to leave their educational pursuits due to discrimination.³²⁴

Students may find themselves forced to educate their health service provider, counsellor, and disability services coordinator. Even then, that individual may not be receptive and may not fully grasp the student's situation. Medical treatments such as hormone replacement therapy (HRT) are difficult to access and providers are often more knowledgeable about procedures specific to transwomen.³²⁵ Many healthcare professionals are unfamiliar with dosing information, potential side effects, drug interactions, and other vital information, making it difficult for trans* individuals to access health care even for issues unrelated to gender. Surgeries and other 'reassignment' procedures are even more prohibitive, yet by many laws and policies, an individual's gender cannot be validated or 'changed' until they have 'completed' a full, medical transition.³²⁶ The works of Beemyn

³²³ Grant et al., *Injustice at Every Turn: A Report of the National Transgender Discrimination Survey*, 2.

³²⁴ Grant et al., *Injustice at Every Turn: A Report of the National Transgender Discrimination Survey*, 45.

³²⁵ Namaste, *Invisible Lives: The Erasure of Transsexual and Transgendered People*, 162-164. While Namaste provides information regarding HRT, she fails to fully include the process for transmen. Unlike estrogen and related medications, which is regularly administered orally as Namaste suggests, testosterone is rarely prescribed in pill form due to the negative and potentially dangerous health implications. Rather it is most often injected intramuscularly, and sometimes prescribed using more costly transdermal or subcutaneous methods.

³²⁶ Stone, "The Empire Strikes Back: A Posttranssexual Manifesto," in *Body Guards: The Cultural Politics of Gender Ambiguity*, eds. Kristina Straub and Julia Epstein (New York: Routledge, 1991).

and Lombardi both cite that a large number of student service and health providers do not have the knowledge or resources to work respectfully and productively with trans* students.³²⁷ It is important to make note that cisgender students do not face the same pathologization as their trans* peers. While trans* students may be required to provide ‘proof’ or documentation of their bodily status and identity to access basic rights such as adequate healthcare, this is a potentially foreign concept to many cisgender students. This illustrates the differing standards of legitimacy placed on one’s social positionality and lived gender.³²⁸

Services offered specifically for ‘women’ can also be exclusionary. Anecdotal evidence suggests that while many trans* identified students face the prospect of being excluded or disallowed from gendered spaces and services, male-to-female (MTF) trans* individuals are more likely to be denied access to the appropriate facilities, in this case those which are designated for ‘women’. Gender non-conforming and non-binary individuals were less likely to have such experiences accessing the same facilities.³²⁹ A Women’s Centre or similar office may be present to offer a safe space, specific services, and resources. While the purpose of such centres is important and must not be downplayed, female-identified

³²⁷ Beemyn, Making Campuses More Inclusive of Transgender Students,” 77-87.; Emilia Lombardi, “Enhancing Transgender Health Care.” *American Journal Of Public Health* 91:6 (2001): 869-872.

³²⁸ Raun, “Trans as Contested Intelligibility: Interrogating how to Conduct Trans Analysis with Respectful Curiosity,” 37.

³²⁹ Connell, Seelman, “Transgender Individuals’ Access to College Housing and Bathrooms: Findings from the National Transgender Discrimination Survey.” This speaks to the societal notion that female identified trans* individuals should be excluded from ‘women only’ spaces due to the idea that they are potentially ‘male predators’ attempting to access this space for a violent purpose. This reinforces the fact that trans* identities are often socially delegitimized and not considered to be ‘real’ men or women. This is sometimes paired with a twisted perception that a trans* individual may purposefully use their identity to ‘trick’ a potential partner or use their identity to gain access to a space where they may pose a ‘threat’, specifically physically and sexually.

persons should be permitted to access these services without fear of being turned away. Similarly, there are specific health services that are vital for any person who may have reproductive organs that are biologically considered ‘female’.³³⁰ It is important that a Women’s Centre or health office is aware and sensitive to the needs of these individuals as many male-identified persons avoid necessary medical attention due to stigmatization. The survey conducted by Grant et al. showed that 28% of trans* students at any educational level had postponed important medical attention due to discrimination.³³¹

Whether it be in restrooms or health centres, there are elements to segregated spaces that are often overlooked, reinforcing the gendered nature of the space and subtlety emphasizing assumptions about the individuals within it.³³² Often times, service offices and restrooms are used as a site for advertising. The inside of stall doors in restrooms may have posters hoping to take advantage of a captive audience. Students spoke of the dominant themes of said advertising in Cavanagh’s book *Queering Bathrooms: Gender, Sexuality, and the Hygienic Imagination*. They observed that restrooms designated for women included predominantly female-coded products. Students from postsecondary institutions in Ontario spoke of ads that focused on birth control, menstruation, and other topics that speak to a specifically ‘feminine’ audience. One student who identified as transmasculine noted the overt language of the ads, addressing the viewer with comments about their preferred

³³⁰ Many male-identified individuals forego necessary medical exams such as cervical cancer screenings due to the fear of discrimination and disrespect from health providers.

³³¹ Grant et al., *Injustice at Every Turn: A Report of the National Transgender Discrimination Survey*, 6.

³³² This is also evident in sexual health related spaces and services. Condoms are generally the only contraceptive freely available and often posters, pieces of literature, and even interactions with health professionals reinforce both heteronormativity and cisnormativity.

tampons or asking if they had remembered their birth control.³³³ Restroom and locker room facilities reserved for ‘women’ are also more likely to have additional furniture, mirrors, and amenities such as changing tables or vending machines.³³⁴ I would argue that these amenities as well as the targeted advertisements make clear statements about the bodies and identities who ‘belong’ in a space, while making blatantly heterosexist and cissexist assumptions about them. Therefore, I would recommend that institutions consider adding similar amenities to ‘male’ facilities, specifically athletics facilities where one might bring their child.³³⁵ I argue these advertisements be chosen with care, highlighting issues of health and wellness and avoiding excessive advertisements for non-related items. I would further suggest that similar signs be added that are not explicitly gender-coded, and contain information relevant to a wide range of students, perhaps with a focus on health and academics.

³³³ Cavanagh, *Queering Bathrooms: Gender, Sexuality, and the Hygienic Imagination*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010).

³³⁴ While vending machines are often present in both halves of segregated restrooms, the contents are often explicitly gendered, with machines for ‘women’ including ‘feminine’ hygiene products, perfumes, and mints and machines for ‘men’ supplying predominantly condoms.

³³⁵ While not as specific to postsecondary institutions, it is important to note that changing tables should not be located exclusively in ‘female’ restrooms. In public places where a child may be present, it is necessary to have accessible changing tables at minimum. If there are no gender neutral or ‘family’ restrooms in which to place a changing table, they should be added to ‘male’ facilities. Cost dependent, I would argue that they should be available in public facilities of any gender designation.

VIII. Creating Change in Postsecondary Settings

“Our institutions need to change ... Honoring people’s names and pronouns is only the first part of ensuring that *all* people have access to employment, education, appropriate services, facilities, medical care, and general well-being in the world.”³³⁶

Looking Back and Moving Forward

For many Canadian postsecondary institutions, the scope of change necessary to increase accessibility and inclusion for trans* and gender non-conforming students may be daunting. Given the breadth of the issues that directly affect these students, productive change cannot be achieved overnight; it requires time, dedication, and a thorough analysis of the current state of the institution. When many elements which serve to oppress and erase trans* identities are deeply entrenched in the structure of the establishment, it is vital that the framework be addressed carefully and comprehensively. I seek to propose several recommendations for addressing each aspect and suggest ways in which the institution can resolve these issues with appropriate sensitivity.

While many of these suggestions may not be able to be implemented immediately, there are ways that each establishment can make improvements quickly and effectively. Each campus is unique and will need to dedicate thought to figuring out the best solutions to the issues raised in this thesis. When addressing facilities specifically, there are likely to be significant costs accompanying action. This must be taken into consideration, allowing the institution to make the most economically feasible choice that will simultaneously improve access for all students, regardless of identity. Schools can create an inclusive plan of action

³³⁶ Enke, “What’s in a Name?: ‘I Am a Situation Like This’.” Original emphasis.

and a prospective timeline that will allow them to move forward with purpose and accountability.

Rethinking Documentation

For any marginalized group, linguistic and bodily agency can facilitate the creation of new meaning and new spaces and may act as a method of overcoming perpetual silence and erasure, avoiding the potential loss of self. However, it can be difficult to express one's identity within the structure of the institution, illuminating the importance of enabling self-identification and protecting those identities.³³⁷ One of the most important revisions necessary for creating a safe and inclusive postsecondary environment is the use of language. Whether it be on a university website, in promotional materials, or on the student application itself, language constitutes much of a student's 'first impression' of any institution. Sara Ahmed argues that documents form the foundation of organizations such as universities as they dictate the shape and structure of the organization and allow for effective communication.³³⁸ By paying particular attention to the use of gendered language and acknowledging its inherent binarism, these materials can be reviewed to ensure they are inclusive of all prospective students and do not inadvertently render trans* students linguistically invisible.

Application forms should be examined and new methods of gender identification must be discussed. Over the next few years, I hope to see the number of schools including a 'preferred name' option to rise dramatically. Any implementation of a preferred name policy must be well thought out, making it clear who has access to this information, and where and

³³⁷ Cixous, "The Laugh of the Medusa," 882; Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?"

³³⁸ Ahmed, "You End Up Doing the Document Instead of Doing the Doing," 591.

when each name will be used during a student's academic journey. These policies must reflect a high level of understanding in order to be implemented correctly, restricting access to one's legal name and ensuring that all class lists, databases, and other public knowledge reflects a student's preferred name.

While institutions often face limitations through their administrative systems which may be set up to acknowledge only 'male' and 'female' identities, this does not preclude the possibility of replacing binary gender boxes with a more inclusive option on both physical and online application documents. I would recommend the use of an empty box marked 'gender', allowing the student to self-identity in a way in which they feel comfortable. This allows students to disclose as much or as little as they choose, permits the use of cultural terms, and leaves space for new terminology as it is created. Alongside this box, I recommend adding a pronoun question that allows students to write in their preferred pronoun. In order to show students that these boxes are meant to be inclusive and to encourage self-definition, a short example may be appropriate. After 'Preferred Pronouns', the form could include "e.g. he, she, they, or ze" in fine print. Scholar Salamon reinforces the importance of these options: "To define oneself is a linguistic act, and even if that act of self-definition is offered in opposition to mandates of identity that feel somehow imposed from above, this does not place that project of self-definition outside either the linguistic or the social realm."³³⁹ Of the schools I surveyed, School Three stood out in particular. While their gender options were limited to M and F, they included a short statement regarding the status of their current system, explaining that it only recognized these two options but that all gender identities would be welcomed and respected at their institution. These are changes

³³⁹ Salamon, *Assuming a Body*, 90.

that can be made relatively quickly and would be a simple first step in creating an inclusive environment. The internal administrative system would benefit from this change as well, and while it may take extra time and money, having a synchronous system that recognizes gender identity, preferred names, legal names, and pronouns would be an excellent goal.

In order for these systems to be successful, students must be aware that these options exist, and all members of the establishment must understand the system and be held accountable for maintaining its success. Even on campuses with longstanding preferred name policies, some individuals make mistakes and others make the choice to engage in discriminatory practices. A student on one such campus expressed this: “There’s nothing worse than when I went to class and the professor couldn’t find me because I had a male name.”³⁴⁰ To prevent incidences such as this, it is necessary to educate both staff and faculty on these issues as well as any changes to student documentation. Further, it is important to make this information publically available when implementing such changes. On School Three’s website, it is relatively simple to find a page dedicated to administrative issues that trans* students in particular may face. In addition to listing directions for submitting a preferred name request or legal name change to the school, they have linked resources that enable a student to learn more about pursuing a legal name change. Their policies are spelled out so a student knows exactly where their preferred name will be listed and where their legal name must be recorded. This is an excellent resource for students and can be created without significant costs. I would argue that all schools and their students would benefit from resources such as this, which are easily accessed privately without approaching administrative staff and disclosing one’s gender identity.

³⁴⁰ Taylor, “Jessica’s Story: The Fight for Trans Rights on Campus,” *Halifax Media Co-op*.

Reviewing Policy

Perhaps the most important aspect of creating a safe and inclusive environment for all students is ensuring that all identities are adequately represented and protected. Of the institutions I surveyed, only 15% protected gender identity and gender expression as grounds for discrimination. While postsecondary schools do not have the power to change provincial and territorial human rights codes, they have the option of ensuring that everyone within their establishment is valued and protected from prejudice or harassment. This is an important step for all institutions to take in validating and supporting trans* people. This is a relatively straightforward change as there is precedent for such policies at a handful of Canadian institutions. The addition of four words, ‘gender identity’ and ‘gender expression’, to all lists of protected identities and policies prohibiting discrimination and sexual harassment serves to make a significant impact for students, staff, and faculty who may be currently omitted from policies which help shape their institution and acknowledge their rights within it. Online policies are potentially accessed and reviewed most often, as the majority of universities and colleges have a strong presence on the web and organize many aspects of student life and academics through online systems. I would suggest that institutions pursue this as soon as they are able, first proposing and implementing the change, then editing the document, and subsequently posting it online, replacing older versions of the policy.

In a 2005 qualitative study assessing the experiences of trans* college students in the United States, researcher McKinney found that trans* students experienced frequent

institutional discrimination through school policy alone.³⁴¹ Postsecondary institutions should take the time to review all principle documents to ensure trans* students are neither marginalized nor excluded. In addressing policy as well as other concerns such as housing and documentation, it is crucial to question who creates regulations and who enforces them. Institutions must recognize who holds the power to construct and affect institutional discourse with regard to trans* individuals and other marginalized students. I would argue that the institution is largely constituted through its documentation and various policies, which touch upon all aspects of postsecondary life within the establishment, and exert great power over those they include as well as those they exclude.

Remodeling Restrooms

Restrooms are a contentious topic as there are many proposed ways of modifying the dominant exclusively gender segregated system. Regardless of one's stance on the issue, it is a serious concern that must be addressed. Professor Aaron Devor is founder and academic director of the Transgender Archives at the University of Victoria in British Columbia. He explains the mindset of many trans* students, staff, and faculty forced to use gender specific facilities: "Every time they walk into a gendered washroom, they have to take a breath and say, 'OK, is it going to be safe this time or is this the time it is going to happen to me?'"³⁴² In order to relieve trans* persons and other individuals who require a private space of such angst, it is integral that institutions create facilities through modification or construction which meet the needs of all students on campus.

³⁴¹ McKinney, "On the Margins: A Study of the Experiences of Transgender College Students," 63-75.

³⁴² Gessell, "Universities For All Genders," *University Affairs*.

While some individuals argue that public ‘all gender’ facilities with multiple stalls might be the most effective way to denaturalize the gender binary and challenge the stigmatization of restrooms, this option does not acknowledge the needs of all individuals who might benefit from gender neutral or private facilities. Furthermore, the rejection of all forms of gender segregated facilities may disadvantage and discriminate against other individuals, regardless of gender identity. Similarly, moving to a system of exclusively private single stall facilities is not feasible in the majority of spaces within social institutions.³⁴³

I would recommend that the current facilities be mapped to allow the institution to see where they have restrooms that may be converted either immediately or in the future. Private single occupancy restrooms that are currently gender specific are a good choice for conversion. The modification of these facilities can be done very quickly. By changing the language or signage that effectively genders this space, a gender neutral facility can be created easily at a low cost.³⁴⁴ This is a wise sensible first step for institutions to undertake as they review their facilities on campus, locate funding, and design a plan of action.

Those that do not have viable facilities to convert must come up with ways to restructure their space to allow for the creation of gender neutral, accessible restrooms. In

³⁴³ Having several gender neutral single stall restrooms may be a better approach for a smaller establishment like a café, in order to offer privacy to all patrons.

³⁴⁴ There are many conflicting ideas regarding the most appropriate and inclusive signage to use for these facilities. I would argue against the use of pictorial depictions of people, gendered or otherwise, as well as using language exclusively due to language barriers. While the appearance and functionality of toilets is not universal worldwide, the toilet symbol is arguably easier to recognize than variations of ‘restroom’, ‘washrooms’, or even ‘toilet’. For this reason I would argue that this would be the best way of designating these facilities. I would further suggest using the most ‘universal’ term possible for braille signage, perhaps “Toilet.” Finally, if a restroom is wheelchair accessible, it is extremely important to include this symbol as it is well recognized and does not denote gender, rather marking a space as ‘accessible’.

buildings where there are no single occupancy facilities that may be altered, a previously gendered multi-stall restroom could be appropriately modified to increase privacy by restructuring the stalls themselves to extend from roof to floor. This would serve to create multiple private and single occupancy options within a non-gendered space. If there are no restrooms that can be changed in a specific building, the institution must consider the best way to create such a facility in the future. This undertaking will likely require significant funding and should be a time-sensitive priority in order to ensure student safety on campus. In this case, the establishment should strive to make known the location of other facilities nearby.

I would suggest that institutions aim to have at least two private gender neutral restrooms per building, or one private and one modified multi-stall gender neutral option in addition to gendered multi-stall facilities.³⁴⁵ In larger buildings, one gender neutral facility for every two gendered facilities or one on every few floors would be a reasonable goal. The institution should also make it a priority to include an appropriate number of gender neutral and physically accessible facilities when renovating existing spaces or planning new campus buildings. I would argue that the institution should agree to a specific ratio of gender neutral facilities for all ‘new builds’ and be held accountable. A final yet important aspect of this discussion is educating the university community and making the existence of these facilities known. In addition to time and money, scholar Catherine Connell cites the importance of cultural validation for any attempt to repurpose or create these facilities. Any

³⁴⁵ While it is integral to create gender-neutral facilities for those who require or prefer them, it is also important to retain gender specific options that are accessible and inclusive for those who, for cultural or personal reasons, would be unable to use gender neutral facilities.

project to increase accessibility and inclusion should automatically be accompanied by awareness and education initiatives.³⁴⁶

Gender neutral washrooms are not only scarce, they're often 'hidden'. There may be a few scattered across a campus but their locations must be made known to the individuals who may prefer to use them. Institutions should make a point to make their whereabouts known by posting a current directory on their website which is easy to locate and navigate. Of the institutions I surveyed, five had some form of index or listing on their school website. Despite having relatively few facilities on offer, these schools took initiative in making this information known to the campus population, thus simultaneously illustrating their understanding of the issue. Schools One and Three also included an interactive map which used the Google Maps service to pinpoint restrooms around campus. These are innovative ideas that are simple yet extremely beneficial. This is a project that any school with appropriate facilities could undertake, whether completed by staff or incorporated as a project in a relevant course. Institutions could easily add either format to their website and post the information around campus in order to increase both accessibility and awareness. Teagan Widmer is an American software engineer and activist. Her application (app) *Refuge Restrooms* is available for smartphones and can also be accessed online. *Refuge Restrooms* allows the user to type in their location and they will be shown a list of gender neutral facilities nearby in order of proximity. This app also allows users to submit locations of known gender neutral or otherwise accessible restrooms, creating an interactive map of trans* inclusive and gender neutral facilities, as well as those which are wheelchair

³⁴⁶ Connell, "The Politics of the Stall: Transgender and Genderqueer Workers Negotiating 'The Bathroom Question'," in *Embodied Resistance: Challenging the Norms, Breaking the Rules*, eds. Chris Bobel and Samantha Kwan. (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2011): 183.

accessible. Users can rate the restrooms and make public comments to help aid other users in finding the safest facility. While this app includes a vast array of locations in the United States, it is slowly spreading to other countries and already includes a handful of results on Canadian postsecondary campuses. I would encourage all institutions to make a point to add their facilities to the database and perhaps link the resource from a relevant web page.

Restructuring Space and Services

Restrooms are an important aspect of many campus spaces, from academic buildings to residences. The recommendations I have outlined for modifying existing facilities and creating new gender neutral options where needed is similarly applicable to changing rooms and locker rooms present in athletics and aquatics departments. Space depending, an inclusive and accessible option in these locations would be the creation of a ‘family’ gender neutral facility which could incorporate private changing areas and private showers. As many postsecondary institutions allow community members to purchase access to their athletics spaces, this would be an ideal way to meet the needs of trans* individuals, as well as those who may wish to bring a friend or family member of a different gender who may require assistance.³⁴⁷ While this may be a more costly option which would likely require some renovations, it would serve a dual purpose by increasing community access as well as ensuring accessibility for trans* individuals.

I would urge institutions to reject the idea of dealing with trans* issues on a case-by-case basis both with regard to documentation and space. Some establishments have allowed

³⁴⁷ Beemyn et al., “Transgender Issues on College Campuses,” 55. This would be ideal for students, staff, faculty, or community members who may wish to bring their children or others who may require physical assistance or supervision.

students in need of a safe and private restroom or changing room to access staff restrooms or other specially designated locations, requiring a student to come out to administration.

While this practice, in the short-term, is better than nothing, the option must not detract from the urgency with which students require appropriate facilities in a variety of spaces across campus. Additionally, by allowing these students to access spaces that are off-limits to their peers, the student risks exposing their trans* status or ‘othering’ themselves.

When addressing the many issues that have been raised within residences, I would argue that the structure of residence divisions is an ideal place to start. Many institutions have several separate residences, often with distinct features or communities. By taking into consideration the findings of Krum, Davis, and Galupo, institutions can examine their existing residence structures to determine the quantity of ensuite private rooms.³⁴⁸

Dependent on this number, residence staff can choose whether or not to modify room assignment if there is an insufficient number of appropriate rooms for the trans* students that articulate this preference. Modifications may include being assigned an ensuite room that was originally intended for two students, or in the case of single rooms without facilities, modifying a quantity of single or multi-stall restrooms and shower facilities to ensure privacy and gender neutrality, as previously discussed. If the institution has apartment-style housing, a number of these spaces could be set aside for individuals with specific needs that affect their well-being in residence. If an institution has few of these options, I would suggest they consider renovations to create these accommodations in a specific building or wing. I would also recommend that institutions ensure inclusive and accessible housing be a priority for future renovations and new buildings.

³⁴⁸ Krum, Davis, and Galupo, “Gender-Inclusive Housing Preferences: A Survey of College-Aged Transgender Students.”

Once an establishment has determined available options on campus, the residence application form should be modified to reflect these accommodations. By once again using a gender ‘box’ that allows students to self-identify, residence staff will be better able to grasp a student’s specific needs. I would argue that it is also necessary to include a space that permits students to detail any specific requests or needs, a feature which would be beneficial for many students regardless of gender identity. A student from Krum, Davis, and Galupo’s study introduced the term ‘individualized accommodation’. He suggested: “The individualized accommodation [question] could then ask what the student needs to feel safe in their housing situation and on a reasonable basis, this individual request could be accommodated.”³⁴⁹ By designating a member of the residence staff to handle specific inquiries and requests relating to gender identity and other factors, students may be reassured that their needs will be taken into consideration and may feel less apprehensive about reaching out. The application form should include this individual’s contact information and encourage students to communicate their questions or specific housing needs with this contact directly. This information should also reference gender identity explicitly to convey that residence staff are aware of trans* students’ needs. It is essential to ensure confidentiality when a student shares this information, meaning only relevant administrators should be made aware instead of making one’s identity or needs known to the entire residence staff. The student should be consulted if this knowledge is required be shared with other individuals on the residence team. As a final note, I would strongly suggest that when finding a student safe and appropriate housing due to special requirements, be it identity or disability, the university administration should ensure that

³⁴⁹ Krum, Davis, and Galupo, “Gender-Inclusive Housing Preferences: A Survey of College-Aged Transgender Students,” 77.

extra charges incurred due to residence location or option will not fall on the shoulders of the student.³⁵⁰

Resources and Recommendations

These recommendations are but a few ways that a university or college can work towards greater trans* inclusion while concurrently addressing the binary foundations upon which it has been built. This is a vital undertaking that requires persistence and commitment from all levels of administration. Postsecondary institutions must be consistent in their message and accountable for their actions. In order to benefit trans* individuals within the institution as well as prospective students, these initiatives should be prioritized and an action plan developed and initiated as soon as possible.

I would argue that all staff and faculty, regardless of their position on campus, be required to attend either educational sessions on gender identity or undergo specialized diversity training. While exceptionally important for all individuals, it is particularly crucial to ensure that service providers within the institution are knowledgeable of the nuances of trans* needs within their respective fields. Health centre staff, counsellors, and any on-site or visiting health professionals should have a strong understanding of the diversity of all students and their unique health requirements. Affirmation of trans* identities has been shown to have a significant effect on psychological and emotional well being. This affirmation is particularly important within specialized services, and refers to “the extent to

³⁵⁰ Beemyn et al., “Transgender Issues on College Campuses,” 53. Insisting a student pay more for a space when it is the only option available to them would be effectively punishing the student for something outside of their control, just as wheelchair accessible rooms should not cost the student more.

which transgender identity is disclosed to others so as to be recognized by them, performed in the presence of others, and supported by others”³⁵¹ Similarly, the research of Nuttbrock, Rosenblum, and Blumstein finds that “identity validation and personal empowerment are critical factors in mental health functioning.”³⁵² These spaces should reflect student diversity by confirming that materials are neither cisnormative nor heteronormative and language is not unnecessarily gendered. These centres should also ensure that they have a variety of resources specific to trans* individuals, instead of requiring the students to educate the staff.

³⁵¹ Nuttbrock, Rosenblum, and Blumstein, “Transgender Identity Affirmation and Mental Health,” 5.

³⁵² Nuttbrock, Rosenblum, and Blumstein, “Transgender Identity Affirmation and Mental Health,” 9.

Conclusion

This thesis sought to explore the language of gender identity in Canadian colleges and universities. In so doing, I desired to expose the postsecondary climate as experienced by trans* students. As I became aware of the dearth of Canadian literature addressing the education experiences of trans* students above the secondary school level, I was compelled to focus upon the aspects of the institution which rendered these students invisible. Thus, I began to engage in an exploration of the tangible ways in which the establishment could recognize and validate trans* identities and provide accessible spaces in which trans* bodies could exist safely. With an overarching goal of exhibiting the power of productive language in creating an inclusive and affirming environment for students of all gender identities, I examined the documentation and policies of thirteen Canadian colleges and universities.

This work is grounded by the historiographical and linguistic roots of modern trans* discourse and terminology. By examining the medicalized roots of trans*, I sought to illuminate the modern pathologization of trans* bodies and identities. A resolute focus on the constructive nature of language informed by feminist poststructural thought provided a linguistic foundation for my study of institutional documentation and policy. I examined the language of gender in these thirteen postsecondary schools and sought to deconstruct the binary notion of gender that upholds this system. Recognizing the inherent heteronormativity and cisnormativity present in institutional space and structure allowed for the identification of practices which oppress trans* bodies and identities. With this strong foundation, I endeavoured to show how colleges and universities can use language, space, and policy productively to protect and affirm the identities of trans* students and create space which is

inclusive and accessible. I have made recommendations that I believe will be relevant and adaptable for a variety of educational settings, which focus upon implementing administrative and discrimination policies that acknowledge gender identity, preferred names, and pronouns. Additionally, I suggest methods of adapting existing space to create gender neutral facilities and committing to creating new, accessible restrooms, locker rooms, and residence options when possible. I urge institutions to carry out regular education and training initiatives for the entire postsecondary community, ensure service providers are well-equipped to work with trans* students, and create relevant resources that are well publicized and easily accessed.

As with any research that explores new terrain and proposes new ideas, one discovers additional questions and concepts to be examined. While beyond the scope of this thesis, there is further work to be done. Who is granted the power to modify policy and administrative systems? Could a part or full-time position be introduced to oversee the implementation of these changes, work to create new resources, and facilitate all related issues at the institution? How could an existing LGB(T) group or Women's Centre assist with these changes and establish specific support services? How can faculty actively endorse and participate in these actions? These questions are but several of those which should result in further investigation, research, and most importantly, action. Research that examines the experiences of trans* youth in education, health, and social contexts is still relatively scarce, whereas similar studies concerning sexual identity and orientation have been analyzed more fully in Western scholarship. This study faces limitations due to both its postsecondary focus and Canadian context, and contributes to a field with immense room to grow. However, it is my hope that this thesis will provide the context and the impetus to

explore these questions further and facilitate the first steps towards trans* inclusion and protection in postsecondary institutions, making space for creating positive, productive, and lasting change.

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