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Trans*-Subjectivity: Exploring Research Positionality in the Field

Abstract The focus on trans*¹ individuals as researcher subjects often problematizes trans* identity, limiting the possibility for trans* individuals to create and co-create bodies of knowledge. Drawing on three years of participatory research in the animal production industry, I discuss the implications of my subjectivity as a trans* man in this particular setting and in my research more broadly. Beyond being a self-reflexive exercise, this study seeks to make a number of theoretical and empirical contributions. First, feminist literature discussing one's subjectivity has largely focused on the dialectical existence between men and women, with little room for trans* or gender diverse perspectives. Further, studies that have acknowledged trans* identity have done so in relation to trans* persons as research subjects, with no recognition of their positionality or the possibility of the trans* researcher. This study seeks to change these paradigms by extending current feminist research frameworks on subjectivity to include greater gender diversity.

Keywords Gender; Feminist Methodology; Transgender; Feminist Research; Subjectivity; Trans*

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My involvement as a researcher in any setting is often filled with moments of joy, excitement, agony, and self-doubt. The majority of these instances coincide with my gender performance, what it means to be a man in a particular setting and how I am expected to perform my gender accordingly. The negotiation of space, social roles, and

¹ The use of trans* has replaced the use of the term transgender in discourse as an attempt to thoroughly recognize the diversity of gender identity and presentation that may or may not involve a transitional state.

language are all infused with gender connotations, made more pronounced by the fact that I was not born male, but rather that I transitioned from female-to-male in my late teens. In this paper, I address how my subjectivity as a transgender man influences how I conduct research and subsequently interpret my findings. My analysis is based on three years of field notes drawn from my participant observation research on the reintroduction of swine into small organic farm systems.

In the same way that a woman may draw on her gendered experience to understand a situation, trans* researchers can often draw on a variety of cross- and multi-gendered experiences to engage and assess the world. For example, I have been recognized and related to as a woman, man, and androgynous individual. These gendered moments have typically been accompanied by assumptions about my sexual orientation so that at various times I have been labeled as a lesbian, gay man, straight female, and straight male. With each label I have been granted access to some spaces and experiences, while effectively being excluded from others, causing my sense of place and space to simultaneously change with my outward presentation and perceptions of others. While this experience is common among trans* persons, there are few cis-gendered² individuals who can attest to experiencing life as both a man and a woman.

Outside of research related specifically to trans* individuals and their communities, the existence of the trans* researcher is largely ignored. While a number of scholars have written about their ex-

² A term used to describe an individual who considers their gender identity to match their birth gender.

perience in the field as gay men or lesbians (Blackwood 1995; Bolton 1995; Kulick and Wilson 1995; Burkhart 1996; Goodman 1996; La Pastina 2006), none have addressed what it means to be a gender creative (e.g., see: Ehrensaft 2011) or trans* researcher, or how this unique positionality might impart new insights not only in the field but also in documenting the dynamics of gender.

Since 2009, I have been actively involved in a study addressing the social and structural dynamics of pig reintroduction into small organic farms. The study involves the transportation and relocation of pigs from a traditional confinement-based facility to a pasture-based, rotational grazing system at my university's Student Organic Farm (SOF). The pigs are then raised through collective management at the SOF until they reach target weight. At that point, the pigs are transported for slaughter. This paper draws on participant observation notes, chronicling my relationship with the pigs, fellow researchers, and the physical environment to assess how I, as a trans* researcher, conduct, document, and interpret the research process and results in relation to my gender identity. Beyond being a self-reflexive exercise, this study seeks to make a number of theoretical and empirical contributions. First, feminist literature discussing one's subjectivity has largely focused on the dialectical existence between men and women, with little room for a trans* perspective. Further, those studies that have acknowledged trans* subjectivity have done so in relation to trans* research sites or communities. This study seeks to change this paradigm and extend current feminist research perspectives and theory to include greater diversity in gender identity, a process

that can be considered as a focal point in trans-feminism (Scott-Dixon 2006). Additionally, this study also seeks to identify the nuanced gender dynamics within small-scale animal production from a trans-feminist and trans-subjective perspective.

Background

Trans*-Subjectivity

Scholars have begun to recognize the unique experiences of trans* persons in a number of contexts, including risk management and elevated suicide rates (Grossman and D'Augelli 2007; Walls, Freedenthal, and Wisneski 2008), substance use (Cochran, Peavy, and Cauce 2007; Bruce, Ramirez-Valles, and Campbell 2008), HIV/AIDS prevalence (Garofalo et al. 2006; Nemoto et al. 2006; Bockting, Miner, and Rosser 2007; Sausa, Keatley, and Operario 2007; Ramirez-Valles et al. 2008; Kosenko 2010), the need for clinical care, counseling, and psychotherapy (Brown and Rounsley 1996; Israel and Tarver 1997; American Psychiatric Association 2000; Meyer et al. 2001; Carroll, Gilroy, and Ryan 2002; Leli and Drescher 2004; Winters 2004; Zucker and Spitzer 2005; Perez, DeBord, and Bieschke 2006; Logie, Bridge, and Bridge 2007; Hines 2007; Lombardi 2007), and relationship dynamics (Pfeffer 2010; Ward 2010). What nearly all of these articles have in common is that they demonstrate how a gender variant identity is regarded as socially problematic. In addition, more recent work has begun to address the dynamics of the transgender experience in daily life, such as in paid work environments (Connell 2010; Whitley 2010). Specifically, I (Whitley 2010) argue that through the recognition of gendered office dynam-

ics, one's trans* status can be used as a strategic tool to propel one's own corporate career. I write,

As a gender outlaw long accustomed to carving my own path, I learned to communicate in ways that were unavailable and unidentifiable to my non-trans coworkers, catapulting my own trans status from corporate cost to corporate benefit. My female past and male present provided valuable reference points for negotiating interactions with both men and women. (Whitley 2010:32)

This passage showcases how trans* persons can use their gender identity to negotiate and make meaning out of daily experiences, even when those experiences are not directly related to their trans* status. I have also documented that friends and family members of trans* persons may likewise experience unique ways of viewing and assessing gender dynamics in various situations, which alter how gender is constructed and performed in social environments (Whitley 2013).

Despite the significance of this reality, the mundane and everyday experiences of trans* persons are often dismissed by academic discourse in favor of "more provocative" analyses of sex and gender transitions. The current exploration of trans*-subjectivity as it relates to research is my attempt to acknowledge the importance of these everyday moments, where one's past, present, and future gender experiences subtly, and sometimes not so subtly, influence one's experience and understanding of the world.

Gender Dynamics in Organic Animal Production

The literature addressing the dynamics between gender and agriculture production is vast. While I do

not seek to critically engage current theories regarding gender and agriculture production, I do want to present my analysis in relation to a larger body of work. Given that the majority of the participant observation notes analyzed in this study are drawn from observations at an organic farm, I position my observations in relation to the following studies. Hall and Mogyorody (2007:289) suggest that, "gender divisions of labor and decision-making on organic farms are linked in important ways to the labor processes of different types of farms and to the ideological orientations of the farmers within those types." According to this line of thought, alternative systems, such as organic farming, may lead to greater gender equality through the division of labor and possibly decision-making (Kloppenborg 1991; Feldman and Welsh 1995; Meares 1997; Hall 1998; DeLind and Ferguson 1999; Trauger 2004) because they challenge the traditional labor process (Clunies-Ross and Cox 1994; Abaidoo and Dickenson 2002). Feldman and Welsh (1995) suggest that this is the case because alternative farms privilege non-traditional knowledge, effectively increasing the value of female perspectives. Additionally, Peter and colleagues (2000) find that men on alternative farms demonstrate a less "masculinist" view of the dynamic between humans and nature. However, a number of researchers are unconvinced of the perceived differences in gender relations (e.g., Sachs 1996; Meares 1997; Trauger 2004) since much of the research has involved small samples. Hall and Mogyorody (2007) find that it may not be the alternative or traditional approach to farming that produces distinct differences in gender relations, but rather the scale of production. Obviously absent from this discourse is any mention of non-cis-gender individuals or deviations in gender identity and presentation. As

a result, the analysis of trans*-subjectivity is a novel addition to the field, and assessing gender dynamics in small-scale farming provides a rich site for appraising how I use my transgender and/or gender creative positionality to inform my research.

Data and Method

Locations

Two sites were selected for observation: the Swine Teaching and Research Center (STRC) and the Student Organic Farm (SOF). The STRC was completed in 1997, on a university campus that has a long history of swine production. This facility is a full shower-in and shower-out operation with roughly six boars and approximately 200 sows. It has a breeding room, four farrowing rooms (where the sows give birth), four nurseries, and four finishing rooms (where pigs are fattened for "market weight"). Approximately 2,000 pigs are "finished" at the facility each year. The breeding herd is maintained from within; no outside pigs are admitted into the system. Beyond the production infrastructure, the facility also has administrative areas for teaching, research, and management. There are two full-time employees and six to eight student workers each semester.

The SOF was founded in 1999 as the result of student interest in learning sustainable methods of farming no longer taught in the agricultural program. The SOF heads The Organic Farmer Training Program (OFTP) and involves volunteers ranging from students to local community members in its year-round farming activities. In 2009, the SOF negotiated the first transfer of three pigs from the

STRC to the SOF. Farm employees, student volunteers, and faculty from a variety of backgrounds work to monitor and research the development and impact of the pigs on the SOF. The pigs are rotationally grazed on pastures. They are fed a mixture of organic grain and fresh organic produce, along with what they root and graze off the land, and are provided with a hoop-style shelter for nesting and refuge.

These research sites provide stark contrasts in terms of gender dynamics; however, these differences will only be explored to the extent that my own identity as a transgender man interacted with perceived gender norms.

Data

During the spring and summers of 2010 and 2011 and the spring of 2012, I was an active participant in the pastured pig project, meaning that I both participated in the daily care of the pigs and assisted in research activities like monitoring their health and weight. During this time, I did not reveal my transgender status to any of my colleagues or research participants. The opportunity to present myself and be seen as male, and only male, allowed me to document my unique experiences untainted by others' perceptions of my gender identity. Although I cannot be certain that my colleagues did not suspect my transgender status, I find this possibility to be unlikely given that I transitioned well over ten years ago and that I consistently present and "pass" as male. An added dimension of my presentation is situated in the fact that I am legally married to a very feminine woman.

I recorded field notes based on my interactions with the pigs, fellow researchers, staff, and the physical environment. Notes were documented both while engaged at the site and after each visitation. All field notes were hand-coded for instances where my gender identity and perception of self as a transgender man were mentioned. These instances were then separated into key themes. The collection of notes analyzed in this study spans two consecutive years, May 2010 to April 2012.

I chose to focus my analysis on my own field notes for a number of reasons. First, given that the estimated population of trans* persons in the United States is less than one percent (0.3%) (Olyslager and Conway 2007; Gates 2011), generating a random sample of trans* researchers is virtually impossible. Second, most research requires an adherence to objectivity, where the researcher attempts to remove him/her/herself from the research process. However, Harding (2001) calls for increased ownership of one's subjective existence through "strong objectivity." According to Harding (2001:163), strong objectivity places the "agent of knowledge in the same critical, causal plane as the object of her or his inquiry." In adherence to this call, I seek to identify and present my unique subjectivity—trans*-subjectivity—as it relates to one of my research projects. Third, the recognition of one's own subjectivity and how it impacts research serves as a valuable exercise for all researchers regardless of their gender or gender identity.

Findings

Beyond seeking to extend literature and theory on the value of trans* perspectives in work environ-

ments and suggesting that discussions around positionality in feminist research should include greater awareness of gender presentation and identity, this study draws on three themes, each with a relevant example from my own subjective interactions, to illustrate how a trans-feminist perspective could be applied to understanding gender dynamics in field research. The key themes identify the particular instances where my gender identity was in conflict with the structural nature of the observational environment, and include physical space, role expectations, and language.

Physical Space

Because of human intervention, the physical environment often has gendered associations that are embodied in how space is managed and who is allowed to control or manipulate the space. There is a vast literature on the construction of space from a gender perspective (e.g., see: Massey 1994). In animal production, space can be highly regulated, as seen in confined feeding operations, or it may be minimally or alternatively managed. Although most scholars recognize that space may have gendered connotations, how space is occupied and negotiated for non-cis-gendered people provides interesting insights into how gender is constructed and maintained for all individuals.

While I cannot go into detail regarding all of my experiences, perhaps the most telling example was my first visit to the STRC. I decided to take a tour of the facility. I had no idea that my physical body would become a barrier to freely accessing the space. A few days before the tour, a colleague informed me of the

shower-in and shower-out policy. Many confined feeding operations have a shower-in and shower-out policy to limit contaminants that might be brought in from the outside. The policy mandates that individuals visiting the facility must remove all clothing and leave it in an open locker-room at the front of the facility. Once all clothing is removed, the individual must then enter the open showers, scrub off, and proceed out of the shower and to the other end of the locker-room. At this point, the individual retrieves clothes (underwear, socks, and coveralls) from a bin to be worn during the tour. There are only two locker rooms, one for men and one for women. Both are fully open, where space may be shared by any number of individuals at one time. After the tour has ended, the same showering procedure is followed in reverse.

Prior to this study, my research had never involved the removal of clothing. While there is no doubt that all bodies are unique, for trans* persons this uniqueness can be a source of contention, extreme psychological distress, or social vulnerability. As a transgender man, my body is no different, and in this space I had a number of concerns. First, I had never been in a male locker-room. I feared that I would not understand the social norms or expectations. Second, I was concerned that, although I had fully transitioned, my body would betray me, and my past history as female would be discovered. Finally, I worried about my safety. If my past were discovered, how would I be treated? Like many trans* people, I have experienced both verbal and physical harassment.

Leading up to the tour, I discussed my apprehension with a few friends who were not involved in

the project. The women I spoke with mentioned that if they had concerns, they would address these concerns with the STRC manager. In the past, when I had been read as female, even as an androgynous female, this would have been my approach. For example, at my undergraduate university, I requested to have a unisex restroom constructed at the recreation center because I did not feel comfortable in either the male or female locker-room. Ultimately, my request was taken seriously—the university was concerned for my safety—and a unisex restroom was constructed. The key point, however, is that I had made these requests as a woman, requests that I could not have made as a man. In the current case, presenting as male, requesting special consideration was out of the question. The men I spoke with informed me that there was no room for negotiation, that men do not raise such concerns about shared space and that to do so would signal my difference. So, I was left with two challenging options. First, I could raise my concerns and compromise the relationships I worked so hard to construct, or I could remain silent and risk my own physical and mental health.

As with most situations in my life, I decided that I would go through with my scheduled tour despite my apprehensions. I rationalized my decision based on the fact that, should there be a problem, it would not be mine. I adopted a “your ignorance is not my issue” mentality, which I recognize can only be enacted from a place of privilege. As a university sanctioned building, I was protected legally and I had documentation to prove that I am legally recognized as male. So, if I was harassed or questioned, this would be a university issue, an issue that I was

fully aware might require legal action. I entered the STRC male locker-room and conformed to the procedures outlined above. There was no problem. I shared the locker-room with three men. No one noticed, perhaps because no one thought to.

While inside the locker-room, I shifted between feeling like a fraud and feeling a profound sense of accomplishment. It was not just the self-awareness of my transgender status that conjured up these feelings, but also a compilation of my collective subjectivity. I knew that perhaps everything they thought I was, I had never been. Most importantly, I was not a meat eater, nor was I born male. What I learned from this experience and a culmination of others is that the flexibility to be an emotionally engaged being is often stifled in the male world, something that I was not fully aware of before I transitioned. Though my female colleagues could express their discomfort with the shower-in-shower-out policy and bemoan their body issues, for me as a transgender man, as I am sure for other men at the STRC, there was no appropriate space to identify and share our concerns or emotions regarding this practice. As a transgender man, the shower-in-shower-out routine became the focal point of my experience at the STRC, while for others it was a minor detail. While this serves as only one of the many examples of how space was constructed in opposition to emotional disclosure, it is a powerful demonstration of how my trans*-subjectivity serves as an essential component of my research. Additionally, these observations not only lend themselves to a greater understanding of the construction of this specific space, but they also bring into question other aspects of the emotional work of men in this industry. For example, if there

is no room for men to identify and discuss emotions at the STRC, is there room for men to be emotionally engaged with the animals they raise?

Role Expectations

A role is an expectation placed on us by society dictating how we are to act in a given situation. Roles are often gendered. In the above example, if I were a woman, I may have been able to discuss my apprehensions with the manager of the facility, but as a man, there was no place for this type of disclosure because it would be inconsistent with my expected gender role. Similarly, food preferences also have gendered associations, as do the ways in which we are expected and encouraged to interact with animals. While much has been written regarding the relationship between gender and meat consumption (e.g., see: Adams 2010; Merriam 2010; Potts and Parry 2010; Ruby 2012), few, if any, articles address what it means to transition from female-to-male as a non-meat-eater. In this section, I explore my subjectivity as a vegan transgender male and how this unique position impacts my research. Additionally, I provide an example of how others expected me to relate to the pigs based on my gender presentation.

The Gender Dynamics of Meat Consumption

I have been a vegetarian since I was a child, not because my family abhorred eating meat; on the contrary, my father, a Korean War veteran from the South, did not eat a meal without it. I often tell people I was a vegetarian before the majority of people had a word to describe my eating prefer-

ences and well before tofu and Morningstar were widely available. Today, I'm a vegan. As a man, my decision to avoid meat has become a focal point of many conversations. I have often encountered people who assume I made a “bad decision” to transition from female-to-male because I do not eat meat, as if eating meat should define my gender identity or perceived sex. When I started with my work at the SOF and STRC, most of my colleagues assumed that I was a meat eater, after all, why would a man who is a vegan be engaged in raising animals which would eventually be slaughtered for food? The answer to this question is complex. Initially, I engaged in the project to foster dialogue, to support the farm-to-table movement, raise awareness about confined animal feeding operations, to see if shared suffering was possible, and to learn from an insider's perspective what it means to engage in animal production. Being reflexive about my own subjectivity, I recognize that beyond these seemingly practical endeavors, I had a desire to learn about the boundaries and borders of gender in a new environment. I was interested in what I could identify as a vegan transgender male that might not be readily accessible to others who were more centrally located in the community.

What I learned was less about the community and more about myself. When I came to the farm, I did not announce that I was a vegan, but I assumed that if someone asked, I would politely answer, offering only as much detail as was requested. What happened instead was a lie by omission. During a conversation with some of the principal investigators, the discussion turned to food; as we talked about meals and restaurants we enjoyed, someone

made the common assumption that I was a meat eater. I did not correct them. Now, on the one hand, I can justify this by saying that I did not want to isolate them—I was, after all, studying their world and seeking to understand the ways in which they naturally interacted with animals. However, this is not the full story. The other reality was that standing in a group of men in a male-dominated field, I did not want to reveal my food preferences, my animal ethics because as a transgender man, I did not want my gender to be questioned. I know that it is not uncommon for men to avoid emasculating situations, but for me, the fear was that my gender would be questioned in a way that would challenge my own validity as a researcher in this environment. I had an “in” as a man—one that I would not necessarily have had in my female life—and I did not want to jeopardize that.

Gender Dynamics in Human and Animal Relationships

During the summer of 2010, I spent many mornings at the SOF. I would arrive early, well before anyone else, giving me a chance to watch and document pig behavior, to see how they related to me, and to form a more intimate relationship across species. On the day that the pigs were to go to slaughter, I arrived early at the farm as usual. As I approached, they greeted me with excitement, making high-pitched squeals and running wildly around their enclosure. After introductions, I found a space in their enclosure and sat down to meditate. The director, who also arrived early on this particular morning, found me there with the pigs. We hugged as she approached and then we wept. I was heartbroken.

I had engaged in this process, fully aware that the end was drawing near, but that did not make it any easier. When I transitioned from female-to-male, I learned how to control and manage my emotions, how to assess appropriate places for emotional disclosure, and how to present and alter my gender performance depending on the people I interact with. When among women, I often find that I am able to bring forth or channel my feminine side, whereas when interacting with men, my communication style changes. After years of this behavior it has become instinctual; yet as hard as I tried to control my emotions, I wept openly that day.

Close to the time of the pigs’ departure, a second faculty member arrived. This particular man had been involved with both the STRC and the SOF. He was taken aback by my emotional transparency. I could tell that seeing me cry made him uneasy as he even remarked to the director that he had never seen a man so attached to a group of farm animals. This comment highlights the gendered expectations surrounding human-animal relationships—women are allowed to be attached while men are not—but it also raises an important question. How can men share in suffering and develop empathetic relationships with animal others if we are not emotionally engaged with them? In the second year, I was astounded to find that my emotional display had altered my relationship with this man, and had altered it for the better. After my display of vulnerability we shared a closer relationship; our conversations were more intimate as he disclosed stories about his life raising animals and his connection, often intimate and emotional, to the animals he raised.

Language

As a transgender man, language has served as a valuable indicator of my arrival into the male world. Early in my transition, I used language cues to determine if I was being perceived as a man or as a woman. By interpreting these cues, and the gender performances of those around me, I could alter my presentation to achieve my desired effect. Although it can be more reflexive for trans* persons, this process is not unique to the trans* community. It is the same procedure that happens for all individuals as we develop our gendered sense of self. In most contexts, language conveys some form of gendered information, to suggest who should be included or excluded, and how this inclusion or exclusion should be implemented. Animal production language is no different.

Having little experience with agricultural animals, my first exposure to this language was with the term “animal husbandry.” This term is well accepted in the literature and used at both the STRC and SOF. The word husbandry is derived from the term “housebondrie,” which first appeared in 1250 to 1300 and is used to describe those who actively breed and raise livestock. The base of the term, “husband,” has obvious masculine gender connotations, where a husband signifies a man who is a provider and manager over another, usually a person or animal. When applied to animal production, this term involves managing the care and breeding of animals. In the formal definition, there is no mention of an emotional component. For me, this term is both gender affirming and problematic.

My sense of affirmation in this term has no basis in its practical use. For me, as a transgender person who has fought so hard to be recognized as male and referred to with male pronouns, the clear masculine nature of the word is comforting, regardless of its meaning. The application of this term on my body by others produces a sense of pride, even if the current use of the term extends to those who do not identify as male. My apprehension of the term is also embedded in the gender connotation, in what it means to use a male term as a symbol of management or control over another being, whether that being is human or animal. I wondered if the function of this term at the SOF was laden with the emotional disconnect that seems to plague the STRC and men in animal production more generally. What I found was that while both the STRC and SOF freely use the term, those at the STRC more readily identify with it, while those at the SOF prefer the use of organic farmer.

More recently, the term midwife has been used on the SOF to classify those of us who engage in the delivery of the piglets. This compound term, originated in the 1300s, has been used to describe a woman who assists another woman in childbirth. My reaction to this term was in direct opposition to my reaction to animal husbandry. While I had initially enjoyed having animal husbandry applied to me by others, I had reservations regarding its practical use. When I first heard midwife applied to my body, it gave me an uneasy feeling. In introducing me to another student, the director commented, “He is going to be one of our midwives this year.” I was taken aback. I wondered whether she had found out about my past as female, though intellectually I knew this was not the

case. She was actively blurring the lines of gender at the SOF, giving space to be both male and a midwife. Counter to my intellectual resistance of animal husbandry, the use of midwife as applied to a male-bodied individual has powerful implications. Not only does it seemingly cross the boundaries of gender in language, but also it suggests that men can, and perhaps should, have a deeper relationship with animals. The use of the term implies that the relationship should not be based in power and control, but rather in a caring and nurturing capacity that is facilitated across species.

What was significant about both of these terms was the fact that, as a transgender scholar, I had to be hyper-aware of my own reaction to them and then manage my emotional response. As part of my research, I am interested in the ways that workers in the SOF and STRC use language to develop meaning in their work. Because I am a participant researcher, it was at first easy for me to assume that the other workers would have a positive association with animal husbandry and a negative association with midwife, simply because I had had such visceral reactions to these gendered terms. It took several days of self-reflection to identify my deeply embedded and purely subjective understandings of these terms so that I could investigate and understand how others incorporated and made meaning of them.

Conclusion

The literature on trans* experience is growing daily. Such an expansive field brings new ways for assessing how gender in presentation and identity has tangible impacts on our daily lives. Limited

work has already explored the negotiated process of trans* persons in work environments. This work has found that gender identity and performance are used to negotiate and make meaning out of daily experiences even when those experiences are not directly related to a person's trans* status (Whitley 2010). A distinctly different body of literature has begun to assess the presence of trans* persons in academic settings. Much of this literature is focused on inclusiveness, policy development, and individual educational experiences. With a growing number of trans* persons entering post-baccalaureate academic and research positions, the logical connection between these two branches of research is to assess how trans* researchers use their identities to negotiate field experiences.

Feminist approaches to research and methodology have long encouraged the recognition of one's subjectivity or positionality in the field. While past scholars have addressed both gender and sexual subjectivity from a feminist standpoint, they have not yet written about trans*-subjectivity. More specifically, what it means to be both a trans* individual and a scholar, and how one's trans* status impacts one's research agenda. Individual analyses of subjectivity have largely focused on binaries where man/woman and gay/straight are contrasting positions, seemingly missing a wealth of experiences that reside in the margins of these distinct categories. Clearly absent from this discourse is the mention of non-cis-gender individuals or deviations in gender identity and presentation.

The analysis above begins to fill this gap by providing an individual assessment of trans*-subjectivi-

ty on a small-scale animal production project. The goal of this assessment was threefold. First, I want to encourage gender creative and trans* persons to be mindful of their positionality as a research tool. Second, I want to encourage those who have a unique gender journey to recognize that their experience may create unintentional opportunities or challenges in the field, challenges that are distinct from those of cis-persons. Third, the recognition of these two ideas can create openings for new insights into the ways in which gender is constructed in the field environment.

Through my research at two distinct sites, a confined animal feeding operation (STRC) and an organic farm (SOF), I came face-to-face with the ways in which my transgender identity influences my research process. By examining my identity in relation to space, I was able to better understand the gender dynamics and boundaries present at the STRC and SOF; by investigating the interactions between my gender performance and expected role I was able to understand the root of meaningful relationships with my research subjects; and, by studying the subjective responses to language that have developed because

of my transgender identity, I was able to overcome my own predispositions so that I could better understand how research subjects make meaning of their worlds through language. This analysis is novel in its extension of feminist research methods to trans*-subjectivity; however, the undercurrent of this analysis contends that we all act on research from a specific position. Historically, trans* researchers have often been forced to hide their "positionality." However, as anti-discrimination legislation progresses, new opportunities are opening up for trans* persons across society. While limited research has explored trans* persons in work environments, many issues such as trans*-subjectivity, specifically in research environments, remain undocumented. As with feminist discourse, we have found that those who experience and present gender in ways that are different from the dominant paradigm (male/masculine) have unique insights into the construction and presentation of gender as a social system. Because of this, and based on my own experience in the field, it is likely that a closer assessment of trans*-subjectivity by those who identify as trans* will provide unique insights into various dimensions of research and social life more broadly.

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