

12-15-2019

## Allies in Training: The Construction & Management of Cis Allyship at State University

Davida J. Schiffer  
davida.schiffer@uconn.edu

Follow this and additional works at: [https://opencommons.uconn.edu/gs\\_theses](https://opencommons.uconn.edu/gs_theses)

---

### Recommended Citation

Schiffer, Davida J., "Allies in Training: The Construction & Management of Cis Allyship at State University" (2019). *Master's Theses*. 1456.  
[https://opencommons.uconn.edu/gs\\_theses/1456](https://opencommons.uconn.edu/gs_theses/1456)

This work is brought to you for free and open access by the University of Connecticut Graduate School at OpenCommons@UConn. It has been accepted for inclusion in Master's Theses by an authorized administrator of OpenCommons@UConn. For more information, please contact [opencommons@uconn.edu](mailto:opencommons@uconn.edu).

Allies in Training:  
The Construction & Management of Cis Allyship at State University

Davida Schiffer  
B.A., University of Maryland, College Park, 2016

A Thesis  
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of Masters of Arts  
At the University of Connecticut  
2019

Copyright by  
Davida Jae Schiffer

2019

ii

APPROVAL PAGE

Masters of Arts Thesis

Allies in Training: The Construction and Management of Cis Allyship at State University

Presented by

Davidae Jae Schiffer, B.A.

Major Advisor

---

Mary Bernstein

Associate Advisor

---

Nancy Naples

Associate Advisor

---

Bandana Purkayastha

Associate Advisor

---

Christin Munsch

University of Connecticut

2019

## Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
Theoretical Framework.....	2
Doing Cisgender and Transgender.....	2
Doing Allyship.....	5
<i>Being a “Good” White Ally</i> .....	5
<i>Institutionalized Allyship</i> .....	7
Methodology .....	10
Method & Field Site.....	13
White Trans Woman Positionality.....	16
Findings, Analysis & Discussion: How to Manage Cis Allyship.....	18
What does it mean to be an Ally? .....	19
<i>An Ally for Trans People</i> .....	21
<i>Claiming Allyship</i> .....	24
Passing Allyship: Positionality & Participant Emotions .....	27
<i>Passing and Clocked</i> .....	28
<i>“Cooling” the Ally</i> .....	31
Professional or Personal: Contextual Allyship .....	38
<i>Allyship in the Workplace</i> .....	38
<i>Negotiating Familial Allyship</i> .....	47
Conclusion .....	51
Appendix 1 .....	54
Appendix 2.....	62
Appendix 3.....	63
Works Cited .....	65

## Introduction

Walking around State University, one would quickly find stickers indicating an office is a “safe space” maintained by a supportive person – an ally. The stickers indicate one’s attendance in the Ally Training program run by the campus’ LGBT Center. I wondered, how do cis allies on college campuses enact allyship – what does it mean for them to be allies? Much of the literature regarding allies examines various motivations like positionality and personal “gain” (egotistical or professional) – do these motivations manifest differently in the workplace compared to their personal lives, and if so, how? As they learn more about allyship, how do participants interact with the concepts related to LGBT experiences? What role do emotions play in participant’s management of allyship? I attempted to answer these questions by attending 4 three-hour trainings and conducting 21 interviews with 12 training participants and with Tildy, the Ally Training instructor, to try to understand allyship at State University.

While the Ally Trainings are open to everyone in the University, the attendees are predominantly university staff, faculty, and graduate students. Therefore, interviewing the participants of a University Ally Training is imperative due to the power they hold over queer and trans students. Examining the stories that privileged (in this case, white cisgender) people tell about themselves is paramount to understanding how they perceive systems of inequality. However, literature on allies is fairly group centric – white allies and straight allies do not explore the intersecting aspects of identities. Therefore, in examining the LGBT Ally Training, I examine how participants conceptualize intersectional allyship in relation to their own embodiment. While I am not creating a full typology of cis allies, I strive to unpack aspects of cisgender embodiment. To avoid reifying a distinct trans/cis binary between the participants and myself, I utilize Florence Ashley’s “gender modality” to refer to “how a person’s gender identity stands in relation to their gender assigned at birth” (Ashley 2019). Similarly, I avoid defining

terms like cis or trans myself by utilizing the LGBT Center’s online dictionary and participants definitions – both of which are informed by discursive narratives around identity (Enke 2013).

In the following section, I discuss the theoretical context of the phrase “cis ally” and how it is implicitly gendered and racialized. I review how cisgender modality and allyship are identities that are actively managed – often at the same time – to contextualize how cis ally participants thought of themselves. After that, I discuss the methodology utilized for my study. My method took some refining to suit the specifics of my field site, and my identity as a white trans woman had a larger-than-expected role in the interviews. The findings section examines how participants define and manage their cis allyship to situate my findings in the theory. There are three interconnected sections: participant’s definitions of allyship, the role of emotions in allyship, and how they manage their actions/emotions at work and home.

## Theoretical Framework

Cisgender and ally are two very broad terms, in this section I will examine how scholars have conceptualized both concepts. First, I discuss the discourse around how people “do” their gender modality. Literature on allyship complicates the “good intentions” of allies to show that white allies contribute to systems of oppression even when they signal their inclusivity. I hope to extend this literature by showing how allyship is something that people “do” and in the process, constructs a type of cisgender identity.

## Doing Cisgender and Transgender

Framing cis allyship as actively done necessitates an extension of doing gender narratives to unpack how allies manage their cisgender modality. Understanding how allies are enacting their racialized and gendered allyship is crucial to contextualizing their actions. As I will discuss, framing gender identity as a process is dependent upon how one enacts their gender modality – which then contextualizes how they see themselves as allies. While allyship denotes the ally has

some degree of privilege, but their enactment of allyship is simultaneously racialized and gendered.

In their seminal article “Doing Gender,” West and Zimmerman (1987) argue that individuals exert effort to “do” their gender to influence how others categorize their perceived sex regardless of the gender assigned at birth. They expand on Garfinkel’s (1967) analysis of Agnes’ “passing” as a “gender normal” (cis) woman (West & Zimmerman 1987). “Passing” as gender (normal) is framed by Judith Butler as performative, where individuals enact a “stable [gender] identity” through everyday actions that other people recognize (and therefore legitimize) (Butler 1990: 186; West & Zimmerman 1987). The notion of doing gender as an active process is complicated by gender modality. Before evaluating if cis allies are doing cisgender through their allyship, I must discuss the context of doing gender.

While West and Zimmerman (2009) conceptualize doing gender as a universal process, Deutsch argues that the concept of doing gender reifies gender norms (Deutsch 2007). She argues that “doing” gender rationalizes actions by implying that an individual’s actions are not typical for their gender, that one can eschewing of gendered expectations and *still* be a cis woman/man (Deutsch 2007). Scholars applying doing gender frequently cite the example of Agnes, a trans woman examined by Harold Garfinkel (1967) (Connell 2009). Garfinkel (1967) recognizes Agnes’ experience of “passing” as a (cis) woman to study how gender operates for gender normals (Serano 2016). Raewyn Connell (2009) argues this emphasis on passing for cis recognition places trans people as striving for cis approval, creating what Johnson (2013) dubs “trans-as-model-for-doing-gender.” Catherine Connell expands upon Garfinkel’s analysis by framing trans people’s active management as “doing transgender” where we “mask...the discordance between their sex, gender, and sex category,” exemplified by Agnes’ passing

(Connell 2010: 50). These concepts imply a cisnormative reality that is determined by an individual's ability to clearly discern between cis and trans embodiments (Serano 2016; Schilt & Westbrook 2009).

If trans people are “doing” transgender – do cis people “do” cisgender? Austin Johnson's thesis “Doing Cisgender vs Doing Transgender” reconfigures “doing gender” as doing cisgender and expands upon Connell's “doing transgender” by situating it as a necessity to survive in a cisnormative world (Johnson 2013). Doing transgender requires trans people to adhere to a transnormative model where one adheres to an institutionally enforced binary-centric medicalized interpretation of trans experiences to become a respectable trans person (Johnson 2016). Bradford and Seyd (In Press) expand upon transnormativity by noting how it simultaneously provides trans people an alternative narrative to cisnormativity while constructing a respectable manifestation of transgender modality (Duggan 2003).

Recent literature has explored the medicalized underpinnings of transnormativity (Johnson 2013, 2016; Bradford & Seyd In Press; Miller & Grollman 2015; Meadow 2018) and (to a lesser extent) cisnormativity (Valentine 2012; Schilt & Windsor 2014), but there remains a gap on the impact of intersectional experiences on this dynamic. The “production of transgender whiteness” constructs trans/cisnormativity's presumed whiteness, exemplified by the continued mistreatment of trans people of color doing trans/cisgender by a white supremacist society (Stryker & Aizura 2013: 10; de Vries 2012, 2015; Snorton 2017). Trans discourses strive for intersectional lenses (Spade 2015), but this striving can translate into lip service as white trans people articulate sameness with a white cis population (Crenshaw 1991; Ghaziani et al 2016; Ward 2008). An example of this sameness is improving the process of changing gender marker while not challenging the state's need to collect gender attestation in the first place (Spade 2015).

The few accounts of cis people “doing” cisgender (Valentine 2012) all discuss cisgender modality in relation to trans people. The term ‘cis’ has a complicated history and implies a rigid cis/trans binary that positions cis as merely “not trans” and stifles the temporal nature of cisgender modality (Enke 2013). Enke voices concern that “cis” allows cis people to re-inscribe the authenticity of their genders while signaling an awareness of trans experiences. I use the word cis to mark the unmarked. The epistemological context of “cis” is important but beyond the scope of the paper. Ze argues that ally trainings exemplify a neo-liberal, non-substantive allyship by focusing on basic terminology and not a reexamination of participant’s racialized cis privilege (Enke 2013; de Vries 2015; Snorton 2017). Before discussing how the cis participants in my study performed cis allyship, first I must discuss what it means to “do” allyship.

### Doing Allyship

In this section, I review what it means to be an ally and how individuals enact allyship. First, I examine the emotional and context-dependent dynamic of white allyship. Then, I discuss the literature of institutional context of allyship and ally trainings to examine how it shapes the field site.

### *Being a “Good” White Ally*

Allyship is a complicated concept, enabling those who claim it to tacitly acknowledging their privileged status while simultaneously showing that they support minority claims (Enke 2013). There are many examples of members of dominate groups (i.e. male feminists, straight allies) showing solidarity with minorities, but I selected literature on white allies to highlight the racialized aspects of cis allyship.

Color-blind racism, a term coined by Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, describes an ideology of racism that manifests through white people’s desire to ignore race in everyday interactions through attempts to find a non-racial reason for racial inequalities. White people will disguise

their racial opinions with rhetorical shields like “I’m not racist, but” to distance themselves from being perceived as a racist (and therefore “bad”) to absolve themselves (Bonilla-Silva 2006: 57).

When confronted with topics of race, white people enact 'white fragility' (DiAngelo 2018) - a reaction of anger, fear, guilt, rationalizing, and/or withdrawal. This fragility protects allies, allowing them to rationalize their actions with altruistic intentions and avoid the stigma of being racist (Goffman 1952, 1986; Lewis & Diamond 2015). Thus, the white people who volunteered to attend DiAngelo’s white ally trainings exhibited white fragility when accused of racism because they were confident in their own good intentions, distinguishing themselves from “bad” racist whites (DiAngelo 2018).

The white people in DiAngelo’s trainings required constant reassurance that their good intentions canceled out any racist behavior. But such reassurances maintain white fragility and shift the focus from racism to white victimization (DiAngelo 2018). When called out, white participants’ fragility prompted feelings of guilt, which manifested through crying and denial. DiAngelo’s participants, upon feeling like they might be racist, got frustrated and interrupt the training. The participants’ emotions are like Goffman’s “cooling the mark,” where the mark has a dramatic reaction that others must handle (Goffman 1952). For instance: white women’s anxiety centers her victimhood based on others’ accusations of racism over her actual racism – prompting others to forgive her (DiAngelo 2018).

Context has a large influence on white people’s willingness to talk about race, varying based on perceived publicness and the amount of white people present (Picca & Feagin 2007). Picca & Feagin (2007) expand upon Goffman’s (1959) notion of frontstage where people feel pressured to meet expectations and a backstage space where one can contradict their frontstage actions. They found that the frontstage is a space where whites try to prove they are not racist, but

get defensive when interacting with people of color. Talking about racism in the frontstage would make the problem apparent and potentially implicate oneself/family – so direct confrontation is impolite (Eliasoph 1999; Picca & Feagin 2007). In a private, backstage venue, white people do not view themselves facing the same pressures of the frontstage. White people did not judge racist actions in these spaces as representative of a white person’s ability to be “good” since their racist comments are not “real” (Picca & Feagin 2007). The backstage can also operate as a space where white people can teach others how to act in the frontstage in a private space through educative encounters (Eliasoph 1999; Creed & Scully 2000; Picca & Feagin 2007). The distinctions between front and back stages allows a shared expectation of how white allies and non-allies react to allyship by others and provides a rationale for other’s non-ally behaviors.

I utilize white ally literature to introduce the idea of ally’s necessity to be “cooled” and how their reactions can vary depending on the context. My goal in connecting cis allyship to white allies is not to merely substitute cisgender modality for whiteness, but rather to examine how “well intentioned” privileged people express their support for minorities. White fragility and allyship have gendered manifestations, and race, gender, and power contextualize the cis allyship. In the next section, I explore the institutional context of allyship.

### *Institutionalized Allyship*

When someone is an ally, there is an implication that they have some degree of privilege over the group/person they support. Allyship does not operate vacuum – it occurs in different spaces and shaped by their associated norms. In this section, I discuss institutional motivations for allyship and the literature on ally trainings.

Ally trainings educate people and signal an inclusive environment for marginalized community members, but voluntary attendance establishes a selection bias where attendees are

more likely to be supportive (Poynter & Tubbs 2008). Other studies have documented how cis women are more likely to be trans-inclusive than cis men (Worthen 2011, 2016; Poynter & Tubbs 2008). Trainings and educational material articulate a message of “sameness” between white LGBT people and the general population – framing them as a group that would otherwise be accepted “but for” their queer/trans identity (Crenshaw 1989: 154; Ghaziani et al 2016; Spade 2015; Ward 2008). The effectiveness of these trainings is difficult to measure (Worthen 2011), but is contingent upon a specific training’s substantive discussion of systematic issues while considering the audience’s background (Enke 2013).

Kimberlé Crenshaw coined the term intersectionality to analyze how Black women’s simultaneous experience of racism and sexism is absent within activist circles (focused more so on Black men and white women’s experiences) or in legal issues, where they would not be categorized as both identities (Crenshaw 1989). While I strive to utilize intersectionality as an analytic to examine the relational, cultural, and institutional ways that power manifests (Collins & Bilge 2016), I would be remiss if I did not also discuss how the term has discursively interacted with diversity narratives. Diversity discourses naturalize whiteness, straightness, cisgender modality and other privileged identities as the default that needs to “learn” how to interact with “others” (Ward 2008). In supporting a distinct “group,” one can re-enforce systematic oppression allocating resources to those who are the most “similar” (i.e. women’s shelter not having Spanish proficiency; misogynoir in the women’s movement and Black activism) (Crenshaw 1989; Collins & Bilge 2016; Bailey 2013). When identities like Black or gay are seen as distinct, there is an underlying narrative that the groups are interchangeable – that one can support gay people without supporting Black people (and vice versa) and thereby erasing the existence of Black gay people (Collins & Bilge 2016). Furthermore, as Collins and Bilge

(2016) observe: diversity initiatives “overemphasize individual remedies for social problems” without deconstructing the structural causes (p. 183).

As Ward (2008), Spade (2015) and Embrick (2016) have discussed, the white cis ally is part of the neo-liberal project of diversity that has a large role in Universities. There are multiple reasons one takes steps to become an ally. Institutions have a vested interest in framing themselves as diverse – prioritizing the appearance of diversity over tangible benefits to minorities (Ward 2008; Spade 2015). Individual reasons can range from institutionally motivated (Schilt 2010); placating one’s own sense of self as good (DiAngelo 2018) and avoid the stigma of appearing bigoted (Goffman 1986, 1952); and to support a family member (Meadow 2018; Rahilly 2015; Travers 2018). Even when an individual is supportive in one context (frontstage/backstage/neither) that does not dictate their actions in another area.

Among other reasons, white participants are concerned with how the stigma of being racist – or seen as racist – will hinder their career, underscoring their need absolve themselves. In training spaces like DiAngelo’s, instructors must handle these participants while continuing to educate others – thereby performing what Hochschild (2003) calls emotional labor as they “induce or suppress feeling” to work (p. 7). In the training space, instructors like DiAngelo had to suppress their reactions to run the training (DiAngelo 2018). Therefore, I find the cooling off process to be a type of emotional labor. Based on the literature, it seems that this emotional labor is part of training allies (suppressing their own emotional reactions) and allies themselves (avoiding an instinct to victimize themselves when learning). These interactions are necessary for an effective, mutually beneficial training space. One notable difference is that DiAngelo’s participants attended a white ally training that participants detached from other aspects of embodiment (i.e. gender identity/modality, sexual orientation), whereas my study focuses on

being an LGBT ally. Based on the literature, it is likely that participants will see their allyship as race-neutral.

The literature on allyship has many examples of *why* one would become an ally, how one enacts allyship, and the role of emotions in people's allyship – but much of the literature around allyship focuses on a specific group (i.e. white allies, cis allies, etc.). As I discussed earlier, literature on doing gender is complicated by examining the impact of gender modality. Putting literature on doing gender and allyship in conversation with each other is crucial to investigating how cis allyship manifests in participants' professional and familial lives.

## Methodology

I have designed my research questions to uncover how participants define allyship and how they incorporate the material into their professional and familial lives. The identities of the interviewees contextualize their responses – as well as how students, coworkers, and families perceive their actions. Since I studied and attended an LGBT Ally Training with an emphasis on cis allyship, my positionality informed how I approached this study.

My original question focused on the social construction of “cisness” to examine how cis identities have adapted in response to the training. The question for the training was quantitatively framed (“do trainings make [cis] people more accepting of trans people?”) while implicating the wider State University community in an unanswerable way. I positioned my standpoint as the “correct” way of approaching the world. Some of the interviews felt like impersonal evaluations – quizzing participants on the training. My trans lens became *the* trans lens, approaching my analysis with a “correct” trans lens (Charmaz 2006). I could not hold participants to my own level of knowledge on trans theory, so I had to make a change.

Addressing that qualitative flaw, I shifted to Grounded Theory. I dismissed the questions binding my research, focusing on the data (Charmaz 2006) and reformulated the questions to

better suit the study (Walton 2002). This forced me to prioritize the participants understandings of reality and to avoid using them to transmit an “objective” truth about the world (Clarke, Friese, Washburn 2015). I was constantly analyzing and re-analyzing their statements to understand their worlds, drawing on the training material for definitions and writing thematic memos (Charmaz 2006). Cisgender modality was still relevant to my questions – but only as it related to participants’ allyship. This stopped my ubiquitous application of cis regardless of participant descriptions of their gender modality, even when the term is still relevant (Smith 2012). Since most of my participants were cis, studying “cisness” positioned me as a forever outsider, even though my role as a researcher complicates the power dynamic since I do have some power over the narrative (Naples 2003).

Constructionist Grounded Theory was useful for reformulating my study but was drastically limiting when I approached my ethnographic observations. When training attendees made allusions to androgynous people being “sensitive” or how people who undergo trans-related surgeries sometimes “regret” them, I had no way asking them for more information since I could not interview them. With Grounded Theory, I felt constrained between strictly sticking to the data and contextualizing them within the greater discourses (Clarke, Friese, Washburn 2015). The instructor and participants rarely discussed race, and if the predominantly white respondents were not discussing race, then I would need to supplement Grounded Theory to provide a better analysis. Furthermore, as a participant observer, I remained cognizant of my own subject position in the space (Boellstorff et al 2012).

After writing a few memos, I adopted Situated Analysis (SA) to resolve these flaws, drawing on techniques from institutional ethnography, discourse analysis, and critical race methodology (CRM). SA calls for an examination of the social world that provides the

background discourses the participants were drawing on, contextualizes their statements, and situates the trainings within the wider world (Clarke, Friese, Washburn 2015). This aspect pairs nicely with critical race methodology. The training's attendees are predominantly white and the white participants rarely addressed race in concrete terms. Nevertheless, the participant's race is more than an "attribute" to discuss or not discuss – it shapes the context of their statements (Bratter & Zuberi 2008). The LGBT Center that runs the ally trainings has an all-white staff in a predominantly white university – which contextualizes it within the wider social world (Ford & Airhihenbuwa 2010). To preserve the anonymity of State University, I cannot appropriately cite the reported racial and gender demographics of the university. The training space and participants are not immune to societal racism, which permeates throughout the training through a deracialized approach to queerness (Ford & Airhihenbuwa 2010; Ward 2008). Additionally, the LGBT Center is situated among "other" cultural centers such as the Women's Center and The African American Center – distinctions I will discuss more in the findings.

Framing the trainings as a point of entry to allyship reveals the narratives participants use to tell themselves to make sense of the information, while viewing the training as a space that people go to as a part of the "textual roles" of their social worlds (Geertz 1978; Campbell & Gregor 2004). Each participant has some connection to the university with a role in the social relations at play. While their rhetoric is important, it exists in the same cis/transnormative institutions that I am. These factors further obstructed my ability to be overly critical of their misunderstandings. The trainings are a local space where people go to learn how to be allies, but the extra-local discursively manifests in the participant's discursive statements (Smith 1987).

SA invites Foucauldian Discourse Analysis by allowing me to draw on the links between statements and their discursive influences. I approached the training attendees, participants, and

Tildy (the Ally Training instructor) as bearers of subjugated knowledge shaped by local and extra-local contexts (Auyero 2002; Smith 1987, 2006; Clarke, Friese, Washburn 2015). The training format is largely consistent, but over the past year there were subtle changes to the curriculum. The interactions between genres (Tildy speaking, the power point, the activity) construct a narrative that implicates absent actors to show what allyship is not (Fairclough 2003).

### Method & Field Site

The LGBT Center is one of the few spaces at State University specifically geared towards educating people around LGBT related topics. I chose State University, a predominantly white university, to better examine how allies strive to support students. Universities are common areas of study (Nicolozzo 2017; Worthen 2011, 2015), but studying (predominantly white, straight, and/or cis) University staff, administrators, faculty, and graduate students provides a unique insight into well-intentioned individuals with some power over queer/trans students (Nicolozzo 2017). The scope of power can vary from creating an in/exclusive classroom space to ameliorating or strengthening administrative hurdles to their success.

I attended four of the Ally Trainings run by State University's LGBT Center and interviewed 12 of the training participants. In total, I performed 12 hours of ethnographic observations and conducted 21 semi-structured interviews.<sup>1</sup> Initially, I chose to interview people before and after their participation in the training – interviewing 8 people for a total of 16 interviews. I recruited via an email solicitation sent out before the training. To increase my sample size, I modified my protocols to allow post-training solicitation of participants, yielding me three more participants and interviews after adjusting the interview schedule. There was one participant who I only interviewed before the training because he made me uncomfortable:

---

<sup>1</sup> All interview schedules (Before/After Training, Only After Training, and Tildy can be found in Appendix 1).

misgendering me, getting my name wrong, and requesting that we hold the interview at his van. Interviews ranged from 45 minutes to an hour and a half. I also interviewed Tildy, the training instructor, after I attended the four trainings; her interview lasted two hours.

I did not come into the interviews or observations with expectations of what I would find, shown by my need to reframe my research question as I described above. Ultimately, my interview data tended to discuss the participant's biographical history, their thoughts about the training material/concepts, and how they conceptualized allyship professionally/personally – but the loosely-structured format meant that questions arose from conversation as well. In the trainings, I was a participant observer who occasionally participated and took notes in a notebook. My attendance and questions had some impact on the trainings themselves, since participants knew a researcher would be in attendance. I was in a space where I was observing people talking *about* people like me and making us seem relatable to themselves. There were moments where I felt confident that I knew more than other attendees – yet held my tongue to avoid altering the space (Naples 2003). I transcribed each interview and fieldnotes myself and used open coding via NVivo to organize the data (Emerson et al 2011). Once I started conceptualizing themes and wrote a few case memos (Charmaz 2006, 1995), I began to develop focused coding and thematic memos (Emerson et al 2011; Charmaz 2006).

The main field site is the training space, though my ethnographic accounts of the training material are difficult to separate from my analysis. Tildy (WBCW<sup>2</sup>, training instructor) begins the training by stating that her main goal of the training is for attendees to develop their “informed empathy” instead of mastery, where participants learn to be understanding that there is

---

<sup>2</sup> To improve readability and provide context, I list abbreviated demographics (race, sexual orientation, gender modality, gender identity) in parenthesis when I first reference a participant's name (Jack 2019). For a complete list of participant identities and the key for the initialism, see appendix 2.

no “one way” to prevent offending people. The training has a lecture phase where Tildy reviews concepts like Gender Identity, Gender Expression, Sex, Romantic Attraction, and Sexual Attraction. Following that is a discussion about common malapropisms (transgenders, etc.) along with advice on avoiding gendered language and what to do when someone comes out to them. After detailing the resources for students at State University, the attendees take part in the hetero/cissexism scale activity.<sup>3</sup> After the training, each participant receives a sticker certifying their attendance.

The trainings met monthly, and the training material was largely consistent. The attendance varied between trainings, ranging from 7 to 18 attendees. Three trainings were located on the main campus of State University, but there was one training (the one with the highest attendance) that was located on the Satellite State University campus. Without interviewing each of the attendees, I cannot definitively state their racial identities, sexual orientations, or the gender modalities. However, based on my perception of the attendees’ appearances, the attendees/participants reactions to the material, and the participants and Tildy’s opinions of the demographics I can make an informed estimate of the general make-up of the room. Based on these components, I believe that the training attendees are predominantly white, cis, and straight women for reasons I will discuss in the findings section.

The interviewee demographics were not entirely the same as that of the trainings. I gave participants the ability to describe their identities themselves. Racial demographics were similar in that one-third of my interviews were non-white: eight participants described themselves as white/Caucasian, one identified as Black, one identified as African American, one identified as Asian, and one identified as Hapa. Only two participants identified as non-straight: one described

---

<sup>3</sup> The scales are displayed in Appendix 3, I will discuss the activity in more depth in the data section.

herself as a gay cis white woman and the other as a bisexual genderfluid woman who “sometimes feels comfortable as a cis woman.” Only three participants identified as cis men: two of them were Black/African American and the third was white. Appendix 2 contains a complete list of participants and relevant demographic information.

### White Trans Woman Positionality

My positionality is extremely salient in these spaces – yet participants downplayed it through a desire to “not assume.” The literature scarcely examines the standpoint of trans researchers, particularly when interviewing cis/straight people. I hope my Masters can add more to the growing field. It is difficult to separate my actual/perceived positionality here without talking about the data – but this section will strive to do just that. I utilized my identity to aid in starting this project and gathering data: I gained access to the space in part because of my identity as a white queer trans woman, granting me access to a queer space that eschews straight/cis observers (Davis 2015).

Blee (2002) and Stein (2001), both white cis self-described progressive women, have discussed researching populations that were at odds with their identities. These women experienced difficulties maintaining their own identities while interviewing people who were largely at odds with their experiences (Klanswomen and anti-LGBT activists). Like Stein and Blee, I prepared for the worst even while I strove for Stein’s “critical empathy” of understanding participants’ lives within a social context without necessarily liking them (Stein 2001: 230). Ultimately, my experiences proved to be much different: it was easy for me to have empathy for people who were acknowledging a knowledge deficiency and attempting to learn more, which is considerably different than actively racist white women (Blee 2002). There was only one point where a participant had me concerned about my well-being, but even in that case he (and a cis woman) merely made me feel uncomfortable and dysphoric.

When Stein interviewed anti-LGBT activists, she was initially concerned about participants reading her as a lesbian – instead finding that participants did not notice her sexuality but noticed she was Jewish. Perhaps the biggest difference between myself and Stein is how we navigate participant recognition of identities. Stein’s lesbian identity was largely unrecognized by participants, but the pronouns on my email, the flag outside my office door, and my clothing choices shattered any illusions of a closet door. The Ally Training participants could have been expecting a queer and/or trans researcher based on prior assumptions. Their good intentions mitigated the discomfort that other scholars have reported when interviewing cis people (Hughes 2008), but my embodiment influenced my findings by giving away my transgender identity.

During my interviews, I experienced what Meadow described as participants and researchers “studying each other” (Meadow 2018a). As a white queer trans woman who has medically transitioned and had supportive parents, participants wanted to hear about my research and my own thoughts on allyship. One participant asked me for advice on how to be an ally. Though my transgender modality positions me as an “outsider” to many of my cisgender participants, we have the common ground of working for State University (Naples 1996; Davis 2015). My researcher lens complicated the “studying up” narrative, since I am developing an account of the participants experiences (Smith 2012). Even if participants did see me as cis – as Meg did – my position as a researcher could still make them wary.

My white privilege shapes my comfort as a trans woman in a room of cis folks, and while the trainings do not discuss race, I situate my analysis as a refusal to view trainings as non-racial (Solorzano & Yosso 2002). My decision to be a participant observer further implicated me in the processes at play by adding another white person to an already white space. Nevertheless,

participants were not *just* cis woman – they were predominantly white cis women. As I examined the narratives of white allyship (Ward 2008; Frankenberg 1993; Bonilla-Silva 2006) for LGBTQIA+ communities in addition to the non-white participant’s allyship, I found that my racialized gender identity and modality were also salient for reasons I will discuss in the findings (Solorzano & Yosso 2002).

Though my queerness and my transgender modality differentiates me from most of my participants, my whiteness, binary gender identity, educational status, supportive parents, and medically transitioned experiences situate me as fairly transnormative (Johnson 2013, 2015). One participant talked about supporting her gay son, prompting me to share my parent’s support and the educational journey. This moment of vulnerability allowed for a greater and mutually beneficial conversation (Meadow 2018b). My conversation with the gender-fluid individual was complicated but overall positive – though neither of us identify as cis, there were still numerous differences in how we “did” transgender (Johnson 2013; Connell 2010). I have medically, legally, and socially transitioned into my womanhood – whereas June (WBGFW, GS) did not see herself needing to do these steps. While we have similarities, it also augmented our different standpoints and realities (Smith 2012).

## Findings, Analysis & Discussion: How to Manage Cis Allyship

Allyship is a complicated word. This section explores what the process means to the interviewees. I begin by examining how the participants conceptualized a group-specific allyship and how they related to the term ally. Then, I explore how my conditional positionality created circumstances where I can see the emotional cooling process necessary for allies to feel at ease. Once I show how participants defined their meaning and emotional influence of allyship, I will demonstrate how one’s allyship manifests based on professional and familial contexts.

## What does it mean to be an Ally?

The word ally carries a significant weight to participants – all of whom want to be an ally. This section explores what that word means to participants and how they interact with it. In describing their relationship to allyship, I found that that tended to frame allyship as a group specific phenomenon. Additionally, some participants were apprehensive about applying the concept to themselves while others claimed the term quicker. Before I discuss those sections, I want to show what the word ally means in these contexts.

Tildy (WBCW, training instructor) is hesitant to provide a concrete definition of ally, but the LGBT Center's online dictionary states allyship is "Typically considered a verb...Allies disrupt and educate in oppressive spaces. Allies must constantly work to educate themselves about communities to which they are acting in allyship." This description explains why many are reluctant to fully claim that they are an ally – and why people's intentions can mitigate deviations from allyship. She does not have a personal definition of allyship, saying that it is "action based and awareness based." Tildy frames allyship as a Sisyphean task of self-improvement where learning more about the world continues to reveal existing inadequacies to one's knowledge, situating allyship as an active process (Grzanka & Blazer 2015). When asked if she is an ally herself, Tildy responded that it was something she "works on every day." In statements like that, it is difficult to determine if I am getting the "honorable" response (Pugh 2013) or if she is being genuine – but regardless she frames her response around her front stage performance (Goffman 1959).

Tildy has difficulty making a definitive definition for allies. She is concerned that participants have misconceptions about their position, thinking that their allyship is enough or they need have others bestow the title of ally to them. At the end of the training, the participants partake in the "heterosexism/cissexism scale" activity adapted from informed by C. Demnowicz'

2017 Racism Scale and Heathcliff McLean's 2017 Transphobia scale. She distributes statements (see Appendix 3) for participants to rank from allyship/accomplice to overt hetero/cissexism to have them reflect on the nuance of allyship.

Tildy's depiction of allyship called for people to "take action and change behavior," leading many participants to criticize passive allies who claim allyship without doing anything to prove it (Grzanka & Blazer 2015). She hopes the concluding activity of the training teaches participants about the nuances of allyship:

I think that if people were laying down the 'its fine, just do it in front of me,' [statement] and they said that earlier in the training, they're going to realize how high up on the scale it is and how much more work they have to do. And so it's kind of like 'you're here, you're not the worst but you still have so much more left to grow

When the activity is over, participants can see the distinctions between categories like "overt cissexism" and "justification" (the former appears to be outright bigotry and the latter is rationalizing one's transphobia), showing the differences between their interpretations and the instructor. Tildy does not challenge participants in the activity, recognizing that the context-dependent impact of some of the statements listed. She later observes that, "It's very unlikely that the people saying these things view themselves as harmful [i.e. transphobic] ... But if we say they're being transphobic, it'll shut down the conversation." Much like Bonilla-Silva's observations, participants recognize an associated stigma with transphobia and distance themselves accordingly while maintaining their beliefs. If someone claims allyship while maintaining transphobic ideologies their allyship is suspect, but if Tildy called them out in the training they would be unable to be "cooled" (Goffman 1952). Managing the emotions of ally participants – as well as her own – reveals the emotional labor required to teach well-intentioned people (Hochschild 2003). Maintaining a space where participants "can make mistakes" necessitates that participants do not feel "judged" (and therefore feel guilty) for their opinions

that do not reflect their “true” feelings (see the section on passing allyship for further information).

During the training, Tildy cautions people against turning the scale into a “good/bad thing” and placing all the statements in that manner, but these attitudes were still present. For instance, Marsha (WSCW, admin) placed herself “definitely towards the good end. Um, but I definitely have work to do as well in being a *true* [ally].” Even when the goal of this activity is to decenter the role of intentions, the “good/bad” dynamic speaks an aspect of allyship where one is signaling that they are “good.” Marsha’s statement reveals that the dichotomy persists even with the scale: she is aware that she is not the perfect “*true*” ally, but she’s still on the “good end.”

To properly understand how participants defined allyship, I spend the rest of this section exploring to themes I found. Firstly, participants talked about allyship for groups in a group or topic specific manner. Being an ally on queer issues did not always entail being an ally for trans rights or racial justice – the implications of which I will discuss shortly. Secondly, participants had different reasons for claiming allyship, indicating a subtle construction of an ideal ally.

#### *An Ally for Trans People*

Many participants saw allyship as interchangeable between “different” groups – so long as one is being “supportive.” Participants are aware of the concept of intersectionality, but appear to differentiate between baseline groups and other groups based on their difference from the perceived norm of a white, straight, cis man (Ghaziani et al 2016; Crenshaw 1991). By grouping LGBTQIA+ issues into a list of topics like “issues of race” and “Latinx issues,” participant’s usage of intersectionality appears to construct an allyship towards a community (LGBTQIA+ people of color) that is distinct from their allyship of a general, white LGBTQIA+ population. For example, participants (such as Marsha and others) desire to learn more about the “trans-

transgender area” creates a narrative where one can be an ally for LGB people without being one for trans people.

The scale disembodies trans and queer people, objectifying us as de-raced, de-classed, and de-gendered group that are either deviant or in need of saving. Allyship seems to only partially directed to help trans people, since the handout reasons that “gender norms [have] a negative impact on all of us” it centers cis people’s benefit as well. The highest level of action on the scale is “talking to people about their problematic behavior...and working toward change.” The handout’s lack of specifics as to what this “change” looks like or the “people” one talks to exemplifies the vagueness of diversity (Embrick 2016).

Participant’s classification of transgender modality as mutually exclusive part of the LGBTQIA+ community implies the desexualizing of trans embodiment in addition to discursively constructing a uniformly white trans population (Spade 2015). Tildy’s depiction of the topics are critical of allies who have an overly narrow focus:

...every choice you make has the capacity to be [that of] an ally or not [an ally] – and we’re only talking about being an ally for the LGBT Community and, if we’re *really* going to get into that, you can’t be an ally for the LGBT community in totality, like all the time, if you're not also anti-racist or fighting structures of injustice in *many* forms. Because then you're only fighting for specific LGBT people ...

Being an ally for LGBT individuals necessitates an intersectional lens that helps everyone in the community by accounting for the different types of oppression encountered by people with intersecting identities. Allies who only make space for “white cis gay men” are superficial and reproducing systems of inequality within support networks (Crenshaw 1989; Collins & Bilge 2016). Based on these comments, allyship is a process in that it must be actively/properly managed for allies to be effective (Goffman 1959). Tildy rejects the ally who claims to support LGBT people but “is real weird about trans people” because they are rationalizing deviance from

allyship so long as they support “specific [homonormative and transnormative] LGBT people” (Johnson 2016; Spade 2015).

Participants did not always reflect Tildy’s ideas of intersectional allyship, some of whom claimed allyship of “other” groups like racial minorities, with the occasional mention of the intersecting intra-community issues faced by queer and trans people of color. By approaching LGBT allyship as something independent of anti-racist/white ally actions, some participants implicate the former as white normative and the latter with hetero/cis-centric. When I asked participants if/how the training discussed race, I would hear that it did not. Pushing further, participants shared their distinctions between different types of diversities. As Susanna put it:

I mean this was not the topic, right? The topic was not diversity and inclusivity period, right...? This was clearly about the diversity...of gender, gender identity, sexual expression. So, I thought it appropriate not to bring it in...if somebody had done that, that would be okay as well as long as it wouldn’t...as long we would come back, basically.

I will discuss the specificity of diversity in academia later when I talk about the context – but Susanna’s quote is a prime example of how diversity narratives can maintain a race neutral environment. The absence was largely unnoticed by people who “didn’t miss it,” like Amanda. Such statements frame LGBT groups as deracialized – and implicitly frame racial minorities as straight/cis (Crenshaw 1989; Collins & Bilge 2016).

In becoming an ally for a specific group, one is implicitly applying a normative narrative to that group. Nikki defines herself as an anti-racist and an ally for trans people, immigrants, and undocumented people.

I mean I try to be an ally for as many communities as I can. Obviously, there are like lots and there's only so much energy I can put into learning...I'm aware of different groups I might be missing from consideration like not-able-bodied, native groups, and stuff like that. So I'll actively try to learn things about these groups ... But I think my focus is more on race, immigrants, and the LGBTQ fields, I'd say.

Delineating between these three categories – even as she is aware of the missing pieces and attends activist events, something others did not – Nikki appears to utilize an additive variant of intersectionality where there exists a normative baseline for a group (Yuval-Davis 2005) that other identities add to. June was more concrete: “combine those with like being like a poor Black woman then the troubles just get extremely compounded right?” – a sentiment Wendy stated almost exactly. Phil affirmed this line of thought, stating that race “didn’t come up” even as it had a place – but that he hoped for an “Ally Training 201” to include LGBT racial issues. Framing racial issues as more advanced makes the 101 seem race neutral, but participant’s usage of intersectionality to refer to Blackness indicates an unspoken whiteness to that neutrality.

### *Claiming Allyship*

The term ally meant different things to participants. For some, allyship was being a “good” person who tries to improve themselves. Others were hesitant, concerned about the perceived ideal ally that they could not compare to – thereby downplaying their usage of the word.

Nine of the twelve participants stated that they were allies through direct or indirect statements. Of these nine, five (Nikki (WGCW, GS); Wendy (WSCW, admin); Phil (A-ASCM, HLA); Jerome; Fiona (ASCW, GS), like Tildy, viewed their allyship as a process of self-improvement. Phil said the training improved his ability to be an ally by teaching him about different concepts. Jerome sees his allyship as contingent upon this education get “better” at responding to concerns and increasing his knowledge base.

The other four implied their allyship as more definitive. Marsha (WSCW, admin), for example, stated that: “Yes, I do [consider myself an ally]. I would speak up; I would be a person that someone could turn to” and that she would “do the right thing” for whoever it was she was supporting. She stated that she was an ally:

Because if I do – come across anyone in my life who is transgender or queer or is anyway different from myself, I advocate for them, I try to understand where they're coming from, I want to be inclusive, um, you know, I don't discriminate. I just, I like to help people... it's important to be inclusive to everyone...no matter who they are.

By claiming her support despite other's differences (“no matter who they are”) and “for them,” Marsha is reifying her privileged position. The rhetorical style she uses is similar to June (WBGFW, GS), a gender fluid woman who “think[s] [allyship] means like being a voice when people who can't speak or would have to put themselves at more risk than me to speak up in a given situation um, for themselves or for what they identify as.” She contextualizes this statement as utilizing her privilege in the classroom, and that she is continuing to educate herself around different topics as well. Amanda (WSCW, HLA) also claims allyship and situates her university position as a vehicle for allyship – defining allyship as being “willing to speak up when you hear someone saying things that are hurtful and incorrect.”

June and Amanda's depictions of allyship differ significantly from Marsha's “I don't discriminate,” which seems to be positioning herself as “good” (Bonilla-Silva 2006; DiAngelo 2018). Perhaps the biggest difference is that Marsha's closing words “no matter who they are” positions her support as *in spite of* people's differences, which is reminiscent of Dan's claim that he “supports everyone.” Marsha's confidence indicates an active performance defined by a distinct lack of specifics – thereby making the support seem hollow and self-serving (Bonilla-Silva 2006; Goffman 1986). How participants conceptualize difference – if the group one supports is discursively being othered by claiming allyship (and signaling a dominant, normative identity) – appears to be an important varying trait of the cis ally.

Susanna was the only participant who claimed allyship before the training and shifted away after. Her rationale for being an “ally in training” is reminiscent of Tildy's hesitation calling people allies:

I'm, perhaps, a little unclear about what it [means] to be an ally. Is there a base, and a gold level, and is the gold level the ally? I don't know...I think it may be presumptuous for me to say that I am an ally, because I don't know how I would react in any given situation. I would certainly strive [to be] one?

Allyship is something she strives for, but she differentiates between a "base" level ally and that of a "gold" level. The differentiation leads her to conceptualize allyship as seemingly "unattainable" but still worth working towards.

CJ seemed to have a different reason for marking herself as an ally in training. Whereas Susanna sees a gradient of allyship and cannot place herself, CJ sees the "in training" modifier as self-imposed limitation on the scope of her allyship. Noting that there is an internal diversity to any community and there were queer activists who saw marriage equality as heteronormative, CJ believes it would be "disingenuous" claim to fully support the claims of any community. For example, there were some topics that limited the scope of her allyship:

um, it's interesting with trans woman. One of the arguments about trans ...[is] the degree to which, because of biological factors of strength, muscle mass... which trans woman can bring biologically male physical traits ... It is interesting to think about. What does parity and equality mean there? But, I'm not saying that equality in those areas is bad, but there are questions that we need to ask and work out. Whether it's an older generation like me that's more wed to those ideas, and newer generations won't care as much... I don't know, its new territory and a lot to think about.

CJ appears to be framing her opinions as Bonilla-Silva's abstract liberalism, drawing on notions of equality based on the perceived advantages trans woman like myself receive from "biologically male traits" to question what "equality mean[s] there." Trans women in sports is a lengthy topic that I will leave to other scholars (Serano 2016; Davis 2017; Fausto-Sterling 2012), but rationalizing about the scope of equality contextualizes her reluctance to claim the term ally.

Participants had different reasons for claiming allyship – and their reasons were oftentimes dependent on the group they were being an ally for. Though many participants hinted at an ideal type of allyship, such analysis would require additional data. When applying the label

ally to themselves, participants had varied motivations and anxieties about how others would perceive them. Some associated the term with not discriminating, while others were cautious about others perceiving them as more knowledgeable or supportive than they were. In the next section, I explore how my reflexive positionality informed how participants reacted – and what this says about the concept of allyship.

### Passing Allyship: Positionality & Participant Emotions

During my interviews, I often experienced what Tey Meadow (2018) described as participants and researchers “studying each other”. As a white queer trans woman who has medically transitioned and supportive parents, participants were interested in hearing my own thoughts on allyship – which I avoided to prevent compromising the data. I found myself managing my identity throughout the interviews in ways I did not anticipate, but I was not the only one managing how my presentation. I could infer that some respondents could be wary of me as a trans woman and as a researcher deeming them transphobic - put on guard by my appearance, or other characteristics (Fetner & Heath 2018). Since I did not actively go stealth, I cannot methodically determine how participants saw me (Stein 2001).

Positivist notions of replicability and objectivity are impossible here as my presence as a white trans woman can potentially put respondents on edge – but only if they clock me as trans (Burawoy 2009; Smith 2005). As I discussed in the methodology, this dynamic makes my white trans woman positionality dependent on how they read me. I did not notice myself acting differently so that participants would perceive me as straight and/or cis – but there were moments where participants clocked me as trans even when they recognized my womanhood (Davis 2015). Regardless, researchers have a level of power regardless of gender modality – adding another lens to the dynamic. In this section, I explore the nuances of passing/clocking as a white trans woman researcher and how it could have led to respondents’ desire for me to view

them positively (Bernstein & Taylor 2019). Therefore, spend the latter half of this section exploring how participant's reactions to me (regardless of my perceived gender modality) could have shaped the interview process and the greater implications for how allies manage emotions.

### *Passing and Clocked*

As I prepared for the interviews, I realized that part of my positionality was dependent on how the participants were perceiving me. With the rainbow flag on my door, my mannerisms/embodiment, and the IRB-approved consent form, I was confident that most participants recognized me as a queer white woman researcher. I reviewed discourses around passing in the literature review, but few scholarly sources explore being “clocked” as a trans researcher. For the purposes of the Masters, I use the word clocked to refer to participants recognition of me as trans (shuster 2017; Serano 2018). Since the colloquialism has its origins in the trans community, the definition used here should is not the definitive definition.

When I began my study, I attempted to navigate the dilemma above by asking how participants perceived me. At the end of two interviews following the first training, the topic of recognizing people's gender modality came up with two white woman participants, Meg and CJ. Meg read me as a cis woman/female – which I did not confirm or deny. CJ saw me as a “manly female who might be a man – so a trans woman.” She requested reassurance that she did not offend me, confessing that she only shared this because I asked. CJ tried to explain herself:

... what I know is, I know none of that. And. I. read. The length of your hair... your facial features as symbolizing something. But why did I do that? So that I actually do not your gender identity...your gender expression, although for me...it reads as female. I do not, certainly, know ...your chromosomes or ...primary and secondary sex characteristics

Like other trans sociologists who talk to cis people (Hughes 2018), I had to consider what participants thought about my gender identity and work to make sure I could still collect my data without getting upset. I realized that this question was shaping how I perceived CJ, so I removed

the question to avoid participants explicitly clocking me. This boundary helped me interview participants comfortably – but it is still difficult to recount this interaction dispassionately.

Sara Crawley makes the argument that “gender identity is always dependent on how others allow us to see ourselves” – but this is complicated by the need for a consistently defined researcher positionality (Davis 2015; Crawley 2008: 377). Since asking directly was not ideal, I had no way of methodically determining if they clocked<sup>4</sup> me as trans when they recognized me as a woman. The term passing has a loaded history for trans people (Serano 2018, 2017; Connell 2009, 2012; Schilt 2010), but in this research I did not attempt to go stealth (Connell 2012) and instead appeared to “pass” as a white trans woman (Stone 2014). My embodiment complicated the norms around stealth/passing/clocked – but my experiences are not a stand-in for all trans people/researchers since my white transgender modality – along with my position as a researcher - granted me an unspoken legitimacy (Snorton 2017). I chose to not actively come out as trans or cis, thereby letting participants make their own opinions on my gender modality.

Nevertheless, my embodiment does not enable me to go stealth. One participant, a white, straight, cis man named Dan, called me to set up an interview. Surprised at my voice, he mentioned he was calling because of “that man I emailed.” I politely and awkwardly corrected him that while that was me, I was not a man. Dan also thought that the interview would get him out of the training. I felt uncomfortable throughout the interview, but I strove to not let that influence the data (Blee 1991). To continue the interview, I had to manage my emotions and give him the benefit of the doubt or risk jeopardizing the rapport (Hochschild 2003).

Other participants could infer my transgender modality while recognizing my womanhood. I did not come out to Amanda as trans, relaying only that my parents also had to

---

<sup>4</sup> A term utilized by the trans community to describe the act of being recognized as trans (Serano 2018).

learn how to become more supportive when I came out. From my statement she inferred my gender expression, asking “When you started expressing *your* gender identity to *your* parents...” after which I moved back to the topic. Similarly, interpreting Wendy’s comments is contingent upon if she knows I am trans:

I’ve expressed I want to learn more, I want to be better, if I say or do anything problematic I want to confront that so I hope I’ve presented myself in a way where I – and I don’t know if you can do that...or if you have to be impartial ... but if I said something wrong or problematic call me out. Not that you need permission to do that...

I could interpret this quote as a participant seeking validation from the researcher – but it could also be a white cis woman asking a white trans woman to correct her. My in-the-moment perceptions are necessary for analyzing the data – because the dilemma posed above has different implications depending on how they read me. Clear distinctions between insider/outsider are impossible in this dynamic, since the amount of common ground between the participants and myself is dependent on how they perceive me (Naples 1996).

I am not just the researcher studying the interviewee – I am also a queer white trans woman helping them to understand these concepts for themselves (Stein 2001). I did not feel unsafe around most of the participants (Dan asked me to meet him at his van, which I declined), but I still had to manage my own emotions (Blee 2002). I strove to not be “offended,” and still held the participants as people who have recognized knowledge gaps and are trying to better themselves. Ultimately, these were similar conversations to the ones I had shortly after coming out – but now it was my job to document and contextualize these interactions. As I show in the next section, participant perceptions of me shaped how they responded to my questions and the types of emotions they elicited. In the next section, I explore not only how participants used emotion in their statements but also how I managed my own emotional response.

### *“Cooling” the Ally*

During the interviews, I found that participants had emotional reactions to some of my questions and what I thought about them. The participants did not want me to perceive them as ignorant, bigoted, or non-inclusive. Some of my questions caught respondents off-guard and elicit an emotional response. By talking to participants about trans topics as a researcher, I helped them process unfamiliar information – inadvertently providing a benefit that could influence their thinking (hooks 1994). Some participants recanted their statements and acted as if I “caught” them – implying that the conversation was a game they could win or lose. Others were anxious, feeling the need to explain/rationalize their actions. Interviewees had to “cool” down before the interview could proceed, but they had different methods of doing so (Goffman 1952). My role varied depending on their emotional reaction, requiring me to manage not just my emotions but the participants’ as well (Hochschild 2003). For these participants, having their emotions managed seemed to be part of their allyship – an affirmation that they are acting “right.” In this section, I unpack what the notion of “rightness” meant and how allies managed their anxiety.

### *“You’re Right”*

In the post-training interview, Meg had difficulty responding to some of the questions: “part of it is that I know I learned it! Like a quiz I didn’t study for ...I swear I’m not a close-minded person.” She articulated a dilemma I faced with my respondents: since they were unfamiliar with the information I was asking about, they felt put on the spot. I had to reassure participants otherwise – eventually incorporating reassurances into my orientating paragraph that this “was not a quiz” and that I was not looking to “judge” them. Regardless of their perceptions of me, I am asking them to share their thoughts on unfamiliar concepts and participants were

concerned with giving the “wrong” responses. In this section, I describe how participants grappled with feeling “wrong” and their emotional management of the process.

When participants were talking about information they were uncertain about, they tended to proceed with caution. During her first interview, CJ told a story of when she was in a room filled with “biological” men:

So now when I say biologically [pause] it would be better to say [pause] {questioning tone: chromosomally} [sic] male to distinguish between [pause] and someone who identifies as male and someone who may have been born with the chromosomes that sexually puts one in the category of male but whose gender expressions could be anywhere on this broad and roomy spectrum of possibility.

This quotation reflects an incoherence of someone who feels uncomfortable talking about a topic (Bonilla-Silva 2006). She reiterated that “I also happen to know these particular biological men gender identify [sic] as men.” CJ was making what Julia Serano (2016) calls the cis assumption by presuming that the men in the room were also cis as an unspoken fact (Smith 1987, 2005).

Attempting to examine her taken-for-granted assumptions, I asked CJ how she knew their chromosomes. The question made her somewhat defensive, and instead of shifting responsibility (Taylor & Bernstein 2019) changed it to a matter of right/wrong:

[claps hands together] well, that’s *a really great question* and I don’t know and I have made assumptions... they’re culturally renditioned and presumptuous. I would say each of the individuals I know fairly well... You’re right. I have no clue other than what I think I know to be quote unquote “evidence” that I have obviously quickly read and assembled...

Just by asking the question, CJ felt judged. It is not only that I was “right,” CJ implied that she was wrong and distanced herself from the “presumptuous” statement she just made. In doing so, she contextualized her response as coming from “... the eras that I came up [there was] the presumption that ‘one just knows’ [another person’s gender/sex],” thereby cooling the perceived judgment by clarifying expectations. I will discuss her thoughts on the training in the next section, as her reactions shifted from an admittance of fault to denial.

I had similar interactions with other participants, but they seemed to be more eager to correct themselves. Susanna observed that someone in her class was probably trans because she did not “look like a typical woman.”

Well it could be totally assumption... it was somewhat a deviation from gender norms. Deeper voice, greater height, deeper proportions, um but. I think, perhaps I'm wrong on this. It would have been a, it would have been, you'd, I don't think it'd be your typical woman. [D: What is a typical woman?] S: Well, I mean. *You got me there*. No, it's the it's the, perhaps I was totally wrong and perhaps I made this up...I just don't know, and it's okay not to know.

Much like CJ, Susanna felt caught by my question and retreated – but she did not double-down on assumptions post training. Susanna clocked the woman in the class as CJ did with me, and my question caused Susanna to feel guilt. I tried to reiterate that I was not evaluating her on being right or wrong to try and maintain rapport (Goffman 1952). After the training Susanna asked me how to be a better ally, that she was “happy to be involved in anything [I] think would be appropriate for [her] to be a part of.” This question puts me in a bind, as she is asking my thoughts as a queer trans woman *and* as a researcher. I declined to give an answer, aware that personal development is an important part of allyship and anything I did say would be a prescriptive task to be an ally.

Amanda is an older straight white cis woman with a gay son who she supports. During the interview she appeared to use the term cis synonymously with the phrase “fully female,” prompting me to ask what she meant by the phrase. She hesitated at first, eventually saying, “... When I say someone who [is] fully female, they were born as a female with female biological equipment and are heterosexual.” Amanda appeared to categorically exclude trans woman and non-straight cis woman from “full” womanhood. If I moved on from this definition and continued the interview, I risked missing the how she applies this definition. Therefore, I felt the need to ask her if a trans woman could fall under this category:

Would a trans woman be able...you know this is the tricky part of it too because my definition is obviously wrong. I would [D: It's not wrong, I'm just trying to -] no no no. I would *hope* that a trans female felt *just* as female as what I just said...But when I say cisgender, I think of that person who was born female, identifies as female, and is going to be having a sexual relations with a heterosexual male. But that doesn't mean that someone who is a {quieter tone} transgender female is not fully female, because I believe that they are – they just weren't born with the physical part of the female body. Now this is where we get in trouble with the terminology, because I need to know how to talk about this without offending people. Because if I said that to someone who was transgender, I would expect them to be offended... You're just asking the questions and you can see it upset me [D: I'm sorry] no no no it's not you! You don't apologize! I'm upset with myself for not being clear and for saying something that, when you asked the question, made me realize how wrong it was.

Amanda shows guilt while processing the question,<sup>5</sup> attributing the exchange to difficulty with terminology. Given that she described a trans student who requested help as not having a “heterosexual profile” (“somebody who does um um does their given name does not match the way they present themselves...”) and voiced confusion about the terminology, Amanda's allyship is a something she is working to improve. But this did not stop Amanda from ensuring that the student had access to the right bathrooms.

Amanda's reaction was markedly different from that of Susanna and CJ. Instead of centering my “right”-ness, Amanda centered her wrongness and got upset. I tried to have her understand that I was not examining right/wrong answers – but this only encouraged a more resolute stance. By asking if trans woman could fall under her definition of “fully female,” I “made me realize how wrong it [her response] was” and got upset. Amanda rejected my attempts to cool her, as she did not accept the premise of there being no wrong answers. For the interview to continue, I had to help Amanda process the guilt she felt in a non-judgmental way. Since I am (and was clocked as) a trans woman, the burden of maintaining the rapport was mine – I could

---

<sup>5</sup> Admittedly, I could have phrased the question better. The question was not listed in the interview schedule since it came up in conversation and therefore is part of the interviewer-interviewee emotional management dynamic.

not react negatively to her statement (Hochschild 2003). When participants see themselves as wrong (implicitly or explicitly), sometimes dwell on the topic and seek forgiveness. But it is notable that Amanda is describing her guilt around her “wrong” statement is primarily around the fear that she could say something in the presence of a trans person that offends them. This interaction and associated guilt corroborate Picca & Feagin’s (2007) discussion of a backstage learning space (without trans people) and the frontstage as a space of inter-group interactions.

Extrapolating from these participants’ labeling me as “right” and/or themselves as “wrong,” it appears that being an ally has increased stakes when interacting with a member of the group they support. In the next section, I discuss how participants managed emotions or anxieties within the allyship process.

### *The Anxious Ally*

As participants drew on emotions to navigate their perceived wrongness, most accepted the premise that Tildy knew what she talked about and positioned themselves as needing to improve. CJ’s reactions proved to be a negative case, framing Tildy as wrong and doing the attendees a disservice in how she was presenting the material. CJ’s identity as a white woman contextualizes her frustration within discourses of white woman’s emotions to self-rationalization (Jones & Calafell 2012).

When talking about things she disliked about the training, CJ was quick to critique the way Tildy discussed chromosomes. Tildy discussed how most people don’t know their chromosomes, or as CJ phrased it “[airy, mocking voice] well who knows! What my chromosomes might be!” She noted that while she was not a scientist:

chromosomal expression, its, guessing can be fairly accurate based on primary and secondary sex characteristics. Are there variances? Absolutely. So again, I’m not trying to rule out the notion of variance but I thought the notion of – uncertainty, was exaggerated for a category that was more about science.

CJ recalls the interaction of assuming the chromosomes of the men in her meeting, saying that while it might have been unfair, it was not inherently wrong. In the training, Tildy states that since she did not have her chromosomes tested that she does not know them, but I do not remember her saying “no real tight correlation.” CJ is utilizing the notion of science to bolster her own understandings despite the training material – based around the perceived objectivity of “scientific fact” (Fausto-Sterling 2012).

In learning new information and potentially finding herself as “wrong,” CJ reacted differently than other participants to clarify how *she* is the one who is right:

Now, am I saying that someone who identifies as female is incorrect if they do not have what I just described as female? No, that’s what we’re discovering that that would bring me back to kind of gender expression, identity. But, I don’t -some there are facts scientifically that I don’t think we can just – I don’t think it does anyone any favor – uh I don’t think it does the movement – or to me I think it makes it less credible to try to minimize that some things can be known scientifically.

CJ understands that saying that a trans woman/man is biologically male/female would be rude since “we” are just discovering that trans people’s identities are valid. While she recognizes the legitimacy of people’s gender identity, she is retaining a biological valuation of cis people’s gender modality as more authentic. Her closing statement that the “movement[‘s]” minimizing of scientific “facts” hurts overall credibility is telling – and makes her the closest example of white fragility around these topics (DiAngelo 2018). Whiteness and cisgender modality are connected – as a history of racialized and gendered science implicates CJ’s adherence to biological “facts” in whiteness (Snorton 2017).

Guilt is certainly an aspect of DiAngelo’s white fragility, but I found that (perhaps due to the seemingly de-racialized discourse around the topic), the participants who exhibited guilt acted differently than CJ. When I observed them (and/or heard about them) cooling off, they did not dwell on it too long and did not absolve themselves of blame. Meg (WSCW, admin) was

prone to apologize for her statements. After she attended the training, Meg texted an apology to two of her friends for any wrongs she committed against them:

[I] was like ‘I’m sorry if I offended you I really didn’t mean too!!’ And so, so we kinda reopened that conversation and it was nice to reopen that conversation. And I think... she said ‘everyone’s a work in progress, it’s not a big deal. Its its fine we’ll figure it out!’ And my other friend doesn’t um, doesn’t like different pronouns so she was like ‘buh, fine. I wasn’t offended.’

The apology appeared to confuse one friend and led the other to validate Meg’s intentions.

Jerome (BSCM, student housing) accidentally misgendered his friend at a workplace gathering.

After apologizing a few times, Jerome still felt guilty and apologized again the following day and the friend said it was okay. Such guilt can portray the privileged as a victim – thereby pressuring others to absolve them of blame (DiAngelo 2018; Bonilla-Silva 2006; Jones & Calafell 2012).

Nevertheless, Jerome’s guilt seems to center his friend’s well-being more than Meg’s

“reopen[ing]” of old issues. Meg’s response evokes a desire to atone for one’s mistake via the

approval of one minority person. CJ’s fragility seems more geared to frustration, whereas Meg’s

guilt led her to conclude her interview by asking for me not to “hate [her].” Meg and CJ’s

emotions seemed to center themselves as well-intentioned white cis woman more than Jerome’s

multiple apologies – even though he continued to feel guilt. However, CJ and Jerome’s apologies

occurred around the workplace, whereas Meg’s friends were located outside academia. Each of

theses contexts has unique norms associated with them that I will unpack in the next section.

As a trans woman, I am accustomed to loaded conversations where social norms

encourage me to not ask follow up questions to people’s usage of “typical” womanhood. I know

what they mean, and it is not intentioned to disrespect me. But, as a sociologist, I am vigilant of

the everyday – marking the hidden universality behind their statements of “you know” (Smith

2005; Stein 2001). This section examined how participants perceptions of my identity influenced

their answers and how they reacted to the questions. The emotional process of allyship was more salient when talking about *why* participants were or were not allies in specific spaces. In the interview, my job required me to not react to offensive statements, but context and power inform the impetus for participants' allyship too (Hochschild 2003). In my personal life, I can react differently than I do in the interview – and as I discuss in the next section, the participants encounter a similar divide.

### Professional or Personal: Contextual Allyship

Allyship not only has different manifestations in the workplace versus at home – both are further complicated based on the surroundings and context in which allyship would take place. In this section, I examine the different contexts in which allyship takes place and how training participants rationalize the discrepancies. It would be easy to see the workplace as the front stage and family as backstage – as there is evidence for both of those labels – but specific sub-spaces within each eschew a clear-cut classification (Picca & Feagin 2007). Within academic spaces, many participants felt encouraged to align with diversity narratives of the University, though some feared pushback from colleagues or students and were hyperaware of their position. At home, the discouragement came more from unreceptive parties that were not worth correcting, but the internal motivation for allyship (though similar in many respects), operated differently than it did in academia where they interacted with more of the affected parties. Anxiety on the perception of one's allyship was present in different ways: it was important to signal allyship at school, but at home many reported a shared understanding.

### *Allyship in the Workplace*

In the workplace, different pressures push the participants towards and against allyship. This section explores the motivations for allyship, discouragement, and emotional management in their professional lives. The Ally Training itself is a part of participant's employment, and

therefore part of the overall diversity discourses (Collins & Bilge 2016; DiAngelo 2018).

Colleagues, job security, and student feelings all shape an ally's efforts in positive and negative ways.

The university environment can encourage people to become allies – though some felt constrained by how they appeared to students and colleagues. Three graduate students (June, Nikki, Fiona) incorporated allyship into their curriculum by citing scholars who are not in the traditional canon. In doing so, teachers like Nikki risk her students stigmatizing her as “one of those” instructors (Goffman 1986). Tildy experienced this pushback in the undergraduate class:

... ‘um, no. you're telling us lies? Biological sex is like a final medical piece of information... And how dare you tell me otherwise...why would the sociology department not be teaching that?’ I was like ‘I don't know maybe [they] need to update their content.’ And they were like ‘maybe it's cause you're lying!!’ And I was like ‘sure, one of those...why are you comparing me to one department...’

The quote frames Tildy's classroom as falling neither back nor front stage, creating an institutional contradiction where she must teach students without upsetting them (Creed et al 2010). However, there are significant benefits to students seeing one as an ally: Fiona took pride in queer students approaching her after class, attending the training to help these populations. She even added the training to her CV. It is possible that the risk varies based on the power dynamics at play – Tildy did not seem overly concerned about student evaluations but Nikki (who works in a public school) could be subject to the students' parents (Lewis-McCoy 2014).

People in administrative positions felt comfortable advocating around LGBTQ issues. For people like Jerome, this meant being a person their non-binary coworker can lean on for support as “colleagues across campus that told them to their face ‘I don't respect your pronouns.’” These interactions upset him, but it has yet to happen in front of him – potentially due to a reluctance to cause problems frontstage (Eliasoph 1999). Marsha found herself in a

similar position with a coworker who accidentally misgendered a student – prompting Marsha to correct her. After the training, Wendy implemented the training material into forms to make them more inclusive – but her coworkers’ receptiveness in a non-public space complicates a front/back stage binary (Picca & Feagin 2007).

One could see the private conversation Marsha had as backstage, but the well-intentioned diversity narrative allowed her co-worker a path to change. Meg had a much different front stage workplace, indicated by her hesitation on pronouns:

And I think that is my own frankly insecurity of like ‘okay, I work with a lot of officials and I don’t want to be judged by them for them not to work with me’ so I think that’s in the back of my mind. [What do you think they would think?] that you’re liberal puke why would you want to talk about this oh god I can’t work with one of them...

Meg’s account differs significantly from that of Wendy, but appears to have some level of similarity to that of Jerome. Meg is cautious of coworkers thinking of her as “one of those” like Nikki’s students, but her anxiety is pre-emptive because the supervisor/person with power is much different than from a student. Meg appears to have some degree of guilt about not listing her pronouns and sees a stigma associated with being an ally that positions her sympathetically. Meg’s comment seems like her anxiety is backstage, but the public nature of email signatures indicates otherwise. The benefits of listing pronouns are different than Nikki’s shaping of the curriculum, which indicates a cost/benefit analysis for allyship (Goffman 1959).

Fiona was the only participant who talked about working outside the university. In her hospital life, she takes a different approach to these allyship. Because of a top-down institutional structure and her at-will employment, Fiona finds that these spaces are less conducive to allyship. Outside of academic contexts, allyship is less welcome:

for me to ask [pronouns]...some people actually take it as an offense. [laughs] Some of the older people are not used to receiving that question...they’ll think I don’t recognize them as say a woman or a man... the way that we teach it in academic settings is even

just to ask for personal pronouns: ‘who are you tell me about that.’ And in more conservative settings they have probably had more narrow training, they’re going to blame the employee ...

Fiona notes that University spaces operate in a bubble that does not reflect the seemingly more conservative world where people are less knowledgeable – and therefore less supportive. The interaction reveals differences in the professional front stages of the hospital and the university, where the latter of which allows for increased public visibility of allyship (Eliasoph 1999). In the University, participant’s failure to be knowledgeable could invite correction from students – thereby triggering fragility, guilt, and/or shame (DiAngelo 2018; Goffman 1952, 1986). In the hospital the risks of allyship outweigh the emotional labor of maintaining the status quo.

In talking about the front/back stage context of the University, it is important to recognize that - as Susanna put it – participants mostly viewed the training as teaching them about “diversities of gender” that do not explicitly include race (Embrick 2016; Crenshaw 1989). In the previous section, I discussed how she was upset on how people interpreted her lack of actions in the front stage – but she described other interactions about “race” as well. She would compartmentalize between different diversities and view one’s antagonism in that frame. During a business dinner, the hosted guest had a glass of wine and “turned out to be racist:”

... ‘yes, we all have these students that are just here on affirmative action and they don’t really deserve to be in this institution,’ ... I couldn’t get beyond ‘well that is a pretty strong remark,’ and then I had to get up and go to the restroom... but no one said anything. ... it was a diverse group, just a diversity that was a mentioned by the speaker was not a diversity that was represented at the table. And, which makes me think that, in a different context he could have said something about any of us in whatever he would pick. And perhaps again people would not say anything... I think people were trying to be...good hosts ... How strong can I react... but I was also there as an official person...

Calling out the racist guest would not be “good” because her official position means any action in this backstage would have consequences elsewhere (Eliasoph 1999; Picca & Feagin 2007).

Therefore, she excused herself from the room to maintain a professional environment and to

distance herself from this action (Hochschild 2003). It is possible that this frontstage interaction was a backstage for the guest – but it is noteworthy that Susanna had to leave to properly manage her professional identity (Goffman 1959, 1986). I discussed the topic of multiple diversities earlier in the paper, but it takes on a new life in academia.

### *Institutional Narratives of Diversity and Inclusivity*

Participants discussed LGBT topics as merely one of the many diversities present at State University – something that can be discursively isolated from “other” diversities. The University’s distinctions between group centers fed the notion of multiple diversities. In this section, I discuss how participants saw the Ally Training and themselves within the diversity narratives of State University.

“Like allyship, people have very different concepts of what diversity is.” Tildy’s assessment of participants was accurate, but participants workplace positions appeared to inform their definitions of diversity. Amanda states this when she voices concern for “particular populations that we know are at risk that we need to be more supportive of.” Diversity is more than “gender or race” to people like Marsha – she is “inclusive” to “diversity of thought” as well. However, the term “diverse” in practice translates into non-white:

Do I think that I am what would be considered a diverse individual? Or underrepresented in any way? Not really, I think, as a white female – do I think I could have some complaints about the gender pay gap? That’s about it, but that’s kind of small and insignificant compared to what a lot of other people deal with.

Marsha uses broad terms to describe diversity, but excludes herself from the category.

Ultimately, she defines diversity as an implicit deficit that implies whiteness, straightness, and cisgender modality as a privileged default.

Phil, a high-level administrator, differentiates between diversity and inclusivity. Diversity creates “an environment that is reflective and has different backgrounds, perspectives,

experiences.” Participants saw inclusivity as an expansion upon diversity, where people feel welcome and valued in the space; but both terms are intentionally vague (Embrick 2016).

Diversity can exist without inclusion, but then it invites the accusation of being a superficial “passive” ally with no follow up (Grzanka & Blazer 2015). Tildy argues that systems “cannot be inclusive or not inclusive” because systems cannot “*be*” one specific thing:

Each individual person on the campus is actively making choices to be harmful or inclusive every single moment or every single day and the dynamics who you run into or interact with are going to change...but that doesn't make the school any more inclusive or less inclusive because the school itself cannot be... we as a society believe that systems can be certain things, companies can care for us...and they don't.

People will have different encounters with the University's institutions depending on their identity – and can create conflicts depending on institutional contradictions (Creed et al 2010).

Universities, like other structures, benefit from the perception that they “can care for us” motivating them to claim diversity, objectifying itself to make itself palatable to white parents aiming to broaden their children's horizons – thereby contextualizing Tildy's critique (Posey-Maddox 2014). Participants and Tildy saw the mandatory trainings as prioritizing university image over substantive benefits (Puar 2017). They did not *see* the attendees of the mandatory trainings as allies just by attending the training – and Ally Training participants saw these trainings as feeding into a superficial allyship narrative where one can *be* inclusive.

University employee's “*try* to be more inclusive” compared to other places – according to Fiona – but the effectiveness can vary. Nikki recalls a time where student housing, which “claim themselves to be [an] inclusive institute” turned “non-gendered [single stall] bathrooms” into gendered bathrooms. The department altered the bathrooms because a new director came in and thought she would not “mind as much.” After some time, Nikki got the bathrooms changed back to gender neutral – but criticized student housing because they continued to say they were

inclusive. Even as the University offices claimed inclusivity for the front stage – that did not always shape their actions.

As I discussed in the section on how to be an ally, participants' notion of group specific allyship presupposes distinctions between groups such as Black people (under the umbrella of race), women's issues, and LGBT people (Crenshaw 1989). Marsha (a white cis woman) abstained from considering herself as diverse because of her whiteness and Fiona resented the university tokenizing her as diverse. Inclusivity, however, appears to have different connotations. Marsha feels like she is "an inclusive person, I'm supportive of everyone..." Being an inclusive ally is contingent on Marsha's ability to "do the right things, say the right things, confront others if they're not being inclusive." Other scholars have discussed the right/wrong aspect of allyship (Bonilla-Silva 2006), but Marsha's notion of inclusivity as "right" is complicated by her observation that people who list their pronouns in emails are doing so "to be more inclusive."

#### *Workplace Motivation and Anxieties*

Participants felt encouraged to be allies at the University to some degree. The atmosphere was conducive to trying to support students, and they were pleased that the LGBT Center ran a training. Participants wanted to make sure students were comfortable in their presence, with some attending the training to ensure that they don't "mess up" and offend students.

Failing to be an ally and support students would mean that Fiona was "not doing [her] job right." She is afraid of doing something "wrong," and when I asked what she was afraid of, I received an emotionally laden response:

if people feel like you're supposed be the teacher and you're supposed to I don't know make it a comfortable place for students [sniff] that maybe I'm not doing my job right. ...I think there's a lot of say students who [are] the first ones going to college and you just hope [sniffs, more tears] you don't say or do something that makes them ... [feel] that they shouldn't be in college. And so, I try to be more conscious of that and that I'm a better instructor because .... there's a lot of people[who] just teach from a book ...

Even though she has not “had um any complaints from students,” she still strives to *not* be one of the instructors who teach from a book dispassionately. The emotional impact of allyship seems larger in the workplace than in other aspects of Fiona’s life, partially because it’s the space where she feels like she can most effectively be an ally. But there is the added factor that Fiona does not interact with trans people – or queer people in general – in her personal life.

When participants’ main interaction with queer/trans individuals is through work, they are hypervigilant of the power dynamic and the potential of “screw[ing] up.” Wendy initially described this as her biggest fear when working with a someone “that was {pause} transgender” before distancing herself from the word fear:

... I have nothing to be afraid of, I am not the person who is unsafe when someone comes out as transgender to me ...I don’t even want to use that word that’s the wrong word. I’m afraid that I’m going to [quick sigh] do something wrong and even, you know... if you slip up when you ...use the wrong pronouns just correct yourself and move on. They’re not going to come after you [we laugh] that’s not how it works, it you know... because I have this like, sometimes (less so now, because I’m getting there) you know previously like {simulating yelling} ‘OH MY GOD I’M GOING TO SAY THE WRONG PRONOUNS!!’ like, check yourself and just stop.

CJ also commented that she strives to “check [herself] before [she] wrecks” herself, and cites that as one of the reasons she attended the training. Wendy attributes her anxiety to grappling with her privileged identity in a new way – while distancing herself from the narrative where “... You can’t make a joke anymore because of people get so sensitive.” Wendy notes that she is not a victim in this scenario, but based on the quote above it still seems to be a sensitive topic. Even though she knows that she should not feel “unsafe,” Wendy’s need to “check” herself requires a cooling off to avoid escalating the situation.

Allyship has professional advantages in academia. Fiona listed her attendance of the Ally Training in her CV, and CJ attended the training to feel more prepared for a class she taught. For

some straight cis people, like CJ, they perceived a risk to being an ally in professional queer spaces:

Because there wasn't an opportunity in the beginning to say 'oh, are you here as an ally' or kind of identify what brought us there I was – I found myself self-conscious and worried that I want them to *know* I was an ally and that I wasn't, I didn't care if they thought I was an LGBTQ+ member but I didn't want to have anyone think I was crashing or not being forthright...[incomprehensible] I was like 'wow I want to let them know I'm an ally so they have - they know me'...I have no clue, how they were perceiving me and I guess I {large pause} ...-like I don't want to like [voice drops] 'oh she's eavesdropping or she's' {pause} you know...

In this professional space, “ally” became a euphemism for straight and cis, which seemed to fluster CJ who was concerned “they” might think “she’s {pause} you know.” She states that she does not care if they thought she was part of the LGBTQ+ community, but her tone implied that she feared giving the wrong signal and they would not “know her” (Goffman 1959). Whether this is due to fear of being disingenuous or gay by association (Pascoe 2007; Denissen & Saguy 2014), being an ally would grant her access to the queer space that a straight/cis person would be an intruder (Goffman 1959). In the space, which invited self-described allies like CJ, “ally” is a symbol of being outside: straight and cis (Goffman 1959, 1986).

Conversely, the two participants who identified as part of the LGBTQ community (Nikki and June) utilized “ally” to signal their position as a straight/cis person who supports the LGBTQ community. Nikki, who keeps an ally training on her laptop, was asked if she was gay because of the sticker: “... I had the SU ally sticker so I was like ‘oh I'm an ally!’... cause I guess it could address either in the sense of like ‘ahh I'm an ally’ I don't have to be gay but you can be.” Nikki and June both closeted in the workplace and claim to pass as straight – complicating the normative outsider of allyship (Creed & Scully 2000). The stigma of being openly queer/trans in the workplace is larger than the negative connotation of being a straight/cis ally – indicating that both participants know of the increased social capital of the detached ally (Goffman 1986).

Examining workplace allyship in isolation from their personal lives misses the greater context which participants operate in. Distinctions between these two contexts –participant’s personal and professional lives – has larger implications for their allyship.

### *Negotiating Familial Allyship*

In their personal lives, some participants felt pressured to avoid ally-related conversations. When a family member is more conservative, traditional, or set-in-their-ways, participants feel that their efforts will be in vain. Nevertheless, participants appeared to be more willing to view family members as flawed, possibly because they were unable/unwilling to cut them off or because they do not need to signal allyship as they would in their workplace (Goffman 1959). Perhaps the biggest difference in workplace-family allyship varies based on one’s power. Amanda and Phil had the ability to “control” how the space is approaching different topics and therefore had the means to reap the results of their emotional labor.

Negotiating the different contexts for allyship can take an emotional toll on participants. Some persisted despite barriers, but even they acknowledged they needed to choose their battles to not alienate the family. Others accepted that their families were bigoted while continuing to care, and a few feared their families would cut them off for their allyship. To keep the focus on the emotional management in familial spaces, I excluded accepting families.

### *Cooling the Family: “It’s tough for [them] sometimes”*

Just as participants had to be cooled down when they say the “wrong” thing, they rationalize their family’s statements to avoid seeing them as bigoted. When participants saw their family’s knowledge as lacking, but their intent as positive – they are explaining how their family member’s statement does not truly reflect them (Goffman 1952). They are not justifying the bigoted statement, instead participants are rationalizing an irregular deviation from “goodness.”

Like group-specific allyship, someone can have “difficulties” in some topics and be irredeemable in others.

Participants who utilize this framework are reluctant to affix a morality to the flawed person, as doing so would not accurately represent the individual. Like discourse around being “not racist,” there is a belief that since “they weren’t exposed to it” that the ally can rationalize their continued missteps. Marsha used this narrative to discuss racialized narratives from her parents – but she used similar quotes to rationalize why others are using non-inclusive language. Growing up in a “different time” and not having the exposure mitigated people’s ability to be an ally – participants included. CJ describes her opinions on biology as “dated,” Dan commented how he “grew up in a different time” where LGBT subjects did not come up, the examples of age having an inverse relationship to inclusivity is a common pattern. Such discourses allow participants to ameliorate thoughts that their family members are bigoted – thereby absolving themselves from full culpability (Goffman 1952).

Distinct differentiation between family and work can be difficult for this population. Marsha had a conversation with her husband, a faculty member at State University, about a student who shared their pronouns with him. In the conversation, he referred to the student as “she” and Marsha corrected him – prompting her husband to comment how “it’s hard:”

... he took it well. It’s it’s tough for him sometimes:... ‘I see what traditionally looks like a female so my mind goes to she.’ Um, so this was the first that he got one of these cards, so trying to get used to it. Other than that, he doesn’t have a problem, with...Um, it’s just like, you know you have these associations...it’s how the brain works...it’s hard to change people’s mindsets sometimes just with where they are in their life with age...

“It” is being used to refer to the act of gendering people correctly – and the framing of “it” as hard allows the husband to make himself sympathetic. Tildy and Wendy appeared to mock

Marsha's when they reject what appears to be a cisgender fragility that absolves oneself of accountability.

The perceived “tough”-ness of particular topics – which seems to refer to the emotional labor of rationalizing their non-allyship and/or correcting them - is predicated on the hope that the individual will take steps towards “get[ing] used to it.” Intentions play a large role in Amanda's willingness to “challenge” her mother-in-law,” because she's “got a heart as big as the world.” She's got a gay grandson and “she loves him to death.” Even though she “says things,” it is because “she's just being thoughtless” and unintentional, but she is still “good.” The notion of “it” being tough indicates participants' “cooling” their family in a Goffman-esque manner to avoid seeing the family member as a bigot. Even though it is unpaid, I still see this as a form of emotional labor that is necessary to avoid a potential conflict.

As these interactions occur, allies risk stigmatization if they push too far, “they'll be like ‘classic Nikki with her way too liberal perspective’” – a fear reminiscent to her concern with her students. After Nikki's persistence, “they've warmed up” to changing their perspective. Now, her grandma will recognize when she is saying something racist when she says it. Since topics of race are “tough” for her grandma, Nikki views the new dynamic as an improvement and thereby validating her emotional investment (Creed & Scully 2000; Hochschild 2003).

*“I don't think you can really change some people”*

Some individuals were beyond the capability of an ally's abilities to change, implicitly framing them as static by participants. When Meg tries to have conversations with her family about LGBT related topics, “the conversation would be “shut down.” Instead of trying to focus on all related discourses, she focused on getting “them to not hate my cousin because he's gay, so we're working on it.” These participants saw allyship as “work” partially due to the emotional

labor it entails (Hochschild 2003) from the participant, but the familial context meant that unless there were direct reasons for allyship (like Meg), then the toughness outweighed the benefits.

Fiona's parents are older and conservative. But, instead of approaching them in small steps or in limited contexts, she sees their attitudes as static:

I don't think you can really change some people. I think it's worth trying to talk and educate people like 'oh this is what I learned in a class.' But that doesn't mean they're um, like I see my parents really set in their ways on certain things and how they can be more liberal or conservative on different fronts... because it's sort of a self-selected population ...go[ing] to an optional training...because they want to improve themselves in some way and to try and be open to it so its...okay if they're not interested in learning- it can change over time but they have to be open to it. And so I don't think...it can be as inclusive as we want it to be for certain individuals who kinda don't fit that.

Unless someone is "open" to learning more, then it is not worth being an ally in their presence.

Thus, even though Fiona does not face institutional constraints encountered in her workplaces, the futility of educative encounters means it is not worth her emotional labor (Hochschild 2003; Creed & Scully 2000). An important caveat is when one is being an ally *for* a specific person instead of a group: Meg "got" them to not hate her LGBT family members – but the way she talked about it was different than Amanda who believed her mother-in-law has good intentions.

Jerome's partner is a queer cis woman, but his family rejects her because of her identity – adding a heightened importance to his role as a straight/cis ally. After she came out on social media during pride month, his grandma called everyone saying "'did you know? His girlfriend's queer?!'" Because of this, his family sees him as naïve. He feels discouraged to educate because "they don't want to hear it to begin with", therefore making education (and the expended emotional labor) futile– adding credence to Fiona's belief that people must want to improve. Instead of "it" being tough for them, Jerome attributes his familial interactions as "tough:"

Because at the end of the day I love my girlfriend and I love my family, and it's like I feel like I'm in the middle of that...it sucks. And I already told my girlfriend like, '... if we do get married like FYI, I might lose my family ...'

Jerome's allyship is less detached than people like CJ and Fiona, yet his family's attitude makes it more troubling for him than Meg and Amanda. By continuing to be supportive of his girlfriend, he risks jeopardizing his familial relationship. The stakes of being an ally are more dramatic than Wendy's concern of being "wrong," yet Jerome does not frame his actions as that of a victim. His relationship appears to have turned the family's backstage into an unreliable one – but this paradigm fails to account for the fact that there is no front stage façade since Jerome's family is acting consistently (Picca & Feagin 2007).

The context of allyship reframes how allies define themselves and how they manage their emotions. The pressures of allyship in work were far different than families, where participants were more willing to rationalize non-ally actions or resign themselves to an unchanging family member. Workplace allyship had more benefits to being an ally, but had institutional risks preventing large-scale work.

## Conclusion

In examining how Ally Training participants navigate different spaces as self-described (or aspiring) "allies," I found that they enacted an emotion-laden groups-specific allyship in the workplace and were more likely to perform allyship at home when there is a queer/trans family member involved. I have expanded upon the work of scholars discussing allyship to better understand how context shapes how they manage their identities as allies. I have focused on the emotion work participants exhibit and how it differs and rationalizes their front/backstage behavior while they organize actions and statements into right and wrong frames. University diversity narratives allowed participants to distinguish between multiple "types" of distinct allyship, thereby implicating cis allies in white normativity. I found the participant's racialized

cisgender modality contextualizes their constant managing potential of missteps and their emotional responses to others perceiving them as “wrong.”

Participants’ allyship was largely institutional – focused primarily on student populations and how professional peers would see them. Institution-based allyship occurred partially due to a perceived welcoming climate (so long as the allyship did not undermine the University itself) but also because participants felt empowered to effect change. In the family, the many participants felt caught between respecting the perceived backstage talk and creating educational encounters to teach family members how to act on the frontstage (Picca & Feagin 2007; Creed & Scully 2000). However, their perceptions of family members intentions and assessment of emotional labor could enable them to rationalize their family member in a way that differs from their professional persona. The risks/rewards of allyship deployment and the emotional cost/rational depends on the nature of the space – making the emotional labor of educating only sometimes worthwhile.

By focusing on the enactment of cisgender allyship, I am drawing on the discussions among racism scholars and expanding narratives of identity management of well-intentioned individuals seeking information on an aspect of their identity, in this case, gender modality, that has previously been a taken for granted facet of their existence. I examined how they relate allyship to their existing identities. However, many participants framed their allyship to trans people as distinct from their allyship for cis queer people and people of color – thereby deracializing trans people. This study is applicable to broader discussions and analyses of personal allyship. I have shown how context shapes allies act in the workplace and in their personal lives by showing how participant’s motivations and limitations were dependent on the people they were interacting with and the context-specific norms. The university space appeared

to encourage a color-blind lens to the training material in that participants did not see race as relevant to the subject matter – or to advanced for the apparently race-neutral baseline.

I have suggested the generalizability of contextual, emotionally motivated allyship to the greater discourse of “diversity” movements and awareness campaigns. The nature of my study has distinct limitations: a non-saturated sample of self-selected voluntary training attendees.

While there is no “magic” number of qualitative participants, I intend to continue examining and expanding this topic for publication. Specifically, I hope my research can translate into an article on trans woman positionality and the emotional management of allyship.

My analysis shows how the recipients of these trainings process new information and incorporate it into different aspects of their lives. Further research is needed on the implicit racialization of cisgender modality that is obscured within the current educational resources. The emotional labor of educative encounters is often uncompensated, but most participants defined their allyship around their employment instead of the home – unless they had an impacted family member. The notion of “it” being “tough” for people to understand trans issues sympathizes the oppressor – priming the ally to cool off others.

## Appendix 1

### Pre-training

Thank you for meeting with me today. As you know, I am interested in how you think about your gender identity, how you see yourself as an ally, and your decision to participate in ally training. I would also like to learn how you define your gender identity and how your family and peer group shaped this definition. Additionally, I am interested in what factors have shaped your definition and experiences of allyship for marginalized communities. To begin, could you tell me a bit about yourself, your background, your first understandings and experiences surrounding gender, growing up experiences, and what led you to become an ally?

1. Gendered Background and History
  - a. How would you define your current identity? (Race/gender)
    - i. Has it changed over time?
    - ii. What does your gender mean to you?
    - iii. How do you show others the gender/race you identify as?
  - b. Experience with gender identity among family.
    - i. Have you had conversations about trans people or gender with your family? Can you give me an example?
      1. How about race?
  - c. Experience with gender and peers
    - i. Queer/trans friends and family members
  - d. Can you think of a time when you wanted to “change” how others saw your gender? Was there a time where you wanted to be seen as more or less feminine/masculine person of your gender?
2. Gender Identity and Sex
  - a. Understanding of terms. Relations to self and LGBTQ
3. Self-descriptors and terminology
  - a. How did you come to define your racial and gender identity? Influences of family
  - b. Feelings towards trans and cis terminology
    - i. First time hearing these phrases
    - ii. What do these terms mean to you?
    - iii. Do you have friends who use/identify with these words?
  - c. Terms you don't know – what do you think they mean?
4. Allyship
  - a. Do you currently view yourself as an ally for LGBTQIA+ community? Why or why not? How does it feel to be/not be one?
  - b. Meaning of ally – Tell me about what it means to you to be an ally.
  - c. Example of allyship – can you give me an example of when you feel you have acted as an ally? Or, how they could imagine acting as an ally in the future.
    - i. Has it impacted their relationships?
  - d. Their perceptions of allyship: Not enough or going overboard. What are other peoples/social views of allyship and/or advocacy?
  - e. What does it mean to be an ally for people of color?
  - f. What prompted your decision to participate in ally training?
  - g. What do you hope to get from participating in it today?
5. Context of Allyship

- a. Where is it easier to be an ally? Harder? Why?
6. Anything else you'd like to add.

## Post-Training

Thank you for agreeing to meet with me again for an interview. I am interested in hearing your feedback on the [Ally Training] you recently participated in. More specifically, I would like to hear your thoughts on the topics covered in the training and if it has shaped or reshaped your terminology/understanding of LGBT communities. This is not a test or evaluation of your knowledge; I am merely looking into how you think about these topics. I am also interested in how this training has impacted your interactions with individuals who are a part of the LGBT community and people in minority groups in general. As with last time, please feel free to share anything not listed. Can you begin by telling me your thoughts about the training?

1. [Ally Training]
  - a. What did you like about the training? Dislike?
    - i. Anything still confusing?
    - ii. Did it clear up any misunderstandings or questions you had?
  - b. did the training improve your understanding of LGBT communities?
  - c. What did you think of the informed empathy discussion at the beginning?
  - d. Thoughts on participant demographics/participation – why do you think it got the turnout it did?
2. Reflections
  - a. Post-training identity
    - i. Has the way you describe your identity shifted since the training? What does it mean to identify in the way you describe?
  - b. Have you interacted with LGBT people?
    - i. If so, in what ways?
    - ii. And if so, has your involvement changed over time?
      1. Were there times you were more or less supportive?
3. Did race come up in the training, why do you think it did/didn't come up?
4. Allyship
  - a. Has your understanding of what it means to be an ally changed as a result of the training?
  - b. Do you see yourself interacting with others differently in the future because of the training?
  - c. Has this training influenced your post-training interactions?
    - i. Perceptions of people's gender, pronouns, etc.
    - ii. Your decision to act in different or new ways vis a vis discussions or comments you might head or actions you might have seen regarding members of LGBT communities?
  - d. Do you consider yourself an ally for members of communities other than LGBT? What does that mean for you or what does that entail for you in terms of group membership, activities, or other forms of support?
    - i. Examples of non-LGBT allyship
    - ii. Groups that you don't consider yourself an ally for and why?
  - e. The training was focused on allyship for the LGBT community, do you consider yourself an ally/ally-in-training for other communities as well?
    - i. Examples of allyship
  - f. Space – where is it easier/harder to be an ally. What factors help/hinder - example

- g. Was there a time where, as an ally, you would have liked to have responded or felt you should have intervened but didn't? example
  - h. What encourages/discourages allyship in other places:  
family/church/friends/political groups
5. Contextual Allyship
- a. Space – where is it easier/harder to be an ally? What factors help/hinder
  - b. Was there a time you opted not to be an ally? what happened?
  - c. What encourages/discourages allyship in your job? Title IX policy/procedures, for example?
6. Other post training changes:
- a. Has the training reshaped your interactions with co-workers, students, family and/or friends?
  - b. If so, could you describe in what ways?
  - c. Has your understanding of trans/cis terminology changed as a result of the training?
    - i. If so, in what ways?
7. Next Steps
- a. Were there topics you were interested in learning more about?
  - b. Has this training better prepared you to support trans students?
  - c. If so, in what ways?
8. Any other thoughts?

## Only post- [Ally Training] Interviewees

Thank you for agreeing to meet with me for an interview. I am interested in hearing your feedback on the [Ally Training] you recently participated in. More specifically, I would like to hear your thoughts on the topics covered in the training and if it has shaped or reshaped your terminology/understanding of LGBT communities. This is not a test or evaluation of your knowledge; I am merely looking into how you think about these topics. I am also interested in how this training has impacted your interactions with individuals who are a part of the LGBT community and people in minority groups in general. Please feel free to share anything not listed. Can you begin by telling me your thoughts about the training?

1. Gendered Background and History
  - a. How would you define your current identity?
    - i. Has it changed over time?
  - b. Experience with gender identity among family.
    - i. How is gender understood by your family? Can you give me an example?
      1. What have been the differences between family members? Are some more accepting than others? How have their views changed over time?
  - c. Can you think of a time when you wanted to “change” how others saw your gender? Was there a time where you wanted to be seen as more or less feminine/masculine person of your gender?
2. Gendered perception over time in peer groups
  - a. How would you describe your peer groups?
  - b. What role does gender have in your peer groups? Does this role change depend on where you are?
  - c. How do your peer group’s attitudes compare to your family’s?
3. Gender Identity
  - a. What does your gender mean to you?
  - b. How do you show others the gender you identify as?
  - c. Under what circumstances are you more aware of how your gender presentation is seen by others?
4. Self-descriptors and terminology
  - a. What terms do you use to describe your identity? How did you come to use these terms over others?
  - b. Feelings towards trans and cis terminology
    - i. First time hearing these phrases
    - ii. What do these terms mean to you?
    - iii. How do they relate to each other?
    - iv. How do you feel about people who embrace these identities? Those who avoid them?
5. Gender’s impact on life
  - a. When did your gender shape an event in your life? How did this shape future events?
6. Ally training
  - a. What prompted your decision to participate in ally training?
  - b. What do you hope to get from participating in it today.?

- c. Do you currently view yourself as an ally?
  - d. If so, in what ways?
- 7. Husky Ally Safe Zone Training
  - a. How did you hear about this training? What prompted you to sign up for it?
  - b. What did you like about the training? Dislike?
  - c. How did the training improve your understanding of LGBT communities?
  - d. Did you feel that you could openly ask questions at the training? What does it mean for people to have good intentions?
- 8. Reflections
  - a. Post-training identity
    - i. Has the way you describe your identity shifted since the training? What does it mean to identify in the way you describe?
  - b. Have you been engaged with the LGBT community?
- 9. Anything else you'd like to add.

## Instructor Interview Schedule

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed. As you know, I am unpacking what allyship means on college campuses for the participants of the [Ally Training]. I would like to understand your own understanding of allyship – and how this has impacted your presentation style. Over the past few months I've noticed a few subtle changes in the material, which I would also like to unpack further. To begin, could you talk about how you think the past few trainings have gone?

1. Background
  - a. How would you define your current identity? (Race/gender)
    - i. Has it changed over time?
    - ii. What does your gender mean to you? How do you show others the gender you identify as?
  - b. Experience with gender identity among family.
    - i. Have you had conversations about trans people or gender with your family? Can you give me an example?
      1. How about race?
    - ii. Queer/trans friends or family
2. Ally training
  - a. How do you define allyship? Would you consider yourself an ally?
    - i. Example of personal allyship
  - b. Do you think the trainings are part of campus diversity efforts?
  - c. Has your understanding of trans/cis terminology changed as a result of the training?
    - i. If so, in what ways?
  - d. Thoughts around training topics and participant reactions
    - i. Gender Identity/Sex
    - ii. Romantic/Sexual Attraction
    - iii. Topics you wish you could add
  - e. Activity
    - i. Where did you find the material? Thoughts on the scale
  - f. Feedback the past few trainings
3. Participants
  - a. Demographics
  - b. What do you hope for participants to take away from the training?
  - c. Informed empathy & Participant intentions
  - d. Answering questions as an instructor *and* a bi woman
4. Demographics of the training
  - a. Does race factor into the material? Why/why not?
  - b. Racial interactions in the training between participants
5. Allyship
  - a. What do you think it means to be an ally?
    - i. Did the training impact your understanding of being ally? Any changes in your actions as an ally? Example
    - ii. Are there particular issues/debates you find especially important to support? Are there some issues that are harder to support? Why?

- b. The training was focused on allyship for the LGBT community, do you consider yourself an ally/ally-in-training for other communities as well?
        - i. Examples of allyship
        - ii. Differentiation between allyship for LGBTQIA+ folks and other groups
      - c. Distinctions of authenticity of allies – difference between accomplice and ally
        - i. “Some people say they’re allies...”?
- 6. [LGBT Center], students, Allyship
  - a. Student-SU staff relations – is the campus accepting? Student stories as examples
  - b. Interactions with other cultural centers
- 7. Contextual allyship – where is it easier to be an ally? Harder? Why is this the case?
  - a. Was there a time where, as an ally, you would have liked to have responded or felt you should have intervened but didn’t? example
  - b. What encourages/discourages allyship in your job? Title IX
  - c. What encourages/discourages allyship in other places:  
family/church/friends/political groups
- 8. Allyship, Self-descriptors and terminology
  - a. How did you come to define your racial and gender identity? Influences of family
  - b. Feelings towards trans and cis terminology
    - i. Changing nature of terms
    - ii. Students/participants usage (transgendered)

## Appendix 2

Key				
Race	Sexual Orientation	Gender Modality	Gender Identity	Position
B: Black A-A: African American A: Asian American W: White H: Hapa	B: Bisexual  G: Gay S: Straight	GF: Gender Fluid  C: Cisgender	W: Woman  M: Man	HLA: High Level Administrator GS: Graduate Student

Demographics						
Name	Pronouns	Race	Gender Identity	Gender Modality	Sexual Orientation	Position
Tildy	She/her	White	Woman	Cisgender	Bisexual	Training Instructor
Marsha	She/her	White	Woman	Cisgender	Straight	Administrator
June	She/her	White	Gender Fluid Woman	Neither/Gender Fluid/Cis	Bisexual	Graduate Student
Jerome	He/him	Black	Man	Cisgender	Straight	Student Housing Staff
Fiona	She/her	Asian American	Woman	Cisgender	Straight	Graduate Student
CJ	She/her	White	Woman	Cisgender	Straight	Faculty
Meg	She/her	White	Woman	Cisgender	Straight	Administrator
Amanda	She/her	White	Woman	Cisgender	Straight	High Level Administrator
Dan	He/him	White	Man	Cisgender	Straight	Athletics Staff
Phil	He/him	African American	Man	Cisgender	Straight	High Level Administrator
Susanna	She/her	Hapa	Woman	Cisgender	Straight	High Level Administrator
Wendy	She/her	White	Woman	Cisgender	Straight	Administrator
Nikki	She/her	White	Woman	Cisgender	Gay	Graduate Student

## Appendix 3

Bolded statements were handed out as part of the activity. The scale on the left was magnified, flipped 90 degrees, and placed on a large sheet of paper for participants to place statements. Participants were split up into groups of 3 or 4 and given the materials for either the heterosexism sheet or the cissexism sheet.

overt/cissexism	<b>Trans people are perverts.</b>
	There are only two genders: male and female.
	Trans people don't deserve special legal rights.
sub-conscious	My pronouns are "your majesty" and "almighty" and I demand you respect them. (giggle)
	I think it's funny when men characters on TV/in movies wear dresses/makeup.
justification	<b>Trans men and women aren't "really" men and women.</b>
	Being trans just came out of nowhere -- it's a fad.
	But, biologically speaking....
	<b>I get that trans people need to use the restroom, but if we let them, perverts will take advantage of those laws and there will be issues.</b>
denial	I shouldn't have to change to accommodate such a small number of people.
	<b>A person's gender doesn't matter! I don't see gender.</b>
cis savior	I've never met a trans person.
	<b>I knew someone who was trans growing up, and I wasn't mean to them, so I'm an ally.</b>
platitudes	Yaasssss.... I love drag queens!
	<b>#loveislove, and people can "self-identify" any way that makes them feel good.</b>
	Omg.. I totally didn't even know you were trans until you told me. Good job!
awareness	<b>I can tell that I have done things that were transphobic/cissexist in the past, so I'll work to do better.</b>
	I share my pronouns on a few documents at work (no other action)
allyship	<b>I'm taking time to do some reading and learn more, and I'm starting by working to understand my own gender identity.</b>
	I recognize that the way that society muddles sex and gender and enforces gender norms has a negative impact on all of us, but especially trans folks, and I'm changing my behavior.
accomplice	<b>I'm taking action. Talking to people about their problematic behavior, refusing to laugh at jokes at the expense of trans folks, and working toward change.</b>

overt heterosexism

**Being gay can be cured.**

It's wrong to be gay.

Being gay is a choice.

Being gay is just a phase.

sub-conscious

**"no homo"**

Being a straight person is the hardest thing in the world right now.

There are just too many identities to remember.

I'm fine with gay people, but it's weird when it's someone close to me.

justification

**I'm accepting, but I wish they weren't so "in my face" about it.**

If gay people want me to be an ally, they have to be more respectful.

dental

**It's the 21st century. Marriage Equality exists. It's illegal to discriminate. Everything's fine.**

I went to Pride in town last year, so I'm already an ally.

straight savior

**Can't you see that I'm trying to help? (No action)**

If I can't use words like butch to describe people who I think look butch, why can gay people use them?

platitudes

#loveislove #lovewins

**We're really all the same on the inside.**

I just want my office to be a safe space. (No action)

awareness

**I know that I don't know enough to do the right thing, so I'm trying to figure out how I can learn more.**

We live in a society that assumes all people are straight.

allyship

People's experiences as gay are different based on other social identities they may hold: race, class, ability, gender, education, geographic area...

accomplice

**I'm reading, researching, and making a consistent, concerted effort to learn more about this community.**

**I'm taking action. Talking to people about their problematic behavior, refusing to laugh at jokes at the expense of gay folks, and working toward change.**

## Works Cited

- Ashley, Florence. 2019. "'Trans' Is My Gender Modality: A Modest Terminological Proposal" in *Trans Bodies, Trans Selves* (2nd Ed.) Edited By Laura Erickson-Schroth forthcoming. Found online on 4/27/2019.  
[[https://www.florenceashley.com/uploads/1/2/4/4/124439164/florence\\_ashley\\_trans\\_is\\_my\\_gender\\_modality.pdf?fbclid=IwAR2QmFGTZyCkGDtV\\_hx86\\_EYPwSVNkFD1rl-9K1K7KXvtQEfjRp3QOKekvs](https://www.florenceashley.com/uploads/1/2/4/4/124439164/florence_ashley_trans_is_my_gender_modality.pdf?fbclid=IwAR2QmFGTZyCkGDtV_hx86_EYPwSVNkFD1rl-9K1K7KXvtQEfjRp3QOKekvs)]
- Auyero, Javier. 2002. "The judge, the cop, and the queen of carnival: Ethnography, storytelling, and the (contested) meanings of protest." *Theory and Society*. 31(2): 151-187.
- Bailey, Moya. 2013. New Terms of Resistance: A Response to Zenzele Isoke, *Souls*, 15:4, 341-343
- Blee, Kathleen. 1991. *Women of the Klan: Racism and gender in the 1920s*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Blee, Kathleen. 2002. *Inside Organized Racism: Women in the Hate Movement*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Boellstorff, Tom, Bonnie Nardi, Celia Pearce, and T.L. Taylor. 2012. *Ethnography and Virtual Worlds: A Handbook of Method* Princeton, NJ: Princeton.
- Bonilla-Silva. 2006. *Racism Without Racists: Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequalities in the United States*. Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.
- Bradford, Nova & Syed, Moin. Accepted/In Press. "Transnormativity and Transgender Identity Development: A Master Narrative Approach." *Sex Roles*.
- Bratter, Jenifer and Tukufu Zuberi. 2008. "As racial boundaries "fade": racial stratification and interracial marriage." In *White Logic, White Methods: Racism and Methodology* edited by Zuberi, Tukufu, and Eduardo Bonilla-Silva. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Burawoy, Michael. 2009. *The Extended Case Method: Four Countries Four Decades Four Great Transformations and one Theoretical Tradition*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Butler, Judith. 1990. *Gender Trouble*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Campbell, Marie, and Frances Gregor. 2004. *Mapping Social Relations: A Primer in Doing Institutional Ethnography*. Rowman & Littlefield.
- Connell, Catherine. 2010. Doing, Undoing, Or Redoing Gender? Learning from the Workplace Experiences of Transpeople. *Gender and Society*, 24(1), 31-55.
- Charmaz, Kathy. 2006. *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide Through Qualitative Analysis*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Charmaz, Kathy. 1995. "Grounded Theory." Pp. 27-49 in *Rethinking Methods in Psychology* edited by Jonathan A. Smith and Rom Harre. London: Sage Publications.
- Clarke, Adele, Carrie Friese, and Rachel Washburn, eds. 2015. *Situational Analysis in Practice*. NY: Routledge.
- Collins, Patricia Hill, and Sirma Bilge. 2016. *Intersectionality*. Cambridge, UK: Polity.
- Connell, Raewyn. 2009. "Accountable Conduct 'Doing Gender' in Transsexual and Political Retrospect." *Gender & Society* 23(1):104-11.
- Connell, Raewyn. 2012. "Transsexual Women and Feminist Thought: Toward New Understanding and New Politics." *Signs*, 37: 4.

- Creed, W. E. Douglas, and Maureen A. Scully. 2000. "Songs of Ourselves: Employees' Deployment of Social Identity in Workplace Encounters." *Journal of Management Inquiry* 9, no. 4
- Creed, W. E. Douglas, Rich Dejordy, And Jaco Lok. 2010. "Being The Change: Resolving Institutional Contradiction Through Identity Work." *The Academy of Management Journal* 53, no. 6: 1336-364.
- Crenshaw, Kimberlé. 1991. "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color." *Stanford Law Review*, 43(6), 1241-1299.
- Crenshaw, Kimberlé. 1989. "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics." *University of Chicago Legal Forum* 138-67.
- Crawley, Sara. 2008. "The Clothes Make the Trans: Region and Geography in Experiences of the Body." *Journal of Lesbian Studies* 12(4): 365-79.
- Davis, Georgiann. 2015. *Contesting Intersex: The Dubious Diagnosis*. New York: New York University Press.
- Davis, Heath Fogg. 2017. *Beyond trans: does gender matter?* New York: New York University Press
- Denissen, Amy and Abigail Saguy. 2014. "Gendered Homophobia and The Contradictions Of Workplace Discrimination For Women In The Building Trades." *Gender & Society*, 28: 3, 381-403.
- Demnowicz, C. 2017. "Racism Scale 2.5." *Racism Scale*. Retrieved August 15, 2019 (<https://racismscale.weebly.com/>).
- Deutsch, Francine. 2007. "Undoing Gender." *Gender & Society* 27(1):106-27.
- DiAngelo, Robin. 2018. *White fragility: why it's so hard for White people to talk about racism*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Duggan, Lisa. 2003. *The twilight of equality?: neoliberalism, cultural politics, and the attack on democracy*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Eliasoph, Nina. 1999. "'Everyday Racism' in a Culture of Political Avoidance: Civil Society, Speech, and Taboo." *Social Problems*, 46(4): 479-502
- Embrick, David G. 2016. "Thinking Diversity, Rethinking Diversity." *Humanity & Society* 40, no. 3: 223-28.
- Emerson, Robert and Rachel Fretz, and Linda Shaw. 2011. *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*. Second Edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Enke, Ann. 2013. "The Education of Little Cis" in *The Transgender Studies Reader 2* edited by Susan Stryker and Aren Aizura. New York: Routledge.
- Fairclough, Norman. 2003. *Analyzing Discourse: Textual Analysis for Social Research*. London: Routledge.
- Fausto-Sterling, Anne. 2012. *Sex/gender: biology in a social world*. New York: Routledge
- Fetner, Tina, and Melanie Heath. 2018. "Studying the "Right" Can Feel Wrong: Reflections on Researching Anti-Lgbt Movements." In *Other, Please Specify: Queer Methods in Sociology*, edited by Compton D'Lane, Meadow Tey, and Schilt Kristen, 140-53. Oakland, California: University of California Press
- Ford, Chandra L., and Collins O. Airhihenbuwa. 2010. "The public health critical race methodology: praxis for antiracism research." *Social Science and Medicine* 71(8):1390-1398.

- Frankenberg, Ruth. 1993. *White women, race matters: the social construction of whiteness*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press
- Garfinkel, Harold. 1967. *Studies in ethnomethodology*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall.
- Geertz, Clifford. 1973. *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*. New York: Basic Books
- Ghaziani, Amin, Verta Taylor, and Amy Stone. 2016. "Cycles of Sameness and Difference in LGBT Social Movements." *Annual Review of Sociology* 42 (1): 165–83.
- Goffman, Erving. 1952. "On Cooling the Mark Out: Some Aspects of Adaption to Failure." *Psychiatry: Journal of Interpersonal Relations* 15(4):451–63.
- Goffman, Erving. 1959. *The presentation of self in everyday life*. New York: Anchor Books.
- Goffman, Erving. 1986. *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*. 1st Touchstone ed. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Grzanka, Patrick, R. Adler, and Jake Blazer. "Making Up Allies: The Identity Choreography of Straight LGBT Activism." *Sexuality Research and Social Policy* 12.3 (2015): 165-81.
- McLean, Heathcliff. 2017. "Transphobia Scale: Where Do You Fall?" *Facebook*. Retrieved August 15, 2019 (<https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=10159709244930187&set=a.10150934383065187&type=3&theater>).
- Hochschild, Arlie Russell. 2003. *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling, Twentieth Anniversary Edition, With a New Afterword*. University of California Press,
- hooks, bell. 1994. *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*. New York: Routledge.
- Hughes, Cayce C. 2018. "Not Out in the Field: Studying Privacy And Disclosure As An Invisible (Trans) Man." In *Other, Please Specify: Queer Methods in Sociology*, edited by Compton D’Lane, Meadow Tey, and Schilt Kristen, 111-25. Oakland, California: University of California Press.
- Jack, Anthony Abraham. 2019. *The Privileged Poor: How Elite Colleges Are Failing Disadvantaged Students*. Harvard University Press.
- Johnson, Austin H. 2013. *Doing Cisgender Vs. Doing Transgender: An Extension of Doing Gender Using Documentary Film*. M.A: Thesis, Department of Sociology, Kent State University
- Johnson, Austin H. 2015. "Normative Accountability: How the Medical Model Influences Transgender Identities and Experiences." *Sociology Compass* 9(9):803–13.
- Johnson, Austin H. 2016. "Transnormativity: A New Concept and Its Validation through Documentary Film About Transgender Men." *Sociological Inquiry* 86(4):465–91.
- Jones, Richard, and Bernadette Calafell. 2012. "Contesting Neoliberalism Thought Critical Pedagogy, Intersectional Reflexivity and Personal Narrative" *Journal of Homosexuality* 59(7):957-981.
- Kessler, Suzanne and Wendy McKenna. 1978. *Gender: An Ethnomethodological Approach*. NY: Wiley Interscience.
- Lewis, Amanda E. and John B. Diamond. 2015. *Despite the Best Intentions: How Racial Inequality Thrives in Good Schools*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Lewis-McCoy, R. L’Heurex. 2014. *Inequality in the Promised Land: Race, Resources, and Suburban Schooling*. Stanford University Press
- Mathers, Lain, and J.E. Sumerau, and Ryan Cragun. 2018. "The Limits of Homonormativity: Constructions of Bisexual and Transgender People in the Post-Gay Era." *Sociological Perspectives*.

- Meadow, Tey. 2011. "'Deep down Where the Music Plays': How Parents Account for Childhood Gender Variance." *Sexualities* 14.6: 725-47
- Meadow, Tey. 2018a. *Trans Kids: Being Gendered In The Twenty-First Century*. Oakland, California: University Of California Press.
- Meadow, Tey. 2018b. "The Mess: Vulnerability As Ethnographic Practice." In *Other, Please Specify: Queer Methods in Sociology*, edited by Meadow Tey, Compton D' Lane, and Schilt Kristen, 154-66. Oakland, California: University of California Press.
- Miller, Lisa and Eric Grollman. 2015. "The Social Costs of Gender Nonconformity for Transgender Adults: Implications for Discrimination and Health." *Sociological Forum* 30(3):809–31.
- Naples, Nancy. 1996. "A feminist revisiting of the insider/outsider debate: The "outsider phenomenon" in rural Iowa." *Qualitative Sociology*. 19(1): 83–106.
- Naples, Nancy. 2003. "Whose Feminism? Whose Dilemma?: Comments on 'The Feminist Ethnographer's Dilemma'." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 42(4):427-438.
- Naples, Nancy. 2003. *Feminism and Method: Ethnography, Discourse Analysis, and Activist Research*. NY: Routledge
- Nicolazzo, Z. 2017. "Imagining a Trans\* Epistemology: What Liberation Thinks Like in Postsecondary Education." *Urban Education*.
- Pascoe, C. J. 2012. *Dude, You're a Fag: Masculinity and Sexuality in High School: with a New Preface*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Picca, Leslie Houts, and Joe R. Feagin. 2007. *Two-faced racism: Whites in the backstage and frontstage*. New York: Routledge
- Posey-Maddox, Linn. 2014. *When Middle-Class Parents Choose Urban Schools: Class, Race and the Challenge of Equity in Public Education*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press
- Poynter, Kerry John, and Nancy Jean Tubbs. 2008. "Safe Zones." *Journal of LGBT Youth*, 5:1, 121-132.
- Puar, Jasbir K. 2017. *Terrorist assemblages: homonationalism in queer times*. Durham: Duke University Press
- Pugh, Allison. 2013. "What good are interviews for thinking about culture? Demystifying interpretive analysis." *American Journal of Cultural Sociology* 1(1); 42-68.
- Rahilly, Elizabeth. 2015. "The Gender Binary Meets the Gender-Variant Child: Parents' Negotiations with Childhood Gender Variance." *Gender & Society*, 29: 3 338–361
- Schilt, Kristen and Elroi Windsor. 2014. "Negotiating Sexuality Through Gender: The Sexual Habitus of Transgender Men." *Journal of Homosexuality: Special Issue on Trans Sexualities*. 61(5): 732-748.
- Schilt, Kristen. 2010. *Just One of the Guys? Transgender Men and the Persistence of Gender Inequality*. University of Chicago Press.
- Schilt, Kristen and Laurel, Westbrook. 2009. "Doing gender, doing heteronormativity: "Gender normals," transgender people, and the social maintenance of heterosexuality." *Gender & Society*, 23, 440–464.
- Serano, Julia. 2018. "Julia Serano's trans, gender, sexuality, & activism glossary." *Juliaserano.com*. [online] Available at: <http://juliaserano.com/terminology.html#C> [Accessed 21 Apr. 2018].
- Serano, Julia. 2016. *Whipping Girl: A Transsexual Woman on Sexism and the Scapegoating of Femininity*. Berkley: Seal Press.

- Serano, Julia. 2017. "Transgender People and "Biological Sex" Myths." *Medium*. Found online 4/30/2019. Retrieved from: [<https://medium.com/@juliaserano/transgender-people-and-biological-sex-myths-c2a9bcd4f4a>]
- shuster, stef m. 2017. "Punctuating Accountability: How Discursive Aggression Regulates Transgender People." *Gender & Society*, 31(4), 481–502.
- Smith, Linda Tuhiwai. 2012. *Decolonizing Methodologies*. London: Zed Press.
- Smith, Dorthey. 1987. *The Everyday World as Problematic*. Boston: Northeastern University Press
- Smith, Dorothy E. 2005. *Institutional ethnography: a sociology for people*. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press.
- Snorton, C. Riley. 2017. *Black on Both Sides: A Racial History of Trans Identity*. Minneapolis; London: University of Minnesota Press.
- Solorzano, Daniel G., and Tara J. Yosso. 2002. "Critical Race Methodology: Counter-Storytelling as an Analytical Framework for Education Research." *Qualitative Inquiry* 8(1):23-44.
- Spade, Dean. 2015. *Normal life: administrative violence, critical trans politics, and the limits of law*. Brooklyn, NY: South End Press.
- Stein, Arlene. 2001. *The stranger next door: the story of a small community's battle over sex, faith, and civil rights*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Stone, Sandy. 2014. "The Empire Strikes Back: A Posttranssexual Manifesto." [online] Available at: [<https://sandystone.com/empire-strikes-back.pdf>]. [Accessed 12 July 2018].
- Stozer, Rebecca. 2009. "Straight Allies: Supportive Attitudes Toward Lesbians, Gay Men, and Bisexuals in a College Sample." *Sex Roles*. 60(1): 67-80.
- Stryker, Susan, and Aren Z. Aizura. 2013. *The transgender studies reader 2*. New York: Routledge.
- Taylor, Malaena and Mary Bernstein. 2019. "Denial, Deflection, And Distraction: Neutralizing Charges Of Racism By The Tea Party Movement." *Mobilization*, 24:2, 137-156
- Travers, Ann. 2018. *The Trans Generation: How Trans Kids (and Their Parents) are Creating a Gender Revolution*. New York: New York University Press.
- Valentine, David. 2012. "Sue E. Generous: Toward a Theory of Non-Transsexuality." *Feminist Studies*, 38(1) 185-211.
- de Vries, Kylan Mattias. 2012. "Intersectional Identities and Conceptions of the Self: The Experience of Transgender People." *Symbolic Interaction* 35(1):49–67.
- de Vries, Kylan Mattias. 2015. "Transgender People of Color at the Center: Conceptualizing a New Intersectional Model." *Ethnicities* 15(1):3–27.
- Walton, John. 1992. "Making the Theoretical Case," in *What is a Case?* By Charles Ragin and H. Becker. Cambridge U. Press
- Ward, Jane. 2008. *Respectably Queer: Diversity Culture in LGBT Activist Organizations*. Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press.
- West, Candace and Don Zimmerman. 2009. "Accounting for Doing Gender." *Gender & Society* 23(1):112–22.
- West, Candace, and Don Zimmerman. 1987. "Doing Gender." *Gender and Society*, 1(2) 125-51.
- Worthen, Meredith. 2011. "College Student Experiences with an LGBTQ Ally Training Program: A Mixed Methods Study at a University in the Southern United States." *Journal of LGBT Youth*, 8:4, 332-377.

- Worthen, Meredith. 2016. "Hetero-cis-normativity and the gendering of transphobia." *International Journal of Transgenderism*, 17:1, 31-57.
- Yuval-Davis, 2006. "Intersectionality and Feminist Politics." *European Journal of Women's Studies* 13:193-209.