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Cisgendered Organizations: Trans Women and Inequality in the Workplace[1]

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This article responds to calls to better understand how intersecting "inequality regimes" operate in organizations. Through in-depth interviews with 25 white trans women about their workplace experiences, my analyses highlight how trans women navigate relational practices that are simultaneously gendered and cisgendered—that is, practices that maintain cultural connections between sex and gender and maintain gender as immutable. Findings demarcate three distinct mechanisms by which cisgenderism, a system that devalues women and trans people, operates and strengthens hierarchical privileges at work: (1) double-bind constraints; (2) fluid biases of cissexism and sexism; and (3) group practices of privilege and subordination. In the first regard, analyses reveal unique double binds that trans women face—binds that dictate contradictory feminine and masculine ideal worker expectations but also expectations of gender authenticity. Second, I find that trans women often hover between two subordinate statuses (i.e., gender and transgender status) in a given workday, a fact that prods a more fluid conception of cisgenderism. Finally, this study highlights how cis men collectively mobilize through group practices to repair cisgender system breaches. All three dimensions are critical for understanding the production of workplace inequality between not only trans women and cis men, but all feminine-identified workers.

KEY WORDS: gender and work; gender inequality; gendered interactions; transgender and cisgender; trans women employment; workplace inequality.

INTRODUCTION

Gender scholars have clearly articulated that workplaces are not simply rational, goal-oriented institutions. Rather, through structures and practices, workplaces tend to privilege certain groups—historically white men—in the process of achieving high-level organizational goals (Acker 1990; Britton 2003; Martin 2006; Morales 2016). Widespread stereotypical beliefs about men and women, for instance, are infused in organizational interactions and contribute to gender disparities by rewarding men and masculinities over women and femininities (Acker 1990; Ridgeway 2011). Yet, the relationship between interactional privileges at work and cultural alignments between sex and gender remains undertheorized in sociological research in spite of its relevance for broader gender hierarchies.

Trans people's employment experiences have the capacity to reveal distinct sex/gender inequality processes surrounding status and interactional hierarchies and help fill gaps in what we know in this regard. As individuals who reject their birth-

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assigned gender and identify and desire social recognition as the cross-gender, trans people complicate and challenge widely held cultural assumptions that gender is binary and derives from biological sex (i.e., chromosomal, hormonal, reproductive systems, or genitalia) (Kessler and McKenna 1978; Schrock et al. 2005). A small but growing body of literature has begun to elucidate the differential work experiences that trans people accrue when compared to their cisgendered counterparts whose birth-assigned sex culturally match their gender identities and bodies (henceforth cis men and cis women) (Connell 2010; Garfinkel 1967; Schilt and Westbrook 2009). For the sake of clarity, Table I offers pertinent trans-related terms and definitions.

While prior research finds that the gender system largely "absorbs and adapts to" trans people by elevating the status of trans men and degrading the status of trans women after transitions (Schilt 2010), we have, however, a limited understanding of how cisgenderism, a system that helps maintain and secure the gender system, transpires in workplace relations. Cisgenderism is an expansive ideology that simultaneously demotes women and femininities, in addition to persons whose identities challenge normative conceptions of gender and sex such as trans people. In other words, cisgenderism incorporates both sexism—the belief and treatment of women as inferior to men—and cissexism[3] —the belief and treatment of transgender people as inferior to cisgender people (Lennon and Mistler 2014).

In this article, I draw on 25 extensive, open-ended interviews with white trans women (i.e., individuals who were assigned male at birth due to hormonal, chromosomal, or genital classifications and who later transitioned to and identified as women) about their work experience both prior to and after their gender transitions. Such in-depth observations highlight whether and how these trans women simultaneously experience feminine and cisgender subjugation (i.e., cisgenderism) throughout different organizational social interactions. Trans women are uniquely positioned to provide insight into this issue because they disrupt cisgender expectations and transition from a presumably higher gender to a lower gender. Trans women also tend to be highly cognizant and aware of nuanced gender and cisgender interactional work (Connell 2010; Dozier 2005; Schilt 2010). Notably, due to the white racial composition of the sample, this study exposes cisgendered expectations and subordination of femininities typically associated with whiteness.

Addressing the aforementioned issues extends gendered interactional theories by highlighting the often simultaneous confluence of cissexism and sexism—a confluence that is consistent with Acker's (2006) and Ridgeway and Kricheli-Katz's (2013) call to analyze and better interpret how intersecting "inequality regimes" operate in organizations. This article contributes to this aim in at least three distinct ways. First, my analyses extend theoretical conception by highlighting how cissexism and sexism function in organizations through double binds (e.g., "bitch" double

[3] While *cis* is a prefix that means "on the same side" and is used to indicate a cultural match between a person's gender identity and birth-assigned sex, cissexism reflects an exception for the meaning of this prefix. In this case, cissexism does not refer to sexism toward cisgender people, as the prefix would otherwise suggest. Rather, cissexism refers to the belief system that denigrates trans people, or non-cisgender people. This terminology mirrors how heterosexism is used to refer to the belief system that denigrates nonheterosexual people (despite that *hetero* modifies the word *sexism* and may suggest that it is sexism toward heterosexual people).

Table I. Trans-Related Terminology and Definitions

Term	Definition
Cisgender	An umbrella term that refers to persons whose gender identity is congruent with their bodies and birth-assigned sex.
Cis	A Latin prefix that means "on the same side as." Often used as a prefix before "man" or "woman."
Cis man	A birth-assigned male whose body and personal identity aligns with a culturally normative masculine gender identity.
Cis woman	A birth-assigned female whose body and personal identity aligns with a culturally normative feminine gender identity.
Transgender	An umbrella term for individuals who reject their birth-assigned gender and identify and desire social recognition as the cross-gender.
Trans	A Latin prefix that means "on the other side." Often used as a prefix before "man" or "woman" to refer to individuals whose birth-assigned sex and gender do not culturally match.
Trans man	An identity that refers to a birth-assigned female who rejects their birth-assigned gender and lives as and desires recognition as male/man.
Trans woman	An identity that refers to a birth-assigned male who rejects their birth-assigned gender and lives as and desires recognition as female/woman.
Cissexism	An ideology that denigrates and subordinates trans people because their sex and gender identities exist outside the gender binary. Transgender people are positioned as less authentic and inferior to cisgender people.
Sexism	An ideology that denigrates and subordinates women and things associated with women, such as femininities. Sexism is rooted in assumptions of inherent, sex-associated inferiority of women.
Cisgenderism	A more expansive ideology that simultaneously demotes women and the feminine, in addition to persons whose identities challenge normative conceptions of gender and sex such as trans people.

Note: (1) Please note that trans-related terminology is ever-evolving and still being debated within feminist and transgender studies scholars. I leverage terminology and definitions published in a special edition on trans-related key words in *Transgender Studies Quarterly*, which reflect some of the latest thinking on these terms. Importantly, this table includes only the terms central to the current study and does not reflect an exhaustive list of sex/gender terminology. (2) Cissexism replaces transphobia, meaning a fear of or hatred toward trans people, to better capture the underlying oppressive system that rejects and subordinates non-normative gender identities.

bind; competence double bind). This study connects two distinct bodies of scholarship—one on the double binds that cis women face and the other on double binds that trans people face—and reveals how double binds uniquely coalesce for trans women. Second, I denote the flexible character of cisgenderism, depending on the salience of one's trans or gender status, or both. Taken together, this provides a deeper sociological understanding of the malleability and durability of a cisgendered system in the face of potential disruptions. Third, the in-depth qualitative accounts make clear how proximate group interactions and rituals mobilize and reify cis men's naturally assumed masculinity privileges.

ORGANIZATIONAL INTERACTIONS AND CROSSING THE GENDER DIVIDE

Ethnomethodological theories (Garfinkel 1967; Kessler and McKenna 1978; West and Zimmerman 1987) highlight the importance of studying social interactions for revealing mechanisms that sustain broader gender inequality. Ridgeway (2011) contends that gender, like race and age, act as a principal cultural frame for organizing social interactions. Individuals tend to instantly categorize individuals according to sex, which consequently spurs the accessibility of gender stereotypes and status beliefs (Blair and Banaji 1996; Ridgeway and Kricheli-Katz 2013). Gender status beliefs are commonly held values that associate higher levels of competency and worth to one sex over the other (Ridgeway 2006). Although situations exist, such as caregiving, where status beliefs favor women, they generally depict cis men, particularly white cis men, as more competent, rational, and competitive than cis women, especially in masculine-typed activities (Ridgeway 2011). Such biases pervade ideal worker norms enacted by and within organizations—norms that tend to privilege white and married men with a stay-at-home wife and children (Acker 1990, 2006). Whereas cis men are more likely than cis women to personally endorse gender status beliefs (Ridgeway and Correll 2006), both men and women consider them before constructing their own actions because status beliefs are "consensual" (Seachrist and Stangor, 2001). If people think they will be held to a standard, it can alter behavior in a manner that corresponds to the belief, thus creating a self-fulfilling effect (Ridgeway 2011).

Culturally held gender beliefs and ideal worker norms stem from assumptions of inherent sex differences that lead to naturally occurring gender differences. What happens, though, when individuals disrupt and challenge assumptions that sex and gender culturally match? Trans women's intersectional viewpoint may reveal important insights to this question and directly assess if, and how, sex/gender connections shape interactional privileges and ideal worker norms.

CISGENDERISM AND THE POTENTIAL OF DUAL SUBJUGATION OF TRANS WOMEN

Cisgenderism refers to ideology that delegitimizes and subordinates people whose gender identities differ from their gender assigned at birth and enforces a

rigid hierarchy of valued gender norms, identities, and roles (Lennon and Mistler 2014). This term simultaneously encompasses sexism and cissexism. Cissexism dictates that birth-assigned males consistently practice masculinities while birth-assigned females consistently practice femininities. Although useful as a construct for understanding why trans people's gender identities are seen as less valid and/or worthy of respect, cissexism as an orienting concept does not explicitly consider sexism or the denigration of cis women and associated femininities (Serano 2007).

Sexism, as a concept, places a higher value on assumed gender traits that are culturally and "biologically" tied to cis men. Cis women are, therefore, assumed to have little biological claim to the most valued traits in society (e.g., leadership), helping to explain why cis women often experience sanctions when they attempt to access privileges associated with displaying masculinity practices (Ridgeway and Kricheli-Katz 2013; Schippers 2007). However, "[w]ith sex being limited to two dichotomous categories (male and female), sexism, inherently, is also a limited term that does not encompass oppression rooted in a spectrum of identities that extends beyond a dichotomous category assigned at birth" (Lennon and Mistler 2014:63–64). Studying mechanisms that produce only these single ideologies omits the crucial reciprocal nature of these two oppressions.

In this article, I turn explicit theoretical and empirical attention toward the interlocking characteristic of cissexism and sexism. The following discussion reflects three areas in the literature where significant gaps still exist in our understanding of trans women's experiences more generally but especially at work: double-bind constraints, fluidity of cissexism and sexism, and group practices of privilege and subordination.

Double-Bind Constraints

Scholars have theorized that the subjugation of trans people, in part, operates under a double-bind framework that invalidates trans women's gender authenticity regardless of their behaviors (Bettcher 2014; Serano 2007). Bettcher (2014:403) states that trans people can "either pass as the opposite sex (i.e. be a gender deceiver) or come out as trans and be read as openly fraudulent (i.e. a mere pretender)." Despite trans people's agency, a double bind between gender deceiver and pretender elucidates how other individuals' actions and beliefs, particularly when they are culturally shared, can constrain a trans person's social status, behaviors, and speech. We do not know, however, whether trans-related double binds interact with other double binds that individuals read as feminine must also navigate at work.

Traditional or emphasized femininities, typically framed in terms of cooperativeness, dependence, passivity, and emotionality, often conflict with valued workplace characteristics and behaviors such as confidence, authority, and rationality (Schippers 2007). Notably, among femininity practices, traditional femininities are culturally exalted because they are tied to whiteness (Pyke and Johnson 2003; Ridgeway and Kricheli-Katz 2013). Intersectional theories outline how gender and race, along with other statuses, intersect to create benefits and oppressions that vary by context and are unique to different matrices of characteristics (Collins 1990).

Due to educational and occupational gains, women's gender expressions of all races have become less rigid and narrow, especially relative to cis men's cross-gender expressions (England 2010; Pascoe 2007). Nevertheless, cis women may still risk negative consequences when they express masculinities if they do not also display femininities such as niceness to offset the gender breach (Ridgeway and Kricheli-Katz 2013). This may be particularly true for white cis women: Because whiteness informs exalted femininities, minority (particularly black) women are excluded from cultural associations with niceness, cooperativeness, and modesty in the first place (Collins 1990; Epstein 1973). Thus, when black women, for example, perform femininities, it is often read as performing masculinities, particularly in certain contexts (Epstein 1973; Livingston, Rosette, and Washington 2012; Richardson et al. 2011). Even though black women still face race-based disadvantages, performances of masculinity do not necessarily conflict with racialized-gendered expectations that already characterize them as unfeminine, unlike the expectations associated with white women (Ridgeway and Kricheli-Katz 2013). Yet, at the same time, white cis women have access to racially privileged "knowledge, customs, and ways of thinking, speaking, and doing most familiar to whites" (Ward 2008:564) that may offset double-bind consequences.

These two literatures—double binds for trans women and double binds for cis women—have not yet been placed in conversation with each other. This leads to an important question: Do such double binds cojoin in unique ways for trans women, in this case white trans women? My analyses below build on Bettcher's double-bind conceptualization by extending this framework to the workplace and examining whether and how cissexism and sexism—different but arguably complementary oppression systems—create contradictory pressures for trans women as they simultaneously navigate feminine, cisgender, and ideal worker expectations.

Fluidity of Cissexism and Sexism

Serrano (2007) contends that trans people can experience "conditional cissexual privilege," or shifting experiences of cis privileges (privileges that result from a person's cis status). That is, individuals conditionally extend privileges to trans people if they maintain a nondisclosed trans status. Schilt (2010), for example, finds that coworkers extended cis privileges to undisclosed trans men in the form of masculine privileges typically associated with birth-assigned males (e.g., higher levels of assumed competence and authority). Notably, even when coworkers knew of their trans status, some trans men still received some privileges—a fact that makes it difficult to parse out gender privileges from cisgender privileges. Because trans men transition to a higher gender,[4] prior research in the workplace has primarily highlighted reports of cissexism or contrarily, emphasized the advantages that stem from transitioning to men. Accordingly, the question remains as to whether trans women hover between two subordinate statuses in a single workday, depending on with whom they interact.

[4] Trans men who practice femininities, however, may not be afforded the same advantages as trans men who conform to normative masculinities post-transition (see Schilt 2010).

Group Practices of Privilege and Subordination

Vested interest in the gender system varies greatly by structural position. Cis men typically hold greater allegiances to the gender structure because they tend to benefit most from its enforcement and continuation, particularly in the workplace (Acker 1990; Connell 2005). Martin (2001) termed the phrase *mobilizing masculinity* to describe practices that cis men use together to bond with other cis men and that tend to promote and reinforce masculine privileges (e.g., giving cis men greater esteem than cis women, etc.). While prior mobilization frameworks emphasize group enactments of masculinities, they do not address whether cis men also collectively mobilize cisgenderism by affirming their *natural* rights to privileges and the permanency of gender.

Previous research, though limited, suggests that heterosexual cis men are less accepting than cis women of trans people, particularly of trans women (Nagoshi et al. 2008; Schilt and Westbrook 2009). Yet, do cis men mobilize to repair breaches to the cisgender system like they do for breaches to the gender system? Building on Martin's (2001) theoretical framework on how cis men "mobilize masculinity" and gendered interactional theories, this study highlights cis men's collective practices of exercising not only sexism but also cissexism.

DATA AND METHODS

Between June and September 2011, I conducted in-depth interviews with 25 trans women living in Ohio. Because trans women are a numerical minority and a concealed population due to discrimination risks, I chose two metropolitan areas because they have active transgender communities and local employment ordinances that protect gender identity. In such contexts, trans people may be more likely to be open about their transgender status at work and thus, able to speak about cissexism, in addition to sexism.

All participants had at least six months' employment experience both before and after their gender transitions; the sample's average pre- and post-transition employment experience was twenty and six years, respectively. I recruited subjects from Internet and community support groups, a lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer/questioning (LGBTQ) festival and conference, LGBTQ-friendly bars and churches, and snowball sampling. The sample includes both undisclosed trans women (5 respondents reported their transgender identity was undisclosed to coworkers) and open trans women (20 respondents reported their transgender status was disclosed to coworkers). Undisclosed individuals switched companies, while open individuals either kept their jobs or switched companies.

Interviews lasted one to two hours and were digitally recorded and transcribed by two trained undergraduate research assistants. Table II provides individual-level demographic and employment information derived from each interview.

The average age of transition was 41, although many respondents identified as women at earlier ages. Transition age was based on the time when individuals began working and openly identifying as women (Schilt 2010). All respondents had

Table II. Sample Demographics

Pseudonym	Highest Education Level	Years Working as a Woman	Before Gender Transition		After Gender Transition	
			Occupation	Industry	Occupation	Industry
Whitney	Some college	1	PC Repair Tech.	IT/PC Repair	Customer Rep.	Telecomm.
Stephanie	Doctorate	2.5	Attorney	Law	Teaching Instructor	Education
Elizabeth	Associate	2.5	Supervisor	Public Safety	Supervisor	Public Safety
Laura	Some college	3	Engineer Tech.	Manufacturing	Engineer Tech.	Manufacturing
Erica	Associate	13	Software Eng.	Computers	Software Engineer	Computers
Caitlyn	Associate	0.5	Prep Cook	Grocery	Prep Cook	Grocery
Samantha	High school	3	Food Server	Food Service	Food Server	Food Service
Tara	Some college	2	Metadata Specialist	Library Service	Metadata Specialist	Library Service
Amanda	Some college	4	Customer Service	Industrial	Customer Rep.	Altern. Energy
Kelly	GED	4	Computer Technician	Education	Computer Technician	Computers
Rebecca	Some college	5	Retail Store Manager	Retail	Maintenance Worker	Carpentry
Andrea	Doctorate	10	Technical Manager	Telecomm.	Computer Admin.	Finance
Katie	High school	11	Maintenance Worker	Private Real Estate	Truck Driver	Trucking
Jenny	Bachelor's	30	EMT	Ambulance Rescue	Library Associate	Education
Sara	Doctorate	11	Real Estate Appraiser	Govt.	Assistant Professor	Education
Jackie	High school	2	Custodian	Education	Factory Associate	Manufacturing
Madeline	Bachelor's	4	Assistant Manager	Theater	Marketing Coordinator	Marketing
Sandra	Bachelor's	4	Retail Associate	Retail	Retail Associate	Retail
Bethany	Bachelor's	3.5	Security Manager	Security	Truck Driver	Transportation
Cassy	High school	8	Truck Driver	Trucking	Truck Driver	Trucking
Deirdre	Bachelor's	1	Electronic Tech.	Telecomm.	Electronic Tech.	Telecomm.
Frances	High school	15	Truck Driver	Transportation	Truck Driver	Transportation
Genevieve	Bachelor's	2.5	Bicycle Mechanic	Retail	Bicycle Mechanic	Retail
Haley	High school	5	Truck Driver	Trucking	Truck Driver	Trucking
Reanne	Doctorate	13	Associate Professor	Education	Copyeditor	Coal, Gas, Energy
Rhonda	Associate	3	Custodian	Education	Custodian	Education

Note: (1) Twenty-six trans women appear in this table; however, one interviewee, Kelly, is excluded from discussion because she did not meet the study's work experience requirements. (2) Reanne reports a nonstandard occupation for the industry listed (copyeditor in the coal, gas, energy industry). This industry categorization reflects the industry that she reported when she filled out a background survey during the interview. Indeed, all information provided in the table reflects interviewees' written responses from the administered background survey.

undertaken medical changes, including for about half of the sample, various bodily augmentations. All but two trans women stated they are consistently referred to with female pronouns in public spaces, suggesting that people recognize their desired gender. Although I sought to include trans people of color by approaching racial minority LGBTQ organizations and black churches open to LGBTQ people, all participants identified as white except one participant who listed both white and black as her race on the questionnaire. This study, therefore, largely reflects the work experiences of white trans women. This means that my sample, although disadvantaged along other axes of oppression, likely understood and practiced privileged "white norms" (Murray 1998). The intersection between being identified as white and a cis man pretransition, particularly for those who practiced normative masculinities, also could have increased the social and economic position from which they transitioned (higher-paying job, educational attainment status, etc.) (Ridgeway 2011). Thus, it is important to contextualize later findings in view of the intersection of cisgenderism with white trans women because the workplace experiences of racial minority trans women would likely differ. On other status characteristics besides race, the sample nevertheless captures variation in education, age, income, and years since transition.

The interview guide consisted of a variety of questions centered on trans women's work experiences before and after their transitions. To identify emergent themes, I read transcripts multiple times to generate topical themes and subtopics, leading to a coding framework comprised of respondents' perceptions of cissexism and sexism.

To assess whether individuals' gender practices fall within or outside of the range of behaviors considered to be normative (potentially affecting the degree of gender sanctioning they experienced from others), I asked, "How would you describe yourself while you were presenting as a man? As a woman?" In regard to their pretransition gender presentations, I coded 17 trans women as gender normative using the following descriptions: "normal guy," "macho," "masculine," "stereotypically male," and "one of the guys." In contrast, I coded eight trans women as non-normative pretransition based on their following descriptions: "feminine," "effeminate," "flamboyant," and/or often misattributed "as homosexual" or called "a fag." Reports that coworkers used homosexual-related insults toward them provide empirical support that coworkers interpreted their behaviors as nonnormative (Pascoe 2007).

Drawing on Mahalik and colleagues' (2005) construction of the Conformity to Feminine Norms Inventory—designed to assess dominant femininity norms in the United States—I classified trans women as gender normative post-transition if they described themselves as more relationally invested, nicer, and more oriented toward their physical appearance and used words typically tied to femininity to describe themselves, such as "girly-girl," "soft," "feminine," or "femme." I selected femininity norms from the dominant culture—European-American, middle- and upper-class heterosexuals—because these norms are the most pervasive and set the standards by which appropriate femininities are judged (Schippers 2007). Contrarily, I classified respondents who described themselves as "masculine, "butch," "aggressive," "loud," "and did not regularly wear makeup or dresses to work" as gender non-normative.

FINDINGS

The analyses that follow are organized into three main sections, each of which highlights a poignant theme. The first section draws attention to the double binds trans women experience in the workplace based on both their trans and gender status; the second section focuses on the fluidity of cissexism and sexism among organizational actors; and the third section highlights the collective and public demeanor of men's discriminatory actions. Because open trans women's experiences allow for distinct understandings of cissexism and sexism, my analyses largely focus on the experiences of this subgroup (20 of the 25 respondents were open). However, notably, undisclosed trans women indicate that they, too, experienced cisgendered constraints.

Cisgendered Double Binds

The "Bitch" Double Bind: Abdicating Dominant Practices In a cisgendered system that devalues trans and feminine statuses, open trans women report that coworkers imposed unique constraints on their actions, limiting how trans women could navigate the workplace without incurring a cis or gender-related penalty. Multiple trans women, with and without institutional authority, expressed constraints on how they could enact authority and reported pressures to avoid being labeled a "bitch" or as aggressive. For example, Elizabeth, an open trans woman with a higher-level job in protective services, reports conflicting cues to be authoritative (i.e., perform her job competently) and still be perceived as feminine: "If a woman is strong, then she's a bitch . . . I mean, I hear the way men talk at work. And with me it's kind of a double-edged sword because it's like, well, if I want them to see me as a woman, then that's what comes along with the territory." In other words, coworker's derisive and sexist views toward cis women who crossed gender boundaries signaled to Elizabeth that similar penalties of being deemed a "bitch" could be applied to her. Stereotypes of women as bitches disincentivize cis women from attempting to access masculinity privileges and penalize cis women when they do. Racialized feminine stereotypes contribute to expectations that white women, in particular, practice demureness and niceness (Ezzell 2009; Livingston et al. 2012). Importantly, these stereotypes had similar effects on trans women.

Yet, in the case of trans women, they also perceived strong incentives to not display dominant behaviors in the workplace because their gender identities were also at stake. Indeed, Elizabeth expressed that many cis men mocked her gender identity and thus, she felt even more constrained to act in ways that "proved" her gender identity. Cissexist and sexist beliefs that connect feminine authenticity with subordination—and not leadership—jeopardized her credibility as a woman when she exercised authority and reinforced that only birth-assigned males who practiced normative masculinities are entitled to expressions of authority. Whereas cis women are able to maintain a feminine identity because slurs such as "bitch" feminize and stigmatize them (rather than masculinize and stigmatize them) (Schippers 2007), trans women's masculine practices carried the additional penalty of undermining gender authenticity.

Consequences such as lower levels of respect that resulted from not enacting "strong" exertions of authority characterized the other side to the double bind. Indeed, Elizabeth expressed frustration with the lack of respect coworkers gave her:

> I noticed . . . [male subordinates] don't listen to me as much. When we are on runs, I'll say, "Let's move the patient this way" and they will . . . almost always want to do it a different way . . . they don't look to me for the guidance that they used to on things.

Despite her leadership position and Elizabeth's accumulated decades of experience, she perceived that she was now less influential and had little leeway to carry out her authority without calling into question her gender. Importantly, had Elizabeth acted authoritatively, her subordinates still may not have listened to her—not only because she was transgender, but also because she was recognized as rejecting masculinity in a very masculine environment.

The "Bitch" Double Bind: Maintaining Dominant Practices Not all trans women thought that the consequences of being perceived as a bitch outweighed the advantages that came from acting assertively and dominant. For example, Andrea, a computer professional, and Sara, a social scientist (both open at work), attest they still reaped rewards from enacting assertive and aggressive characteristics and avowed coworkers did not bestow them less authority post-transition. Sara states, "I'm very intimidating. I can come across as very forceful. . . . Some of my female colleagues feel like they get walked on by the students. I don't feel that problem." Sara draws on her confident, direct behaviors to explain why students respect her as compared to her cis women counterparts who presumably act less "forceful." Sara goes on to describe that colleagues respect her like any other scholar in the department. Andrea states, "The male detail of being assertive really serves me very well as a woman. . . . I find that I get taken seriously just as much as I did as a guy." Sara and Andrea may be extended additional leeway to display masculine-typed practices because their high levels of achievement legitimized their authority. Similar to the argument that some workplaces are less gendered than others (Britton and Logan 2008), Sara and Andrea's workplace contexts may also be less cisgendered than other organizations. Andrea transitioned on the job in a "trans-friendly" organization, and the academic department that hired Sara knew she was transgender and valued her research focused on gender identity. If these contexts emphasized norms that less tightly linked sex and gendered behaviors, trans women may have had more leeway to transition to women and further challenge gender binaries by retaining masculine-typed behaviors—blurring the lines between sexed bodies and gendered behaviors.

While these respondents received some benefits from enacting masculinities—which highlights the privileging of masculinity practices in organizations (Britton and Logan 2008)—they nevertheless did not receive the full dividend of masculine privilege because their public sex category did not align with this gender expression. Indeed, Andrea and Sara contend that their assertiveness still carried negative consequences even if they thought the benefits outweighed the negative consequences. Sara disclosed that she gained a reputation as a "bitch" by students (unaware of her transgender status) and coworkers (aware of her transgender status) because of her

assertive personality. Similarly, Andrea states that after being reprimanded by coworkers multiple times, she "learned that anger is not appropriate" as a woman and has resorted to mostly keeping her "mouth shut" when angry. These findings underscore the other side of the double bind of women attaining esteem but not likability.

In all of these cases, trans women—regardless if they did or did not maintain assertive practices—incurred a relational penalty. Importantly, trans women's previous experiences of being publically recognized as white cis men may have made it harder to abdicate behaviors that previously rewarded them with respect and influence. In other words, if trans women practiced normative masculinities prior to transitioning, as most attest, trans women had access to particularly esteemed privileges, white masculine privileges. Relegation post-transition, therefore, may be particularly noticeable or stark because these trans women had more status to lose as a result of intersecting gender and race advantages.

The Competence Double Bind Nearly half the sample of trans women—the majority of whom remained in the same job and were open about their trans status—reported that coworkers perceived them as less competent than coworkers previously did pretransition. Yet, when open trans women tried to combat coworkers' lowered assumed competence of their abilities by enacting masculinities, their attempts were thwarted by cultural legitimacy frames that determined them less entitled to advantages associated with masculinity practices, particularly in masculine-typed contexts. As such, open trans women perceived being penalized for practicing competence as a woman while at the same time being penalized for presenting as too feminine.

Genevieve's experiences as a bicycle mechanic in a small retail shop represent an illustrative case. Genevieve transitioned on the job and says she is never publicly misgendered. She states that cis men coworkers frequently "question that my [mechanical] diagnosis is wrong. I definitely get called out on things a lot more." Accordingly, she contends, "I was definitely more confident, when I was doing it as a man despite having less experience [than now]. . . ." This example provides a compelling case on how status beliefs are perceived by lower status individuals and have a self-fulfilling effect: Genevieve believes that people expect her to perform below par, and her performance suffers accordingly. Correspondingly, her lower performance helps confirm status beliefs that women are less mechanically apt, despite the socially constructed and situational context (Ridgeway and Correll 2006). She feels further constrained as to how to overcome these gender slights due to her trans status: "Like anything I do that's masculine accentuates my gender. It essentially proves that I'm really just a man that's doing a good job performing as a woman." Because practices necessary to perform her job are tightly connected to cis men and their assumed inherent qualities, she believed some coworkers interpreted her gender identity as inauthentic. Bettcher (2014) describes this dilemma as part of the deceiver-pretender double bind where trans women are cast as gender pretenders.

Making matters more difficult, she believed that coworkers simultaneously rewarded and penalized her femininity displays. Genevieve attests, "I definitely feel more objectified and taken less seriously the more along the femme spectrum I

travel." At the same time, her boss enforced stringent and difficult to obtain feminine standards of cleanliness: "[I]f I had some grease on my T-shirt, all of the sudden that became an issue where I had never seen anybody else get yelled at about getting grease on their shirt." Genevieve could either privilege her well-coiffed appearance and gain feminine status but delay repair time because of the extra measures she had to take to maintain a clean appearance, *or* privilege her mechanical skills but be penalized for her dirty appearance. As part of a cisgendered system that devalues both trans and feminine statuses, she navigated a fine line of not appearing too masculine, which could invalidate her gender, and presenting optimal femininities that would not undermine her assumed competence and avoid being gender policed by her manager.

Some employers also created double binds through job-task reassignments that overtly questioned trans women's competencies. Employers absorbed gender breaches by reassigning responsibilities so trans women's jobs included fewer masculine-typed tasks. While managerial actions certainly highlight the gendering of jobs and specific types of work (Britton 2003), managers' actions also highlight the importance that the coupling of sex and gender play in determining work assignments and resulting double binds for trans women. This assertion can be best understood through Jackie's workplace experiences. Jackie was a factory associate and part of her job required her to operate a stitcher machine, which was considered a high-status responsibility in her work context. According to Jackie, cis men nearly exclusively performed this job because it required some heavy lifting. After Jackie transitioned on the job, her boss reassigned her to a box-folder position in the warehouse despite the fact that she "was good at running the stitcher" and still able to lift the weight. Jackie states that this reassignment was "because he [her boss] was afraid that he would get in trouble with his bosses if he had me doing men's work." On one hand, her boss extended recognition to her gender identity by assigning her to more feminine-typed work. On the other hand, it reinforced cisgendered organizational practices that dictated that only birth assigned male bodies that displayed normative masculinities should perform masculine-typed jobs. In Britton's studies on the gendering of officer guard jobs in prisons, she noted that coworkers/managers rarely called upon cis women, even those who appeared physically stronger than cis men, to break up a prison fight; rather, the inscription of masculinities onto birth-assigned male bodies mattered more than the physical size of the body (Britton 2003). In this case, as soon as Jackie's body was disentangled from masculinities and therefore superior male strength, her employer revoked privileges to perform a higher status job. Not only did cissexism dictate that some trans women's gender transitions required a change in work, but trans women risked being assigned lessened responsibilities due to the direction of their transition to a subordinated gender and the devaluation of feminine work.

The Knowledge Double Bind and the Cisgender Burden of Being Undisclosed Open trans women were not the only ones tethered to cisgendered, competency double binds; undisclosed trans women also reported dualistic behavioral constraints. Because of the tight coupling of birth-assigned males with certain skill and knowledge sets, trans women whose transgender status had not been revealed at work

often felt compelled to act in ways that minimized the risk of their trans status being revealed and consequently, being viewed as a gender deceiver. This typically meant limiting their displays of masculine-typed knowledge. Acting otherwise could lead to a questioning of the authenticity of their gender and ultimately their sex. Amanda, a customer representative whose trans status was undisclosed, states, "It's funny how I hold myself back from saying—oh, I don't want to seem too knowledgeable because girls aren't supposed to know about certain things." Amanda's experience is illustrative of how status beliefs that privilege cis men's knowledge, consequently spur self-fulfilling effects by which trans women (and cis) interject less in conversations on culturally valued subjects (e.g., sports, technology, etc.) and consequently appear less knowledgeable. With replication, these interactions help legitimize assumed differentiated gendered knowledge and could spur Amanda to internalize these beliefs and/or develop other interests, especially if part of her enjoyment surrounding sports derived from the social interaction that accompanied it (Ridgeway 2011).

Other undisclosed trans women who did *not* hold back masculine-typed knowledge state that coworkers, particularly cis men, acted "shocked" when trans women knew information culturally associated with cis men and questioned the means by which it was acquired. Bethany, a trucker who switched jobs after her transition and maintained an undisclosed identity to workers she met at truck stops, describes a particular example in which a mechanic (cis man) interrogated her on how she knew about a specific engine part: "He acted completely surprised, and he proceeded to question how I knew so much about engines." In a binaristic system that rests upon cis men and cis women having inherently different interests and therefore different knowledge, trans women experience penalties regardless of their actions. Whereas Bethany's strategy increased scrutiny of her gender and potentially compromised any accruement of cis privileges—even if she appeared competent; Amanda's maintenance of cis privilege limited social connections (often secured through shared knowledge and commonality) and further differentiated the workplace by gender.

Dual Cisgendered Perspectives and the Fluidity of Cissexism and Sexism in the Workplace

Although most respondents were open about their transgender status, multiple trans women reported being in a state of flux between an undisclosed and disclosed transgender status, even within a single workday. Depending on the work-related person's knowledge of their trans history, trans women's transgender and/or gender statuses helped shape social interactions. Trans women's experiences of cissexism and sexism, thus, were often fluid and context dependent.

Fluidity of Explicit Cissexism and Veiled Sexism Trans women reported differences in the ways in which coworkers fluidly expressed cis sexism and sexism toward them. Wherein respondents reported that sexism permeated interactions through subtle cues, they reported that cissexism manifested in more flagrant actions. Laura,

an engineer technician who transitioned openly on the job and remained in the same position, asserts that when external clients (unaware of her transgender status) gave presentations to her engineering technician team (comprised of all cis men, except her), they often subtly singled her out to ensure she comprehended the material: "For most people, they're just like here are the bullet points, we'll skip right through. And it's like, 'Oh, wait. We've got a girl. We're going to have to go through and make sure she understands and explain it step by step.'" While in these instances she felt singled out as being less competent due to her gender, in other instances she encountered explicit harassment on the shop floor due to her transgender status. She states that coworkers, predominately cis men coworkers, "would avert their gaze and wanted nothing to do with" her while she assisted with a machine in their area. In this way, coworkers publicly affirmed their disapproval of her transition and used an averted gaze to relationally subordinate her (Wirth et al. 2010).

In another context, academia, Reanne's exposure to prejudices varied in and outside of the classroom. Reanne was a tenured professor in the humanities whose transgender status was open to colleagues but undisclosed to students. In the classroom, Reanne experienced lower student evaluations post-transition teaching the "exact same course and same notes" and was called a "femi-nazi" for including lectures on Margaret Atwood and other feminist writers. While presenting as a gender-normative cis man, students notably praised Reanne for being an advocate for women ("student responses . . . were wonderful") because both Reanne's gender and institutional position as a professor provided her with the esteem to transgress traditional hegemonic norms that typically devalue feminism. Post-transition, although students seemingly granted her cis privileges—as indicated by an absence of trans-related slurs in student evaluations and by her testaments that she "rarely, if ever, has been read as male"—she encountered a sexist double standard by which students judged her actions more harshly. Outside the classroom, she, contrarily, experienced cissexism when she was socially ostracized by coworkers and was later fired from her teaching position of which she attests was due to her transgender status. This type of employer response to a sex/gender breach is indicative of significant hurdles that some trans women still face at work.

Customers' Enactment of Cisgenderism Even nonorganizational actors such as customers helped perpetuate and enforce certain aspects of cisgenderism. A handful of trans women interacted with customers on a regular basis and attest that customers treated them differently, usually worse, than customers did prior to their transitions. Because respondents did not openly disclose their trans status to customers and they attest to never being misgendered in public, these trans women believed customers demoted them in social interactions due to their gender. Thus, some trans women not only experienced cissexism constraints and penalties on behalf of coworkers but experienced sexism on behalf of customers as well.

In one case, Sandra, a retail associate at a small bookstore where she worked pre- and post-transition, perceived a shift in her expected conversational role with customers. She attests that customers pulled her into *more* conversations post-transition but not as an active participant; rather, cis men enlisted her in long, one-sided

conversations and looked for her simply to listen and provide agreement with their opinions. Sandra's race likely mattered in this case as well because her white race may have signaled an expected gendered approachability (because traditional femininities tend to exclude racial minority women) that encouraged cis men to engage her (Reynolds-Dobbs, Thomas, and Harrison 2008). As a result, doing gender (i.e., doing additional emotional labor) was incorporated into the daily responsibilities of her job (Acker 1990; Hall 1993). All the while, she struggled with coworkers who did not think it was "appropriate for a trans person to be working" in the children's section of the bookstore, assumedly because trans women are still regarded by some as mentally unstable and sexually perverse (Tosh 2014). This research underscores the dual disadvantage that results from occupying two subordinate statuses (transgender and woman) and the conditional nature of cis privilege and its dependence on the nondisclosure of transgender status.

Group Dynamics and the Mobilization of Masculinity and Cisgender

The Invisible Act: Ignoring Trans Women and Privileging Cis Men's Attention Nearly all respondents assert that cis men, rather than cis women, inflicted more discriminatory practices, particularly when in the presence of multiple cis men. Trans women report that cis men nearly always treated them better one-on-one than in a group setting. Tara, an open trans woman who worked as a metadata specialist, states, "as the number increases in a group of men, the more interruptions happen, and the less I'm able to say than in a one-on-one situation with a man talking." While some cis men may have held more accepting and egalitarian views, maintaining and/or improving their own masculinity status appeared to trump their commitment to equality. Jenny, a librarian whose trans status was undisclosed, attributes men's exclusion of her as part of a broader practice that cis men repetitiously exercise toward feminine-identified persons: "I'm just treated as any other woman would be treated." Even in a female-dominated space such as a library, she suggests that cis men routinely excluded cis women when they fraternized. Notably, some trans women, including Jenny, welcomed exclusion from cis men's social circles because it signified cis men's recognition and respect for their desired gender, in spite of resulting stymied relations with organizational actors that often had greater access to resources. Bestowal of gender authenticity through this route only makes sense in a cisgendered system that relies on gender differentiation and encourages same-gender bonding, particularly among cis men.

Not all trans women welcomed social exclusion on account of their gender. Stephanie, a college instructor, states, "certain conversations for males you feel excluded from... . Sometimes they want to talk about sports and they think I wouldn't know anything about sports or have any interest ... but I like sports." Instead of inquiring about Stephanie's sports interests—as cis men undoubtedly did when they struck up conversations with other cis men—they instead privileged other cis men's attention and strengthened assumptions of shared interests.

Publicly Denouncing Sex/Gender Disruptions Trans women attest that cis men actively enforced and reproduced cissexism, along with sexism, through group life.

Similar to how cis men use homophobia to shore up their own masculinity, expressing cisgenderism was another way to mobilize masculinity in a group in which cis men's own status relied on distancing themselves from individuals who challenge dichotomous gender binaries. In other words, cis men communicated cisgenderism to assert that they were committed, at least publicly, to minimizing threats to the cisgender system. Jackie, the aforementioned factory associate who was open, states that a cis man coworker would frequently harass her by saying, "That's my bitch. That's my ho," when he walked by her workstation, particularly when other cis men could hear him. She attests that he did not speak to cis women in this manner and singled her out as a result of her trans status. Jackie's coworker used a phrase ("my bitch") that has been employed most notably in prison settings to assert dominance over a feminized, weak man. This phrase signaled to her and the other cis men within earshot that she represented a failed man, which of course, is only cogent in a broader context in which all women (cis and trans) are deemed subordinate (Kleinman, Ezzell, and Frost 2009).

Some cis men appeared to mobilize cisgenderism in order to cultivate a coherent masculine group identity—one that stressed an immutable dichotomous sex/gender structure and a natural gender hierarchy. Katie, a trucker, approached six cis men talking at a trucking rest stop. These cis men fluidly transitioned between expressing cissexist and sexist sentiments in a single conversation. Though Katie was open to her boss, her trans status was undisclosed to new truckers she met at truck stops.

> They [the six truckers] were talking about trans and saying, "Well, I could spot one of them [a trans woman] a mile away!" . . . And they noticed I was laughing. I was like, "Yeah, sure," and they proceeded to say that "it would just be like a guy in a dress" and all this other stuff and I said . . ., "You guys can't spot nothing" . . . but then they started putting me down: "You know where your place is, you shouldn't even be here, your place is in the bed and behind the sink washing dishes and having babies."

Here, cis men bonded over the idea that gender could not authentically be changed—that even though a man may put on a dress, he's still a "guy"—and that they as cis men had the ability to identify and define who was a man or woman (Serano 2007). Ironically, these cis men spoke directly to a trans woman and could not uncover any inauthenticity. But as soon as Katie challenged an idea that secured cis men's higher hierarchical position, these cis men corrected both of these breaches by rejecting her conversational challenge and by drawing on her gender status to demote her to a sexual object and a mother who was not qualified for paid work (and also not qualified to have an opinion in their conversation).

These group rituals represent collective strategies by cis men to repair possible ruptures to gender and cisgender systems. They simultaneously demonstrate many cis men's "dedication to being *men together*" where women—cis or trans—are leveraged as resources to bolster cis men's status (Martin 2001:611). Because other cis men are the greatest arbiters of cis men's behaviors and status (Schrock and Schwalbe 2009), it was more important for men to make their denouncements of trans women's gender breach known to cis men, rather than cis women. This research underscores the importance of groups to perpetuate organizational inequality.

DISCUSSION

While gendered interactional theories have advanced understandings of how workplaces are gendered, my analyses reveal the ways in which organizational actors enforce cisgendered principles via social relations with white trans women. By constraining and penalizing trans women's behaviors through double binds, enacting a flexible system of cissexism and sexism, and mobilizing cisgenderism, organizational actors promoted and enforced a culture that made it nearly impossible for trans women to achieve consistent esteem and respect. Coworkers—and customers, students, and clients—denied trans women privileges reserved for cis men who meet consistent sex/gender ideals. This research extends Acker's conceptualization of the ideal worker—that is, white, middle-class, male, married, and with a stay-at-home wife and children—by underscoring organizational interactions that help to enforce workers' sex and gender as fixed and culturally matched. In other words, the ideal worker is also someone who cultivates and practices a stable and normative gender identity.

Importantly, this study expands Bettcher's double-bind perspectives by illustrating how cissexism and sexism intersected to produce unique double binds for trans women as they constructed work identities. Because cisgendered assumptions link males and females biologically to certain gendered characteristics (Kessler and McKenna 1978), the tight coupling of authority and proactivity with masculinities incentivized trans women to shed these behaviors to validate their authenticity as women. As many trans women attest, cisgendered assumptions also incentivized workers to sanction trans women when they exhibited these traits. While some gender incongruities may be overlooked for cis women (Pascoe 2007), incongruities may be used to undo trans women's gender (Serano 2007). Thus, if trans women continued to engage in more assertive, proactive behaviors, they risked disrupting social cohesion within the work environment, experiencing gender sanctions by colleagues, and raising questions about the authenticity of their femaleness. However, if trans women adopted more reactionary behaviors—practices that align with white femininities—trans women affirmed recognition as authentic women at the expense of potential career rewards. At the same time, coworkers may still not recognize trans women as women.

This study provides important insights into practices of gender associated with whiteness and should be contextualized in view of this particular intersection. Indeed, feminine cisgender expectations are racialized in that practices considered "natural" for white cis women are not necessarily considered "natural" for nonwhite cis women (Collins 1990). Because white femininities are typically framed around cooperation, dependence, and niceness (Schippers 2007), according to trans women's reports, coworkers appeared to use expectations specifically associated with white femininities to gage the authenticity of trans women's gender. Notably, some trans women in certain high-level jobs who challenged gendered expectations post-transition thought colleagues still respected their opinions despite corresponding sanctions for assertive practices. Trans women, therefore, may have reaped benefits for displaying dominant behaviors that outweighed the penalties, corresponding with Britton's (2003) contention that organizations are masculinized.

The need to reconceptualize gendered interactions as cisgendered becomes particularly evident in the experiences of open trans women whose exposure to cissexism and sexism shifted, even within a single workday—highlighting the importance of cisgender to influence and shape interactions. Viewing organizational relations as cisgendered not only captures feminine subjugation but also encompasses the subjugation grounded in oppressing a variety of identities outside of a dichotomous birth-assigned category (Lennon and Mistler 2014). In jobs that required trans women to interact with noncoworkers (e.g., customers, students, clients, etc.), open trans women may be allotted cisgender privilege, yet at the same time, this privilege could be readily rescinded upon disclosure of transgender status—an omnipresent risk for all trans women (Serano 2007). Consequently, some open trans women experienced dual cisgendered perspectives based on experiences of being extended cis privileges at times and other times not. However, even when organizational actors granted trans women cis privileges by not questioning their gender authenticity, trans women reported encountering sexist interactions that undermined their assumed competency and authority due to the direction of their transition to women.

While "othering" and subsequent adaptation research has been theorized with cisgender people (Salzinger 2003; Stombler and Martin 1994), empirical analysis of trans people's experiences offers further insight into these social processes. These findings demonstrate that even limited exposure to subordinate status beliefs can be enough to spur trans women to alter their behaviors and beliefs about their own capabilities despite, in many cases, decades of contrasting experiences of privilege. As several respondents report, they feel they have no choice but to accept certain cis/gender expectations to maintain a peaceful working environment. Through self-fulfilling prophecies, hierarchical gender status beliefs have an appearance of being socially legitimate (Ridgeway and Correll 2006).

Cisgendered practices, such as those outlined in the article, are fundamental to upholding gendered practices because they strengthen the assumed natural connection between males and masculinities and, therefore, cis men's inherent superiority over cis and trans women and cis men that fail to practice masculinities correctly. Hence, cis men, particularly in groups, appeared to mobilize cisgender ideals that denounced sex/gender transgressions and publicly pledged their support to the current cisgender system. Similar to how cis men direct masculinities toward other cismen, trans women described instances in which cis men directed their practices toward other cis men and leveraged trans women—and the denigration of them—as a resource to bolster cis men's own status. When cis men were confronted with a trans woman or the idea of trans people, it was not enough for cis men to simply mobilize masculinities. Instead, cis men mobilized cisgenderism, a more expansive oppression that not only privileged masculinities but also called attention to the inherency and fixed characteristic of gender. This study provides further nuance to Martin's (2001) mobilization framework and brings forth useful information on how cisgenderism is exercised and maintained in organizations.

While my findings offer novel insights into cisgendered relational practices, limitations exist and open up important directions for future research. First, analyses of how nonwhite racial stereotypes and status beliefs intersect with cisgenderism at

work is ripe for investigation because this study largely reflects the work experiences of white trans women. I suspect that trans women of color would likely report different experiences based on coworkers gendered, cisgendered, and racialized expectations, resulting in double binds different from those of white trans women. For example, prior to transitioning, black trans women may contend with stereotypes of being perceived as threatening (Shapiro et al. 2009). Transitioning to women may alleviate this stereotype, allowing for greater freedom to access people's intimate space at work and the ability to express anger without invoking fear in coworkers; of course, post-transition, black trans women may be perceived as loud or obnoxious (Reynolds et al. 2008; Schilt 2010). Thus, black trans women may be expected to fulfill racialized and gendered stereotypes specific to black women; otherwise, the authenticity of their gender may be challenged. Second, future research should examine how cissexism and sexism varies across heterogeneous workplace contexts. Due to the small sample, variation across these types was difficult to detect. A comparison of how cisgendered practices unfold in high and low status, as well as how practices vary across male- and female-dominated occupations may also yield interesting findings.

Trans women's accounts attest to the difficulty of changing the cisgender order, particularly in employment contexts where organizational goals rest upon the harmonious cooperation of employees. Regardless of the ways by which they craft their professional identities, trans women risked incurring penalties for either not meeting cisgendered or gendered expectations. While the current study extends our understanding of perceived status hierarchies at work, double binds, and how cisgender operates and reifies in the course of rooted organizational practices and interactions, more scholarly attention is warranted to fully understand how organizations distribute work, enact policies, and recruit, hire, promote, and fire employees based on cisgendered principles

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