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## High Impact of [Whiteness] on Trans\* Students in Postsecondary Education

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### ABSTRACT

This article asserts whiteness as an ideology that reaches beyond race/racism to shape and reproduce other interlocking oppressive systems. In higher education, this notion of whiteness permeates commonly celebrated “high impact practices” (HIPs) to undermine the success of trans\* students in US postsecondary education. Through an intersectional approach, we illustrate how HIPs lead to jeopardizing trans\* students’ success in higher education and advance a different approach that we have coined “trickle up high impact practices” (TUHIPs). TUHIPs prioritize the needs of those students who are most vulnerable and incorporate an acknowledgement of the oppressive contexts within which students with multiple minoritized identities must navigate higher education. We discuss the implications of this approach and offer five recommendations to move higher education institutions toward policies, practices, and systems that support the college success of trans\* students.

In May 2013, Monica Jones, a black trans\*<sup>1</sup> woman, was arrested in Phoenix, Arizona on the ambiguous charge of “manifesting prostitution.” At the time of her arrest, Jones was in her third year as a student at Arizona State University working toward a degree in social work. An active member of her community, Jones “volunteer[ed] with battered women, work[ed] at a needle exchange, and passe[d] out condoms to sex workers” (Crabapple, 2014, para. 13). She also was involved with the Sex Workers Outreach Project (SWOP) in Phoenix, which had been actively protesting Project ROSE. Project ROSE was “an anti-prostitution collaboration between the Arizona State University School of Social Work, the Phoenix Police Department, and Catholic Charities, which claims to provide services to workers within the sex industry through a prostitution diversion program” (Strangio, 2014, para. 7).

Jones’ arrest and imprisonment has become illustrative of how the US carceral state targets visibly trans\* people, specifically black trans\* women (McDonald, 2015). As she has stated herself, “If I was a white woman walking in Arcadia, I would never have been stopped for manifestation. But since I’m a black trans\* woman, who’s hypersexualized [I was arrested]” (ACLU of Arizona, 2014). And while Jones’ case took place in Arizona, the ongoing surveillance and policing of black trans\* women has a national scope. For example, on February 3, 2016, Natasha Martin, a black trans\* woman, was arrested in Brooklyn, New York “under a 40-year-old statute in the state’s penal code that allows the police broad discretion in arresting anyone they deem to be loitering for the purpose of engaging in prostitution” (Bellafante, 2016, para. 3). Black women’s gender and sexuality has always already been burdened with racist fantasies of both hypersexualization and emasculation (Collins, 2004; Jourian, 2017; Spillers, 1987; Stewart, 2017),

rendering black transwomen particularly vulnerable and subjected to criminalization (Mock, 2014)—the manifestation of the white imaginary through the carceral state.

Jones is described as having been arrested for “walking while trans” (Busey, 2014; Nicolazzo, Marine, & Galarte, 2015), and her case is of particular importance for the field of higher education for multiple reasons. Certainly, Jones’ being a black trans\* woman signals the need for complex intersectional analyses of racialization and (trans\*)gender oppression (Alexander, 2010; Mogul, Ritchie, & Whitlock, 2011; Stanley & Smith, 2011). However, perhaps more germane to higher education is the need for further clarification on how institutions of higher education are colluding with state and federally sanctioned policing of people with marginalized identities (Nicolazzo et al., 2015). As Jones stated:

I am a student at ASU, and fear that these wrongful charges will affect my educational path. I am also afraid that if I am sentenced, I will be placed in a men’s jail as a transgender woman, which would be very unsafe for me. Prison is an unsafe place for everyone, and especially trans people. (Strangio, 2014, para. 4)

It, therefore, becomes essential to explore how educational institutions collude in the ongoing oppression of highly vulnerable populations, such as black trans\* women. It is our contention that such collusion is both explicit—as was the case with Project ROSE—and implicitly interlaced throughout policies and practices often presumed to be “best practices.” In particular, we examine one such widely lauded set of practices, that of *high impact practices* (HIPs; Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, Whitt, & Associates, 2005).

As higher education scholars, we believe that challenging and disrupting inequity in postsecondary institutions is a public good and therefore a critical gaze is needed to transform those institutions. In this article, we expose the oppressive frameworks of HIPs, suggesting the concept of whiteness as an ideological container in which various interlocking systems of oppression operate in higher education. First, we discuss relevant literature detailing how institutions of higher education are complicit in furthering trans\* oppression. We then introduce HIPs as a set of commonly used practices that does not take trans\* students, particularly trans\* students of color, into account. Next, we discuss our conceptualization of whiteness as a container, which we then use as a lens through which to interrogate HIPs, including how they have been praised as a “best practice” throughout higher education praxis. To disrupt this inequitable educational practice, we turn to Spade’s (2015) work and propose a rearticulation of HIPs as *trickle up high impact practices* (TUHIPs), which focus on the lives and experiences of those most on the margins. Finally, we use our extended critique of HIPs as a clarion call for educational researchers to collect more precise data regarding the effects of oppression for multiply marginalized populations in higher education. Although intersectionality has become an oft-cited buzzword in higher education, our analysis exposes the deep flaws in scholars’ understandings and usage of the concept (e.g., Jones, 2014; May, 2015). Therefore, we end our article by (re)calling educational researchers to Crenshaw’s (1989, 1995) original conceptualization of intersectionality and how it should be used as a tool of radical transformation within higher education.

### Higher education enactments of trans\* oppression

Monica Jones’ case serves as one of the various points of connection detailing how educational institutions actively perpetuate the surveillance and policing of people with multiple marginalized identities, while systematically shutting them out of participation in practices otherwise seen as valuable for undergraduate students. This has particular deleterious effects on trans\* people of color and trans\* women of color. To this end, various scholars have elucidated how institutions of higher education are awash in trans\* oppression (Catalano & Griffin, 2016; Nicolazzo, 2017), trans-misogyny<sup>2</sup> (Jourian, Simmons, & Devaney, 2015; Serano, 2007), and transmisogynoir<sup>3</sup> (Trudy, 2014). These realities not only highlight the continued dismissal and disavowal of trans\*

people throughout postsecondary educational spaces, but also demonstrate the interlocking nature of systems of domination and oppression in ways that harm those with multiple subordinated identities, as is evident in Jones' case. Compounding these systems of domination and oppression that frame trans\* people as impossible and/or as inherent problems (Butler, 2004; Cohen, 1997; Spade, 2015) are those policies, practices, and frameworks that have become widely lauded in higher education. These concepts are complicit in promoting an ideological whiteness throughout higher education research and practice; an ideology that has deleterious consequences for marginalized students, as is evidenced by Jones' plight described above.

One such celebrated framework that forwards ideological whiteness is that of "high impact practices" (HIPs; Kuh et al., 2005). Mirroring most of higher education scholarship and practice, this framework was developed without care, attention, or energy paid to trans\* people and our needs. The result of this oversight was the development of a series of HIPs that are not accessible to trans\* students due to administrative violence (Spade, 2015) and trans\* oppression. For example, the HIP of studying abroad overlooks: how trans\* students may not be able to access necessary identity documents such as passports (Spade, 2015); that trans\* students of color are always already imagined as dangerous in a post-9/11 world (Beauchamp, 2013); and/or that non-binary trans\* students may need to make choices that encourage feelings of gender dysphoria to access such opportunities. Other HIPs include research-based relationships with faculty, career internships, and service-learning. Each of these recommendations ignore trans-antagonistic personal biases (e.g., transphobia), systemic oppression (e.g., large-scale absence of nondiscrimination protections), and the tendency of academic programming to privilege the learning needs of multiply privileged students (Jones, LePeau, & Robbins, 2013; Seider, Huguley, & Novick, 2013). As tragically illustrated by Monica Jones, trans\* collegians cannot safely enact recommended HIPs even when they align with institutional goals and rhetoric for student involvement and success. Thus, trans\* students are egregiously disserved by HIPs, yet the framework is purported to have universal applicability and effectiveness (Kuh et al., 2005), reflecting the dominance of whiteness in higher education (Patton, Harper, & Harris, 2015).

As trans\* scholars, we find the continued use of such frameworks deeply problematic. These frameworks not only continue to position trans\* people as inherently deficient in comparison to their cisgender peers, but also shape physical campus environments in ways that directly impact trans\* lives. Similar to Hanhardt's (2013) analysis of how white middle-class lesbian and gay communities have used notions of "community safety" to gentrify neighborhoods where queer and trans\* people of color live, we suggest that the continued promotion of HIPs without regard to its investments in whiteness as an ideological container further reproduces the maintenance of college campuses as dangerous spaces for trans\* students, especially those at the intersections of interlocking systems of oppression.

### **Whiteness as a container**

Our argument rests on understanding whiteness as an ideology of interlocking tacit assumptions that shape and support racism, patriarchy, classism, ableism, ageism, religious hegemony, trans\* oppression, heterogenderism, and settler colonialism. We join other scholars, both classic and contemporary, who have employed intersectionality (Collins, 1998; Crenshaw, 1989) to recognize how whiteness has been connected to other discourses of oppression, including gender and family (Davis, 1983; Torres & Pace, 2005; Williams, 1995), sexuality (Collins, 1998; Hanhardt, 2013; Hutchinson, 2000), social class (Adair, 2001; Anthias, 2005; Levine-Rasky, 2011), and disability (Clare, 2015). Therefore, we see *whiteness* as distinct from *white identity* and *white supremacy*. We understand *white supremacy* to be the belief in white racial purity and eugenic superiority, enacted through the structural, symbolic, and physical violence of racism and anti-blackness. However, our conceptualization of *whiteness* is that it is an ideological and epistemological

perspective that consolidates and promotes hegemony and normalization across various interlocking systems of domination and oppression to further white supremacy. As such, whiteness is a way of knowing and set of knowledges that drives white supremacy. Moreover, engaging in whiteness is not restricted to those who are racially classified as white in the US.

A whiteness episteme centers and privileges certain habits, beliefs, and ways of being as normal, optimal, and preferred following Johnson's (2006) definition of privilege. Those habits, beliefs, and ways of being include supposed proper relations between and among racial groups, as well as assertions of what constitutes normal, optimal, and preferred sexual relationships, family structures, forms of religious worship, economic relationships, and ideas about labor, as well as norms for interpersonal interactions as enactments of whiteness. Those knowledges inform social policy, law enforcement, and educational curricula. For example, as both Angela Davis (1983) and Patricia Williams (1995) have written, two-parent family structures where one parent, the mother, stays at home with the children have been optimized over single-parent, multigenerational families, and families where all the adults work outside the home. These are household structures commonly found among communities of colonized and racially minoritized peoples, whose structures reflect resistance to and resilience in the face of settler colonialism and anti-blackness. One consequence of whiteness's propagation of cis-patriarchal-heterosexism is that black families have been demonized and targeted by anti-poverty policies (Adair, 2001).

Likewise, sexuality and gender norms have been used to target racially minoritized communities as hypersexual and inappropriately matriarchal (Collins, 1998, 2004), as well as to ostracize those with minoritized identities of sexuality and gender (e.g., cisgender queers and trans\* people across sexualities) for presenting a danger and challenge to "safe communities" (Hanhardt, 2013). Colluding with whiteness's consumption of classism, white middle and upper-middle class queer people have used marriage equality as a homonormative/assimilationist project to regain access to white privilege and further marginalize the needs of queer and trans\* people of color (Hanhardt, 2013; Spade, 2015). These examples illustrate the broad reach of epistemological whiteness.

This conceptualization of whiteness as an epistemic reality is not meant to overshadow or erase complex analyses regarding the intersections of specific systems of oppression (e.g., transmisogynoir). We recognize the risk posed by further privileging white identities in our analysis. In this article, we seek to intentionally speak to the ways in which Western European colonization and its creation of white identities have relied on multiple systems of oppression, beyond phenotype and lineage, to further white supremacist projects. We also recognize forms of power that name particular matrices of oppression, as well as how various, potentially disparate, forms of oppression coalesce to further the project of white supremacy across educational spaces. In other words, we do not intend our assertion of whiteness as a container to be an erasure of the effects of particularized forms of oppression. Instead, we find the container to be a useful metaphor to understand how white supremacy holds many seemingly disparate threads of oppression together to consolidate power and further the project of white racial hegemony.

Throughout our article, we re/present whiteness as a container for these interlocking systems that inform white supremacy by writing it within brackets as [whiteness]. Our use of brackets follows their grammatical usage to replace a word or term within a direct quotation with another term that is synonymous and comprises the ideas behind the original word. In relation to our conceptualization, we use [whiteness] as an overarching episteme that supersedes and encompasses a vast network of systems of oppression. Thus, [whiteness] acts as a broad and all-encompassing descriptor for the many individual systems of oppression named above, as well as intersectional analyses of oppression (e.g., trans-misogyny, transmisogynoir).

[Whiteness], then, is a complex and nefarious web of tacit assumptions that, among other things, promotes an idealized vision of "the student body" or the "traditional" student that is limited to those who are white cisgender-heterosexual men, 18–23 years old, middle to upper-class, enabled<sup>4</sup>, and (Protestant) Christian. The impact of the tacit nature of [whiteness] as an

ideological container for multiple, interlocking oppressions is that it is more ethereal, going disguised as unbiased and equitable policy and practice. For example, Ahmed (2012) discussed the free-floating use of “diversity” on college campuses as a synonym for race. However, what is often lost in these overly simplistic usages are their implicit [whiteness], and how that [whiteness] forecloses educators from coming to know the complex ways in which power operates to “shorten life chances” (Spade, 2015) for those with multiple marginalized identities (Cohen, 1997). We now turn to a discussion of the development of HIPs, linking their creation and use as implicitly tethered to [whiteness].

### **The [whiteness] of high impact practices**

A team of higher education scholars performed case studies of approximately 20 colleges and universities to identify educational practices that facilitated student success (Kuh et al., 2005). These institutions were diverse by size, mission, and sectarian affiliation, including two historically black colleges<sup>5</sup>, having in common higher-than-predicted graduation rates and engagement scores on the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE; Kuh et al., 2005). Related to Astin’s (1985, 1993) theoretical framework describing the relationship among students’ individual pre-college characteristics, the institutional environment, and students’ individualized outcomes (i.e., the “I-E-O model”), Kuh et al.’s research focused on the institutional environment as a crucible for facilitating student learning, achievement, and persistence. Specifically, they sought to identify the strategies and programing opportunities accessible across the student body (as opposed to those focused only on certain pre-selected students, such as honors programs) that added value to students’ educational experiences (Kuh et al., 2005). Conceptualized as an idealized set of “enriching educational experiences” (Kuh et al., 2005), HIPs include internships, community service and volunteerism, foreign language coursework, study abroad, independent study, co-curricular activities, and culminating senior experiences.

Differential access to HIPs, the effects of oppression on student outcomes from such practices, and institutional capacities informing the structure and delivery of HIPs were not acknowledged or analyzed as mediating effects limiting the transferability of HIPs. Consequently, the development of HIPs reflects [whiteness] and the normalization, optimizing, and preferencing of the “traditional” “student body.” This fictive body remains unchallenged as the basis upon which broad-based educational recommendations for the use of HIPs have been derived using non-intersectional, majoritarian-based research practices that center and normalize as “average” (i.e., the statistical mean) the outcomes of oppressive systems of privilege.

In doing so, the survey design, data collection, data analysis, and data dispersal from which HIPs were developed become sites for the (re)production of administrative violence—or the violence enacted onto marginalized people and populations through administrative functions and processes (Spade, 2015)—as at each phase, those on the margins (e.g., trans\* students) and those with multiple marginalized identities (e.g., trans\* women of color, non-binary students with disabilities) are erased from view (Cohen, 1997; Crenshaw, 1989). Thus, [whiteness] as an ideology operates on multiple levels: epistemological, methodological, and practical/policy. Moreover, these multiple forms of erasure through [whiteness] compound each other, constructing worlds of [whiteness] in which there is no other type of student worthy of attention, energy, or recognition than the “average” “student body” that is the central focus of HIPs.

### **Destabilizing [whiteness] in higher education**

Other scholars in higher education have begun to challenge the inherent majoritarian narratives embedded in higher education. For example, Patton (2016) examined the history and development of higher education through the lens of critical race theory (CRT). Her CRT analysis

disrupted the “ordinary, predictable, and taken for granted ways” in which higher education has functioned since its inception fortified by racism and white supremacy. Racism and white supremacy are pervasive in the theoretical frameworks (Patton et al., 2015), methodological approaches (Scheurich & Young, 1997), and publication processes (Harper, 2012) that serve as gatekeepers for what knowledge and evidence will be disseminated, cited, and used to inform policy and practice. Despite the emergence of the “other” in higher education scholarship, [whiteness] has remained centered, empowered, and normalized as optimally functional (Patton et al., 2015). By studying race but not engaging the systemic effects of racism, the literature that buttresses higher education scholarship, policy, and practice permits racist norms to exist unchecked (Harper, 2012).

As noted by Harper (2012), higher education research has rarely used CRT for conceptual sense-making. The violence enacted by such an uncritical gaze remains hidden from view without the direct and intentional application of theoretical frameworks grounded in critical and poststructural paradigms. This results in the development of popularized mechanisms, such as HIPs, that do little to actually reduce or eliminate inequities among student populations, but rather reproduce and leave disregarded the marginalization and oppression faced by those on the margins across the campus commons and beyond into internship sites and global locations. Instead, foregrounding the assumption of [whiteness] and its effects as pervasive and inescapable reveals the manifold ways that oppression constrains and restricts student success for multiply marginalized students.

In critiquing the practices themselves, it becomes quite clear how [whiteness] operates as a way to “shorten [educational] chances” (Spade, 2015) for those on the margins. For example, one’s engagement in community service and volunteerism as a HIP necessitates a level of leisure time, money, and an ability to access local organizations; these are luxuries to which many multiply marginalized students do not always already have easy access. However, the supposition that participating in these [white] HIPs is identity-neutral or inclusive of promoting every student’s success occludes these realities. Moreover, community service is often understood by students and educators as helping those who are “less fortunate” (Jones & Hill, 2003; Jones et al., 2013), which is a narrative that is racialized and steeped in settler colonialism. Specifically, those doing community service occupy a “less fortunate” community, often a racially minoritized community, to provide a version of “support” that may be disconnected to that community’s needs/values. Additionally, such “support” is often given with little to no conversation about what the occupied community wants or needs. This form of [whiteness]-as-“support” also does not engage the community in problem solving, in direct contrast to what many critical educators have encouraged (e.g., Freire, 2000). In this sense, the person doing community service is always positioned as “more fortunate,” which overlooks the ways in which multiply marginalized students’ in/visibility operates to deny their full humanity and breadth of their personal experiences.

### **Imagining liberatory practices from the margins**

Instead of continuing to be complicit in the deleterious [whiteness] of HIPs, we propose postsecondary educators move toward developing and using what we term “trickle up high impact practices” (TUHIPs). We base our notion of TUHIPs on Spade’s (2015) assertion to prioritize the “most vulnerable first” believing that “social justice trickles up, not down” (pp. 222–224). In this critical tradition, we call on those in higher education to take part in crafting and using a set of TUHIPs that recognize the margins as a potent site of resistance (hooks, 1999). The diffuse, always already asymmetrical, circuitous ways in which networks of power pervade campus institutional cultures orient us to believe much can be gained from going to/staying in the margins *alongside those multiply marginalized populations who are already there* and conceptualizing new, inclusive TUHIPs with them. In doing so, we engage in a praxis of recognition and redistribution alongside marginalized populations (Ferguson, 2012). Put another way, our imagining TUHIPs is

a strategy for recognizing the central importance of working alongside multiply marginalized populations in higher education praxis as well as a process through which educators can redistribute human and financial resources toward those who are most vulnerable. Thus, the impact of TUHIPs has liberatory outcomes, rather than the highly bruising effects of HIPs described above.

Our conceptualizing of TUHIPs coincides with Love's (2010) notion of liberatory consciousness. As described by Love (2010), liberatory consciousness acts as a lens through which individuals can understand the complex implications of systemic oppression without giving into hopelessness, engaging in savior complex mentalities, or viewing allyship as a static positionality/identity. Instead, liberatory consciousness demands recognizing one's need for constant and consistent investments in critical hope (Duncan-Andrade, 2009), or the notion that one can—and must—continually resist systemic oppression, despite its omnipresence.

In connecting liberatory consciousness to trans\* populations, Catalano (2015a) used the concept to “provide ... a holistic framework for strategies and practices that go beyond virtual equality” (p. 419) alongside trans\* men. In other words, Catalano's use of liberatory consciousness to further educational praxis with trans\* students resists the wholesale adoption of “best practices,” such as HIPs, that are devoid of cultural contexts and histories and in no ways center those students like Monica Jones who, as trans\* women of color, are highly marginalized. Catalano's use of Love's work is also an important signpost for our conceptualizing TUHIPs due to the pairing of liberatory consciousness with trans\* college students. Thus, our connection of TUHIPs with liberatory consciousness builds on Catalano's (2015a) work, expanding the trans\* populations with whom liberatory consciousness could be used to advocate education that “go[es] beyond virtual equality.”

### **TUHIPs with and alongside trans\* students**

In what follows, we explore possibilities for conceptualizing TUHIPs alongside trans\* students. As will become clear, we do not provide examples of specific TUHIPs. We make this choice intentionally, as the process of arriving at TUHIPs requires that one center trans\* students in both the process of their development as well as the goal of their being solidified and established. Instead of proposing a list of TUHIPs, then, we focus on the process by which educators could realize TUHIPs that best fit their educational contexts. As Catalano (2015a) indicated,

Developing a liberatory consciousness requires people, as individuals and in their institutional roles, to ask themselves and their colleagues about goals that support trans\* people, and then ask how they can do it better. There is no “one size fits all” approach to institutional change, and each college and university must consider specific institutional dynamics, limitations, and structure. (p. 430)

We concur, and our focusing on the process rather than the goal of arriving at TUHIPs reflects our commitment to using liberatory consciousness to frame educators' work alongside trans\* collegians.

We envision TUHIPs as those practices that frame student success and engagement from frameworks that resist racism, ableism, ageism, settler colonialism, trans\* oppression and heterogenderism, religious hegemony, and patriarchy. As various scholars have discussed, postsecondary education is deeply embedded in racism (e.g., Ahmed, 2012; Carnevale & Strohl, 2013; Patton, 2016; Scheurich & Young, 1997), trans\* oppression (e.g., Nicolazzo, 2017; Stewart, 2017a), economic inequality (e.g., Porter, 2015), ableism (e.g., Jones, 1996; Miller, 2017), and various other forms of systemic oppression. As such, it is vital for educational researchers to resist colluding in such systems, which have nefarious effects for trans\* populations, who often confront multiple, interlocking systems of oppression. Instead, it becomes important for educators to center research and praxis that can aid in recognizing higher education as a radically democratic<sup>6</sup> engine of liberatory futures. We envision TUHIPs as one way in which educational researchers can begin to do such.

An essential component of such imagining is the creation of research teams that reflect those in the margins alongside whom they are working. Ensuring that research teams involve those with trans\* identities is a necessary move, as it resists an epistemology of settler colonialism, or the notion that cisgender people are “helping” trans\* people. Furthermore, we propose that trans\* people not be peripheral to the research team process, but integral members, perhaps even positioned as taking leading roles in such teams. It also is essential that research teams involve and collaborate alongside various local trans\* community members and organizations as well. Doing so will help reduce the effect of what Rist (1980) described as “blitzkrieg” data collection, or the process whereby outside researchers descend on a site, collect data, and then leave, showing little to no care or investment in the community from which they have collected data.

Such liberatory strategies are reflective of those practices already in use by grassroots member-based organizations that forward justice for trans\* populations, such as the Sylvia Rivera Law Project, Audre Lorde Project, and FIERCE, among others. Strategies such as having open meetings, housing meeting minutes in widely accessible spaces (e.g., online repositories on office web-sites), using consensus decision-making, and ensuring trans\* students are in leading/leadership positions are essential for the development of TUHIPs (Nepon, Redfield, & Spade, 2013). Though these strategies may feel uncomfortable for some educators, we suggest this discomfort could be vital to uprooting the [whiteness] that largely grounds the false premise that educators “know best,” and therefore, should always be foregrounded in policy and practice-based decision-making. We assert that subverting such [whiteness] is at the very core of developing TUHIPs. Such subversion would also reinforce the ways in which developing TUHIPs is one that is—and always should be—led by trans\* people and others with multiply marginalized identities (Nepon et al., 2013; Spade, 2015).

We also envision these practices as being developed *with and alongside* the very populations they are espoused to support, rather than being developed *on or about* them (Bhattacharya, 2008; Nicolazzo, 2017). For example, as Harper (2012), Renn (2010), and Pasque, Carducci, Gildersleeve, and Kuntzntz (2012) discussed, there is a continued need for the use of critical and poststructural paradigms and methodologies in the advancing of research that resists normative conceptualizations of college environments, discourses, and student populations. Not only do paradigms that center the experiences of vulnerable populations need to be used, but methodologies that encourage working alongside such populations should be strongly encouraged and amplified. Collaborative/feminist (auto)ethnography, oral history, narrative, communities of practice, and participatory action research methodologies can be used to resist the normative framing of research, and by extension, the results of such research that plague the creation and (re)production of HIPs as a “best practice” in higher education. This suggestion not only amplifies Love’s (2010) notion of liberatory consciousness, but also serves to answer the call from Nicolazzo (2016) to engage in methodological practices that are invested with “liberatory potential,” and is a project both the authors, as critical educators, have employed. For example, we have used various methodologies to reimagine the populations alongside whom we research and with whom we are ourselves a part. For example, Stewart (2017b) used oral history as a practice to center the narratives of black collegians, and Nicolazzo (2017) has used collaborative ethnography to situate himself alongside trans\* collegians to envision what we and our participants articulated as “practices of resilience,” or those daily strategies to navigate the omnipresence of trans\* oppression in colleges and universities.

Finally, we propose that all TUHIPs be subject to consistent and constant revision. In doing so, we recognize Spade’s (2015) invocation that “we need a critical trans politics that is about practice and process rather than a singular point of ‘liberation’” (p. 2). In doing so, we pick up on Stewart’s (2010) framing of research as steeped in fallibility, or the notion that “empirical knowledge claims are informed by imperfect observations and therefore may turn out to be false and subject to correction (Rysiew, 2009)” (p. 292). We assert that even quantitative research, often framed as providing objective, generalizable truths, is subject to fallibilism, through the use

of researchers' imperfect observations to construct and interpret instruments and data. As such, we assert that any imagining of TUHIPs should center research designs that are longitudinal and/or repetitive in nature. In this way, research teams can continually revisit and reassess their presumed claims regarding TUHIPs, thereby realizing these practices as always already in process rather than a "singular point of 'liberation.'"

In other words, TUHIPs should never be thought of as a closed, final set of practices, but as a continually re/negotiated list of what works for the most marginalized students, many of whom may not even be able to access our campuses due to the excluding and exclusionary [whiteness] of higher education (Ahmed, 2012; Ferguson, 2012; Patton, 2016). Such a recognition also implies that everyone must be involved in trans\* liberation. As Catalano (2015a) stated, "A shift to liberatory consciousness for individuals at an institution reasserts how everyone is responsible for trans\* inclusion at all times" (p. 430). Creating TUHIPs, then, would require more than one office, one (marginalized) population, and/or one moment in time.

Finally, TUHIPs should be continually constructed with and alongside multiply marginalized populations, and should be framed by epistemologies, methodologies, and research designs that are invested with "liberatory potential" (Nicolazzo, 2016a, 2017). These practices will not radically or immediately alter the inequity and injustice replete in institutions of higher education. Yet, they are strategies and practices whereby those who are most vulnerable can be consistently recentered by envisioning a praxis that prioritizes the "most vulnerable first" and, as a result, lives out loud the notion that "social justice trickles up, not down" (Spade, 2015, pp. 222–224).

### Implications for Policy, Practice, and Research

Our discussion of the [whiteness] of HIPs reveals how the proposition of "power-neutral" ways of promoting student engagement and success erase trans\* collegians who often come with multiple marginalized positionalities and subjectivities in postsecondary education. As Patton (2016) wrote, "Concepts and phrases such as 'learning outcomes,' 'assessment,' and 'evaluation' are regularly used to gauge how students experience college but rarely account for, at least in a critical way, the nuanced experiences that shape the racial realities of college life" (p. 325). This power-neutral approach is consistent to identity-neutral approaches, which foreground single-axis analyses of how privilege and marginalization operate and are also grounded in [whiteness]. Specifically, the greatest impact of HIPs is their inaccessibility to trans\* students, like Monica Jones, who are most on the margins (e.g., trans\* women of color, trans\* people with disabilities, queer and trans\* students living in poverty). That these practices are inaccessible for trans\* and gender non-conforming students is itself an effect of the role of [whiteness] as an incubator for the (re)production of cisnormativity, heteronormativity, patriarchy, trans-misogyny, transmisogynoir, compulsory able-bodiedness, and religious hegemony, among other vectors of systemic domination and oppression.

The implications for this conceptual article are manifold. We explicate five future directions for institutional policy, practice, and research. First, we begin by recommending that institutional policy analysts endeavor to elucidate the systematic and structural (dis)engagement of trans\* and gender non-conforming students from HIPs, including providing an in-depth understanding as to why they may be (dis)engaged. Second, we propose that our critique of HIPs should encourage educators to work alongside trans\* collegians to develop (in)visible and (un)official networks of educationally enriching practices. For example, Nicolazzo (2016, 2017) discussed the development of (un)officially sanctioned kinship networks as vital to trans\* student success. In other words, given the complex and often problematic nature of institutionalizing diversity and inclusion (Ahmed, 2012), several scholars have begun to theorize the possibilities of the "unofficial" (Ferguson, 2012), particularly as it relates to marginalized students creating those unofficial spaces and groups they need to promote their own success (Miller, 2017; Nicolazzo, 2017).

The fact that Monica Jones' arrest was executed by a university police department also begs the question: What else about our environments, policies, practices, and/or pedagogies is dangerously ensnared in [whiteness] and reliant on societal entrenchments of [whiteness]? Therefore, third, our analysis is an invitation for other critical scholars to explore and expose those ways of thinking, being, researching, doing, and teaching that reek of [whiteness], and to imagine alternatives accordingly. Although recent critical scholarship has begun to expose the white supremacy laced throughout the history, philosophy, and delivery of higher education (e.g., Patton, 2016; Patton et al., 2015), not much has been written about the [whiteness] of higher education and its codependency on societal [whiteness]. Fourth, we invite critical scholars to engage with our conceptualization of [whiteness] as a container in which interlocking systems of domination and oppression create treacherous environments through which those who are most on the margins must navigate. Doing so means taking seriously Cohen's (1997) call to not forward a single identity-based ethic of coalition-building, analysis, or action, but to think about how power operates in tacit ways to mediate various peoples' life chances *across identities* in parallel ways. This would be a more authentic application of intersectionality as originally conceived by black women scholars (Collins, 1998; Crenshaw, 1989) and applied to black women's lives caught between the racism of women's activism and the sexism of black politics. It would have done little for Monica Jones for her institution to destigmatize community-based volunteer work and activism on behalf of sex workers without the decriminalization of sex work through which transmisogynoirist stereotypes of black transwomen can be enforced.

Fifth, our analysis makes explicit the need for more precise data collection that reveals the effects of gender and sexuality on student outcomes and engagement and which mobilizes an intersectional framework. To be clear, we are *not* suggesting the need for more climate studies regarding whether systemic oppression is "real." Instead, we suggest higher education scholars need to use more sophisticated epistemological perspectives and methodologies to further elucidate the effects of trans\* oppression, homophobia, queerphobia, and femmephobia, as well as other systems of oppression that intersect with these to shorten life chances for other students also on the margins. Therefore, it is not about determining if these systems of oppression exist, but collecting more nuanced data to determine the effects of these systems of oppression.

## Conclusion

Neoliberal policy mandates have reduced public support for postsecondary education while increasing calls for the application of commodity-based accountability metrics (Gildersleeve, Kuntz, Pasque, & Carducci, 2010). In this context, institutional and legislative leaders flock to individualistic approaches that seek to "fix" students and encourage them to engage these spaces and environments in individualistic "high impact" practices such as being more involved and developing grit (Duckworth, Peterson, Matthews, & Kelly, 2007; Kuh et al., 2005). The fact that these approaches persistently fail to improve the educational chances for trans\* students, while even exposing them to greater harm as illustrated by Monica Jones, is ignored.

The equity implications of continuing to advance decontextualized best practices that work against trans\* students' success in higher education are two-fold. First, gender-restrictive institutional norms and policies continue to propagate under the guise of promoting grit and resiliency. These norms and policies ultimately work to push trans\* students out of higher education and reduce their life chances. College outcomes research continues to show that students without college degrees earn significantly less than those with college degrees (Mayhew et al., 2016).

Second, the continued application of HIPs, without attention to the societal and institutional contexts that corrupt them, inhibit trans\* students' achievement of externally validated metrics of success. Moreover, it makes it more likely that only trans\* students who can deflect their gender minoritization by social class and "realness" advantages will be counted as "successful." Trans\*

students are advantaged by realness or trans-normativity (Catalano, 2015b; Jourian et al., 2015; Nicolazzo, 2016b) when those who are most recognized in their gender authenticity can access systems and structures formed within cissexist norms and assumptions. Systems, structures, policies, and practices of higher education cannot be equitable when they systematically render the most vulnerable populations unable to achieve.

Through this examination, we have joined other critical scholars in calling for higher education to confront and disrupt the existing high impact of [whiteness] as an organizing framework, specifically calling for the development of TUHIPs instead of the propagation of HIPs. It is only by doing this that we can hope to block the uncritical advancement of practices that are permeated by [whiteness] and which frustrate the liberatory potential of higher education as a “practice of freedom” (hooks, 1994). The Monica Joneses on our campuses are watching.

## Notes

1. An earlier version of this article was presented at the 5th annual pre-conference of the Council on Ethnic Participation in conjunction with the annual meeting of the Association for the Study of Higher Education on November 10, 2016, in Columbus, Ohio.
2. Mimicking Boolean search functions, the asterisk is a symbol that some—but not all—trans\* people use to provide an expansive understanding of the transgender community. As Tompkins (2014) stated, “trans\* blends the symbol’s wildcard function with its use as a figurative bullet point in a list of identities that are not predicated on the trans- prefix” (p. 27). Although there is contestation over how some people have misused the asterisk for exclusionary purposes, we use it throughout our article as a way to reflect the various ways in which trans\* people may identify their genders, including in ways that do not rely on the prefix trans- or the word transgender.
3. A term originally coined by Serano (2007), who wrote, “When a trans person is ridiculed or dismissed not merely for failing to live up to gender norms, but for their expressions of femaleness or femininity, they become the victims of a specific form of discrimination: trans-misogyny” (pp. 14–15). It is also sometimes written as one word without the hyphen, as in *transmisogyny*.
4. An extension of the term misogynoir (coined by Moya Bailey), transmisogynoir (sometimes written as *trans-misogynoir* or *(trans)misogynoir*) refers to the ways racism, anti-blackness, and trans-misogyny manifest in the lives of black trans\* women (Trudy, 2014). In particular, the term denotes the various ways in which life chances for black trans\* women are foreclosed as a result of these interlocking systems of oppression.
5. *Enabled* is the term used by Clare (2015) to signal the multiple ways that societal norms and assumptions enable certain bodies and ways of functioning in the world instead of focusing on “disability.”
6. These two were Fayetteville State University and Winston-Salem State University.
7. Following Cornel West’s use of the term; see West (1994).

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