Transforming Bodies of Knowledge:  
Transgender Experiences of Embodiment 
and the Production of Insurgent Knowledge

If knowledge is an effect of power, as Foucault suggests, then the “insurrection of subjugated knowledges” provides a crucial starting point for challenging dominant relations of power. But how do we understand the relationship between embodied knowledge and epistemological rupture? Are subjugated knowledges of the body always constituted through hegemonic ones? What faith can we put in experiences of embodied knowledge, particularly if insurrection involves a kind of corporeal undoing—or as Foucault describes, a “general feeling that the ground [is] crumbling beneath our feet, especially in places where it seem[s] most familiar, most solid, and closest to us, to our bodies, to our everyday gestures”? Drawing from feminist and critical race scholarship on subaltern epistemologies, this paper revisits debates about the role of experience, the significance of the body and the impact of resistance in the production of counter-hegemonic knowledge. It explores the ways that subversive knowledge practices are defined, generated, and deployed through activist expressions of transgender embodiment. It also questions whether attempts to link experiences of embodiment with insurgent knowledge necessarily invoke normative hierarchies around what constitutes “radical” bodily practice in transgender politics. I begin by highlighting the political significance of experience in the generation of counter-hegemonic knowledge. I then examine critiques of experience and outline some conceptual limits of thinking through relationships between experience, embodiment and knowledge production. Finally, I turn to experiential knowledge claims within transgender politics to explore how we might re-conceptualize the role of experience in the generation of transgressive knowledge. In particular, I explore how narratives of gender transition challenge the temporal and spatial logic of experiential knowledge production and potentially open up new ways for understanding and engaging in insurgent knowledge practices.