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Gender Identity Work: Oppression and Agency as Described in Lifespan Narratives of Transgender and Other Gender Non-Conforming Identified People in the U. S.

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Gender Identity Work: Oppression and Agency as Described in Lifespan Narratives of
Transgender and Other Gender Non-Conforming Identified People in the U. S.

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Dedication

This project is dedicated to those transgender and other gender non-conforming identified people who met with violence and left us far too soon, in memoriam.

Epigraph

I say, “It’s *not a choice*. It’s who you *are*.” Yeah. It’s, and I actually say it’s not a *lifestyle* for me. It’s a life *correction*. A life *style* is, you know, do I date a, a brunette? Or a redhead? That’s my *lifestyle*. Do I / uh / go out running, or do I go to the *opera*? *That’s* my *lifestyle*. And then when they say, “Whatever makes you happy.” And I *hate* that one, too. I go, “What makes me happy’s a good cheeseburger!” [laughs] So it’s, it’s not about, it’s not about a means of whatever makes you happy... It’s, it’s a matter of if you can be who you *are* (Mimi, sec. 237-240).

I’m, you know, *talking* to you, I’m talking *freely* to you. I am *happy* and *relaxed*. It’s kinda like bein’ dressed [in alignment with gender identity], you know. Uh / it’s / uh somebody who knows who I *am*, you know. And it’s, it’s *good*. Uh you know. I // it’s good (Karen, sec. 424).

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Abstract

The purpose of this research was to critically examine the gender identity work of white transgender and other gender non-conforming identified (TgNCi) people through their stories and the meanings they attach to important artifacts across the lifespan. A single question directed the investigation: How do TgNCi individuals describe gender identity work through lifespan narratives? Thirteen volunteers participated in two interviews: the first, a narration of their life stories and in the second, descriptions of the significance of personal artifacts selected by the participants and photographed by the investigator.

Participants' ages ranged from 22 to 66, according to four pre-determined age ranges of the study design. This allowed for investigation within each age group, and also across all age groups. Qualitative analyses were conducted in three layers: (1) content analysis, (2) Critical Discourse Analysis, and (3) multimodal analysis. Content analysis identified three primary categories describing gender identity work: (1) *oppression* (from outside), (2) *suppression* (of preferred gender expression), and (3) the desire for *visibility* (longing to be recognized by others, and to see the self, as *Who-I-Am*). Critical Discourse Analysis revealed that in response to violent oppression, participants interrupted their natural agentic actions, speech, and thought processes. The term *Interrupted Agency* was coined to convey these strategic responses of hiding and secrecy. Multimodal analysis of participants' expressed relationships with material objects exposed three primary functions of the artifacts: (1) *tools of visibility*, (2) *messengers*, and (3) *laminations*. The

closing discussion features the researcher's meaning making of this gender identity work and addresses future study and research.

Keywords: transgender, gender non-conforming, agency, oppression, qualitative research, gender identity, narrative, content analysis, critical discourse analysis, multimodal analysis, lifespan interviews

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perhaps I will never leave academia. I cannot imagine this journey without you by my side. Thank you for your patience, for your companionship, and for your ability to help me summarize when my words wandered everywhere.

Chapter 1. Introduction and Rationale

Statement of Purpose and Background

Efforts by transgender people to achieve equal status in the U.S. resulted in significant collective achievements during the Obama presidency, including: the lifting of the ban on transgender individuals' service in the military; the appointment of the first White House LGBTQIA+ Liaison; an announcement from the U.S. Department of Education that it will publish a searchable database in the coming months of educational institutions which have sought and/or received an exemption from federal civil rights law in order to discriminate; and joint guidance from the U.S. Departments of Justice and Education (2016) about schools' responsibility for Title IX protections of transgender students. But in the first few months of his presidency, Donald Trump reversed the Title IX protections, precipitating once again the oppression of transgender people. There is a clear need to educate a President and others who knowingly or unknowingly perpetuate oppressive ideologies and practices. Dominant ideologies translate into routine practices that divide individuals into privileged hierarchies. As I will explain, transgender people, and those who identify themselves using other non-binary gender terms, have been, and remain a population at high risk for unemployment, lack of access to health care, physical assault, and homelessness. The specific focus of this research was on the gender identity work of individuals whose *ways of interacting, ways of representing, and ways of being* (Rogers, 2011) do not align with gender stereotypes in the United States. To date, there exists little to no research into lifespan narratives of these individuals. This dissertation,

with its focus on critical investigation into gender identity work is, therefore, of great significance.

A few definitions of terms are essential before moving ahead. From this point onward I will use the term *transgender and other gender non-conforming identified* (TgNCi)¹ to encompass all gender identities that blur traditional stereotypes of woman and man. The narrow, either-or, binary perspective, fails to account for the infinite possibilities of gender identity and self-representation. I define *gender identity* as an individual's innate sense of *Who-I-Am*. I use the term *Who-I-Am* in a straightforward fashion. In everyday parlance when people meet, and one individual asks another, "Who are you?" the one questioned responds with a statement of name, role, or some other identifier that is then accepted by the questioner. However, many TgNCi people are told by cisgender² people (those who are not within the TgNCi constellation) that they are not who they know themselves to be. They are denied the right to identify themselves. I define *gender expression* as all the elements of communication – material and otherwise, that manifest an individual's gender identity. (It should be clear by now that this research has to do with identity, and not sexual orientation, which is concerned with sexual intimacy.)

¹ In this research I have elected to use the umbrella expression transgender and other gender non-conforming (for simplicity, I abbreviate the term as TgNCi) to represent non-binary gender identities. However, when I refer to specific research I will default to the terminology used by those scholars.

² I have used the most basic definition of the term, cisgender. Those who want a fuller explanation of that word, and other associated terms (cis sexism, cissexual, cis privilege, for example), can read about those terms in detail in Serano (2014).

While mainstream thought remains fixed in the dualistic perspective, the gender identity work of TgNCi people goes against the grain of culture. This work may be perceptible or imperceptible, as I will explain. First, however, it is essential to unpack the term, TgNCi, which comprises

Individuals that broaden commonly held definitions of gender, including its expression, associated identities, and/or other perceived gender norms, in one or more aspects of their life. These individuals expand the definition of gender through their own identity and/or expression. Some individuals do not identify with being either a man or a woman; others identify as a blend of both, while still others identify with a gender, but express their gender in ways that differ from stereotypical presentations. A [TgNCi] person's preferences and self-expression may fall outside commonly understood gender norms within their own culture; or they may be aligned with them even as one's internal gender identity doesn't align with the sex assigned at birth. (Gender Spectrum, 2016, p. 2)

I chose to use the term TgNCi because it makes accessible the infinite multidimensional combinations of gender expressions, behaviors, and identities, far beyond restrictions of current U.S. language practice that protects exclusivity and privilege of the male/female binary, conflating the meanings of gender and sexual orientation. Of course, the traditional, contextually based binary gender presentations may be subsumed in this scheme, along with every other possible expression of gender.

Identity (including gender identity) is communicated through systems of signs that accrue meaning in a community of practice.

Linguistic and contextual symbols are considered *signs* (Hall, 2013). Linguistic signs are words linked together into utterances, drawn from shared language conventions, and embedded within specific contexts. Bourdieu (2003) explains this concept as follows:

The all-purpose word in the dictionary, a product of the neutralization of the practical relations within which it functions, has no social existence: in practice, it is always immersed in situations, to such an extent that the core meaning which mains relatively invariant through the diversity of markets may pass unnoticed.

(p. 39)

Such situations are created through signs. Contextual symbols include sensory (visual, auditory, tactile, olfactory, and gustatory) and behavioral signs, and also constitutive belief systems. Meanings are negotiated in complex situated moments but are deeply rooted in shared social histories. Collectively, the unique combination of signs constitutes a moment of interaction. These concepts will be expanded in the sections that follow.

For people whose identities fit neatly into the constraints of a binary system the construction of gender identity aligns with cultural expectations, and, therefore, meets with little to no resistance. This alignment is comprised of a collection of iconic (visual) signs, which render the gender identity at an early-reader level. Binary expressions of gender identity are culturally legible, able to be seen and recognized without question, due to their material and embodied presentations. Hall (2013) explains this phenomenon

of familiar reading of iconic signs, which, “bear, in their form, a certain resemblance to the object, person or event to which they refer” (p. 7). Examples of iconic signs, cultural efforts to signal gender, include headbands on bald infant girls and early crew cuts for ruddy-faced toddler boys. When signs appear to be scrambled, as viewed from the perspective of dominant ideologies, then a cultural rebalancing seeks to repack them into proper order. Dominant ideologies serve to maintain equilibrium, but in the case of this research, they also serve to oppress TgNCi individuals. Individuals participate in discourses at the micro level (instances of text plus interaction plus social action occurring within a specific context at a particular time), which are embedded within macro discourses, such as religious or political beliefs, heterosexist cultural practices, economic policy, workplace regulations, and so forth. Scollon (2008) writes, “Discourses are always material. They may take the form of acts of speaking by humans, their memories of such acts, or artifacts in the world” (p. 12). Identities exist within discursive contexts and are recognized due to Discourses, which can separate ‘good people’ from ‘bad people’ as I will explain later. Discourses story identities.

Pahl and Rowsell (2010) explain further. "Identities reside on a sea of stuff and of experiences. These experiences are intertwined with material culture. Material culture is portable and travels with us" (Pahl & Rowsell, 2010, p. 8). The use of artifacts in the construction of narratives can add depth of engagement with memories as interview participants recall tactile, olfactory, auditory, visual, and oral experiences of artifacts.

Furthermore, “objects tell stories, hold memories, and evoke identities connected with their existence” (Pahl & Rowsell, 2010, p. vii).

Research indicates that TgNCi individuals may experience “more severe and deadly forms of violence while simultaneously having less access to anti-violence services and support” (NCAVP, 2014, p. 37). Other researchers (Beemyn & Rankin, 2011; Pascoe, 2012; Thurlow, 2001) report similar results from research. In addition, The National School Climate Survey (GLSEN, 2013) cited discriminatory policies that specifically affect transgender students: 1) 42.2 percent of transgender students were prevented from using their preferred name (transgender students represented 10.8 percent of LGBTQIA+ student respondents overall); 2) 59.2 percent of transgender students were required to use a bathroom or locker room of their legal sex (18.7 percent of student respondents overall); and 3) 31.6 percent of transgender students were prevented from wearing clothes that were considered inappropriate based on their legal sex (19.2 percent of student respondents overall) (p. xvii-xviii). Furthermore, the study found that in comparison with lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) students, transgender, and other non-traditionally gendered students faced the most hostile school climates. Nadal (2013) cites additional cultural problems: e.g., use of transphobic terminology; endorsement of gender normative culture and behaviors; assumption of a universal transgender experience; exoticization; discomfort with or disapproval of transgender experience; assumption of sexual pathology, deviance, or abnormality; denial of the reality of transphobia; physical threat or harassment; and denial of bodily privacy; and systemic bias (restricted restroom

access, health care inequities, lack of fairness and safety within criminal justice system, and lack of access to correct government-issued identification). All of these areas of discrimination arise from dominant ideologies (discourses) that withhold privilege from TgNCi people because of restricted cultural gender stereotypes. Broad-brush statistical descriptions explain the scope of oppression and violence toward people who identify as TgNCi, but do not expose the fine-grained interactions of context, time, and relationships that constitute the system of oppression and violence.

The purpose of this research was to critically examine the gender identity work of transgender and other gender non-conforming (TgNCi) people through individual lifespan narratives, including the stories and meanings they attached to important artifacts. To date, there exists no body of research representing lifespan narratives of TgNCi people. Documentation of the stories of gender identity work for TgNCi people offers knowledge about developmental trajectories as well as the roles of material objects along the way. This study encompasses not only the 13 individual lifespan narratives, but also a total span-of-lives perspective across all participants, from the late 1940s to the present time. This research adds to current knowledge about the workings of oppressive systems, and responses to those systems, as experienced and voiced by TgNCi adults. Through critical discourse analysis (CDA) and multimodal discourse analysis (MDA) I examined intersections of sense of time, perceptual spaces, and interpersonal distances (Scollon & Scollon, 2003) in the identity work of TgNCi people, and the role of material objects in self-representation. A critical lens pried open layers of privilege and

oppression, as well as sources of affirmation and support. Analysis of audio interview transcripts and photographs of the personal artifacts chosen by TgNCi participants to represent their journeys offered insight into the connections with material culture in the identity work of individuals who have experienced culturally sanctioned abuse (Canaday, 2009). In the sections that follow, I first properly frame the study through consideration of identity, embodiment, and agency; cultural discourses of morality and U.S. citizenship; and critical discourse studies (CDS), semiotics, and multimodality. Then I pose questions arising from the literature to further refine the focus of my research.

Identity, Embodiment, and Agency

I rely on Scott's (2001) definition of gender in this research: "The core of the definition rests on an integral connection between two propositions: gender is a constitutive element of social relationships based on perceived differences between the sexes, and gender is a primary way of signifying relationships of power" (p. 1067). The first proposition underscores the socially constructed nature of gender, in contrast to a notion of its being defined by anatomy. Whereas at birth, an infant is assigned a sex that is based upon visible anatomical markers, gender is a matter of identity co-construction. Culture offers gendered artifacts, and individuals employ or reject those representations (iconic signs) in favor of others. Scott's (2001) second proposition has to do with issues of control: who (based on perceived gender) has greater or lesser power. Scott's (2001) definition is germane to my research, because it highlights the socially constructed nature of gender, and also the power dynamics of gender, which are an object of study in critical

works. She contends that gender has frequently been used to create and enforce systems of political power based upon the binary view of gender. That perspective relies on the societal trope that gender is immutable and biological, determined by an individual's reproductive anatomy. Shotwell and Sangrey (2009) disagree with that construction.

Gender isn't ever something that just 'is'—it is a doing, and one way to see this is to examine how it is reinforced. The very movement of displacing 'gender' through...topological turns highlights the co-production of what is understood as 'normal' and what is understood as 'deviant'... The refusal of gendered identification as a relational 'doing' thus paradoxically shows us something about how trans- and non-trans genders are mutually constructed. (Shotwell & Sangrey, 2009, p. 61)

Of course, the attachment of concepts like 'normal' and 'deviant' to gender identity serves to maintain the binary construction.

The binary view of gender stems from what Ingraham (1997/2010) calls the *heterosexual imaginary*. She creates the term through borrowing from Althusser's theory of ideology as, "the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence" (Ingraham, 1997/2010, p. 357). Ingraham (1997/2010) argues that patriarchal systems and heteronormativity go hand in hand, being more materially linked to sexuality than they are to gender. A grasp of this concept becomes possible when surveying current day advertisements for beauty products and clothing for men and for women (binary), items used as outward expressions of today's gendered "ideal."

Identity work. The communication of one's identity in any given context raises the matter of intelligibility. Identities may be understood, or not understood, based upon specific contextual discourses, and such understanding depends upon ongoing interchanges with others. Gender identity work has a great deal to do with the practice of persuasion, which leads to recognition: "Success in establishing identity will inevitably rely on dialogue" (Gergen, 1994/2014, p. 257). Social interactions are necessary for any concept of human identity whatsoever (Lemke, 2000), and identities carry meanings. In the U.S., for example, a binary system of gender means that individuals who do not adhere to conventions of men's or women's dress and presentation interrupt the flow of the reading of gender. Lemke (2000) contends, "Meanings are not made by organisms but by persons, and they are not made within organisms but within an ecosocial system that minimally includes other persons and the things they make meaning about" (p. 283). TgNCi identities flow beyond boundaries that are nothing more than social constructs, from points of origination that TgNCi individuals did not choose (Stryker, 2008). Thus, when a TgNCi person expresses gender in a way that varies from cultural norms, they may be viewed as disturbing a sort of psychic peace. Lemke (2008) argues that movements such as varied gender expressions unsettle culture: "Identities are packages. If we start to mix and match, then social control functions of identity are in trouble" (p. 36). Such identities are no longer merely related to personal feelings and self-presentation. They become, "contested public terrain" (Lemke, 2008, p. 32).

Self-presentation takes place through language and through the metalanguage of semiotics. Hall (2013) explains that objects play roles in meaning production. He uses the example of clothes, which, “double up as signs. They construct a meaning and carry a message” (p. 22). In this discussion, semiotics may be understood as referring (for example) to Lemke’s (2008) statement above that identities are packages. Semiotics – collections of signs, symbols, and texts comprise the “packages.” Mixing and matching of signs that are culturally associated with a binary view of gender conflicts with expectations in a patriarchal society. TgNCi individuals struggle within heterosexist culture, to reveal, illuminate, and validate their places of belonging, equal to all others. However, they are met with resistance: cultural inertia that would rather live with cliché perspectives of how gender should be presented. As a result, gender identities that interrupt the status quo create trouble.

Identities are contested not just in the sense that there are struggles over the kinds of identities we are allowed to claim for ourselves, but there are also struggles over the kinds of identities we can conceive for ourselves, and which identities in any system of heteroglossic practice we will strive to establish in ourselves.

(Lemke, 2008, p. 31)

In this sense, TgNCi identities reside in the multi-voiced, dialogically constructed margins, because “the complex workings of power and ideology in discourse [sustain] a (hierarchically) gendered social order” (Lazar, 2005, p. 1). Lazar (2005) describes discourse as “a site of struggle, where forces of social (re)production and contestation are

played out” (p. 4). Gender functions to support sense making and organization within communities. Gender also creates numerous other relations and activities (Lazar, 2005). The view of gender as a binary construct is woven throughout U.S. discourses of economics, politics, and religion, and is, therefore, the site of political power.

To vindicate political power, the reference [e.g., the coding of gender] must seem sure and fixed, outside human construction, part of the natural or divine order. In that way, the binary opposition and the social process of gender relationships become part of the meaning of power itself: to question or alter any aspect threatens the entire system. (Scott, 2001, p. 1073)

Scott (2001) describes gender as “a social category that is imposed on a sexed body” (p. 1056). Such impositions are based upon the false assumption that gender is inherently related to sex (Gender Spectrum, 2015; Griffin, 2012). Griffin (2012) notes that even the sex-based binary categorization fails to apply, since it, “ignores the spectrum of biological sex characteristics that confound attempts to fit everyone neatly into either male or female categories” (p. 99). Thus, adherence to Scott’s (2001) abovementioned “natural or divine order” could be more appropriately accomplished through the acknowledgement of diversity in both sex *and* gender identity.³ As Butler (2006)⁴ insists,

³ Later I will discuss the role of meta-narratives as intertwined with popular assumptions about gender categories.

⁴ I am aware of current debate in trans* circles whereby Butler is considered to be a Trans-Exclusionary Radical Feminist (TERF), a term that describes adherence to oppressive perspectives of and behaviors toward transgender people. Included are the deliberate misgendering of trans* people, outing them at work, claiming that trans* women are really men in drag, and the like. Although some might have extrapolated such views from Butler’s earliest writings, I am not convinced that Butler still adheres to such

“Gender ought not to be construed as a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts follow; rather, gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a *stylized repetition of acts*,” (p. 191, italics in original).

Perhaps then, the correct reading of gender identity should be *human being*.

I conceptualize the term ‘gender identity work’ as an iterative, socially situated, and co-creative process of making visible the gendered self. This process may, or may not, result in a sense of personal value/worth for the TgNCi individual. Salomon (2010) asserts, “The social realm that produces gender oversimplifies it by legislating only two possible choices” (p. 73). This constraint produces what I think of as “low oxygen” cultural spaces for TgNCi individuals, situating them as outsiders lacking privileges afforded to insiders. Privilege has to do with social goods. Social goods are, “who gets what in terms of money, status, power, and acceptance on a variety of different terms, all social goods” (Gee, 2011a, p. 7). In other words, the default cultural constraint of gender as strictly male or female may prevent TgNCi people from access to basic affordances. As pointed out earlier, statistical evidence demonstrates that TgNCi people lack access to such things as personal safety, jobs, health care, and medical treatment (Beemyn & Rankin, 2011). Individual claims about the self are influenced by ways in which the individual is co-constructed within changing social, affective, and material contexts that shape a person's desires and behaviors. Gergen (1994/2014) proposes that identity is relational, rather than "an individual's personal and private cognitive structure,"

perspectives, particularly as Butler denies holding a trans-exclusionary point of view at the present time.

connecting it to, "the performance of languages available in the public sphere" (p. 247). Instead of looking at categories like self-concepts, schemas, self-esteem, Gergen (1994/2014) considers "the self as a narration rendered intelligible within ongoing relationships" (p. 247). Shotwell and Sangrey (2009) concur.

We understand self-identification to be at root a kind of relationality. This relationality is constantly in process; it begins with what a person chooses, but that choice itself is never separate from the multiple, intersecting networks that constitute self-formation. While labeling and being identified by others is for the most part a judgment that takes place in a particular moment, a slice of time, self-identification is essentially a work-in-progress, a narrative that in its telling constitutes a self. (Shotwell & Sangrey, 2009, p. 71)

In a culture where TgNCi people lack social goods, dominant belief systems perpetuate their placement as oppressed. Davies and Harré (1990) assert that identity is a persistently open question, and that the answer shifts based upon, "the positions made available within one's own and others' discursive practices and within those practices, the stories through which we make sense of our own and others' lives" (p. 263). As articulated by Shotwell and Sangrey (2009) "To understand the full complexity of identity requires a more nuanced account of how people's self-formation is multiply constituted" (p. 66). The gender identity work of TgNCi individuals offers sites of contestation, where politically charged ideologies and individual agency intersect.

It is at this intersection that Anzaldúa's (1987) concept of *mestiza consciousness* provides insight. Anzaldúa (1987) writes of rigid boundaries, perceptual spaces that support and maintain interpersonal distances from that which belongs, and that which does not belong. In heterosexist societies, the sexed binary is meant to dictate gender identity, but fails. Therein lies potential to disrupt "entrenched habits and patterns of behavior" (Anzaldúa, 1987, p. 255). In TgNCi identity work one must grapple with a self who is something greater than either/or, woman/man. Such an individual must create space where none exists, and in doing so, force consideration of the binary conception of gender.

A further complication for some individuals who were assigned the male sex at birth and who incorporate femininity, or fully identify as women, is the issue of the male gaze (Mulvey, 1999). Mulvey (1999) considers two contradictory "aspects of looking in the conventional cinematic situation" (p. 836). The first aspect has to do with pleasure derived from the use of another person for sexual stimulation through looking, through sight. The second aspect has to do with a narcissistic sense of identification with the situation, whereby one is satisfied through the object of the visual experience.

Pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects its phantasy on to the female figure which is styled accordingly... women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote *to-be-looked-at-ness*... The presence of woman is an indispensable

element of spectacle in normal narrative film, yet her visual presence tends to work against the development of a story line, to freeze the flow of action in moments of erotic contemplation. (Mulvey, 1999, p. 837)

Mulvey (1999) writes from perspectives of cinema. Berger's (1972) *Ways of Seeing*, speaks of woman's image of self as being drawn from other people, while man's image of self is drawn from the world, suggesting on the one hand that women assess ourselves (appearance, personal value, success, and so forth) according to our perceptions of how others view us. Berger (1972) implies that men, on the other hand, are more inclined to self-assess and be satisfied regardless of what others may project about them.

Women constantly meet glances, which act like mirrors, reminding them of how they look, or should look. Behind every glance is a judgment. Sometimes the glance is their own, reflected back from a real mirror... From earliest childhood she is taught and persuaded to survey herself continually. She has to survey everything she is, and everything she does, because how she appears to others, and particularly how she appears to men, is of crucial importance, for it is normally thought of as the success of her life. (Berger, 1972, 0 min., 57 sec.)

Mulvey's (1999) psychoanalytic perspectives of cinema resonate with Berger's (1972) critiques of art and culture. Both authors address the heightened attention to woman's appearance and presentation, which present particular challenges for some TgNCi people whose body structures appear to visually contradict their femininity.

From a new and inclusive space there is room for *all* gender identities. However, in TgNCi identity work the individual encounters not only traditional representations from art and media, but also strong political, economic, and religious perspectives and pressures. Any of these ideologies may construct and circulate messages that stick and are internalized, and which adhere to human beings, as though attributing truth (Ahmed, 2004).⁵ Ahmed considers two such emotions: fear, and hate. Ahmed (2004), in the following quote, deconstructs how fear “shapes the surfaces of bodies in relation to objects” (p. 8).

Emotions are relational: they involve (re)actions or relations of ‘towardness’ or ‘awayness’ in relation to...objects... [W]e have a contact with an object, and an orientation towards that object. To be more specific, the ‘aboutness’ of fear

⁵ “The example that is often used in the psychological literature on emotions is a child and a bear. The child sees the bear and is afraid. The child runs away. Now the ‘Dumb View’ would be that the bear makes the child afraid, and that the bodily symptoms of fear are automatic (pulse rate, sweating, and so on). Functionalist models of emotion which draw on evolutionary theory, might say that the fear has a function: to protect the child from danger, to allow survival. Fear in this situation could be an *instinctual reaction* that has enhanced successful adaptation and thus selection. Fear would also be an action; fear would even be ‘about’ what it leads the child to do. But the story, even in its ‘bear bones’, is not so simple. Why is the child afraid of the bear? The child must ‘already know’ the bear is fearsome. This decision is not necessarily made by her, and it might not even be dependent on past experiences. This could be a ‘first time’ encounter, and the child still runs for it. But what is she running from? What does she see when she sees the bear? We have an image of the bear as an animal *to be feared*, as an image that is shaped by cultural histories and memories. When we encounter the bear, we already have an impression of the risks of the encounter, as an impression that is felt on the surface of the skin. This knowledge is bodily, certainly: the child might not need time to think before she runs for it. But the ‘immediacy’ of the reaction is not itself a sign of a lack of mediation. It is not that the bear *is* fearsome, ‘on its own’, as it were. It is fearsome *to* someone... So fear is not in the child, let alone in the bear, but is a matter of how child and bear come into contact. This contact is shaped by past histories of contact, unavailable in the present, which allow the bear to be apprehended as fearsome... Another child, another bear, and we might even have another story” (Ahmed, 2003, p. 7.)

involves a reading of contact: the child reads the contact as dangerous, which involves apprehending the bear as fearsome. We can note also that the ‘reading’ then identifies the bear as the cause of the feeling. The child becomes fearful, and the bear becomes fearsome: the attribution of feeling to an object (I feel afraid because you are fearsome) is an effect of the encounter, which moves the subject away from the object. Emotions involve such affective forms of reorientation. (Ahmed, 2004, p. 8)

Furthermore, ideologies may be oppressive, serving to maintain the status quo (the early reader approach to gender), having solidified through circulating across time to attach disgust or hate to TgNCi people. Ahmed (2004) observes, "Hate does not reside positively in signs, but circulates or moves between signs and bodies. The circulation of signs of hate involves a movement and fixity; some bodies move precisely by sealing others as objects of hate. Tracking the history of hate involves reading the surfaces of bodies, as well as listening to those who have been shaped by this history" (p. 60).

Similar to fear and hate, the emotion of disgust also circulates, stuck to such ideologies. The outcome of this process extends from laws and policies to cultural practices, and includes structural and personal violence. Galtung (1969) referred to, “the type of violence where there is an actor that commits the violence as *personal* or *direct*, and to violence where there is no such actor as *structural* or *indirect*” (p. 170). Structural violence often goes unnoticed, as it is part of the political, economic, and social systems in which we live every day. People tend not to recognize it, because it is simply the way

things are. This makes the work of those who are on the receiving end of structural violence all the more difficult, since they also need to do the work of educating and convincing mainstream culture of the existence of the problem. From the data I collected, I read the tangible artifacts narrated into lifespan stories of TgNCi people, and deconstructed the evidence of individual agency in identity work within the larger context of powerful ideologies of opposition.

Embodiment. In this research I examine identity as social practice, as narrated by TgNCi people describing their experiences in one-at-a-time, one-of-a-kind, contexts through embodied texts. According to Borba and Osterman (2007) embodiment has to do with context-based, gendered bodily meanings such as mannerisms, dress, tone of voice, expressions through language, and verbal transmission. They describe embodiment as, "the appropriation of signs that index gender and sexuality made by transgendered [sic] people" (p. 132).

When conceptualizing TgNCi identity, it is necessary to consider both biological sex and the performance (variety of expressions) of gender. These dual considerations force a cleavage in the myth that birth-assigned sex determines gender. Salamon (2010) argues that "the body one feels oneself to have is not necessarily the same body that is delimited by its exterior contours" (p. 3). She suggests, "the usefulness of the body image for theorizing gendered embodiment is precisely not that the body image is material, but that it allows for a resignification of materiality itself" (p. 38). Such a resignification, the separation of birth-assigned sex from gender identity produces changes in language

practice through non-traditional assignments of pronouns. A person who is a TgNCi man, for example, may wish to be referred to with pronouns he/him/his, even though his sexual anatomy is female. In other words, it is the culturally based expectation that gender expression and biological sex should always be in culturally expected alignment (Borba & Ostermann, 2007).

Some transgendered [sic] individuals juxtapose systems of signs that produce them as culturally trans, i.e., transforming the body to transgress its biological limitations. Embodiment, thus, is what enables transgendered [sic] people to construct performances of gender which contrast with their biological determinations, thus making their positions highly fluid. (Borba & Ostermann, 2007, p. 132)

Butler and Athanasiou (2013) refer to such embodiment as "a turbulent performative occasion" (p. 179), as the TgNCi body constitutes texts that challenge dominant ideologies. Language use and outward expression of identity enable TgNCi people to perform gender at variance with cultural practices (Richardson, 2013). But cultural expectations of conformity in embodiment and in language patterns often function to keep non-conformists in hiding. McLaren (1995) offers insight.

Recent research on the body suggests that knowledge is grounded through forms of embodiment. The concept of the body as a site of cultural inscription is growing in prominence as a topic of investigation among contemporary social theorists... bodies are becoming recognized and explored as socially situated and

incarnated social practices that are semiotically alive... We cannot separate the body from the social formation, since the material density of all forms of subjectivity is achieved through the 'micropractices' of power that are socially inscribed into our flesh. (McLaren, 1995, p. 279)

Such inscriptions are also affectively embedded at the intersections of the TgNCi individual's embodiment and cultural affect. Ahmed (2004) augments the discussion of micro practices of power through her works on cultural affect. She proposes that affective value accumulates over time as an effect of the circulation between objects and signs. If a TgNCi body is an object, then signs would be dominant ideologies: metanarratives attached to that embodiment of gender. "Signs increase in affective value as an effect of the movement between signs: the more signs circulate, the more affective they become" (Ahmed, 2004, p. 45). In this way, affective value mounts up, and takes on what Ahmed (2004) terms "stickiness," so that the object and the sign (affect) become linked.

For example, if a particular object circulates with a negative sign, the resulting stickiness might be an attachment of cultural disgust to the object, so that the general cultural response to that object then becomes one of disgust, whether or not this response is correctly applied to the object. In the U.S. negative affect has been directed toward individuals with TgNCi identities, resulting in broad cultural rejection of TgNCi embodiment. Ingraham (1997/2010) mentions, "the way in which heteronormative assumptions organize many conceptual and professional practices" (p. 363), including of course educational practice.

Lemke (2008) writes, "Both the transgressors and those whose identities are simply anomalous are sources of identity-based 'trouble' [read 'ecological balance'] for the society" (p. 31). Identity becomes a site of "contested public terrain" (Lemke, 2008, p. 32). The consequences of cultural rejection are devastating in terms of depression or more severe and chronic mental and physical illnesses and suicide among transgender people (GLSEN, 2013; Goldblum, et al., 2012; Greene, Britton, & Fitts, 2014; NCLVP, 2014). Graham, et al. (2014) found that male-to-female (MtF) participants in their research faced greater social pressure than did female-to-male (FtM) transgender people. MtF individuals faced great pressure to conform as feminine-gender people to the extent that the pressure slowed or completely blocked their transition process. Due to discourses about femininity—what a woman should talk like, act like, look like—they were unable to transition physically or socially in a way that allowed them to experience satisfaction and fulfillment; because according to dominant ideologies, they did not conform to cultural femininity standards. The salience of gender is evident in circumstances where it is perceived as being deficient as related to femininity and masculinity (Bogetić, 2013). Material practices have to do with the distribution of power (Ingraham, 1997/2010).

TgNCi people disrupt the gender binary of language systems. Borba and Ostermann (2007) observed the ways in which a community of transgender people in Brazil used masculine and feminine terminology in language. Some participants in their study had undergone partial surgical transitions, and some had not. Thus, their textual bodily presentations (ranging from partial, to full gender reassignment surgery) did not

match with traditional application of gendered words in Portuguese. Based upon the bodily and linguistic departures from tradition, these individuals used gendered language forms to exert influence in new ways. Borba and Ostermann (2007) noted the ways in which the positioning achieved through masculine or feminine language forms opened additional leveraging opportunities. "The juxtaposition of gender indexes on a single body, we believe, enables these individuals to take advantage of their privileged access to gendered meanings which do not seem to be available to traditionally gendered people" (Borba & Ostermann, 2007, p. 132). Kulick (1999) suggests that the fact that 'men's language' and 'women's language' can be appropriated by transgender individuals, "is the most powerful evidence I can think of that those labels themselves are hopelessly inadequate, theoretically impoverished, and conceptually sterile" (p. 610). Richardson (2013) describes the vast creativity of gender expression, whereby "One can be a (masculine) woman with certain family members, with employers, or during interactions with the state but also have a section of one's life where one's manhood is validated with male pronouns" (p. 372). Fluidity of language style interrupts cultural expectations, creating the possibility that there may also exist privileged language access for TgNCi people, who may expand upon locally gendered meanings and/or create new ones (Richardson, 2013), meanings that solidify TgNCi identities. Lemke (2008) enfold the concept of agency:

What the specific notion of identity adds to a basic sociological or cultural

framework is the sense of Agency, that we construct our own identities out of the

options afforded to us by our general positionality and our particular trajectory of experiences, encounters, options for action, and so forth. (Lemke, 2008, p. 21)

Agency. In this section I discuss agency from two perspectives:

collective/distributive agency and individual agency.

Collective/distributive agency. Bennett (2010) maintains, “bodies enhance their power *in or as a heterogenous assemblage*” (p. 23). Bennett’s (2010) theory of distributive agency frames dynamic processes that include human and nonhuman elements. She uses the term assemblage to describe “ad hoc groupings of diverse elements...living, throbbing confederations that are able to function despite the persistent presence of energies that confound them from within” (Bennett, 2010, pp. 23-24). To illustrate her theory, Bennett (2010) deconstructs the constellation of factors contributing to the 2003 North American blackout, which affected, “nearly 50 million people over approximately twenty-four thousand square kilometers and shutting down over one hundred power plants, including twenty-two nuclear reactors” (p. 25). The active participants were non-human: electricity, power plants, transmission wires, a brush fire, energy-trading corporations, consumers, and the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (Bennett, 2010). All of these participants were in one way or another constituted by, or from, human involvement, but the power grid disaster took place without any human hand flipping a switch. “A theory of distributive agency...does not posit a subject as the root cause of an effect. There are instead always a swarm of vitalities at play. The task becomes to identify the contours of the swarm and the kind of relations that obtain

between its bits” (Bennett, 2010, pp. 31-32). Bennett (2010) proposes that agentic power is possessed by both human and nonhuman bodies.

This perspective of distributive agency can be seen in the increasing geographic scope of liberatory events on behalf of TgNCi people, culminating in the U.S. with the announcements from the Departments of Justice and Education, as mentioned earlier. For example, from 1981 to the present, the period of time corresponding to the Waves of the World Values Survey (discussed later in this chapter), collective agency of TgNCi people and allies in the U.S., included:

- 1980s legislation in eight states and the District of Columbia recognizing legal change of sex on birth certificates, changes of name and gender on driver’s licenses, and rights of postoperative transsexuals to marry in their preferred gender (Stryker, 2008)
- 1980s enactment in three cities of human and civil rights protections for transgender people (Stryker, 2008)
- Publication of scholarly and non-academic works about gender identity by Judith Butler, Leslie Feinberg, Kate Bornstein, and others (Stryker, 2008)
- Barney Frank’s 2007 removal of transgender from ENDA, splitting the proposed legislation into two different bills (Stryker, 2008)

While collective agency instigated each of these occurrences, distributive agency maintains synergy and energy for increasing efforts that result in greater visibility and acceptance of TgNCi people.

Individual agency. Gubrium and Holstein (1995) view individual agency as a reflexive product of action. They point out "the self's substantial groundings in local interpretive practices, in which individuals *actively* represent and manage their identities" (Gubrium & Holstein, 1995, p. 555). They argue that the ordinary (i.e. mundane aspects and circumstances of everyday life) "shows diverse substantive resources for the enduring production of agency, including the manifold selves regularly used to inhabit and animate contemporary life" (Gubrium & Holstein, 1995, p. 556). For Gubrium and Holstein (1995), self-construction and agency go hand-in-hand as omnipresent selves are actively revealed in everyday life, in relation to locally understood social and material resources. This view, "suggests a social conditioning of the possibilities for how interpretation, including self-construction, is carried out" (Gubrium & Holstein, 1995, p. 557). In the course of the challenges encountered in everyday living, it is reasonable to locate agency in the flow of ordinary days, as individuals "refer to the spaces that meaningfully circumscribe their action" (Gubrium & Holstein, 1995, p. 557). For TgNCi people, such spaces are defined by cultural values. For the specific focus of this research, I added U.S. cultural assumptions. Sue and Sue (2013) describe patterns of U.S. cultural assumptions that inform the interpretation of my data. The following points are salient for this research:

- Highlight the importance of the family (versus the individual) as the unit of identity.
- Be concerned with family structure and dynamics.

- Assume that these family structures and dynamics are historically passed on from one generation to another. (Sue & Sue, 2013, p. 197)

These same authors suggest that the primary values and beliefs of White culture (which still predominates in the U.S.), include the idealization of the nuclear family as the primary social unit; a patriarchal structure with the man as head of household and breadwinner and the woman as subordinate to the man, and in the primary role of homemaker (Sue & Sue, 2013). These cultural values align with the binary, heterosexual view of gender, and inscribe spaces for belonging (like us) and for non-belonging (not like us).

Crapazano (1996) investigated Foucault's work about Herculine Barbin, an intersex individual from the nineteenth century. Although intersex anatomy is not the focus of this research, Crapazano's (1996) analysis is salient as an example. Born in 1860, Barbin was assigned the female sex at birth, and lived as a woman, until she disclosed her feelings for another girl in a church confession. This prompted extensive medical examinations that culminated in her body being legally reclassified as a man at age 21. Crapazano (1996) explores her "dislocation" which, based upon medical decisions, was far from a magically complete shift from woman to man. Nevertheless, the dislocation did set the course of Barbin's life narrative.

No doubt gender relations prevalent in nineteenth-century France, no doubt attitudes toward the body, sexuality, identity, aberration, social classification, medicine, and the State, indeed language, text, and narrative affected—and

effected—this dislocation and its story. It would be a mistake, though, to understand the dislocation and its story particularistic ally in terms only of the psychology or physiology of Barbin's hermaphroditism (sic). Such reductive understanding, characteristic of many popular and less than popular psychologies—psychologies that do not acknowledge, or bracket off too easily, narrative conventions—is essentialist... It precludes consideration of narrative constraints, of the tension between the 'lived' and the narrative, of the possibility of succumbing to, of being submerged in, a 'prescribed' narrative or losing that narrative possibility. (Crapazano, 1996, pp. 106-107)

Barbin committed suicide nine years after this identity change (Kulick, 1999).

Crapazano (1996) describes his study as "neither psychological nor anthropological but textual" (p. 106), and he reads Barbin's demise as the result of the loss of a genre:

Barbin's life can be understood in terms of the loss of a genre—the loss of those conventionalized discursive strategies by which a man (or woman) of Barbin's provincial, bourgeois background could 'meaningfully' articulate his (her) life—or past, giving seemingly full expression to his (her) self. This genre, these discursive strategies, could not give Barbin a vantage point, an identity, in the engendered discourse they assumed... Barbin was quite literally trajectory—thrown across an uncrossable border—and this trajectory, this being thrown across, not only questioned the system of classification that created that border but its very assumption. (Crapazano, 1996, pp. 106-107)

Crapazano (1996) argues that the machinations of the priests, the doctors, and the law pushed Barbin beyond narrative into Discourses⁶ where she could not gain purchase. There existed *no* common linguistic ground within which to connect – from Barbin to others, or from them to Barbin. All Barbin was left with, in the end, was "the horror of being deprived of any story whatsoever" (Kulick, 1999, p. 611). Crapazano's (1996) interpretation highlights a sort of discursive suffocation of the subject, Barbin, whose anatomical anomalies were the origin of her demise.

In previous research (O'Brien, 2016, in revision) I applied the term *no belonging* to a similar situation from a research narrative, describing it as a void from which there is no language to speak one's existence into society. Gender expression that disrupts rigid binary sensibilities results in similar discursive opposition as faced by Barbin. Crapazano's (1996) interpretation is of significance to my research.

To be at home with one's gender identity in public contexts, however, is difficult, if not impossible, for many TgNCi people, due to social, cultural, and political constraints. In the next section, I will explain how discourses of U.S. citizenship and morality negatively impact TgNCi people by supporting such divisions.

⁶ Since, when we use language, social goods and their distribution are always at stake, language is always "political" in a deep sense" (Gee, 2011a, p. 7). Gee (2011a) distinguishes lower case discourse (little d—everyday, casual conversation) from uppercase dominant Discourse (big D—related to shared beliefs, customs, as unique to groups of people, political systems, organizations, religions, corporations, and so forth).

Cultural Discourses of Morality and U.S. Citizenship

Mapping the cultural territory. In 1981, the European Values Study (EVS) was conducted from Tilburg University to “test the hypothesis that technological changes are transforming the basic values and motivations of the publics of industrialized societies” (World Values Survey, History, paragraph 1). The research expanded geographically and the name was changed to the World Values Survey (WVS). Data collection now includes postindustrial societies on all six inhabited continents, involving social scientists from more than 100 countries. Headquartered in Stockholm, decentralization of ownership of the WVS facilitated the move away from the survey’s original Eurocentric perspectives. Currently, social scientists from around the world participate in all aspects of planning, implementation, data collection, data analysis, and distribution of findings (WVS, History).

With each wave of the study, the number of participating societies has increased. For example, the third wave was completed in 55 societies, and in the fourth wave, 65 societies were surveyed. With a goal of increasing participation of Islamic societies, the fifth and sixth waves of the WVS expanded somewhat into those cultural settings. The reach of the study will likely continue to expand into additional societies in successive waves. Thus, at this writing of my proposal, the WVS shows a much broader perspective of societies’ values than did its Eurocentric orientation in 1981, yet there is still room for expansion into more diverse societies.

Broad analysis across all WVS data demonstrated that there are two major dimensions of cross-cultural variation in the world: traditional values versus secular-rational values, and survival values versus self-expression values (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005).

Traditional values emphasize the importance of religion, parent-child ties, deference to authority and traditional family values. People who embrace these values also reject divorce, abortion, euthanasia and suicide. These societies have high levels of national pride and a nationalistic outlook.

Secular-rational values have the opposite preferences to the traditional values. These societies place less emphasis on religion, traditional family values and authority. Divorce, abortion, euthanasia and suicide are seen as relatively acceptable. (Suicide is not necessarily more common.)

Survival values place emphasis on economic and physical security. They are linked with a relatively ethnocentric outlook and low levels of trust and tolerance.

Self-expression values give high priority to environmental protection, growing tolerance of foreigners, gays and lesbians and gender equality, and rising demands for participation in decision-making in economic and political life. (WVS, Findings and Insights, paragraphs 4-7, 2017)

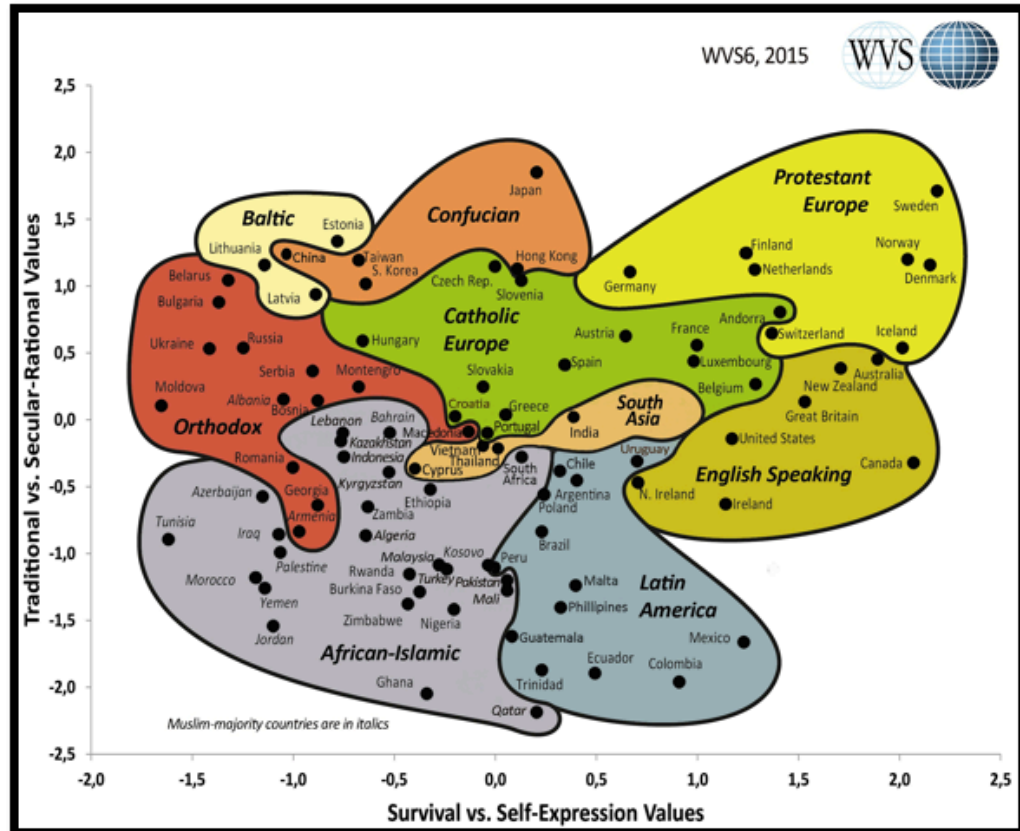
Headquartered in Stockholm, decentralization of ownership of the WVS facilitated the move away from the survey's original Eurocentric perspectives. Currently, social scientists from around the world participate in all aspects of planning,

implementation, data collection, data analysis, and distribution of findings (WVS, History).

Inglehart and Welzel (2010) report, “A massive body of cross-national data demonstrates that (1) socioeconomic modernization, (2) a cultural shift toward rising emphasis on self-expression values, and (3) democratization are all components of a single underlying process: human development. The underlying theme of this process is the broadening of human choice” (p. 2). In this research I take the perspective of morality as a system of cultural values and beliefs broadly situated within the axes of the WVS. The WVS allows me to offer two perspectives of U.S. culture in this research. First, there is the view from above, the broadest possible orientation to the U.S. as a society situated among more than 100 other countries, as a macro perspective of societal values as illustrated in Figure 1, below, the Inglehart-Welzel Cultural Map (2015), from the WVS, Wave 6 survey. This perspective establishes the broad cultural constraints, as well as possible areas of flexibility of constraints, for citizens.

Figure 1.

Ingelhart-Welzel Cultural Map (reprinted with permission)



Second, reorientation from this top-down view to the micro (bottom-up)

perspectives of everyday life and decision-making, involves engaging with day-to-day choices made by TgNCi people about how to publicly represent gender identity within the context of these cultural dimensions of U.S. society. It is worth noting that the macro context within which micro contexts unfold in the U.S., as shown in Figure 1, are slightly below midrange, or 0,0, in terms of traditional versus secular-rational values, and somewhat higher, at roughly 1,0 on the survival versus self-expression scale. Choices made by TgNCi people about how to publicly represent gender identity reside within the

constraints and permissions of the range between traditional and secular-rational values, as intersecting with the range between survival and self-expression. Figure 1 seems to make it clear that the U.S. leans toward the traditional, rather than the secular-rational perspective; and that survival is less of a critical need, thereby engendering more self-expression. This macro perspective, however, is contradicted in the micro, day-to-day experiences of many TgNCi people, who are faced with the oppression and violence mentioned earlier in this chapter.

Looking at the WVS data with another lens, Norris and Inglehart (2009) consider five dimensions of social and moral values within the WVS:

- *Liberal sexual and moral values*, “Based on where respondents placed themselves on 10-point scales ranging from ‘never justified’ to ‘always justifiable’ concerning abortion, divorce, homosexuality, prostitution, euthanasia, and suicide” (p. 224)
- *Tolerance of low ethical standards in public life* including, “The justifiability of cheating on taxes, avoiding paying a fare on public transport, falsely claiming government benefits, and accepting a bribe” (p. 224)
- *Religious values and practices* including, the importance of religion and the importance of God; “whether or not the respondent prayed or meditated and the frequency of attendance at religious services;” and “whether people identified themselves as religious” (p. 224)

- *Egalitarian gender values* including, “gender equality at work, in politics, and in education” (p. 224)
- *Liberal family values* comprising “three items concerned with attitudes toward family and marriage” (p. 224)

Norris and Inglehart (2009) point out high levels of religiosity in the U.S., which they describe as, “a special case among affluent societies and cosmopolitan nations” (p. 269). Among the factors that contribute to American exceptionalism, these authors mention the lack of a lifespan welfare system that is in place in other affluent societies, along with the unavailability of universal health care (Norris & Inglehart, 2009), which, in spite of the passage of the Affordable Care Act in 2010, remains a topic of heated political debate. Strong essentialist ideologies on gender and capitalism in the U.S. serve to reinforce the centrality of heterosexism, and regulate the distribution of social goods (money, status, power, and acceptance) (Gee, 2011a).

Finally, from an evolutionary theory of emancipation rooted in data from the WVS, Welzel (2013) proposes a human empowerment framework. From the macro perspective of U.S. culture this is important because one is able to understand broad ideologies and assumptions that function as an umbrella of cultural understanding. Within this context, at the micro level, TgNCi individuals must conduct identity work against constant opposition through individual agency. Over time, as is being seen, the scattered work of individual agents coalesces into collective acts. Welzel (2013) cogently unpacks the concept of agency:

Agency is an inherently emancipatory quality that has been selected for its power to shape reality. Agency makes guarantees for freedoms a useful good – to the extent to which people have the resources to access their agentic faculty. To the extent to which this is the case, people recognize the value of freedoms and take action for their guarantee. If this is a correct proposition, then the quest for freedoms is adaptive: it waxes and wanes in response to existential constraints on people's action resources. Once existential constraints recede, the quest for freedom awakens and starts to spread, until it has spread wide enough so that people join actions on behalf of their commonly valued freedoms. As this happens, the power of solidarity grows irresistible at some point. Consequently, rulers are forced to guarantee freedoms and pressured to abide by these guarantees. (p. 37)

In the U.S. at the present moment, there exists a great deal of uncertainty about agency and existential constraints on the broader (macro-level) societal perspective, as President Trump appears to be systematically reversing important advances made toward gender equality by President Obama at breakneck speed, as I discuss later. Such macro changes permit increased constraints in interpersonal, everyday (micro-level) interactions.

Heterosexism and morality. Johnson (2005) discusses the changing cultural perspectives of gender and sexuality.

In a heterosexist culture...when people say 'sexual' they typically mean 'heterosexual' and exclude all other forms of sexual expression as possible meanings. In ancient Greece, however, 'sexual' included a much broader range of human potential and experience which, in turn, shaped people's perceptions and experience as sexual beings. And only a century or so ago in Europe and the United States, 'homosexual' was a term that described behavior but not people: People could behave in homosexual ways, but this didn't make them 'homosexuals.' The word 'homosexuality' first appeared in print in Germany in 1869 and was first used in the *New York Times* in 1926. Today, by contrast, being gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgendered [sic] is treated as an aberration at the core of people's social identities and an oppressive system of heterosexual privilege that excludes and persecutes them. (Johnson, 2005, p. 21)

Within the broader socio-political heterosexist default in the US, recent survey results echo Johnson's (2005) remarks, as LGBTQIA+ people report being victimized because of their identities (socially aberrant), which differ from heterosexist standards (systemically aberrant). More than 90 percent of respondents to a survey conducted by the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (NGLTF, 2014) indicated that they had in some way been victimized because of their sexual identity. Thirty-three percent reported direct threats of violence. Blumenfeld (2013) describes four interrelated levels of

homophobia. (1) *Personal homophobia* involves a personal belief system in which LGBTQIA+ people are generally viewed as inferior to heterosexual people. (2) *Interpersonal homophobia* has to do with public expressions, such as story-telling or jokes intended to demean LGBTQIA+ people. This includes refusals by employers to hire LGBTQIA+ people, landlords who refuse to rent to LGBTQIA+ people, and other direct and indirect acts of hostility. (3) *Institutional homophobia* is concerned with "the ways in which governments, businesses, and educational, religious, and professional organizations systematically discriminate on the basis of sexual identity" (Blumenfeld, 2013, p. 381). Finally, (4) *cultural homophobia* relies upon discourses – social norms or codes of behavior, even if they are not written into law or policy, which legitimize the oppression of TgNCi people. Blumenfeld (2013) illustrates Gee's (2011a) concept of social goods this way:

It cannot be denied that homophobia, like other forms of oppression, serves the dominant group by establishing and maintaining power and mastery over those who are marginalized or disenfranchised. Individuals maintain oppressive behaviors to gain certain rewards or to avoid punishment, to protect their self-esteem against psychological doubts or conflicts, to enhance their value systems, or to categorize others in an attempt to comprehend a complex world. By excluding entire groups of people, those in positions of power obtain economic, political, ideological, and other privileges. (Blumenfeld, 2013, p. 383)

He concludes that such posturing ultimately limits everyone. Similar opposition has been raised based on religion. The 1973 decision of the American Psychiatric Association to reclassify homosexuality from a mental disorder to a sexual orientation prompted reaction in the form of the ex-gay movement. Burack (2008) describes attendance at a Focus on the Family-sponsored ex-gay conference, where Minnesota Republican State Senator Michele Bachmann, "opened the conference with a greeting and blessing, underscoring the alliance of the Republican Party with antigay Christian right projects" (p. 71). The point of mentioning this, of course, is not to vilify individuals' religious beliefs, but to highlight the conflation of religion with political speech that withdraws social goods from an entire category of individuals (e.g., everyone who is not heterosexual and possessing of a gender identity that matches biological sex). Such claims in the name of government and God serve to silence the out-group. Pahl (2010) writes of the religious origins of violence in America. He maintains that ideas lead to actions. This happens due to complex religious discourses and practices that become intermingled with political actions and policies. That intermingling muddies the concepts so that religion and politics appear to be one and the same.

Violence in America has almost always been grounded in a complex set of religious discourses and practices in many communities and institutions. These shifting yet discernible patterns of ...—things like dualism, ecstatic asceticism, and, above all, sacrifice—produced what I call an American 'empire of sacrifice,' or instances of 'blessed brutalities.' In essence, Americans have found ways to

consider blessed some rather brutal attitudes and behaviors, such as age-based domination, racism, gender discrimination, and land grabbing, in patterns that are identifiably religious and yet cannot be explained simply as the working out of the logic of Christian millennialism. (Pahl, 2010, p. 3)

I use the example of Christianity, because Christianity is the predominant religion in the U.S.*⁷, because of the frequent conflation of political and religious language, and because the public infusion of such talk often serves to withhold social goods from TgNCi people. With the election of Donald Trump to the office President of the United States on November 8, 2016, and his ensuing Cabinet picks (including those with conservative Christian perspectives), the President put in place the machinery to reverse recent progress for LGBTQIA+ people (including, of course, those who identify as TgNCi). Titles of articles published five months apart in *U.S. News* by the same journalist (Milligan, 2016 and 2017) reflect a head-spinning reversal of perspectives. The title of the first article, published on August 25, 2016 reads, “Bathroom Bills and Religious Freedom Laws: Losing Battles for the GOP: New polling results show Americans aren’t fans of restricting LGBTQIA+ rights.” The title of an article published on January 23, 2017 reads, “Gay Rights Activists Face New Hurdles: Donald Trump administration breathes new life into anti-LGBTQIA+ bills.” Just when LGBTQIA+ people took comfort in the progress of policies and legislation, the advent of Trump and those who

⁷ According to PewResearch, 78.4 percent of American adults identify as Christian. <http://religions.pewforum.org/reports>

supported him, gave the appearance of a reversal of fortune. The outcomes are as yet unknown.

Gender identity and citizenship. US citizenship rights for TgNCi people are largely subsumed under the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBTQIA+) individuals, but this terminology can be confusing. Lesbian, gay, and bisexual are terms related to sexual orientation (who one wishes to be intimate with), while the term, transgender describes gender identity. As explained earlier in this chapter, TgNCi is an encompassing term for all gender identities that extend the boundaries of the gender binary. Discourses of immigration, welfare, and the military, and the conflation of political and religious language have circulated sticky messages around an affect of disgust toward TgNCi people, causing them not to be recognized as good citizens. Canaday (2009) describes citizenship as legal or cultural status, an identity that demonstrates "the attributes of good citizens, and the way in which individuals are incorporated into the status of citizenship" (p. 8). The history of the regulation of homosexuality in the U.S. (even though TgNCi and homosexuality are not parallel terms) offers valuable insight into the attachment of disgust to TgNCi people. In the sections that follow I will explain the cultural influence and shaping of privilege through practices and policies related to immigration, welfare and the military, and mental illness.

Immigration. One arena for the regulation of homosexuality (although that term would not come into use until the 1950s) was immigration. In the early twentieth century, immigration inspectors usually encountered perversion in one of two ways: perversion was seen as an act, or it was detected on the immigrant's body. The first was more likely to concern the deportation of aliens already in the country; the latter usually involved exclusionary proceedings at ports of entry (Canaday, 2009, p. 33)

to detect perversion based on an individual's appearance indicates that any visible variance from man/woman binary norms could result in the denial of citizenship at a port of entry. If the nation refuses entry based on someone's gendered appearance, then a good citizen must 'look like' a citizen.

Throughout the remainder of the Twentieth Century homosexuality in the eyes of the state shifted back and forth between status and behavior:

In setting the terms of inclusion and exclusion in citizenship policy, in sum, federal officials also helped to set the terms for homosexuality. Sometimes they used medical knowledge and sometimes they dismissed it, but homosexuality was never something like tuberculosis: a problem to be discovered by the state and then simply reacted to. Homosexuality was much more like race: a certain set of rules produced out of the state's own murky encounter with difference. (Canaday, 2009, p. 254)

If the state sanctioned the oppression of TgNCi people, then institutions of the state, schools and the military, for example, should follow suit. Welfare and the military were conjoined by the state in the oppression of TgNCi people.

Welfare and the military. The Depression after World War I resulted in the unemployment of many veterans. Returning from war, and unemployed, many became transient. The Federal Emergency Relief Act of 1933 (United States Congress, 1933-34) allowed for the issuance of bonds to be loaned to the states for relief purposes. Camps were established to provide housing for men, to rehabilitate them and to increase their employability (Deeben, 2012), as government concern about the numbers of men who appeared to be at ease with transiency—and also with same-sex relations—increased during the Depression (Canaday, 2009). In the 1930s, fear about homosexuality was implied through concerns about mobility and settlement (Canaday, 2009). Eskridge (1997) reports, "The 1930s witnessed a homosexual panic in many urbanized states that had sizable homosexual subcultures, particularly New York, California, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Michigan, and Ohio" (p. 4).

After World War II, "a homosexual/heterosexual binary was explicitly written into federal welfare/citizenship policy" (Canaday, 2009, p. 134). In 1945, the Veterans Administration enacted policy, which barred, "GI Bill benefits to any soldier who had been administratively discharged as undesirable" (Canaday, 2009, p. 138) due to acts or tendencies associated with homosexuality. Throughout the ensuing years policing of sexual behavior in the military became a key activity of keeping forces pure. The

escalating pitch and intensity of such regulation translated into cultural and social compliance with the military's ways of seeing. Soldiers in same sex relationships faced dishonorable discharge and loss of all benefits afforded to those who were honorably discharged. Canaday (2009) writes that the GI Bill not only created a closet, but "It also institutionalized heterosexuality by channeling resources to men" (Canaday, 2009, p. 173) who engaged in sexual relations exclusively with women, and who also avoided any appearance of effeminacy. Thus, a rigid binary of the alignment of gender identity with sex was instituted as normal.

Alongside the establishment of heterosexism as normal ran the developing theories of transgender people as mentally ill. In the next section I will summarize a few key moments in that trajectory and explain the relationship between mental illness and citizenship.

Mental illness. Global developments in how to categorize transgender people first took shape in Germany, in Krafft-Ebbing's authorship of *Psychopathia sexualis* in 1868 (Stryker, 2008). Whereas, in previous centuries, gender expression was much more fluid among adults, in the more recent shaping of culture prior to Krafft-Ebbing's time, the gender binary came to be seen as normal. Gender roles and expressions were more rigidly defined. Therefore, for Krafft-Ebbing, the public appearance of a person whose outward presentation varied from (presumed) biological sex was an anomaly, an object of curiosity. The act of setting individuals apart as sexual psychopaths due to what is now understood as nothing more than gender variance constituted an in- / out-group division,

labeling those who we would now call transgender as mental misfits. After Krafft-Ebbing's initial work, others, including Magnus Hirschfeld, David O. Cauldwell, Harry Benjamin, Robert Stoller, and Harold Garfinkel (Stryker, 2008; Stryker & Whittle, 2006) joined in the research that eventually led to the formalization of diagnostic criteria and the relegation of gender variance to the status of a mental illness. Although much of the negativity of stigmatizing diagnoses has now been removed from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition (DSM-5) (American Psychiatric Association, 2013), transgender people must still be diagnosed by a psychiatrist in order to access hormone therapy and/or sex reassignment surgeries (Coleman, et al., 2012). Gender Dysphoria was added as a diagnosis that refers to, "The distress that may accompany the incongruence between one's experienced or expressed gender and one's assigned gender" (American Psychiatric Association, 2013, p. 451). Within the context of a heterosexist culture, even when it is the context that creates the identified problem, the individual who seeks therapeutic and/or surgical intervention, must be diagnosed in order to receive insurance coverage of any sort.

Current medical practice allows the administration of hormones to adolescents who meet certain mental health and medical criteria (Coleman, et al., 2012). Therefore, in order to "qualify" as the gender that aligns with the individual's *Who-I-Am* moniker, it is possible that from early childhood a person now carries a diagnosis that will be a permanent part of the individual's medical record. While diagnosis is the pathway to healing, it is also something that results in stigma, although it is likely that many gender

non-conforming people have experienced stigma before ever seeking treatment, due to gender expression that varies from cultural gender norms. Whereas for most people, a mental health diagnosis is a marker of illness, for many transgender people, the mark of illness must be carried in order to access hormones and all other medical resources. But what does this have to do with citizenship?

The very requirement of diagnosis links with discourses of questionable citizenship. For example, the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) has on its website, a list of state voting laws regarding mental illness (NAMI, 2015). State voting laws are largely restrictive based on mental incompetency in Alabama, California, Colorado, Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Louisiana, Maine, Michigan, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Oregon, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Texas, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, West Virginia, Wisconsin, and Wyoming. Voting is restricted due to ‘unsound mind’ in Alaska, Montana, Nebraska, and Nevada; due to being categorized as ‘incapacitated or insane’ in Arizona; classification as ‘insane or an idiot’ in Kentucky, Mississippi, New Mexico, Ohio, and Oklahoma; as ‘incompetent to vote’ or ‘under guardianship’ in Maryland and Missouri; and as ‘incapable of understanding the act of voting’ in New Jersey.⁸

Legislation regulates access to citizenship privileges for the mentally ill, as this list

⁸ Although states are listed only one time here, some states have more than one of the provisions listed. States that are not listed have no restrictions on voting for the mentally ill.

clearly demonstrates. A diagnosis of mental illness carries stigma viewed as worthy of government regulation.

The mutually reinforcing threads of mental illness, welfare and the military, and immigration, created confusing discourses that not only permitted the ostracism of TgNCi people (they could be denied entry into the country or deported, they could be denied military benefits, they could be stigmatized through a diagnosis of mental illness), but also sanctioned overt exclusion by other citizens, driven by the cultural affect of disgust. The cultural context of TgNCi people in the U.S. is always transnational, as they are situated in a blurred gender boundary within a heterosexist culture. Their context is also always historical, as they seek space within which to be full citizens in any present moment. From this explanation of the U.S. cultural context for TgNCi people, I now turn to specific considerations of critical discourse studies and narrative.

Critical Discourse Studies (CDS) and Narrative

In this section, I discuss CDS and narrative. I explain three primary concepts from CDS that are salient to this research: discourse, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), and semiotics and multimodality. I then discuss narrative, and consider the role of memory in narrative.

CDS. CDS refers to a multidisciplinary body of academic works that include scholarship from legal studies, education, sociology, gender studies, anthropology, and other disciplines. Texts are the common element linking all of these disciplinary interests in CDS, but other contextual elements are essential in making sense of texts. In fact, Bakhtin (1986) described texts as "any coherent complex of signs" (p. 103), and theorized that such complexes formed contextually understood speech genres, which encompass more than merely the spoken utterances. Vygotsky (1978) viewed sociocultural aspects as critical to making meaning: "The internalization of cultural forms of behavior involves the reconstruction of psychological activity on the basis of sign operation" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 57). Signs may include language, behavior, artifacts, and all other elements that contribute to meaning within context. Context is defined by language plus all other elements that contribute to meaning making (Norris, 2004). Meaning making is influenced by discourses.

Discourse. The term, discourse, refers to connections in language: "saying (informing), doing (action), and being (identity)" (Gee, 2011, p. 2). As an example, I offer the discourse of an auto mechanic as compared to that of a surgeon. Both work in precise professions, in which they perform specific operations using specific instruments, in a specific environment. Each profession has associated practices of cleanliness, and of the charting of procedure start and stop times. In the garage, as in the operating theatre, there are expectations about who may be present and when and also rules about what those who are present may or may not do. Discourses comprise professional practices,

suitable clothing, and specific language sets of each of these two professions, but as viewed side-by-side from the perspective of an onlooker, it is clear that the discourses are not the same. No one would ask the auto mechanic to perform a human organ transplant. It is equally unlikely that the surgeon would be called to calibrate new brakes. Each of these individuals—the auto mechanic and the surgeon—is a skilled professional, but their workplace discourses diverge. Their discourses are interpreted as having varying levels of value or worthiness, embedded in different contexts.

Gee (2011a) describes discourse as a piece of writing or conversation embedded in a specific context where the text has significance based upon beliefs, understandings, or assumptions. There are always consequences to texts. Texts simultaneously:

Construct and represent the social world and thus can be referred to as constitutive, dialectical, and dialogic. Discourse is never just an artifact but a set of consumptive, productive, distributive, and reproductive processes that exist in relation to the social world. (Rogers, 2011, p. 6)

Fairclough (2011) defines texts as, "any product, whether written or spoken" and, "other symbolic forms such as visual images and texts which are combinations of words and images" (p. 4). He also describes discourse as, "a particular way of constructing a subject-matter" (Fairclough, 2011, p. 128). Texts inhabit and create embodied and multimodal systems. Some originate from the individual, and some originate from environment(s), which allow or restrict individual choices of expression. In this research I use the term, texts, to refer to spoken or written language. I use the term, signs, to refer to all other

discursive elements, including embodied multimodal representations, within specific contexts.

Kress (2010) views discourse as dealing with, "the production and organization of *meaning* about the world from an institutional position" (p. 110). He argues that discourses are a society's resource for meaning making in various contexts including at the national, regional, local, and even the family levels. What "we" know may not be the same in every context. He explains,

Discourse refers to 'institutions' and the knowledge they produce about the world which constitutes their domain. Knowledge about the world which is the institution's domain of relevance and responsibility is continuously produced. Examples of such institutions are education, medicine, science, law, 'the church', and more often and somewhat less tangibly, institutions such as 'the family'. Knowledge is produced in and shaped by the perspectives of a particular institution. 'Discourse' *names* both the complex as well as the understandings derived in encounters with such knowledge. In these encounters 'we' produce what we then hold as our knowledge about our world. *Discourse* shapes and *names* the routes through which we (have come to) know the socially shaped world as one kind of *knowledge*. (Kress, 2010, p. 110, italics in original)

These definitions unite around the concept of language as more than a spoken or printed artifact (Scollon, 2008). Rather, language *does* things (Austin, 1975). First, social relations and social subjects are constituted in and by discourse, which is viewed as

socially constructive. Second, each instance of discourse is considered to have three components: text, interaction, and social action that occur within a specific context at a particular time. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) examines these components and the power structures within them.

CDA. Through CDA a discourse analyst deconstructs an event through describing the text, interpreting the interaction, and explaining how those aspects are involved in the social action of the event (Caldas-Coulthard, 1993; Fairclough, 2011). One approach to CDA involves the examination of orders of discourse. Whereas linguistic analysis may focus on structures such as nouns, phrases, and sentences, CDA looks at language + context + behavior and more—all the elements that comprise the weaving of discourses. Discourses are, “socially constituted as well as socially conditioned” (Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2014, p. 448). Recalling the earlier comparison of the surgeon and the auto mechanic, it is easy to understand how *ways of representing, ways of interacting, and ways of being* necessarily differ between the two sites. No surgeon would enter the surgery waiting room with motor oil under their fingernails, wearing a sweaty t-shirt, and grease stained jeans and report to the deceased’s loved ones that, “She’s totaled.” Discourses of surgery and auto repair are vastly different, even though the repair of inner parts is a common theme.

The critical aspect of CDA is concerned with the ways in which texts and signs position/privilege individuals, or classes of individuals, based upon Discourses, and how these give language cultural authority (Bourdieu, 2003). Language always reflects the

social position of the speaker (Bourdieu, 2003) and positions the one spoken to, so that social hierarchies are maintained or reproduced. In the operating room, the surgeon is in charge. All other staff members are there to support the surgeon's expertise. In the operating room, and in every other environment language governs access to what Gee (2011) calls social goods in society, as described earlier. "Since, when we use language, social goods and their distribution are always at stake, language is always 'political' in a deep sense" (Gee, 2011a, p. 7). Gee (2011a) distinguishes lower case discourse (little d—everyday, casual conversation) from uppercase dominant Discourse (big D—related to shared beliefs, customs, as unique to groups of people, political systems, organizations, religions, corporations, and so forth). I use those same designations throughout my analysis.

Discovering the orders of discourse that comprise social practices makes it possible for the discourse analyst to learn about meaning potential of texts (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014), and for the critical discourse analyst to probe into ideological struggle in and among texts. The variety of possible meanings construes the context and the socio-cultural implications of each utterance. CDA pays particular attention to the power relationships that inform and direct discourse exchanges, both implicitly and explicitly.

CDA's locus of critique is the nexus of language/discourse/speech and social structure. It is in uncovering ways in which social structure impinges on discourse patterns, relations, and models (in the form of power relations,

ideological effects, and so forth), and in treating these relations as problematic, that researchers in CDA situate the critical dimension of their work... These dimensions are the object of moral and political evaluation and analyzing them should have effects in society: empowering the powerless, giving voices to the voiceless, exposing power abuse, and mobilizing people to remedy social wrongs. (Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2014, p. 449)

Exposure of ideological struggles through CDA reveals patterns of power, and contestation of that power. Ultimately, recognition of oppression opens the way for solutions, for transformation.

Semiotics and Multimodality. Semiotics is the study of signs (Jewitt, 2011; Kress, 2010; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006; Pahl & Rowsell, 2010). Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) describe sign-making as a process, “in which the signifier (the form) and the signified (the meaning) are relatively independent of each other until they are brought together by the sign-maker in the newly made sign” (p. 8). Signs may be viewed as motivated unions of forms and meanings through a fundamental relationship between the signifier and the signified (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). Although the terms signifier and signified are linguistic in origin, they may be extended to semiotic modes other than language (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). Jewitt (2011) notes that identities are represented through multimodal means. The purpose of this research was to critically examine the gender identity work of TgNCi people through the stories and meanings they attach to important artifacts across the lifespan. To do that I probed meanings (signified)

that TgNCi individuals attributed to artifacts (signs) that they considered significant, to lifespan narratives of their identities and to the stories in which those signs are embedded. My analyses incorporated multimodal discourse analysis (MDA), taking into account a variety of communicative and representational modes as I examined texts and artifacts.

Visual structures do not simply reproduce the structures of 'reality'. On the contrary, they produce images of reality which are bound up with the interests of the social institutions within which the images are produced, circulated and read. They are ideological. Visual structures are never merely formal: they have a deeply important semantic dimension. (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 47).

Narrative. CDA is a collection of methods used to accomplish two objectives: first, to explain how language works, and second, to apply the work to humankind in some fashion that results in solutions to problems related to social or political issues, oppression, and other inequities. Discourses separate insiders (those who belong) from outsiders (those who do not belong). As language is always political, a critical approach to discourse analysis brings to light the dynamics at work in the inherent ideological struggle in a discursive event, as one Discourse seeks to dominate another (Fairclough, 2011; Gee, 2011a). I situated my analysis of narratives within perspectives of CDA because an important component for understanding the obstacles to transgender identity work was the discovery of ideologies (of the individual, but also of broader culture) evoked in lifespan narratives.

Langellier (1989) writes that to tell a story/narrative requires the organization of experience into some sort of whole. She maintains, "in a most profound way, our stories tell us who we are and who we can—or cannot—be, at both surface and deep-level meaning" (Langellier, 1989, p. 267). Furthermore, she contends that dominant perspectives are affirmed through personal narratives, whether from the perspective of one who adheres to those perspectives, or one who is subjected to them (whether or not the individual chooses to accept or reject the subjugation) because, apart from a political function, narrative cannot exist (Langellier, 1989; see also, Gee, 2011a). Narrative is a representation of a past occurrence and what is included in a narrative depends upon the speaker within the context of the speaking as the narrator relies on memory to construct past occurrences in the presence of one or more listeners. Interpretation is always part of the speaker's story and the researcher's narrative (Riessman, 1993).

Curry (2015) holds to the idea that narration, "involves a kind of reflective split in the present moment, between the event and a perspective of teleological retrospect on the event" (pp. 46-47). This split is not only between the present talk (narration) and the subject of that talk (narrated event), but includes also an omniscient perspective, "that allows narrative to reflect not only upon the narrated event, but also upon itself" (Curry, 2015, p. 47). The point of focus here is the intersection of the time of the narrative (narrative temporality) and the time of life (from/within which the narration occurs). This is significant, since narration of past events relies on memory, and the telling of stories from the past as though they were unfolding in the present, or anticipated in the future.

Narrative and memory. Participants in this research recalled events from across the entire lifespan in spoken narratives, which means that some events occurred in early life. I begin this section with Vygotsky's (1896 – 1934) perspectives, which are central constructs for this research. Vygotsky conceptualized thought and speech in early childhood as overlapping circles, within whose intersection occurs verbal thought. Verbal thought is an external, rather than internal, process in which the young child speaks and appropriates cultural meanings from adults. Words and thought shape, and are shaped through language practice between child and adult within a situated community. Early information is organized by types, and through practice with tools (objects, language, behaviors, dress, and so forth), those types re-form as concepts. Vygotsky (1938/1978) writes, "*Human learning presupposes a specific social nature and a process by which children grow into the intellectual life of those around them*" (p. 88, italics in original). This means that in the family, through talk and action, children learn language and form family-specific meanings for the words. Children carry these ideas into society where, in school, places of worship, and other settings, those meanings are challenged or reinforced. Early social learning instills specific perspectives about right/wrong, inclusion/exclusion, the value (or lack thereof) of diversity, for example. Vygotsky's (1938/1978, 1934/1986) work is particularly salient for my research because of his emphasis on social interaction along with mental processes (Wertsch, 1985). Wertsch (1985) identifies three themes at the core of Vygotsky's theoretical framework: "(1) a reliance on a genetic or developmental method; (2) the claim that higher mental processes

in the individual have their origin in social processes; and (3) the claim that mental processes can be understood only if we understand the tools and signs that mediate them” (pp. 14-15). Among such tools and signs are personal artifacts used to make meaning throughout life: an old tintype photograph; a grandmother’s wedding dress; a child’s first drawing; a teddy bear given to a child by mother shortly before her untimely death – the list is as infinite as there are meanings to attach to objects. Memory and cultural context play key roles in such meanings, and the ongoing stories constructed around objects across the lifespan.

Recent studies of memory have shown that while there is an occasional memory from before age three, it is most common for early memories to be recalled from between the ages of three and four (Fivush & Nelson, 2004; Pillemer, 2001). How memories are reported changes over time as suggested above in the brief illustration of the use of a needle. The use of a word (or any other sign) in a functional way focuses attention. A young person selects “distinctive features and analyz[es] and synthesiz[es] them” (Vygotsky, 1934/1986, p. 106). Through this process, concepts are formed.

Concept formation is the result of such a complex activity, in which all basic intellectual functions take part. This process cannot, therefore, be reduced either to association, attention..., imagery and judgment..., or determining tendencies... All these moments are indispensable, but they are insufficient without the use of a sign, or word. Words and other signs are those means that direct our mental

operations, control their course, and channel them toward the solution of the problem confronting us. (Vygotsky, 1934/1986, pp. 106-107)

Thus, first comes the process of manipulation of tools (signs). This leads to conceptual thinking. In adolescence, problem solving is possible through the incorporation of previous practices with tools and then concepts. As Vygotsky (1934/1986) asserts, “Real concepts are impossible without words, and thinking in concepts does not exist beyond verbal thinking. That is why the central moment in concept formation, and its generative cause, is a specific use of words as functional ‘tools’” (p. 107). This mediational use of signs (words and other tools) is at the heart of narrative, as the speaker and listener negotiate contextual meanings.

Narrative is neither fact nor fiction (Langellier, 1989). As a reconstruction, it offers only the perspectives of the narrator as memories are chronicled. Language is central to memory for three reasons. First, language provides an organizational structure for experience. The telling of an occurrence is a reconstruction of the basic framing elements of an event. Second, language in use constitutes dialogue, which supports the formation of organized representations of experience. People frame the story, add supporting elements, and thereby shape the occurrence into a re-tellable memory. Third, through dialogue memories are connected as representations of situations from the past, which can be considered from a variety of points of view (Fivush & Nelson, 2004). Such conversations are particularly important in childhood in the formation of memory.

Gemignani (2014) notes that the past is not just one thing. It is a combination of many pasts, "and they are continually being rewritten, told, silenced, and forgotten. The past, in other words, is in our situated relationships with its main possibilities" (p. 134). Merleau-Ponty posits that signification – connections with perceptions, with signs – offers the building blocks from which memories can be assembled.

To perceive is not to experience a multitude of impressions that bring along with them some memories capable of completing them, it is to see an immanent sense bursting forth from a constellation of givens without which no call to memory is possible. To remember is not to bring back before the gaze of consciousness a self-subsistent picture of the past, it is to plunge into the horizon of the past and gradually to unfold tightly packed perspectives until the experiences that it summarizes are as if lived anew in their own temporal place. (Merleau-Ponty, 2012, p. 23)

Thus, in the telling of a lifespan narrative, participants dipped into the past to construct memories from early childhood and across the lifespan; and from different memory structures that have changed greatly across time. The recounting of memories involved intertextuality.

Intertextuality is the employment in the present of recalled texts from the past. It is inherent to narrative. Kristeva (1980) defined intertextuality as the "Transposition of one or more *systems* of signs into another, accompanied by a new articulation of the enunciative and denotative position" (p. 15). This practice creates a dialogic relation

between past and present, and among signs, texts, and contexts. Fragments of past texts may be used to construct lifespan narratives in the present. Signs associated with one gender (feminine or masculine clothing, for example) may be displayed by someone whose body structure interrupts the common “reading” of those signs. Talbot (2005) describes intertextuality as expressing a sense of blurred boundaries that combine in such a way that meaning is made. Intertextuality reveals complexities through which meanings take shape as varieties of texts are combined (New London Group, 1996). Fairclough (2011) summarizes the concept as "the property texts have of being full of snatches of other texts, which may be explicitly demarcated or merged in, and which the text may assimilate, contradict, ironically echo, and so forth" (p. 84). In this way, narrative text pieces together any other moment than the immediate present.

Overview of Inquiry

In Chapter 1, I introduced issues around the identity work of people who identify as TgNCi. I provided theoretical grounding for critical inquiry into TgNCi identity work across the lifespan. A macro perspective of the U.S., as represented by the WVS, illustrates a slightly above midrange acceptance of self-expression, while also showing the clinging to traditional values that can constrain some types of self-expression. The intersection of the constraints of self-expression with individual agency through self-expression creates trouble, and also opportunity, for TgNCi individuals in the U.S., whose gender identities are situated in a patriarchal society where concepts of gender identity remain rooted in a binary system. Statistics tell a compelling story about the

oppression of individuals who identify as TgNCi. To discover the deeper workings of how systemic norms are reproduced, and the consequences and opportunities for individuals who identify as TgNCi, I wanted to dig into minutia of critical analysis. My inquiry into events so small that they often go unnoticed provided depth of knowledge about the fine-grained work of sustaining cultural norms, and of gender identity work that interrupts those systems, and carves new spaces for TgNCi people.

Research questions. Curious about what comprises gender identity work across the lifespan for TgNCi people, I posed a single question: How do TgNCi individuals describe gender identity work through lifespan narratives? I then formulated three sub-questions that I felt would propel me deeply into the texts:

- How do participants of different generations describe gender identity work individually and collectively across the decades from the late 1940s to the present?
- How do participants describe gender identity work when they encounter structural and personal violence?
- How do participants represent and describe their relationships with material objects in gender identity work?

In Chapter 2, I explain the research design I devised to respond to these questions. I present aggregate data about interview participants; provide details of the data collection processes; and discuss the methods I used to approach my sub-questions. Content analysis, CDA, and MDA provided entry into complex data.

I approached the first sub-question through content analysis. Chapter 3 comprises findings and implications from this layer of my research. In Chapter 4, I explain the consequences to participants in response to the second sub-question. Through Critical Discourse Analysis of transcript segments I explain a concept I call *interrupted agency*. Through multimodal discourse analysis, in Chapter 5, I respond to my third sub-question. Using photographs of personal artifacts that participants brought to the second interview, combined with narrative segments, I demonstrate the power of material possessions as tools of visibility, messengers, and laminations.

I identify as an ally to TgNCi people. In pursuit of my own identity I have made difficult (for me) and troublesome (for others and for institutions) decisions. Although I seem to have had a lifelong commitment to exposing inequities, my identity work flung me into the margins of culture as I knew it, and resulted in a great deal of personal loss as I sought (and continue to seek on the lifelong pathway) warm welcomes and human acceptance. It is the total collection of experiences that has deepened my resolve as an ally across the spectrum of social justice issues, and particularly to TgNCi people.

This work establishes the foundational layer of lifespan narrative research that was previously absent from the literature. Furthermore, it also serves to inform the processes of how oppression is perpetuated, and also how it may be interrupted, through gender identity work across the decades.

Chapter 2: Methods

Based on the rationale for my study, and as focused through the review of literature in Chapter 1, I now turn to a discussion of research methods. In the sections that follow I explain the design, sampling, data collection and data analysis frameworks, assurances of data quality, ethical considerations, delimitations, and limitations of my research.

Research Design

This research used a multiple case study (Stake, 2005) design. I used layered methods of content analysis, CDA, and MDA, for inquiry into lifespan narrative interviews with TgNCi individuals. I also provide analysis of photographs of the artifacts participants chose to share. Narrative interviewing is a data collection strategy in which, “the interviewer is an attentive listener and [the] interviewee is a narrator with narrative thinking. The stance is more important than the content, or the structure of a particular question” (Kim, 2016, p.165). For the purposes of this research I viewed the interviews as speech events (Mishler, 1986), thereby situating them as co-constructed, discursive occurrences. Interviews were unstructured in order to privilege participants’ voices and stories. Additionally, the use of an unstructured approach to the interview results in greater complexity of narratives (Mishler, 1991). The focus on discourse as a central construct in narrative interviewing that Mishler (1991) emphasizes offered alignment with the methods of analysis I would use in this research.

In Interview 1 (I-1), each participant narrated their lifespan story of gender identity work. In Interview 2 (I-2), each participant narrated their gender identity work through descriptions and stories of artifacts they brought with them. The two interviews will be described in detail, later in this chapter. Content analysis (Mayring, 2000 & 2014; see also Kohlbacher, 2006), CDA (Scollon & Scollon, 2003; Wortham & Reyes, 2015; see also Gee, 2011a), and Multimodal Discourse Analysis (Jewitt, 2011; Kress, 2010; Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006; Norris, 2004) provided entry into rich analyses of interview transcriptions, and images of participants' artifacts.

Sampling and Participants

I identified participants through purposeful sampling methods (Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2002), using snowball sampling (Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2002). I sought to identify adult participants who described their gender identity using TgNCi terminology (e.g., any non-binary gender identity descriptor) from the Midwestern U.S. I also set my research parameter so that participants would align with a span of three age groups (18 to 30; 31 to 45; and 46 to 60) in order to benefit from experiences of political and social change inherent across *all* lifespan narratives; narratives that span five decades, from the late 1940s to 2016. My goal was to engage three to five participants per group, for a total of from 9 to 15 participants. However, as word about my research spread, the first individuals to volunteer were older than 60. I decided to create a fourth age group (60 and older) to add richness and depth to the findings. The desired number of participants then increased to a potential range of 12 to 20. Participants (all names are pseudonyms) are

represented in the table below in age groups. A total of 26 interviews were conducted with 13 participants (two interviews per person).

Participants are represented in Table 1 below.

Table 1

Participants by Age Group

Age Group	Pseudonym	Age	Sex Assigned at Birth	Gender Identity	Transition Complete ⁹	Preferred Pronouns ¹⁰
60 and Above	Karen	66	M	F	N	She/her
	Mimi	65	M	F	Y	She/her
	Victoria	61	M	F	Y	She/her
46 to 59	Amélie	59	M	F	N	She/her
	Heidi	51	M	F	N	She/her
	Emma	49	M	F	Y	She/her
	Micah	49	F	M	Y	He/him
31 to 45	Ryan	45	M	F	N	She/her
	Gabriela	36	M	F	N	She/her
18 to 30	Dingo	24	M	Gender fluid	N/A	Ze/zir
	Sidonie	24	F	Genderqueer	N/A	They/them
	Prism	23	F	Non-binary	N/A	They/them
	Aeon	22	M	F	N	She/her

⁹ Transition is a term that is defined by each TgNCi individual, based upon the sense of what is right for them. Some individuals prefer partial surgery; some prefer complete surgery; while some prefer no surgery at all. Some want HRT, and some do not. Transition can be viewed neither as a single process, nor as the same process for every TgNCi person.

¹⁰ Throughout the findings and discussion chapters, I default to participants' present-day preferred pronouns. I chose to do this out of respect for their identities. This practice may frustrate some readers, who prefer the ease of language reading that is associated with a binary perspective of gender. However, this practice in the reading of non-binary texts is as critical as the practice of reading non-binary signs of individual presentation. Both the texts and the signs hold potential to pry open spaces of belonging for TgNCi people.

Three participants were assigned the female sex at birth, while the remaining 10 were assigned the male sex. One participant identified as male (preferring he/him pronouns); nine identified as female (preferring she/her pronouns), and three identified by terms such as non-binary, genderqueer, and gender fluid. Religious influences included Catholic (10), Protestant (3) and none (1).¹¹ Nine participants are from urban communities, two are from suburban communities, and two are from rural communities. Six participants have had no hormone replacement therapy (HRT). Seven participants have had HRT, but two of those stopped due to serious health complications (strokes / blood clots). Three participants had undergone gender confirmation surgeries. One individual had elected to have partial gender confirmation surgery. Five participants had not yet had any surgical procedures, but hoped to do so in the near future. Three individuals had no plans for surgery. One individual wanted to experience HRT, and then to undergo surgical procedures, but decided not to proceed with either avenue, due to their marriage. In terms of the gender identity for day-to-day living, four participants said they live as men, and five live as women. One participant presents as a masculine or as feminine, depending upon the circumstances, and three express identity as non-binary, genderqueer, or gender fluid. Two participants completed military service and were honorably discharged. Finally, in regard to the 13 participants' education, two completed some college; two have bachelor's degrees; three are pursuing master's degrees and five completed master's degrees; and one individual completed two doctorates.

¹¹ The total of 14 indicates that a participant was influenced from more than one religious tradition.

Snowball sampling resulted in a steady influx of participants, from two primary sources: my hairdresser and a group of professional colleagues (including representatives from academia, and local and national LGBTQIA+ advocacy organizations), one of who distributed my Call for Study Participants to her entire university.

In order to capitalize on participants' initial interest, I designed strategies to make engagement prompt and easy. First, I created a unique email address for my dissertation research so that I could assure participants a private and safe point of access to me if they chose to contact me by email. Although I also offered my personal cell phone number, no participants initiated contact by that means. Second, using an alphanumeric code generator from the Internet (Numberator.com) I generated a set of 50, 4-digit alphanumeric codes, which allowed me latitude to eliminate codes I felt were unsuitable, off-putting, or potentially offensive (7ASS, for example). Third, in Google Sheets I created a schedule of available dates and times for interviews, limiting the schedule to a span of no more than four weeks in the future, to set constraints on how far in advance participants could schedule. I offered a selection of day, evening, weekday, and weekend time slots. This calendar is included in Appendix A. I felt that motivation to participate would be highest when it occurred as close to the initial contact as possible. As each week passed, or as time slots were filled, I added weeks to the calendar for new participants.

I prepared a Call for Study Participants (Appendix A) that I provided electronically to key individuals, after first talking with them in person about my work

and gaining their interest. Although the Call for Study Participants included both my phone number and the research-specific email address, all participants contacted me by way of email.

I created an initial email reply to participants' first inquiry (Appendix A). I kept the language upbeat, energetic, and welcoming. I attached a copy of the Informed Consent for Participation in Research Activities (hereafter referred to as Informed Consent, see Appendix B), so that they could read about the details of the research before committing to participate. (In my earlier research design, I planned to also send them the Demographic Data Form, but I decided against this. I knew the form would take only a short time to complete in person, and I wanted participants to simply be able to come to the first meeting without trying to remember to bring the form with them.)

I instructed participants to select two appointment times that would occur between one and two weeks apart. Since the schedule extended a limited number of weeks into the future, to some degree the selection of the date for I-2 required that the date for I-1 would occur within the next week or two. In this way, I assured engagement to the highest degree possible, while also allowing participants latitude to select times that would work in their schedules. Participants initiated scheduling changes, on the rare occasion that conflicts occurred. One participant in particular sent me an email letting me know that she had changed the date of her upcoming I-2 on the schedule. Thus, the easy calendar access allowed participants freedom of access and control of the process, and removed from me a host of back-and-forth scheduling contacts.

I checked the Google sheet frequently, as I wanted to establish my presence by responding to participants' date selections within hours, not days. When I saw a new alphanumeric code, I sent that participant a second email (Appendix A) in which I thanked them for scheduling, and told them to watch for a reminder message three to five days before I-1. At that same time, I set a reminder in my phone to send an email to the participant, identified by alphanumeric code, on a specific day, three to five days before the appointment. On that day, I sent the reminder message. Here, too, I sought to be upbeat, welcoming, and eager to meet them. Initially, I thought that I would meet participants at a mutually agreed location. However, as I considered the availability of confidential spaces on the university campus, I elected to have all interviews conducted there. I wrote this expectation into the Call for Study Participants, and reiterated it in my email message. At the time that I sent the second email, I also requested university conference room reservations for the dates and times the participant chose. All interviews but two were conducted at the university. Those exceptions were for a participant who was physically unable to leave her home. For those interviews I went to her home.

Finally, three to five days before each interview, I sent an email with specific directions to the campus room for that meeting. I attached to that message a map of the university campus and a map of visitor parking. If I-2 was already scheduled to take place in the same room as I-1, then I confirmed that location at the end of I-1, and sent only a quick reminder of the date and time before I-2. If I-2 was scheduled to take place in a different room from I-1, then at the end of I-1, I told the participant that I would send

directions to the new location in the reminder email. Following these steps across all participants, I met with 13 participants for 26 interviews between September 6 and December 10, 2016. Participants were offered a selection from three \$20 gift card options after completion of the second interview: Amazon.com, Starbuck's, or iTunes. Gift cards were delivered to participants electronically within 48 hours after each participant's completion of the interview process.

It is important to emphasize that I am a master's level counselor and a Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW) in the Midwestern state where I conducted this research. I have never been the object of any sort of complaint or lawsuit related to that clinical practice. At the present time, I do not work as a clinical practitioner. I do not seek to recruit a client base of my own, nor did I seek to recruit participants by way of any practitioner's known client base. This research was in no way connected to any interest in my own, or anyone else's clinical practice. However, I do feel my background expertise was an important factor in the depth and quality of the life narratives shared by this vulnerable group.

Data Collection

I collected data from two interviews with each participant. With their permission I made jottings throughout each interview, "brief written record[s] of events and impressions captured in key words and phrases" (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011, p. 29). I recorded all interviews using my iPad. I also spoke with each participant about the importance of narrative inquiry methods and my research purposes so that they were

aware of the “value of their own voice and the importance of sharing their own experiences and stories” (Kim, 2016, p. 167). Kim (2016) explains the reasoning behind this unstructured approach.

In narrative interviewing...it is important to establish such a stance that an interviewer is an attentive listener and our interviewee is a narrator with narrative thinking. This stance is more important than the form and content of a particular question. That is, we are likely to find stories if we allow our interviewees to continue in their own way. The narrative inquirer’s job is to listen with attentive care and ask necessary questions that will further inspire the telling of stories. We are unlikely to find stories if we cut our storytellers off with new questions, which could signal that we are not listening to their stories. (Kim, 2016, p. 165)

Although there were moments when I redirected in order to maintain focus (Kim, 2016), participants generally led the way through the telling of their life stories.

Interview 1. I started every I-1 with a review and signing of the Informed Consent (Appendix B), and each participant completed the demographic data form (Appendix B). This interview was based on an unstructured, open-ended format (Kim, 2016). Mishler (1991) categorizes interviews as speech events, which take place in context of time, place, and with engagement of the participant and the interviewer. The unstructured approach to the interview foregrounds the narrative and opens space for the telling of stories (Mishler, 1991; see also Kim, 2016). Furthermore, the open-ended nature of the single question in I-1 resulted in greater complexity of participants’

responses than could have been accomplished through a list of many close-ended questions. The interviews ranged in length from one to two hours, during which participants narrated their life stories with minimal interruption. When they indicated that they were finished, I offered prompts or asked clarifying questions. Thus, I-1 comprised three segments: 1) completion of forms and brief introduction to the meeting; 2) the life story narrative; and 3) follow-up questions and finalization of plan for interview two (Appendix C).

I used audio recording (participants gave permission for recording by signing the Informed Consent) to capture segments two and three (described above) of the first interview. At the start of segment two, after beginning to record, I prompted the life story narrative using a single question printed, and attached to the inside of a brightly colored file folder: Tell me your life story beginning as far back as you can go, up to the present time (see Appendix C for the interview protocol). This question was drawn from Seidman (2013), who instructs: “In the first interview, the interviewer’s task is to put the participant’s experience in context by asking him or her to tell as much as possible about him or herself in light of the topic up to the present time” (p. 21). Although Seidman’s (2013) approach is phenomenological, my appropriation of his strategy for I-1 accomplished a key purpose in my research: the establishment of the context within which to discuss specific aspects of gender identity work of the participant.

One possible concern with narrative interviews is that participants may have rehearsed some stories from their histories many times, through retelling. These accounts

often lose depth, in contrast to a fresh, first telling, which may be accompanied by raw emotion and perhaps surprise (Gemignani, 2014; Langellier, 1989). Gemignani (2014) explains that in often repeated stories “memory tends to behave more like a muscle than a storage box” (p. 128). In order to sidestep practiced stories, I used several strategies. First, I prompted participants to go into greater depth or detail about a particular matter they discussed. My jottings during narratives allowed me to document questions and probes for further discussion. Second, I relied on an unstructured approach to follow-up questions after I-1, and after the segments of I-2, asking the participant to further explain gaps, inconsistencies in events or time periods, and to provide additional clarification. Third, in I-2 participants were asked to construct narratives as stories about personal artifacts. This approach was introduced to participants at the end of I-1 (see Appendix C).

Interview 2. Ahrendt (1965) theorizes, “The things of the world have the function of stabilizing human life, and their objectivity lies in the fact that [human beings], their ever-changing nature notwithstanding, can retrieve their sameness, that is, their identity, by being related to the same chair and the same table” (p. 137) (See also, Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981). Kim (2016) suggests, “collecting objects as data...which will go with the life story and lived experiences” (p. 177), as a way to achieve depth of narratives with research participants. Following these thoughts, the second interview drew from the Baroque concept of cabinets of wonder (Kim, 2016). Participants were instructed to bring to I- 2, three to five artifacts, things they wished to

talk about as representative of their gender identity work (Kim, 2016; see also Pahl & Rowsell, 2010). (See Appendix C for text to be read to participant at the close of I-1.)

I completed all I-1 transcriptions before I-2. This permitted me to follow up with participants in person at the start of I-2. Thus, I-2 began with my asking if they wanted to clarify or change anything they said in the first interview, or if they want to add to it. Next, I raised any discussion points that arose during the transcribing of I-1.

I then invited participants to narrate the textures and stories of each object as related to their gender identity work, focusing on one artifact at a time (see Interview Protocol in Appendix C). Participants followed prompts printed on a card to develop a detailed description of each item. Second, they were invited to tell the story of the object and its role in their gender identity work. Third, they narrated their relationship with the object as outlined in Appendix C. As in the first interview, I allowed them to talk freely. After they finished the narrative of an artifact, I probed for the significance of the various sensorial connections with it, emotional responses to it, and layered meanings. When the participant indicated that they had nothing to add about an artifact, I then prompted them to move to the next one. As they finished speaking about each item, I prompted them to provide more detail. I allowed the momentum and energy of each participant to determine whether I photographed each object before they presented the next one, or waited until the end to do all the photography. I did not touch their items without first asking participants' permission. I defaulted to asking participants to position each item so that I could photograph the various features of the object's details from a variety of angles.

Thus, I-2 alternated between a participant's narration of an artifact, and an interlude during which the interviewer asked for clarification about the narration, with photography taking place intermittently, or all at one time at the end of I-2.

Although in this setting I was not functioning as a clinician, it would have been a mistake to pretend that I was *not* a clinician. Furthermore, due to my status as a mandated reporter, I disclosed my professional credentials in the Informed Consent (see Appendix B). After the narrative phase in the first interview, and again in the second interview, I asked questions that probed for depth of response. I remained aware of the depth of my probing, and accessed well-practiced skills to direct one individual away from deeply painful emotion with solution-finding strategies, which produced fresh insights. Because this was research, rather than clinical interviewing, I avoided engagement through counseling techniques such as active listening and paraphrasing, and focused instead on foregrounding participants' stories, offering prompts only at times when they indicated that they had lost direction in their talk. I took Seidman's (2013) counsel: "Let the participant work out the distress without interfering and taking inappropriate responsibility for it" (pp. 109-110).

Data Analysis

Transcription and corroboration. I approached data analysis as a layered process. As mentioned, I transcribed audio texts from every I-1 so that they were completed before the same participant's I-2. A key to my transcription notation conventions is included as Appendix D. During the transcription process I kept notes and

memos, tracking aspects about which I then sought clarification in I-2 (Merriam, 2009). I also reviewed my notes from each participant's narrative in order to recall as accurately as possible the interview experience, and also to maintain an objective perspective through identification of instances during which my own experiences might tend to influence my interpretation of the participant's story. I wanted to complete the transcription of each I-2 no later than two weeks after the occurrence of I-2, but the rapid snowball of first interviews meant that I spent the entire stretch of time from early September through the end of November completing I-1 transcriptions. Thus, transcribing second interviews extended into the New Year. I planned to reach out to participants for further clarification about Transcript 2 when needed, but no such contact was needed (Merriam, 2009).

I named and filed all transcriptions with the alphanumeric codes of participants, rather than using names. This serves to separate the texts from identities of participants. I marked time progression in all transcriptions according to units of one minute. This meant that I could easily search a recording for clarification, or to refresh my memory of vocal nuances of talk.

Incorporation of digital images. I downloaded all digital images from each I-2 into my personal laptop computer immediately after each I-2, and stored them in chronological order in collections according to participants' alphanumeric identifiers. Images were imported in RAW formats, processed as Photoshop Data (.psd) files, and then saved in duplicate as Joint Photography Experts Group (.jpg) files for easy insertion

in documents. Jpg files are lossy file types, meaning that they degrade over time.

Therefore, preserving images in RAW form, and also as .psd files will maintain their integrity. Processing was completed in Adobe Lightroom, and Photoshop, and included adjustments of white balance, minor image sharpening, cropping, conversion from color to black and white, and minimization of backgrounds to make artifacts more visible.

Other than these adjustments, no changes to the artifacts were made. Records were kept in password protected files.

I then reviewed each I- 2, and examined the associated digital images. I selected preliminary images that were visually most sharp. Those images were stored in a subfolder where I could easily locate them during later stages of analysis and interpretation.

The remaining layers of analysis are individually described in the sections that follow, but it should be noted here that while the process of analysis may be described in a linear arrangement, it also involved many iterations of interpretations, comparisons across data in a constant comparative mode, reflection across processes, and review of my notes and analytic memos. Such toggling back and forth among the words of the participant, my reflective notes, and the artifacts themselves served to provide a level of triangulation and interpretation.

Data Security. All digital data was stored in password-protected folders, which may be accessed only by the researcher, the dissertation advisor, and committee members as needed. Printed documents used for analysis are stored in a locked file drawer when

not in use, and do not bear any identifying information that could link them with a particular participant.

Content Analysis. In order to gain a holistic view of the transcripts, I conducted qualitative content analysis (Mayring, 2000 & 2014; see also, Kohlbacher, 2005; Phoenix, 2013). This method allowed me to examine and interpret thematic content across the transcriptions, comparing and contrasting narratives, in order to identify common concepts, ideas, and behaviors among all participants (Kohlbacher, 2005). Phoenix (2013) examines the phenomenon of key narratives: practiced stories told over and over, to the extent that they may be used by the teller to effect a specific and strategic outcome in the listener. Through content analysis of categories across all participants, I was able to minimize the possibility of misinterpretation of data due to the insertion of key narratives into participants' stories.

Mayring (2000 & 2014) and Kohlbacher (2005) urge strict control of the method, along with a one step-at-a-time approach to qualitative content analysis. To that end, I adhered to an iterative process of coding, review, comparison, and revision, as I worked within, and across transcripts. Mayring (2000) explains: "The material is worked through and categories are tentative and step by step deduced. Within a feedback loop those categories are revised, eventually reduced to main categories and checked in respect to their reliability" (paragraph 12). I uploaded the 13 transcripts of combined first and second interviews into MAXQDA Analytics Pro software, which allowed me to view data across all transcripts. First, I assigned categories to narrative segments that I felt

might inform responses to the first guiding question, defining each category as I created it. Table 1 below shows a sample of categories and definitions.

Table 1

Sample categories and definitions

Category	Definition
Culture & Politics	Texts about participants' interactions with culture and/or politics
Examples/Language	Limits of language connected with limited gender expression
Longing	Wanting to <i>look like</i> the gender of <i>Who-I-Am</i>
Transphobia	Texts about participants' encounters with transphobia
Activities & artifacts - ADULT	What participants enjoy doing in adulthood, and any specific objects mentioned, related to those activities.

Next, I identified redundancies among them and re-categorized some segments.

Finally, I revisited each step, and all of my decisions in a back-and-forth process of data analysis and interpretation. I combined 66 categories into 30 merged categories. A sample of those results is shown below in Table 2.

Table 2

Sample of category merges

Category	Definition	Category Merge
Culture & Politics	Texts about participants' interactions with culture and/or politics	Culture/Politics
Examples/Language	Limits of language connected with limited gender expression	Culture/Politics

My analysis culminated in the identification of three primary categories related to gender identity work: oppression, suppression, and visibility. This process is illustrated in the content analysis table in Appendix E, which contains all categories, definitions, and two levels of category merges. These categories are defined early in Chapter 3 as an introduction to the discussion of content analysis of narratives within, and across the four age groups of participants in this research.

During content analysis, I also was aware of texts from each transcript as “embedded narrative segments within an overarching narrative that includes nonnarrative parts” (Reissman, 1993, p. 51). My memories of participants’ behaviors as they spoke, my field notes, and memos, helped me to keep the context in mind. The complexity of working within, and also across transcripts offered depth of insight, drawn from diverse narratives. I worked from whole transcripts (Paget, 1983; Reissman, 1993), meaning that I did not eliminate any utterances, including my own. This allowed me to consider not only the words of the participants, but also any influence of my own in directing their narratives.

I then searched across the body of transcripts again, in order to foreground narratives of interest for CDA. Since CDA is concerned with revealing power and privilege, these were sections that contained narrative data illustrating ideological wrestling around social goods. As mentioned earlier, Gee (2011a) includes among social goods the things that are viewed by the privileged as societal *givens*, such as money, status, power, and acceptance. I felt I would find evidence of this struggle in the narratives of TgNCi participants, since statistical studies arrived at disturbing results in regard to basic needs and the lack of wellbeing of transgender people. Statistics tell the story of Discourses in operation; the political use of language to grant, or to withhold privilege from an individual or a class of individuals. I selected, and then discarded, and selected again, texts that demonstrated salience for analysis, working iteratively within, and across transcripts.

Next, I created a written summary portrait of each of the 13 participants, in order to lift the key elements of gender identity work from each narrative. This work demanded a methodical pace, as I deliberated about narratives and segmentation. As a parallel process, I viewed the participants' artifacts in order to interact with the relationships between texts and signs. As in all phases of my analysis, participants were identified only by way of their assigned, four-digit alphanumeric codes. During the portrait-writing process I assigned a pseudonym to each individual. I made notes of my observations, gathering quantitative descriptors of the group as a whole, and then looking across the

four age groups, from the oldest participant to the youngest. I also investigated corresponding milestones of transgender history.

The history of transgender people is often subsumed (and therefore, unrecognized) within the history of LGBTQIA+ people. Furthermore, the history of transgender people is not necessarily the history of TgNCi people. However, because gender identity work is the subject of this research, I chose to draw from a history of gender identity – transgender history – rather than from history related to sexual orientation. Drawing from Stryker (2008), whose comprehensive work is a primary resource for transgender history, I was able to situate narrated events within their historical contexts.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). I approached CDA through the analysis of the sense of time, perceptual space, and interpersonal distances as indicated in participants' narratives and artifacts (Scollon & Scollon, 2003). Scollon and Scollon (2003) describe the sense of time as "A person's sense of duration, how rapidly or slowly time is passing" (p. 50) as determined by either urgency or a single focus on activity (as opposed to multitasking). Drawing from Hall, Evans, and Nixon (2013) they characterize perceptual spaces as boundaries produced by our senses around spaces that are visual, auditory, olfactory, thermal, and haptic (tactile) (Scollon & Scollon, 2003, p. 52).

Concerning interpersonal distances, they explain that

Differences in interpersonal distance index differences in social and interpersonal relationships. Because we express our relationships to others in part by where

(and how) we stand or sit or touch, those postures can be ‘read’ by others to be signaling those interpersonal relationships. Interpersonal distances become, then, a crucial resource by which we...embody significant meanings about ourselves and about others and about our relationships. (Scollon & Scollon, 2003, p. 54)

To conduct CDA I created a table with text segments in the left hand column.

These segments represent utterances broken into meaning units that permitted analysis at the level of fine detail. In three columns to the right of the text I kept notes under the headings, sense of time, perceptual space, and interpersonal distances. Table 3 below shows a sample representation of my approach to CDA in this research, using Emma’s Warm Sunny Day story, which I discuss in detail in Chapter 4.

Table 3.

Sample of CDA for Emma's Warm Sunny Day story

Text	Sense of Time	Perceptual Space	Interpersonal Distances
My best friend in kindergarten was this little blonde girl named Jane. Her family moved away at the end of that school year.	Established kindergarten as the year in school, which also indicates approximate age of 5 or 6	Mention of friend's blonde hair	Range from geographically near to far - friend moved away at the end of school year.
But at the beginning of that school year, so this would have been / in my memory I can still feel the warmth of the sun on my skin and I can smell freshly-mown grass, and I can smell the dust of leaves in the air. So it had to have been late September, early October. It was a beautiful day. It was kindergarten.	Emma further limits the time to "late September, early October."	Emma access the time of year through perceptual spaces: warmth of sun, smells of mown grass and leaf dust. A beautiful day.	Emma references the happy innocence of a young child, connecting kindergarten with a beautiful day, thereby situating herself as at home with everything, and everyone around her.

I then allowed the analytical process of creating the table to reveal juxtapositions of the three elements (sense of time, perceptual space, and interpersonal distances) in order to, “offer a sort of ‘window’ into how individuals evaluate their past experience and position themselves in their world” (Wodak, 2005, p. 101). Positioning has to do with the previously mentioned concept of social goods (Gee, 2011a), and how identity is put forth (by the participant) and recognized (from cultural ideologies). In the completed analysis of this story in Appendix F it is possible to trace how at intersections of the three elements of the analysis, Emma’s perception of herself in society was dramatically

altered through a simple, momentary interaction. Thus, in this layer of analysis, a critical lens allowed me to pinpoint intersections of ideologies in context, as contained in participants' stories about their gender identity work. Lazar asserts that critical perspectives, "Show up the complex, subtle, and sometimes not so subtle, ways in which frequently taken-for-granted gendered assumptions and hegemonic power relations are discursively produced, sustained, negotiated, and challenged in different contexts and communities" (Lazar, 2007, p. 142).

In addition to my analysis of sense of time, perceptual spaces, and interpersonal distances I also looked at gender identity through the lens of Gee's (2011b) Identities Building Tool.

For any communication, ask what socially recognizable identity or identities the speaker is trying to enact or to get others to recognize. Ask also how the speaker's language treats other people's identities. What sorts of identities the speaker recognizes for others in relationship to his or her own. Ask, too, how the speaker is positioning others, what identities the speaker is 'inviting' them to take up. (Gee, 2011b, p. 110)

Since gender identity work is the topic of this research, using the Identities Building Tool (Gee, 2011b) allowed me to examine the co-construction of identity within a social context. Using CDA as described above, I then identified Discourses that influenced the story. For example, in Emma's Warm Sunny Day story, the identities building tool allowed me to pinpoint the powerful position of the teacher, as acting from

within adultist and heterosexist Discourses to direct a kindergarten-age child. I include my work with the Identities Building Tool in Appendix F, alongside CDA. This analysis demonstrates the effect of a single moment of interaction upon a child's self-perception. I could see that Emma's identity transformed from a happy child in the early school year with a group of friends and a 'bestie,' to a child who quickly became a highly visible target for adults in authority, and also for her peers.

Thus, through the juxtaposition of the temporal, the perceptual, and the interpersonal, followed by the analysis of identities according to procedures described above, I completed CDA of salient narrative segments. I identified four primary *contexts of oppression* that served to restrict participants' access to social goods freely enjoyed by individuals whose identities neatly align with Discourses associated with a binary view of gender identity. In this way, I examined the situatedness of TgNCi people in cultural and relational contexts, as explained in Chapter 4.

Multimodal discourse analysis (MDA). Beginning with CDA as described above, I added a layer of analysis, MDA, in order to probe the relationships between/across modes of meaning. My point of entry into this layer of analysis was through participants' narratives about artifacts they brought to I-2. I considered not only the meaning of each object to its owner, but also broader contextual meanings of such objects in culture.

I identified narratives that contained the greatest detail. Through iterations of analysis and reflection, I drew from Jewitt's (2011) four interconnected theoretical

assumptions. She writes, first, of language as part of a multimodal ensemble explaining that multimodality, “proceeds on the assumption that representation and communication always draw on a multiplicity of modes, all of which have the potential to contribute equally to meaning” (Jewitt, 2011, p. 14). Bodily movements, gestures, gaze, images, engagement with surroundings, silence, space, color, texture, lighting, pacing and tone of voice, and non-verbal response modes are all examples of modes that contribute to meaning. Visual aspects were unavailable except to the extent that I captured some details in my field notes.

Some narratives around artifacts in I-2, re-storied the same incidents that were described in I-1. I proceeded, “comparing and cross-checking data collected through observations at different times or in different places, or interview data collected from people with different perspectives or from follow-up interviews with the same people” (Merriam, 2009, p. 216). Through MDA, I sought to discover meanings created through combinations of the various modes of data including all of my notes and memos, interview transcripts, and still images of participants’ artifacts and, on an as-needed basis, a review of audio recordings to confirm vocal and speech nuances as connected to particular material objects.

Second, Jewitt (2011) explains that each mode in the multimodal constellation has a specific function in the overall communicative process. The material objects – the artifacts – presented by participants as significant in their TgNCi identity work, represent specific aspects of culture, history, and social practice (Jewitt, 2011). All modes are

socially constituted components of meaning making. I observed how and why individuals doing TgNCi identity work attached meaning to specific material objects. I saw this in how participants related physically to each object and I heard it in their talk.

Jewitt's (2011) third assumption is that "People orchestrate meaning through their selection and configuration of modes" (p. 15). Participants in my research engaged in the narrative process through telling their life stories (I-1) and then through telling stories associated with specific artifacts they choose as significant in their gender identity work (I-2). In this way, they constructed meaning through memory and also through the tangible presence of personal items of meaning. Furthermore, they were prompted to provide sensory details of each object (see prompts for I-2 in Appendix C). Such modes established communicative acts as social, in an endless variety of configurations, each of which constituted specific meaning.

Finally, multimodality is constructed on the understanding that the meanings of the signs, which are fashioned from multimodal resources, are social: shaped by the norms and rules operating at the moment of sign-making, and influenced by the motivations and interests of a sign-maker in a specific social context. That is, sign-makers select, adapt, and refashion meanings through the process of reading/interpretation of the sign. These effect and shape the sign that is made.

(Jewitt, 2011, pp. 15-16)

I relied upon a social semiotic approach to context, based upon the work of Kress (2010), where “All signs in all modes are meaningful” (p. 59). Kress (2011) explains the usefulness of multimodal analysis.

[Texts] are in part constitutive of social institutions; they provide means of ‘reading’ the interests and purposes of those involved in the making of *texts* in an institution; they reveal the meanings and the processes involved in their making. *Texts* are outcomes of processes initiated and performed by social agents for social reasons; and they provide a means of getting insight into these processes and the purposes of social agents. (Kress, 2011, p. 205)

My analysis drew from “the many material resources...which societies have shaped and which cultures provide” (Kress, 2011, p. 208). Therefore, the use of MDA in the analysis of participants’ artifacts allowed access to dimensional depth of information about *ways of interacting, ways of representing, and ways of being* (Rogers, 2007; see also, Fairclough, 2011): all modalities were situated within the context of the interview. Artifacts identified by participants as meaningful to them served not only as points of entry into individuals’ stories of TgNCi identity work, but also as constitutive elements of lifespan narratives. “These objects tell stories, hold memories, and evoke identities connected with their existence” (Pahl & Rowsell, 2010, p. vii).

During analysis, narrative patterns that demonstrated participants’ self-representation within the context of suppressing their identities from public view became evident. I understood these patterns-in-contexts as a conundrum of showing or hiding the

participant's gender identity, a component of gender identity work that is not necessary for individuals who align with Discourses that maintain cultural reliance on a binary construction of gender identity. Working with narrative segments, and the associated artifacts, I deconstructed the appearance of an object as narrated by the participant, the social context(s) in which the object was significant to the individual, and investigated intertextuality (defined earlier in this dissertation as how sign systems are transposed onto one another and what they say together). The findings from this layer of analysis are detailed in Chapter 5.

Finally, I drew from Scollon and Scollon (2014) to examine combined actions between participants and their artifacts. I looked at principles of *indexicality*, *dialogicality*, and *selection* as I sought to understand meanings of significant objects in participants' gender identity work. The principle of indexicality is concerned with how a semiotic sign is placed in the world. For my analysis, I inquired into how, when, and where the participant joined with an artifact. The principle of dialogicality has to do with not only the placement of a sign, but also with its interaction with other signs. "Each sign indexes a discourse that authorizes its placement, but once the sign is in place it is never isolated from other signs in its environment, embodied or disembodied. There is always a dynamic among signs, an intersemiotic, interdiscursive dialogicality" (Scollon & Scollon, 2014, p. 205). The principle of selection focuses on the action, or agency of the person who places a sign, and their choices about meanings they choose to foreground, and those they keep in the background.

As the first step in analysis I searched transcripts to identify examples of narratives from I-2 that were richest in modal density. Norris (2011) explains the term modal density as follows:

Density is a term borrowed from physics, where density is mass per unit volume, which is the ration of the amount of matter in an object compared to its volume... Thus, the density of a piece of lead is higher than the density of a piece of cork of the same size. Analogously, the amalgamation of various metals has greater density than a ball of paper. Modal density is viewed in a similar sense, where, instead of chemical substance, we think of communicative modes at play in interaction. (p. 82)

Therefore, I was searching for rich combinations of talk, emotional and physical engagement with artifacts, and evidence of meaning (both from the past, and new meaning, within the context of the interview). In Appendix G, I include an example of how I approached MDA for Chapter 5. Alongside the participant's talk in the left hand column, I inserted my own comments and notes in a center column. In the right hand column I inserted remarks about the artifact and its purposes in the past, and in I-2, including its meaning for the participant, and for the context of our interview. An excerpt from the analysis in Appendix G is included in Table 4 below.

Table 4

MDA – Karen’s Halloween Picture

Text	Notes	Artifact
Looking at it now / I, I don’t like the way I look.	The way she looks is important to Karen, who wants to fit in. She almost shoves the picture at me, in her excitement to share about the event.	Karen wears all white: t-shirt, denim skirt, and pumps. Her wig is brown, and her purse a darker color leather. In the picture she is smiling broadly, but I have blurred her features to protect her identity. She stands with her arm around her wife, and it appears that they have switched appearances for the evening, with her wife in more masculine attire.
But um / uhhh but it was, oh, golly!	This story is a repeat from I-1. Now, she seems extremely animated in her talk. “Oh, golly!” She sounds very excited.	This would make it possible for the wife to agree to Karen’s dressing in feminine clothing on Halloween.

In the fuller analytic example in Appendix G, it becomes clear how I arrived at visibility as the function of this artifact, based on its use, and the meanings co-constructed between Karen and me in I-2, and also as she recalled the past event to tell of it. Modal density, then, included:

- Karen’s narrated past
- The first telling of this event in I-1
- The picture that was evidence of that story
- Karen’s heightened energy in action and in talk, using superlatives throughout the re-telling of her story in I-2
- The co-construction of meaning around the picture as she presented it to me
- My acknowledgement and acceptance of the picture as evidence
- My recognizing her in the picture

- The context of the conference room where I-2 took place, as a sort of bubble, within which our work together took place

As in previous layers of analysis, I first examined narratives of individual participants, as demonstrated above. In that process, three primary functions of artifacts became evident as they recurred across participants' evidence of meaning making. Through my analysis, I discovered primary meanings of each artifact, which coalesced into three areas of collaborative function: (1) tools of visibility, (2) messengers, and (3) laminations. Collaborative functions are explained and represented in Chapter 5. The entire collection of artifacts is available in Appendix H. A table representing artifacts grouped by collaborative function is included in Appendix I.

A key aspect of MDA was that the incorporation of artifacts into I-2 increased modal density. Some stories that were told in I-1 were repeated in I-2, due to the presence of an artifact associated with the narrated occurrence. Participants delivered these narrations with greater energy than they had done in I-1. As they responded to the questions prepared by the researcher they engaged physically with objects, manipulating an object in order to demonstrate one of its qualities. The presence of objects added layers of representation through visual, tactile, olfactory, and auditory elements, thereby multiplying the elements represented in the modal mixture. This made it possible not to simply recall and intertextually repeat occurrences, but also to pack together layers of intertextuality through representation of real sensory access to the object (sounds, touch, smell, and other elements) interwoven with narrations.

Assurances of Data Quality

Merriam (2009) points to consistency of data and results as one indication of reliability in qualitative research. Built into my research were several aspects that will be critical to balanced interpretation of results. First, I used multiple layers of data: verbal/linguistic and artifacts. Second, I allowed time for preliminary data analysis between interviews, so that if changes in the interview structure were needed, I could make them early in the data collection process. This iterative approach allows for depth in analysis, as I revisited texts again and again. Third, I contacted participants for answers to questions that arose during the transcription processes. Fourth, I analyzed multiple artifacts from each participant: audio recordings, transcripts, and my photographic representations of artifacts.

Other important safeguards for my analysis included maintaining an audit trail of field notes (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011) and analytical memos (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). In addition, I involved researcher-colleagues in my data analyses for triangulation, in order to assure that I maintained a balanced perspective (Merriam, 2009, p. 229). I consulted with my committee members, in order to maintain transparency about my work-in progress, and also to benefit from their insights and questions throughout the process. These processes served as checks and balances for my analysis, and offered fresh perspectives. Questions and challenges from colleagues enriched and deepened my research praxis, as I learned new strategies for planning and writing about research and

analysis. Finally, researcher reflexivity was foundational to a balanced analysis, as I engaged with the data, and also with the input from colleagues.

Alongside these traditional safeguards coexisted the puzzling moments in which analyses neither converged, nor corroborated one another. This was not necessarily undesirable because, “Social inquiry can substantially enhance our understanding of social phenomena by generating empirical puzzles--results that do not converge and thereby warrant further study and contemplation” (Greene, 2007, p. 44). As mentioned above, researcher reflexivity throughout the iterative layers of analysis and synthesis was key.

Throughout my developing research practice I have learned that the cycle of analysis and reflection is critical for the discovery of findings and the understanding of implications. CDA and MDA required a great deal of listening in order for the texts and signs to speak above my own voice and my thoughts about where *I* wanted to take the interpretation.

As the researcher, I could not step aside from *myself*. Interpretations of the data arose from the way that I see and understand. Lather (1986) writes, “there is no neutral research” (p. 257) and “research that is explicitly committed to critiquing the status quo and building a more just society — that is, research as praxis — adds an important voice” (p. 258). However, as Rogers (2011) writes, “The trappings of language are troublesome for critical discourse analysts intent on unraveling power in language of which they are implicated” (p. 7).

Lather (1986) refers to the “reciprocal shaping of theory and practice” (footnote, p. 258) essential to anti-oppressive practices, arguing that, “Our best tactic at present is to construct research designs that demand a vigorous self-reflexivity” (p. 268). Lincoln (1995) writes that critical reflexivity

...is absolutely required to understand one’s psychological and emotional states before, during, and after the research experience. Such reflexivity or subjectivity enables the researcher to begin to uncover dialectic relationships, arrange and discuss contradictions within the stories being recorded, and move with research participants toward action. Thus the words *transformative* and *critical* not only embody the action aspects of research, but also recognize the ability of meaningful research experiences to heighten self-awareness in the research process and create personal and social transformation. (Lincoln, 1995, p. 283)

Reflexivity is a powerful tool for the understanding of knowledge production: “To be reflexive, then, not only contributes to producing knowledge that aids in understanding and gaining insight into the workings of our social world but also provides insight on how this knowledge is produced” (Pillow, 2010, p. 178). I maintained regular consultation with trusted faculty members, with peers, and with TgNCi readers, making notes of their insights and recommendations. Ultimately, my own audit trail, enriched by consultations with others, inscribed the essential foundation from which I worked to understand TgNCi identity work across the lifespan.

Delimitations

In order to fulfill my purpose of critically examine the gender identity work of TgNCi people, several delimitations are important to mention. First, I chose to use the term, TgNCi, rather than trans* or transgender. Some may object to this choice. For the purposes of this research, I prefer terminology that fully encompasses possibilities for gender identity, and also which avoids a binary entanglement. Whereas in everyday life, I am comfortable with, and use terminology preferred by individuals about their own identities, for this work I wanted the broadest possible reach. The term, TgNCi, provides that without a connotation of crossing over from side to side, and is a term sufficiently comprehensive to gather in all non-binary configurations of gender identity.

I also sought diversity of gender identities and ages within a small sample size. This resulted in learning about a range of experiences across decades from participants. As the methods used in this study probe for depth in lifespan narratives, there was no intent to generalize the findings to either the broader population, or the wide range of identities of TgNCi people. Research knowledge of the identity journeys of TgNCi people remains in its infancy and it is hoped that others can build upon the issues and insights excavated through this study.

Finally, due to the amount of data, it was necessary to narrow the data through identifying salient examples within each, and across all narrative transcriptions. A delimitation of this research was that analysis focused on these exemplary texts.

Limitations

Researcher bias, the use of audio recording devices and still photography, and the small sample size all held potential for inaccuracy of interpretations. As just mentioned, there is no intent in this study to generalize the results. For those who see generalizability as an important research outcome, then that may appear to be a limitation to my study. Nevertheless, findings from a study such as this are certainly transferrable, and should be taken into account by educators and others in the public and private sectors as they consider their dealings with TgNCi people. As I move forward from this work into future research, I plan to expand on the current project in order to gain knowledge and insight from the stories from greater cultural diversity among TgNCi people.

The uses of audio recording and still photography might have resulted in some initial awkwardness for participants. Initial awkwardness in I-1 dissipated quite quickly, as participants began to narrate life stories. I had no hesitation about the use of the audio recording devices and the camera. I developed strategies for systematizing my practices for each interview. For example, I always arrived approximately 30 minutes before the scheduled interview time in order to set up my equipment, make certain the room was tidy, and focus my mind on the individual who would be coming that day. This routine made it possible for me to greet every participant from a place of inner calm. In addition, I spent a few minutes putting the participant at ease, as much as possible. I always provided participants with a bottle of cold water, refrigerated at home, and carried to the interview in a thermal protector. Every participant began the I-1 narration with some anxiety, but that dissipated in every case within the first three to five minutes.

Another limitation in this research related to my being the photographer of participants' artifacts, which in a sense is a form of self-reporting. My gaze through the lens was the one that positioned the objects for my own consideration. I minimized this complication first by having participants show me what they consider important to photograph in each object, and then through having them position the artifacts for the picture taking, sometimes more than once, in order to make certain I captured the features they felt were important. Through the printed prompts, participants were asked to describe each artifact in detail, including visual, tactile, and other sensory details, along with ways in which they interacted with it across the lifespan.

Finally, to commit to this research was to engage with a topic about which I feel deeply passionate. I focused great energy on remaining neutral throughout the research processes (Merriam, 2009), knowing that such neutrality is an essential element of a balanced and fair inquiry.

Introduction to Chapters 3 through 6

The remainder of this dissertation is organized in four chapters. In Chapters 3-5 I present the findings of this study. These chapters are organized according to the three research sub-questions, with each chapter representing a response to one question. Each chapter includes a unique lens through which to understand the complexity of gender identity work of TgNCi people. Chapter 6 synthesizes the findings from those chapters to provide a full response to the primary research question.

In Chapter 3 I address the first sub-question: How do participants of different generations describe gender identity work individually and collectively across the decades from the late 1940s to the present? Data represented gender identity work within, and across study participant age groups, foregrounding the categories identified through content analysis: oppression, suppression, and visibility. I situate that discussion within the context of notable events from U.S. transgender history, from the late 1940s through 2016. The association of individuals' lifespan narratives with historical contexts provided rich detail for the examination of each participant's gender identity work. In addition, the continuity across the entire span of lives – from the late 1940s to the end of 2016 – allowed a view of developments in gender identity work as culture evolved across nearly 70 years.

Chapter 4 focuses on oppression and suppression, two of the three categories identified through content analysis. I address the second sub-question: How do participants describe gender identity work when they encounter structural or personal violence? I explain four contexts of oppression identified through CDA of study participants' narratives. I relate sense of time, perceptual space, and interpersonal distances within selected narrative segments to focus a fine-grained lens on the suppression of individual agency of TgNCi individuals, who interrupt their own gender expression. I further illustrate oppression through the use of Gee's (2011b) Identities Building Tool to pinpoint identities offered, and available, among a narrative's players/roles.

In Chapter 5, through MDA of narratives and artifacts, I show the interrelatedness of human agency and material artifacts in gender identity work. This chapter addresses the third sub-question: How do participants represent and describe their relationships with material objects in gender identity work? MDA exposed three primary functions taken up by objects. They function as tools of visibility, messengers, and laminations. Furthermore, the combination of the human and the material, yielded insight into the implications for participants' agency in the creation of resonant expressions of gender.

In Chapter 6 I discuss the research, and then join my voice with those of participants as I conclude the research. I explain the contributions of this inquiry, and suggest directions for future research.

Chapter 3: Oppression, Suppression, and Visibility

The purpose of the analysis presented in this chapter is to respond to the first sub-question: How do participants of different generations describe gender identity work individually and collectively across the decades from the late 1940s to the present?

Through content analysis of interview transcripts as described in Chapter 2, I identified the following three categories:

1. *Oppression* refers to actions or intentions directed toward the participant, such as bullying, violence, name-calling, or harassment; and to efforts by others to directly interrupt the individual's gender expression.
2. *Suppression* refers to a collection of self-protective responses to perceived threats in oppressive contexts, whereby participants managed self-expression through the implementation of requisite coping and defending strategies.
3. *Visibility to self and others* refers to the individual's desire to see in the mirror and in photographs, and to be seen by others, as the gender they experience.

In Chapter 3 I provide examples of narratives that illustrate these categories, within each, and across all, age groups defined for this research.

The chapter is arranged in five sections. The first four sections represent data from the four participant age groups, beginning with the oldest participant in the 60 and over age group, and progressing to the youngest participant in the youngest age group. This structure allows for a view of gender identity work across the decades. Each section is divided into subsections, the first of which is a brief introduction to the participants

from that group along with notable events of LGBTQIA+ history during that span of years. The second subsection contains findings from content analysis grouped across the lifespan in sections called, childhood, adolescence, and adulthood. The final subsection presents current perspectives of the participants.

Every participant is represented in the section for their age group, but is not represented in every subsection. I selected the most salient segments about gender identity work to represent the data and to include the rich variety of diverse narrative examples. Following the four age-related sections, the final section of this chapter offers synthesis of findings across all age groups.

Ages 60 and older (1949-1956)

Participants. Participants from this age group are listed in Table 5 below.

Table 5

Participants Ages 60 and Older

Age Group	Pseudonym	Age	Sex Assigned at Birth	Gender Identity	Transition Complete	Preferred Pronouns
60 +	Karen	66	M	F	N	She/her
	Mimi	65	M	F	Y	She/her
	Victoria	61	M	F	Y	She/her

Karen was born in late 1940s, the same year that a legal case was decided in California, by the state attorney general, Edmond B. Brown. Brown's legal opinion stated that the modification of genitals in transsexual surgery would expose any surgeon who performed such surgery to legal prosecution (Stryker, 2008, p. 44). Criminalization of such surgery in the U.S. not only restricted medical practice, but also vilified individuals

seeking that sort of intervention as seekers of unlawful medicine. Mimi was born one year later, in 1950, the year that California rolled out a project throughout the state that was funded by the California Sex Deviates Research Act of 1950. This act permitted that male sex offenders, who were incarcerated in that state, could be castrated and used for experimentation with sex hormones (Stryker, 2008). Ironically, the year after it became a crime to perform medically helpful surgery, laws facilitated the use of male human genitals for experimentation. Christine Jorgensen learned in 1949 that surgical sex change could be performed in Europe. In 1952, Jorgensen departed for sex reassignment surgery in Copenhagen. She returned to the U.S. in 1953. Two years later, in 1955, Victoria was born.

Karen and Mimi both grew up in suburbs of a city in the Midwestern U.S. Victoria comes from the East North Central U.S., where she grew up in a prominent family in a medium size community. All three identify as transgender women and prefer she/her pronouns. Mimi and Victoria underwent gender confirmation surgery. Karen longs to do so. Professions represented by this group include telecommunication, engineering, and medical specialty services.

Karen presented in masculine clothing for both interviews wearing sport shirts and khaki trousers. A leader in a local organization for transgender people, Karen spoke easily about her gender identity. Mimi, too, attended the interviews in masculine attire, wearing jeans and t-shirts. An experienced presenter and advocate for transgender individuals, Mimi was prepared for I-1 with her practiced story, but quickly departed

from talk that sounded rehearsed in to a more relaxed and exploratory pace of speaking. Victoria greeted me in feminine clothing for I-1, wearing a long denim skirt and lightweight top. Her bright-eyed dog stayed by her side throughout, except at times that he dropped his ball on the researcher's foot to engage in play. It appeared that the dog and owner shared a zest for life and unquenchable love of humor. I experienced Karen as being deeply introspective and thoughtful; Mimi as calm, confident, and sure of her decisions and current life status; and Victoria as warm and witty.

Findings.

Childhood. Karen told of an incident sometime before she was five, which illustrates oppression. She told her mother that she was going to ask Santa for a doll. She stated that this exchange was the “first time I realized that there was, uh, kind of a code of behavior between boys and girls” (Karen, sec. 7). When her mother objected, Karen replied, “Well Santa will understand” (Karen, sec. 7). The realization that there was a *code of behavior* meant that Karen was expected to act in certain acceptable ways. Karen suppressed her own desires, recalling deeply painful memories of childhood, attached to Easter. When her family went to church all the little girls wore beautiful new dresses, but Karen was made to dress as a boy. As she was growing up Karen had access to clothes that were in the attic.

I would wear ‘em, and I didn’t know why. There didn’t seem to be any sexual excitement associated with that, but ... I’d look in the mirror and I would get this kind of a warm, fuzzy feeling...and I liked the way I looked ... I used to pray at

night. My number *one* prayer...was ‘God, let me wake up a girl’...so *then* it was just like, ‘God, please make me *normal*.’ (Karen, sec. 18)

Karen liked to see herself dressed in feminine clothing, and experienced pleasure from that. Seeing herself that way was important from childhood and onward. In the narrative segment above, Karen engages a coping strategy for the correction of her problem: praying that she will wake up a girl. The implication of Karen’s talk was that the prayer was not answered, and so she downgraded the prayer. In childhood, Karen experienced oppression from outside herself, suppression from within herself, the desire to be visible to herself, and she devised a coping strategy.

Victoria prayed, too. She explained that at school couple of months before her seventh birthday: “Sister asked us for a writing assignment, ‘What do you pray for?’ And being the honest little six year-old I said, ‘I pray to wake up and be a little girl.’ That did not go over well in Catholic grade school” (Victoria, sec. 7). Like Karen, Victoria relied on the hope of a miracle. Due to the subject of her prayer, the nuns decided she had mental issues and sent her to the school psychologist as a condition for her remaining in school. The psychologist made Victoria kneel on the linoleum and beat her across the shoulders with a wooden pointer, across a period of one week. “He would *crack* me across the shoulders. I was all black and blue there. And I didn’t // I didn’t know if I had told it to my parents, what would he have said? I fell down?” (Victoria, sec. 223). She described the pointer: “They’re generally oak or hickory, and they’re about thirty...or thirty-six inches long. They’re about...half an inch thick, maybe” (Victoria, sec. 217).

The second week, Victoria refused to talk to him. As her refusal continued, the psychologist threatened to beat her. She told him she wouldn't talk until he stopped hitting her, and so he brought the stick down across the backs of her hands.

He swung that with some force. I remember pieces of that flying everywhere. And uh when the pain hit my brain, it was like I screamed as loud as I could. I fell out of the desk and I just curled up into a ball. I went hysterical. (Victoria, sec. 219)

The nuns and the priest came, and the priest carried her to the nearby hospital for emergency care.

Victoria developed a strategy for change: prayer. She told her strategy to her teachers, the nuns in Catholic school, which sparked swift (and no doubt well-intentioned) action to fix her, and physical violence to punish her. Victoria's personality changed. She drew inward and suppressed her gender expression.

It pushed me right in the closet. And then I couldn't talk about how I felt. I got, you know // I became very introverted. Did reading. Um go down in the woods and sit. Um didn't have much to do with anybody. Other than I worked...my world was more of an adult world...I just didn't want to be around my peers. / And I didn't. // It's been quite a screwed up life. (Victoria, sec. 227)

Adolescence.

Mimi explained how much she admired the appearances of women who “looked really nice” (Mimi, sec. 5). She wanted to look that nice, too. It wasn’t that Mimi wanted to be any other person wearing those clothes. She wanted to be *herself* in those clothes. She accumulated women’s clothing items – some from her sisters and some from a collection that her mother had packed away. “I found some clothes that my mother had / packed away in a closet that were on the floor that she probably forgot that she had and went into that uh clothing, so in the privacy of my own room at nighttime I would put, uh, those clothes on and uh / visualize, or fantasize that I was female. And uh that continued for many years” (Mimi, sec. 6).

Mimi liked to be in women’s clothing, and to see herself in it. She wanted to *be* a woman. It was necessary for her to suppress her expression, outside the bounds of *the privacy of my own room*. She knew she could not go in public dressed in women’s clothing. Mimi spoke about the stigma (oppression) about gender in the 1960s and 1970s that kept her silent (suppression). “You *had* to hide it, and you had to *suppress* it” (Mimi, sec. 9). Later, she spoke about the resulting feeling of guilt: “Because you’re doing this. Because you, you are *told* that this is not right. So you’re doin’ something that you’re told is not right, then you, you do feel guilty about it” (Mimi, sec. 10). Ultimately, Mimi engaged with a local organization for transgender people, and then sought therapy in order to find answers within herself. She identified her gender as female. “That’s what I feel as, um, today. I’m a transwoman” (Mimi, sec. 21).

Karen described carrying three fears: first, a fear of others finding out; second, whether or not she could control her dressing; and third, the possibility that she would turn out to be a pedophile. She said she has no idea where the third fear originated. “So I had a plan that if I ever got to a point that I would uh look like I was gonna hurt somebody, or I could not control it, and I did not want this to come out, I would kill myself” (Karen, sec. 21).

Adulthood. After high school, Karen went into the Navy. She described that experience as the best thing that ever happened to her. She remarked that she was treated as a peer, and that she felt very, very lucky with her time in the service. Later, when Karen and her wife decided to marry, “I didn’t tell ‘er, because I knew once I was married I could quit” (Karen, sec. 28). In a short time, she realized this was not the case. Karen began to accumulate and hide women’s clothing. Suppression through hiding was possible, but suppression of her desires was not. When her wife discovered the clothing, there was marital conflict. Here, too, oppression is evident, but in time Karen decided to just hang her clothing in the closet. “All I’m getting out of this is being yelled at and a bunch of wrinkled clothes...And it [hanging her clothes in the closet] didn’t make anything worse, it didn’t make it any better” (Karen, sec. 29). Marital disagreement continued, and Karen continued to suppress the expression of her gender identity. Eventually, she began to experience cognitive impairment and consulted with a neurologist, who diagnosed her with stress. Karen searched the Internet for a gender therapist, and found Dr. X., who she described as a godsend.

Mimi was married for 23 years and, as her masculine self, raised two sons with her wife. She said that prior to marriage, because she felt so stigmatized, as though she didn't belong, she would drink several beers before she could feel relaxed enough to go out. Systemic oppression, woven into the fabric of culture, resulted in Mimi's anxiety about herself in relation to others in public. Her mobility was restricted. I / I'm *caught* in between genders is kind of how I felt...I didn't have a, a *home a place*, you know, either on the male side or the female side... // (Mimi, sec. 92)

Eventually, Mimi had sex reassignment surgery, to align her body with her gender identity. Her sons outwardly rejected Mimi after she told them about her feminine gender identity. When her father died, she felt that it would be up to her to provide the sort of family anchor that her father had been. Thus, even though she underwent full sex reassignment surgery, and legally changed her name and her gender marker, Mimi now lives outwardly as a man much of the time – still going by her feminine name, which is her *legal* name. She explained that how she appears outwardly isn't as critical to her as it used to be, because she knows who she is, and is comfortable in her feminine identity. Family members ask when she will change her name back. "But uh I don't want to change it. I want to *leave* it as [Mimi], because / that gives me the identity of who I *am*, not what I *look like*" (Mimi, sec. 106).

Like Karen, Victoria served in the military. She was married and had two young children, when she developed symptoms requiring abdominal surgery. Earlier, when Victoria was 12, the Friday after Thanksgiving, when the town gathered for the arrival of

Santa Claus on the fire truck, she collapsed in the street, following several months of testing for severe abdominal cramping. She was carried to the hospital on the fire truck, and emergency surgery was done. Victoria was told that her appendix had been removed. Due to a later abdominal surgery in adulthood, at the age of 32, she learned that she was intersex. When she was 12, rather than an appendectomy, her surgery had been related to biological sex. She immediately called her mother, who explained the earlier surgery. In her interview Victoria explained what happened. “My dad was adamant about removing it. That I was his *son*. ‘Cause they, they had a point there where they coulda woke me up, asked what I wanted. And they could’ve built me a vagina and all” (Victoria, sec. 24). When she learned about her intersex physiology, “Well that was, that was it. I wanted to transition. I knew it was wrong, I’d been wrong, my whole body felt wrong during my whole life” (Victoria, sec. 25). Her mother convinced Victoria to raise her children first. Victoria explained how difficult it was to simply stay alive during those years.

I used to shoot deer because we needed the, the meat, um, to *live* on, but I sat out in the woods and I stared at that barrel of that gun and I just / it was *very, very difficult* to stay alive all of that time. I had to fight it all the time. And there were times I wouldn’t go out in the woods, because I was so scared, so depressed, that I was gonna *kill* myself. And I didn’t want that for my kids. They kept me alive!
(Victoria, sec. 39)

In 2012 Victoria began taking a low dose of Estrogen, realizing that with a 31-year history of diabetes, she must be careful with hormones in order to avoid a stroke.

After six weeks of taking Estrogen she met with her doctor, who asked how she felt on the hormone. “For the first time in my life I’m not *angry*. I feel *calm*. And I, I’m *happy*. I’m *finally happy*” (Victoria, sec. 44). In 2013 she went to Mexico for breast construction and facial feminization surgery. Her sister and brother were extremely supportive, and her sister accompanied Victoria to Mexico. In 2014 she underwent gender confirmation surgery. Victoria had saved vacation and sick days over several years so that she would have extended time available for that trip and her healing process. She had sought to have her insurance cover her medical costs, culminating in hearings that resulted in the representatives from the carrier supporting her position. However, her employer – the hospital where she worked – refused to allow coverage. Thus, she risked her retirement savings to pay for her surgery. In addition, shortly before she was scheduled to leave for the trip to Thailand for her gender confirmation surgery, she was given a layoff notice that the hospital was cutting positions – *her* position. Victoria pushed back, because her employer was aware that she would be taking time off and using FMLA for her surgery. She was prepared to litigate, but her employer agreed to delay her layoff until December first.

They played fast and loose. What they did is this young guy that we had hired, they promoted him *over* me as, uh, *expert*. I forgot more about computers than *he* knew! So that was / I feel it was due to my being transgender. (Victoria, sec. 53)

Even when big accomplishments are completed, oppression continues, but suppression appears to lessen, as Karen, Mimi, and Victoria have applied realistic strategies to express gender in the ways they each prefer.

Current perspectives. Karen, Mimi, and Victoria offered these perspectives from the points where each of them currently is in gender identity work.

[I] definitely envy these young kids who can come out, uh, at an early age...It was basically the same thing year after year, and...it was an incredible struggle...even when I was very young... It's kinda like...like you know, a child that's born without an arm. She never knows what it was to have that arm there, so she probably deals with it a lot closer, a lot easier than somebody that had that taken away from them. Later on. And...I could say I really had a rotten childhood, but at time I didn't know that, because it was the norm...I'll be in church today and I'll see a young girl some 8-year old dressed up real pretty, and I'll have a flashback...and sometimes I feel like crying...It's just that I / *needed* / I wanted to *live* that. (Karen, sec. 61)

Karen spoke about her career and how fortunate she was at work. Even in childhood she counted her blessings. "But I would give all that up / just to have been born female" (Karen, sec. 66).

Mimi explained that some people still do not understand why she would want to make the transition.

I say, 'It's *not a choice*. It's who you *are*.' Yeah. It's, and I actually say it's not a *lifestyle* for me. It's a *life correction*. A *life style* is, you know, do I date a, a brunette? Or a redhead? That's my *lifestyle*. Do I / uh / go out running or do I go to the *opera*? *That's* my *lifestyle*. And then when they say, 'Whatever makes you happy.' And I *hate* that one, too. I go, 'What makes me happy's a good cheeseburger!' So it's, it's not about, it's not about a means of whatever makes you happy. It's, it's a matter of if you can be who you *are*. (Mimi, sec. 237-240)

Victoria maintained, "In this life, you just do the best you can. Take your lumps. /// Doesn't help to complain about it. I'll *admit* I'm lonely. I don't have a *lot* of friends, but I have some good ones here" (Victoria, sec. 253). Later, she asserted, "And I have things I need to do, and I have a life to live. I've raised our kids, I've done all I can do. Now it's / it's gonna be *my* time" (Victoria, sec. 328).

Ages 46 to 59 (1957-1969)

Participants. Participants from this age group are listed in 6 below.

Table 6

Participants Ages 46 to 59

Age Group	Pseudonym	Age	Sex Assigned at Birth	Gender Identity	Transition Complete	Preferred Pronouns
46 to 59	Amélie	59	M	F	N	She/her
	Heidi	51	M	F	N	She/her
	Emma	49	M	F	Y	She/her
	Micah	48	F	M	Y	He/him

Amélie was born in 1957, four years after Jorgensen’s return from her surgery in Europe, and two years before the 1959 Cooper’s Donut Riot in Los Angeles, when police raided an establishment frequented by “transvestites” (Stryker, 2008). Heidi was born in 1965. One year later, in 1966, Emma was born, the same year as the occurrence of Compton’s Cafeteria Riot. 1968 was known for the Stonewall Riot, formation of the Gay Liberation Front, and Micah’s birth.

Amélie, Heidi, and Micah all grew up in suburbs of a city in the Midwestern U.S., while Emma’s origins are rural Midwest. Amélie, Heidi, and Emma identify as transgender women and prefer she/her pronouns. Micah identifies as a man and prefers he/him pronouns. Amélie and Emma are currently on HRT. Micah discontinued HRT due to cardiovascular risks. Heidi is not yet at the point of beginning HRT, although it is likely that in the near future she will do so. Amélie and Heidi are still considering whether or not they will pursue sex reassignment surgery. Emma completed sex

reassignment surgery, and Micah pursued partial sex reassignment surgery. Professions represented in this group include engineering, public and community advocacy, and nuclear medicine.

Amélie's personality is bubbly and warm, although she described her earlier self as a shy and quiet child. She appeared extremely excited to narrate her life, and also to share her artifacts. Throughout I-1, Amélie repeatedly interjected remarks about such-and-such that was just outside in her car, and asked if she should run and get it. The interviewer demurred, in order to adhere to research protocol. Heidi's feminine identity remains very much a secret from most people. She presented as somewhat nervous, yet as quite eager to talk. Narrating her life story seemed to provide a release of tension, and also to place her in a risk-free space where she could construct thoughts about her future. Emma narrated her life with eloquence, confidence, and in rich detail. She came to I-1 in a t-shirt from the Russian Human Rights Campaign (HRC). An activist, Emma's talk showed mental agility and resilience as she spoke about her gender identity work. Micah had a sense from early childhood that he was different from others around him. His narratives were deeply rooted in his Catholic faith. He spoke openly, energetically, and with humor.

Findings.

Childhood. Amélie spent her childhood with hobbies such as riding bicycles, Cub Scouts, and racing HO Scale Slot Cars, a hobby she continues today. Later, she also took up chess. During those early years other students began to police her behavior, telling Amélie that she carried her notebooks the wrong way, and that she crossed her legs like a girl. Oppression began in her early years of school. Amélie was in sixth grade (11 years of age) when she began cross-dressing. Her mother and grandmother hung their stockings to dry on the bathroom door. Amélie would lock the door and try on their stockings. “So that’s how it all began...I didn’t know / what was wrong with me at the time, but I knew there was something / *something* wrong with me” (Amélie, sec. 19). Amélie devised a safety strategy of locking the bathroom door in order to try on stockings.

Around age ten, Heidi began to experiment with putting on her mother’s clothing. “I felt incredible guilt and shame over that. And probably didn’t touch it or think about it for another year. And then / all of a sudden I had to do it again. And *why did you do that?! It’s a sin!*” (Heidi, sec. 18). Heidi was unable to recall anything that caused her to believe she should feel guilt or shame, but those feelings were followed by suppression, and then the cycle of trying on women’s clothing, followed by guilt. When prompted to think about how she decided to try on the clothing, Heidi laughed: “I was too young for dating at the time, but I’ll, ‘I’ll have to work to take this bra off a girl someday, so I’ll put it on and see how it works.’ And so I rationalized the hell outa that!” (Heidi, sec. 73). The urges continued, followed by self-deprecating thoughts.

Emma's experiences of oppression began early. She said that she was bullied quite a bit, that by second grade it was a regular occurrence, and that it continued until her junior year of high school. It began with name-calling, and then in third grade, transitioned into physical violence. Later, Emma was shoved out of a second story window; pushed off a balcony from the side of a building; pushed down two flights of marble stairs with brass railings; and choked unconscious with her face down in the dirt, while being kicked in the ribs. As a boy child, she was called a girl. Emma had only a few close friends.

As a child, Micah wanted to be a priest. His parents reminded him that girls can't be priests. He pushed back with the fact that Vatican II had just been passed, and that by the time he was grown, there would in all probability be a Vatican III that would allow a girl to be a priest. His focus was on academics and sports. He describes himself in childhood as a tomboy, a rough and tumble little kid, and rugged – fearless and eager to play the defensive positions on the soccer team. I include this example from Micah here, because his narratives of childhood contained very little oppression, or suppression of self. He was able to express himself boldly, in the strong-featured ways described above, which meant that there was no need for him to hide, or to develop safety and coping strategies. He was visible to himself, and to others, as a tomboy, because that is how he saw himself.

Adolescence. When Amélie was in seventh grade her mother got her a set of books called, *Life Cycle Library*. She first encountered the words, transsexual and

transvestite, in these books, in the last volume, in the glossary. Reading those descriptions left her with the distinct feeling that there was something greatly *wrong* with her: specifically, that she was mentally ill. From the seldom-read references at the very end, she discovered troubling words that caused her deep worry. She responded by suppressing her inclinations to cross-dress, which was something that gave her a feeling of wholeness.

In second grade Emma began a program of prayer. She actively planned and implemented this strategy, to cope with what she perceived as something wrong with her. Already being bullied regularly at school, she called in the greatest power she knew: God.

I started saying extra prayers. I had this idea that whatever was wrong with me was something that could be fixed... I hadn't even *gotten* to denial yet... So I would pray every night. Uh it was 300 Our Fathers. 200 Hail Marys. 150 Acts of Contrition... And I would, I came up with this little shorthand with initials. I filled page after page from night after night with these little numbers and letters. How many of *these*, how many of *these*, and the next night, resolved a different combination. And I would stay up half of the night, sometimes all night, praying... If I just found the *right one*, the *key* you know, *seamless* as I saw all the priests with all the prayers, and the appropriate timing, and pacing in the ritual, and then a miracle occurs. Just like it does at *every* mass. Bread into flesh, wine into blood and I thought *surely* if I got the right combination of prayer I'd get, I'd

get a little of God's heart. He'd hear, and *fix*. And I'd be fixed. I said these prayers /// till in college. I was / 17. (Emma, sec. 13-15)

For roughly ten years, Emma kept up her practice of prayer, seeking the combination of prayer, timing, and pacing of the ritual that would get God's blessing. If ever there was a devoted believer, it was Emma. While she was being bullied and harassed, she kept up her religious practice. Her text indicates that she felt she was not getting the pattern of elements right, as though she might somehow turn her prayers three turns to the right, two turns to the left, and one turn to the right, like a combination lock.

Accepted as a student who did not like to wear girls' clothing, and also with a reputation for being cheerful, helpful, and high-achieving, Micah was asked to wear a dress for the day of a North Central Association of Colleges and Schools evaluation. Later, Micah told of how someone took his picture that day in the girl's uniform, and that students were going to place the image in the yearbook. "Our faculty had to approve the, the yearbook. And several faculty members said they would not approve this picture unless somebody sat down and said, 'Are *you* OK with it?' And I said... 'You know, I think I *am*'" (Micah, sec. 261-262). Micah knew himself, and he was also able to view himself as others might have seen him.

However, school relationships were not always easy. Micah was in high school during the 1980s, when women's fashion included wearing mannish neckties. "So of *course* I was going to embrace that. Yeah. *This* is cool. I'm gonna get into this!" (Micah, sec. 53). Micah described an incident with a high school teacher.

So I'm wearing my tie, and he's got me up in front – he was history, he was a history teacher along with being the football coach. Um and he was just like, you know, 'Yeah. Well we all know that you want to be a man, but you never will! And you'll never make it in this world!' Blah-blah-blah. This is like, in front of the whole class! Um to the point where / the *football* players that ended up being friends with me would say, 'We're really concerned he's gonna do something *to* you, so we don't want you to use your locker any more.' So they actually had me put my books in different lockers around the place, and my locker was just, I, it was amazing that his *own players* were like, '*This has gone way over the top!*' (Micah, sec. 53-54)

In this situation, Micah was harassed by a figure in authority. Rather than him having to solve the problem, or suppress his identity, the coach's own players came to Micah's defense. Together, they devised a strategy for his safety.

Adulthood. Oppression became too much for Emma. Bullying and harassment ended with high school, but she found herself somewhat socially unprepared for college. She attempted self-harm three times within one year. Finally, "I decided, I *lived* with this, I'd do my best to wad it up into a little ball and stick it in the back of my head" (Emma, sec. 24). Her suppression included efforts at hyper masculinity, and a failed marriage. But eventually, Emma met her current wife. Open from the beginning about her wearing of women's clothing, the relationship began on a mutually informed level. Emma was able to express her gender identity, and decided to transition. The relationship became tenuous

for a time, and then settled back into a warm space. As Emma explained the timing of this decision.

Like so many other trans women in their early 40s, you just get that little hint of cold air on the back of your neck. Mortality. How much time do I have left? How long does it take to do this? And do I have time *left* to do this? If I do, will I ever actually get to *live* as / the person I see myself as? (Emma, sec. 40)

Emma began therapy with a qualified therapist in 2010. She began HRT in January of 2011. She worked through her social transition in 2013; her legal transition in 2013 and 2014; and her medical transition in 2015. Emma and her wife have navigated uncertain relational territory. She smiles when she says that her marriage is stronger than ever. Due to her transition, Emma lost her career in an industry she loved. However, that oppressive action did not result in the suppression of her gender expression.

Amélie credits the fact of her even beginning transition to her own anger, grown from the toxicity of oppression and suppression: “My *anger* was so tremendous that uh I literally began wearing women’s clothing ... well it looked *sort of* like men’s clothing” (Amélie, sec. 85). Thus, she began to push back against oppression, step by step. First, she began to get her nails and hair done.

I remember that first day, she just did something with the back of my neck. She cut my hair like a very short cut for a female on the back of the neck. And I remember just driving home // I couldn’t *explain* why I felt so *good* from just

having *anything* that looked a little bit / more *female* instead of / *male*! Made me just feel so *good* and so *right*. (Amélie, sec. 90)

Amélie started working on feminine mannerisms right away; started sitting down to use the restroom; worked at trying to be “the best female I can *be*” (Amélie, sec. 110). In addition, as mentioned earlier, she began working to feminize her voice. Previously a baritone, and a member of a popular 1970s singing ensemble, she has put considerable effort into her current vocal training. Amélie has no desire to be noticed, or notable, for any outstanding traits. She strongly prefers to simply be a *normal* [her word] person.

As her transgender identity has become clear to her, Heidi has talked some with her wife, who is overtly hostile to Heidi’s moving forward in any way to confirm her feminine gender identity. In spite of this threat, Heidi has engaged in strategies that counteract her own suppression. She has connected with transgender people, engaged with support groups, and she is in therapy. She would like to transition to living as a woman full time, but also needs to consider her potential losses and weigh those against her desire to be her authentic self outwardly, as well as inwardly. She expressed a sense of how her life might be different after transition. She is beginning to become visible to herself.

I *think* / to some degree I’ve been kind of... *repressed* / and kind of *depressed* my entire *life*. And just never knew any different. And um / you know / when I get my [Heidi] time, then I’m up *here* [draws line in air far above head] and / I started asking around, is that how *normal* / people / you know...and people are like,

yeah. That's the way you're supposed to feel. And I've hardly ever known that...Someday // I'd like to be // *proud* of who I actually am, and be able to / *deal*. I'm just not at that point yet. (Heidi, sec. 279)

Micah's narrated pathway seemed to have fewer persistent and pervasive evidences of oppression than other participants, or perhaps he somehow did not internalize it as others did. This segment demonstrated Micah's analytical way of understanding others' perspectives of him:

I would often *forget* that people *didn't* see me the way *I* saw me. And so when they would, they would kind of call me out on it, it would be very abrupt-feeling to me. Um so if you and I were out at dinner, and I'm thinking that you're seeing me the way that you're seeing me and realize you see me as – pick something – a giraffe, right? You're like, 'Gee, don't you want *leaves* for dinner' and I'd be like, '*What?!!*' and I mean, it'd be like the *shockingness* of it, right? It / 'Ohhh. That's right. You don't *see* me the way that I see me.' So I think all my life I've just *known* that. That other people don't necessarily *see* me the way that I see me. (Micah, sec. 69-70)

Micah sees himself as a part of community, and serves as an Oblate in the Catholic church. Elsewhere in his narrative he explained instances of negotiating through conflict such as what bathroom he should use at work, and initiating conversations with coworkers who refuse to acknowledge his gender. His assertiveness and openness serve him well in those instances.

Current perspectives. Amélie, Heidi, Emma, and Micah all had something to say about how they felt about their lives during the period of time that encompassed I-1 and I-2. Amélie referred to her process of writing a journal for her therapist, which stretched across hundreds of sheets of paper, as she tried to figure out what she referred to as her problem.

And all that journal writing and that, I couldn't solve it by thinking about it. I'm absolutely certain now that I'm transsexual, and that I'm living my life correctly, and I'm reaping the benefits of a, of a better and happier life as a result of that.

(Amélie, sec. 137)

Heidi is just at the start of her process in many ways. "I've been seeing a different therapist, because the first one didn't work out so well. And um / she said she's ready whenever I am to get me my letter for a doctor" (Heidi, sec. 28-29).

Emma has completed the steps that she wanted to include in her transition. She took special care to explain her current perspective.

I'm // I'm happy! Um, my crying almost continuously during both of these sessions notwithstanding, I uh, I just, I cry. It's something that I do when feeling strong emotion, so it's not sadness or depression at all...I'm happy! ...There was a big chunk of my life I never thought I would get here. That I would, that I would be who I am and the way I look at the world, only as such, and that I would have love, that I would have a magnificent person such as [name], my spouse, that I would have friends, I would have a career. (Emma, sec. 220-221)

Micah also explained the difference between life before transition and life after transition.

The difference between, like, if you were tryin' to breathe like through one of those little coffee stirrers that is like a straw, but it's like *barely* getting enough air, and it's like *all you knew* and it had been there for so long, that's just how you thought it was. And then somebody is just like, 'Get that outa your mouth and open your mouth up!' And you're like 'Wow! This is so much *easier*.' Right? It was just like all of a sudden there was like *so much more life* to me!...I was / always carrying around this weight that I almost had forgotten I was carrying. (Micah, sec. 147).

Like Emma, Micah expressed contentment and peace. He, too, is happily married. By his report, he and his wife are soul mates who share personal and professional interests, who work and play together, and who talk everything over.

Like I said, it's a really good life. Um / if I die tonight, I would die a very happy guy. Um it's been really good. I've had some ups and downs in my life. It hasn't always been an easy path. But I am in a good place. (Micah, sec. 210)

Ages 31 to 45 (1970-1984)

Participants. Participants from this age group are listed in Table 7 below.

Table 7

Participants Ages 36 to 45

Age Group	Pseudonym	Age	Sex Assigned at Birth	Gender Identity	Transition Complete	Preferred Pronouns
31 to 45	Ryan	45	M	F	N	She/her
	Gabriela	36	M	F	N	She/her

Ryan was born in 1970; two years before San Francisco held its first Gay Pride march to commemorate Compton's Cafeteria riot and Stonewall. Stryker (2008) pinpoints the mid-1970s as the time when the “‘Transgender rapist’ trope began to circulate in grassroots lesbian networks as most extreme version of an antipathy toward transgender people” (p. 105); and then near the end of that decade, a shift from a primary focus on sexual orientation to “a preoccupation with gender identity” (p. 113). Gabriela’s birth followed the close of the 1970s, taking place in 1980.

Ryan and Gabriela both grew up in suburbs of the same Midwestern U.S. city. Both identify as transgender women and prefer she/her pronouns. At the time of the interviews, Ryan had been on HRT for a year. Gabriela had not yet begun HRT, but was eager to get started. Raised in a middle class family, in a suburban community, Ryan attended public school and completed two advanced degrees. Within a few weeks of her interviews, Ryan would be publicly introduced according to her correct gender identity, and by her feminine name at work, where she would become the first openly transgender

executive in her organization. During I-1 and, again in I-2, Ryan wept openly as she told her story. Ryan presented for her interviews in feminine dress, and spoke easily about her life.

At the time of I-1, Gabriela was on the verge of two major changes: the finalization of her divorce, and an impending move to her own living space. She has a 16-year-old son, who she recently told about her feminine identity. Gabriela has a supportive network of friends, who are accepting, fun loving, and who like to shop as much as she does. She presented in the interviews as excited about her future, although anxious about how she will navigate gender identity in relation to her job, where she will likely increase her income a great deal within the next year. She presented in masculine dress for both interviews, as she came directly from work.

Findings.

Childhood. Ryan's parents divorced when she was three or four years old. She lived with her mother, who was a nurse. When Ryan was nine her mother started working nights, leaving Ryan alone. Ryan got herself up in the morning, got dressed, got to the bus stop on time, "all that stuff that no kid that age should have the responsibility for" (Ryan, sec. 33). It was during this time that Ryan started wearing her mother's clothes, after she left for work at night. "I wanted to look beautiful like the women I saw on TV" (Ryan, sec. 35). And then, "I spent / the next...thirty-five years, basically, um thinking I had some sort of mental illness... I thought what I was made me, you know //// perverse" (Ryan, sec. 35). In these statements, Ryan demonstrates her desire for visibility, *to look*

beautiful. She did this through wearing her mother's clothes, through a strategy of hiding, to do it in secret when her mother was away. The consequence for Ryan was a sense of oppression, and the suppression of her gender expression.

Gabriela began her life story by talking about cross-dressing from an early age. She stated that her gender identity is something that has "always been in the forefront of my mind" (Gabriela, sec. 6). She dressed in her mom's clothing when she could do so in secret, as a child. She said she admired other girls' clothes.

It was like // you know just that yearning to be able to, you know, I'd find myself daydreaming. You know, bein' able to come in as a girl or wake up as a girl...and...it, it happened all the time. *All the time* I'd think about it. (Gabriela, sec. 36)

Gabriela fantasized about being a girl, emphasizing the prevalence of this thought. She wanted to be a girl, but she suppressed expressing that through actions, or through verbally confiding in anyone else, including her friends. Similar to other participants' statements, "The older I got, the worse it got. You know" (Gabriela, sec. 38). Across time, from a very young age at which she was aware of nuances of her gender, pressure built.

Ryan and Gabriela both preferred friendships with girls, although they hung out some with boys. Both individuals seem to have gotten along well with both sexes. Additionally, neither of them – even when prompted at the end of I-1 – could report an instance of bullying on childhood related to their gender expression.

Adolescence. Ryan spoke in this way about coping strategy of maintaining her masculine persona:

It's all a collection of little things, I guess. Mannerisms...the way I just...I wouldn't let myself feel emotion. I wouldn't let myself feel like my sensitivity to things was a weakness...A *constant feeling* that something just wasn't right. And not having any idea what it was. (Ryan, sec. 184)

She monitored her mannerisms, suppressed emotions, saw sensitivity as a male strength, and in that sustained suppression she constantly felt *that something just wasn't right*. Furthermore, she hadn't any idea about what it might be. Carrying a constant feeling indicates that Ryan kept that feeling secret, that she didn't share it with anyone, and focused her energies on suppression.

She explained that she always had more women friends than men. All her best friends in high school were girls. Later, in college, "I figured out even when I was in the fraternity I didn't *like* being around men, that many men, or *a* man...I really always have preferred being in the company of women" (Ryan, sec. 188). And yet, Ryan associated herself with men, because her sex was male. She placed herself in what she described as undesirable territory, in order to be whom she thought she *should* be, and yet she was unable to align with expectations. She suppressed her own nature to fit into a culturally defined glass slipper.

Gabriela described herself as having been a serious student. She didn't have many guy friends, but has always had a number of girl friends. She rode dirt bikes and

motorcycles, but never played sports. She stated that she felt like an outsider with guys. She liked dressing well, and didn't like getting dirty. When her male secondary sex characteristics began to develop, especially facial hair, she did not like it. "It's like // it feels like it's a jail cell almost. In a way. You know. Because it, it, it comes *back*" (Gabriela, sec. 73). Gabriela talked about "The need / as soon as I was 16 years old and had my own money I was out buying clothes. And hidin' 'em in my room" (Gabriela, sec. 38). High school was when she really started trying to figure out her gender. "It was bigger than what I thought. And I felt / more like *me* that way, and / started figuring out my style of clothes" (Gabriela, sec. 39). Gabriela, kept to herself, maintained secrecy, and experienced little opposition. She continued to pursue visibility with herself, but not in public. Finally, in high school, she confided in a close friend.

When you *tell* somebody it is such a *relief*, you know. And / it was the *hardest* / it was extremely hard to tell her. And I wanted to, and wanted to, and wanted to, and one day I just came out with it. She was like, "*That's cool!* / All right." She was like, "Well, let's go *shoppin*" It was a sense of *huge* relief and a *huge* weight off my chest and like, just / almost a sense of *euphoria*. Just that / there's somebody in the *world* that I can *talk* to about it and not worry about being judged. (Gabriela, sec. 136)

This unrestrained support of a friend in adolescence seems to have provided Gabriela with confidence, and also to have given her the social connection with an ally

that can be critical for an adolescent. Beyond the alliance of this friendship, Gabriela also found support and resources through the Internet.

Adulthood. Ryan described several relationships with women that she enjoyed as her masculine self, including her marriage, which ended in divorce. After each breakup, she returned to her practice of cross-dressing. This cycle is reminiscent of previous analyses in this chapter, of participants who also suppressed this expression of gender identity. Ryan explained cross dressing:

I went to what made me happy...My being myself wasn't part of any of these relationships, so I think that on many levels it was therapeutic. It made me happy. It represented some level of freedom that I didn't feel in the relationship, a restriction. Something that I had to keep hidden for so long that it would be, you know, you repress something so long and something like that never really loses its energy! (Ryan, sec. 245)

Ryan noted that although she was in relationships, they didn't involve her being herself. By wearing feminine clothing, she was being herself. This represented freedom from relationships that were oppressive (restrictive). She mentions another key idea that I have drawn from previous participants' narratives, which is the escalating power of suppressing gender expression.

Ryan also spoke about her aversion to wearing suits with ties and shoes, as required in her previous legal practice. At the time, she would look "at every woman in

the office thinking, ‘I would wear that. I would *love* to wear that’” (Ryan, sec. 53). Later, she explained further:

I wasn’t just attracted to women. I wanted to be them. Be *one of* them. It was more than just ‘That dress looks really cute on her’... I remember looking at the mannequins in the store when I was a kid and bein’ like, “I wish I was one of these mannequins / wearing these beautiful clothes.” (Ryan, sec. 162)

Ryan didn’t just want to wear the women’s clothing. She wanted to *be* a woman.

Although Ryan didn’t come from a strong religious background, she recalled a realization in adulthood: “A lot of the reasons I thought I couldn’t be who I am is because of thoughts that what I was doing was a *sin*. Somebody was watching me somewhere and disapproving” (Ryan, sec. 39).

Ryan put together an outfit and went to Chicago for an evening on the town. She experienced herself as feminine in a public place, and said to herself, “So you can be around other human beings and they don’t like / laugh at you, snicker at you, come at you with pitchforks, right?” (Ryan, sec. 66). Ryan searched for people who *identified* as women, rather than cross-dressing to act as women for a period of time. The mainstay throughout her transition was her dog, Rex, who died the previous April. He was an 85-pound Rhodesian-Golden mix, and he was with Ryan across 11 years. “Eleven *magical* years. And he transformed me physically and mentally. I learned more about what I could *do* and what I could *achieve* with him” (Ryan, sec. 307). She spoke about not having been aware of the amount of energy the dog would have when she and her former wife

adopted him and his brother as puppies. Ryan quickly understood that Rex needed a great deal of exercise, which resulted in her development of a daily running practice with him. Ryan lost weight. Together, they competed in an annual race, where frequently they were the winners. Like other dog lovers, Ryan relished the relationship that developed between her and Rex, particularly appreciating his unconditional acceptance of her. “You know, in terms of like who I came out to *first*, my *dogs!* Right? ‘Cause they were there. They saw me. They knew what was goin’ on. / Um I drew strength from him. I needed all the strength I could muster to get where I / could come out of my shell, figure out who I was. He was there. // He saw, heard, felt quite a bit” (Ryan, sec. 308-309).

For Gabriela, navigating her feminine identity with others comes with some challenges.

When people ask me and I feel comfortable about telling somebody about it / the first thing it seems like people ask is like, they get it in their mind that, you know, I’m just putting on a dress. And some really crappy wig. And it’s like, it’s like, *you have no idea how much invested I have in this*. This is like, I’m living *dual lives* / here. Um and people don’t uh / they don’t *get* it. (Gabriela, sec. 13)

Switching gender expression is challenging at best, when one is forced for personal wellbeing, and physical and financial safety and security, to suppress the real gender identity, and live the pretense.

Current perspectives. At the time of I-2, Ryan spoke with excitement about her future, as she anticipated being recognized as the first openly transgender executive at her place of employment.

I progressively decided that I couldn't continue / I needed to be me in my own home, my own town, and that progressed into me living, um, as I do today. Which is everywhere *but* work and my kids' school, as a woman. And / um // that all changes in about / 13 days. (Ryan, sec. 79)

At the time that Ryan spoke these words, there was post-Obama optimism for the future of TgNCi people in the workplace. Ryan anticipated a life of unity of expression, continuity of her identity across all aspect of her daily activities, at home and at work.

Gabriela's immediate concerns are how to maintain job security, and then to plan for her gender reassignment surgery.

I feel like / I *wish* that I'd had the option to figure that stuff out in my 20s, or who I was, so now I'm in my 30s and I feel like the clock is ticking, because...I don't want to be one of these people who are transitioning in their 50s. You know. My body still heals really well and I, I'm athletic, and I can move around. I don't have physical issues, ailments...So I feel like I'm in the *prime* where I need to make a decision. (Gabriela, sec. 40-41)

And yet so much is at risk for her. Her employment, at which she is in line to make a significant increase of income in the next year, could be in jeopardy if she discloses her

gender identity and then pursues transition. Even having come so far, Gabriela faces possible risks.

Ages 18 to 30 (1985-1993)

Participants. Participants from this age group are listed in Table 8 below.

Table 8

Participants Ages 18 to 30

Age Group	Pseudonym	Age	Sex Assigned at Birth	Gender Identity	Transition Complete	Preferred Pronouns
18 to 30	Dingo	24	M	Gender fluid	N/A	ze/zir
	Sidonie	24	F	Genderqueer	N/A	They/them
	Prism	23	F	Non-binary	N/A	They/them
	Aeon	22	M	F	N	She/her

The Intersex Society of North America was formed in 1990. The word, transgender, was first used in 1991 by Boswell, and was framed as an encompassing term for the spectrum of gender diversity, “pulling together rather than splitting apart the many subgroups” (Stryker, 2008, p. 123). That same year, Leslie Feinberg published, *Stone Butch Blues*. In 1992, the year that Dingo and Sidonie were born, the first International Conference on Transgender Law and Employment Policy took place (Stryker, 2008). Prism was born in 1993, the year that “Kiki Whitlock and other transgender activists [worked] with San Francisco’s Human Rights Commission (1993-94) to produce a landmark report documenting human rights abuses against the transgender community at an unprecedented level of detail” (Stryker, 2008, p. 142). Aeon was born in 1994.

Dingo and Aeon both grew up in suburbs of the same city in the Midwestern U.S. Prism originates from a different Midwestern U.S. city. Sidonie is from the South Central United States, where they grew up in a rural, bayou region. Dingo identifies as gender fluid; Sidonie, as genderqueer; Prism, as nonbinary; and Aeon, as a transwoman. Dingo, Sidonie, and Prism are master's degree students, and Aeon is pursuing her undergraduate degree.

Dingo arrived for I-1 wearing a short sleeved t-shirt under an open, short-sleeved button down shirt. Ze also wore a sheer handkerchief hem skirt with panels of solid jewel-tone fabric. Zir shoes were medium heel black shoes with a strap across the foot. Ze wore a cleanly-trimmed goatee, lipstick, and zir light brown hair had streaks of bright blue. In zir pierced ears were small sparkling pale blue studs. Ze spoke with eloquence and insight as ze narrated zir life.

Sidonie grew up in the Cajun culture, surrounded by their immediate, and extended family. "I like grew up with basically all of my family literally right there. Ummm / which is nice in a lot of ways" (Sidonie, sec. 7). Sidonie fondly recalls:

The special thing that we had as a family. Um particularly because, like, every Sunday, we call it dinner, it's lunch, um / but Mawmaw would cook dinner for the whole family, like literally the *whole family* would come to Mawmaw's house. We had our assigned tasks, like / I got to refill the cookie jar [proudly stated]. That was my task...I had the best job in the family if I do say so myself. (Sidonie, sec. 7-9)

Sidonie explained that growing up in a Catholic Cajun family they experienced a lot of freedom to express their gender, but that freedom was rooted in a heterosexual binary.

Prism was raised in a middle class suburban community, where they attended Catholic school for K through 12th grades. Prism is the middle of five children in their family, with two older sisters and two younger brothers. They described their upbringing as being sheltered and reserved. Prism came to their first interview in comfortable jeans and a t-shirt. They spoke easily and appeared to think deeply as they narrated their life.

Aeon came to her first interview wearing jeans and a t-shirt. This was not her favorite clothing, as she explained. She much prefers to wear the attire she wore to I-2: black low-top leather booties, full-skirted dirndl-type dresses with laces up the front, and a hooded cape. When handed the question for I-1, she said, “Actually, *my* life story – oh! *This* is gonna be a fuckin’ doozy!” (Aeon, sec. X).

Findings.

Childhood. Dingo described switching gender roles in childhood play. Sometimes ze wanted to play the masculine role, and sometimes the feminine role. Small in stature, an easy target for bullies, but more than mentally agile, Dingo learned early in life to use zir intelligence as a substitute for physical prowess, describing this as “mental jujitsu” (Dingo, sec. 36). This coping and defending strategy served zir well for many years.

Prism grew up being called a tomboy. They were fine with this gender label, as it suited their expression, and they were strongly opposed to the wearing of dresses.

I was a girl, but hated to wear dresses...When I was in kindergarten, first, and like *second* grade I didn't mind the jumpers. I didn't really think about them. And then it was probably around third grade where / I was really like, 'I don't wanta wear this. I wanta wear *shorts*, Mom. I *feel* better in *shorts*.' (Prism, sec. 39)

Prism described that realization that they should wear a dress as the first time they really noticed that they had to do something a certain way just because they were female. Prism went on to explain that about third grade, age 8 or 9, "I was already sort of being kind of *bullied* at school. Ummm / the girls just started taking my pencils and calling me, like calling me a *boy* and, and it was just because I wore *shorts* at school" (Prism, sec. 40). Oppression was difficult for Prism during these years, but was somewhat alleviated in high school, as I explain in the next section.

It was before fourth grade that Aeon felt "*deeply* uncomfortable with my...masculinity, with trying to remain in a masculine role" (Aeon, sec. 54). She explained that when she had questions she talked to the Internet, rather than to her family. The Internet was how she coped. "That was my first safe space" (Aeon, sec. 59). She described herself as being a WoW¹² addict up until high school, "because that was the only space I could express myself as *female*" (Aeon, sec. 59). Later, she also mentioned that it was the only environment where she felt empowered.

Adolescence. As a high schooler, Sidonie recalls taking a "boy role" with girl friends; censoring their own behaviors; having a masculine way of expressing affection;

¹² Worlds of Warcraft (WoW) is a massively multiplayer online role play game (MMORPG) created by Blizzard Entertainment, www.blizzard.com.

sitting a lot with uncrossed legs; having a postural ‘boy lean’; and keeping silence in conversations with girls who talked about boyfriends. This mixture includes masculine gender expression, alongside suppression of gender expression, through censoring of their own behaviors. For example, Sidonie told of a time that they walked down the school hallway with a friend, and automatically reached out to place their arm around the girl’s waist, realizing what they were doing just in time to stop. Although Sidonie felt greatly at ease with their masculine behaviors, they also “felt very excluded from my friend group... I kinda felt like the outcast kid...because I could not *talk* with them about stuff that was supposed to interest me as a girl” (Sidonie, sec. 45).

Prism recalled the happiness they felt in their all-girl high school, as compared to the discomfort in the coed environment of the earlier years. Their narrative left the impression that the school environment was one that prevented the worship of hyper-femininity, which suited Prism well. Prism relished the fact that “you could not shave your legs for // like a year or two and like no one would care... the *norm* was to not wear makeup... I was distant from like those, I don’t know, other societal pressures. To kind of conform... I didn’t have to be fashionable. I wore a uniform. You know. It was, it was awesome. *I loved it!*” (Prism, sec. 12). In high school, Prism enjoyed the lack of focus on femininity that was a common trait of many girls their age, who spent (in Prism’s opinion) way too much time on their hair and makeup every morning before school. Prism liked being able to relax, and to avoid such practices.

Aeon described her school years as a time of torment. Not only was she at risk of physical harm at home, but peers also exhibited hostility:

The best way to describe my schooling experience is, is a bunch of my classmates tried to kill me, and it didn't work...when your classmates trying to murder you is the happiest memory of your middle school experience, you *know* shit's fucked up. (Aeon, sec. 13)

Her high school experience, however, was different.

Suddenly being treated like a human being was an absolute *trip* for me. That was the first time in my life that I / had / was in a space in which the majority of people I interacted with were not a *threat*. It was / and the *fact* that being treated like a human threw me for a loop *should* say a lot. I was not *used* to that. I was not used to having *friends*. Or having people who *cared* about me. Because my...mom and dad certainly didn't. One was an abusive asshole and the other figured better *me* than *her*. (Aeon, sec. 14)

High school appears to have offered Aeon at least a modicum of belonging and friendship, commodities that were previously unknown to her.

Adulthood. Dingo described zir gender fluidity and self presentation as playing roles, “but none of these roles are disingenuous to who I am. All of these roles *feel* and *are* me” (Dingo, sec. 93). Yet ze struggles with others’ policing of zir dress, from inside and outside of LGBTQIA+ circles, which creates conflict between zir own choices and others’ evaluations of those choices. “It’s an insult to conform, and it’s an insult *not* to conform” (Dingo, sec. 95). Although individuals of all genders deal with the need to dress for the occasion, this issue seemed particularly difficult for Dingo, based on zir gender fluidity. As a gender fluid individual, ze seeks out a broader variety of options for dress and self-representation than others might do. This not only increases zir sense of self unity, but simultaneously also may multiply contexts of oppression as ze can be misidentified from a variety of different Discourses about gender.

Sidonie explained being drawn to guys, and thinking that meant they were attracted to guys. Slowly, Sidonie “started to realize that it’s not that I’m really attracted to guys. It’s that...I want to *look* like that... I have *no* interest in like, hormones and...physical transition, but ...the *aesthetic* is what is *right* for me” (Sidonie, sec. 56).

I’m at a place with myself where I can be that rainbow spectrum in the middle, and not like the black or white color. Um / because I’m *not* the black or white color. I’m all of the colors and I like to shift *between* the colors, and like, *be* all of the colors...So it’s like / beautiful // and joyous / to be in that space, in a way that, like, as a kid, I would not have [seen] a beautiful and joyous future for myself.
(Sidonie, sec. 123)

Prism started questioning their own identity: “Like, yeah. I identify as a lesbian, a gay female, you know, but I, I wanted to try, like dressing a little bit differently. I want to, um, I’d been looking at these magazines of this like really great, like male fashion” (Prism, sec. 24). During the past year, Prism has explored personal pronouns, slowly turning over the idea of using they/them pronouns for self-reference. “I get to do what I *want*. I get to / finally *be* who I’m gonna *be*” (Prism, sec. 34). Prism experienced new freedom in college.

I like had to pick my own / clothing style // I’m like, you know ... I could / look how I wanted, I could actually look at pictures, and you know, go buy those clothes and wear them. So / um / yeah. Um / that was, again, [magazine pictures] were, they were probably my / my *source* to society. (Prism, sec. 90)

Aeon transferred from a state university to a community college, and turned her attention to getting HRT, to begin her transition. When she began HRT, her grades improved, and a long struggle with debilitating arthritis abated. “I could *run* again. I picked up a whole bunch of *hobbies*. I got back into LARP¹³, got *damn* scary with a bow!” (Aeon, sec. 24). She found out that her parents were moving to California. “*Ohhhhhhhh, fuck yesssss! And that’s when stuff went from good to fuckin’ awesome!*” (Aeon, sec. 25).

Current perspectives. A final issue raised by Dingo in I-2 was related to how zir identity is read within the LGBTQIA+ community, and the sense of pressure to self-

¹³ Live Action Role Play (LARP). Players take up roles and belong to specific functional groups. More information is available at www.larping.org.

present in legible ways rather than presenting based on how ze feels on a given day. Dingo experiences criticism of zir identity at times when ze presents in a masculine way, and is misidentified as a white man, even though ze doesn't identify as a man. The term, white, carries with it the advantages of privilege, which ze understands. Being called white male is a slur, due to the use of white, and incorrect, based on the use of male. Ze experiences the term as a gross misunderstanding of zir purpose in the community. Furthermore, it minimizes zir experience, and zir identity.

Across time, Sidonie has interacted with pressure to conform to feminine norms with makeup, dress, and nail polish. There were times when it was important to do that, but as they have moved away from the family home and begun to build their own independence and adult identity, Sidonie has also explored and consciously integrated their own gender style. Initially, a lack of a cultural concept constrained them. People were free to dress in any manner, within the alignment with the gender binary / heterosexism. Sidonie credits the Internet and reading books as ways they began to explore identity, since they weren't permitted to learn openly about gender-related matters. Currently, Sidonie enjoys playing with gender. They like to bring femininity into masculinity "and see how those two things play out. And see how they complement each other" (Sidonie, sec. 188).

I think the word, play, for me is...like few boundaries, so like creation, exploration...not having my gender tied down. Not having it grounded...by either like my expectations or other people's expectations, and instead...trying to go

about my life in a way that...lets my gender create itself...and lets my body express itself / in the core sense of its being. And the core sense of its being is / pretty fluid. It's a mix of masculine and feminine...like bowties and dangling earrings... It's very playful. (Sidonie, sec. 190)

Sidonie went on to explain that they are surrounded by people who are affirming of their gender, and that now it's become important not to *pass*. They attribute the opportunity to play with gender to their environment.

I have an environment that is affirming...[and] I don't have to pass any more. As well as just like my knowledge and comfort of, and with, self / leads me to be in a position now to where I / kind of like *refuse* to present myself as anything other than what I am. (Sidonie, sec. 194)

Prism spoke about non-binary as their expression and as something they experience as empowering. Through the concept of non-binary they have considered masculine roles, and have enjoyed the flexibility of that. "Every day I, I, I can let go of a framework...and yet I'm attaching myself to a label, and I struggle with labels" (Prism, sec. 153). Prism explained:

It's hard to describe what's in my mind. It's hard to describe, like, do I really...have this, you know masculine versus feminine side, or whatever? Um // and it, it's let me be who I *am*. It's / I don't have to be, it's like not even about male or female. It's letting, it's taking away the societal roles. Just let me be who I am. I / again, I've experimented with non-binary. Um them, their, themselves / them.

And uh it's been / really *cool*. And the first time that someone called me *them* / I got a little, I got giddy. I, I uh my heart started pounding and I, is, is this what I really, really, truly wanta be called, thing? I didn't know if I was just like freaking out 'cause that didn't feel right, or if I just felt really *happy* and um / I felt *calm* afterwards! ...um // yeah. It's been really empowering to use the word non-binary. (Prism, sec. 155)

Prism sighed. "I wish that we lived in a world that we could, like, not have to have these two, like, conflicting communities, you know... I wish that we could all have that frame of mind of *choice*" (Prism, sec. 176).

Aeon has built a strong community of relationships in LARP, and claims the members in her lineage there as family. Friends encouraged her to be involved in political activities, and so she worked on Bernie Sanders Presidential campaign.

Wound up // *pretty much* getting involved with local campaigns, involved with volunteering for NARAL, And you know what? It was pretty awesome! So / now I went / so / I went from being the world's most unstable, unhappy, Catholic school boy, to being so damn left-wing that I make Stalin look conservative! (Aeon, sec. 27).

At the time of her research interviews, Aeon was experiencing success and satisfaction from a number of directions.

Synthesis

Throughout this chapter I presented data to address the first guiding question of this dissertation: How do TgNCi individuals describe gender identity work across the decades from the 1950s to the present time? Through content analysis I identified topics that were most prevalent across all participants' texts, which merged into three categories: oppression, suppression, and visibility to self and others. In this chapter, by age group, I traced the presence and the impact of these categories across the lifespan.

Developments in technology and communications contributed to somewhat different experiences for these research participants from 1949 to the present. Participants from the 60 and older age group spoke about having no role models, no language, and no one to talk with about their experiences of gender until they were at, or in some cases past, the ages of the participants in the 18-30 age group. The individuals in this youngest group also spoke about limited information about gender in their younger years, except for Aeon, whose early access to the Internet and the materials on the World Wide Web proved to be of great value. Thus, for younger participants, information was available early in life that older participants lacked.

The availability of information also means that society's awareness of TgNCi identities is greater than in previous decades. This does not in any way indicate more acceptance, although the greater the visibility of TgNCi people, the greater also will be society's knowledge and understanding. Nevertheless, all participants narrated occurrences when they responded to oppression with suppression. Even more disturbing

was that participants all reported having experienced negative feelings about themselves, in a manner similar to internalized racism, whereby they believed they were as bad as society said they were. Something is suppressed, because it should be hidden.

It became clear that the three primary categories from content analysis, oppression, suppression, and visibility to self and others, all intersected at a single point: agency. Collective agency of primary Discourses resulted in participants' development of coping and defending strategies. They devised strategies for hiding and secrecy, while enacting an outer identity that did not resonate inwardly. Simultaneously, they longed for visibility: to be known by others, to be recognized congruently with their gender identities, and to be able to see their own images reflected in a realistic way. Longing for visibility created tremendous internal pressure for participants from all four age groups as, for their own wellbeing, safety, and threat of relationship or job loss, they shoved their identities into a figurative glass slipper.

I have highlighted the convergence of oppression, suppression, and the longing for visibility many times in this chapter. In secret, participants practiced visibility, longing to be known by others, and to be seen authentically according to their gender identities. These conclusions set the direction for the next two chapters, in which I shift the focus to the fine details of discourse as social practice. Since CDA exposes layers of power and privilege and can, therefore, lead to solutions, I use methods of CDA for the analysis that is presented in Chapter 4. There I focus specifically on a micro level analysis of intersection of oppression and suppression, as I explain and illustrate four

contexts of oppression that were evident from the narratives, and illustrate the minutiae that sustain and perpetuate oppression.

In Chapter 5, I take into account the interactions between participants and their meaningful artifacts, as I consider visibility, the desire to see the self, and to be seen by others, in congruence with one's gender identity. Through MDA I demonstrate the significance, and primary roles of artifacts for visibility.

Chapter 4 – Oppression and Suppression

In Chapter 4 I consider two of the categories from Chapter 3, oppression and suppression. As I explained, suppression of gender identity functions as a protective response to oppression. The purpose of the analysis presented in this chapter is to address my second sub-question: How do participants describe gender identity work when they encounter structural and personal violence? In this chapter I use methods of CDA to examine language as social practice within contexts of oppression.

As described in Chapter 1, CDA exposes power and privilege in and among texts. One of the interests of this research was to critically investigate that aspect in greater detail as it related to agency, a primary topic of this research. As I read across transcripts, searching for intersections of agency and oppression, I identified four primary contexts of oppression that I explain and illustrate in this chapter. They are:

- Implied/Indirect
- Implied/Direct
- Applied/Asymmetrical
- Applied/Symmetrical

The Implied/Indirect context is best conceptualized in regard to a person who identifies as TgNCi, as a context of mental processes. By mental processes, I mean inner experience: “A kind of replay of the outer [experiences], recording it, reacting to it, reflecting on it, and partly a separate awareness of our states of being” (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, p. 214). Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) propose that mental

processes comprise sensing: the individual's world of consciousness including aspects like thinking, feeling, and seeing. Thus, within the Implied/Indirect context, the individual engages by way of mental processes, rather than material processes, which involve doing. For the TgNCi individual then, this context of oppression represents their inner work as they consider the broader culture and its influences on their own agency. An individual who identifies as TgNCi interacts with the machinery of culture itself and the invisible meta-messages internalized situationally.

The Implied/Direct context of oppression is concerned with aspects of the culture that are communicated through texts and/or signs directly in the presence of a person who identifies as TgNCi *and* whose gender identity is unknown to others who are present. Nevertheless, the individual who identifies as TgNCi experiences the impact of cultural ideologies through the direct focus of someone else's texts and signs. For example, someone present within the context might demean people who identify as TgNCi, but does not aim that criticism specifically toward the TgNCi individual. The TgNCi individual must choose how, or whether, to engage. Thinking (mental process of assessment of context and other factors) is ongoing, as an individual considers all aspects of contexts and events. In language, it is identified through verbs related to sensing and feeling. Material processes, "processes of doing-&-happening" (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, p. 224) are represented through verbs that demonstrate action. Deciding, for example, when to respond, when to ignore, when to challenge, and the possible personal risk(s) involved.

The Applied/Asymmetrical context of oppression refers to a context of oppression in which someone in a position of power, or authority over a person who identifies as TgNCi (for example, an employer, a teacher, a doctor, or a parent) directly applies behavioral corrections or otherwise criticizes texts or signs of the TgNCi individual. Mental processes and material processes are involved in this context of oppression, when an authority figure seeks to shape an individual who in some way does not conform to expectations of heterosexist culture.

The Applied/Symmetrical context of oppression is concerned with peer relationships: a peer of a person who identifies as TgNCi directly applies behavioral corrections or otherwise criticizes texts or signs of that individual. Mental processes and material processes are involved in this context of oppression when a peer seeks to shape an individual who in some way does not conform to expectations of heterosexist culture.

(See Table 9, below.)

Table 9.

Four Contexts of Oppression.

Context	Person-to-Person	Specifically Addressed to the TgNCi Individual?
Implied/Indirect	N	N
Implied/Direct	Y	N
Applied/Asymmetrical	Y	Y
Applied/Symmetrical	Y	Y

It could very well be true that there are many more – in fact, infinite – contexts of oppression, based upon intersections of ethnicity, language, religion, political beliefs,

personal preferences, families' unique ways of talking, and level of contextual detail. The four contexts of oppression I define, and use for this research, are primary sites of intersection of agency and oppression.

As detailed in Chapter 2, the analysis in this chapter is drawn from Scollon and Scollon (2003) and Gee (2011b). Based on Scollon and Scollon (2003), I analyzed juxtapositions of sense of time, perceptual space, and interpersonal distances. From Gee (2011b), I used the Identities Building Tool to pinpoint identities offered, and available, among the narrative's players/roles. The identification of contexts of oppression, and deconstruction of fine details of the social construction of gender identity¹⁴ clarifies constitutive elements of the systemic oppression that maintains and perpetuates the withholding of social goods from people who identify as TgNCi.

All participants' narratives included all four contexts of oppression. This created a great deal of difficulty in selecting illustrative texts. I tried to choose a varied group of examples, both in setting, and from age groups, in order to best illustrate the four contexts. Thus, texts analyzed in this chapter are representative of the entire body of data. For the detailed analyses, I represent the data by meaning units, in order to foreground meaning within narratives. This representation will become clear in the discussion of Sidonie's Conundrum, which follows. Supporting segments from other participants' talk

¹⁴ To be clear, I view all genders as socially co-constructed. For individuals whose gender identities do not interrupt cultural sightlines, gender identity work is assumed, and therefore invisible, meeting with little to no resistance. However, TgNCi people may encounter structural oppression as early as toddlerhood.

are represented in narratives without segmentation, and followed by interpretive summaries.

Implied/Indirect

All participants described the pressures brought to bear on their identities by broader Discourses, the basic cultural assumptions of how individuals should interact, represent, and *be*, in order to access social goods. In Chapter 1 I discussed collective/distributive agency as a force that could gain traction to situate TgNCi people in mainstream culture. Here, it is important to consider the collective/distributive agency, already in place in mainstream culture, agency that keeps TgNCi people out of the mainstream. The Implied/Indirect context of oppression is always present, giving substance to the other co-constructive influences described in this chapter. The power and momentum of this agency maintains the status quo. As such, it exists as what *is* and requires no direct or intentional action toward TgNCi people. The withholding of social goods (Gee, 2011a) is woven into the fabric of culture. Heterosexism and patriarchy are assumed to be normal. Narratives such as Sidonie's Conundrum, illustrate the powerful force of such Discourses, even though they are not directly, intentionally, or specifically aimed at Sidonie.

Sidonie's Conundrum. Sidonie was assigned the female sex at birth. Sidonie identifies as genderqueer and prefers they/them pronouns. Raised in a rural bayou area of Louisiana, Sidonie describes their cultural background as Catholic Cajun, and socioeconomic status as poor to middle class. Currently, Sidonie is a graduate student.

Early in I-1, they spoke about cultural constraints that impacted the formation of their identity.

Growing up in like a Cajun Catholic family /
there are a lot of freedoms that you get in my area
with expressing gender, um / in ways that like /
people wouldn't even acknowledge.

And I think that freedom comes
from the assumption that everyone is straight.

Sidonie establishes the religious and cultural context in which they were situated throughout the process of *growing up*. Growing up happened within the broader ethnic and religious practices and ideologies of *Cajun Catholic*, and within the specific context of *family*. This introduces a socio-cultural assumption that permits fluidity in ways of representing gender, but there is an underlying assumption of heterosexuality. The assumption that everyone is heterosexual creates delimitation, a perceptual space, within which great latitude of gender expression is not only allowable, but is accepted. In that space, tolerance comes more easily.

And not being straight, that's difficult.

So / if one of my friends, like,
dressed very, very masculine, "She's just a tomboy."

And we all know that she's straight
and like, that's OK.

It's OK for her to ride dirt bikes,

it's OK for her to love fishing and being outdoors.

It's OK for her to present masculine,

because like, we know that is the assumption right then and there.

It's fine. She's cool.

That's really queer. Like that's super-queer.

It's *not* queer, because the basis of that is

assuming that everyone is straight. (Sidonie, sec. 12)

Sidonie then situates their talk within the specific context of non-hetero, sexual orientation, *not being straight*. Sidonie describes that perceptual space as *difficult*. They list four sample scenarios of gender presentation that could occur with a friend. Specifically applying the examples to a friend serves to set Sidonie apart from any of those situations, placing them outside of the discussion as the narrator *of*, but not *in*, the perceptual space of the scenarios. One of their friends could dress *very, very masculine*; *ride dirt bikes*; and *love fishing and being outdoors*. These presentations of gender are paired with cultural responses that explain the rationale: *She's just a tomboy and we all know that she's straight...that's OK; we know that being straight is the assumption. It's fine. She's cool*. Sidonie evaluates the examples, using the terms, *really queer* and *super-queer* to describe masculine presentation by women within a culture rooted in the heterosexual binary. They then speak to the paradoxical bind of perceptual space where such expression is culturally sanctioned, but only if not related to gender identity.

Um, which becomes, particularly hard
 when you're like *struggling* with your sexual identity.
 Because then it's like // how do I develop,
 because everything that would be accepted for everyone,
 and that's comfortable for me, then is like a threat.
 So like // me enjoying fishing
 or me, like wanting to present more masculine,
 that now is like, that's not cool... (Sidonie, sec. 13)

Sidonie's describes their own perceptual space and the complications of a culture in which they cannot be visible except as a heterosexual woman. Sidonie identifies the first of two struggles: *sexual identity* [orientation]. The ways of self-representation that feel comfortable for Sidonie also function to misrepresent them in culture as a straight tomboy. If Sidonie were to come out as a lesbian, then representing their identity in exactly the same ways would mark them as a *threat* to the heterosexual order. Sidonie is faced with choosing invisibility in which the eyes of culture slide across Sidonie without stopping to acknowledge their identity at all; or a precarious visibility, in which they risk social ostracism. What is comfortable for Sidonie, they perceive as *like a threat; not cool*, in their community of origin.

only just now I'm getting comfortable
 with the fact that like he/him pronouns are cool.
 Um which is I think a thing I always knew that,

that's, OK for me.

I don't feel discomfort with that. (Sidonie, sec. 14)

Sidonie describes their current thinking about pronouns, about using language that aligns with their gender identity. They begin the statement with the words *only just now*. This phrase represents Sidonie's temporal perspective of all the years that have passed until the present, when they are very recently at ease with trying out genderqueer identity. Even though Sidonie indicated for this research that they prefer gender-neutral pronouns, it is evident from this narrative that they might be moving toward the use of masculine pronouns, or perhaps a mixture. Sidonie mentions that *he/him pronouns are cool*, and qualifies that statement as a *fact*. They reach back through preceding years to sweep the possibility of perceptual space (*I think*) within which to anchor the present (*a thing I always knew*), and also to acknowledge self-acceptance (*that, that's OK for me*). Sidonie further confirms acceptance by denying discomfort with the acceptance of masculine pronouns. They state it two ways.

Um, but that's never a thing that I would have, like,
gotten to or expressed back home.

Um / I think I eventually like would,

I knew that I was queer when I was young.

I did, did not know what comfort and safety levels were / with that.

And what that comes from. (Sidonie, sec. 14)

Sidonie closes the narrative by circling back to their culture of origin, and the struggle to understand and express her gender identity in ways that felt authentic. They state with certainty that *back home*, back in the strictly heterosexist Cajun Catholic bayou community, they would *never...have gotten to or expressed*. Sidonie seems to begin to predict what might have happened, or what they might have done, if they had remained in that milieu, but then shifts back to self-knowledge at a young age. Sidonie situates their young self (temporal) as *queer* (perceptual space). Then Sidonie explains that they did not know the origins (*what that comes from*) of their perceptual space. They experienced the paradox as from an indirect origin, rather than as from an individual or group of people. There was not an available resource, or model upon which Sidonie could rely to acknowledge that identity within, or to gauge the risks of exposing (*I...did not know what comfort and safety levels were / with that*) their sense of self. Due to the perceived risks of exposure, Sidonie's perceptual space of gender identity remained invisible. As Anzaldúa wrote, "I am visible...yet I am invisible. I both blind them...and am their blind spot" (p. 260). The consequence was an increased interpersonal distance.

The broader Cajun Catholic culture invited Sidonie to take up the identity of a tomboy, but denied the possibility of presenting in masculine ways as a woman. In their gender identity work, Sidonie increasingly felt a desire to represent in more masculine ways. Even though Sidonie's friends did this freely, for Sidonie, to represent as the self and be seen as *not* the self, resulted in being neither seen nor known.

Examples from other participants. All participants, including Mimi and Gabriela, whose narrative segments are included below as examples, offered stories salient to the Implied/Indirect context of oppression. I offer brief comments about each segment. Mimi spoke about her first time out dressed as a woman.

Uh the *first* time I went to uh one of the uh transgender uh [local organization] meetings, I was at uh, uh a hotel. And I was *probably* // ten yards away from the door. It was the back door to this banquet center where we had our banquets. The room I had was maybe ten / ten *yards*. Wasn't very far. I mean, I could have *ran* over there in / two seconds to go in that door! But it took me an *hour* to come out of my door, because I was afraid somebody was gonna see me down the hallway. And / and I was *hearing* out in the hallway, a lot of *kids*. And that was my biggest thing. I / didn't want *kids* to be *freaked out*. Didn't really care about the uh / uh adults. I was more / afraid of how the / *children* would perceive this and how those *parents* might / perceive me and / what kind of message would they give to the children. So that was always a big fear of mine. (Mimi, secs. 175-176)

Mimi feared the perceptual space of misidentification, first by children, and second, through the possible follow-up messages from parents. Terms like *freaked out* demonstrate Mimi's mirrored view of herself as reflected through cultural stereotypes. This anxiety held her captive in a hotel room, from fear that she would be recognized in a way that did not align with the expression of her gender identity. Mimi knew herself to be reliable and competent. Parents who might instruct their children about her as an icon of

bad citizenship, caused her worry, to the degree that she was on the verge of immobility. Mimi froze in her mental process, and experienced great difficulty accomplishing the material action of walking across the hall. It is possible to view her hesitancy as caring for other people, but the implication of caring for others through hiding is that one must bow to transphobic and heterosexist messages to ‘care’ in such a way.

Gabriela spoke about keeping her life compartmentalized in order to avoid jeopardizing her job. She talked about *girl mode* and *guy mode*. I asked how she managed to keep herself separated into those two roles. She works at her job in guy mode, but hopes to transition soon to full time girl mode. She is not convinced of job security after she transitions, and so she continues to live within the safety of cleanly separated gender roles.

It’s I, I do that... That, I’ve been asked before, actually. And um // it’s because I’ve had to comp- / like I’m a compartmentalizer. So like I keep things separate so I don’t slip up. That to me is like the uh, a way of protecting, a / redundancy in a way... It is. It is. That’s the way I look at it, as, you know, because if I get caught up in a conversation or, or I, “Oh, she, she’s / yeah. That’s her not me.” And I’m not / accidentally putting myself in a position of uh exposure. (Gabriela, sec. 205)

Gabriela’s compartmentalization is a carefully managed practice, whereby she maintains her masculine presentation at work, while encompassing a perceptual feminine self. Her boss is also her best friend. They share a common passion for motorcycles and often go riding together on weekends. Gabriela fears not only the loss of employment and income,

but also the loss of her closest personal friend, if she discloses her transgender identity to him. Potential (but not *certain*) may lead to self-protective strategies. For the time being, Gabriela's identity, and income management strategy is to live in two modes.

Implied/Direct

Aeon's experience illustrates the Implied/Direct context of oppression in which an individual's gender identity is unknown in her immediate context, and in which one or more individuals in the context are overtly hostile in regard to TgNCi people. Aeon explained her home context in similar terms. After describing an upbringing in which she was hyper vigilant at all times due to her father's abuse, Aeon explained her survival strategies, the protection of her gender identity, and her safe space for representing herself as a woman.

Aeon's Safe Haven. I was, I don't remember how I became conscious of it,
but // I / before 4th grade,
I was *deeply* uncomfortable with my,
with masculinity,
with trying to remain in a masculine role (Aeon, sec. 54)

Aeon temporally situates her awareness of discomfort with her birth-assigned sex as before 4th grade. She recalls that she *became conscious of it*. The discomfort was something that she knew, of which she was perceptually aware. She emphatically represents her feelings as *deeply uncomfortable*. She starts to state ownership of masculinity, through the use of the word, *my*, but then redirects her wording to the

construct, *masculinity*. She backs away yet again, distancing from masculinity through referring to it as a *masculine role*, a portrayal. Aeon takes two successive steps away from referring to masculine identity, thereby increasing her interpersonal distance from any connection of her gender identity with masculinity.

But during the heyday of like early online gaming,

I grew up, I've grown up, I pretty much grew up

with an Ethernet cable in hand, you know.

So // when I had / when I was trying to understand everything,

the Internet was a pretty major resource.

But while it was in its infancy,

I mean, I was born in '93.

I was born right when Mosaic hit.

So I grew up with like Net- /

we're talking like Netscape and shit.

Really early on.

Like a step up from AOL. (Aeon, sec. 57)

Aeon situates her life in juxtaposition with the development of the Internet. She explains her temporal context as related to *the heyday of like early online gaming*.

Elsewhere in her narrative, Aeon mentions that her parents always had the most current, and the fastest, Internet capabilities in the home, and so she connects her growing up (restated three times as *grew up*, *I've grown up*, and *I pretty much grew up*) to the birth

and growth of the Internet. She positions the Ethernet cable as *in hand*, at the closest interpersonal distance, as connected to her. Her talk conjures perceptual space containing a child, untethered from humankind, but attached by an Ethernet umbilical cord to her life source, the Internet. Aeon continues, comparing her own birth and infancy with that of the Internet, further detailing the period of history.

So / I had pretty much grown up like
playing video games and shit,
so when I had questions I didn't talk to my family.

I talked to the Internet. (Aeon, sec. 58)

From the background she provided about the primary role of the Internet, Aeon now situates her quest for information there as well. She reiterates the interpersonal space of relationship with her family as not just distant, but as remote. Aeon situated her life within the worlds available through the Internet. Threats from humans such as she faced in her everyday life were not a factor online. The Internet was a non-judgmental source of information. She *talked to* the Internet.

And trying to discover /
trying to deal with my own gender identity complications,
it eventually ended in head-desking¹⁵ very hard,

¹⁵ “Pop culture hits again, this time with *head-desking* which is exactly what you think it is. Someone faced with a situation that is frustrating and seemingly unsolvable can literally and figuratively lead to *head-desking*. To *head-desk* is to reach a perceived impasse that causes the person to experience a level of frustration that is so intense that one feels it must literally be smacked out of one's head to relieve the pressure” (Bruce, January 24, 2017, paragraph 1).

and finally looking up “can a boy become a girl?”

That was when all of the shit *clicked*, I guess.

That was when all the little pieces fucking fit together. (Aeon, sec. 58)

Aeon was not a passive participant on the Internet. She worked at finding what she needed (*trying to discover*). She searched for solutions (*trying to deal*) to her *gender identity complications*. This continued for an unspecified period of time (*eventually*), at the end of which Aeon reached extreme frustration, which she framed with a statement of physical impact: *head-desking*. She says that *finally*, at last, after searches and inquiries, trusting the Internet for information, she looked up the topic that led her to the information she sought. Aeon emphasizes her research, looking up, *can a boy become a girl*, as the space of time in which, *all of the shit clicked*, and *all the little pieces fucking fit together*. She says, *That*, was the pivotal temporal space (her sense of time when she did the research), perceptual space (of herself as whole), interpersonal distance, and safety (her family did not know).

There was now,

there was a *term* for this,

there was something that could be done *about* it.

And then I re- / and *then* I real- /

and then I did a little *more* digging,

realized the sheer depths of transphobia in Western society.

And it was like, “Well. Fuck *me!*” (Aeon, sec. 58)

Aeon could then connect to her gender identity through language. *There was now*, is an odd mixture of the present in the past, as Aeon narrates the past from the present. It was *now* back then. In that temporal space, she learned *there was a term for this*. She had a name for her gender identity, evidence of the existence of such a gender identity apart from her own experience. Furthermore, she learned that there was also action that could be taken (*something to be done about it*). Working through her narrative, step by step, her excitement about the discovery of language, and also her hope in solutions, drew me into her story. However, her research was thorough, and her next discovery provided unhappy balance to her joy, as she encountered *the sheer depths of transphobia in Western society*.

But the Internet was how I *coped*.

It / digital space / that was my first safe space.

Like / in World of Warcraft,

you wonder why I was such a WOW addict up until high school,

it's because that was the only space I could express myself as *female*. (Aeon, sec.

59)

These last five lines demonstrate the degree to which Aeon depended on, even needed, the Internet. Through her research she found information that allowed her to own her gender identity, a safe space in which to learn, and also virtual spaces in which to express herself as a woman. Aeon could also be completely free from being seen, except as an avatar. She could manage her identity, representing as a woman online, full time, while fulfilling expectations of her being a man in her everyday life.

In other parts of her narrative, Aeon mentions her family's hyper conservative religious perspectives, homophobic conversations, and of course, abuse (physical, verbal, emotional) toward her. Her father questioned her about gender and sexual orientation. For her safety, she denied all of it, and made homophobic and transphobic jokes for her own protection. While interpersonally close to her family due to the physical proximity of living in the same house, she felt not even a hint of shared perceptual space. The family required that she take up masculine identity. Aeon recognized the family environment as toxic and hostile. She lived with them, but safely, showing only what she knew was safe to let them see.

Aeon made no effort to tamper with family elements of identity, due to overt threat of harm. She relied on the Internet to be her coach, mentor, informer, educator, and ally. She allowed the Internet to lead her to spaces of safety, strategies for protection, and connections with other people. Through the Internet, Aeon allowed herself to experiment with femininity, power, force, success, and failure. Digital spaces and virtual relationships offered Aeon many possibilities for gender identity, including her own. Aeon's family offered her no possibility of variance of gender identity from her birth assigned sex. Furthermore, her family context suggested threat of physical harm if she were to vary from its perception of gender correctness, based on the history of parent-child interactions. The Internet offered an identity to Aeon's family, as she discovered "the depths of transphobia," and applied that learning to everyday life in the home with her parents, as she enacted their expectations of her gender for personal protection.

Examples from other participants. Amélie's and Ryan's narratives also included texts that illustrate the Implied/Direct context of oppression. Amélie told of how she learned the term, transgender, reading books that were a gift from her mother.

[This is] a little library of books that my mom gave me to read. And uh it's, it's dated 1969. It's a uh / what it is, is it's a, it's a book for young / for *kids* to learn about / about *sex* and / things...it's, it's significant to me because this is literally, these little books ... this is the first place where I saw – and it's, it's not in the text. It's in the uh, Volume IV – it's in the appendix, or in the *glossary*. Where... / where I saw the words, uh /// transvestite and / transsexual...So this is *literally* the object that gave me // yeah. This is the object that gave me my initial indication that / I had something /// *unusual* that most people don't have. And uh / and that it was a *very* serious thing. A very serious thing that needed to be hidden... I would have been maybe 13 years old. So that's when I first realized that I *had* an issue...*this* is the *initial thing* that gave me an indication there was something / I felt / something *wrong* with me. You know. So *that's* a pretty big *deal*! You know, you're not even in high school yet, and you know there's something major *wrong* with you, or *different* about you...I'm sure as soon as I read these words, and the definition of transsexualism and transvestite for the first time in my life, I had a *word* to describe something similar to this unknown *thing* that I didn't know what it was. So / to me that's *extremely* significant. If it could speak to me, I think it would say, "Yeah. There's uh / you / there is definitely something *wrong* with

you.” And I think this is how it *did* speak to me. “You have a *major problem*. You’re *different* / than / uh normal, normal people. And uh, and this is something you need to keep to yourself, and this is something you need to *hide*. Because everybody currently thinks you’re just a normal, quiet, shy / person.” So that’s what it would say to me. It was *huge!* And this was all I had for *decades!* Really. It’s sad...I mean, you would see, every once in a while, you would see transsexuals on late night TV shows or something, you know, but they were as an oddity. You know. *Why do people do this?...*it’s a *big* deal. For *me* it was a *huge* deal! Oh, *yeah!* This is the thing that let me know / for the *first time* / I knew there was something terribly wrong with me. So that’s a pretty big message. (Amélie, sec. 316-329)

Amélie researched her gender identity alone. She had no Internet, and so her research was slow and deliberate, unfolding over time, whereas Aeon had complete information (as she explained in another portion of her narrative) before junior high school. Thus, about the time that Aeon accessed all that she needed to know in order to have a foundation of knowledge, Amélie was reading in the very back of her set of books, in the glossary, about words that categorized her as not normal, as having a major problem.

Ryan came to understand her gender identity later, after many years of trying to conform to expectations of society. She experienced a series of relationships, including a marriage. I asked her why she kept going back to those types of relationships.

Ssssocietal expectations, cultural expectations, familial expectations. They became my expectations. Um, you'll succeed when you are married, have kids, have a nice big house, a couple of dogs in the yard, and // I got to that place. And a career and / I got all those things. I achieved all those things. And there was still a giant, gaping, massive, fucking hole in my life that wasn't filled by *any* of those things. And um /// so here I am! (Ryan, sec. 250-251)

Ryan simply followed along, believing that things would work out. However, that was not the case. Compelled by nothing more than cultural norms, she followed in step, only to achieve emptiness.

Applied/Asymmetrical

Emma was assigned the male sex at birth, but identifies as a transgender woman, and who uses she/her/hers pronouns. She was raised in a rural community in the Midwestern U.S., where her middleclass family was one of only a handful of Catholic families. This resulted in a great deal of name-calling by peers in the public school she attended. She did not like sports, and strongly preferred reading books and talking about them with others who loved to read. Emma wept through much of I-1, as she recalled her experiences from a very young age up to the present time. In her Warm, Sunny Day narrative below, Emma tells of a situation in which a choice she wanted to make was overshadowed by a teacher's firm correction. This story illustrates a context of oppression in which contextual elements of culture are directly applied to a person who identifies as TgNCi by someone more powerful.

Emma's Warm, Sunny Day. Emma explained, "My earliest memories that have any coherency were linked to remembrance of a particular place and time // possibly not coincidental, it also had to do with some of my earliest feelings about...who I knew myself to be, or who I *felt* myself to be" (L 17-19). The following story is from the year Emma was in kindergarten in the early 1970s.

My best friend in kindergarten was this little blonde girl named Jane.

Her family moved away at the end of that school year. (Emma, sec. 6)

Emma foregrounds her primary friendship in kindergarten to introduce her story. She defines the relationship status (*best friend*); the grade in school, and thereby, the approximate ages of the two girls; physical descriptors (*little, blonde*); and finally, her friend's name. Her affinity for her friend leads directly into a statement of permanent loss, as Emma inscribes it with a temporal boundary. She closes the relationship cycle, completing the broad-stroke picture of the friendship, as prelude to a specific incident that occurred in kindergarten. Emma redirects the temporal focus away from the end of the friendship and back to the beginning of the school year with the single word: *but*.

But at the beginning of that school year, so this would have been /

in my memory I can still feel the warmth of the sun on my skin

and I can smell freshly-mown grass,

and I can smell the dust of leaves in the air.

So it had to have been late September, early October.

It was a beautiful day.

It was kindergarten. (Emma, sec. 6)

Emma uses demonstrative, *that*, to indicate kindergarten. She further uses *this* to specify the exact meaning of *beginning* by defining the perceptual space through tactile (*warmth of the sun on my skin*) and olfactory (*freshly-mown grass, dust of leaves*) elements. Emma's recollection of the combined smells of mown grass *and* dust of leaves, pinpoints the summer-into-fall time frame at the start of a school year. Next, Emma confirms her recollection in two statements. The first statement summarizes the perceptual space (*it*) as *a beautiful day*. The second statement summarizes the sense of time (*it*) as *kindergarten*. Having established the perceptual and the temporal, Emma moves forward into her description of the event.

We went for a half-day

And uh I remember there was some activity,
and um // our teacher divided us into two groups.

Boys over here, girls over here.

And uh // I just saw boys going over there,
girls, including my friends,
and particularly, you know, my bestie,
going this way so I just went that way. (Emma, sec. 7)

Emma explains the time constraints of kindergarten as a half-day. She introduces the topic of *some activity*. She labels the person in charge not by name, but by title:

teacher. Furthermore, she inscribes the context of the group through the use of *our*, with *teacher*. From a single group – a kindergarten class – the authority figure group member set out to divide the students into two groups.

Emma uses the word, *here*, to indicate spaces within the purview of the teacher for boys, and for girls. She plays the teacher's role through intertextuality, directing the children: *boys over here* (Emma points to the left) and *girls over here* (Emma points to the right). Then, Emma speaks for herself, using the radial deictics, *here* and *there*, giving her perspective. Radial deictics, "Presuppose an unspecified boundary around the speech event, with *here* describing things *inside* the boundary, and *there* describing things *outside*" (Wortham & Reyes, 2015, p. 47). This narrative, constructed from Emma's memory, describes her experience of the occurrence. From Emma's perspective, the boys were *there*, identifying her own special location as *here*. She specifies her desired location three times, first speaking broadly of *girls*, then narrowing the reference to *my friends*, and finally through the specific term of endearment, *my bestie*. She gestured *this way*, as she spoke, and then from where she was, with *boys over there* and *girls/friends/bestie this way*. She inscribes her own location as different from the other children, and also from the teacher, from where she knew she must make a choice: *boys over there*, *girls this way*, so I just went *that way*. The word *that* situates Emma as also separated from the girls in a moment of decision. Everyone is moving to the expected locations, but for Emma time stops for a blink in time as she makes up her mind to follow the girls.

I was stopped.

“No, you go over there.” ...

Uh and I stopped and I said that I’d go over there [with the girls]

It was like, “No. That’s [other direction] where the boys go.” (Emma, sec. 7)

Emma is moving toward the girls. Otherwise, there would be no need to stop. She heads toward the *girls*, her *friends*, her *bestie*. She says that she was stopped, and it is implicitly the teacher who stops her. Taking up the teacher’s role, she speaks, “No, you go over there.” Next she says that she stopped, indicating her own action in response to the teacher. She speaks indirectly for herself, telling about her talk, but not representing her speech as a direct quotation, as she does for the teacher. She says she would *go over there* to be with the girls, and then again, she speaks as though quoting the teacher: “No. That’s where the boys go.” The contrast between Emma’s indirect speech and the teacher’s talk represented as direct quotations gives the impression of Emma’s powerlessness. In the setting where Emma exhibited nothing more than an innocent wish to be with her friend(s), she was directed away from the girls, toward the boys.

Emma has spoken so far in this narrative of the perceptual space of a stunningly beautiful day in the time of late summer, outside for a class activity. Her story conjures early childhood joy of carefree friendship. The teacher’s words cause Emma to stop physically, and also makes visible to all the other students Emma’s movement to go with the girls.

And it was then that I realized //

I always kind of assumed at some point that /

it would sort itself out, you know. (Emma, sec. 7)

Emma specifies a single moment in time – *then* – that she made meaning about her gender identity. It's not that she knew gender identity as a sophisticated, or academic term. But it is that she knew herself. She knew she wanted to be with girls, and that she did not want to be with boys. She also observed that this was not how others her age tended to align themselves and therefore, something (*it*) would sort itself out. The words, *you know*, seem to reference childhood naïveté, and the ways that friendships sort themselves out over time. Emma knew she was somehow different from other children her age, but in this moment, *then*, she realized something different.

This moment in time was life altering for Emma, to the extent that it might be said her innocence, her childhood exuberance for friendships and play, were muted. Even before kindergarten, she had a sense of *something different* about her gender identity: “I had always assumed.” In speaking about her gender identity, Emma speaks as a child who lacks the knowledge about what troubles her, as she uses the word *it*. The word, *it*, is a deictic that typically refers to a noun, but at the age of five, Emma did not *know* the noun. In this narrative segment, she replicates that innocence in her authorship of this story. In the text that follows, she uses another deictic, *this*, in reference to her gender identity, the term she did not know.

I can't remember what those thoughts felt like.

I don't really remember what it felt like to think that.

But I remember the emotion.

I remember the feeling of it now. //

And it was at that point that I realized, no.

This isn't / going to resolve itself. (Emma, sec. 7)

Emma experiences a crisis. She says she can't remember what her thoughts felt like. In a situation that was traumatic for her, Emma very likely had to put on a good face and do as she was told. Whether or not that was the case, she clearly articulates her takeaway: *this* (the thing about her that she perceived as different from her peers) *isn't* (firmly, absolutely, not) *going to* (even across time, bit by bit) *resolve itself* (be adjusted, made right, or work itself out). Her teacher's public direction forces her into a perceptual space that is not aligned with Emma's sense of self. It also forces Emma into an uncomfortable interpersonal space in relation to both the boys and the girls. In this situation, her alignment is with the girls, her friends, and her bestie, not with the boys, and yet the teacher directs her to locate herself with them. Emma stands in expanded sense of time where, for her, time freezes in that big, loud moment, while everyone else carries on as usual. She desires to go with her friends. She managed her representation (agency) in that instant of decision, by going with the boys. But her teacher had publicly called her out. The emotions Emma evoked in telling of the moment were as though she

experienced a shattering, a loss of hope, betrayal, unmerited public exposure, and shaming. Emma described that expanded sense of time:

And I felt this // heavy falling feeling

from the upper center of my chest right down my core.

[gestures draw the movement using both hands]

Just this sick feeling, um /

like a roller coaster when you,

you kind of lose your stomach for a second. (Emma, sec. 7)

Emma described her visceral response with the terms *heavy falling*, *sick*, and *lose your stomach*. She placed the backs of her hands together, fingers pointing toward her body, to draw the pathway down through her core. The image of a roller coaster reinforces a sense of powerlessness as something bigger and more powerful than oneself controls the trajectory of the body. On a roller coaster the individual is at the mercy of the machine. This was Emma's experience of the binary construction of gender during kindergarten on a warm, sunny day.

Emma brought her story to a close, first with adult insight, and then with statements about the kindergarten child of this experience.

And uh / it wasn't till many years later I realized that feeling was dysphoria.

I had no idea.

I just knew there was something wrong.

And I had no idea,

I didn't know what to do about it.

But I did know that a boy who acted like a girl would be punished,
and punished severely. (Emma, sec. 6-9)

Whatever was the teacher's reason for singling out Emma – whether it was to deliberately call her out, or nothing more than a sociocultural default – the effect on Emma was deeply personal, as she was corrected in front of her classmates, and intentionally separated from her friends by a teacher who represented powerful social machinery she could not oppose. Emma refers to *many years later*. Elsewhere in the interview, she explained that she first sought counseling in 2010. The math indicates that roughly 39 years passed between Emma's Warm Sunny Day, and when she learned what dysphoria was. During those years she carried the burden of gender dysphoria, not knowing what it was, or how to deal with it. The next four lines of text alternate between statements about her lack of knowledge (*I had no idea, and I had no idea*) with what she did know (*something was wrong*) and lacking any tools to resolve her conundrum (*what to do about it*). However, there was something critical that she learned from her moment in the kindergarten spotlight, and from many incidents that followed after that. She made meaning about the consequences of behavior that did not align with cultural expectations of sexed bodies. First, Emma implies that even though her assigned sex at birth was male, her behavior must have been like a girl, and so she was called out in front of the class for choosing to go with the girls. Emma described the consequences with the word, punished, two times: *punished*, and then *punished severely*.

In consideration of building identities in her story, Emma clearly recognizes the boys, the girls, and her teacher. The boys exist in her story only as entities on the periphery. She represents the girls as her affinity group, including her friends and her bestie. The teacher's identity holds authority through Emma's direct quotations. When it comes to self-placement, however, Emma's narrative reflects less certainty. She hesitates an instant before moving toward the location to which the girls were sent. The teacher simply sees her as a boy and takes persistent action to direct Emma to the boys' group. Emma invites the teacher to see her as aligned with the girls (*I stopped and said I'd go over there*), but the teacher does not. Emma may also be inviting her friends and her bestie to persuade the teacher to let her go with them, but they do not. In this situation where Emma's desire to locate herself with the girls is clear, her momentary hesitancy reveals tension between her self-understanding, and cultural dictates. No one intervenes to support her, and Emma is sent to be with the boys.

Elsewhere in her narrative Emma elaborated on punishment, the final concept from her Warm Sunny Day Story. Emma said that she was bullied quite a bit, and that by second grade this practice toward her had solidified. The bullying continued until her junior year of high school. It began with name-calling and then transitioned into physical violence. Her first experience of physical violence was in third grade. Later, she was shoved out of a second story window, landing in a pile of cinders. She was pushed off a balcony from the side of a building; pushed down two flights of marble stairs with brass railings; and choked unconscious with her face down in the dirt, while being kicked in the

ribs. As a boy child, she was called a girl. That is who she *was*, but Discourses conflating sex and gender as a single construct created a situation of shame and humiliation rather than joy in self-knowledge.

Examples from other participants. All participants narrated similar texts, but segments from Prism and Victoria are included in this section. Victoria explains what happened when she shared her heart's desire in a parochial school.

And / and I / I was six going on seven years old just a couple of months from my seventh birthday, and I was at Catholic school I was going to, grade school, grades one through eight. Sister asked us for a writing assignment: "What do you pray for?" And being the honest little six year old I said, "I pray to wake up and be a little girl." That did not go over well in Catholic grade school that was in ninteennnnn sixty-two, I believe. Cause you'da thought I just burned down the Vatican. My mother got called in and / it was / felt by the nuns that I had mental issues and that I needed counseling. From the right psychiatrist, or psychologist which was Dr. A. Well Dr. A. was a, a sadist. Ummm I started to go see him. That was the condition for me to stay in the school, and his idea of teaching me how to be male and purge this idea that I was a girl, kneeling on linoleum, bein' whacked across the shoulders with the, one of the pointers. And I put up with that for a week. And starting in the second week I refused to talk to 'im. And he says, "You *will* talk to me or I will beat the *heck* out of you." "I'm not gonna talk to you till you stop hitting me." And he got mad. He'd been hittin' me across the back of the

shoulders. I was really black and blue and sore. But he made me sit up straight, hands like this on the desk [places hands on table top, palms down] and my feet flat on the floor and talk to 'im that way. He got mad. He took that stick and he came down across both my hands and that stick shattered into pieces all over. I screamed. The whole school heard me scream. And um the Principal came, and Father H. came. Well I was on the floor and I was curled into a ball and Father H. was scared he might have really injured me. He picked me up and carried me over to the emergency room of St. [Name]'s Hospital, was only a half block. And my folks were called. And I was, I was in hysterics. I'd never been hit like that and um / I, all I could do was cry and I just curled up into a tight ball. And they pulled my arms out to x-ray my hands, make sure that uh I didn't have any broken bones. But I had badly bruised hands. They were really concerned till they saw the x-rays and nothing was broken. They were just, I couldn't, I couldn't move my hands. They were just like *frozen* in tight little fists like that [closes hands into tight fists]. And um / of course all the nuns found out what was goin' on. And I, after that I got severely discriminated against, treated like a pariah. (Victoria, sec. 7-10)

The outcome of Victoria's being physically abused was not an apology, or any other measure of healing or reconciliation, but overt discrimination. This incident marked the last time that Victoria disclosed her gender identity, directing her agency toward concealment. Elsewhere in her narrative, she stated:

It pushed me right in the closet. And then I couldn't talk about how I felt. I got, you know // I became very introverted. Did reading. Um go down in the woods and sit. Um didn't have much to do with *anybody*. Other than I worked. My folks had me work in the supermarket and the bowling alley. And I was / my world was more of an *adult* world. My mom's always said I never had a childhood. It was always an adult world. Uh. I just didn't want to be around my peers. / And I didn't. /// (Victoria, sec. 227)

From a much more lighthearted account Prism speaks about their experience with family members who are convinced about what Prism should want to own, and to wear.

It's, it / theeee / like I can't / the *biggest* example is, like, Christmas. Where you know, these / my *family* on my mom's side especially, is very, like, they're all there for each other. 'Cause / they're always *there* for each other, but they never actually take the time to get to knooowwww you or they don't really *care* about what your actual interests are. They just like think about what a *normal twenty- / early twenties woman* would want. You know. So that's great [with irony]. Um or a normal 10 year old girl would want. Um and // [sighs] it / kind of like my mom with the feminization of things and, um, my grandma, who // she's maybe an actually little bit more open-minded one, but she'll still like not understand exactly where, like, I'm going with, just like, "I don't really like the color pink. I don't, I don't want it. I don't think I look good in it." Whatever. And they still, like would buy me pink things. Or, um, again, to this day I get / I got these, like,

fuzzy pink / and black / polka-dotted **boots** in the mail for Christmas. And I'm like, "**Whattttttt?!!**" They're awful! Like they're, they looked *awful*. [laughing] And they think that, you know, through gifts and like mail... I took them straight to, like, a thrift store, 'cause *I'm* not gonna wear those. (Prism, sec. 50-54)

Prism's decision was clear-cut. There was no chance that they would ever put on those fuzzy boots. Their remarks about people – even family members – who *don't really care about what your actual interest are* speaks to cultural assumptions that perpetuate gender stereotypes. Prism is not the only participant who included the subject of gift-giving as a perceived strategy for the shaping of gender expression of someone who identifies as TgNCi.

Applied/Symmetrical

Karen was assigned the male sex at birth. Karen prefers she/her/hers pronouns and identifies as a woman, but lives as a man. She is married, has two grown daughters, and is retired from a career with a telecommunications company, where she established a reputation as the go-to person for getting inter-departmental favors, due to her habit of informal chatting and relationship-building. When something "couldn't be done," Karen was contacted, and she would phone a friend in the department from which help was needed.

Karen described an incident sometime before she was five, when she told her mother that she was going to ask Santa for a doll. She stated that this exchange was the "first time I realized that there was, uh, kind of a code of behavior between boys and

girls” (L 15-16). Karen’s mother explained that boys don’t play with dolls, and Karen replied, “Well Santa will understand” (L 20). She learned early in life to hide her longings.

Like other participants, Karen talked of being singled out for teasing by her friends, as demonstrated in the analysis of the story of Karen’s Bewilderment. It is within the overarching cultural context that peers saw fit to police Karen’s ways of interacting, ways of representing, and ways of being.

Karen’s Bewilderment. I guess it was / around / second or third grade,

I was startin’ to get picked on by the other students...

I remember that uh / they would kid me,

‘You run like a girl.’ (Karen, sec. 15)

Karen establishes the sense of time as approximately (*around*) second or third grade. She refers to *startin’* to get picked on, indicating that she is trying to pinpoint the beginning of something that continued. She indicates twice that it was more than one students, *other students* and *they*. She defines her classmates’ criticism as kidding. She does not say *made fun of me*, or *ridiculed me*, but distances herself from harshness through the use of an equalizing term, indicative of joking among equals, as though it might be too painful to admit her outsider status. They ridiculed her masculinity: *You run like a girl*. This established disparate interpersonal distance, as they placed her outside the realm of boys, and outside the realm of girls.

And um, I didn't know how /

Boys ran and girls ran,

But I did kind of watch the boys

And try to emulate the way they were / running.

And uh, that was 3rd grade... (Karen, sec. 15)

Karen says she *didn't know* the difference between how *boys ran and girls ran*.

Perceptually, she couldn't tell. Her strategy of correction was to watch the boys and try to replicate features of how they ran. (She employed this same strategy in high school by trying to replicate masculine ways of talking, and vocal tone).

I did not know what I was doin' wrong.

I did not know what might be /

How I was behaving

To always have kids pick on me. (Karen, sec. 15)

Karen repeats the phrase, "I did not know," twice. She accepted her peers' opinions, believed their criticisms, accepting that she was doing something wrong, and understanding herself as an outsider. Her peers established an interpersonal distance of removal, and she understood that as well. However, Karen also defines the issue as behavioral, an indication that she felt she would be able to do something to solve her problem through behavioral changes. She did not yet conceive of the perceptual space of gender identity.

And I remember
One of the girls in class,
And this was third, fourth grade again,
Probably fourth grade,
She was introducing a new student
And she came around to me and said,
'Yeah. This is [male name] the [inaudible].
U, he, he, he's uh,
He dresses like a boy,
But he's really a girl.'
And I could not figure out what I was doing,
You know, t' get that. (Karen, sec. 14-16)

Karen continues (*and*) with an account of a specific incident that took place in fourth grade (one year later than the previous example). *One of the girls in class* was introducing a new student. Not only was Karen the object of the girl's ridicule, but she also had no chance to make friends with the new student. Her classmate's introduction included both poles of a binary system of gender, boy/girl, describing Karen as not belonging to either perceptual space, a human mismatch of clothing and behavior (*dresses like a boy...really a girl*), connecting Karen with a perceptual space within which what one sees can't be trusted as real. Therefore, Karen can't be trusted. Her peers inscribed an outsider status around her, and kept her in that space. Karen's bewilderment

indicates her desire to do things differently, a belief that if she could accomplish that she would be accepted, and also a sense of aloneness, left to deal with her situation without a single advocate.

Karen invites classmates to take up the identities of gender experts. She is powerless against a troupe of peers, and seeks to make whatever connection she can. Classmates invite Karen to take up the role of social outcast, and keep her there through continuous ridicule. No teacher or other authority figure was part of her story. She focused on the perceptual space of aloneness and bewilderment, and interpersonal distance within the temporal space (Karen's sense of time) from second to fourth grades.

Examples from other participants. Narrative segments from Heidi, Micah, and Dingo are included in this section. Heidi recalls being in high school, and the policing of peers.

I always had these tendencies, but I've // got uh / policed, I guess is the word and um, you know, I just naturally sat down in class at my desk with my legs crossed in a female way. And actually, I'd even wrap my ankle, you know, in a *double* cross, you know. I got pointed out for that. I got pointed out for / using my hands while talking, you know. (Heidi, sec. 82)

Micah describes a situation during his undergraduate years at a large Midwestern university, where other students caused him to fall while riding his bike through campus.

Um as far as gender, lots and lots of gender work there. Um I / used to get harassed *very badly*. Um I liked to ride my bike through Greektown. Which is

unfortunate on [university]'s campus. Um / to the point where I actually had people like jab sticks between my tires and flip me off my bike, and I had to go to the hospital and yeah. Just stuff like that. So there were, there were lots of gender identity – figuring out, OK, what's the healthy balance, you know? OK. If you *know* this is just gonna *keep happening*, do ya **keep riding** your bike through Greektown? Or do ya *not*? Right? Tryin' to, tryin' to move through some of those stories and align with people, I'd be like, "Well all right. If you lived in, if you lived on this side of town, then you don't have to worry about that. Right?" Is that the right thing to do? That type of stuff, *lots* of those questions surfaced there, as far as *how do you* get along... How *do* you get along when people are not necessarily wanting to belong with *you*? Right? Like, "Look. I'm willing to bend. Are you willing to bend? And if so, what does it look like? Because what are we / what are we *most* after? Are we after / love and compassion and mercy? 'Cause if we're not, then let's just be up front about it!" Right? "So if that's not what we're about, then no. I will just never ride my bike through Greektown again, right? If we *are*, and you're gonna say, 'You can ride your bike through Greektown, but don't do it on a Friday night when I'm drunk, because then I'll probably knock you off your bike again' *great!* I can live with that, too! Let's just figure out what our *rules* are!" So *that* type of complement, uh, lots and lots of that work goin' on when I was at [university]. Um not very / some pockets of tolerance, some not. So that was a, that was a not so great story. (Micah, sec. 383-384)

Throughout his narratives, Micah did not waver in the owning of his own temporal and perceptual spaces, and in deliberately seeking to navigate the best possible interpersonal distances. Here, he describes his dilemma, as he recalls the harassment encountered on his rides through Greektown. In this example, Micah describes possible solutions to the problem from the past. He could simply not ride through Greektown. Or he could work out an agreement with the bullies about when he could safely ride there, and when he could not. Micah's narratives demonstrate a lifelong pattern of negotiation and, whenever possible, collaboration. This segment demonstrates those relational capabilities, along with a realistic perspective that is willing to work with limitations, whether those are his or someone else's.

Dingo describes zir strategies for fending off bullying.

Um, but luckily I've always been pretty bright, so when it came to school I was very, very good at, um, either keeping my isolation or, um, if anyone tried to pick on me I was, I learned very, very quickly, um ... if you will, and take what they would say about me and turn it back onto them. I don't have any specific examples, but I just have a lot of memories of like if someone would try to pick on me I would do this, and then no one would pick on me, and so I would just like / I learned this defense mechanism of, if someone is being mean to me, all I have to do is, like be mean back. Right? Um / which, uh, is kind of interesting phenomenon. Um, but yeah. But yeah, um all the boys would play sports and I would not. We would play house on the playground. I got to kiss the girls. So that

was a good balance, right? And they're like, [whispering] "Wow, how did you get to kiss the girls?" I was like, "'Cause I played house..." Ummm "I know what I'm doing." Ummm anyway, so yeah. Um that was up until I was 8 years old, and then I moved. (Dingo, sec. 37)

Dingo learned early in life to use zir mind, because ze was small in stature, and for many years the shortest in zir class at school. Being able to easily out-think peers, and sometimes teachers, served as protection, but did not always serve to endear Dingo to others.

Synthesis

In this chapter I presented data to address the second sub-question of this dissertation: How do participants describe gender identity work when they encounter structural and personal violence? Through CDA I deconstructed participants' experiences with structural and personal violence as four contexts of oppression. Whether oppression was experienced at the greatest interpersonal distances (Implied/Indirect; Implied/Direct), or the closest interpersonal distances (Applied/Asymmetrical; Applied/Symmetrical), oppression served as a mechanism to pressure the participant to conform to societal gender stereotypes. But the application of oppression resulted in suppression of the expression of gender identity, rather than an individual's conforming with narrow gender expectations.

Oppressive cultural belief systems permitted the following acts toward participants: ostracism; bullying and physical violence; public criticism that heightened

personal visibility; and misidentification of gender identity, due to cultural illiteracy of gender identity and gender expression. The outcomes for the research participants in all four contexts of oppression were related to performance of a socially acceptable, false representation of gender (*gender suppression*), and reliance on other coping and safety strategies, such as withdrawal.

I also demonstrated that in each of the four contexts of oppression and for varying reasons, participants stopped what they were doing. Tools of CDA illuminated the presence of dominant Discourses, and the exertion of privilege to knowingly, or unknowingly oppress participants, withholding valuable social goods. Oppression took the form of cultural messaging, derogatory comments or actions in the presence of participants, the exertion of power by someone in authority, and policing by peers. Participants responded to these restrictions of social goods by interrupting their own agency in regard to the expression of gender identity. I use the term, *interrupted agency*, to describe the desire to act, or automatic acting as arising from the normal expression of one's gender identity, when that action is stopped by the TgNCi individual as a response to a perceived, or actual threat in an oppressive context. Throughout the interviews, participants indicated that after repeated, or severe oppressive incidents, they withdrew socially. This insight holds implications for the onset of mental and physical illness among TgNCi people, and should be noted by medical professionals, psychologists, counselors, and others who provide health and wellness services to TgNCi individuals.

As previously mentioned, the gender identity work of TgNCi individuals comprises multiple sites of contestation, where politically charged ideologies and individual agency intersected. Such intersections became visible through narratives that revealed juxtapositions of sense of time, perceptual space, and interpersonal distances, where Discourses – dominant belief systems or ideologies led to the oppression of TgNCi individuals, who responded with suppression, thereby interrupting their own agency in gender expression. But it was also clear to me that many participants had moved beyond the threats of oppression to embrace the experience and knowledge of their gender identity, and to express it.

Driven by the desire for the kind of social and personal visibility that most people take for granted, these individuals seemed to take strides in that direction. Thus, coexisting with oppression there also exists the possibility of resistance, or interrupting contexts of oppression through gender expression that is aligned with the TgNCi person's identity. In Chapter 5, I explore the third category from content analysis, visibility, as I deconstruct aspects of gender identity work explained through participants' narratives of meaningful objects. Through MDA I demonstrate the roles of material possessions in gender expression.

Chapter 5: Visibility

In Chapter 1 I referred to Pahl and Rowsell's (2010) description of identities as tightly connected with material culture, and as possessing multiple, layered meanings. In this chapter, I introduce material objects as players in gender identity work, increasing the complexity and depth of analysis, and leading to greater understanding of the roles of artifacts in gender identity work. The purpose of Chapter 5 is to address the third sub-question: How do participants represent and describe their relationships with material objects in gender identity work? I relied on Scollon and Scollon's (2014) approach to MDA to examine the relationships between narratives and artifacts in regard to three aspects: indexicality, dialogicality, and selection, as described in Chapter 2. Through analysis of narratives of the artifacts, it became clear that each item served a collaborative function with its participant-owner, as narrated in I-2. One function was as a *tool of visibility*, meaning that through an artifact, the participant could recognize and affirm the self, or that ownership of the artifact represented others' validation of the participant. Another function was as *messenger*, meaning that an artifact served as bearer or bringer of a message that served as inspiration, or as an important reminder of the individual's value, purpose, and significance. The final function was as *lamination*.¹⁶ For the purposes

¹⁶ Wohlwend (2007) defines lamination as, "The production of layered, socially constructed spaces in human interaction" (p. 73). She asserts, "In order to legitimate particular identity enactments for ourselves and others, we laminate more distant discourses to present times and spaces. In turn, lamination strengthens and stabilizes our identity position by repeating themes across layers" (Wohlwend, 2007, p. 74).

of this research, I consider lamination as embodied layering in that the participant applied in some way one or more artifacts to the body so that together, participant and artifact collaborated in a kind of collective agency in gender expression that resulted in something different than the participant could accomplish alone.

This chapter is divided into four sections. In the first section I present an overview of the artifacts. The remaining three sections correspond to the three primary functions of artifacts: *tools of visibility, messengers, and laminations*. Each function represents a clear purpose for the artifact as narrated by the participant, separate and distinct from the other two functions. While any of the artifacts could potentially serve more than one function, my analysis focused on one primary function for each artifact, as described by a participant in a narrative segment, wherein each artifact represented a single purpose in the story. In each section, I represent analysis with examples from participants' narratives, accompanied by a photograph of the artifact. Chapter 5 closes with a final section of conclusions.

It is important to remember that the images are only representations. They are not the artifacts themselves. The images are representations of representations (narratives recorded in the presence of the artifacts), of memories (reconstructions) of events that lie in the past and which can never be repeated. Furthermore, after each I-2, I brought images to my office, where I uploaded them into my computer, and created a backup file on an external disk, each step removing an image from the moment of its capture in I-2. Finally, although I minimally manipulated the images through cropping and adjusting

white balance and contrast, in order to make the objects more visible within a frame, the entire context that lay outside of the frame during I-2 is not shown. As such, the images themselves are crude representations of moments from a brief span of time, in the context of a university conference room.

Overview of Artifacts

In aggregate, participants brought more than 60 artifacts to I-2. For organizational purposes, I grouped artifacts into 13 categories. Some category titles are self-explanatory, but a few require brief explanation. Artwork includes both body art and items that hang on the wall. Personal records include not only official documents (e.g., transition letters from medical professionals), but also documents highlighted by participants as marking the record of their gender identity journey. Tributes included items awarded by organizations for participants' advocacy work or other achievement, and also specially created recognition from a family member. Table 10 below, shows artifacts grouped by categories.

Table 10.

Categories and artifacts.

Category	Items	Items (#)
Artwork	Tattoo, framed calligraphy, framed greeting card, framed Serenity Prayer	4
Books	<i>Welcome to Nightvale; Cross-Dressing, Sex, and Gender; Transsexuals: Candid Answers to Private Questions; Life Cycle Library</i> (boxed set from 1960s); <i>The Buddha Walks Into a Bar</i> (placeholder for unavailable library book, <i>The Way of Tenderness: Awakening Through Race, Sexuality, and Gender</i>)	5
Clothing	GISHWHES shirt; two pairs of jeans: one gender neutral and one skinny; Xi Tau (woman's Chinese traditional dress) and jacket; three dresses: gray, black, red, and green with sequins; fleece-lined tights; binder; lacy bra; soccer shirt; tie-dye jeans with flowered shirt (counted as one item)	13
Cosmetics	Nail polish; stage makeup kit; Manscaper and Beard Balm (counted as one item)	3
Household Items	Dr. Seuss mug, coffee coaster, pillow	3
Jewelry & Accessories	Aviator sunglasses, earrings, faux zebra heels, mark of chaos necklace, typewriter key necklace, Mizzou pin, oblate pin, professional pin, wristwatch, breast prostheses	10
Personal Records	Heraldry, "son" birthday card, adoption check, bag drawing, birthday card from colleagues, greeting card in blue envelope, hand written diary, set of transition letters	7
Photographs	Dog, rings, yearbook, Eureka Springs visit, Halloween, head shot	6
Prescriptions	Estradiol tablet and testosterone package insert	2
Touchstone	Glass bead, Mardi Gras doubloon, and muselet cap	3
Tributes	Homemade sign, necklace, music box, and trophy	4

Category	Items	Items (#)
Videos	<i>Normal</i> , and <i>What Sex am I?</i>	2
Weapon	Switchblade	1
Total Items		63

This table illustrates that clothing was the most common article brought by participants, representing roughly 22% of the artifact total. Jewelry and accessories were the second most popular category, at 16% of the artifact total. Personal records (11%) was closely followed by photographs (10%). Books (8%) preceded artwork and tributes (each of which stood for 6% of the total). Touchstones, cosmetics, and household items each held equal weight, at 5%, collectively representing 15% of the total. Prescriptions and videos were next to last, for 3% of the total. Finally, the weapon stood alone as a single object, representing 1% of the total number of artifacts. From this birds eye view of the collection I now turn to an examination of artifacts organized by age group, as represented in Table 11.

Table 11.

Artifacts by age group.

Age Group	Category	Items	Items (#)
60+ (3 participants)	Household Items	Coffee coaster, pillow	2
	Personal Record	Set of transition letters	1
	Photographs	Eureka Springs trip, Halloween, head shot	3
	Tribute	Music box, trophy	2
<i>(Age Group Total)</i>			8

Age Group	Category	Items	Items (#)
46 - 59 (4 participants)	Artwork	Framed greeting card, framed Serenity Prayer	2
	Books	<i>Cross-Dressing, Sex, and Gender; Life Cycle Library</i> (set), <i>Transsexuals: Candid Answers to Private Questions</i>	3
	Clothing	Binder, green sequin dress, lacy bra, soccer shirt, tie-dye jeans and flowered shirt	5
	Jewelry & accessories	Mizzou pin, oblate pin, professional pin, breast prostheses, wristwatch	5
	Personal record	"Son" birthday card, adoption check, bag drawing, birthday card - colleagues, greeting card - blue envelope, hand written diary	6
	Photographs	rings, yearbook	2
	Prescription	Estradiol tablet, testosterone package insert	2
	Touchstones	Glass bead, Mardi Gras doubloon, muselet cap	3
	Tributes	Homemade sign, necklace	2
	Videos	<i>Normal</i> , and <i>What Sex am I?</i>	2
		<i>(Age Group Total)</i>	32
31 - 45 (2 participants)	Clothing	Black dress; gray and red dresses; fleece lined tights; skinny jeans	4
	Jewelry & accessories	Typewriter key necklace	1
	Photograph	Dog	1
		<i>(Age Group Total)</i>	6

Age Group	Category	Items	Items (#)
18 - 30 (4 participants)	Artwork	Body tattoo, framed calligraphy	2
	Books	<i>Welcome to Nightvale</i> and <i>The Buddha Walks Into a Bar</i> (placeholder for unavailable library book, <i>The Way of Tenderness: Awakening Through Race, Sexuality, and Gender</i>)	2
	Clothing	GISHWHES shirt, gender neutral jeans, Xi Tau (Chinese woman's traditional dress) and jacket	3
	Cosmetics	Nail polish, stage makeup kit, Manscaper and Beard Balm	3
	Household Items	Dr. Seuss mug	1
	Jewelry & accessories	Aviator sunglasses, earrings, faux zebra heels, mark of chaos necklace	4
	Personal Record	Heraldry	1
	Weapon	Switchblade	1
<i>(Age Group Total)</i>			<i>17</i>
Total items			63

Participants concretely explained the usefulness, and the meanings of each of their artifacts. Here, I offer those general descriptions as relevant to each age group. The three participants in the 60 and older age group brought a combined total of eight artifacts, representing significant milestones of accomplishment, achievement in advocacy for transgender people, and visual confirmation of gender identity. The four participants in the 46 – 59 age group brought a combined total of 33 artifacts, representing personal education, touchstones of memory, demarcations of specific life events, love shared with family members, and transitions of body and of appearance. The two participants in the 31 – 45 age group brought a combined total of six artifacts, representing the significance of appearing outwardly as they experience themselves inwardly, and the support of a

faithful dog. The four participants in the 18 – 30 age group brought artifacts representing self-nurturing, experimentation, self-protection, and belonging. It appears that across the generations, artifacts presented for I-2 ranged from traditional and straightforward in the 60 and older age group; to the more flamboyant, experimental, and playful in the 18 – 30 age group. This variation parallels the rapid increase of access to information across the decades from the 1950s to late 2016. Turning from participants' reports about their objects, in the next three sections of the chapter I explain artifacts according to the three functions that became clear during the processes of MDA: *tools of visibility, messengers, and laminations*.

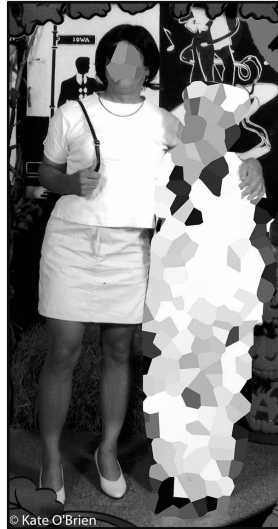
Tools of Visibility

During analysis, the theme of visibility was often mentioned in some form, indicating its salience for participants. Seeing the self, and being seen by others in ways that affirmed their gender expression was extremely important to participants. The examples of analysis in this section could equally have been drawn from artifacts brought by other participants, but for this section I have selected a variety of examples that clearly illustrate the dialogue between participant and artifact as tools of visibility.

Karen's Halloween picture. After many years of suppressing her desire to go out dressed as a woman, it was finally agreed between Karen and her wife that they would go out together on Halloween. Karen presented the image below as she spoke about that experience. (Image manipulated to protect identities of individuals shown).

Figure 2.

Karen's Halloween picture.



This image shows Karen (left) in feminine dress for her first time out in public as a woman. She stands with weight evenly distributed on both feet, holding the strap of a purse over her right shoulder.

Looking at it now / I, I don't like the way I look.

But um / uhhh but it was, oh, golly!

It was / I was *on cloud nine* that night!

I mean, I was,

I was bouncing off the walls I was so relieved!

Karen does not say she was excited to be going out dressed in women's clothing, or that she was happy, or that finally she got to do something she had wanted to do for a long time. She describes her experience as one of being *relieved*.

It was a *huge spring unwinding!*

It was so tight there, it was ready to *snap!* //

I told you that I was, you know,

cognitively I was falling apart.

I don't think I was that far away, looking back,

from a *breakdown* of some sort.

And uh / and / you know //

[wife] just wished I had more trouble

with the heels or something that night.

You know. I really didn't. Uh she uh, yeah.

I was // it was, it was just like I said it was.

Kinda like beating your head against the *wall* for *all your life*

and I stopped and was like,

“*WOW! This actually feels **good** different!*” (Karen, sec. 230-231)

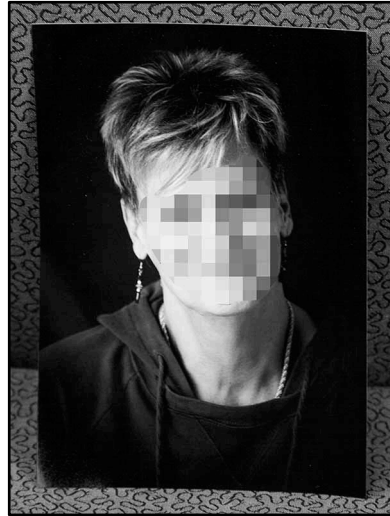
Karen spoke about going in public dressed as a woman, as a pivotal point in her narrative, after spending years in secrecy and suppression of her gender expression.

Those years led her to a point at which she sought medical help from a neurologist for cognitive impairment, as described elsewhere in her narrative. After testing, the neurologist diagnosed her with severe stress. It was at that point that she sought support from a psychologist who was skilled in work with people whose identities were TgNCi.

In the narrative segment presented above, Karen spoke using superlatives: *oh golly!, on cloud nine, bouncing off the walls, so relieved, a huge spring unwinding*. She spoke of this experience juxtaposed against the stress she had been feeling: *so tight, ready to snap!, cognitively falling apart*, and not far away from a breakdown. Quietly embedded in the midst of her talk about stress was the mention of her wife, who Karen described as wishing she *had more trouble with heels or something*. Karen announced with a smile, that she had no trouble at all walking in heels. And then, she continued with a final descriptor of her stress: *like beating your head against the wall for all your life*. Karen closes the segment with a statement of jubilation: *WOW! This actually feels good different!* Her experience clearly demonstrates resonant agency. She chose artifacts to represent herself as a woman on Halloween. Her response to the joining of those items with her body in representing her gender identity was one of unity, of being at home with, and within, herself. This picture shows Karen an image of herself that rings true.

Mimi's photo. As will become evident throughout her narrative segments that follow, gender expression that conformed with cultural expectations for a woman was extremely important for Mimi. After her transition, she was invited to participate in a photography fundraiser for a transgender advocacy organization. For her involvement, the photographer gave her a copy of the black and white photograph of her that was displayed in a gallery show. She brought the image as one of the artifacts from her gender identity work.

Figure 3.

Mimi's Photograph

Mimi's photograph is a standard black and white headshot, with her head tilted in what a photographer would recognize as a feminine pose. She brought the image to I-2 in an archival photo sleeve, not in a frame. This might have meant that she did not regularly display this image at home, where she lived with her sons, and that it was something she had to seek out when she wanted to look at it. She explained the significance of the image in her gender identity work.

So getting this and seeing how I looked,
it was really a good validation
on who I am and how I perceive myself...

Mimi could recognize herself in this image. *Getting* the image, which she was given by the photographer, and *seeing how I looked*, gave her *really a good validation*. That validation had to do with *who I am* and also with *how I perceive myself*. This

photograph resonated with Mimi's self knowledge. It spoke in a confirmatory way about her identity and gender expression. She went on to tell why it was so significant.

I always had the impression
if I could never // assimilate
and *look*, maybe at least 50% female,
I probably would have never made the transition.
'Cause it's more important for me to assimilate
than it was to / for the appearance. You gotta do both.
And for me it's, that's just my uh philosophy.

Uninterested in creating a public spectacle, Mimi preferred a low-conflict life.

What aligned with her thinking was that if she could not assimilate as a woman through her outward appearance, then she *probably would never have made the transition*.

If I just couldn't pull it off,
if I looked just too male, too masculine,
I just would have to uh deal with it,
suppress it, and just let it uh *be* there.
It would've been too hard of a fight
to uh, for me, personally.

The idea of thinking beforehand about whether or not she would be able to assimilate came up several times in Mimi's narratives. Before her physical transition, she weighed the options. If she couldn't assimilate as a woman, she decided she would not

undergo the change. Relationships are of primary importance to Mimi, and she did not want ongoing conflict: *It would've been too hard of a fight.*

part of my makeup um

am I givin' the wrong *signal* to other people

who need to *know* about transgender people?

Mimi cares deeply about how she represents herself and other transgender people.

Gender expression is a primary concern. She wants to be an accepted ambassador within cultural spaces unfriendly to transgender people. She spoke elsewhere about taking opportunities to talk with other people her age about her transgender identity. Her demeanor is warm and invites genuine regard from others. Mimi is concerned about not *givin' the wrong signal to other people who need to know about transgender people.*

And it could be twofold.

I could, they could take it as /

this person doesn't look female, but identifies as female.

That would be *great* if they *could*.

But at this point in society, they don't.

She takes a moment to imagine one possible outcome, which would be that all expressions of gender would be acceptable to the extent others would allow each individual to identify the self. Mimi recognizes that this is unlikely, even rare. *At this point in society, they don't* recognize people based on how others identify themselves. Society still identifies people based on categories and stereotypes.

So if I become a *negative*, because I can't look female enough,
then I don't want *that* to happen either...

And uh / so / I would take that,
unless society would change drastically before I die,
I would, if I look too masculine,
I wouldn't uh wouldn't've done it.

Mimi wanted all along to bring a deservedly good name to transgender people, through the way that she represented herself as a transgender person. She did not want to be an impediment, or the caricature that broader cultural stereotypes would assign her, if she didn't appear to conform to acceptable standards of appearance. If she had felt that she couldn't *look female enough*, then she would not have wanted to make the physical transition. It was significant that Mimi stated her concerns time after time, highlighting her concerns not only for her own wellbeing, but also about making a culturally acceptable presentation for those unfamiliar with TgNCi people.

So I was fortunate enough to have, uh, fair features and uh so it *worked*...
And once again, this was a validation thing,
because I'm part *of* a project,
and to be displayed in an art gallery, a fundraiser,
and that supported [organization's name],
um / I did it and uh / so that was uh /
my hair was somewhat highlighted I see there...

Looking at the photo connects her directly with *validation*. She sees herself in the image. Linked to the photo was a *project*. Her image was displayed in *an art gallery*, and was involved in a *fundraiser* to support an organization. Thus, it served a purpose for social good. She was part of an important public recognition of the transgender community. That validation is attestation to her community representation, which engenders Mimi's resonant agency. She engaged in a project, and in the end, saw herself.

Yeah. I really like that look with all the highlights in my hair. (Mimi, sec. 440-442)

So uh // if this object could speak,

um it would probably say,

“Job well done, because you look *pretty darn good* there!”

So, “You did a good job in presenting yourself!”

And yet I can tell by the smile that uh

it was pleasing to be // in that setting. (Mimi, sec. 445)

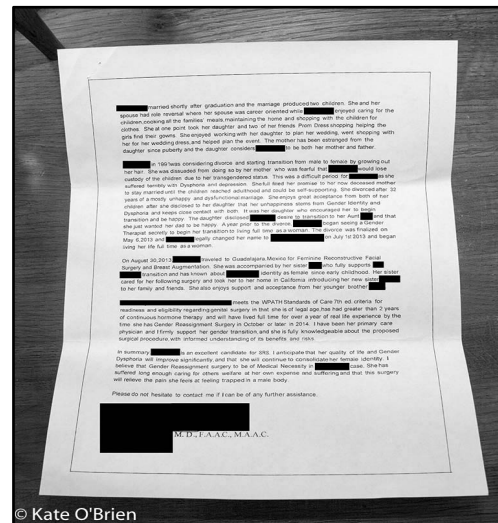
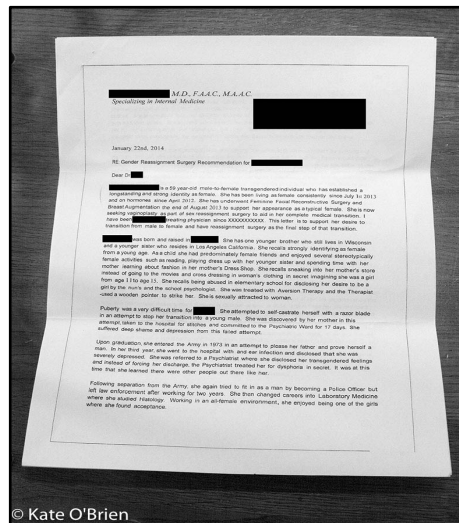
Mimi is proud of her image in the photograph. She is able to enjoy the *highlights in my hair*, and to compliment her own appearance, and her accomplishment in self-presentation. Perhaps most important of all, Mimi was able to engage in the experience as an individual wholly united, inwardly and outwardly, with her gender identity.

Victoria's letters. As we spoke during I-2, Victoria hinted that she hadn't selected artifacts from her gender identity work. But she went to her desk and opened the file drawer. She riffled through the folders and pulled out the collection of letters written

on her behalf for gender confirmation surgery. Because she worked in a medical field, and was familiar with the standards of care and medical documentation, she actually authored the letter that was adopted by her physician, and proudly spoke of how much that doctor liked what she wrote.

Figure 4.

Victoria's gender confirmation surgery referral letter (one of six)



The two images represent a single letter, page one and page two, provided by her doctor, to support Victoria's surgeries that would align her gender and her sex. There are additional letters in the collection of her artifacts from other medical professionals, which were required to substantiate her treatment. All of the letters represent authority, with professionals' credentials, detailed language about why Victoria's surgery was necessary, diagnoses, and other medical (or psychological) terminology necessary for her physical transition. Experts stood behind her in her pursuit of this surgery. I asked Victoria what the letters meant to her.

It's / it was my *transition*.

All the things that went *into* it.

That I, I *did* those things.

And I went to therapy.

I went to the doctors.

Um did the hormone therapy.

I changed / legally changed my name.

Um / and announced to the whole *world* July 1st, 2013,

that I was forever more gonna be [first name, last name]. (Victoria, sec. 318-320)

Victoria's collection of letters marks the culmination of a lifetime of being forced into an incorrect gender identity, beginning with primary caretakers, and school personnel. Her body was sexed at birth by the doctor, and later by her parents who approved the surgical alteration of female elements in her abdomen. She says the letters *are my transition*. At last she accomplished the alignment of her body with her gender identity. Victoria's agency was demonstrated through material processes as she *went to* therapy and to doctors; *did* the hormone therapy; *legally changed* her name; and finally, *announced to the world* who she was. The letters constitute evidence of her agency, and the accomplishment of a lifetime: living every day being able to recognize herself, and being recognized by others. Victoria's interviews were conducted in her home. Her pride and satisfaction were evident, as she pointed out more than once, in both of the interviews, certifications on which her feminine name was boldly printed. Certificates on

her walls display her feminine name on professional credentials. Victoria is able to read her correct identity – the one she knew all along – when she stops (as she frequently does) to gaze at those documents. Her letters are evidence of her agency, and the professional certifications stand as records of her completed work.

Sidonie’s nail polish. Sidonie spoke about playing with gender, which they described as, “experimenting with my comfort of different gender expressions, um or like experimenting with gender expressions outside of, like / this is hetero *norm*” (Sidonie, sec. 187). They explained that the term, play, is one they use purposefully, because they are engaged in a discovery process. Sidonie brought to I-2 a bottle of bright blue nail polish that they described as significant in their gender identity work.

And so I think the first thing that I think of is /

like wearing nail polish.

Like, I only recently started doing that again,

and I recently started doing that again, I think,

because now wearing nail polish

is no longer a / signal of being a woman.

Now because of, like where I am with my gender identity,

how I am with my presentation,

get to have that both/and.

Whereas in Chapter 4, I deconstructed Sidonie’s dilemma within their culture of origin, here, they narrate their break from oppressive constraints, *because now wearing*

nail polish is no longer a signal of being a woman. Sidonie has re-situated in regard to dominant Discourses, embracing their gender identity through presenting in a variety of gendered ways. They can enjoy a spectrum of presentation styles.

I think the word, play, for me is indicative of like,
it's like few boundaries, so like creation, exploration.

So playing with gender for me is like /
not having my gender tied down.

Not having it grounded.

Um by either like my expectations
or other people's expectations,
and instead, just like // trying to go about my life
in a way that like lets my gender create itself.

Um / and lets my body express itself /
in the core sense of its being.

And the core sense of its being is / pretty fluid.

It's a / mix of masculine and feminine. (Sidonie, sec. 187-190).

Sidonie describes what playing with gender means to them: *creation, exploration, not having my gender tied down, or grounded* in culture's, or their own, expectations.

They can experiment with fluid gender and self-expression. Allowing their gender to *create itself* is Sidonie's daily practice. They introduced their nail polish as part of that work.

Figure 5.

Sidonie's Nail Polish.



This is nail polish! Sinful Colors Brands, uh *Beautiful Bright Blue!*

Um // so I got this / when I was / like *panicking*, almost. I don't know...

And like started to have sort of a lot of feelings

and like *anxiety* about what was coming up.

Ummmm / and just like nervousness.

Um and just // just like // *really*

sssssstrangely and surprisingly enough,

in my brain it was like,

oh, you could solve all of this by painting your nails, obviously.

So I was like, *OK*. [laughs]

Sidonie experiences anxiety, and somehow goes back to something that might have been a familiar practice earlier in their life, when they got ready for a big occasion.

In this circumstance, Sidonie was thinking about being in grad school and feeling nervous. They immediately latched onto the idea of painting their nails as a solution, and they also appreciated the irony of that idea.

So I went to a Walgreens...

And I was like trying to find the nail polish,

and also just like really panicking,

'cause I haven't really walked down

and looked for anything for myself in the like, air quotes, beauty aisles.

Um I mean // *really* since / probably like high school,

when I *had* to do that, or when I was like *expected* to do that in ways.

Ummm / just like really nervous,

and I didn't know what I was doing...

And so I // [laughs] / and it was just like a whole thing.

So I went to like a very small section,

kind of like near the front of like the Walgreens,

where they have, you know, it'll just be like here's *Burts Bees*,

and like the cheap nail polish. So like yeah.

So I sat down there and I started like looking at,

and playing with, all the bottles and the colors...

In Walgreens, Sidonie notices that a former familiar practice, buying nail polish, now seems unfamiliar. They also aren't prepared to pay a lot of money for a bottle of

polish, and so they locate the less expensive stock, and *sit down* on the floor to look.

They play with *all the bottles and the colors*.

So I like, I got this like bright blue color that I brought today...

I like, felt // both *confused* and like *weirdly satisfied* about it?

Ummm so I like went home,

like I did my stuff at the house for the day,

and I like sat down in the evening and painted my nails...

So when I like put it on my nails it was rough.

‘Cause I hadn’t done this for a long time.

So I had to just like / you know,

like I was coloring outside the lines, so to speak!...

This narrative unfolded at a deliberate pace. Sidonie purchased the polish, with mixed feelings of *confused* and *weirdly satisfied*. They described every step of the day: buying the nail polish, going home, doing *stuff at the house*. Finally, they painted their nails, and it wasn’t easy. They were out of practice.

Um / but I remember after it was done,

like the next day, I woke up and I looked at them

and I was like, “All right, this is cool!”

They were like, like really shiny, and really smooth,

and like, I liked the bold blue, and it coordinated,

‘cause I had this, like / I chose this,

I had this like bright yellow button-down that has,
it's kind of like a plaid pattern with like um red and blue / overlay to it.

It's really a nice shirt. So I wore that to my first day.

And it looked *nice*,

because the polish that I chose coordinated with the shirt,

which I was all down for, and into...

Um // but yeah.

I just like remember putting this on

and like waking up the next morning

and like feeling like very confident and comfortable with it!

Sidonie woke up the next morning and clearly liked the result. They spoke about the texture, *really shiny and really smooth*; the color, *the bold blue*; and the fact that the nail polish coordinated with a stripe in their favorite plaid shirt. *It looked nice*. Sidonie experienced resonant agency, as the polish, their mood, and the clothing coalesced into a single coordinated presence, *which I was all down for, and into*. Umm / which is like / *awfully unexpected* for me. They wore this for their first day of graduate school, and felt *confident and comfortable*. Sidonie explained what might have shifted.

Because my *past* experiences with like // nail color,

have been very much about um / you know,

you have to put this on to be female.

And / a lot more about *that*

and about having to like conform to // femininity and expectations

from like my assumptions of being a woman.

And nothing about just / um //

appreciating and loving myself.

Which I think is where it stemmed from this time

was that like,

just my comfort with wearing that with my gender identity.

Through that I was able to just really appreciate the experience /

in a way that I've never been able to like appreciate the experience before. //

Yeahhh. So that's my nail polish.

Sidonie pushed beyond their earlier sense of societal restriction, and took ownership of social goods, such as assigning nail polish a role in their gender expression. They explain that in the past they were expected to conform to correct social conventions of femininity. Whereas, in the present, they chose nail polish from *appreciating and loving myself*. Their motivation came from within. And resulted in a fresh visibility of gender expression through turning a trope of femininity (nail polish) into something they blended into their genderqueer expression.

Insights. Participants' artifacts as tools of visibility allow each individual to see the self in a confirming way. Karen is able to revisit the complete joy of her first night out, at a time when she was ready to snap, and cognitively falling apart. Mimi experiences contentment and happiness when she looks at her photograph, having met her own expectations of herself as a woman. Victoria has her letters, which tell her that finally the horror of her earlier life is over. She has her correct identity at last. Sidonie turned a trope into treasure, re-envisioning nail polish as an act of creating her gender. Tools of visibility serve to confirm, to direct, and to give permission for participants to express their genders openly.

Messengers

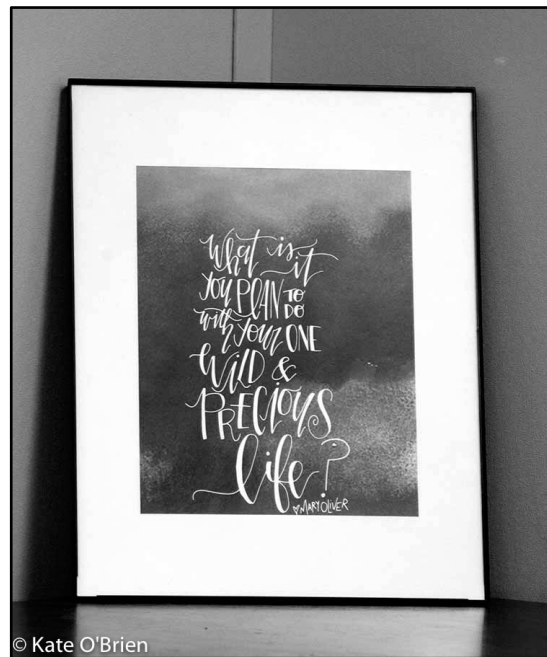
Messengers speak to the participant, enabling them in turn, to speak to themselves. They serve as reminders of the affection, encouragement, and support of others, and of their own successes. They are collaborators in inspiration for gender identity work.

Prism's frame. Prism identifies as non-binary and prefers the personal pronouns they/them/theirs. Prism said that they were fairly well sheltered up to the age of 14 or 15. "I was really silly as a kid, I was talkative, I was loud, *obnoxious*" (Prism, sec. 7). Also, "I was fairly awkward in my growth and I didn't become mature until I was like 16 or 17. It was kind of embarrassing" (Prism, sec. 12). During the two interviews, Prism used the phrase, "they kind of save your life a little" to describe two athletic mentors who cared for them following their parents' divorce, and later, a teacher, who let Prism use spaces

around the classroom to think, to cry, and to process a classmate's death. Prism attended a private, conservative university for undergraduate education, where they benefited from the support of two college mentors. For graduation, those mentors gave Prism the framed saying, below, which Prism referred to in I-2 as a *frame*.

Figure 6.

Prism's Frame: "What is it you plan to do with your one wild and precious life?"



Um / it, it really meant a lot to me to get this frame,
 because, um like [woman mentor] picked the quote, she picked the colors.
 Um // I guess the size, you know, um
 and she gave it to me as a graduation present. (Prism, sec. 234)

Prism establishes the temporal space of their frame as a graduation gift from their woman mentor, and emphasizes the preciousness of the gift through remarking about the

mentor's active engagement in selecting it: *she picked the quote, the colors, the size*, and then after all those aspects were satisfied, *gave it to me*. They described material processes of their mentor as directed toward Prism. The description shows the mentor as busily engaged in a flurry of activities, all of which focus toward Prism. Through that narrative, Prism captured the magnitude of their own experience of the gift in response to her mentor's actions.

Um and I think that was like really important and, um,

because [undergraduate university]

was such a significant part of me growing.

It was just like *everyone there* just embraced me,

even though it was like / it's *really conservative*,

but like / I guess // what I /

I kind of just stood up for myself and I was very,

like, I'm myself.

I don't want to be anything else.

And then people just respected me for that,

which I think is really amazing,

but // I don't know. (Prism, sec. 235)

Prism states that their undergraduate university experience was *such an important part of me growing*, and then explains the reasons why. They were *embraced* by others, even though their gender identity is non-binary, in the midst of a *really conservative*

milieu. Prism then takes some of the credit, as indicated by the word, *but*. That conjunction shifts away from praise of the university and directs Prism's talk toward crediting their self-representation, embracing their own material processes: *I just kind of stood up for myself, I'm myself, I don't want to be anything else*. Prism discovered that in representing their identity outwardly, standing up, they were respected for that by others. During the temporal space of undergraduate years, Prism found a way to present their own perceptual space within the context of what is often thought to be hostile perceptual space for TgNCi people, *and then people just respected me for that*. They found that not just interesting, or fascinating, but *really amazing*. Then Prism pivots using the word, *but* again. This time, they back away from previous statements.

Like, for me being like not in the queer community for very *long*,
it meant the world to like,
it / well she's not *that* much older,
but someone who's not a peer to accept who I am like they do.
Um so her, and my other mentor [man's name],
um theyyyy // they / they *supported* me. (Prism, sec. 235)

Prism enrolled in college recognizing that they were lesbian. Gradually, their gender identity began to clarify. At the time of entering the university, Prism was a newbie, *not in the queer community for very long*. Earlier life experiences with mentors who carried them through painful personal experiences meant that the mentor relationship was not only familiar, but was also important. Prism describes the

importance of the relationship with their undergraduate mentor as meaning *the world*.

Their mentor was somewhat near Prism's own age, but *not a peer*. To Prism, that meant that the mentor would be able to view things from a more mature, outsider perspective, and who would not *accept who I am like they [peers] do*. The mentor would be able to offer guidance from a different perspective. Finally, Prism mentions their other mentor, a male mentor. Prism concludes this segment referring three times to her mentors, first referring to them almost as a sigh, *theyyyy*, followed by a pause, and then *they*, followed by a second pause, and lastly, *they supported me*. Prism's general amazement that straight people would care and honor them reflects the exceptionality of positive feedback in their experience to date.

You know, like again,

I had a really abusive relationship.

And they, they knew that I was distracted.

They knew that I, you know,

I was going through a tough time.

And um / and afterwards,

they just saw my growth,

and they were, they were with me every step of the way. (Prism, sec. 235)

Prism describes the ways in which her mentors supported them. The mentors saw them in *a really abusive relationship*. They (spoken twice) *knew that I was distracted*, and that Prism *was going through a tough time*. The culmination of this description is

Prism's remark that *they just saw my growth*. In seeing Prism's growth, the mentors must also have communicated about that with them. Prism was aware of their presence (*they were* – stated twice) *with me every step of the way*. Prism's mentors joined with Prism in shared sense of time, offered encouragement and guidance from the perceptual space of mentors, and maintained supportive interpersonal closeness. Prism seems to feel that these mentors saw the best in them, and helped them to grow through difficult challenges.

So this frame / and this quote,

I love the quote with um,

“with your one wild and precious life.”

Um also [female mentor] knows

that I have a fairly, like, low self-esteem,

and so it's a nice reminder to say that,

like, my life is precious.

My life is precious to *her* and [male mentor]

and that / and it's *wild!*

You know, I've always been kind of like out there,

and um, and it's a nice reminder!

I feel like it's coming straight from *them*.

Um my life is wild and precious,

and what do I want to do with it?

That's amazing. (Prism, sec. 236)

It's not just any frame and not just any phrase. Prism says *this frame* and *this quote*. Prism then discusses the text within the frame and its special relevance for their *one* life. They discuss the interplay between the mentor's voice and the framed quotation. Prism mentions their *low self-esteem*, and the reminder – as thought uttered by the mentor – that their *life is precious*. Furthermore, Prism understands that their life is not just alluded to as *precious* within the framed quotation, but that they are cared for as *precious* by *both* mentors. Words spoken to Prism by the mentors are transposed onto the framed text, and are visually affixed to Prism's wall, where the words speak to them, reminding them to speak similarly to the self. Furthermore, through the quotation, Prism can read on the wall, every single day, the reminder that their own wildness links with *precious*, rather than existing as someone who doesn't belong. This gives them the courage to live in congruence with their identity, rather than allowing the self to remain hidden.

Prism's frame speaks for itself from a quotation. The quotation speaks for the spirit of Prism's relationship with their mentors, drawing from those two individuals' voices of encouragement, guidance, and support. Furthermore, this object brings past sense of time, perceptual space and interpersonal distances into the present as valued treasure, and solid evidence of past success to carry into the future. At the end of I-2, Prism looked at the final prompt, which asked participants to tell what the artifact would say to *them*.

I think it'll say,

“You are worthy.

I think you are worthy of whatever you think is best for your life.

I've // I've seen you worried,

I've seen you get down on yourself,

but no matter what, you are worthy.

And you have the freedom to choose"...

I / it's also, like,

I love that it came from [female mentor].

So like she's always telling me /

you know / like,

"You're, you're too down on yourself.

You've got this!

You know, you're wonderful, you're phenomenal."

I think it would probably say the same thing. (Prism, sec. 251)

In that moment of addressing the self as though Prism was the speaking object, Prism became their own mentor. The meaningful object, a piece of plastic and printed paper from a store shelf, was layered with storied richness of relationships and could serve Prism as a vehicle of resonant agency, for trying out a new voice, enabling Prism to see the self as *wild*, and *precious*.

Emma's watch. Emma explained that she always liked nice watches, and that she, "Spent ridiculous amounts of money on them." She considered wearing a good

watch to be a symbol of professionalism. She brought to I-2 the first women's watch she ever wore (Figure 7).

Figure 7.

Emma's Watch.



Emma described the heft and the weight of her watch as being significant, and said that even though it isn't a large item, she likes the feel of it. The watch was a gift from her mother, who has an almost identical watch of a different brand, but she was unable to find something of that same brand to give to Emma that looked like her watch.

But I / ... when I had come out to my folks,
um in our mother-daughter conversations since,
um I had expressed how much I,
I liked the watch that she always wore.

It was a gift to her, for her graduation from nursing school. (Emma, sec. 192)

Emma's mother's watch was a piece of jewelry that Emma admired. Since disclosing her gender identity to her mother, Emma and she have enjoyed many mother-daughter conversations. Emma explained that she had *expressed how much* she liked the watch that her mother always wore, and which had been a gift to her mother when she graduated from nursing school.

And I always liked to look at it.

It / appealed to the same sensibility

that, um // that I had always held

about how watches just / just grow.

They're / one of the cadre, so to speak,

of the accessories marking someone / professional in appearance. (Emma, sec.

192)

Emma's mother's watch appealed to Emma's own sense of *professional appearance*, of the presentation of self as competent and capable.

She knew I didn't have a, a women's watch,

so she got me this.

It was um, it was the first present

identifying my correct gender

that she'd ever given me, this watch...

it means a lot to me. (Emma, sec. 193)

Emma identifies this watch as *the first present identifying my correct gender that she'd ever given me*. The full acceptance and welcome that her mother extended to Emma as her daughter, instead of her son, are summed up in this gift.

I've always been really proud of my mother.

Most of my friend's mothers didn't work,

much less have a 4-year degree,

much less a career. /

And she always did...

she was always of the opinion

that women could and *should*

do what they can and what they want. (Emma, sec. 194)

Emma explains her pride in her mother, who worked when other mothers did not; who had a 4-year degree and a career, which most other mothers in their community did not. Emma was raised by a mother who believed that women *could and should do what they can and what they want*, a powerful message for children of any gender identity.

this watch symbolizes my relationship with my mother,

as her child,

and now as her daughter.

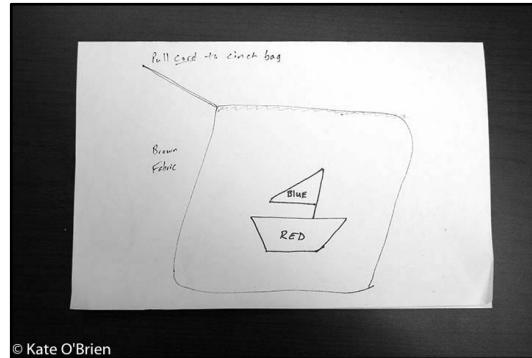
And uh / that's what this object is, and its significance to me. (Emma, sec. 194)

Emma's watch sums up her mother's full acceptance without reservation, of Emma as her daughter. In other parts of her narrative, Emma described her fear of

disclosure of her gender identity to her parents. This artifact symbolizes the substitution of her great fear with her mother's warm welcome. With her mother, Emma experiences resonant agency: she can be herself, and count on being fully recognized. Her wristwatch is an item Emma can take with her into any space, any context. Wherever they go together, it can give her the message of her mother's unconditional love for Emma.

Micah's brown bag. Micah had a sense from early childhood that he was different from others around him. "I don't think there was ever really a time that I / really / fully believed that I was female" (Micah, sec. 72). He didn't imagine that female secondary sex characteristics would develop on his body, and was dismayed when they did. His focus was on academics and sports. He describes himself in childhood as a tomboy (Micah, sec. 21), a rough-and-tumble little kid (Micah, sec. 47), and rugged – fearless and eager to play the defensive positions on the soccer team. In I-2 Micah described a special gift he received from his fourth grade teacher. As he explained, the item is no longer available, and so he made a drawing.

Figure 8.

Micah's Bag Drawing

Micah's drawing is reminiscent of a childhood thought, a plain line drawing, giving basic details of the artifact: a map, but certainly not the territory.

um my fourth grade teacher had made us all,

um, these little bags,

and they were personalized

in the sense that there was something on the bag

that was / basically *you*.

So um she got me, she understood me,

somehow she connected with me back in fourth grade.

My bag was brown.

It had this little cinch cord on it.

It had one little red shape,

one little blue triangle that was a little sailboat.

And *that* was my bag.

While she was passing out pastel bags

with flowers and butterflies and lipsticks and compacts
and all these things to my friends,
this was my bag. (Micah, sec. 258)

Micah describes the bag made for him by his teacher, when he attended fourth grade under his feminine name. The teacher made a bag for every child in the class. Micah explains the personalization of bags that made each one unique, designated for a specific child in the class. *There was something on the bag that was basically you.* Micah describes his teacher as someone who *got me, understood me, connected with me.* This teacher perceived something to the extent that she made Micah's bag distinctly different from the bags created for other girls in the class. As other participants indicated in their narratives, it was acceptable within Discourses of gender identity for a girl to behave as a tomboy, and that is possibly what made it acceptable for her teacher to acknowledge that in Micah. He describes the details of his bag – brown fabric with a cinch cord, with geometric shapes in primary colors, red and blue, to represent a sailboat. His friends, the other girls in fourth grade, received pastel fabric bags with *flowers, butterflies, lipsticks, compacts, and all these things.* Micah's bag symbolized his visibility, his feeling of okayness as a unique human being.

And I *loved* the thing.

I carried it literally – I don't *have* it to show you,
because I literally loved it to *death*, right?

It just was in *shreds*,

and my mom was like,

‘Honey, I can’t / I can’t sew it together any more. It’s just done.’ (Micah, sec. 259)

Micah’s affection for his bag was more than its look and feel. His affection was related to being valued as a unique person in fourth grade. He was neither required, nor expected to fall in line with lipsticks, compacts, and all those things. He could have a brown bag with a sailboat: *something on the bag that was basically you*. In his narrative, Micah did not say ‘about you,’ he said *was...you*, equating the sailboat as representation of *himself*. Micah’s attestation of enthusiastic devotion to this artifact, how he *loved the thing*, highlights the deep significance of knowing he was visible to others. Micah could use his hands to manipulate and to use the bag. To pull the cinch cord, put items inside, close the bag, open the bag, remove the items, using his hands and growing. He grew up within Discourses that allowed him to behave in masculine ways as a child, because that could be seen as his being a tomboy. Discourses infused his interests and behaviors with permission, which meant that even within a stricter tradition of Catholicism, his identity could be celebrated and he could experience resonance in childhood, through others’ recognition of his expression.

Insights. Prism, Emma, and Micah each benefit from artifacts as messengers of affirmation, personal value, and competence. Prism is able to nurture herself using the words from her frame as messengers from mentors. Emma can know in any context, at any time, when wearing her wristwatch, that her mother loves her without reservation.

Micah has a memory, and a hand-drawn picture of his artifact, a messenger with his teacher's voice, reminding him that in childhood he was valued.

Laminations

Laminations are attached to, or embedded in the body in such a way that together with the participant, they collaboratively create something that neither could do alone. A lamination may speak for the participant, creating an expression of gender that results from the dialogical relationship between participant and artifact.

Amélie's bra and prostheses. Amélie's transition has spanned several decades. When it began, Amélie simply changed her outward appearance in small ways, bit by bit. She eventually showed up at work as a woman. No questions were asked, and she simply carried on with her job. One of the artifacts that Amélie brought to I-2 was the lacy bra with silicone inserts shown below.

Figure 9.

Amélie's lacy bra and silicone inserts.



Amélie arranged her items for this photograph. The prosthesis for the left breast is inside its protective cover, and the prosthesis for the right breast rests on top of the cover. Her feminine, lacy bra is shown below the prostheses. Amélie explained that her purchase was made in a medical store.

The anger and the pressure,
and I'm certain, I think,
I literally think my transition
was driven by anger as much as anything.
Anger at having to *deal with* //
such an unusual and *stressful* and *shameful*
and you name it, issue, as I've had to live with for a lifetime. (Amélie, sec. 375)

Amélie was angry from cumulative effects of Discourses that characterized her as not normal, and which misidentified her as a man. She explained her motivation to transition as *driven by anger*. She defined that anger as coming from having to deal with an *issue*, her transgender identity, which she experienced as *unusual, stressful* and *shameful*.

Anyway, so I bought a very good quality /

uh / silicone uh insert.

And I bought the uh / pads to take care of it.

So this is what I / ... I began wearing this as

uh underneath my clothing...

I had to go into a store and buy it as a male.

Um it's / it's very lacy, just

because I liked, and wanted, something lacy.

Um the breast, the silicone breast inserts for it are very realistic.

And I just felt better buyin' something that was realistic-looking...

And it's not / they aren't *huge*.

I'm not / I was never interested in //

being a / *drag* person or anything like that.

I just want to be normal.

I guess that's the best word for it. (Amélie, sec. 377)

Amélie invested in silicone inserts that would last and that would facilitate the alignment of her physical appearance with her feminine gender identity. She emphasizes that she *had to go into the store and buy it as male*, an act that occurred in the 1990s (as she mentions later), and that would have been extremely awkward at best. Her anger propelled her agency, to the extent that she stopped caring about public exposure. Amélie further explained that she wanted only to *be normal*. To live her life as everyone else seemed to do, not to be noticed, but to simply be herself.

And uh // so I got a size
that I thought might be appropriate for /
for my body size...And uh I, I
clearly remember the first time I went down stairs
wearing this bra and these inserts.
I had that sensation of some,
some motion as I went down the steps,
similar to what I imagine they really / a real female might feel.
So that was significant to me.
It was like, I've had one more sensation that's //
uhh / a sensation that's important to me.
I don't know *why*, but it was. (Amélie, sec. 378-379)

Amélie selected a modest size of inserts and bought her lacy bra. Then, she connected her body to the inserts and the bra. She recalled the physical sensation of *some*,

some motion as I went down the steps. She associated this with the idea of what a *real female might feel*. The inserts and the bra connected with her body in a way that authenticated her identity. It was the joining together of her body with these artifacts and the resonance that resulted.

Heidi's rings. At the start of I-2, Heidi searched frantically in her handbag for two rings she meant to bring, but was unable to locate them. After the interview, she sent me a single photograph of four objects. Two of those objects are excluded from this research, due to the possibility of the exposure of Heidi's identity. The other two objects, the rings, cropped from the original image, are shown in Figure 10. Heidi spoke about the rings one at a time, and about the significance of each in her gender identity work.

Figure 10.

Heidi's rings: traditional solitaire and "goth" ring



it's a traditional solitaire that I wear when I go out...

Uh I'm not looking for anything, relationships /
or anything, you know.

I, I want to let people know that I'm spoken for...[laughs]

...the traditional life that I'd like to hang onto

as much as I can. (Heidi, sec. 342)

Heidi first describes the solitaire ring. She indicates that it is *traditional*, a convention of representation, that she wears in the temporal space of *when I go out*. Heidi clarifies that her purpose in going out is not to replace her current marriage. On the contrary, she purposes to represent, through wearing the solitaire, a perceptual space *that I'm spoken for*. In the temporal space of *when I go out*, and the perceptual space of *I'm spoken for*, Heidi purposefully wears the ring, and assigns to it a voice of its own. The ring speaks on her behalf. Heidi relies on this familiar signal to function as a lighthouse beacon, warning away relationships she doesn't desire. Her agency is demonstrated in the wearing of the ring, but the object has a recognizable voice of its own. The two join in action to set a boundary around Heidi, labeling her as unavailable. As a man, Heidi married her wife. As a woman, Heidi marks herself with a traditional symbol of belonging, or ownership.

Heidi wants to *hang onto* her *traditional* (established) life, and yet the fear of losing her family that appears throughout transcripts from both interviews is represented here as an understatement: *as much as I can*.

And then there's / another ring that I had out

that's a little goth, I guess.

And I wear them together,

which probably isn't // fashion wise.

It probably doesn't make sense.

But it is what I do.

It's all I have. [laughs]. (Heidi, sec. 342)

Next, Heidi talked about the other ring shown in Figure 10, which she describes as *a little goth*. Heidi smiled nervously when she said the word *goth*, and then she backed off from the term with *I guess*, an indication of uncertainty. She states that she wears both rings – the solitaire and the goth ring – together, and then makes two uncertain (*probably*) statements disqualifying that decision: *isn't fashion wise* and *doesn't make sense*. Still, she concludes, *It's what I do*, and extends that with a statement connecting the rings to the presentation of her gender identity: *It's all I have. All I have*, right now in the present sense of time. *All I have* as a shared (public and private) perceptual space of femininity. *All I have* to create interpersonal connections of the sort that she wants when she goes out. Heidi allows the two rings – artifacts of her gender identity work – individual and conjoined voices. On her body they speak meaning: one ring says *taken*, and the other speaks of the non-traditional. Heidi calls that *goth*, and as she continues her narrative, *punk rock*.

Um so you know,

that one's kind of / punk rock, I guess.

And um you know,

if // everything changes in my life /

I might go kind of a / punk *rock* direction. [laughs]

Which, for a 51 year old is um kind of // gettin' old for that. (Heidi, sec. 345)

Heidi redefines the goth ring as *punk rock*, again backing off with a term of uncertainty, *I guess*. She considers perceptual space, *if everything changes*, which also includes the implication of temporal space in the period of time when the course of her marriage is decided between her wife and her. That decision will also involve interpersonal distances, to be determined through the resources the couple will bring to that process. She returns to the non-traditional, laminating the *goth, punk rock* ring to her identity of the future, *I might go in a / kind of a punk rock direction*. She reconsiders the concept of a *punk rock direction* due to her age. In this way, she turns upon herself with a Discourse of ageism. Heidi demonstrates a great deal of uncertainty about her future.

so uh, the traditional way [laughs] that life could go

is the fake diamond solitaire,

by the way, it's totally fake. You know.

It's just traditional silver, uh,

a round / maybe / 2/3 of a karat size, nothing flashy.

And it's um got a few small diamonds in the actual ring,

or fake diamonds in the ring.

And um // you know. It's um / just very traditional.

It um, you know, it, it just / ... uhh fake diamond.

Um the / just having it on my finger,

and I wear my real wedding ring with it /

how kosher that is, I don't know [laughs]

but, but it's um, just feels good having it there
and just kind of // sets my hand off a little bit, I guess. /
It's nice. / ...[clears throat]. (Heidi, sec. 358)

Heidi explores the possibility of the *traditional* pathway her life could take, referring to whether or not her marriage will continue. She linked *traditional way* (continuation of marriage) through the word *is*, to the *fake diamond solitaire*. This $x = y$ narrative equation seemed to confirm her sense that something in her present circumstances is fake. Furthermore, the use of the word, *traditional* appeared in close proximity to *fake* several times in this segment. She uses the word *traditional* three times: once in reference to her current marriage and the possibility of its continuation, and twice in reference to the appearance of the solitaire. She uses the word *fake* four times in reference to the solitaire: *fake*, *totally fake*, *fake diamonds*, and *fake diamond*. In terms of the financial implications of buying a diamond solitaire engagement ring, this one has little to no value. With it, Heidi wears *my real wedding ring*. She contrasts the symbolic statement of the solitaire with the real commitment of her wedding ring. The two symbols are not equal. The solitaire is a placeholder, a message, a socio-cultural statement, *fake*. Heidi wears the solitaire, because it *feels good*, *sets my hand off a little bit*, and because *it's nice*.

Collectively, the three rings give Heidi physical connection to her past, present, and imagined future. These overlapping sign systems speak something new when applied as part of Heidi's embodiment of her gender identity: woman, taken, and perhaps

adventurous or exciting. Finally, the rings show Heidi's lack of authentic self-representation in the present, and the threat of losing her family as she walks into the future. In this situation, Heidi's resonant agency shows her the challenges that she faces as she moves toward weaving her outer and inner lives into one.

Ryan's black dress. Ryan described her first night out, wearing her little black dress in a Chicago club. The event was notable not only because she found *herself* there, but also because she unexpectedly applied to herself a woman's name that stuck.

Figure 11.

Ryan's black dress.

Ryan explained that she was out – dressed for the first time as a woman in public – in a club. Someone asked her name, but she hadn't even considered what name she



might use. She fell back on a family custom. Because her family surname was a long, European name, whenever they made dinner reservations or ordered pizza, her father had

used the name, [Ryan] in order to avoid complications with spelling or pronunciation when their name was called.

So when I was *asked* what my name was, [Ryan] just popped into my head. Um and / it stuck! And it's Irish and um it reminds me, it connects me to my Irish grandmother...who I think about every day, I loved, and I know would be proud of me today, and um so yeah. It has a lot of meaning to me! So I was wearing this dress when I came up with [Ryan]. (Ryan, sec. 293)

Ryan launched into a description of her dress, and then told about the evening at the club, her first night out as a woman.

So this dress is, uh, black...

it's got kind of this sassy faux reptilian black skin in the middle of it, the middle of the back and front...

Um when I see it,

just the visceral reaction I have to it,

um, it just makes me smile. (Ryan, sec. 293)

Ryan described the fabric of her dress: *sassy faux reptilian black skin*. She also spoke of her *visceral reaction* to it, the fact that it *makes me smile*. This dress conjured up happiness and good memories of her experiences that night.

Um // yeah...October, '14, I guess it was,

I put this dress on...Umm it was involved in my gender identity work,

because it was part of // that night was, um, you know,

I think I described it for you...as being kind of naked to the world. (Ryan, sec. 295)

Naked to the world was the term Ryan used to characterize her first time out as a woman, when she risked being misidentified as a man in drag, and went to a club in Chicago, as an initial step in trying to understand her identity. *Naked to the world* relates to her having *put this dress on*, and trying it out in public.

Um so this was what was,
this was my *skin*, um when I first felt that way.
Um // so maybe there's something to the /
I, I don't think I'm a *reptile*,
but maybe there's something
to the fact that there's this skin pattern *in* it,
now that I think about it. (Ryan, sec. 296)

Ryan made a connection between the *sassy faux reptilian* skin of the dress, and her having worn it as her own skin that first night out as a woman. She muses about the possibility of a connection between her feeling *naked to the world*, and her putting on a dress with a faux skin.

Um // and...
it contained a very nervous woman, um,
taking her first steps into womanhood at age forty – *four*?
Um it saw a woman let her hair down and have fun.

In a safe and anonymous kind of place...

it felt the touch of a few others,

um, in the club / who were very friendly to me.

Um male and female. Um / which I really enjoyed.

And /// and I was *happy*. (Ryan, sec. 297)

She speaks about the experiences of the dress, which *contained a very nervous woman, saw a woman let her hair down and have fun, felt the touch of a few others*, which Ryan really enjoyed. Her commentary, as from the dress's perspective, begins with containment of her, and ends with the concept of *touch*. The dress constituted surfaces for physical containment and connection, but emotional involvement was experienced and generated through connections between Ryan and other individuals in the club. For example, Ryan talks about connection through friendliness, *which I really enjoyed*. She closes this section with a summary of her own resonant agency, *I was happy*.

I was, I remember // at / at the, um /

I don't remember what time I left,

but I remember disap- / being disappointed

that I couldn't stay longer. Because I had to get home...

I remember taking it all off and feeling sad. //

Um which is a feeling that I have almost every night. (Ryan, sec. 297)

Ryan did not want her experience to end. The dress was joined to her body, and facilitated her resonant agency that night. However, she had to remove it in order *to get*

home. She felt *disappointed* and *sad*. Something resonated with Ryan when she was in public as herself, dressed in alignment with her gender identity. Having to remove signs of her identity and return to the camouflage of men's clothing was emotionally difficult for her. This is persistent, as *a feeling that I have almost every night*.

But there's still a piece of me that, that at night,

I hate the / because I still struggle

with trying *not* to see a man in the mirror. You know?

And I feel like my feminine features are developing,

but strengthened, um with *makeup*.

And um I feel more in my *skin* right now with makeup,

although at some point I'd like to be in my skin

without feeling like I *have* to be all dialed up.

You know?

Um but I remember feeling sad

when I had to take off that dress. (Ryan, sec. 299)

Taking off the dress that night was difficult for Ryan, since she had experienced the resonance of being herself. Furthermore, the mirror is a problem, because she still sees *a man in the mirror*. She wants an experience similar to Mimi's experience of seeing herself in the photo, but so far, that experience seems to still be out of reach. *I feel like my feminine features are developing*. Makeup helps her achieve the feminine look that she longs for, but as with other study participants, Ryan simply wants a life in which she can

be herself, without going to extraordinary lengths to apply an appearance that will help her pass in public. She closes the segment with a final touch on her emotional experience of taking off her black dress that night, as she was *feeling sad*.

Gabriela's (mother's) red dress. Gabriela brought a brand new, scarlet sweater dress to I-2, which provided access to her memories of resonant agency in childhood. She explained that red is her favorite color, and that red was the color of the first dress she ever put on, a dress from her mother's closet.

Figure 12.

Gabriela's Red Dress.



This dress arrived in the mail from The Limited the day before I-2. Gabriela ordered it online, and was extremely excited to bring it.

I have a lot of red dresses. [laughs]

But this one, uh, I love sweater dresses.

And um // it is uh one of my favorite things that um / it's /
the biggest point of my life where it was significant
was you know, when I would go through my mom's closet.

When I was, you know, young. (Gabriela, sec. 435)

Gabriela introduced her artifact as a something she likes in the present, but quickly redirected her talk to the past: *where it was significant, when I would go through my mom's closet, when I was...young*. This dress, the artifact, symbolizes the red dress in Gabriela's mother's closet.

And she had a red dress, and I always liked it.

And I would uh put it on and prance around and you know.

So / and um / it, you know, was very feminine. /

Um you know, but it /

when I was young, though, I would always go back to it. (Gabriela, sec. 435)

Gabriela described her material processes when she was young, using the terms *put on*, and *prance around*. Furthermore, Gabriela wore the dress more than once, as indicated by her explanation that she *would always go back to it*.

And um / you know,

that's kind of why I always go back to these,

because red is my, is my thing. / (Gabriela, sec. 435)

Momentarily, Gabriela returned to the present time, to explain why she likes to buy red dresses. In the same way that she kept going back to the red dress in her mother's closet, now she goes back to buy additional red dresses of her own.

But you know, it always,

when I wore it, I just felt like I was the prettiest girl in the world! – kind of thing.

Uhhm you know, I just,

the feeling of the, the material on your skin and everything was nice.

And it just / all / all-encompassing. (Gabriela, sec. 435)

Gabriela described how she felt when she wore her mother's red dress: *like I was the prettiest girl in the world!* She highlighted the tactile qualities of her mother's dress. It was the activity of wearing the dress, combined with its tactile qualities, which gave Gabriela connection from childhood in her gender identity. She initiated action, and experienced at-home-ness in her gender, resonant agency.

It / to me, I guess, it would have,

it spoke to me as / you know //

the gateway to / exploring that /

who I *was* at that point.

And that I felt OK when I wore it,

and that you know / I was / I // tryin' to word this right.

Um at that point in my life, as young as I was,

I *knew* that I was different.

And I knew that I needed /

that it felt *right* to me. And // you know.

Every time I walked by the closet I'd see the dress.

And it literally would be like calling my name.

So that's kind of the impact it had. (Gabriela, sec. 441)

Gabriela said her mother's red dress *call[ed] her name*, and pinpointed that dress as the means of access to the exploration of her gender identity (*the gateway*). Even though she didn't yet possess academic understanding of gender identity, Gabriela knew she was different, and she knew that the dress felt *right*. She saw the dress *every time I walked by the closet*, and with greater intensity than her previous statement that the dress *spoke* to her, she now describes it as *calling my name*. She experienced a great attraction *to* that dress, and she describes it in terms of the dress's desire for *her*. When prompted to say what that dress might say to her, she responded immediately.

Um, you know, "Put me on and go prance around! And just be a *girl!*"

You know. Um but that's /

that was the biggest impact, when I was young,

and I remember it like it was yesterday. (Gabriela, sec. 443)

Gabriela's talk was relaxed and happy. It was clear in her telling the story of the red dress that she embraced her former child self, and that she experienced freedom and joy in being a girl when she put on her mother's red dress. Together, she and the dress

produced *her*. And she said her response to the dress would have been, “Absolutely! I want to put you on! Let’s go!”

I would / every once in a while if I had time,

I would slip the heels on too.

So / black / black pumps, you know.

Just a black pump. Nothin’ special.

They didn’t have a crazy high heel.

But / at the time I felt complete at that point...

I was young. I was five and six when I first started /

really, you know, *thinking* and *feeling* different. (Gabriela, sec. 450)

Gabriela talks about wearing her mother’s heels with the red dress, and sums up the experience: *I felt complete at that point*. Finally, Gabriela situates her self-awareness of gender identity in temporal terms, *I was five and six*. Gabriela’s material processes of putting on the dress and the black pumps led to her feeling complete. Through resonant agency, she joined with the objects in a way that she had an experience of completeness.

Curious to understand her mother’s role in Gabriela’s repeated wearing of the red dress, I asked her to speak about that. She laughed, and then said:

It was about the, the femininity of it.

It wasn’t / it had nothing to do with my mom.

It had *all* to do with that *I* wanted to rock the dress! (Gabriela, sec. 496)

Dingo's stage makeup. Dingo brought zir first makeup kit to I-2, purchased for a stage makeup class during zir second year of college. A corrugated cardboard box smudged and stained on the outside, and filled with well-used makeup items.

Figure 13.

Dingo's makeup kit.



Dingo talked in great detail about sensory features of the items in zir makeup kit: the feel of different brushes on zir hands and face; the smells of different products ranging from sweet to overpowering; sensations of products on the skin; tastes of substances accidentally brought into the mouth; textures of makeup, from dry and powdery, to greasy; sounds of bristles or sponges on skin; screwing and unscrewing of lids; and the snap closure of the compact. Finally, Dingo discussed colors in the box, and uses for the different products in the box, and summarized with, “It had so many, like shades of *being* in one space. Right?” (Dingo, sec. 327). Ze poked fun at names of the

colors, and concluded zir remarks about the visual elements on a note of fondness: *I loved it.*

And so really, this allowed me in many ways

to begin my exploration of gender in a very real, embodied way...

Like / it / it, it's like *using* that traditional journey narrative

that really is like

these are the tools that helped me put on my face

what I wanted to be on the inside.

And that could change. And that was beautiful.

And I could take it off. And I could put it on.

And I could take it off again, *right?!*

And then I could put it back **on again!** And I *loved* that! Right? (Dingo, sec. 330)

Dingo emphasizes the permission he experienced through zir makeup kit, to explore gender. Zir exploration could be embodied within a safe space of the Stage Makeup classroom. However, ze enjoyed making changes to zir facial appearance through applying, and removing, reapplying, and again removing, the makeup. Ze could freely experiment with gender *in a very real, embodied way* through the lamination of infinite combinations of foundation, mascara, shadow, shade, power, tints, lipstick, and other products.

To a certain degree this...this object,

might even embody my gender fluidity more than any other object, right?

Uh just because like each piece was used

for both masculine and feminine appearance.

So like, if I wanted to be / feminine I would use *this* to do so.

But if I wanted to be *more* masculine, I could also use this to do so,

such as like, you know, intensifying my jaw line,

darkening my you know, thickening out my beard,

which back then was pretty sparse.

Um, things like that, you know.

So this really was, to a certain degree, the *essence* of my gender fluidity,

in that it led me to do all that.

Dingo attributed to the object an ability to *embody* zir gender. Ze spoke about the gender fluid capabilities of the various components of the kit. Some could make zir more masculine, some more feminine. Ze refers to this artifact (or collection) as *the essence of my gender fluidity*, because it *led me to do all that*. Together, Dingo and the makeup kit collaborated, as he attributed to it the capacity to inspire ze.

Um // and it's hard to say, like,

how the object would speak.

Because it was like a crowded, it's a chorus, right?

There are so many different / *players* / happening in here...

So they all, they all like have different / they all say something different.

And so it would be hard to be like,

‘Well they all say that thing.’ But they all say something /// yeah.

Even without thinking it, they all say something to me...

...But like, yeah. They’re almost screaming for attention.

They’re like, ‘Come on!’ Like, ‘You want us *on* you!’

And like, ‘We *want* to be on you!’ Right?

That’s what I think. (Dingo, secs. 318-339)

Rather than attributing a statement to the container, the box itself, Dingo indicated that ze experienced the collection as a *chorus* of collaborators, attributing agency to the items. Multiple voices calling, multiple *players*, who are *almost screaming for attention*. The parts of the kit seem to have coalesced into a sort of collective agency that, when Dingo joins in, offer endless varieties of options for fluid gender expression, any of which offers resonance to Dingo through zir collaboration with the stage makeup kit.

Aeon. Among other items, Aeon brought her heraldry from LARP, which tells the story of her household lineage in the game: “To someone who actually *plays* the game, it’s like having a resume hanging off of your belt” (Aeon, sec. 454). She was brought into a household of women.

Figure 14.

Aeon's LARP heraldry.



Her heraldry is machine stitched in bright colors on a light blue chambray fabric.

A header left open at each end allows the heraldry to be threaded onto a rope, or a belt.

It's a household of *women*!

Being accepted into that was *massive*!

I've always been known in that game

as having been a bit of a recluse. (Aeon, sec. 474)

Aeon's social patterns in the game are in keeping with her social patterns of the past: staying separate, maintaining safety. Her having been accepted into a household of women was, to Aeon's thinking, a huge acknowledgement of belonging.

The Amazons are,

have a pretty positive reputation...

So // but / it was more being adopted into the Amazons also signifies /

there is *no* doubt about / my womanhood is no longer in doubt.

I have been *vouched for* very clear- /
and I am *aware of that*, that I have been vouched for...
So it's a *very clear*, very *unambiguous* statement
that I am accepted as a woman. (Aeon, sec. 474)

Not only was Aeon *adopted* into the household. Because it is a household of women, that acceptance confirmed her gender in ways that meant *there is no doubt* about her womanhood, that she has been *vouched for*, and that she knows she has been vouched for. She described her adoption into the Amazons as a *very clear*, *very unambiguous* statement of her acceptance as a woman. Aeon belongs to a group she considers as family. Through playing the game, and building relationships, she has demonstrated in no uncertain terms, her womanhood, and that was acknowledged through adoption into a household, where she now belongs. Aeon's adoption into the household took place in a ceremony where she was given her heraldry. Her experience was an emotional one. Typical of her demeanor in the game, she kept her hood up and did not reveal her face.

I cried like all day! It was funny.
When [name] handed me the // handed it to me,
I of course, in my typical garb of mask plus hood,
and she just kind of *yanks* my hood back,
because she wanted everyone to *see*
that I was overcome with emotion to be accepted! //
Like, "Take that hood off!" And she yanks it back!

I *glared* at her for that afterwards. [smiling with fondness]

I was like, “*Really?* Did you *have* to?”

And it was like, “I wanted to show everyone that you were happy.”

“You wanted to show them that I straight up, *teared up!* Is that necessary?”

But yeah. I had a reputation for being /

for not showing my *face!* Ahhhhh! (Aeon, sec. 484)

Aeon described the moments during the ceremony when she was adopted into the Amazons family. Her emotion reflected the confirmation, at last, of her womanhood, as she was welcomed into a household of women as one of them. Furthermore, she was not allowed to keep to herself, but the head of household yanked her hood back to display Aeon’s emotion to everyone. Not only was this contrary to Aeon’s private nature of concealment, but it was also her reputation to keep her face hidden. The move to yank her hood back was similar to a mother bear cuffing her young with a large paw: loving, but firm. Even as she told about her objection, *Is that necessary?*, Aeon smiled. Clearly, she welcomed the constraint of the head of household.

You know / [smiles] but I was very happy about it.

But that was one of the happier moments of my existence.

Because it was a moment of being *accepted unambiguously as a woman.*

And of being given something that *proved* /

that *validates me* to *anyone* who sees it. (Aeon, sec. 485)

Aeon received, in the company of people who were not only witnesses, but also welcoming allies, the greatest gift of all. She was *accepted unambiguously as a woman*. The heraldry she was given, is evidence that she can see, touch, and wear, of that validation.

Insights. Laminations discussed in this section were all applied to the body in a way that resulted in something different from what the participant could express without the artifact. Prostheses provided physical sensation that Amélie appreciated as being like a woman. Heidi's rings give her pleasure, but also serve as signaling devices when attached to her body. Ryan experienced herself as a woman for the first time, when wearing her little black dress, and Gabriela has loved to *rock the dress* since childhood! For Dingo, the endless variety of combinations of makeup components allows zir to express gender fluid identity as ze pleases, shifting day to day. And Aeon wears her heraldry, which binds her to a household of women.

Synthesis

The purpose of Chapter 5 was to answer the third sub-question: How do participants represent and describe their relationships with material objects in gender identity work? Through MDA, as I examined principles of indexicality, dialogicality, and selection, I discovered that participants assigned three primary collaborative functions to their artifacts: tools of visibility, messengers, and laminations.

As mentioned, indexicality is concerned with placement in the world, and dialogicality has to do with operation in aggregate. In other words, the artifact, the

individual, and other aspects of the context all contribute to something, somewhere. Selection occurred as participants foregrounded certain meanings in narratives. Through collaborations with artifacts, participants achieved meaningful inner resonance that supported them in a less-than-friendly society. Participants were compelled to consider their gender expressions. Experiences of agency encouraged participants to make decisions about self-presentation, and resonance resulted from the space-taking/space-making (social goods) of participants, through collaborative functions.

Artifacts as tools of visibility created self-recognition. Participants could see themselves as they envisioned themselves, based on their gender identities. They could also experience being seen by others as validation. Artifacts as messengers provided reminders of others' support, a sense of place in the world, affirmation of personal value, and purpose. These artifacts served as powerful inspiration that supported participants' courage in gender expression. Artifacts as laminations demarcated a centeredness that meant the individual could demonstrate self-generative gender expression with greater commitment to self than to oppressive ideologies. Through the lamination of artifacts to the body, there became the capacity for collective action that could be accomplished by neither the individual, nor the lifeless artifact, alone.

With all artifact functions—tools of visibility, messengers, and laminations—participants narrated positive connections between the object and the self. No artifact held a negative connotation, or meaning. Furthermore, it was through engagement with the artifact that meaning making took place. Participants foregrounded internal resonance

in their narration of artifacts. Furthermore, I noticed in the narratives that when a participant engaged with an artifact, to greater or lesser degrees (but always to *some* degree), oppression seemed to hold less traction as the collective unit of person plus artifact could demonstrate (collective) agency. Furthermore, as a dialogic partnership, through intertextuality artifacts seemed to bolster a participant's sense of resonance, an in-tune-ness, or sense of rightness of the self. Sometimes (as with Prism's frame, or Emma's watch, for example) objects linked to voices of other people, adding strength to the resonance. In this equation of human plus artifact, the strong connection between oppression and suppression began to dissolve, as the participant took specific steps to increase visibility to self and others, and risked being seen and known.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, the presence of an artifact in I-2 increased modal density and, therefore, added to the depth of information available. Stories significant to participants in I-1 were sometimes re-storied in I-2 in the presence of a related artifact. The incorporation of sounds, textures, smell, sight, and other sensory engagement with an artifact multiplied the dimensionality of a story (furthermore, the researcher could also experience those sensations). This, combined with the range of artifacts presented, and their functions, revealed the complexity of gender identity work for participants. Of all the artifacts that were brought to I-2, there were no exact duplicates. How an individual made meaning of an artifact seemed to intersect with a significant period of time of life, or an event, or accepting their gender identity.

Sometimes in I-1, participants foreshadowed with a portion of the narrative, an artifact they then brought to I-2. Amélie ask repeatedly during I-1 if she should go out to her car and bring some pictures and other items inside, but I deferred to I-2, per the research protocol. Karen told me the story about her coaster during I-1, and then brought it with her to I-2, as if to say, “See? See what I mean?!” Her animation in the presence of the artifact was twice that of the similar narrative in I-1. The same was true for her Halloween picture. Micah had a very hard time selecting artifacts, and finally decided to bring a collection of roughly 15 items to which he attached three categories, rather than bringing three to five objects. In I-1, he narrated the story of his brown bag, but in I-2, with the drawing, he was quite animated. Thus, between the two interviews, when stories were repeated around an object brought to I-2, participants engaged with greater animation in the presence of the item.

Finally, only one participant brought artifacts representing infancy and childhood. This may represent a desire to disconnect from the sex assigned at birth for some of the other participants. It may also reflect the fact that most of the participants in the 60 and older, and 46-59 age groups, reported having thrown away huge quantities of items over time, in order to try to live according to the sex assigned at birth. Therefore, artifacts from younger years were (regretfully, they indicated) unavailable.

In Chapters 3 through 5 I have addressed each of the three sub-questions of this research. I have explained the findings in increasing detail, beginning with the three primary categories from content analysis: oppression, suppression, visibility. I then

deconstructed the relationship between oppression and suppression using the methods of CDA. I identified four primary contexts of oppression, and the suppression response of participants within those contexts. Finally, using MDA, I examined three primary functions of artifacts in participants' gender identity work: tools of visibility, messengers, and laminations. In Chapter 6, I will summarize and conclude this research, taking into account the overarching research question: how do TgNCi people describe gender identity work across the lifespan?

Chapter 6 - Discussion

In the three preceding chapters I presented findings from three layers of analysis: content analysis, CDA, and MDA, concluding the research. In this chapter, I provide a summary of the research, perspectives, limitations and trustworthiness, contributions, future directions, and then conclude the dissertation.

Summary of Research

At the start of this dissertation I stated that my purpose was to critically examine the gender identity work of transgender and other gender non-conforming (TgNCi) people in the U.S. through the stories and meanings they attached to important artifacts across the lifespan. Through a discussion of the literature I explained key strands of cultural and political development from U.S. history that served to restrict social goods from TgNCi individuals. I discussed in detail the concept of language as social practice and theoretical underpinnings from critical discourse studies. In addition, I explained literature related to identity, agency, and the withholding of privilege from people whose self-presentation interrupts common social practices. My research pathway began when I asked: How do transgender and other gender non-conforming (TgNCi) individuals describe gender identity work through lifespan narratives? I deconstructed the gender identity work of TgNCi participants from three perspectives. First, through content analysis I considered how they described gender identity work within, and across, four participant age ranges from my research design. I identified three primary categories: (1) oppression, (2) suppression, and (3) visibility to self and others. Second, using methods

of CDA, I took into account how they described encounters with structural and personal violence. I identified four contexts of oppression: (1) implied/indirect, (2) implied/direct, (3) applied/ asymmetrical, and (4) applied/symmetrical. Each resulted in participants' suppression of gender identity, and the coexistent desire to be visible to the self, and to others. Third, through MDA, I examined how they represented and described their relationships with material objects in gender identity work. This process brought to light three primary functions of material objects in gender identity work: (1) tools of visibility, (2) messengers, and (3) laminations. The layered approach to analysis allowed me access to minute details of contexts and moments of interaction, through progressively deeper examination of narratives and artifacts.

This yielded rich insights into the gender identity work of participants, all of whom suppressed the expression of identity in response to the four contexts of oppression. Suppression involved hiding and secrecy, and was accompanied by an intense desire to be known as *Who-I-Am* by others. Along with that was the need to see one's gender identity written on the body, whether inscribed on the physical body through hormone replacement therapy and (sometimes, sometimes not) surgery. Furthermore, suppression of physical expression was accompanied by thoughts of doubt about the authenticity of one's identity and an internalization of being 'not normal'. Such doubt comes from external sources, and is much written about in the literature on internalized oppression. Thus, dysphoriagenic culture creates, through minute-by-minute

contexts of language (texts and signs) as social practice, outcomes such as those highlighted by NCTE (2016).

At the time of the interviews all 13 participants had social support, to greater or lesser degrees, but the support was uneven. For example, some participants experienced support at work, while others were not out at work (or were retired, and had remained hidden at work through long careers). Some had close friends who knew, and were fully on board with their gender identity, while others remained hidden from their closest social circle. Fear of job loss or feelings of responsibility to play out an assigned biological role in the family shaped individual choices as well.

This research adds to current knowledge about the workings of oppressive systems, and responses to those systems, as experienced and voiced by TgNCi adults, and thereby establishes new information about the minute details of contexts and interactions that serve to perpetuate structural and personal violence toward TgNCi people. It also provides knowledge about gender identity work within evolving cultural contexts across the decades from the 1950s to the present time.

Perspectives

In this section I offer perspectives from the research in relation to language, representations, relationships, and gender identity.

Language (texts).

The language of gender has undergone dramatic changes since the 1950s, evidence of ongoing gender identity work, and its interruption of cultural practices. This

work represents shifts that are both linguistic and self-representational, and has as brought about rapid changes in how gender identity is conceptualized. Latin-based languages are adapting, so that we now see an X as a linguistic gender marker, rather than o/a (example, LatinX, rather than Latino, or Latina). In English, the U.S. is undergoing similar interruption with increasing flexibility in individual selection of preferred personal pronouns. The incorporation of gender-neutral pronouns directs attention to the uniqueness of gender identity, and also as highlights its separateness from anatomy.

Terminology is being changed by youth, rather than by adults in positions of power. One example of this is the evolution of gender identity selections in Facebook. In 2014, the platform offered (as reported by various websites) anywhere from 50 to 71 options for gender identity, and now offers even greater flexibility with male, female, and custom options.

To write about gender identity was difficult, due to the messiness of terminology to describe decades in which some terms didn't exist. The slipperiness of language of, and about, gender complicated descriptions of gender identity work in two primary ways. First, I had to determine what terminology to use as an inclusive descriptor of transgender and other gender non-conforming identified people. I began the writing using the term Gx (for gender expansive), but then in consultation with non-binary colleagues, I learned that at the present time that term is usually associated with children. Since my research was strictly focused on adults, Gx would not work. Transgender didn't seem quite right, since not all participants identified by that term. The long string of words, *transgender and*

other gender non-conforming was certainly not easy to write, nor was it desirable to repeat multiple times within a single paragraph, or throughout the entire dissertation.

Furthermore, that terminology seemed incomplete without the “i” (identified) at the end. I argued with myself, and consulted with others until finally, during the writing of this last chapter, I added the i, and then settled on the acronym, TgNCi.

Second, I found that I was constantly framing, and shifting among, the decades of participants’ lived experiences, applying, and reapplying correct terminology to describe gender during those years. Furthermore, current innovations in the use of preferred pronouns create challenges for reading, and for writing about gender. Akin to hearing an Eastern scale in Western music, the cultural ear must become acclimated to the new sounds, the new usages, calling forth new terms, and combinations of terms, until concepts solidify. Language evolves as the result, and also as a generator, of new knowledge. It is the solidification of concepts that holds promise for the interruption of stereotypes, negative affect, policies, and laws that affect TgNCi people. Citizenship can be redefined in inclusive terms.

Representations (signs).

The youngest participants have had lifelong access to the Internet, and increasingly, to publications from the popular press and from academia that are focused on gender identity. Furthermore, media images now include non-binary presentations of gender, representing new trends in appearance and fashion. The youngest participant group demonstrated great creativity and joy of self-discovery, through mixing and

matching, scrambling the stereotypical representations of binary genders. Companies market directly to TgNCi people through advertisements for androgynous, or genderqueer clothing, accessories, hairstyles, and more. Sidonie, for example, spoke of being able to purchase (pricey) jeans leaning toward men's styling, but tailored for a woman's body shape. This not only creates an overdue opportunity for TgNCi people to purchase clothing that fits the body, but also opens a new avenue of marketing. Marketing affects the economy. As TgNCi individuals are more visibly present and accepted in culture, the shape of the fashion industry is already making space.

Such marketing initiatives exist in stark contrast to the availability of medical care, job security, insurance benefit coverage for gender reassignment surgery, and other identity-related restrictions. In a rather odd twist, it is acceptable for TgNCi people to spend money and thereby contribute to the economy, but it is unacceptable for them to receive insurance benefits to cover medically necessary services that may (for some individuals) include sex reassignment surgery. For example, Victoria's case for insurance coverage of her sex reassignment surgery was approved by her insurance carrier, but denied by her employer. Not only did she have to pay out of pocket for all of her procedures and the travel associated with them, but she also had to support herself financially through recovery, making up the difference between what was covered and

what was not covered by FMLA¹⁷ and her employer's medical leave allotment. Furthermore, she was dismissed from her job at the end of her medical leave. This example demonstrates the degree to which employment policies may be manipulated to favor heterosexist society, while perpetuating the systems of oppression of TgNCi people. There is great need of the enactment of local, state, and national anti-discrimination legislation. Concerted efforts by advocacy organizations; allies to TgNCi people; and TgNCi people living everyday lives, are critical to move the U.S. forward in welcoming TgNCi people into society. In addition, teachers, legislators, health care professionals, employers, and others in the public and private sectors must become informed and must also assure welcoming and affirming environments for TgNCi people of all ages.

Relationships.

Participants' narratives demonstrated that primary relationships could be difficult. Whether a long-time spouse, parents, or others, some participants struggled in gender identity work, due to actual or anticipated threats of the loss of primary relationships. Other participants flourished in marriages based on openness and trust related to their gender identities. Finally, participants from the 18 – 30 age group experimented with relationships and the expressions of their gender identities. They were in early adulthood,

¹⁷ “The FMLA entitles eligible employees of covered employers to take unpaid, job-protected leave for specified family and medical reasons with continuation of group health insurance coverage under the same terms and conditions as if the employee had not taken leave” (for more information about the Family and Medical Leave Act, see <https://www.dol.gov/whd/fmla/>)

preoccupied with academics and thoughts of future careers.¹⁸ It appeared that their relational futures might be less conflict laden than were relationships for the older participants, due to the fact of greater openness (their own, and that of society), immediate access to information on the World Wide Web, media support of non-binary self-representation, and peer support. The gender identity work of TgNCi people in the U.S. must involve ongoing efforts to increase public awareness and personal recognition of gender identity as a distinct component of individuality. Public awareness can be advanced through individual and group advocacy, and also through personal association with TgNCi people.

I observed across all participants in the research a common desire to be ordinary people living ordinary lives. Gender identity work was propelled by the wish to be known as who one is. Participants wanted the privilege to self identify, and to be believed and accepted in that identification. They wanted to go into public spaces without drawing attention. They wanted to wear what made them feel at one with the self, without being singled out, whether negatively, or through heightened praise. They wanted to belong: to be recognized and to be known, and nothing more. The expression of that desire was evident from early childhood for some participants, and later for others. They sought to be known by a preferred gender, or to present in a fluid or non-conforming manner.

¹⁸ It is important to mention that these youngest participants were also atypical of the general population, in that all four are university students, and three of the four are in graduate school at a top-tier university, in an academic discipline that welcomes TgNCi students.

When chastised directly or indirectly, participants turned inward and practiced gender identity in private. One mechanism for rehearsal was the making of opportunities to recognize themselves in their preferred styles of clothing. Whereas parents, friends, religious leaders, and even helping professionals aligned with heterosexist discourses who (whether deliberately, or from ignorance) might have referred to this as cross dressing, participants would say they were dressed in alignment with gender identity, and that what they felt they had to wear in public was cross-dressing. Interestingly, it was rare that a participant spoke of the wearing of preferred clothing as cross-dressing. Instead they called it dressing, or being dressed.

Participants wanted to recognize in the mirror the individual they know themselves to be, in culturally translatable terms: terms that had to do with artifacts of gender expression, objects which, if left in a heap on the sidewalk, would mean nothing to anyone else. But for these TgNCi people, personal recognition became salient in part, through visual means. Personal recognition was paramount: participants expressed the need to see the outward representation of the inward self recognized, a resonance of their identity. Furthermore, those who experienced resonance of the self as reflected from another person instead of a mirror appeared to experience a healing process. Karen and I spoke near the close of Interview 2, about her wearing male clothing much of the time:

KO: And it's not that the clothes that you [usually] wear are uncomfortable.

Like, you *appear* to be quite comfortable in what you're wearing. It's just that / these clothes / don't / for *you* / show

Karen: Yeah. And-and-and now it's uh too bad, because I'm, you know, *talking* to you, I'm talking *freely* to you. I am *happy* and *relaxed*. It's kinda like bein' dressed, you know. Uh / it's / uh somebody who knows who I *am*, you know. And it's, it's *good*. (Karen, sec. 423-424)

Recognition, acceptance of her gender identity, being able to talk about her gender identity without conflict, being known for who she was – these were for Karen of primary importance. She reworked earlier experiences of interrupted agency as she made meaning of her life experiences in the interview setting with me. After speaking at length about the importance of dressing, of a lifetime of suppressing her preferred gender expression, she focused directly on the significance of being known and understood. *Somebody who knows who I am, you know*. This simple moment became profound. Similar to moments with other participants, it was as though Karen re-scripted interrupted agency with possibility. She slid downward in her chair, extended her legs and crossed them at the ankles. Her left elbow rested on the conference table at her side as she talked. Karen seemed as relaxed as I had seen her throughout two interviews, and she appeared to focus on the aspect of being known from the inside as an avenue to wholeness. She felt known by me, and in that warm openness between us she experienced peace and hope.

There was a moment with Sidonie, who struggled deeply with heterosexist culture, and with religious oppression. was speaking about the concept of tenderness, and how a common understanding of that term is associated with tenderheartedness. But

through the writing of Zenju Earthlyn Manuel,¹⁹ A Buddhist priest, Sidonie had recently begun to apply an alternative understanding of tenderness to their own pain:

The way that *she* describes it [tenderness] is more in medical terms. So like, when your *arm* is tender, your arm is open, it's raw, it's scarred, it's *hurt*. So that's the way that *she* utilizes it. Um and so essentially she's saying that kind of the way that she got to where she's at now in her, um / in her Buddhism, is through // that tenderness. That kind of tenderness. So all of like that *rawness*, that openness, that pain that she felt, through and because of her race, her gender, and her sexuality, and / *really like* being with that. Working through that and using that as like her strength and her power in her spirituality ... and like *through* this practice, and like this specific tradition, I began to learn what, like *actual freedom* looks like. Um what actual day-to-day freedom would be like to literally just *be* yourself, and be the very *core* of yourself. And to be able to integrate that into every moment of your life. Um / yeahh. (Sidonie, sec. 297-299)

I handed Sidonie a tissue to wipe their eyes. Sidonie had narrated a way through deep hurt and was actively engaged in reconstructing their social and spiritual agency. I was curious about the interplay of gender and artifacts in Sidonie's journey.

KO: What / what is the relationship, or how do you, um, conceptualize gender as it's related to things?

Sidonie: [inhale / long sighhhhhh] Hmmm.

¹⁹ Manuel, Z.E. (2015). *The way of Tenderness: Awakening through Race, Sexuality, and Gender*. Summerville, MA: Wisdom Publications.

KO: Decorations? Orrrrrrr // just / the relationship between

Sidonie: Sure. Umm /// I think it's the outward expression of your inward self. /// I think when / we create things, we create things to represent certain, certain / what we *want* to allow people to see in them. And so I think oftentimes, when we // create objects regardless of if they're made in a factory or designed on a fancy computer, or be like hand-carved at your house / um they're expressing things *about* us and we want people to see certain things about / that object. Um so I think gender plays into that, because, do we want people to see this and / *fffeel*, and that this is like a certain gender's *object*, or if this ob- / like, that this object will mean a certain *thing* if you *have* it, or if you put it on. Um, I think we *very intentionally* do that. So I think gendered objects are just things, and objects as a whole, are representations of //// hm. I think it could either be a representation of just you and your inner self / *or* what you *want* people to see. Um and what you *want* people to feel. Yeah. //

KO: So / *you* um // *purposefully* // align your outward self along with who you are inside

Sidonie: Yes.

KO: even though // that may result in misreading...by other people

Sidonie: Yeah, absolutely. Because the misreading does *less* to me than not being me does...Yeah. Like someone misreading me, or my gender, that is a less harmful experience to me than the experience of *not* being my gender. That is

farrrrr more harmful to me. Which is // evidenced by the fact that like, I cry so much when I speak about my tenderness, because that's where a lot of that pain comes from, is // so many things and people and situations, telling me that, um, "You need to *not* be your gender." But I found much freedom through that self-love, and through that expression, to a point that um someone misgendering me is not gonna do too much any more, because I'd rather not hide it any more.

Because hiding it is far worse to me, than *being* it [being the self in public] and *hearing* it [negatively, from others]. (Sidonie, sec. 327-342)

My experience as a researcher-listener (and occasional prompter for additional depth) during the interview process, reinforced my understanding of the powerful possibilities of genuine interest, the setting aside of judgment and my own agendas, and focusing solely on the individual in the room with me.

Another relationship dynamic cropped up within the aggregate data: I noted that the oldest participants didn't necessarily appreciate what they perceive as demandingness in younger TgNCi people today. One participant commented:

And that's a problem I think, these young kids that say, "In your face! This is who I *am*! You've gotta accept me." I don't *have* to really accept you. But if you want me to, it's your job to convince me that I should. // (Karen, sec. 92)

Coexistent with that, however, was the wish of older participants to have had what younger TgNCi people now experience in access to information, a greater cultural

awareness and openness toward gender identity as separate from physical sex, and also greater acceptance of the infinite variety of gender expressions.

Across the age groups of participants, from oldest to youngest, there exist familiar dialogues of older versus younger; the enduring perspectives of age and youth. Age says that it fought hard for youth's place in society. Youth, not yet possessing the lived history of age, focuses on *now*. Age has known all the periods of time since its birth. Youth is beginning to know. Younger participants appeared to be focused on education, careers, relationships with significant others, and planning their futures.

Finally, relationships with artifacts was important. They served as markers of identity, collectively with the individual expressing the *self* of the person. Along with adaptations of language, so will there be visual interruptions of traditional sight lines, such as a person in feminine clothing with masculine hand size, or a beard worn along with lipstick. With the convergence of academic research, the popular press, the media, and the increasing visibility of TgNCi people, distributive agency is already at work.

Gender identity – a constellation.

Prior to this research, I thought of gender identity as a continuum, something like a line with two opposite poles. Now, I think of it more as a scatterplot. Aeon helped me as we discussed gender identity and sexual orientation. She asked me for a scrap of paper and a pen, and then set to work making a diagram. Our conversation went like this:

Aeon: Um / the problem is we're all / everyone is looking at gender the wrong way. OK. Everyone looks at gender // like / in / like a line. An axis. A to B...

[That's] Bullshit. Now. The *truth* is gender // is / is a cartes- / gender is at its most basic understood far better as a Cartesian plane [draws] // within / with an individual who / an individual could theoretically [draws] // an individual could theoretically be right *here* // just as much as an individual could be anywhere else in a spectrum. So like a typical guy, a typical girl, might be / say / here for a guy or here for a chick. Someone who's agender would be about *here*. But / and *then* you might want to add a *thirrrrrd* axis [drawing] / representing masculinity-femininity / and maybe a third axis representing how strongly one identifies *along* that gender. The point is / and maybe then, and maybe put / just like how sexuality has always been understood as *this*, when it really should be understood a / a Cartesian plane between how much you want woman, how much you want man, and how much you want sex in general. / But of course / and then maybe an additional axis for kinky versus vanilla. You could throw / and you could probably go and do four or five / four- or five-dimensional constructs, because essentially, this is the core problem with how we understand *gender*. Everyone sees it as a spectrum. It's at the very least a *Cartesian* and not and / or . And that is the *fundamental re-* / wayyyy that why we look at gender *sucks*. Because we assume even when we / talk about breaking the binary / breaking the / we talk / breaking the binary means existing *here* not existing *here*...

KO: ...You could...build a multidimensional model.

Aeon: It would need more axes than the human mind could comprehend to be accurate. (Aeon, secs. 259-266)

I have decided to stop using linear terms to describe gender identities. Linearity poses a *binary slide* along a line connecting two poles. Mathematics suggests that there is an infinite number of points along a single line, but gender identity seems to involve exponentially greater multidimensionality than merely what can fall between two polar opposites. Gender identity involves much more than a choice between masculine or feminine representation, because there is no single way to represent either of those constructs. Neither does the *binary slide* represent the expression of any other gender, such as agender, genderqueer, gender fluid, or non-binary. I suggest that gender identity aligns with the concept of a *constellation* rather than with a linear spectrum.

In the next section, I discuss the limitations and trustworthiness of this research.

Limitations and Trustworthiness

Limitations.

Several limitations are evident in this research. The first, and most obvious, is its lack of cultural diversity. In spite of many efforts to recruit participants of diverse ethnicities, only one participant represented an ethnicity that expanded upon the Western European model. To tell a whites-only story risks essentializing and privileging dominant racial discourses of the U.S., and perpetuating the racial divide. That was not, and is not now, a part of my agenda. The original intention of this research was to interview participants from a variety of ethnicities. I made every effort through personal contacts,

presentations, and email, to recruit participants who would expand the diversity of the participant base, but those efforts were unproductive. As the pipeline of participants filled, I reluctantly made the decision to close enrollment in order to complete the study. This limitation, of course, means that transferability of the findings extends only to other white TgNCi people, and should not be considered in the gender identity work of other ethnicities.

A second limitation is that within the participant sample, there was a low representation of male-identified participants. This raises a question about whether or not the findings would be transferrable to other white male-identified TgNCi people.

During the course of the research, two additional aspects limited the depth and scope of this study. First, two participants arrived without some, or all of artifacts they meant to bring to I-2. One participant discovered after arrival that she had not brought either of two artifacts she intended to have with her. The absence of any artifacts at all prevented the in-person observation and photography established in the research protocol. Although the participant sent a single photo of four items, including the two she meant to have with her, the lack of physical availability of her objects prevented the multimodal aspects of I-2 and as a result, reduced the depth of narrative that was available with other participants. It was not possible to examine her objects in detail, or to observe fine nuances of their appearances. Another participant brought two artifacts, but arrived without the third, which represented a key relationship that supported her gender identity work. Although she later sent a single photo of the third object, it was shown in the image

as part of a larger composition rather than being foregrounded as a storied object. Tactile elements, sounds, color, and the like were missing from the experience between the researcher and both participants.

Second, in the 30 to 45 age group, there were only two participants, leaving the group one participant short of the minimum. Similar to my wish for cultural diversity I hoped for at least one more person from that age group to enroll. In the end I closed the data collection process in order to finish the study. A third participant would have added depth to the data from within that age group by interrupting a binary of two participants, and would also have lifted occurrences within socio-cultural contexts into more prominence, as equal to the other age groups, to increase depth of understanding across the range of the decades of experiences of all age groups.

In spite of these limitations, substantial depth was achieved within individual narratives, within aggregated narratives of each age group, and across all four age groups. I believe that the findings of this research are solid and transferrable to those represented by the population studied.

Trustworthiness.

In Chapter 2 I discussed the measures I implemented to maximize the reliability of this research. Without reliability, the findings would not necessarily be transferrable. One aspect of reliability that I mentioned in Chapter 2 was that I sought out two TgNCi individuals to read drafts of this dissertation. After their readings, each individual offered feedback that was similar to that from the other reader. Although they have met, I doubt

that they know one another well. Since one is local, and one lives out-of-state, their paths would cross infrequently. Both readers reported a deeply emotional response to the narratives of research participants, and also to the findings. They indicated that it was somehow confirming of their own experiences to read the details of others' gender identity work. Furthermore, they mentioned aspects of gender identity work accomplished in changing cultural contexts across the collective lifespans of all participants, as a helpful new perspective. One of the readers indicated a wish to use material from my research in her advocacy work. Their similar responses demonstrate *catalytic validity*, which is described by Lather (1986) as a term that: "Refers to the degree to which the research process re-orient, focuses, and energizes participants in what Freire (1973) terms 'conscientization,' knowing reality in order to better transform it" (p. 67). I accepted the readers' input as confirmation that the research holds something of value that may be transferrable to other TgNCi individuals, and as evidence of the production of social knowledge made due to making visible mechanisms of oppression. Lather (1986) describes such social knowledge as, "helpful in the struggle for a more equitable world" (p. 67).

Contributions

This research contributes to the literature of qualitative methods and lifespan narrative research, the social construction of gender identity, and the significance and meanings of objects. The development of new terminology and suggested amplification of existing concepts form a basis for strategies to interrupt harmful social practices.

To date there exists no body of data documenting lifespan narratives of TgNCi people. This research begins that process. Furthermore, there exists no evidence of prior use of CDA as a tool to deconstruct the minutiae of language as social practice in either gender identity work or with lifespan narrative research. CDA offered means to identify contexts of oppression across the spans of individual lives, and provided clear evidence of harmful social practices. It also revealed participants' responses as they devised protective strategies such as self-silencing, hiding, and secrecy. This research offers explanations for such tactics as logical and reasonable mechanisms in response to pervasive threat, rather than the popular notion that such approaches are a sign of sickness.

Thus, participants dressed (in alignment with gender identity) in secret as an opportunity to see and experience the recognizable self. The significance and meanings of clothing and other artifacts functioned to support and sustain gender identity work within oppressive contexts, as revealed through MDA. Inanimate objects, when connected with an individual's sense of self, or as representations of connection with supportive others, offered courage, comfort, and authenticity.

I implemented key terminology to describe various aspects of this research and its findings. The term, *Who-I-Am*, offers the simplest way to understand another person's identity. They say who they are and we accept that. *Gender identity work* is an iterative, socially situated, and co-creative process of making visible the gendered self. *Interrupted agency* refers to the desire to act, or automatic acting as arising from the normal

expression of one's gender identity, when that action is stopped by the TgNCi individual as a response to a perceived, or actual threat in an oppressive context.

Finally, I offered the idea of gender identity as a constellation rather than existing along a linear spectrum. A linear concept easily associates gender identity with a binary construction, similar to sex. The perspective of gender identity as a constellation removes, once and for all, any notion of gender identity as either/or, since gender identity resides in a unique, and moveable, space in a multidimensional framework. A constellation includes everyone's gender, with any combination of elements and preferences.

Future Directions

I view this dissertation as the beginning of documentation of lifespan narratives of TgNCi people. This research will continue with interviews and analysis of lifespan narratives from people of color. I anticipate that the intersections of oppression for people with black and brown skin who also are TgNCi, may demonstrate increased isolation from others, along with intensified trauma.

This research included only one participant whose birth-assigned sex was female, and who identifies as a man. Expanding the body of narratives from the experiences of trans men would further deepen understanding of gender identity work.

The theories and methods of CDA should be applied to other endeavors as well, such as understanding the experiences of significant others, who are in relationship with a TgNCi person. What would their narratives reveal about the social construction of their

perspectives and (perhaps) struggles with their loved one's gender identity? Research about spouses, children, and parents of someone who is TgNCi is of great importance in terms of what made it possible for them to embrace their loved ones' disclosures, or what prevented that. A study of couples within which one, (or both) individual(s) is(are) TgNCi could reveal societal structures that impact family life, and offer strategies to interrupt oppressive patterns. Answers to these and other critical questions for research can help to inform, and shape a more just and welcoming society.

As mentioned above, are intersections of oppressions. First of all, this research should be expanded to include a variety of ethnicities. Following that, the examination of data from several single-ethnicity studies could be examined to compare findings across ethnicities. The methods of this study could also be applied to examination of intersections with racism, sexism, religious oppression, ageism, and homophobia. Furthermore, sociologists and ethnographers could consider the relevance of these findings from individuals in regard to responses to oppression of whole communities of oppressed people: communities' responses to oppression, and meanings and functions of artifacts.

Finally, based on the findings from CDA, might it be possible to conceptualize oppression as a public health issue, wherein cultural patterns become the focus of intervention and treatment?

Conclusion

I suggest that each of us has something about ourselves that we are reluctant to reveal to others. But choosing to keep something to ourselves is very different from being forced into hiding through perceived or actual threat of harm, due to a core component of who we *are*. I experienced this sort of opposition when I came out later in life as a lesbian. The process met with responses ranging from gentle acceptance, to oppression and the restriction of primary relationships on a permanent basis, since (as I understand it) I was suddenly categorized as *behaving* rather than *being*. I mention this because oppression and my resulting anger drove me to this research. I wanted to examine the fine-grained details of moment-by-moment social practices, because having felt the sting, I wanted to figure out solutions.

We grow and develop as human beings, and it is expected that we progress through certain predictable stages. In the past, and currently, society at large does not permit such normal processes for TgNCi people. Although the landscape is changing with the increasing presence of reputable gender clinics and medical support, and with supportive organizations for families with a TgNCi member, there is a long road ahead. Increasing the acceptance and welcome of TgNCi people as co-travelers who possess the freedom to express identity openly will only amplify the richness of our cultural landscape. Micah offered insight into the contrast between his life before openly acknowledging his gender identity, and at the time of the interviews, living in alignment with his gender identity.

Yeah. Um I try to explain it to people // the difference between, like, if you were tryin' to breathe like through one of those little coffee stirrers that is like a straw, but it's like *barely* getting enough air, and it's like *all you knew* and it had been there for so long, that's just how you thought it was. And then somebody is just like, "Get that outa your mouth and open your mouth up!" And you're like, "Wow! This is so much *easier!*" Right? It was just like all of a sudden there was like *so much* more *life* to me! Um / and I, I guess I was / always carrying around this weight that I almost had forgotten I was carrying. Because I would be like almost *shocked* when somebody would identify me as male...Um but yeah. I just, that little, that little edge, that little weight was just *gone*. Um which just, I guess the energy that it took, even though I wasn't *really* aware of the energy that it took to live with that, once that was *gone* I was afraid at first, because that energy was lifted and I didn't know what to *do* with all this energy. And then I found all kinds of things. Like I said. I mean, I do more in the *community* now, I have a wife now, I, you know what I mean? I'm like, "*Oh! This* is what you do with that, once you're not carrying this other burden around with you!" (Micah, sec. 145-147)

Micah's burden, the burden of living in secret, was heavy and restrictive. I draw my writing to a close four months after the President of the United States, Donald Trump, declared via a Tweet (Davis & Cooper, July 26, 2017), that transgender people would no longer be allowed to serve in the military. The Joint Chiefs of Staff made it clear that they

would not comply with a Tweet (Starr, Cohen, & Sciutto, 2017). Public demonstrations took place across the U.S., and social media was a-buzz about the issue.

Four days ago, in the first U.S. elections of the Donald Trump presidency, five transgender candidates won races, one of who upset an incumbent of 25 years in the state of Virginia, to take “the highest elected office ever for a transgender candidate” (Malo, 2017). Whereas previously there were six elected transgender officials in the U.S., there are now 11, nearly doubling transgender representation in government (Malo). Furthermore, in the 2017-2018 election cycle, 30 races have a transgender candidate, more than doubling the 13 in the 2015-2016 cycle (Malo).

Across the decades from the 1950s to the end of 2016 this research demonstrates the impact of texts and signs as interrupters of systems of oppression. Such interruption begins to open up spaces for changes not only in social practice, but also in policies and laws that protect and support the rights and equal citizenship of TgNCi people. The way forward must include correction of oppressive social practices so that TgNCi people of all cultural origins are welcomed as co-participants, and co-creators of life in the U.S. To do less than that is simply unjust.

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Appendix A – Participant Recruitment

Call for Study Participants

Kate O'Brien, M.A.Ed., LCSW, Doctoral Candidate in Education

I am a doctoral candidate at the University of Missouri-St. Louis. I identify as an ally to LGBTQIA+ people of all ethnicities. I study lifespan narratives of gender expansive people. By gender expansive, I mean any identity that would be considered non-binary in the sense that an individual's gender identity is different from the sex that was assigned at birth. I am seeking participants in the St. Louis area who will commit to two in-person interviews, each of which may last up to 2 hours. Interviews will be conducted on the campus of the University of Missouri-St. Louis, and participants' confidentiality will be a primary concern of the investigator. Lifespan narratives, as a field of academic study, can expose critical aspects of culture and everyday interactions that contribute to the withholding of certain privileges from gender expansive people. As a result of exposing inequities, it is then possible to offer solutions and hope.

Although there might be some personal discomfort in the sharing of certain aspects of one's life, many people find that participation in lifespan interviews may provide new insights or even resolution to some previously unresolved matters.

I am seeking 3 – 5 participants of in each of the following age ranges: 18 to 30; 31 to 45; 46 to 59; and 60 and above. If you are interested to learn more about participating in this study, please contact me (Kate O'Brien) at **genderIDwork@gmail.com**. *This is a private email address accessed only by me.* If you prefer, you may call me at (636) 288-5304. *This is my personal phone, accessed by no one but me,* and you should feel free to leave a message with your name, telephone number, and best times to reach you, if I am unable to answer your call.

Initial Email

Hi, [NAME]!

Thanks for your offer to participate in the study! I'm attaching the consent form to this message, so that you can read about some of the details of the commitment. To participate, please follow this link to select 2 appointment times. The second appointment should take place 1 to 2 weeks after the first one.

Please use this code, rather than your name, to secure the two time slots: **26QP**

Click on this link to sign up: <http://bit.ly/GIDSched>

I'll arrange private space on the University of Missouri-St. Louis campus for our meetings, and I will let you know exactly where that will be.

Best regards,
Kate

Participant Sign-Up Form

Schedule of Interviews				
Day	Date	Start Time	End Time (approx)	Participant Code
September				
Tuesday	9/6/2016	1:00 PM	3:00 PM	QK44
Monday	9/12/2016	6:00 PM	8:00 PM	S2MD
Tuesday	9/13/16	10:00 AM	12:00 Noon	ZWPX
Thursday	9/15/16	10:00 AM	12:00 Noon	QK44
Thursday	9/22/2016	10:00 AM	12:00 Noon	8URZ
Saturday	9/24/2016	10:00 AM	12:00 Noon	S2MD
Monday	9/26/2016	6:00 PM	8:00 PM	6XUE
Tuesday	9/27/2016	10:00 AM	12:00 Noon	ZWPX
Wednesday	9/28/2016	6:00 PM	8:00 PM	73VT
October				
Monday	10/3/2016	6:00 PM	8:00 PM	F4FT
Monday	10/10/2016	6:00 PM	8:00 PM	6XUE
Tuesday	10/11/2016	10:00 AM	12:00 PM	8DGU
Thursday	10/13/2016	10:00 AM	12:00 PM	8URZ
Friday	10/14/2016	10:00 AM	12:00 PM	73VT
Tuesday	10/18/2016	10:00 AM	12:00 PM	YM3X
Monday	10/24/2016	6:00 PM	8:00 PM	CSWF
Tuesday	10/25/2016	10:00 AM	12:00 PM	8DGU
November				
Tuesday	11/8/2016	10:00 AM	12:00 PM	4AZC
Wednesday	11/9/2016	6:00 PM	8:00 PM	F4FT
Saturday	11/12/2016	10:15 AM	12:15 PM	CSWF
Monday	11/14/2016	6:00 PM	8:00 PM	UW4M
Tuesday	11/15/2016	10:00 AM	12:00 PM	4AZC
Tuesday	11/22/2016	10:00 AM	12:00 PM	YM3X
Monday	11/28/2016	6:00 PM	8:00 PM	UW4M
December				
Monday	12/5/2016	6:00 PM	8:00 PM	JGUL
Saturday	12/10/2016	10:00 AM	12:00 PM	JGUL

Follow-up email if no event scheduled for 5 days

]NAME]:

I wanted to make sure that my last message reached you, which contained the link to the interview schedule for my study, and a unique code for you to use to sign up anonymously for two time slots, between one and two weeks apart. If none of the available times works for you, just email me and we can certainly arrange something else.

Your code is: **26QP**

Sign-up Link: <http://bit.ly/GIDSched>

If you have any questions or hesitations about the study, or if you would like other information, please feel free to let me know, either via email or by telephone, at [636-288-5304](tel:636-288-5304).

All the best,
Kate

I-1 Reminder

[NAME],

I'm looking forward to our time together next **[DAY]**, **[DATE]**, from **[TIME]**. We will meet in **[location]** located on South Campus at the University of Missouri-St. Louis. There's a MetroLink stop at South Campus for those who want to avoid traffic and parking, and there is also guest parking. I'm attaching a map of South Campus, and a map of the parking lot with visitor spots.

Whether you drive, or travel via MetroLink, head toward **[building]** (#xx on the map) and enter through the front door (near the visitor lot). There will be a stairway directly ahead. Go *around* the stairs and head down the hallway directly behind them. Turn right to go down the first hall way to your right (by the glass wall). And then to your right, you will see a double doorway that leads to the computer lab in the **[area of building]**.

Ahead of you will be a desk where there may be a student reception worker, but if not, just walk up the ramp on the left of the desk and turn left to go through a single doorway where we will meet in **[room number]**. I'll be watching for you!

Thanks again for your interest in the study, and for your willingness to participate!

Kate

I-2 Reminder (same location)

[NAME],

I'm looking forward to our next meeting, which is scheduled for this [DAY], [DATE], from [TIME]. We will meet in the same location as before. Remember to bring your "cabinet of wonders," consisting of 3 to 5 items that you find meaningful in your gender identity journey.

I'll see you then!

Gift Card Text

Dear [NAME],

Thanks SO much for your participation in my study. I greatly appreciate your contribution, and will do my best to honor your journey through my work.

Kate

Scripted Introduction to Study

I study lifespan narratives of gender expansive people. By gender expansive, I mean any identity that would be considered non-binary in the sense that an individual's gender identity is different from the sex that was assigned at birth. I do this, because I am an ally to gender expansive people. I want to bring to light oppressive cultural practices.

If you agree to participate in my research, then you and I will meet for two interviews, each of which may last 1½ to 2 hours. I will audio record both interviews. We will schedule the second interview to take place one to two weeks after the first one. At the end of the first interview, I will give you specific instructions about how to select objects you will bring to Interview 2. During the second interview I will photograph your items, but I will not photograph you.

It's my job to make sure that I keep your identity private. That means that no one who reads my research, or who attends a presentation of my research will be able to know from what I say or do, who you really are. I won't associate your real name with any of the materials I write or with pictures of your items. If any of the things you bring with you are photographs of people, I will be sure that their features are not identifiable.

During the interview you may tell me about events or relationships or situations that were not happy experiences for you. So on the one hand, there is the possible risk that talking about the challenges you've faced could trigger unpleasant feelings. However, many people experience personal satisfaction and validation from sharing their life stories, and sometimes find resolution to personal questions. It is also possible that as

a result of your talking about those situations, others may experience new understanding and openness to gender expansive people.

There are no consequences if you decide to withdraw from the study. You may withdraw by letting me know through email or a phone call at any point during the data collection process. That process begins at the time you agree to participate in the study, and ends when Interview 2 is completed and you have answered any follow-up questions I might have. As a way to express my thanks for your participation in both interviews, you may choose to receive a \$20 gift card from Amazon, Starbucks, or iTunes at the end of the data collection process.

Thank you for considering participation in my inquiry. If you have questions, please feel free to contact me by email at: genderIDwork@gmail.com. Also feel free to share this opportunity with those you know who may be interested.

Appendix B – Consent Form and Demographic Questionnaire



College of Education
Department of Teaching and Learning Processes
 One University Blvd.
 St. Louis, Missouri 63121-4499
 Telephone: (636) 288-5304
 E-mail: genderIDwork@gmail.com

Informed Consent for Participation in Research Activities

Gender Identity Work: Cultural Ideologies and Agency as Described in Lifespan
 Narratives of Gender Expansive People

Participant _____ HSC Approval Number _____
 Principal Investigator: Kathryn G O'Brien PI's Phone Number: (636) 288-5304

1. You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Kathryn G. O'Brien under the supervision of Dr. Brenda Light Bredemeier, Ph.D.. The purpose of this research is to learn about identity work from the life stories of gender expansive people.
2. a) Your participation will involve two in-person interviews, each of which may last up to two hours.
 - Both interviews will be held on the campus of the University of Missouri-St. Louis.
 - Both interviews will be audio recorded.
 - Interview 1 will involve talking about your life.
 - At the end of Interview 1, I will give you specific instructions about how to select personal items to bring with you to Interview 2.
 - During Interview 2 I will use still photography to photograph the items you bring, but I will not photograph you.
 - After Interview 2 I may contact you for answers to any questions that arise for me during my work with the materials. I anticipate that this would take no more than a maximum of 30 minutes.
 - Therefore, the total amount of time involved in your participation will be approximately 4 ½ hours.
3. a) There may be a risk of encountering uncomfortable feelings as you recall experiences from across your lifespan. Apart from that, no additional risks are anticipated.

- b) You will be assigned a pseudonym (a name other than your real name) in the writing of this research. Interview transcripts and digital images associated with them will be named alphanumerically, with no reference to you.
- c) You should be aware that I am a Licensed Clinical Social Worker, and as such am a mandated reporter in the State of Missouri. Although uncovering issues related to intent to harm self or others, or of being harmed by someone else would lie outside the scope of this research, if such issues are disclosed to me during the course of the study, I am bound by law and ethics to report them to the appropriate parties.
4. On the one hand, there may be no direct benefits for you participating in this study. However, your participation will contribute to the knowledge about gender expansive identity work, and may help society. Possible benefits to you from participating in this research may be the opportunity to explore your memories with, enjoyment of talking about your life experiences, and the possibility of making new meanings of past events.
 5. Your participation is voluntary and you may choose not to participate in this research study or to withdraw your consent at any time during the data collection phase.
Interviews begin at the time that you agree to participate in the study, and ends when Interview 2 is completed, or when you have answered some additional questions. If you want to withdraw from the study, you can contact me at: genderIDwork@gmail.com or by telephone at 636-288-5304. You may choose not to answer any interview questions that you do not want to answer. You will NOT be penalized in any way should you choose not to participate or to withdraw.
 6. By agreeing to participate, you understand and agree that your data may be shared in the form of presentations and/or publications. In all cases, your identity will not be revealed. In rare instances, a researcher's study must undergo an audit or program evaluation by an oversight agency (such as the Office for Human Research Protection). That agency would be required to maintain the confidentiality of your data. In addition, all data will be stored on a password-protected computer and/or in a locked office.
 7. As a way to express my thanks for your participation in both interviews, you may choose to receive a \$20 gift card from Amazon, Starbucks, or iTunes at the end of the data collection process.
 8. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study, or if any problems arise, you may call the Investigator, Kathryn G. O'Brien (636) 288-5304 or Dr. Brenda Bredemeier (314) 516-6820. You may also ask questions or state concerns regarding your rights as a research participant to the Office of Research Administration, at 314-516-5897.

I have read this consent form and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I will also be given a copy of this consent form for my records. I consent to my participation in the research described above.

Participant's Signature Date

Participant's Printed Name

Signature, Investigator / Designee Date

Investigator/Designee Printed Name

Demographic Questionnaire

Participant's Name:

Preferred Name (if different):

Participant's Preferred Pronouns (she/her/hers; he/him/his; they/their/theirs; or other personal pronouns): _____

Date of Birth: mm/dd/yyyy: _____

Current age: _____

Sex assigned at birth: _____

Gender identity: _____

Ethnicity: _____

Mailing address:

Preferred Method of Contact:

 Email _____ Text _____ Telephone _____

The community in which I grew up was (is):

 Urban Suburban Rural

The schools I attended were:

 Public Private Parochial Home school

I would describe my family's socioeconomic status as:

 High income, Upper class Medium income, Middle class Poor / Lower Class

Appendix C – Interview Protocols

Interview 1

Preliminaries

Interviewer welcomes participant.

Review of Informed Consent, if not previously signed.

Interviewer turns on audio recording device, with participant's permission.

Interviewer asks participant to state their gender identity and pronoun preference.

Question

Tell me your life story beginning as far back as you can go, up to the present time.

I will not interrupt your talk, so feel free to take as long as you need.

Follow-up

Interviewer may ask questions to probe and/or seek clarification. For example:

- When you were talking about _____ I missed the identity of the person who _____.
- Tell me more about how you felt when _____.
- When you were talking about _____ I didn't understand what you meant by _____. Would you tell me more about that?

Closing

Interviewer and participant schedule next appointment (if not already done) and interviewer thanks participant for their time and contributions to the study.

Interviewer then reads the following:

The traditional cabinets of curiosities or cabinets of wonder started in the Baroque period (16th and 17th centuries) with well-to-do European travelers who began collecting extraordinary items from foreign countries they visited, such as natural specimens, items made of precious materials, and instruments of technology.

These extraordinary objects or artifacts were stored in special cupboards or actual rooms for viewing enjoyment to inspire the viewer's imagination, curiosity, and wondering about art, other cultures, and the natural world.

For Interview 2, please bring your own "cabinet of wonders" collection, consisting of *three to five* items that you would like to share in relation to the telling of your gender identity story. The items can be personal journals, diaries, letters, books, photographs, paintings, personal belongings, formal and informal documents, student homework assignments, articles of clothing or personal adornment, or any other objects that you would like to share. (adapted from Kim, 2016, p. 177)

As we have discussed, I will use still shots to photograph those items, but I will not photograph you.

Restate the date, time, and location of Interview 2.

Interview 2

Preliminaries

Interviewer welcomes participant and invites them to arrange their cabinet of curiosities as they wish. Interviewer turns on audio recording device.

Interview

First, is there anything that you have thought of that you would like to clarify, or change, from Interview 1, or that you want to add? [When participant has finished, or if they decline to clarify, change, or add, then interviewer proceeds to the next question.]

Are you ready to take me on a tour of your cabinet of curiosities? Start with any of your artifacts – wherever you choose. Talk about it, following the prompts on the card that I will now read to you. [Interviewer reads Part I, below.]

Part 1

State the object's name

Describe it in as much detail as possible, including:

- Color
- Size
- Shape
- Feel (texture, temperature, anything else that is significant to you)
- Smell
- Auditory elements (actual sound, or what sounds it brings to mind)
- Taste (if the object was ever used for oral soothing).
- Any other significant aspects of its appearance for you

When you have responded to all of the above, please turn the card over and follow the prompts.

Part 2

- During what period(s) of your life was this item most significant?
- Describe the object's gender.
- Tell about a time when this object was involved in your gender identity work.
- If the object could speak, how might it describe you in that same situation?

What did it see, hear, feel, etc.?

When you have finished, please let me know.

When the participant indicates that they have completed the narration, the interviewer may ask questions, and will then ask the participant to situate the artifact for picture taking.

This process repeats through the series of objects and accompanying stories.

Follow-up

Interviewer and participant share conversation about any unanswered questions, or issues that might have arisen during Interview 2.

Closing

Interviewer gives approximate date range for completion of transcription process. Interviewer thanks participant for taking part in the study and confirms participant's choice of thank you gift: \$20 in the form of a gift card (Amazon or Starbuck's), or as a donation to a local LGBT organization.

Appendix D – Transcription Notation Conventions Key

Symbols and Emphasis

/ A pause of one second. A series of several markings indicates one second per mark.

Italics Moderate emphasis

Bold Strong emphasis

Bold italics Extremely strong emphasis

sssss Repeated vowels or consonants indicate elongated sounds within utterances

General Notes

Transcriptions do not include markings for rising and falling tones. Instead, I tried to capture the contour of speech using standard English punctuation to demarcate the structure of spoken narrative.

Appendix E – Content Analysis Categories, Definitions, and Merges

Category System (66 items)	Memo	Category Merge (30 items)	Final Categories (3 items)
ABUSE	Physical and emotional abuse	Abuse	Oppression
Bullying - AD	Texts about bullying in adulthood, but not in higher ed and/or the military	Bullying	Oppression
Bullying - ELEM	Texts about bullying in elementary grades, K-5	Bullying	Oppression
Bullying - HIGHER ED / MILITARY	Texts about bullying in higher ed and/or the military	Bullying	Oppression
Bullying - MID	Texts about bullying in middle grades, 6-8	Bullying	Oppression
Bullying - SEC	Texts about bullying in secondary grades, 9-12	Bullying	Oppression
CULTURE & POLITICS	Texts about participants' interactions with culture and/or politics	Culture/Politics	Oppression
Examples/Language	Limits of language connected with limited gender expression	Culture/Politics	Oppression
gID ²⁰ - OBSTACLES	Opposition, disbelief, or hostility toward participants	Obstacles	Oppression

Category System (65 items)	Memo	Category Merge (30 items)	Final Categories (3 items)
gID - OTHERS' RESISTANCE	Discursive opposition to gID	Resistance of Others	Oppression
gID - PRAYER	Seeking physical transformation to match <i>Who-I-Am</i>	Prayer	Oppression
gID - RELIGION	Experiences with religion and its interaction with gender identity	Religion	Oppression
gID - SOLUTIONS ATTEMPTED	Efforts to correct the "problem."	Solutions Attempted	Oppression
LONGING	Wanting to <i>look like</i> the gender of <i>Who-I-Am</i>	Desire	Oppression
Transphobia	Texts about participants' encounters with transphobia	Transphobia	Oppression
Activities & artifacts - ADULT	What participants enjoy doing in adulthood, and any specific objects mentioned, related to those activities.	Activities & Artifacts	Suppression
Activities & artifacts - ELEM	What participants enjoyed doing in grades K-5, and any specific objects mentioned, related to those activities.	Activities & Artifacts	Suppression
Activities & artifacts - MID	What participants enjoyed doing in grades 6-8, and any specific objects mentioned, related to those activities.	Activities & Artifacts	Suppression

Category System (66 items)	Memo	Category Merge (30 items)	Final Categories (3 items)
Activities & artifacts - SEC	What participants enjoyed doing in grades 9-12, and any specific objects mentioned, related to those activities.	Activities & Artifacts	Suppression
COPING STRATEGIES	Texts about how participants manage opposition to their gender identities	Coping Strategies	Suppression
Dressing - AD	The wearing clothes not socially permitted in adulthood, but not in higher ed and/or the military	Dressing	Suppression
Dressing - URGE	Overwhelming desire to wear clothing aligned with gender identity	Dressing	Suppression
Dressing -HIGHER ED / MILITARY	Wearing clothes not socially permitted in higher ed and/or the military	Dressing	Suppression
gID - ADULT	Consideration of one's own gender identity in adulthood, but not in higher ed and/or the military	Gender identity	Suppression
gID - COMPROMISES	gID compromises made in order to preserve relationships	Gender identity	Suppression
gID - ELEM	Consideration of one's own gender identity in elementary school, grades K-5	Gender identity	Suppression
gID - HIGHER ED / MILITARY	Consideration of one's own gender identity in adulthood, but not in higher ed and/or the military	Gender identity	Suppression

Category System (66 items)	Memo	Category Merge (30 items)	Final Categories (3 items)
gID - MAINTAINING BALANCE	Keeping composure in astonishing circumstances	Gender identity	Suppression
gID - MID	Consideration of one's own gender identity in middle school, grades 6-8	Gender identity	Suppression
gID - SEC	Consideration of one's own gender identity in secondary school, grades 9-12	Gender identity	Suppression
gID_A - ADULT	Artifacts representative of gID in adulthood, but not in higher ed and/or the military	Gender identity	Suppression
gID_A - ELEM	Artifacts representative of gID in elementary school, grades K-5	Gender identity	Suppression
gID_A - MID	Artifacts representative of gID in middle school, grades 6-8	Gender identity	Suppression
gID_A - SEC	Artifacts representative of gID in secondary school, grades 9-12	Gender identity	Suppression
Hiding / Secrecy	Responses to opposition, disbelief, or hostility	Hiding/Secrecy	Suppression
Relationship p/a - ELEM	Relationship preferences or affiliations in elementary grades, K - 5	Relationships	Suppression
Relationships p/a - H ED / MILITARY	Relationship preferences in higher ed and/or the military	Relationships	Suppression
Relationships p/a - MID	Relationship preferences or affiliations in middle grades, 6-8	Relationships	Suppression

Category System (66 items)	Memo	Category Merge (30 items)	Final Categories (3 items)
Relationships p/a - SEC	Relationship preferences and affiliations in secondary grades, 9-12.	Relationships	Suppression
Activities & artifacts - EC	Objects the participant wanted/desired in early childhood.	Activities & Artifacts	Visibility
Dressing - EC	Wearing clothes not socially permitted earlier than kindergarten	Dressing	Visibility
Dressing - ELEM	Wearing clothes not socially permitted in elementary grades, K-5	Dressing	Visibility
Dressing - SEC	Wearing clothes not socially permitted in secondary grades, 9-12	Dressing	Visibility
External sources of information	Digital, print, people - external sources of info pursued by participants to gain knowledge.	Information Seeking	Visibility
First Time Out	Participants' stories of the first time they wore in public, clothing that aligned with their preferred mode of dress	First time out	Visibility
gID - ACCEPTANCE	Acceptance of own gender identity	Acceptance	Visibility
gID - ADVOCACY	Participants' advocacy efforts	Advocacy	Visibility
gID - APPEARANCE	Language of the self, and of others, about gender expression/identity	Appearance	Visibility

Category System (66 items)	Memo	Category Merge (30 items)	Final Categories (3 items)
gID - DISCLOSURES	Sharing about gID with someone else.	Disclosures to others	Visibility
gID - EC	Consideration of one's own gender identity earlier than kindergarten	Gender identity	Visibility
gID - GOING PUBLIC	Changing outward appearance to align with identity	Gender identity	Visibility
gID - NOW STATEMENTS	Texts about how participants view the past, the present, and the future, at the time of the interviews.	Now Statements	Visibility
gID first encounter	Participants' texts about their earliest awareness that they were different from others, based on concepts of gender, such as preferences for toys, clothing, playmates, and the like.	First awareness	Visibility
gID_A - ACCEPTANCE	Artifacts supporting acceptance of own gender identity	Acceptance	Visibility
gID_A - ADVOCACY	Participants' artifacts related to advocacy	Advocacy	Visibility
gID_A - APPEARANCE	Artifacts of appearance (photographs, accessories, clothing, etc.)	Appearance	Visibility
gID_A - EC	Artifacts representative of gID earlier than kindergarten	Gender identity	Visibility
gID_A - GOING PUBLIC	Narration via artifact(s).	Gender identity	Visibility
Personal Interests	Current interests / hobbies	Activities & Artifacts	Visibility

Category System (66 items)	Memo	Category Merge (30 items)	Final Categories (3 items)
Relationship p/a - ADULT	Relationship preferences in adulthood, but not in higher ed and/or the military	Relationships	Visibility
Self-Presentation	How participants represent themselves in public spaces	Appearance	Visibility
Self-understanding	Texts related to participants' gID work in relation to the self.	Self-acceptance	Visibility
TIME - Urgency	Influence of advancing age on decisions related to gender identity	Time	Visibility
Trans Community	Interactions and conflicts within the trans community	Trans Community	Visibility
TRANSITION	Participants' texts about transition: the process, their choices, and associated meanings	Transition	Visibility
VALIDATION	Affirmation of one's identity from others	Validation	Visibility

Appendix F – CDA and Identities Building Tool Example

Text	Sense of Time	Perceptual Space	Interpersonal Distances	Discourses in Operation	Identities Building Tool
My best friend in kindergarten was this little blonde girl named Jane. Her family moved away at the end of that school year.	Established kindergarten as the year in school, which also indicates approximate age of 5 or 6	Mention of friend's blonde hair	Range from geographically near to far - friend moved away at the end of school year.	Carefree and happy childhood, and "best friends"	Emma as a friend
But at the beginning of that school year, so this would have been / in my memory I can still feel the warmth of the sun on my skin and I can smell freshly-mown grass, and I can smell the dust of leaves in the air. So it had to have been late September, early October. It was a beautiful day. It was kindergarten.	Emma further limits the time to "late September, early October."	Emma access the time of year through perceptual spaces: warmth of sun, smells of mown grass and leaf dust. A beautiful day.	Emma references the happy innocence of a young child, connecting kindergarten with a beautiful day, thereby situating herself as at home with everything, and everyone around her.	Happy times early in the school year	Emma as a sensor

Text	Sense of Time	Perceptual Space	Interpersonal Distances	Discourses in Operation	Identities Building Tool
We went for a half-day and uh I remember there was some activity, and um // our teacher divided us into two groups. Boys over here, girls over here.	Still another restriction on kindergarten as a half-day engagement. Emma recalls the moment of the teacher's direction, and the instructions to divide by sexes.	Emma hears the instructions.	Boys and girls were to go to two different locations.	Heterosexism	Emma as a student ready to play
And uh // I just saw boys going over there, girls including my friends, and particularly, you know, my bestie, going this way	Time seems to slow a bit for Emma, as she considers the options.	Emma's affinity group is the girls' group.	Emma's affinity with the girls is accompanied by <i>no</i> mention of affinity with the boys.	Heterosexism	Emma as a chooser
so I just went that way.	Decision made, Emma steps forward, assumably at her normal speed of movement.	Anticipation of joining friends.	Moving close to friends, which meant moving away from the boys.	Childhood agency	Emma as an agent


Text	Sense of Time	Perceptual Space	Interpersonal Distances	Discourses in Operation	Identities Building Tool
I was stopped. "No, you go over there."	Time keeps moving	The teacher's talk placed Emma in a space of interruption. Emma did not stop herself. She also seems not to have quite accepted the teacher's instruction.	The teacher's interruption placed Emma at a distance from the girls, while Emma felt distant from the boys.	Adultism, heterosexism	Teacher as authority on gender Emma as child who must obey
Uh and I stopped and I said that I'd go over there [with the girls].	Time stops momentarily, as Emma speaks to the teacher.	Emma doesn't ask if she can go with the girls. She tells the teacher she will <i>go over there</i> .	Emma makes an effort to increase closeness with the teacher through conversation.	Childhood agency	Emma, agentic child - reasons with teacher Teacher as authority on gender - quashes Emma's agency
It was like, "No. That's [other direction] where the boys go."	Forward motion of the clock	Blank perceptual space as Emma tries to solve her problem	No closeness with teacher after all	Adultism, heterosexism	Emma as a prisoner of teacher's directive

Text	Sense of Time	Perceptual Space	Interpersonal Distances	Discourses in Operation	Identities Building Tool
And it was then that I realized // I always kind of assumed at some point that / it would sort itself out, you know.	Time stops	Emma perceives pervasive opposition; experiences a sort of death of a dream.	No sense of relationship with the teacher, or with the boys; prevented from going with the girls.	Heterosexism, homophobia/transphobia	Emma as publicly shamed for her choice
I can't remember what those thoughts felt like. I don't really remember what it felt like to think that. But I remember the emotion. I remember the feeling of it now.	Time is wide open, going nowhere.	Frozen. From the richness of perceptual recall of the beautiful day in kindergarten, Emma begins to sink.	She is utterly alone: distant from every person on the playground.	Heterosexism, homophobia/transphobia	Emma as questioner of self-knowledge
And it was at that point that I realized, no. This isn't going to resolve itself.	A moment of reckoning, of realization, of insight	Despair?	Interpersonal connections jumbled	Heterosexism, homophobia/transphobia	Emma as little adult who must solve her problems alone
And I felt this // heavy falling feeling from the upper center of my chest right down my core. Just this sick feeling, um / like a roller coaster when you, you kind of lose your stomach for a second.	Slow motion	Bodily sensations from oppressive circumstance; feeling perhaps at heightened visibility to others in her sense of self	Physical proximity, but interpersonally at opposite ends of the earth	Heterosexism, homophobia/transphobia	Emma as physical reactor

Text	Sense of Time	Perceptual Space	Interpersonal Distances	Discourses in Operation	Identities Building Tool
And uh it wasn't until many years later I realized that feeling was dysphoria.	Retrospective from adult time	Realizing the concept of dysphoria	Still apart from others	Heterosexism, homophobia/transphobia	Emma, the adult recognizing Emma, the child
I had no idea. I just knew there was something wrong. And I had no idea, I didn't know what to do about it.	Child's time	Lostness, free-floating, untethered from human connection	Vast interpersonal distances	Heterosexism, homophobia/transphobia	Emma, previously agentic child, now helpless and lonely
But I did know that a boy who acted like a girl would be punished, and punished severely.	Child's time	Experiential understanding of being the object of bullying, due to others' definition of herself	"closest" when being physically attacked	Heterosexism, homophobia/transphobia	Emma as highly visible target for adults and peers

Appendix G – MDA Example

Karen’s Halloween Picture

Text	Notes	Artifact
<p>Looking at it now / I, I don’t like the way I look.</p>	<p>The way she looks is important to Karen, who wants to fit in. She almost shoves the picture at me, in her excitement to share about the event.</p>	<p>Karen wears all white: t-shirt, denim skirt, and pumps. Her wig is brown, and her purse a darker color leather.</p> <p>In the picture she is smiling broadly, but I have blurred her features to protect her identity. She stands with her arm around her wife, and it appears that they have switched appearances for the evening, with her wife in more masculine attire. This would make it possible for the wife to agree to Karen’s dressing in feminine clothing on Halloween.</p>
<p>But um / uhhh but it was, oh, golly!</p>	<p>This story is a repeat from I-1. Now, she seems extremely animated in her talk. “Oh, golly!” She sounds very excited.</p>	
<p>It was / I was <i>on cloud nine</i> that night!</p>	<p>She can’t seem to overemphasize her elation as she reconstructs the experience: clothing, context, being out in public.</p>	
<p>I mean, I was, I was bouncing off the walls I was so relieved!</p>	<p>More enthusiasm. Active words “bouncing off the walls” and internal state, “so relieved!”</p>	
<p>It was a huge spring unwinding! It was so tight there, it was ready to <i>snap!</i> //</p>	<p>Continuation of the description of relief, larger than life “huge.” Also the grip of hiding on all of her life. So tight, ready to snap. She had no release, nowhere to show her identity. Like a plant without sunshine that dies without chlorophyll.</p>	

Text	Notes	Artifact
<p>I told you that I was, you know, cognitively I was falling apart. I don't think I was that far away, looking back, from a <i>breakdown</i> of some sort.</p>	<p>Karen reminds me of her talk in I-1, as though NOW I know what she meant. Somehow, my seeing this picture would have made a difference, and so she layers the evidence in the picture with the words from I-1, and also with her active, descriptive talk above.</p>	<p>Karen's animation as she talks about this experience is dramatically different from her narration in I-1. That appears to be connected to the artifact. It is as though through the artifact she can take me <i>into</i> that night, <i>into</i> her experience, <i>into</i> her feminine self as visible – not just to me, but also to her.</p>
<p>And uh / and / you know // [wife] just wished I had more trouble with the heels or something that night. You know. I really didn't. Uh she uh, yeah.</p>	<p>Karen is proud of how easily she walked in heels that night for the first time in public. She believes her wife wished she had more trouble. She chuckles about it.</p>	
<p>I was // it was, it was just like I said it was.</p>	<p>So there. See? Just as I told you before. – seems to be what she says.</p>	
<p>Kinda like beating your head against the <i>wall</i> for <i>all your life</i> and I stopped and was like, “WOW! This actually feels <i>good different!</i>” (Karen, sec. 230-231)</p>	<p>Summary: Karen contrasts the torment of all of her life up to that evening with the experience of being like an untethered balloon. Release, relief, “good different!”</p>	

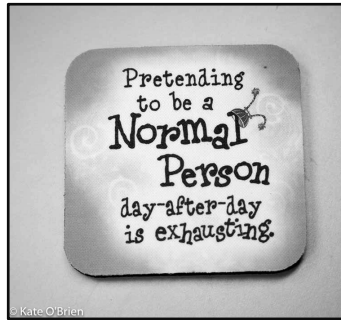
Appendix H – Participants and Artifacts

Ages 60 and Older

Karen.



Halloween picture



Coaster



Eureka Springs picture

Mimi.



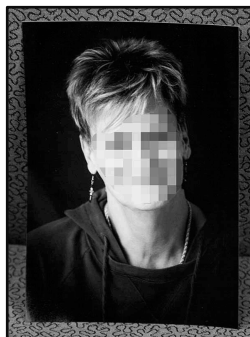
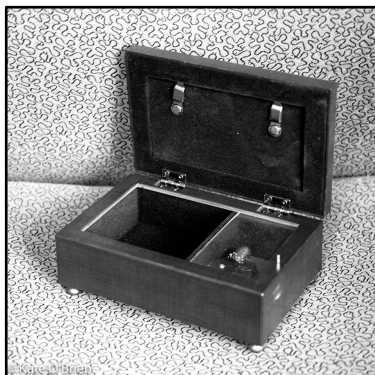
Music box (plays “What a Wonderful World”)



Trophy

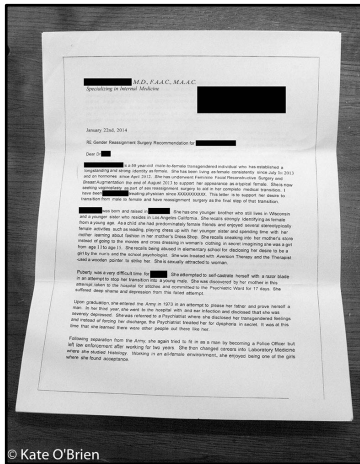


Pillow



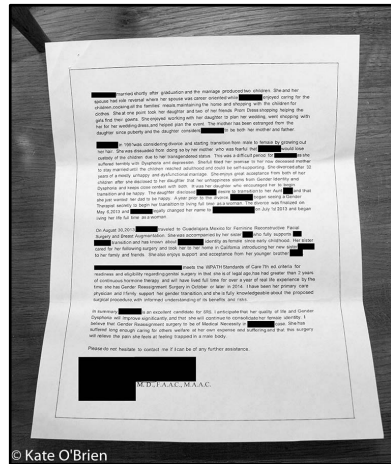
Headshot

Victoria.



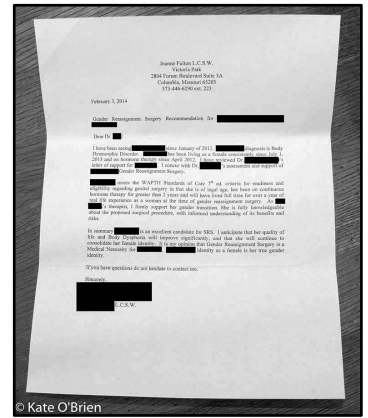
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Letter 1, page 1



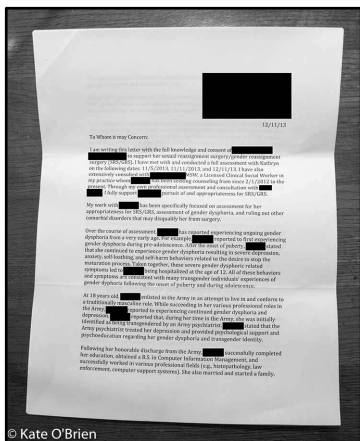
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Letter 1, page 2



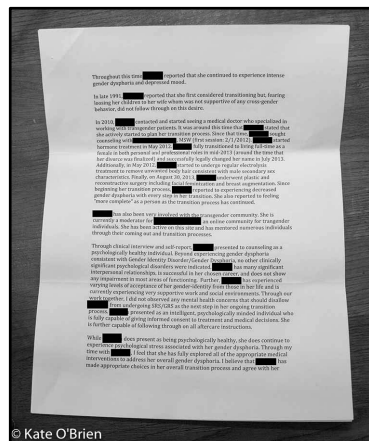
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Letter 2



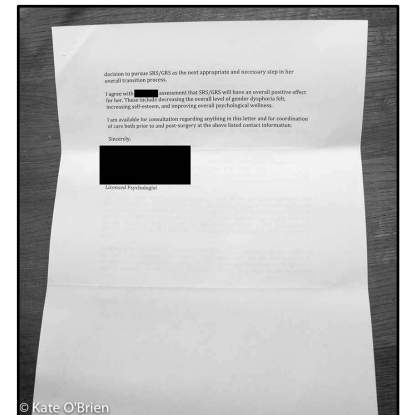
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Letter 3, page 3

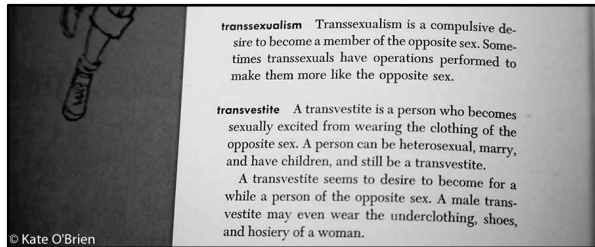


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Victoria's companion

Ages 46 – 59

Amélie.



Glossary page from *The Life Cycle Library* (shown at right)

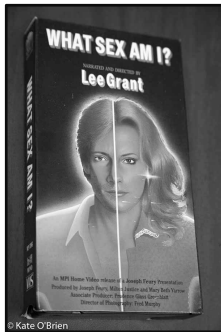


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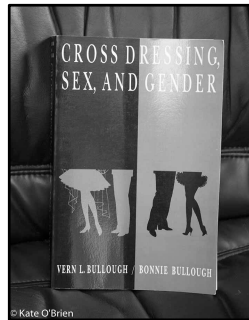


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Award - locket

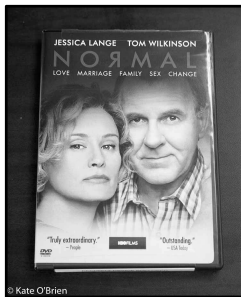


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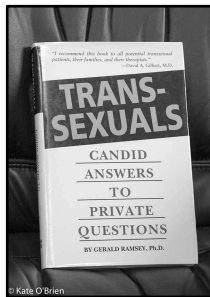


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Amélie's important books and videos



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Lacy bra and prostheses



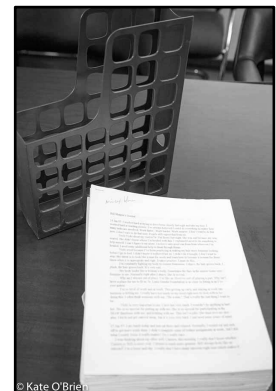
© Kate O'Brien

Green sequin dress



© Kate O'Brien

Tie-dyed "elephant bells" and flowered shirt



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Journal (600-700 pages)

Heidi.



Solitaire and goth rings

Emma.



Wristwatch



Estradiol tablet



Glass bead



Muselet cap



Mardi Gras doubloon, back and front

Micah.



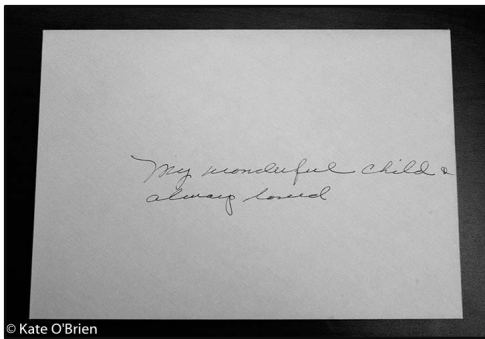
Soccer shirt



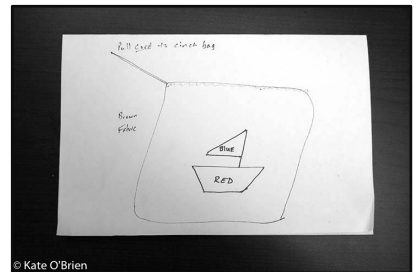
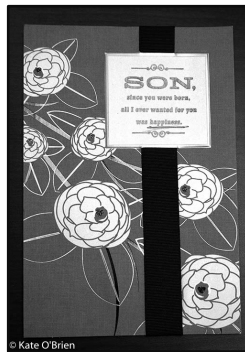
Binder (folded)



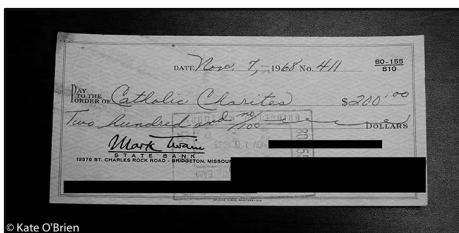
Entire collection, representing head, heart, hands and feet



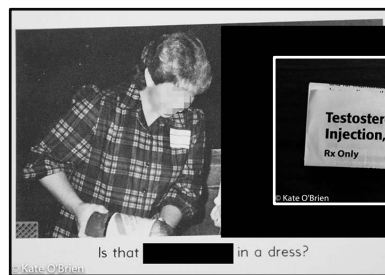
Envelope (earlier) and greeting card (later) from Mom



Drawing of bag from teacher (Grade 4)



Adoption check written by Micah's mother



Yearbook picture taken on the day Micah wore a dress for a school evaluation



Testosterone package insert



Framed Serenity Prayer



Micah's three pins



Ages 31 – 45

Ryan.



Best friend



Typewriter key necklace



Sassy black dress



Detail of dress with necklace

Gabriela.



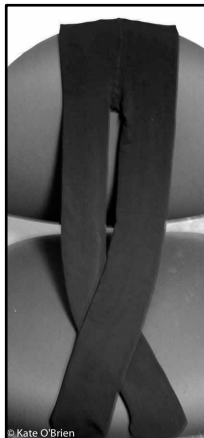
Red dress



Skinny jeans (above and at right)



Gray dress



Fleece-lined tights



Red dress, skinny jeans, and gray dress

Ages 18 – 30

Dingo.



Xi tau with jacket



Faux zebra heels



Facial hair products



Stage Makeup Kit
(never quite closed)



Stage makeup kit – so many voices



Arrangement of all artifacts

Sidonie.



Sinful Colors
Bright Blue
nail polish



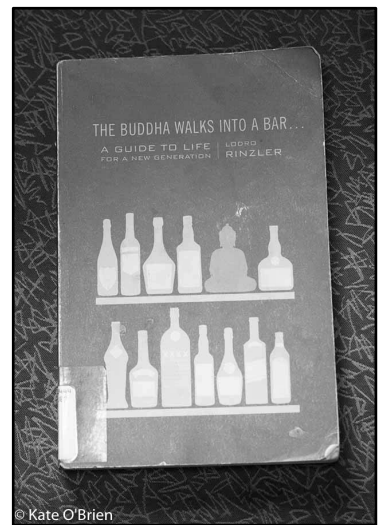
Earrings



Dapper Boi jeans – perfect fit!



Entire collection

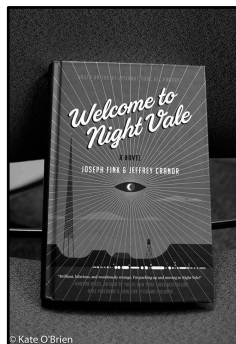


Buddhism book –
placeholder for one she
couldn't find

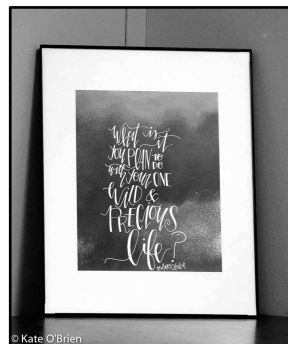
Prism.



GISHWHES
(scavenger hunt)
shirt



Book



Frame

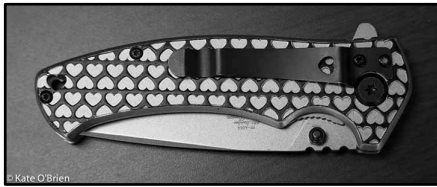


Dr. Seuss mug

Aeon.



Metallic pink and black knife with 3 3/4-inch blade



Mark of Chaos pendant



Entire collection



LARP Heraldry



Aviator sunglasses



Tattoo

Appendix I – Artifacts by Function with Key Statements

Artifacts Grouped by Collaborative Functions	Key Statement
Tools of Visibility	
Books	
<i>Welcome to Nightvale</i>	"There's no identity labels. It's just like this person is this way. And there's also, uh, I think it's in the podcast [by the same name], I'm not sure. Um, but they describe people as like, this one has male or female, or sometimes she/her pronouns, but sometimes they / like, sometimes they keep people with they/them pronouns, you know. And it's so normal. It's / it flows, you know. So I love the world of this book. Uh it's kind of something I can feel really comfortable in. It's something that, like / I can relate to" (Prism, sec. 278).
Prism, 18-30	
Cosmetics	
Nail polish	"I don't think that / wanting to / adorn yourself is a / solely feminine trait. Ummmm /// so I would say that my nail polish is more like me. My nail polish is more / um / say it's more non-binary, so it's more genderqueer. Because it can be used in both masculine and feminine ways. And through its colors it kind of spans the entire [inaudible] of what people typically consider feminine colors and masculine colors. Umm // both males and females, well females and males, wear 'em, even though people kind of like / downcast males who wear them. Which is a shame" (Sidonie, sec. 244-245).
Sidonie, 18-30	

Artifacts Grouped by Collaborative Functions	Key Statement
Tools of Visibility (continued)	
Jewelry & Accessories	
Aviator Sunglasses	"I like cheap sunglasses. What can I say? More accurately, my sunglasses don't live long enough to warrant getting something more than a buck. But the first picture in which I ever felt / did not feel like absolute shit about my appearance // was wearing this pair of sunglasses. It was / a picture I had taken / I was going out shopping with some friends and I just caught my reflection in a mirror, and I was floored. 'Cause literally, the first time I could see myself and I just didn't want to take a freaking axe to it! // But it's the first time I'd seen myself and I'd been on HRT forrrr / a few months at that point. And actually liked what I saw!" (Aeon, sec. 434).
Aeon, 18-30	
University pin	"...medals for some basic accomplishments, a [university name] pin" (Micah, sec. 257).
Micah, 46-59	
CNMT pin	"I also have a degree in nuclear medicine, so I'm a Certified Nuclear Medicine Technologist" (Micah, 257).
Micah, 46-59	
Personal record	
Greeting card - blue envelope from Mom	"My mom and, and part of her transition in this, right? Because my mom saying at one point, um, "My wonderful child, and always loved," right [written on envelope]? But she's not ready to give me a [son] card, but my goodness, is she trying, by evidence of what she wrote on the envelope here. Versus where she is now" (Micah, sec. 260).
Micah, 46-59	
Gender Confirmation Surgery Letters	"It's / it was my transition. All the things that went into it. That I, I did those things. And I went to therapy. I went to the doctors. Um did the hormone therapy. I changed / legally changed my name. Um / and announced to the whole world July 1st, 2013, that I was forever more gonna be [female first name, last name]" (Victoria, sec. 319-320).
Victoria, 60 & Older	
Photograph	
Headshot	"I can tell by the smile that uh it was pleasing to be // in that setting" (Mimi, sec. 452).
Mimi, 60 & Older	

Artifacts Grouped by Collaborative Functions	Key Statement
Tools of Visibility (continued)	
Eureka Springs picture Karen, 60 & Older	"I bought the whole outfit, with the exception of the shoes there. And I just was like wow! I am buying something real and I think it looks halfway decent! And uhhh // I just felt so good about it. I did. I had this new outfit, and it fit me and uh / looks relatively good and uh, so um / I think we went to dinner the next night and that's what I wore to dinner" (Karen, sec. 327).
Halloween picture Karen, 60 & Older	"And it was so funny. My wife was so worried about me getting' dressed, and people, as she told me, everybody in the place was just staring at me. That was her perception, and she wasn't lying, but / but it was / I don't think it was the case. And it was kind of funny" (Karen, sec. 223).
Prescription	
Estradiol Emma, 46-59	"So like a lot of transpeople, and particularly transwomen, I remember exactly the moment I took my first one. ///// It was the lower floor approaching the parking garage of [Name] University's Physicians Building, um 13, actually it's a 17-storey building...I had um just been prescribed, and I got a pill there. Uh at their pharmacy. Um my very first dose of HRT, which began with estradiol...Um it's estrogen...it's // a marker of a very specific place and time. It's the green light when one begins their medical transition. And then all those things to be, like a lot of other transfolk, it was the very first step that I took towards // physical transition. I'd already begun work. I'd already done most of the work of social transition. I was beginning // the monumental task of legal transition. Um // this marked the first forward movement in terms of physical change. / And for that I will always remember that day" (Emma, sec. 174-176).

Artifacts Grouped by Collaborative Functions	Key Statement
Tools of Visibility (continued)	
Testosterone package insert Micah, 46-59	"I have the testosterone, um injectable, um package insert. I actually am not on testosterone these days. I can't be on testosterone due to, um, blood clots. So I have a history of / I actually, literally, right now have blood clots in all lobes of both lungs. So / not a really good place to be. So we have to make sure that I don't get any more of that, because that will kill you. Um so / but that was a really big deal at the time, to actually be at the point in your transition where you were ready to take testosterone. That was a, that was a really big deal. It's a big milestone" (Micah, sec. 260).
Tribute	
Trophy Mimi, 60 & Older	"I'm 20 to 30 years older than everybody else out there who's playin', so that's quite an accomplishment in itself, is bein' recognized as MVP. And uh so it uh, it helped validate me as a female. And being, uh being accepted" (Mimi, sec. 426-427).

Artifacts Grouped by Collaborative Functions	Key Statement
Messengers	
Books	
Buddhism book	<p>Originally, the one I was gonna bring, if it hadn't been checked out again, was one called um // [exhales] gosh! Something comparable to like, Awakening Through, um, Race, Sexuality, and Gender. By an author named um /// ZogenErthalyn Manual [The Way of Tenderness: Awakening through Race, Sexuality, and Gender, by ZenjuEarthlyn Manual]. She is a queer, black, female Buddhist priest. Um lives within the tradition...Um so part of what really held me back in the beginning was Catholicism. Um and beliefs and experiences through that...And eventually //// the point where I came through, because I find a lot of connection to, um, kind of like the Ultimate, through my gender and my sexuality. Um I find a lot of where that is expressed within me and resides within me, is through those parts of me, so I find it to be um very encompassing and very powerful. And I think the more that I / grow in my spirituality, the more that I grow in that. And the more that I grow in that, the more that I grow in my spirituality. But like I find a lot of turmoil in the faith tradition that I was raised in" (Sidonie, sec. 289-290; 291; 292).</p>
Sidonie, 18-30	
<i>Cross-Dressing, Sex, and Gender</i>	<p>"I had never seen the word, cross-dressing / on a book before. You know? Uh I'd never had a book about that subject before. All I had were those old definitions. So here I am. I knew there was something wrong with me. And I saw this book, and it was like // I have to have that! It's the first time I had any information! Any in-depth information / on what I thought might be / wrong with me! You know. I'm gonna call it "wrong," because that's how I felt at the time, you know. Um // oh! I just remembered...I remember when I saw this book on the shelves in between the other books, I'm like, I have to have that. And uh / and then you worry about oh, now I'm gonna have to check out with this book. You know. So I think maybe I got some car magazines or something else, you know, I think I put this on the bottom" (Amélie, sec. 183).</p>
Amélie, 46-59	

**Artifacts Grouped by
Collaborative Functions**

Key Statement

Messengers (continued)

Life Cycle Library

Amélie, 46-59

"It was called, Life Cycle Library. It was like sexual education / books. And uh I you know, 'cause I, I didn't know much about much of anything including, uh, like I'm sure I was having wet dreams and that. I thought I had kidney problems or something. So until I read, until I read these books I didn't know anything about that. So here I am / like 7th grade and don't know much of anything, and anyway I read those books. And in the back, in the back, not in any of the chapters or any of the content, but in // the definitions, back in the definitions, it had a definition for transvestites, and a definition for transsexual. So I think, you know, that at about 11 or 12 years old was the first time in my mind, I thought to myself, you know I've got / I've got some sort of, I'm, I am in fact, mentally ill. I know that – you know what I mean? This is / I don't know any better! I don't know any better. So I uh // so I just realized that there was something terribly wrong with me" (Amélie, sec. 20-21).

*Transsexuals: Candid
Answers to Private
Questions*

Amélie, 46-59

"It's extremely important to me, because it, it answered a lot of my questions about transsexuals. And it let me know, this is extremely important, that // that / the gender spectrum is a very, very broad spectrum. And just because you're a, a male-to-female transsexual doesn't mean you need to give up all of your existing hobbies, or interests, or you know, like I still like my sports cars, and messing with my model aircraft and that...It's what I'm interested in!...So it answered a lot of questions for me. And uh imagine being able to find a book that was literally on the subject that I now define myself to be. So that was pretty important...And uh / anyway, so it was / I mean, for / coming from a time / where I had zero information, zero idea of what was going on with me, zero on anything, other than huge amounts of guilt, shame / you know. You know, hiding, my whole personality. Nobody / and I literally believed that nobody knew me. Only I knew me. Nobody, not even my closest friends knew me" (Amélie, sec. 435-438).

**Artifacts Grouped by
Collaborative Functions**

Key Statement

Messengers (continued)

Clothing

GISHWHES Shirt

Prism, 18 to 30

"Again it, it, this shirt, and this time, this scavenger hunt for a week, was like my freedom. It was my, it was my independence. It was like I could go out in the world, do what I wanted, set my mind to something, go meet new people across the world. It was, I will never forget this experience" (Prism, sec. 267).

Tie-dye jeans & flowered shirt

Amélie, 46-59

"So we were doing, [wife] and I did karaoke that night. And I did, I did two karaokes. I think I mentioned these in my, in my description of my life, of the first, the first one [wife] and I did together. And it was Scott MacKenzie's, uh, San Francisco, where you have flowers in your hair. Well, I had flowers in my hair. And actually, I've got pictures of us on stage. I had a, uh / I had uh, I think like a circular...Yeah! Like a wreath of flowers around my hair. So in my case, in my case, uh, they played Scott MacKenzie's music and his singing, and I'd sing along with it, just 'cause I had fun. Well it was cool and I had, I had the costume from Singles Limited earlier. And uh it just seemed like a fun thing. Oh, and, and the reason I got onto that song was the uh, /// Forest Gump. Forest Gump had some great, great music. And Scott MacKenzie's San Francisco was one of those. All right. In addition to this outfit, I performed that night in a red dress. And this is with my own natural hair and things. And we had to change, make our costumes change backstage and that. And uh / and I sang uh Over the Rainbow acapella. So anyway, what was significant about that night was, um, this was the night were I realized / or I came to my / to the conclusion in my own mind, that I'm not a cross dresser. I'm a transsexual. I'm not someone who's interested in dressing / as a female for kicks or anything like that. I need to be / female" (Amélie, sec. 386-389).

Artifacts Grouped by Collaborative Functions	Key Statement
Messengers (continued)	
Framed greeting card	"That one, that old picture, that's actually an old Christmas card. Um and my gosh. That's probably 20 years old, easily! Maybe longer I've had that thing. I just / I got it and I loved it from the very second I saw it. And uh framed it and I, I've swapped out the frames a little bit over the years, but I just always kept the card. I liked it. I have no idea who the card was from. Um the only thing that's in there is the face of the card, so it had no other meaning than whenever that was it was just like spot on" (Micah, sec. 279-280).
Lion and Lamb picture	
Micah, 46-59	
Household Item	
Coaster	"This is a coaster [inaudible] and I had this in my cubicle at work, and most people thought it was just a joke! But for me it was dead serious. And I had that there for years" (Karen, sec. 231).
Karen, 60 & Older	
Pillow	"So they said, just get one of those and you can sit on that and it'd be uh very comfortable. So the size was kind of, you know, important. You want somethin' that wasn't too big or too small, so it had to be just right to sit on. So uh / and the shape it had to be basically the shape of your bottom, so it would create more support" (Mimi, sec. 410-411).
Mimi, 60 & Older	
Dr. Seuss Mug	"So this mug, coming from [friend] means reflection. Means like, you're going places. It means that like, I will get to the places I need to be. Like, in my mind, in my career, whatever" (Prism, sec. 346).
Prism, 18-30	
Jewelry & Accessories	
Wristwatch	"She [mother] knew I didn't have a, a women's watch, so she got me this. It was um, it was the first present identifying my correct gender that she'd ever given me, this watch...Um /// it means a lot to me. /// I've always been really proud of my mother" (Emma, sec. 193).
Emma, 46-59	

Artifacts Grouped by Collaborative Functions	Key Statement
Messengers (continued)	
Personal record	
"Son" birthday card Micah, 46-59	"And my birthday was a couple of weeks ago. And I got the card that says, now, 'My Son.' And so part of my transition is part of her [mother's] transition as well. Right? People around you" (Micah, sec. 261).
Adoption check Micah, 46-59	"The old check, I think, is pretty cool. People don't have checks any more. I // gosh. I want to say that my mom gave that to me when I was like 18. There was a milestone. I want to say it was either 18 or 21 on my birthday. Um so she held onto it, too, which is what's the cool thing. Um and they had it, um so my mom and dad had like a / my mom had a dresser, my dad had a chest of drawers, but they had like this little common box. And it was in the common box, which was cool. So um, so yeah. I love that thing" (Micah, sec. 271-272).
Bag Drawing Micah, 46-59	"While she[Grade 4 teacher] was passing out pastel bags with flowers and butterflies and lipsticks and compacts and all these things to my friends, this was my bag. And I loved the thing. I carried it literally – I don't have it to show you, because I literally loved it to death, right? It just was in shreds" (Micah, sec. 258).
Birthday card – colleagues Micah, 46-59	"As I got older I better understood what community was and I, this is, this is a birthday card this year from my church group" (Micah, sec. 260).

**Artifacts Grouped by
Collaborative Functions**

Key Statement

Messengers (continued)

Hand written diary
Amélie, 46-59

"What this is, is an incredible thing! I tell the story of writing six or seven hundred pages of diary. And uh / when I was going to see Dr. [name]. This is that diary. And uh // in fact / this is / I haven't read it since I wrote it. But I did just happen to see // I think it's this on right here. This is like after my first, like after my first visit to Dr. [name]. '14 January, 1997. I worked hard at trying to drive home slowly last night, to take my time.' And I've described in my life story, about when I first went to see, to see Dr. [name] she told me, 'You need to slow down. Even if you have to consciously drive slower, consciously walk slower, you have to unwind. You have to slow down.' So uh / and this is uh oh! // This is even printed on printers as they changed over time, you know. Anyway, so this is my, my written story!" (Amélie, sec. 416-418).

Photograph

Candid yearbook photo
Micah, 46-59

"This picture in my high school book, which, people were aware it was a stretch for me. Um, and I shared the story, which was North Central evaluation and my school was gonna get evaluated, and our headmistress, our / our head Sister at the time, came to me and said, 'I need, I need all of my ladies to look like ladies, act like ladies, I need you in a dress. I hate to ask you to do this, but I need to ask you to do this.' And I'm, 'Great. Great.' So of course they snapped a picture. Right? And / back in the day I don't know how yearbooks – or if they even have yearbooks any more – were done. Our faculty had to approve the, the yearbook. And several faculty members said they would not approve this picture unless somebody sat down and said, 'Are you OK with it?' And I said, 'OK!' And I said, 'You know, I think I am'" (Micah, sec. 262-263).

Dog picture
Ryan, 31-45

"He was significant in my life for eleven years! Eleven magical years. And he transformed me physically and mentally, as I said earlier. I learned more about what I could do and what I could achieve with him" (Ryan, sec 307).

Artifacts Grouped by Collaborative Functions	Key Statement
Messengers (continued)	
Token	"This was used in the first major Transgender Day of Remembrance ceremony at the Metropolitan Community Church...And at one point, um / when the names and, where possible, the pictures, of all the transwomen, not just in the United States, but globally, um, were being screened
Glass bead	0:49:00.5 um around the upper um walls of the sanctuary, um everyone was invited to bring their stone up and leave it on this white cloth that was surrounded by um candles and mirrors. And when hundreds of these were put together, the reflection, uh, it just beamed. Beginning on the um, the podium, I don't know if you use the term altar, the altar space. Uh the steps were that, uh ceremony was put together, uh it just glowed with this light that the speaker at that time used as a metaphor for / um / the light gone from the world, because of the murders of these women, but also light in the world, represented by folks like those who had attended. Allies, cisgender, heterosexual people" (Emma, sec. 199, 204).
Emma, 46-59	
Mardi Gras Doubloon	"This is a touchstone, or talisman of our lives together, my spouse and I, in many ways" (Emma, sec. 144).
Emma, 46-59	
Muselet Cap	"So this particular champagne cap is / was on the bottle of the flagship champagne from, um // Perrier Jouet, uh one of the three main / champagne houses in uh Reims, in uh, kind of south central province of Champagne. This bottle was opened // at our wedding reception / in New Orleans / on September 20th, 2002" (Emma, sec. 159, 163).
Emma, 46-59	

**Artifacts Grouped by
Collaborative Functions**

Key Statement

Messengers (continued)

Tribute

Homemade sign

Micah, 46-59

"This Welcome Home sign was / um / something that my now, wife made for me back then. She put it on my computer desk at the time. Um I think I told you that I had to go, I think it was 3 or 4 times / 2 or 3, 3 or 4, I don't know, down to the courthouse to try to get things remedied. And so when, I think this was the first time and then she just kept giving it back to me each time. Then she, then she finally added this little sticky note, 'This is who you are for us!' You know, 'Regardless of what they say, I'm gonna keep putting this sign on your door!' Right?" (Micah, sec. 265).

Music Box

Mimi, 60 & Older

"This was given to me by the St. Louis Gender Foundation, um, because of uh / work / I guess I better go back to [refers to prompts] this before I double up on information. It's a little musical box. Um rectangular in shape, brown in color, and uh / with uh / an inscription on there, "St. Louis Gender Foundation congratulates [female name] in recognition of her contributions to the St. Louis gender community. May 17, 2014." And the Gender Foundation gave that to me, because I was / at that time / involved with MTUG, and uh / going to a lot of uh / um /// places to talk about transgender, such as here at UMSL, with [name], and uh so I would try to educate other people about uh transgender. I would be out there throwin' out the message, and they thought that I was a good ambassador for, uh, the transgender community. So they recognized me for that by givin' me this uh little music box" (Mimi, sec. 455-456).

**Artifacts Grouped by
Collaborative Functions**

Key Statement

Messengers (continued)

Necklace
Amélie, 46-59

"I joined [organization] first as a member, and this is uh / a locket they gave me at the end of my presidency! Which I think was the 1997-1998 time frame. So it was a // I'll say a going away gift or, or present for the uh leadership I provided and the good work I did to / maintain and uh help that organization. So uh // anyway, uh that organization was literally the first time, uh, when I went to one of their, one of their first events, where I had been // outside in a dress and heels. You know. It was the first time where I literally met other people / who were dealing with the same thing I had.
0:47:00.3 Pretty significant, when you, you know, when for most of your life you don't even know there are other people dealing with it. And, and now you're able to see them and speak with them" (Amélie, sec. 263-265).

Video

"Normal"
Amélie, 46-59

"It's amazing! It does have a tremendous number of parallels to my life. Like when, uh / it's got portions in it where / the // person who is going through transition / is very much, I'll say, in the middle of transition. You know, they've // she has breasts, and her hair isn't very long yet, and yet she has to have discussions with her children and things like that. You know, it's, it's like, I've literally gone from one gender to another" (Amélie, sec. 443-444).

**Artifacts Grouped by
Collaborative Functions**

Key Statement

Messengers (continued)

“What Sex am I?”

Amélie, 46-59

"There are a number of things I learned from this tape. Uh first of all, it had pictures of a person who was a transsexual, trying to earn enough money for surgery by performing as a female exotic dancer. And in that case, I was able to see the body / and the face of someone who was // well along in their transition. And I mean, when I saw that, I think in my mind, it's like I want to be that. You know. Oh, another thing that I absolutely know I learned from this tape, and this was a, uh / this was very hard on me, because I think I described in my / in my talking about my life / that when I got married I thought, "Oh! OK. All this is / I, I can do away with all this / whatever it is." So that was 1986 I got married. Anyway, so when I got uh // when I got this tape and watched this tape, there was one / maybe psychologist or psychiatrist in it that said, "If you have this condition, you have it for life. There is no getting over it, there is no / solving it. You just / it is part of you forever. And no matter how many times you throw away thousands of dollars in clothes or other things, you've never going to get rid of this." Because, you know, there were times when I purged, and you felt like, oh! I've gotten rid of all of the female things that I own in the house. Now I / I'm at less risk of being found out, therefore, I'm kinda normal. Now. You can't. You can't live without it. It's that integral to who you are" (Amélie, sec. 352-354).

**Artifacts Grouped by
Collaborative Functions**

Key Statement

Messengers (continued)

Wall Art

"I think this frame would, would describe a transition. Um from / an / I'm still kind of in this transition period from undergrad to grad school. From thinking / in this kind of community base that I must, I must perform for others. I must um // I was very I was very comfortable with myself, but at the same time I still always struggle with like, um // what would I call it? I have very high expectations of myself. So probably not proving myself. If I'm not like doing something always, then I don't / deserve / x, y, and z. Um // and / now I / now I'm kinda seeing that, um /// I don't have to think like that. Um // uh this, this frame has seen / and heard me, like, yelling at myself that like I can, I can do this. That I can // that I can get through life without proving myself, you know. I can like prove myself to myself, but I don't need to do it for others, you know" (Prism, sec. 240-241).

Frame

Prism, 18-30

Serenity Prayer – framed

"The Serenity Prayer, it's still out at home" (Micah, sec. 272).

Micah, 46-59

Weapon

Switchblade

"I at the foremost always had / some form of spring system weapon. It's just how I am. Because in the event of someone jumping me, this is gonna mean making it out alive" (Aeon, sec. 424).

Aeon, 18-30

Artifacts Grouped by Collaborative Functions	Key Statement
Laminations	
Body art	
Tattoo	"I'm in transition! [inaudible] And the fucking trans flag colors on the wings, like, Jesus Christ! I might have written Transition on a brick for all the subtlety of this tattoo! As for the relatively gothic shaping of the butterfly, that's because I, that's because I don't want to look too much like a basic bitch! I have a weakness for pumpkin spice, but felt like if I made it too normal-looking it might just cause me to cringe every time that I saw it! " (Aeon, sec. 449).
Aeon, 18-30	
Clothing	
Binder	"An old, a, a very old binder that I used to wear before I had chest surgery" (Micah, sec. 260).
Micah, 46-59	
Black Dress	"It was part of // I don't know. That night was, um, you know, I think I described it for you in our first session / that first session, as being kind of naked to the world. Um so this was what was, this was my skin, um when I first felt that way. Um // so maybe there's something to the / I, I don't think I'm a reptile, but maybe there's something to the fact that there's this skin pattern in it, now that I think about it. Um // and /// let's see here / it contained a very nervous woman, um, taking her first steps into womanhood at age forty – four? Um it saw a woman let her hair down and have fun. In a safe and anonymous kind of place" (Ryan, sec. 295-296).
Ryan, 31-45	
Gray Dress	"It / really gives me the uh, the feeling of that my // I can carry on as [female name] and feel as sexy as I want. And it's only for me and whoever I choose to share that with. And that's kinda the way I look at it. Uh I wasn't sure how our conversations would go, but uh I'm actually, truly excited to wear this when I / 'cause this is what I plan to wear when I introduce myself as [female name] to my girlfriend" (Gabriela, sec. 558-559).
Gabriela, 31-45	

**Artifacts Grouped by
Collaborative Functions**

Key Statement

Laminations (continued)

Green sequin dress	<p>"I was president of [organization]. And [wife] and I would go to events together. And I bought this for, uh / the Christmas dinner. So [wife] and I went shopping at [mall], and uh /// and she was, I think she was trying on some other dresses in, in one of the other uh dressing rooms. And I saw this and just felt I had to have it. So I grabbed it, being / appearing male grabbed it. Went into the women's dressing room, tried it on, ba-ba-ba-ba, it fit nice, and I decided that I needed to have this, so I got this dress. And uh, so / it has some significance in that, uh, you know the anger I was talking about? I mean I literally had no // I mean maybe I had a little bit of / concern about // going into the ladies' dressing rooms and things like that, but uh / my anger was such that I would go...Anyway, so this has significance as one of the true nights where I felt very / very pretty when I wore it and it's something I used to communicate to my closest, absolutely closest friends, that I had a major issue. Uhhhhmm // [sighs] pretty, pretty significant, uh, you know, in my life, feeling / feeling pretty, or feeling like I looked nice, I mean that was something I wanted to do for a lifetime! You know, so / this dress had significance in that it allowed me to do that. So pretty important object!" (Amélie, sec. 404-405, 407-408).</p>
Amélie, 46-59	
Jeans	<p>"Um / they're brand is Dapper Boi. I see maybe a nod of recognition. Um, they are indigo color. The size is literally my exact waist size, which was / really nice that they actually fit right! Um so these pants are / designed / specifically to give a masculine style, and like / actually works with, and fits on a female bodied person. Um / so these pants, like // well they're shaped like pants, obviously! Um / but they mean just like / so much to me!" (Sidonie, sec. 269-270).</p>
Sidonie, 18-30	

**Artifacts Grouped by
Collaborative Functions**

Key Statement

Laminations (continued)

<p>Lined Tights</p> <p>Gabriela, 31-45</p>	<p>"Another thing that I was always drawn to, was wearin' tights or whatever. I don't know, when I was younger it was just / I liked it. And I still do. It's uh you know, the / feeling against your skin and everything, and they're warm during the winter. Uhhh // I guess / a period in my life where this came into play was probably, you know, when I was big enough to wear my mom's. 'Cause before, they would always be sagging. Um / but I always felt like it completed my outfit. I'm all about accessories. Like jewelry, and so these really polish your look. Like these with that red dress would uh, would be really nice. So / but I spend a lot of money on these, too. I usually like Woolford or whatever, so I spend / but they hold up" (Gabriela, sec. 537).</p>
<p>Red Dress</p> <p>Gabriela, 31-45</p>	<p>"It is um // a sweater dress, so it is a nice soft texture to it. It's heavy. Um it smells new, because it is new. The tag's still on it. It is uh one that I bought and haven't worn yet. Um, but red / um / means / red is the first uh dress I ever put on. / So to me, red is my favorite cover anyway, just in general. And um / so you know, to me / I have a lot of red dresses. [laughs] But this one, uh, I love sweater dresses. And um // it is uh one of my favorite things that um / it's / the biggest point of my life where it was significant was you know, when I would go through my mom's closet. When I was, you know, young. And she had a red dress, and I always liked it. And I would uh put it on and prance around and you know. So / and um / it, you know, was very feminine" (Gabriela, sec. 434-435).</p>

**Artifacts Grouped by
Collaborative Functions**

Key Statement

Laminations

<p>Skinny Jeans</p> <p>Gabriela, 31-45</p>	<p>"But the story with these is, when I was in high school, you know, I'd see girls wearin' these jeans and just being like plain / jane / I always wanted to fit in 'em like that. So I'm not all about bein' fancy all the time. So / but the color of these is a uh it's uh / you know, standard blue jean. Um they're a size 8 long. Um // the shape of them's skinny. Um they are a soft, stretchy material. Uh / these, because I've had 'em for a bout a year, um they smell like a little bit of perfume that was in my closet. Uhhh // they / it / the appearance of skinny jeans to me, uh, I like 'em because they're comfortable, but they're also sexy. So uh that's kinda, you know, the appearance side for me. Um // in high school, you know, I'd see girls wearin' 'em and I was almost jealous a little bit / that I couldn't uh come to school like that. But you know, these are way more feminine than standard, skinny jeans for a guy" (Gabriela, sec. 499-502).</p>
<p>Soccer Shirt</p> <p>Micah, 46-59</p>	<p>"You see a really, really ratty old soccer shirt that I used to wear. This is my lucky soccer shirt. I used to wear it under / all of my games. Um again, things like that allowed me to / I was good in sports. I was a rough and rugged person when sometimes they were hard to find. So um I played goalkeeper. Um kind of the last person defense, it's all on the line, it's win or lose, you know. It was a hard position. A lot of people didn't want to play it for that reason, because when the ball passes you, it's on the, it's on the board for the other team. Right? It's gone by everybody else on your team and you're the last one standing. So um / but that gave me a place to be. It gave me a sense of belonging" (Micah, sec. 259).</p>

Artifacts Grouped by Collaborative Functions	Key Statement
Laminations (continued)	
Xi Tau & Jacket	"Whenever I first wore it, putting it on was like coming home. And so I kind of imagine that this was like the / you know the long-lost lover, right? After years apart, like finally embracing. Um and so I just imagine, like / it's, it was almost like hands like on my body, with the way it rests, and the way it feels. And like the parts of my body it touches, and the parts it doesn't touch, just because of my shape and its shape, it really was like, like putting it on was like putting on almost another skin" (Dingo, sec. 261-262).
Dingo, 18-30	
Cosmetics	
Manscaper and Beard Balm	"I view facial hair as almost like the / like essence of masculinity, I guess, uh kind of like the way that dress is like the essence of femininity, this facial hair that I have going on is the essence of masculinity. Um / and even if I'm not / playing the masculine role, I know that I have to embody it. Just as much as I embody my femininity roles" (Dingo, sec. 351).
Dingo, 18-30	
Cosmetics	
Stage Makeup Kit	"There are so many different / players / happening in here. And each one, each one would say something different, you know?" (Dingo, sec. 332).
Dingo, 18-30	
Jewelry & Accessories	
Rings picture	"And as far as gender, obviously female, going for the female thing. Uh involved in my gender identity work, it's just getting out and trying to / be me. Um /// I guess that helps with just the overall look and there's a little bit of attachment to it, I guess, because it is trying to hang onto um / the family. If, if I can [sighs]" (Heidi, sec. 363).
Heidi, 46-59	

- Earrings
Sidonie, 18-30
- "So like my femininity and my masculinity wasn't coming from a place of, um, I don't know. Like, you have to be this, or you cannot be this. It's coming from this, like, place from "I am this and both of these things are OK." Um so like re-exploring, um, my feminine side, which I like, or like expression, which I shunned a lot. Um and trying to kind of like break away from that binary. Yeah! I think in many, many ways, these giant, bright purple, goddess earrings exemplify that! Um // yeah" (Sidonie, sec 261).
- Mark of Chaos Necklace
Aeon, 18-30
- "This symbol has always held an appeal to me, ever since the first moment that I happened upon it. First, it's symmetrical in multiple plane- / in multiple directions on the same plane. But beyond that / instead of raw meaning, shit changes. Life takes paths you don't expect! And there's always multiple paths ahead of you. That idea has kept me alive. More so than you would think. But especially through my high school years, the years before transition, yeahhh. That concept kept me alive. // Granted it didn't stop the attempts, but it probably greatly reduced the quality which / I figure someone like me, if there's enough effort at it, I can accomplish anything. [inaudible] If I'd put enough effort into ending my existence, I wouldn't be here talking to you" (Aeon, sec. 444-445).
- Necklace
Ryan, 31-45
- "It's significant, um // because of my transition. Ummm / the assumption of a name, um within my family, socially, amongst my friends, um, in the world and in a few days at work, and legally in a few days. Um so it's pretty significant right now" (Ryan, sec. 285-286).

- Oblate pin
Micah, 46-59
- "O – B – like o-b-l-a-t-e. Oblate. It's actually oblation, is what it stands for. And it's basically like the laying down of your life, uh, it used to be, wow. If you go back into like the Middle Ages when uhhh / well it would be lower class people, because they would not be in the hierarchy back in the Middle Ages. Um lower class people would have children. They would essentially have too many, and many of them couldn't thrive. They would take a child and bring them to the monastery and literally drop them off, then they would basically live there in that environment, and so they were called, oblates. Um because they were in community, but they were not vowed. Right? They were not an adult, they couldn't make those decisions and so they were schooled, they were fed, they were all of those things. And so now it's just like the laying down, it's a symbolic thing. It's the laying down of one's life" (Micah, sec. 219).
- Prostheses and Lacy Bra
Amélie, 46-59
- "I clearly remember the first time I went down stairs wearing this bra and these inserts. I had that sensation of some, some motion as I went down the steps, similar to what I imagine they really / a real female might feel. So that was significant to me. It was like, I've had one more sensation that's // uhh / a sensation that's important to me. I don't know why, but it was. So uh // so it's uh / it, it played a very important role in my uh /// being real. These are, these are um / inserts, as any other woman who had breast removal surgery would wear. So in that case it was very, a very real thing for me to wear. And uh, and it represented something that real females would wear to / uhh / improve their feelings about themselves. So that was very significant to me. It uh / my anger drove me to go into the store and just shop. And buy. And not care what the store clerks may have thought. Because they're in a very serious business. And this, in my case, this was also very serious and my / I think my anger was what, uh, gave me the impetus to go in there and shop and buy and uh /// I don't want to be confrontational, but I had to do this!" (Amélie, sec. 378-380).

**Artifacts Grouped by
Collaborative Functions
Laminations (continued)**

Key Statement

Shoes

"I don't know if I would view them as something that could speak, as much as like a metronome / that allowed me to speak, almost. Non-verbally speak. Right? Umm / yeah.// Yeah. I think that's, I think that's probably the, the big gist of these, of these things...It's really the rhythm piece. Not in the way that like, the rhythm / so metronome, not as a way of keeping time, right? So it's not like metronome is to keep / It's like you watch the metronome, and then you start following the metronome, right? ... Yeah. Or you fall asleep. Right? It's this like, there's this soothing comfort in the consistency of the pace. Right? And so like / it / allows you to do things within that space, right? 'Cause within that metronome time, you can play any notes you want. Right? And people will still be able to recognize it. But if you start to break away from the metronome, then people get upset and confused. And so // yeah. It's like, it was a way for me to explore within the boundaries / of what was OK" (Dingo, sec. 300 - 310).

Faux Zebra Heels

Dingo, 18-30

Personal record

Heraldry

Aeon, 18-30

"The Amazons are, have a pretty positive reputation [inaudible]. Feeding everyone sorta does that. So // but / it was more being adopted into the Amazons also signifies / there is no doubt about / my womanhood is no longer in doubt. I have been vouched for very clear- / and I am aware of that, that I have been vouched for [inaudible]. So it's a very clear, very unambiguous statement that I am accepted as a woman" (Aeon, sec. 483).