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# (Women's) Archival Spaces and Trans Voices? A (Re)search and Proposal

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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

(WOMEN'S) ARCHIVAL SPACES AND TRANS VOICES?

A (RE)SEARCH AND PROPOSAL

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO

THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

PROGRAM IN WOMEN'S STUDIES & GENDER STUDIES

BY

J. CURTIS MAIN

CHICAGO, IL

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would first like to express my gratitude toward the dozens of trans, genderqueer, gender-variant, and marginalized people I have been fortunate to know. You offer inspiration, courage, and warmth. Your ongoing bravery and dedication to fight for justice amidst so much hatred, bigotry, fear, and violence makes a better world for us all.

I would also like to thank all of the instructors, students, and believers in the many “minority studies” programs at universities and colleges, especially Women’s Studies. The courage you demonstrate in speaking truth to powerful and harmful institutions has not been lost on me. Rather, ya’ll help foster hope. Further, ya’ll have helped me develop my own language and spaces for speaking out against unfairness and injustice in the world.

I would last like to highlight specific mentors, supporters, and confidantes who have greatly helped me along the way. Prudence Moylan, Ph.D., has demonstrated a continued commitment to knowledge, consideration, and peace, and is truly a role model. Elizabeth Myers, Ph.D., has been an invaluable guide through the world of archiving. I appreciate her approachability and humor. Members of the performance group Awakening C.H.A.N.G.E. from Durham, NC have demonstrated solidarity and work toward social justice that has influenced this work. To my friends and family, I carry your efforts, love, and encouragement. Finally I want to share my gratitude toward Devon Crosbie, who has been patient, supportive, and a one-of-a-kind inspiration all throughout this (re)search. Thank you all.

For the forgotten, ignored, and marginalized. I hear you.

We are a movement of masculine females and feminine males, cross-dressers, transsexual men and women, intersexuals born on the anatomical sweep between male and female, gender-blenders, many other sex and gender-variant people, and our significant others. All told, we are expanding understanding of how many ways there are to be a human being . . .

Our lives are proof that sex and gender are much more complex than a delivery room doctor's glance at genitals can determine, more variegated than pink or blue birth caps. We are oppressed for not fitting those narrow social norms. We are fighting back.

*Leslie Feinberg*

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

FTM	female to male desire, person, or transition
GID	gender identity disorder
LGBT	lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans
MTF	male to female desire, person, or transition
SRS	sex-reassignment surgery
WLA	Women and Leadership Archives at Loyola University Chicago

## GLOSSARY

*Note: these terms should not be applied to others, but rather, should be self-identified first by the individual; the use of these terms is not intended to limit discussion or representation. As noted in the text, many of these terms are situational and constantly in flux in meaning and use; the author uses these terms for an ongoing conversation that is not meant to categorize or minimize, but to expand understanding and knowledge.*

### butch

a noun or adjective used to describe a masculine person or behavior, regardless of natal body.

### cis-gendered or cis-sexed

the term “cis” means “same,” thus in this case, in relation to trans-gendered and trans-sexual, these two terms refer to people who have for the most part stayed within the prescribed societal realms of their birth sex and gender. These terms also are meant to illuminate how non-trans people make efforts and decisions constantly to stay within their prescribed sex and gender.

### femme

a noun or adjective used to describe a feminine person or behavior, regardless of natal body.

### intersex

a noun or adjective used to describe a person, condition, or act that does not fall within the narrow categories of “male” and “female” with respect to the physical body, whether it concerns chromosomes, genitals, hormones, physical alterations and accidents (circumcision, war injuries, etc.), and so on.. Because many societies assume a linear growth from defined sex of male or female to all other physical characteristics (matching hormones, bodies, etc.) people who fall outside this linear path may be considered intersexed. A general distinction between this term and trans is that intersex often refers to physical characteristics not sought or chosen by the individual that do not fit “male” and “female.”

### natal body

most often refers to the prescribed sex of a person at birth, before minor and major societal influences begin.

**pre-op**

a term sometimes used to denote a transgender person who has not had medical and physical alterations to their natal body, such as the introduction of hormones or surgery, that correlate to physical dimensions of sex and gender.

**post-op**

a term sometimes used to denote a transgender person who has had medical and physical alterations to their natal body, such as the introduction of hormones or surgery, that correlate to physical dimensions of sex and gender.

**trans**

a generic term referring to a wealth of desires to move in between and across prescribed societal gender, sex, gender identity, and gender performance. This term often encompasses, but is not limited to, self-identifying transsexuals, gender-queers, transgender people, cross-dressers, male or female impersonators, etc.

**transgender**

a noun or adjective referring to a person or behavior that crosses the “gender divide” from girl/woman/feminine to boy/man/masculine or vice-versa, especially with regard to their conflated natively-assigned birth sex and gender. In this respect, gender does not refer to the physical body (see transsexual).

**transition**

efforts by an individual to align their desired gender, sex, gender identity, and/or gender performance with their own and other’s perceptions of these identities and categories. This may be as “simple” as a name change or as complicated and lengthy as medical and physical interventions.

**transsexual**

a noun (less often an adjective) that refers to a person or behavior that crosses the “sex divide” from female to male or vice-versa. Sex refers to the physical, so alterations in hormones, breasts, hair, muscle/fat composition, chromosomes, genitals, etc. that move away from natively-assigned sex or assumed sex.

## ABSTRACT

Transgender has been silenced, exiled, forgotten, erased, ignored, maltreated, killed, and ultimately, in a major theme of this research project, excluded from histories. Yet, like women, African–Americans, and gay men and lesbians before them, transgender and their allies are working toward inclusion and independence. History, it seems, can no longer ignore them. One of the surest ways to “prove” a history is to have the original items of that history in an archives. So, what representation do we find among various United States’ archives concerning transgender people? Unfortunately, like with many other marginalized groups, much work has to be investigated and accomplished.

Therefore, the purpose of this research is to discuss and analyze the barriers and structures that have resulted in the voids of transgender people in *archival* history in the United States. More specifically, using the Women and Leadership Archives of Loyola University Chicago as a framework, what course(s) of action and awareness might it take to increase and secure transgender people’s voices and experiences in these dominant spaces? “When an individual’s experience does not fit into the binary and deviates from the norm, the individual is criticized, not the system,” Lori Girshik sadly admits. In this research, the system(s) is (are) under scrutiny.

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

There are people out there who have ideas that are not yours that sort of stop you in your tracks and get you thinking in new ways. It's a healthy thing. It's a good thing. It's essential.

-Whoopi Goldberg

Halfway through 2011, Chicago, the third largest city in the United States and home to an urban population of almost nine million, has undergone some notable gender changes. On June 1, Illinois governor Pat Quinn signed over state law allowing same-sex couples the same state rights as married couples through civil unions (albeit the same state rights under a different name). Hundreds of couples lined up outside the Cook County Clerk's Vital Records Office to obtain these "new" legal rights; some had waited years and decades. Meanwhile, just two weeks prior, the Chicago History Museum debuted its "Out in Chicago" exhibit spanning 160 years of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender (LGBT) history. This marks the first exhibit of this kind by a mainstream urban history museum in the United States (Ring, [advocate.com](http://advocate.com)).

Efforts like these are happening more frequently in the United States; indeed, in many countries and cultures. Gaining access to resources and privileges as old as marriage and museums is at once groundbreaking, but also indicative of centuries of exclusion. To be recognized in the modern United States and much of the world,

sex/gender/sexuality transgressors often have to be codified, sanitized, and forced to play the rules of the dominant, ruling classes—just to be included in a museum exhibit, for example. Or, in the words of anthropologist David Valentine, who studied the ethnography of *transgender*, “Accommodationist gay and lesbian activists have sought to gain access to the central institution of social and economic life—‘the family’—through marriage and parenting rights, refiguring ‘sexuality’ as private, decoupling it from both reproduction and gender variance and from a broader conceptualization of gender/sexuality as productive domains of power relations” (241).

Only in the last two centuries have “homosexual” and “gay” been named and grouped (Foucault). Likewise, only in the last two *decades* have “transgender” and “queer” been identified and adopted (Meyerowitz, Valentine). The LGBT/Queer (Q) successes toward inclusion, underneath the many celebrations and hard-won “rights,” has a much darker, hidden side: oppression. Long-held and deeply powerful binary systems of sex, gender, and sexuality, so far as we allow them, influence and limit bodies, lives, expressions, and abilities, demarcating the “haves” and “have-nots” across most societies and centuries in some form or another (Feinberg, 121-125). *Sex* refers to physical sex characteristics and reproductive abilities, or male and female. *Gender* refers to all other attributes beyond physical sex designated to sexed bodies, or man/boy/masculine and woman/girl/feminine. *Sexuality* refers to desire and pleasure concerning sex and gender, or straight/heterosexual and gay/lesbian/bisexual/homosexual.

Those of us who have occupied spaces in-between and outside these three interlocking binary systems, whether by our choice, disposition, or circumstance, have been excluded to varying degrees from nearly all major social aspects of our cultures, be



they legal, religious, historical, or even taxonomic (Namaste, Bornstein). We are in the midst of growing efforts to gain access to simply taking part in societal formation, maintenance, and recognition, but this means challenging the rules of the sex, gender, and sexual binaries.

Nowhere is this more transparent than in the lives of people who do *not* fit neatly into these three binary systems. Who are they? They are people whose behaviors and desires do not fit nor agree with binary sex and gender systems. They will be referred to as “transgender;” an umbrella term for the purposes of this (re)search. Trans activist Jamison Green claims that “Many gendered and heterosexist social constructs collapse like sea-walls against the ocean of my transsexual reality” (506).

As Valentine describes, “In its collectivity, the capacity of transgender to incorporate all gender variance has become a powerful tool of activism and personal identification” (4). I often employ the shorter term “trans,” which means “across” and may also incorporate transsexual and cross-dresser, but the idea is similar to Valentine’s. While I, like Valentine and many others, am hesitant to choose a catch-all phrasing like “transgender,” I must define the subject for this (re)search, even if in the end “the” subject is noted to be a fluid, contested site. Indeed, like the idea of queerness, everyone can in some degree be transgender (Valentine calls it “infinitely elastic” (39)) without anyone ever being “completely” transgender (Burton, 6-21).

The purpose of this (re)search is to demonstrate that transgender desires, actions, and lives have been excluded due to challenging three major binary systems—sex, gender, and sexuality—such that the probability of inclusion in archives has been lessened to an unacceptable degree for a variety of reasons that will be explored in this

work. This (re)search will focus on three areas pertaining to transgender and archives: reality, exclusion, and diversity. Transgender, through desires, actions, and lives, is shown to exist throughout cultures and time; however, transgender has been excluded to varying degrees in many societal institutions. Similar to archives and archivists, transgender is a diverse and complex concept group. Archivists may play an important and supportive role in bridging this gap that will most likely result in further inclusion in other societal aspects. If you have influence and access to shaping history and archives, please consider how trans people may lead better, fuller lives with your help and understanding.

Why care, why bother? If the violence and hatred directed at transgender is not reason enough to make efforts toward its prevention, there are still many other reasons. From a business standpoint for archivists, transgender documents and collections are often bold and unique, and offer special glances into histories regarding binary systems. In addition to these two reasons, transgender presence in archives allows a profound set of radical views that reveal some of the most hidden and protected aspects of societies in regards to power dynamics, for instance. Transnational feminist Chandra Talpade Mohanty sums this well: “It is not the center that determines the periphery, but rather the periphery that, in its boundedness, determines the center.”

Trans activist, author, and theorist Leslie Fienberg argues that transgender, as desire and embodiment, is at the forefront of liberation for all people to have access to fuller, richer lives. Consider her take on “trans liberation” as it influences childhood: “Each of us here, and the trans movement as a whole, is offering trans children today—all children—a roadmap of choices, and the opportunity to speak to us about what we

have found on our journeys. With the vital words ‘and others’ we are protecting uncharted territory, to insure that it remains available for exploration” (46). Additional reasons for transgender inclusion will be considered throughout this (re)search.

This (re)search, keep in mind, is not intended for archivists and historians already engaged with LGB/T history and archive collections. Rather, this (re)search is intended for all other kinds of (read: not transgender-based or lacking in transgender representation) archives and histories that do not contain transgender (while it is shown to exist in all facets of cultures). The formation of women’s archives, an identity-based archives, is surely a way of pursuing archival and historical spaces for women, yet at the same time it may remove the responsibility and accountability of the archivists and historians who had not been including women.

This (re)search is concerned with building conversations and bridges between two highly varied groups that may benefit from such connections. Only a handful of archives have successfully created this conversation. I applaud the The National Transgender Library & Archive for working to include at-risk social groups, which, according to a 2000 press release by the non-profit group *Gender Advocacy and Education*, written by Penni Ashe Matz, is:

Now located in Ann Arbor, Michigan as part of the Labadie Collection, University of Michigan Library, was born out of the private collection of AEGIS founder and Executive Director Dallas Denny. The NTL&A is a repository for books, magazines, films, videotapes, journals and newspaper articles, unpublished papers, photographs, artwork, letters, personal papers, memorabilia, and ephemera related to the transgender and transsexual condition. The NTL&A is believed to be the largest catalogued collection of transgender-related materials in existence. (<http://www.personproject.org/Alerts/States/Michigan/archive.html>)

Other projects include the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Religious Archives (a “virtual” archive) and the LGBT Archives of Philadelphia of the William Way Community Center, in addition to a small number of other LGBT and sexuality archives.

Transgender represents a huge array of people from any and every background, with differing interests and experiences, and thus with various goals, hopes, and desires. They are not without agency, capability, ability, influence, and movement. Likewise, archivists and historians, sometimes transgender themselves, include a vast diversity of people, with hugely differing influences, resources, backgrounds, and interests.

Like women, African –Americans, and gay men and lesbians before them, people are carving out their own nations and histories and screaming for inclusion and independence concerning transgender. Feminist historian Joan Nestle offers:

[they] have ensured that the world of gender discussion will never be the same, for feminists, not for anyone. They and so many others in living their lives are creating new gender histories: histories that will include the lives of men who spent many years living as lesbian feminists; women who started their biological lives as men and now live as lesbians; histories that will include the voices of people who live as both sexes when the medical world allows them; and histories of mourning for the gendered selves not allowed to survive. (9)

#### *Analogy of War and Conflict*

In some parts of this (re)search, I will use the analogy of war to explain and imagine the many conflicts behind the upkeep and enforcement of sex, gender, and sexual binaries. The maintenance of binary systems continually results in exclusion, and this may result in transgender people losing access to their own societies, families, languages, and even bodies. Feinberg notes that “A person who lives as another gender—whether in a motel room twice a year or in marriage, a flight of fantasy or a gay bar—challenges what it means to be male or female, what it means to be a man or a

woman” (28). These challenges and challengers, not taken lightly, are deemed “enemies of the [binary] state.” This may lead to displaced histories and archives. We know they existed, so where are they? This is a central question in this (re)search.

As many archivists and archive theorists demonstrate, wartime and conflict—no doubt usually containing heavy political pressures—are fragile circumstances for archives and histories. Access to knowledge may be restricted or entirely removed. Some knowledges may be hidden or even destroyed. In considering transgender as constantly in a state of war and conflict with dominant, often government-supported sex, gender, and sexual binary systems, a better understanding of where transgender has been in archives and histories will assist in generating safer approaches to increasing the interactions and spaces of transgender and archives.

### *Overview*

Chapter 1 introduces the reader to many aspects of this (re)search, including a literature review regarding transgender reality, inclusion/exclusion, and diversity, followed by how archives and archivists respond to at-risk groups. I will then share and explain my preferred research and academic methods, along with my own standpoint and situation in order to illuminate my interests, hopes, biases, and limitations and connection to this (re)search.

Chapter 2 expands the analysis by including research findings from Chicago-area archivists and in-depth interviews with trans-identified participants. What do archivists and transgender people reveal about archives?

Chapter 3 is a kind of sex/gender/sexual binary journey, in which I (re)introduce the very structures that both produce and deny transgender subjects of this (re)search.

This chapter expounds upon the evidence for why transgender may be excluded through erasure, impossibility, shaming, and silencing. Once these binaries have been described, Chapter 4 further develops the ramifications for exclusion of transgender desires, behaviors, and people; or put another way, the meeting grounds of societal institutions and transgender will be explored.

Chapter 5 will consider archives in their limitations and possibilities, citing various sources, especially archivists, on the issue of archives and marginalized groups. An interview with the director of an archives that entirely focuses on an at-risk group (women) shares her expertise on this topic in this chapter. Finally, positive results that may develop by increasing dialogue between archives and transgender will be considered, along with possibilities for creating transgender collections.

#### *Literature Review*

The central question in this (re)search examines the presence and absence of transgender in societal institutions, specifically archives. Literature on transgender experience and people is not necessarily lacking in the United States, and in the past two decades has been steadily growing (Valentine). Often, research has focused on the interaction between medicine, biology, and psychology with transgender (Meyerowitz). As Canadian transgender theorist Vivian K. Namaste states: “Research and theory in psychiatry, the social sciences, and the humanities are preoccupied with issues of origin, etiology, cause, identity, performance, and gender norms” (1). This is most obvious in some of the earlier scientific research of the mid-nineteenth century to the 1980s (and still today) in the United States and Europe. A large focus in these early case studies and reviews was “deviance;” and often the “gender deviance,” then referred to as *dysphoria*

and *inversion*, was lumped with “sexual deviance,” most notably homosexuality and transvestitism (Meyerowitz, 11).

*A Reality of Existence*

We have a history filled with militant hero/ines. Yet therein lies the rub! How can I tell you about their battles when the words *woman* and *man*, *feminine* and *masculine*, are almost the only words that exist in the English language to describe all the vicissitudes of bodies and styles of expression? (ix)

-Leslie Feinberg, trans liberationist

This is not to say that transgender had not occurred in literature before medical doctors and Freudian psychologists published their findings. Even the Bible mentions cross-dressing and drag, intersexed bodies as the result of castration, and *eunuchs* in several passages (Tanis, 55-79). Cultures across the globe have mythical, religious, artistic, taxonomic, and many other cultural references (some literature) to transgender (Bowen, Feinberg, 23, 67; Nanda, 10; Kulick).

A trio of books on trans history evidences transgender throughout cultures and time. In Leslie Feinberg’s *Transgender Warriors: Making History from Joan of Arc to Dennis Rodman*, Feinberg traces transgender globally, cross-culturally, and transhistorically, employing dozens of images to demonstrate. Repeatedly, the reader is invited to (re)discover transgender as not a recent phenomena or “mental illness,” but a part of world histories in many nuanced, deep ways. In gender historian Joanne Meyerowitz’s *How Sex Changed: A History of Transsexuality in the United States*, she takes the reader on a journey through popular culture and media, medicine, science, and literature as it has connected to *transsexual* in the United States. Again, as with Feinberg’s work, we find transgender desire, behavior, and embodiment occurring before the terms transsexual and transgender came into use. Meyerowitz follows the work of

Dr. Harry Benjamin and Dr. Magnus Hirschfield, two early European and American advocates for sex and gender “deviants,” in their lifelong careers of treating and supporting transgender patients. Through this she illuminates a long, stable United States history of transgender people with varying interests and backgrounds from all over the United States and Europe, interacting with doctors and medical practitioners who were in the first stages of confronting sex and gender nonconformity in academic, institutional settings with published, documented practices and results. Likewise, in feminist historian Susan Stryker’s *Transgender History*, her goals are, in her own words, “to provide a basic chronology from the nineteenth century to the twenty-first, and to focus on a number of key events or personalities that help link transgender history to the history of minority movements for social change, to the history of sexuality and gender, and to feminist thought and practice” (2). All three of these works share one overarching theme: transgender histories seem to be missing and/or inept, thus efforts to develop transgender histories (and archives) are vital to the positive future of transgender people, and *all* people. But a lingering question remains: why is transgender often hidden, invisible, and erased from archives and histories?

### *Exclusion*

As the authorities seemed to recognize, the right to change sex legally threatened to undermine the established system, not only with regard to transsexuals, but also with regard to other issues of sex, gender, and sexuality. (245)

-Joanne Meyerowitz, transsexual historian

The simplest answer to this question is that transgender less often makes archives and histories because of the exclusion of transgender from many other facets of societal and cultural production and access, whether by cisgendered or transgendered people.



Everyone plays a part in societal creation and maintenance; it is not just cisgendered people and archivists who are responsible for archives and histories. Another way to answer this question is that if transgender is missing or hidden in components of societies that leave behind archivable and historical evidence that may be stored as social memory, then the likelihood of transgender having spaces in archives and histories is less(ened).

Much of the literature available concerning transgender, both inside the United States and outside, regards the social exclusion of transgender and makes the case for the important contribution of transgender people. Anthropologist Serena Nanda's research in *Neither Man nor Woman: The Hijras of India*, repeatedly shows how these male natal-bodied "eunuchs" provide necessary societal functions, with varying degrees of rejection, acceptance, and resource access.

Gender theorist and anthropologist Don Kulick's work in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil on *travestis* (usually referring to male-to-female transgender sex workers) suggests that regardless of how often travestis are ignored, attacked, and abused by members of the city workforce or other people, like family members or strangers, they still not only inhabit an active role in Brazilian culture, but also are revealing of Brazilian cultural values and norms as marginalized populations. Many of Kulick's findings, too, demonstrate conflicts with exclusionary practices, often experienced by transgender people.

In 2000, Vivian K. Namaste published *Invisible Lives: The Erasure of Transsexual and Transgendered People*. Her main argument is that trans people are continually erased from societal institutions, though it is clear, with plenty of evidence, that they do indeed exist. She locates trans people in spaces such as queer theory, punk

culture, and the HIV/AIDS situation in Québec, and follows identification with subsequent invisibility. She not only vouches for the existence of transgender and transsexual in varying places and times, like the trio of transgender history books previously mentioned, but she goes on to theorize how transgender and transsexual continues to be excluded.

Her main argument throughout her work is that societal institutions and discourses influence social production. Therefore, those who are excluded in reflection and recreation, *even* while they took part, are effectively erased, especially in the *possibility* of inclusion through social memory formation and maintenance.

Namaste's arguments are of paramount importance in this (re)search. As transgender is searched and researched among many areas of societal and cultural discourses and mediums, absence is found even when histories and people are known to have existed. Or as Namaste suggests: "History was not merely forgotten but was fundamentally rewritten" (92). She goes on to say that when trans presence is found, at times a "discourse of tragedy" is "inevitably inscribed" (119). This is an important warning also when (re)searching transgender. Lastly, Namaste also mentions being weary of presenting transgender through a limiting American approach, which greatly stifles the large diversity of transgender. Researchers must use caution to not collapse nation and (trans)gender (130).

Another site of literature reviewed that tackles transgender exclusion and inclusion is Susan Stryker and trans activist and British law professor Stephen Whittle's massive 2006 volume *The Transgender Studies Reader*, which entails 50 essays on various transgender topics by transgender allies and activists. The book itself contains

over 700 pages of transgender theory and work (mostly limited to the United States) spanning over a century. Many essays from Stryker and Whittle’s collection influenced this (re)search and attest to societal exclusions and inclusions.

Further examples of societal exclusion of transgender will be explored in Chapter 4, pertaining to certain themes such as language and boxes (Beam; Nestle et al; Valentine; Namaste) legal rights (ACLU; Whittle), police forces (Pettiway; Feinberg; Boyd), childhood and family (Stockton; Bornstein; Howey, Samuels), employment (Feinberg; Wilchins), sex work (Pettiway; Nanda; Kulick), HIV/AIDS (Bockting, Avery; Bockting, Kirk), and Christianity (Tanis; Comstock; Douglas; Copeland). There are hundreds of books, websites, articles, studies, documents, and forms of media that describe transgender interaction with societal institutions—highlighting some of these sources is helpful in illustrating the ongoing conflict of exclusion and inclusion, specifically in relation to binary systems.

#### *Diversity*

For gender-variant people, no conceptual framework fits their experience, and no individual words adequately describe it. (13)

-Lori B. Girshick

Transgender is not simply a white, male to female (MTF), middle-to-upper class experience in the United States as it may be stereotyped through popular media and discourse. Source after source of literature indicates an incredibly rich and diverse “transgender” *body* of histories, people, desires, movements, backgrounds, and privileges (Feinberg, Bornstein, Beam, Boyd, Girshick, Namaste, Whittle). David Valentine’s work, entitled *Imagining Transgender: An Ethnography of a Category*, published in 2007, analyzes “transgender” after more than two decades of common use. Valentine,

however, as Namaste warns, limits his scope to mostly MTF subjects in the United States. This is not to say his work is not valuable and revealing; but rather to demonstrate, using Namaste's warnings, that even within transgender activism and literature, erasure occurs.

Valentine actually finds erasure and problems himself with the term "transgender" as a catch-all phrase. He notes that people, behaviors, and desires that are assumed to fall under the umbrella term *transgender* in many cases do not use the term, know the term, understand the term, or like/accept the term. Through his many years of interviewing and studying "transgender" people, for example, he found many who preferred a variety of other identities, not transgender, such as "gay," "queen," "high femme," and "female impersonator," to name some of many. He further shares his concerns with the term "transgender:" "[i]t worries me that transgender itself (because of its institutional life, its implication in agencies of the state, its racial and class entailments) may unintentionally become another tool of 'exclusion,' even as it promotes to 'include,' to liberate, and to seek to redress" (245). Indeed, there are concerns with any fixed identity within identity politics and movements as exclusions are likely.

Like Namaste, Valentine is also cautionary in regards to erasing, reinscribing, and fixing the marginalized. Much of the literature on transgender, no matter the topic, includes discussion of the limits of language, identities, and binaries, and, in general, agrees that "transgender" as an umbrella term includes *far* more than just male-to-female and female-to-male. Though sometimes transgender subjects are minimized as wanting to wholly be the "opposite" sex and gender, in mind, body, behavior, and so on, this is certainly not the case for the majority of trans people. Or, at least as I employ

transgender as an umbrella term to include movement between, across, inside, and outside the binary sex and gender systems. This leads to another useful question for literature, how neat are transgender desires, behaviors, and people, and on a similar note, what is their relation to sex, gender, and sexual binaries?

Not all transgender people want and follow through with hormones, genital surgery (“bottom” surgery), chest surgery (“top” surgery), name-change, and hair changes, to name some “crossing.” Further, as far as additional surgeries, not all transpeople seek phalloplasty (penis formation), vaginoplasty (vagina formation), hysterectomy, shaving down of the Adam’s apple, redistribution of body fat, rhinoplasty, electrolysis, and so on, to name some surgical “enhancements.” Still further, some transgender people are male or female impersonators, drag queens, drag kings, masculine females (as Feinberg identifies), feminine males, genderqueers, cross-dressers, genderfuckers, intersexuals, and again, so on. If one tries to imagine a natal-bodied male who is transgender, some assumed “journey” or crossing to the “opposite” sex and gender of female and woman is not some predetermined, one-step process. There is most likely no end goal or finishing line. More generally, for any person, cisgendered, transgendered, or gender-neutral, sex and gender desires, behaviors, and identities are lifelong processes that are constantly in flux and/or in renegotiations. For example, consider two aspects of sex and gender that are constantly changing: our physical bodies and the sex and gender binary systems. These are not static, so neither are the people involved. Thus, when we consider transgender, we must not also strictly think of crossing binary systems. There is far more to each individual, and each person’s (sex and gender) journey through life.

Consider another trio of books/collections as testament to this concept of great fluidity and diversity in and among transgender. Sociologist and criminologist Leon E. Pettiway published *Honey, Honey, Miss Thang: Being Black, Gay, and On the Streets* in 1996, a series of five in-depth interviews taking place in the early 1990s. The five people are drug-using sex workers, all natively-born males, whose gender and sexual identities fall within transgender as used in this (re)search. However, the five individuals expressed far more nuance and complication with male “to” female, man “to” woman, straight “versus” gay than might be expected by neat research approaches. Shontae says, “I always liked being a girl, you know. The girl role to me was the better. It seem like you always got the best if you were a girl” (8); though she was raised as a boy and considered one by her family and environment. She goes on to say, “I guess what made me take that first step was the determination of wanting to be... seeing other transvestites and wanting to be like that” (25), and note here she does not say “women,” but “transvestites.” Shontae calls herself “gay,” “woman,” “boy,” and “man” at various times. Shontae reveals going on hormones in her teens to achieve a feminine body and secondary sex characteristics, but does not undergo surgery to remove her male genitals. Is Shontae “stuck” between binaries? Or is she, rather, creating her own niche in which she is comfortable? As Pettiway notes with these five transgender/gay men/women, they more often confuse rather than uphold sex, gender, and sexual binaries. Consider, for example, that several of them say they only date straight men.

Sociologist and social justice activist Lori B. Girshick brought together 150 transgender voices in her 2008 work *Transgender Voices: Beyond Women and Men*. Similar to Pettiway, Girshick found far more diversity and depth than simple sex, gender,

and sexual binary reinforcement. Even if some desires and goals are expressed of “reaching” the other side of a binary, the reality is that most transgender people (and cisgender people, for that matter) fall in-between and outside the binary systems. For instance, Girshik notes: “The unlikelihood of successful penis functioning kept most FtMs from pursuing bottom surgery; only a small number had had this surgery” (85). Or, considering psychology, Girshik reminds “Male privilege involves a sense of one’s entitlement to space, rewards, and status, a sense that is absent when one is brought up as female” (88). In a last example that has made headlines more than once: “Was Matt female-bodied or male-bodied, a man or a woman? He was a man who birthed a baby” (citing Green, Girshik, 73). Girshik demonstrates—through the inclusion of 150 transgender voices—far more fluidity than binary and “cross-binary” movement. Transgender greatly complicates destinations of binaries, even if only by the journey and desire for movement in-between.

The final book in this trio is transgender activist Helen Boyd’s *My Husband Betty: Love, Sex, and Life with a Cross-Dresser*, published in 2003. Boyd, as the wife of a straight male cross-dresser, had for years struggled with her husband’s desire to dress, act, pass, and be a woman (at times). Though she found resources plentiful for her husband, she was concerned with the lack of literature and material available to the partners of cross-dressers. As she recalls, “The irony of a cross-dresser then is that he is both unknown and invisible in society, and can’t become known until he is visible. His wife is even more misunderstood. What kind of women would stay married to such a deviant?” (16). Thus, she wrote this book about how to have a healthy and loving relationship with a cross-dressing husband, in which she gathers the voices of many other

girlfriends, wives, and partners to also support one another. According to Boyd, the idea that cross-dressers are simply men performing as women is minimizing. For her husband, he feels he is a man sometimes, a woman other times; two aspects of his self. Boyd, referencing the work of Virginia Prince, who founded The Society for the Second Self, “the largest organization of heterosexual cross-dressers in America,” offers “Their urge to cross-dress, Prince emphasized, was not erotic, and it did not indicate dysphoria of any kind. It was purely an expression of inherent but repressed femininity, and its expression results in happier men who had integrated both their masculine and feminine sides” (25). Yet Boyd does not leave her audience with this simple view of male cross-dressers. Shortly thereafter, she claims that “there is no single viable explanation, and though some might appeal to reason (more or less), and others seem plausible (more or less), there is no explanation that holds up under all circumstances” (25). Once more, another researcher finds incredible variety rather than singularity and binary under the transgender umbrella, this time with straight cross-dressing men. Though there is some literature and research into cross-dressing, the idea or topic of more acceptable cross-dressing (women in business settings) is evidence of further diversity and complexity.

*Archival Existence, Exclusions/Inclusions, and Diversity*

In making any selection decision, the first questions an archivist asks are “Why does the archives exist? What purpose or purposes does the archives serve?” Obtaining the records needed to accomplish that purpose or purposes is the aim of selection. (43).

-Frank Boles, Archivist

Thousands of archives with hundreds of thousands of records exist in the United States, with an incredible array of diversity in their missions, practices, and collections, with varying levels of inclusions and exclusions. According to archivist and archive



theorist Frank Boles in his work on successful archival selection and appraisal, there are two main types of archives: institutional and noninstitutional. Institutional archives are more often concerned with records management, or in other words, “Institutional archives exist to document the organization that created them . . . The institutional archivist’s responsibility is not to document the world around the institution but rather the institution itself” (44). These may often be governmental, educational (university, college), business (for-profit), and non-profit.

On the other hand, “Archives founded to document a collecting theme exist specifically to preserve information regarding some activity external to the organization that founded and maintains the archives” (45). Boles separates noninstitutional archives into four categories: geography; subject; specific event, group, or individual; and media type (45). Some archives are a mix of the two main types: “Institutions can, and often do, create a single archives that combines both an institutional mission and a collecting responsibility. College and university archives, in particular, are often charged with both documenting their own institution of higher learning and collecting some body of material deemed of use by the faculty for research” (47).

Archives are limited to the missions and guidelines set forth in their records management/schedule (institutional) and/or collecting policies (noninstitutional), which may or may not be influenced and managed by the archivist or archivists in the archives. Boles notes that some archivists have a larger amount of decision-making powers in their selection processes while others are more bounded by the institutions, supporters, researchers, donors, and any others tied to the archives (43-74). Still, Boles reminds that “The vagueness of most founding mandates allows a thoughtful archivist to develop a

professionally based selection program that implements the broad agenda set forth in the founding document” (50).

Beyond the basic tenets of the mission and theme/institution of an archives, archivist Randall C. Jimerson argues that archives

[C]an provide resources for people to examine the past, to comprehend the present, and to prepare for a better future. This is the essence of our common humanity. It provides archivists with a sense of professional purpose and a social conscience . . . This power gives those who determine what records will be preserved for future generations a significant degree of influence. Archivists must embrace this power, rather than continuing to deny its existence. (253)

While many archivists are aware of their influence and power, Jimerson’s point is to argue for accountability and responsibility. Citing much of South African archivist Verne Harris’ work and theories, which will be explored in Chapter 5, Jimerson similarly argues for archivists to work towards archives of social justice. Or, in his words, “Such power carries an obligation to employ it for positive purposes, as archivists search for a role to play for the benefit of all people in society . . . [A]rchivists have a moral professional responsibility to balance that support given to the status quo by giving equal voice to those groups that too often have been marginalized and silenced” (253). Thus, while archivists may be bounded and influenced by many factors outside of their control, they still may retain capacities to work toward societal inclusions for marginalized groups/subjects such as transgender.

Outside of the initial contact between transgender and archive, another site of contact is important to consider—the researcher and general public. Archives not only serve the institutions and donors that support them financially and politically, but must also attract archives users and researchers. Ultimately, the interpretation and use of the

archived materials by this group determines how the archival materials may affect other societal institutions and histories. Feminist historian Estelle B. Freedman outlines her journey as a researcher working through the manuscripts of Miriam Van Waters (1887-1974), a prison reformer whose public presence may have assisted in keeping her lesbian status secretive and potentially suppressed.

Through searching through archival materials related to Van Waters private and public life, Freedman encountered many challenges to the ways in which archives may be interpreted. First, as a researcher, she found that “In short, we cannot study lesbians in the past because the term is too modern and limiting, too falsely universalizing, and too much a figment of discursive imagination” (184). Second, “Historians too rarely acknowledge either the complications of contradictory and competing identities in their subjects, or the dilemmas we face in handling elusive identities,” in this case, Van Waters professional role in prison reform in a homophobic society set against her lifelong intimate and sexual desire for women (185). Third, the role outside observation serves in viewing the historical and archival subject may add to, negate, or support the subject’s evidence. For Freedman, Van Waters granddaughter solidly stated that Van Waters was indeed a lesbian who had a significant relationship with her “lifelong friend” Geraldine Thompson. Likewise, many other people during Van Waters’ lifetime spread rumors (or facts—the evidence is uncertain) surrounding her sexuality and lesbianism. Finally, Freedman concludes that

For complex reasons, then, I think that historians must be careful not to impose upon the past identities constructed in their own times. Rather, we must read for past constructions, and consider where they originated, how they changed, and how multiple layers of meaning—intellectual, emotional, and political—could influence political identity. (195)

In searching for a marginalized identity, behavior, desire, and action, such as lesbian or transgender, Freedman's awareness of her power as a researcher to interpret the archival subject through various lenses signifies the importance of researchers and the general public once archivists and donors interact. Not only are documents created then donated by a person or group, followed by selection, appraisal, organization, publicity, and preservation by archivists, but then another level of interaction and power dynamics occurs when archives are interpreted and used. These many levels and actors provide various opportunities for at-risk groups to be negatively and positively impacted, or as Jeannette Allis Bastian proclaims, "The writing of history is so dependent on who is reading, interpreting, and selecting the records" (32).

What do archivists and archive theorists say concerning at-risk groups and displaced records/documents? There are four major sites of literature reviewed for this question. First, Elizabeth Myers, Ph.D., Director of the Women and Leadership Archives at Loyola University Chicago, served as a liason in managing an archives in general, and specifically, one that collects an at-risk group. Myers' views come from both a series of interviews and completing an internship under her direction in the archives for four months. Myers' most notable response to these questions, as gained from in-person interviews shared in a later chapter on archives, is that more and more attention is being paid to at-risk groups among archivists as a whole, at least in the United States. Myers also shared that a growing awareness of who and what "makes" the limited spaces in archives helps shed light into the power dynamics at play with both archivists and potential collections.

The second literature site is a collection of essays published in 2005 by archivists and archive theorists from all over the world, entitled *Archive Stories: Facts, Fictions, and the Writings of History*, edited by feminist and historian Antoinette Burton, with the following common theme: “[C]laims to objectivity associated with traditional archives pose a challenge which must be met in part by telling stories about its provenance, its histories, its effect on its users, and above all, its power to shape all the narratives which are to be ‘found’ there” (Burton, 6). This volume relates the idea that archives and archivists have their own situations and standpoints through various examples, each unique and telling. Much of this work is cited later in the final chapter.

The third site of literature reviewed concerning archives and at-risk records/documents is another collection of articles from archivists and archive theorists, published in 2005, entitled *Political Pressure and the Archival Record*. The volume itself was inspired by a 2003 international conference in England by the same name. Much like the previously mentioned collection, this work emphasizes the many pressures and influences felt by archivists, and in turn, archives and histories. Editor and archive theorist Margaret Proctor argues, “Records provide evidence of political pressure, yet can also be used to exert it, one tool among many for political activity” (x). This collection helps make sense of how governments may treat archives and histories that are not necessarily in-line with their agendas. Examples pulled from this volume of how political pressure affects archives, at-risk groups, and social justice will be analyzed in Chapter 5’s discussion of archival problems and solutions.

The fourth and final site of literature reviewed regarding archives and archival practices comprises of several books and articles by leading archivists on understanding,

managing, and administering archives and manuscripts. Some of the archivists include the prolific Richard J. Cox, Michael J. Kurtz, and Bruce W. Dearstyne. These archivists and their works help inform pragmatic solutions for bringing together an at-risk group like transgender with archivists and archives. As mentioned, archivists also often work with heavily structured and limited resources, influences, and people. Thus understanding some of the pressures, theories, and approaches by archivists is also an important component of this (re)search.

This literature review by no means ends here; indeed, the remainder of this (re)search seeks to examine and engage the aforementioned literature plus many more sources, including research questionnaires with both archivists and transgender-identified participants. It is my hope that, due to influences from the many works that gather varying voices on a certain topic, this (re)search will follow in their lead by engaging many situations, standpoints, theories, and approaches. Before moving into the research results, the next two sections briefly outline my methods/theories and limitations/biases as a researcher.

### *Method and Theory*

At its core, this research is heavily inspired by feminist and critical race theories/theorists within United States, English-speaking, and global perspectives. Due to the heavy interdisciplinary approach to these fields, this research is also a web and meeting grounds for transgender studies, library sciences, queer theory, and Gay and Lesbian (and Sexuality) Studies.

The heart of this research, though, is simple. It is the belief that every person offers a unique, important situation that is no more and no less valuable than the next

person. For every person in the world, there is a nonrepetitive standpoint; each person has their own experiences, opinions, influences, struggles, and privileges. No one person may be understood without connecting them to others. Likewise, no *world* may be fully understood without knowing and listening to its inhabitants, be they few, be they millions. This is my take on feminist standpoint theory, made known and popular by feminist scientist Sandra Harding.

Harding is weary of truth-claiming, fact-heavy, and supposedly unbiased research methods. As Harding asks: “How should one explain the surprising fact that politically guided research projects have been able to produce less partial and distorted results of research than those supposedly guided by the goal of gender-neutrality?” (39). For every person dead or living, there is a unique knowledge claim—beliefs and ways of doing and living in the world. Feminist standpoint theory argues that unbiased, unlimited, truly “subjective” science, research, and theories do not exist. Thus, it is important to reveal not only the connections I have as a researcher to this work, but also my motivations in doing this research in addition to the backgrounds and interests of others involved, such as scholars cited and participants interviewed.

As a researcher, I am accountable to the subjects of this (re)search, be they archivists, transgender people, scholars, or even myself. I must be held accountable for situating others’ knowledge claims. I must be wary not to make my own voice normative. From my own rearing I was taught that if you are going to speak of others, be ready to speak of yourself and hear others do the same. Feminist researchers call this reflexivity. This allows all aspects of relationships and power in research to be acknowledged. Not doing so, as Harding states, “implies that human ideas can somehow

escape their own location in history” (58). I have a history, too, and I quickly mention it in the next section.

One may consider this (re)search *not* as hard evidence or “truth,” but rather as a journey and investigation into finding ways to connect complex topics. As feminist researchers Sharlene NagyHesse-Biber, Patricia Lina Leavey, and Michelle L. Yaiser speak of “truth:” “The nature of knowledge and truth is that it is partial, situated, subjective, power imbued, and relational” (13).

Therefore, in this (re)search, much effort has been funneled into making this more of an ongoing conversation between all kinds of people, especially ones who seem to have not spoken much in the past (archivists/historians and transgender people/allies).

I rarely if ever assume fixed identities or communities for people. I agree with Valentine’s description of *identity* and *community*:

’Identity’ can erase the intersections of different kinds of social intersections of different kinds of social experiences, more often than not asserting the experiences of white, middle-class U.S. American social actors as the implicit exemplary center. (131);

Whether geographically bounded or not, community is not a natural fact but an achievement, a process that does not happen without the exercise of agency and power. (73)

While some transgender communities may exist, I prefer not to assume any one transgender community, and as mentioned, employ “transgender” as an umbrella term for the efforts of this (re)search, rather than a hardened identity concept.

Feminists also have explored the danger of assuming fixed identities and groups. If we are not careful as researchers, we may reinscribe the very subjects we are hoping to



help unsubscribe from harmful social systems. Feminist historian Denise Riley

describes how this applies to *women* in history:

To put it schematically, ‘women’ is historically, discursively constructed, and always relatively to other categories which themselves change; ‘women’ is a volatile collectivity in which female persons can be very differently positioned, so that the apparent continuity of the subject of ‘women’ isn’t to be relied on; ‘women’ is both synchronically and diachronically erratic as a collectivity, while for the individual, ‘being a woman’ is also inconstant, and can’t provide an ontological foundation. (150)

Her warnings are exactly why archives are an important home to secure and safeguard transgender—after all, archives may allow documents and records to speak for themselves in complex ways.

As the purpose of this (re)search is to help foster connections between transgender and archives, to include transgender, this eventual inclusion into history of course affects history itself. Gender historian Joan Wallach Scott sums this well:

“We are learning,” wrote three feminist historians, “that the writing of women into history necessarily involves redefining and enlarging traditional notions of historical significance, to encompass personal, subjective experience as well as public and political activities. It is not too much to suggest that however hesitant the actual beginnings, such a methodology implies not only a new history of women, but also a new history.” (135)

Indeed, as will be obvious by the conclusions of this (re)search, transgender not only supports new conceptions of history, but of societies and cultures as well; which is why transgender can be so threatening.

Further, this (re)search is based in feminist critiques of binary sex, gender, and sexual systems, and not just these, but also others, such as race, education, and ability. I utilize the efforts and theories of hundreds and thousands of feminists who have challenged both binary thinking and binary systems, notably sex and gender. From

Hariet Tubman, Ida B Wells, and Simone de Beauvoir to Chandra Mohanty, Michael Kimmel, and Gloria Steinam, many feminist activists resonate in this (re)search. At the same time, I do disagree with some feminists who may dismiss and disregard transgender people as purely patriarchal and sex/gender binary supporters, such as highly successful feminist lawyer Catherine MacKinnon who, in a 2009 speech paid for by a university student LGBT group, proclaimed that transgender upheld patriarchy. In a later section in this (re)search, I will discuss further how transgender actions and people are more often incredible threats to, not supporters of, heteropatriarchy and binary systems.

Beyond a baseline of feminist theory and application in this (re)search, I also utilize work in Gay & Lesbian, Sexuality, Queer, and Transgender Studies. Along with feminism, all of these fields (note, I am speaking of five) question binary systems, specifically sex, gender, and sexuality, and aim to offer healthier, safer alternatives for cultures. All certainly share one goal in common: to imagine, pursue, and create societies that allow fluidity in expression and being. Due to this shared goal, dominant institutions, cultures, and players that keep people policed and limited in structures of violence are constantly being interrogated by these fields. This (re)search shares the same goal for transgender.

#### *My Situation & Interests, Biases and Limitations*

I believe it is those most different from us that have the most to teach us, especially if they come from disempowerment in relation to our privilege. In the same vein, those with the most privilege have much to learn, and along with their power are accountable to listen and respect the voices of the marginalized. Queer theorist and author Michael Warner proclaims: “The rule is: Get over yourself. Put a wig on before

you judge. And the corollary is that you stand to learn the most from the people you think are beneath you. At its best, this ethic cuts against every form of hierarchy you could bring into the room” (35).

What is certainly true is that I come from many circles of privilege, and from my many viewpoints I have been witness, again and again, to maltreatment and dismissal of others. Friends, family, acquaintances, and strangers occupy situations in the world in which they are minimized, ignored, harmed, and forgotten. With my increased access to resources and power, I believe it is my responsibility to bring to light these “situations” and share knowledges and potential, positive solutions.

When one considers how marginalized transgender can be, adding in other marginalizing factors like poverty further pushes potential subjects closer to erasure. This is not an excuse, but an awareness of the limitations of this (re)search and my own limiting outlook as white, male, and American. Likewise, much transgender work and research contains United States and European biases and generalizations (Namaste), as feminist sociologists Gwyn Kirk and Margo Okazawa-Rey note of United States’ materials in general: “People in the United States need to understand the significance of this country’s preeminence in the world, manifested culturally[,] economically[,] and militarily” (3). Though this (re)search mostly takes place in the United States, some influences and sources come from a global perspective. The possibility of transgender inclusion is itself a global issue.

I have found incredible company and solidarity with sex/gender/sexuality outlaws, queers, and refugees through participating in performance art and activism related to sex and gender critique and play. An important distinction ought to be noted:

as of now, my genitals match my birth certificate that mostly aligns with the sex and gender I was raised to “become” that for the most part I pass as without too many issues. I am cisgender and cissex. I am an advocate and ally to transgender—in addition to archivists that have concern for social justice. My sexuality and common mannerisms do muddle gender often, but again, not to dangerous degrees (as far as I know). I am fortunate that how I feel comfortable in my “self” is OK in our culture, which is a reason I fight for others have are constantly told they are *not* OK. I take great caution and concern as a cisperson in this (re)search.

In February of 2009, in a graduate course with feminist historian Prudence Moylan, entitled “Feminist Foundations,” I learned of the importance of archives. We were assigned a project and paper that required each student become familiar with a collection from the Women and Leadership Archives (WLA). Seeking guidance for my research, I met Elizabeth Myers, Ph.D., Director of WLA. During our conversation, she shared interest in collecting some transgender materials, as the WLA did not contain any. At that moment my concern for this (re)search began, with a basic goal of answering the following question: “What would it take to find transgender presence in not just identity-based archives, but any archives?”

Next, what do transgender people have to say about archives, history, and inclusion/exclusion? What do some Chicago archivists reveal about inclusion and exclusion of transgender? The next chapter contains research findings.

## CHAPTER TWO

### (RE)SEARCH RESULTS

[S]ilences are inherent in the creation of sources, the first moment of historical production. Unequal control over historical production obtains also in the second moment of historical production, the making of archives and documents.

-Michel-Rolph Trouillot, Haitian Historian (Bastian 26)

If transgender ways of approaching, being, and expressing in the world are erased, harassed, unnamed, and attacked from many aspects of many modern societies (Namaste, Feinberg, Valentine, Nanda, Kulick), then the likelihood of transgender manuscripts and collections is decreased. Likewise, different archive organizations are most often formed around themes—be they medical, government, religious, university, familial, art, and so on (Cox, 4-16). As the literature review demonstrated, transgender has been overlooked and ignored to varying degrees in a variety of societal institutions. To be marginalized in one realm compounds the chances of being left out of another (Ghosh). Or, as gender and colonial historian Durba Ghosh found in her work on interracial relationships and their biracial children in Britain’s first century of colonial rule in India (circa 1760 to 1840): “In their own ways, Britain’s and India’s archives produce silences that reinforce each other on a topic that is, if nothing else, a history of transgressive behavior that threatens the respectability and racial purity of the family and of the nation” (39). In this case, many Indian woman and biracial British/Indian children challenged dominant

notions of family and race, therefore leading to their archival records being lessened and excluded in not just one instance, but several. Trans people face the same challenge as they also threaten many dominant institutions.

*Real Absence; Real Responsibility?*

To search for transgender inclusion, I contacted over twenty well-known, larger Chicago-area archives to find out if any of them had transgender collections. I chose these archives as they represent a variety of different kinds of archives. They fall into several categories: institutional, academic, government, digital-only, themed, identity-based, or a mixture of these. For example, the Women and Leadership Archives is institutional (Loyola University Chicago and Mundelein College), themed (leadership), and identity-based (women). The Billy Graham Center Archives is themed (evangelical), institutional (Wheaton College), and subject-based (on Billy Graham). The University of Illinois at Chicago, the Chicago Public Library, and the Chicago History Museum are all state-funded (partial government). These archives represent a random selection of Chicago archives.

Chicago, like any major, bigger city, contains a great deal of transgender (not just because of a bigger population, but also because large cities often attract transgender people) (Meyerowitz). Do the records align with this? The following table shows the results.

Table 1. Chicago-area Archives Responses to Inquiry of Transgender Inclusion

Email/Question		
<p>“I am a graduate student at Loyola University Chicago, currently working on my thesis. I was wondering if your archives has any manuscripts of trans or gender-variant people? Or records of any organizations concerning trans or gender-variant issues? By using the umbrella term "trans," I am referring to transgender, intersexed, transsexual, two-spirited, or any people who live/d their lives moving between fe/male, man/woman, masculine/feminine, heterosexual/gay/lesbian. More often, it involves people who do not feel they "fit" into their physical birth body, whether psychologically or physically. Please, if you do not have manuscripts/records, let me know either way! I greatly appreciate your help/guidance.”</p>		
Archives	TG?	Response
Regional History Center Northern Illinois University	No	“The University Archives has several collections that contain materials on sexual orientation, however, I do not know how much of the material deals specifically with gender-variant issues.”
Benedictine University	?	[No response]
Chicago Women’s Liberation Union Herstory Website Archives	Maybe	[No response]
College Archives & Digital Collections Columbia College Chicago Library	No	“Columbia College Chicago Archives does not, at present, hold any manuscripts of trans or gender variant people or organizations. We are a relatively new archives, established less than six years ago, and we are still collecting materials.”
F.M. Johnson Archives and Special Collections North Park University	No	“The North Park archives do not contain any collections pertaining to your research.”
Chicago Public Library	No	“Unfortunately we do not have any materials about trans or gender-variant people in the Northside Neighborhood History Collection.”
Chicago History Museum	Maybe	“The Chicago History Museum has just opened a major exhibition “Out in Chicago” that explores the history of Chicago’s LGBT population. Information on the exhibition is available at <a href="http://chicagohistory.org/planavisit/exhibitions/out-in-chicago">http://chicagohistory.org/planavisit/exhibitions/out-in-chicago</a> Some of the materials, documents and interviews that make up “Out in Chicago” may give you a sense of what the museum has to offer.”
Chicago State University	No	“To the best of my knowledge there are no records dealing with trans- or gender-variant people or issues.”

Columbia College Chicago	No	“Columbia College Chicago Archives does not, at present, hold any manuscripts of trans or gender variant people or organizations. We are a relatively new archives, established less than six years ago, and we are still collecting materials.”
Special Collections & Archives DePaul University	No	“While we have some collections of gay or lesbian individuals, and LGBTQ materials from within DePaul, to my knowledge there is nothing that is specifically “trans.” The LGBTQ records document student groups and activity, but it is a very small and unprocessed collection. You’re welcome to view it, but from what I have seen of the records, I don’t think they speak to your topic.”
Dominican University	?	[No response]
Illinois Institute of Technology	?	[No response]
Lake Forest College	No	“We don't have anything in our archives; I'm not aware yet of any faculty, student, or staff examples –though they would be protected by privacy laws.”
Leather Archives & Museum	Yes	Finding aids for our available archival records can be found at : <a href="http://www.leatherarchives.org/collections/papers.htm">http://www.leatherarchives.org/collections/papers.htm</a> The Justin Tanis papers may be of particular interest to you <a href="http://www.leatherarchives.org/collections/catalog/PERS0001.html">http://www.leatherarchives.org/collections/catalog/PERS0001.html</a> Please let me know if we can help provide access to any of these.
National Louis University	No	Sorry for the delay in responding. To my knowledge we do not have any such collections or records. Only within the past year to two has a group devoted to GLTB issues organized at National Louis and their history has not yet been documented or collected.
Northwestern University Archives	No	“The Northwestern University Archives does not hold any manuscript collections that appear pertinent to your research.”
Roosevelt University	Maybe	I’ve looked through the inventory of processed papers and come up with the following files, mostly from the Student Activities collection: [Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual Records]
University of Chicago Library	No	“Unfortunately we do not have manuscript material written by transgender people.”
University of Illinois at Chicago	No	“Based on my familiarity with our collection, I would say that we don't have any original material concerning your subject matter in our archival holdings. We may have published material in our journal and book collections, but no primary material that I am aware of.”
Billy Graham Center Archives Wheaton College	No	“We do not have transgender sexuality in the largest sense as a subject in our database, since it is not a topic that comes up as such in the documents in our collections, although there is a significant amount of material on more specific topics, such as homosexuality, lesbianism, and the Christian view of sexuality in human life.”



Women & Leadership Archives Loyola University Chicago	No	[Dr. Beth Myers, Director and archivist, has expressed interest in collecting TG archives, but does not have any in the collection]
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What is the common answer here? An overwhelming no. Some of these archives have hundreds of collections. Considering them as a group, we are speaking of thousands of collections. Only one archive responded in the affirmative—the Leather Archives and Museum. Perhaps the “deviance” attributed to leather communities causes them to be more welcome to other “deviants?” (Warner).

Actually, a pattern emerged from the archivists’ responses that was previously mentioned: the lumping together of transgender with gay and lesbian. Though I do not share their full responses in the table above, several of the archivists tried to be helpful in offering potential transgender presence in certain collections. What were these? Gay and lesbian and women’s studies and feminist collections. I do not disagree with their offers; yes, there is a chance transgender people are in these collections. But once again, the response was a “maybe,” as transgender continued to be hidden and/or absent in yet another realm of society.

Though the scope of this (re)search is limited to a selection (less than 20%) of the responses of more than 100 archives that exist in Chicago, the point of displaced histories is not lost. Where are the transgender histories that we know exist and existed? Leslie Feinberg stresses:

My own research has led me to believe that trans expression is not rooted in modern reaction to restricted sex and gender roles in class-divided societies. I have documented that trans expression predates such oppression. Gender variance, sex change, and intersexuality appear to have existed globally throughout the history of human societies. (121)

Surely some transgender people have been through all of these institutions at some time or another. Some of the archives listed in Table 1 are over a century old.

The chances of there being opportunities to collect the archives of transgender people and organizations may be lower than other at-risk groups, but not impossible. Are the bulk of transgender manuscripts and records collected only by LGBT and T archives? Or, is it possible that shaming and secrecy have kept many potential transgender collections from being identified as transgender, or from being collected at all? Or that shaming and secrecy keep transgender donors from considering archives? Or maybe the aforementioned reinforcement of sex, gender, and sexual binary systems has played a major role in looking over and at times rejecting transgender documents? There are many possibilities as to why transgender is missing in this small but revealing snippet of archive collections in the United States.

Perhaps one reason remains pertinent: when special collection archives are created to house at-risk groups, perhaps this table of archives, for example, loses potential transgender collections to LGB/T archives. The Gerber/Hart Library and Archives was founded in 1981, and is the largest LGBT circulating library in the United States' Midwest, located in Chicago. Gerber/Hart has over 100 archival collections ([www.gerberhart.org](http://www.gerberhart.org)). Maybe since 1981, other archives have either passed on potential transgender donors to Gerber/Hart, or even lost transgender collections to Gerber/Hart and other more "transgender-focused" and "LGBT-focused" archives. But I contacted Gerber/Hart, and they only have one small trans collection. What does this inclusion suggest? Hypothetically, if the gay, lesbian, and bisexual population of the United States

is around 5%, and the transgender population is 1%, then the ratio of 5:1 in an LGBT archives might suggest a larger number of transgender collections, perhaps 20 or more (out of over 100). Yet they only have one.

Consider the following example as it relates to identity-based archives: transgender Pastor Justin Tanis, author of *Transgendered: Theology Ministries and Communities of Faith*, may have documents he wants to donate to an archives. Just from his research, we know that his identities as transgender and Christian are significant to him. In considering where to donate his own materials, what kind of archives might house them? For his work in transgender activism, maybe a LGBT archives or transgender archives. For his Christian leadership and work, maybe a religious archives, though many of them may not be welcoming to transgender due to homophobia and transphobia. What about the universities he attended? Or his hometown? His multiple identities means there are many options.

The irony of this example is that Justin Tanis does have a small collection that showed up as a surprise in this research. Some of his documents are at the Leather Archives and Museum—yet another identity/interest and option for Tanis. Thus, as the example shows, transgender as an identity will not be the sole identity of any person. People have multiple identities—some that last a lifetime, others that are fleeting, and still more that vary in importance depending on the person’s situation and the social environment. While identity and themed archives are useful for researchers, they may prove challenging when a person must choose which identity and/or interest to focus on for donation. Then again, the person may make multiple archival donations. Consider Valentine’s reflection on erasure concerning (binary) identities, even *transgender*: “The

goals and logics of identity politics themselves produce this apparent unintelligibility and erase an analysis of the entrenched inequalities that underpin them” (109).

These research findings on a small sample of Chicago archives indicate the need to bridge divides between archives and transgender. Thus, the next section entails transgender participant research through questionnaires on these topics.

*(Re)search: The “Subject” Speaks*

As I admitted, though transgender in some ways, I do not live as nor am I identified as a transgender person. However, I have been *assumed* to be trans because of my activism as an ally; but I am not trans. So, rather than assume how transgender people feel about archives and history, I decided to ask them. Instead of creating more binary boxes of “this” and “that” for transgender people to check, I decided in-depth questions with no required, boxed answers best suits this (re)search. Thus, using my connections to transgender people, several of whom are actively involved in politics, I sent out a call for participation in an in-depth questionnaire regarding the topic of this (re)search. The research had two main goals: to not only invite feedback on the topic from those living the conflicts, but also to literally invite people to consider donating to archives (hence, a “search” and “proposal”). For an in-depth look at the research process, please consult Appendix A for forms, questionnaires, and methods. Appendix B contains all of the responses together.

These questionnaires were submitted to and approved by the Institutional Review Board of Loyola University Chicago, and followed all recommended procedures. Keep in mind that participants were given the option of anonymity through numbering (only I know their identities) or to request to be known by full name (consent form required). As

far as the numerical representation of the participants, three is far from enough to claim fair representation; but it is an important start. As far as the range of diversity in the participants, here is a breakdown of several social locations plus their answers to “would you consider donating your life documents to an archives?”:

Table 2. Social Locations of Questionnaire Participants

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Sex/Gender</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Race</b>	<b>Donate to an archives?</b>
1	Transman	24	black	“Yes.”
2 Tea	Transgender woman	59	white	“I suppose.”
3 Ethan	transsexual (ftm) man	29	white	“[yes, on some levels]”

The following sections are topics covered by certain questions from the questionnaires. These sections represent major topics in this (re)search. They are also part of the ongoing conversation of: “Why transgender in archives? How?”

#### *Are Transgender People in History?*

This is an important question to consider not just for historians, archivists, and societies in general, but especially for transgender people. Being represented in history is often most salient to the people who share the identities in question, as they have direct life experience dealing with inclusion and exclusion. Participant 1 responded that “There is such a lack of presence of trans people and our experience in historical archives. We definitely need more presence.”

Participant 3, Ethan, has more to say:

I think that there is very little space made for trans\* people in our history. I don’t recall ever having seen any mention of a trans\* person in any history book I ever

read in school – grade school through undergraduate education. In graduate school, I only read about trans\* people as a modern phenomena; as a population of traditionally marginalized people in the context of cisgender privilege and transphobia, but not in the context of exposing those histories. When trans\* histories are cast, it seems to generally be about the hardship, about the sorrow, about the maltreatment. It is rare, if ever, that one is afforded the opportunity to learn about the successes and contributions of trans\* people through the ages. Again, folks who may have identified as trans in the modern era are rarely identified as trans\* in our collective history, since they did not have the means by which to identify as trans\* given the social and medical landscape of their time. Often, the most visual representation we have of trans\* people through history are those of native peoples in the Americas revering their trans community members in a spiritual way. But we do not see the link between European Americans and trans\* identities in our American continent history. And when native peoples are discussed it is often in passing as an example of how trans\* is not actually new, but is a variation of human nature that has existed for centuries. This is, of course, an intersection between transphobia and racism; the intersection of two marginalized groups being minimized and hidden from our history books in any meaningful way, and a yardstick by which current white American trans\* activists can measure trans history, without delving too deeply into the meaning within a culture of people of color.

Participant 2, Tea, quickly notes that people living openly as trans is "relatively new."

All three participants reveal similar beliefs on this topic of trans inclusion in history and archives as many trans historians and theorists argue: trans is hidden, or forgotten, or a phenomena, or "new," and so on, but certainly not accepted, celebrated, and fully known.

*Should Transgender People be in History and/or Archives? Why?*

To this simple but powerful question, Participant 1 responds with the following:

Just like any community, our community has leaders and groundbreakers that are worthy of being known and celebrated. They belong in textbooks and history books next to MLK Jr. and Harvey Milk. It would also be really beneficial and progressive for our history to include the little progress made in modern history in the trans experience and the lack of safety.

This response acknowledges an issue all too common and harmful to minority groups and identities—that of being devalued regardless of life efforts and endeavors. Consider the following: in the summer of 2010, Ru Paul and Dennis Rodman, two men who are

publicly known for enjoying women's clothing and other aspects of femininity, were part of a California public school scandal in which a teacher got into trouble with the school system for using these two men as examples of leaders for Black History Month. Regardless of Rodman's excellent professional basketball career and Ru Paul's notoriety as one of the most famous drag queens in the world, these men's cultural values in history were considered "vulgar" for their interests in cross-dressing and trans experiences. As Participant 1 notes in his response, leaders and struggles exist, but they are hidden or denied even though they may prove highly beneficial to individuals and societies. This is one example of many.

Archivist Margaret Proctor concurs with the need for records of struggle in her introduction as one of the editors to *Political Pressure and the Archival Record*: "The need of individuals to access such records to provide the evidence needed to seek reparation for wartime abuse and deprivation is a well-documented phenomenon and can be a major role for the contemporary archivist" (xiv). Though Proctor is discussing wartime, the analogy is helpful here as transgender has been considered an enemy and challenge to many powerful societal institutions. If more of the general public and people who have interest in transgender could access evidence through archives of both struggle and victory, solidarity and inclusion may increase.

In a response that mirrors what many trans authors have stressed, Participant 2, Tea, notes that transgender status need not be the central aspect of people included in archives in history, but that perhaps people of notable achievement who are also transgender would help lead to more "historic gains." Tea says that "those who by actions gain new rights and new acceptance for all trans persons" can receive recognition.

Speaking of recognition, Participant 3, Ethan, raises an important issue in the lack of trans awareness:

My first thoughts are that trans\* people and trans\* histories are often left out of history. Even in our own (LGB-T) community, the work of trans\* people is often forgotten as such (ie, Stonewall). Part of this is due to the clandestine history of the trans\* community. Those who might have identified as trans often had less means to do so in previous eras of our human history – medical and social paradigms had not come far enough to support trans people. This meant that for much of our history trans\* people are mislabeled as gay or lesbian. Particularly performers, but also, anyone who could only dress in the full regalia opposite that of their assigned sex at birth for only parts of their days, but were unable to fully transition for 100% of their lives. Those people often go unidentified as trans in our histories.

Having past representation and struggle to cite and learn from is a powerful resource for current and upcoming generations of people, trans, questioning, or not. Consider the much higher rate of suicide attempts of trans teens (which, depending on source, is generally above 50%). If trans awareness and representation existed in greater and more positive ways, perhaps many of these teens would not feel that their struggle, loneliness, and difference were unsurmountable. Trans identity, desire, and experience being hidden in other, related forms (like lesbian and gay) may prove a disservice to trans and gender-variant people looking for connection, history, and answers.

*Where and How does Transgender “fit” in Current Archives?*

Participant 1 believes that transgender does not quite fit into current archives with his answer: “We don’t fit into any other social group as the LGB‘T’ community has demonstrated time and time again. Our experience is completely unique and needs to be treated as such.” In the United States in the past few decades, there has been work and connection between “LG,” “B,” and “T,” but often conflicting priorities, biases, and



approaches have kept people and movements apart, many times to the point of leaving transgender behind or even scapegoating transgender to move other agendas “ahead.”

This point is expounded further as Participant 1 notes multiple experiences and identities in addition to discussing race:

Well, as every person has a different experience as a trans person, the same thing could be said for my black experience. The best way to have history inclusive is to include multiple experiences and histories. For example, I would *not* identify with a white trans man’s history because their experience usually includes gaining a lot of privilege as a white man; whereas, my experience got significantly more difficult as a black man.

Where might Participant 1 “fit” as gay, and black, and trans? Must he be parsed out into different histories and archives per identity, or have one identity “trump” others, or miss out on inclusion for having multiple underrepresented identities and experiences? Should a special section of history be deemed gay, black, and trans? These are important questions in this research that have no solid, neat, nor accommodating answer.

All three respondents agreed that transpeople have little to no space in history and archives currently, but that there are numerous archives that could and should include trans people and collections. Participant 3, Ethan, goes into detail concerning trans archives and histories in his response:

In San Francisco, at the LGBT history museum, I was pleasantly surprised to see how much care was taken to present the history of trans\* persons in the United States. Trans men and women were each individually given space as complete exhibits. They were not lumped into other groups or minimized, but recognized as having bolstered their own community in significant ways, and by proxy, bolstered the entire LGBT community. I think it is important that trans\* identities be recognized as something separate from LGB identities. I think all too often the LGB community forgets the trans\* community, and takes ownership for the contributions of the trans\* community as if those contributions were solely of the LGB community. For example: Stonewall. Stonewall is often regarded by members of the LGB community, and of the cis\* straight allied community, as a tremendous step forward in ‘gay rights’ in the United States. What is often

forgotten is that transwomen (drag queens and crossdressers) were those who were there at Stonewall. I think that it is important that our stories are allowed to be ours, and are not simply used by the white gay cis\* male dominated 'LGBT' movement to propel the mission of that movement, as so many of the equal rights talking points are today.

*Should Transgender Status be Mentioned/important? Would you Donate?*

"I think they should be listed as trans, but without their birth names," responded Participant 1, who considers his own life a contribution to an archives with his quick answer of "yes." More specifically, he shared the following: "I'd love my experience to be included in a men's archive because my experience is just another male experience" and "I would want to be included in gay history because I primarily identify as a gay man, but I also have the trans experience." Again we see the potential splitting of one's interests and life into categories/identities. In his responses, though, this participant seems somewhat comfortable in sharing different aspects of his life depending on the archive. All participants shared having multiple identities, which can both simplify but also complicate archives and histories; who decides the focus? Which identity, if there has to be one, is central? Participant 3, Ethan, considers multiple identities in his reply:

As I before alluded to, I think that trans\* people fit in a variety of groupings. To affirm a person's gender, one cannot simply place a trans\* person into anyone slot and that be the end of the story. Myself for example; I may fit into an archive for men (though aren't they all?). Or I might fit into an archive for transmen. Or I might fit into both. If one were to place me into an archive for men, I would say its worth noting that I was also a transman, though not harp on it. Though if I were placed into an archive for trans\* people, I think it is important to note that I am a transsexual man, not genderqueer. If I were to be placed in an archive for women, I think that it would be to elucidate my early life. But there are trans\* people who also identify as sexual minorities. Take, for instance, a transman who partners with other men might identify as gay. I think this shakes the core/foundation of our groupings according to gender. Trans\* people fit in a lot of places.

Participant 2, Tea, would donate, noting that: “I am locally significant for my ‘strength’ of being out and being myself. For my work with the groups that I have mentioned before as well as my activism with community and business issues for decades as a well known and well liked ‘man’ in the community.”

Participant 3, Ethan, considers how many genderqueer and trans people have been kept away from resources that may have allowed them to be considered valuable contributors to societies and economies. Consider his comment:

Many of these women are of a working class. Much of our history has relegated gender non-conforming persons to a working class status, and our current political and social climate continues to do so. Butch and stud lesbians, and, to a differing degree effiminant men, are shunned from our economy. So say those women even had the means, they would certainly have not been able to afford the health care I am in decades passed. And this still plagues our community today.

Ethan also notes that current trans and queer generations are benefitting from the efforts and sacrifices of past generations, some whose members may feel it is too late to take advantage of the increasing resources that are now available. Perhaps their trans desires and identities were not as realized given limited and violent social limitations. These limitations are weakening. We may never know millions of trans histories and lives due to structural violence against transgender, which includes the long history of medical fields denying and disregarding trans desire, embodiment, and experience.

Responses were varied to the trans status question, but all three participants seem to agree that some mention of trans is an important step in trans recognition and acceptance. Consider their responses, in order of participant number:

I think they should be listed as trans, but without people’s birthnames.

This is not my thing, but I would think that there should be a cross-reference so that persons could study the achievements or the facts of an individual either way.

I think so. I think that is the only way to pay homage to the work and the lives of trans\* people. Though some people might disagree. Some people feel as if they were born into the wrong body, and do not wish for their trans\* identity to be public. In their cases, listing them as trans would be a great disservice and offensive, to be sure.

All participants answered yes to the “would you donate” question. Part of Ethan’s statement is powerful and considers struggle: “I am a real-live transperson who is living and breathing in America. I am surviving a system that is pit against me every step of the way. Any of us that are living are miracles and are contributions to history.”

*Would you consider Inclusion into the Women & Leadership Archives?*

“No, because it is not gender appropriate,” stated Participant 1. A topic of conversation between Dr. Myers and me has been how to approach someone who has life documents that pertain to living as more than one gender when considering archives that collect materials based (however loosely) on gender. Participant 1 identified his current gender as a man as a mismatch to being included in the Women and Leadership Archives. He did not mention his life before transitioning, and why or why not this aspect may “allow” him into a women’s archives. He further explained his answer in the following, which is a response to being asked if he would have any special request for his donation to the Women and Leadership Archives: “I would not demand anything. I’m not a woman and it is not appropriate”

Participant 3, Ethan, notes varying levels of gender identity in his considering donating to the Women and Leadership Archives:

I would not. I don’t identify as a woman, though I one time presented as a woman. I think that, as a transman, I had to do the important work of giving up certain ‘membership cards’. I have to understand that I am not a woman, and as such, my masculine presence is a threat to women’s safe spaces. Because I

present as a privileged member of society, I must allow myself to now be excluded from certain identity markers that I no longer have right to lay claim to, like 'woman.'

The final question for participants asked of their response to this project, and results were neutral and positive. Participants and several other trans people who caught wind of this (re)search expressed gratitude in work towards bridging transgender and archives/histories.

Although the content of these responses is included in this chapter and in the proceeding chapters, I highly suggest perusing Appendix B and reading through their answers. I specifically included *all* of the participant's responses to partly demonstrate how varied people's views are to archival inclusion. If you are an archivist interested in transgender collections, or simply in fine-tuning your methods, consider reading through these questionnaires. People forced out of histories often have insights into the shortcomings of the processes that go into them.

CHAPTER THREE  
MEET THE BINARIES—SEX, GENDER, & SEXUALITY

It's not what you call me, but what I answer to.  
-African proverb

“Modern” societies, dominant cultures and ideologies, and stratified masses of people across the globe often have one trait in common: divisions among sex (then gender and sexuality). These divisions are not innocent reflections of diverse expanses of human expression and physical being, but rather, intentional class groupings into binary systems. If ever there has been a naturalized and normalized power dynamic concocted to control bodies and resources that relies on exclusion through denial of real diversity, it is the tired, old, entrenched sex/gender binary system (De Beauvoir, 61-138; Feinberg).

In simpler terms, of the millions of physical, emotional, and mental possibilities each person offers to the human population, we often allow only two possibilities to note and explain them. Regarding physical sex, one is either completely male or female. A sexed distinction is as simple (so they say) as doctors and family looking at a newborn's genital area and demarcating, for eternity, that infant's sex. Simply, “vagina” or “penis.” This is often an infant's first encounter with social stratification. Trans activist and performance artist Kate Bornstein elaborates: “These doctors look down at a newly-born infant and say, ‘It has a penis, it's a boy.’ Or they say, ‘It doesn't have a penis, it's a

girl.’ It has little to do with vaginas. It’s all penises or no penises: gender assignment is both phallocentric and genital” (22).

Discussions and analyses of these binary systems are an important component in considering and respecting transgender as a social category and transgender as a lived experience, desire, and behavior. After all, the term *transgender* literally implies “crossing gender.” *Crossing* implies a starting point and a destination, or in the least, a divide. *Gender* implies the binary of man/boy and woman/girl. The purpose of this chapter is to first explore dominant views within the United States on sex, gender, and sexual binaries. How do many powerful people, professionals, doctors, and institutions propose these systems work, and how do they *really* play out? Are they truly binary systems? These questions are explored.

“Penis” and “Vagina” are assumed to tell the world an infant’s chromosomes, hormone balance, reproductive ability, parenting interest, sexual desire, sexual orientation, future height, weight, mood, moodiness, fat and muscle composition, and on and on and on. Or as Stephen Whittle aptly describes, “The sighting at birth will be the ‘siting’ for the remainder of life” (5). “Male” and “Female” designations at birth also denote linear paths. Thus, female infers: girl to woman, vagina, breasts, sexual interest in males/men, feminine interests and disposition, emotional approach to the world, larger flows of estrogen and progesterone, etc.

However, at least 1 in 2000 births immediately do not follow this “magical rule” of female/vagina or male/penis (<http://www.isna.org/faq/frequency>). In fact, as infants grow larger and develop, the binary system becomes overloaded with exception after exception. The more complex infants become as they age and become “themselves,” the

more they complicate sex, gender, and sexual binary systems, be they transgender or not. The following six sections provide dominant discourse on each of these three systems. Following each binary system is the reality of diversity, showing how they exclude. Let us now “Meet the Binaries” in detail.

*Meet Binary Sex... and its many Implications*

Biology, medicine, folklore, dominant religions, grandma, census forms, and cereal boxes readily tell us there are two types of physical bodies—simple, neat, and predictable:—female and male, also referred to as *biological sex* or just *sex*. Every infant is supposed to be born one or the other (“other” often being female). There are many ways, modern medicine tells us, that we can know if a body is female or male. Almost always, though, beyond genetic testing, hormone levels, or the presence of sperm or oocytes/eggs, a quick glance for a penis will do the trick. If there is a penis, that body is male. If there is *not* a penis, and perhaps a vagina, that body is female. End of story, we are told. As psychologist and intersex activist Suzanne Kessler says: “In the late twentieth century, medical technology has become sufficiently advanced to allow scientists to determine chromosomal and hormonal gender, which is typically taken to be the real, natural, biological gender, usually referred to as ‘sex’” (74). Binary sex is increasingly being applied beyond penis and vagina into other bodily characteristics; or in other words, we are medicalizing sex binary onto bodies in new ways.

Genitals, be they “male” or “female,” are also assumed to demonstrate to both the owner and others many other physical, biological characteristics. Not only does the presence of a penis note a person’s sex as male, but also many other binary systems that fall within binary sex. Next I will demonstrate these quickly. Keep in mind, many if not



most of the upcoming binary “rules and regulations” may be easily found all over the United States, via mainstream media, public education, religious teachings, even down to an everyday conversation. Many of the citations have been pulled from a 2004 textbook that was used to teach a graduate level social work course at Loyola University Chicago. Many of the lessons on sex, gender, and sexuality are similar to those taught in public sex education.

Before an infant emerges from its parent with “male” or “female” genitals, according to modern human biology and medicine, several other physical attributes have also been medicalized as binary sex characteristics: sex chromosomes, sex hormones, sex gonads, sex germ cells, and sex glands. These together constitute primary sex characteristics, and have been divided into two major groups that align with male and female. Table 3 below details primary sex characteristics for humans.

Table 3. Primary Sex Characteristics per Binary Sex

<b>sex characteristic</b>	<b>female</b>	<b>Male</b>
sex organ	vagina	Penis
sex chromosomes	XX	XY
sex gonads	ovaries	Testes
sex germ cells	eggs/oocytes	sperm/spermatocytes
sex hormones	estrogen/progesterone	Testosterone
sex glands	skene’s glands	prostate gland

These “primary” physical characteristics theoretically influence and support the onset of secondary sex characteristics. These “begin” at puberty for both females and males, and consist of further physical changes induced by the primary sex characteristics, especially sex hormones produced and regulated by the testes and ovaries. Whereas

primary sex characteristics exist before puberty and are thought to be necessary for reproduction, secondary sex characteristics are considered aspects of sexual selection (read: heterosexual courtship, mating, and reproduction). Table 4 below details secondary sex characteristics for humans.

Table 4. Secondary Sex Characteristics per Binary Sex

<b>female</b>	<b>Male</b>
widening of pelvis	widening of shoulders and chest
increased fat storage in buttocks, hips, breasts, and thighs	decreased subcutaneous fat storage (tougher and more rigid skin)
growth of uterus	growth of penis, testicles, and prostate
growth of thigh muscles behind femur	growth of thigh muscles in front of femur
	growth of facial, chest, arm, abdominal, neck, and back hair
	growth of larynx and voice deepening
erection of clitoris	erection of penis
erection of nipples (more pronounced in females)	
growth of underarm and pubic hair	
enlargement of stature, bones, and height	
increased muscular mass and strength (more in males)	

Many sex characteristics in general that we use everyday to “sex” others are associated with secondary sex characteristics, as these tend to be more noticeable (especially in cultures that wear clothing). Susan Stryker similarly argues that “Secondary sex characteristics constitute perhaps the most socially significant part of morphology—taken together, they are the bodily ‘signs’ that others read to guess at our sex, attribute gender to us, and assign us to the social category they understand to be most

appropriate for us” (10). Males are thought to have more body hair, especially on the face. Females are supposed to have more fat deposits in their breasts, buttocks, hips, and thighs. As one can see from Table 4, males and females further “diverge” at puberty (McAnulty & Burnette, 64-101).

This concludes meeting binary sex. Though many assume male and female to be simple designations, primary and secondary sex characteristics show over twenty variables. Linear paths are normalized from birth to reproduction for humans in this sexed binary, and sexed bodies are assumed to contain all mentioned characteristics—“this” way or “that” way.

*From Implications to Complications, Part 1*

Trans liberationist Leslie Feinberg says that “These images have been drilled into us through popular culture and education over the years. [...] These gender messages play on and on in a continuous loop in our brains, like commercials that can’t be muted” (3-4). For almost everyone, this binary sexed system has been *sold* as truth, as embodiment, as medicine and science, as nature and even as divinely ordered (Bornstein, Tanis). Yet body after body prove this system fails not just some of us, but *all* of us at some point in our lives, as every single sex characteristic has at least one exception, if not millions.

Sociologist Lori B. Girshick speaks to this:

We attach social and cultural meaning to otherwise neutral biological givens. The really important questions are whether we can stop assuming that genitals = gender, whether we can overcome our knee-jerk tendency to think of masculinity and femininity as polar opposites, and whether we can honestly investigate how our language and ideas create and sustain two oppositional sets of identity boxes in which millions of people do not fit. (6)

To only be told, sold, and given two options for physical human sex is not only an enormous disservice to all of humanity, but also one with sometimes disastrous consequences, such as violence, abuse, murder, and shaming. Girshik concludes that “To build an entire societal structure on a binary system for which there is no scientific evidence is a colossal fraud” (34). Or, as Simon (via Lori B. Girshik) asks, “99.9% of the DNA between those two sets of humans is exactly the same. Why do we obsess about that 0.1%?” (52). One of the more common starting points of evidence that sex binary is misleading occurs in at least 1 in 2000 births.

This exception to the sex binary rule is referred to as a condition: intersexed. Though roughly considered another sex, “male” and “female” are not called conditions; yet when a human body does not meet the expectations of male and female, United States’ and Western medicines calls this a “condition.” Even the discourse here has implications for treatment of nonnormative bodies.

The dangerous assumption by doctors, psychologists, and families is that an intersexed infant must be reared to identify with either male or female, because if not, then the infant will not belong in the world nor have an easy life, but rather, an outcast and shunned existence. Really, however, the underlying issue here is, and it is less often mentioned (except by feminist, intersexed, and trans activists, but who listens to them/us in dominant, scientific circles?), that most of the world has been imagined and socialized without intersexed people being considered, so their very presence is a not a threat to themselves, but to entire, gigantic binary sex systems. Or as the Intersex Society of North America proclaims, “Intersexuality is primarily a problem of stigma and trauma, not gender” (<http://www.isna.org>).

Sometimes it is not the infant who is born with the intersexed condition. Some doctors accidentally botch male penile circumcisions, resulting in damaged “future penile abilities.” If the damage is deemed extensive enough (read: inability to have an “acceptable” or “functioning” penis), many times the same doctor will decide, along with the parent(s), to continue damaging the penis to shape it into a “female.” Leslie Feinberg, also an intersex activist, sums it well:

To examine this issue, we must confront the fact that one of the very establishments we hold dear does not always respect women (surgeons assign nine out of ten intersex infants they see as girls because “it’s easier”), are not always rational (whatever doctors do is respected as “scientific,” even when it makes little sense), and do not always love or protect our children (psychologist Suzanne Kessler notes that genital ambiguity is “corrected” because it threatens not the infant’s life but the culture in the infant was born into). (89)

This is only one of the more than twenty sex characteristics that is not a simple binary of “penis” and “vagina.”

The “intersexed” condition may refer to genital composition not fitting neatly into “penis” and “vagina,” or may be the result of other complications with binary sex categories. Kessler explains:

The diagnosis of intersexed conditions includes assessing the chromosomal sex and the syndrome that produced the genital ambiguity and may include medical procedures such as cytologic screening, chromosomal analysis; assessing serum electrolytes; hormone, gonadotrophin, and steroids evaluation; digital examination; and radiographic genitography. (77)

Because sex characteristics affect one another, sometimes in a circular way, intersexed characteristics have a number of causes and a variety of embodiments. For example, male and female genitalia may appear to be “normal” and intact, but an individual’s sex chromosomes may not fit the binary XX and XY sex chromosomal thinking. Some people have XXY and XYY (Klinefelter Syndrome), XO (Turner’s Syndrome), to name

some. These *not* being the expected or dominant does not make them inherently bad or unhealthy, it simply means they *might* be different, and have other needs and ways of being (Crawford & Unger, 163-168).

Other intersexed “conditions” may result from nontraditional hormone balances or bodies that react to hormones differently, one example coming from Kessler’s work: “If the Y-chromosome infant cannot make testosterone or cannot respond to the testosterone it makes, the phallus will not develop, and the Y-chromosome infant will not be considered to be male after all” (77). Some bodies have testicles that are smaller than usual or that do not function as expected, or none at all. Some bodies have larger clitorises, labia, or vaginas than acceptable by medical or social standards. Some prescribed male bodies have breasts while some female described bodies have little to no breasts. Some people are born with both “male” and “female” tissues and organs, which may be obvious at birth, later in life, or never be known at all (<http://www.isna.org>; Crawford & Unger, 164-168).

Note use of the word “syndrome” and further emphasis on “penis or no penis” so far. Intersexuals are viewed by doctors, parents, and society as conditions that must arise from *problems*. Even normal hormonal changes in (usually) female bodies are labeled “syndromes,” as in premenstrual syndrome, as feminist biologist Anne Fausto-Sterling notes: “The premise that women are by nature abnormal and inherently diseased dominates past research on menstruation and menopause. While appointing the male reproductive system as normal, this viewpoint calls abnormal any aspect of the female reproductive life cycle that deviates from the male’s” (399-409). Similarly to females, intersexuals are less often considered normal and healthy; formed and existing without

necessarily reinforcing and reinscribing male and female sexed binary. Intersexuals often face an onslaught, generally at birth through puberty, of medical tampering, treatment, and diagnoses. To not fit within male, female, and reproductive is threatening to sex binary (Kessler, Feinberg). But intersexed conditions are one set of many threats to binary sex.

In addition to the reality of bodies between and outside the primary sex characteristics, there is an incredible array of actual, not theoretical, secondary sex characteristics embodied in people that also falls between and outside of binary sex. Perhaps all this sex education sounds neat and fixed, but lived experiences demonstrate mutability and desired change.

First, let us start with the most obvious: menopause and aging. Puberty is not the only major time of hormonal change. Most “normal” bodies go through another set of hormonal changes as they age, which alter and sometimes reverse secondary sex characteristics. Older “females” sprout facial hairs and rougher/tougher skin, while older “males” lose aggression, sex drive, and testosterone. Testicles and ovaries may atrophy, resulting in less sex hormone in the body. The thyroid gland may develop cancer and over- or under-manage the body’s hormone levels. There are many changes that human bodies may go through as they age that influence and maybe change their secondary sex characteristics (<http://adam.about.net/encyclopedia/Aging-changes-in-hormone-production.htm>).

Second, not all bodies experience puberty the same in their respective sex group. If not already obvious, males and females gain varying degrees of body hair, with plenty of overlap between the sexes. Some females grow taller and have more leg hair while

some males stay short and barely have underarm hair. Some males develop small penises, or even micropenises, and some females develop a larger clitoris that may resemble a penis (McAnulty & Burnette, 64-101). As the saying goes in research on binary systems, there appears to be far more variation inside the designated groups than between them (Schwalbe).

Third, some bodies do not respond well or at all to the changes in hormones in their bodies during puberty. Some people do not have the receptors necessary for certain sex hormones, while other people may even go through puberty and find that their assumed sex does not match their secondary sex characteristics (Crawford & Unger, 169-176). For instance, the person identified as female and raised as a girl may indeed undergo puberty that resembles “male” puberty with increases in testosterone and related changes. On a related note, some bodies encounter accidents, toxins, cancers, and other environmental conditions that may alter secondary and even primary sex characteristics. Breast or testicular cancer, for instance, often leads people to consider surgeries that restore lost breasts or testes. A male’s chances of developing prostate cancer increases as he ages, as does the size of his prostate, which often correlates with decreased libido and/or ability to maintain an erection (American Cancer Society, <http://www.cancer.org/prostatecancer>).

Finally, and this shoves us into a later section, there are billions of people whose sex characteristics are altered whether by desire, behavior, or accident. We all age, we all fluctuate in physical chemistry and biology—we are not fixed, rigid, binary physical beings. Especially with advances in technologies which may be utilized to enhance, alter, and control the human body, sex characteristics are increasingly under the control of



cultures and people (Haraway, 103-116). Girshick argues that sex binary is proven false by biology: “Doctors and other medical/scientific personnel have interpreted a set of biological traits to fit their notion of a binary gendered reality: penises should be large, and clitorises should be small. But . . . biology itself defies the binary” (24).

On a last note reflecting the overemphasis on sex/gender, feminist psychologists Mary Crawford and Rhoda Unger describe how sex binary is amplified in common settings in a simple study:

To demonstrate that perceived sex is a fundamental category in the identification of others, in one study a situation was chosen in which sex did not appear to have any functional value for the perceiver. People who were waiting at a subway station were asked if they had purchased a token. If they had, they were told that a study on eyewitness reports was being conducted and would they please describe the token seller by listing characteristics for the purpose of identification. Of the characteristics mentioned, the sex of the token seller—in this case, female—was always included. It was given as a first or second characteristic 100 percent of the time. In fact, it was given as a first 75 percent of the time and was displaced to second position only by race (in this case, African-American). These informants apparently thought that sex was a very important characteristic to mention for purposes of identification. Of course it isn’t important in any statistical sense. By naming sex, one only distinguishes a person from about 50 percent of the population. Most people have many more individuating characteristics—glasses, hair color, freckles, and so forth. (80)

Many such similar findings and reflections of the importance we give to sex binary exist. Note, too, Crawford and Unger’s use of “perceived.” The person’s actual sex is not always distinguishable. When a person’s body parts, hormone levels, reproductive organs, and genetic make-up are not clear markers, people resort to another binary system to assume sex: gender.

### *Meet Gender, and its Constant Movement*

While sex generally lies in the physical, thus medical and biological—and this makes its discussion somewhat simpler—gender is a trip into a muddy, messy

“controlled” chaos. Nevertheless, gender binary systems are powerful social stratifications that can be found in many parts of the world and throughout the past. However, keep in mind, as feminist archeologist Margaret W. Conkey cautions: “Yes, we must recognize that a ‘two-genders’ system is not likely to have been everywhere and throughout time” (53). Though we may be entrenched in a two-gender system currently, we must be careful in viewing the past without applying this concept transhistorically.

Gender refers to characteristics *attributed* to sex, so the simplest way I have come to understand gender is not only what we cannot see or touch, per se, but what we know (mental, spiritual, emotional, and psychological versus the physical). Crawford and Unger pinpoint gender “when women are not treated the same way as men” through “distinctions” of “personality differences, skills, and roles” (78). Another approach to gender concerns feminist biology. Whereas animals act and react to differently sexed bodies based on sexual instincts, as encoded by their DNA, as far as biologists understand, the overwhelming majority of the animal kingdom does not think, feel, or reason their behaviors and bodies (Goodenough, McGuire, Wallace, 7-34). On the other hand, humans have the capacity to reason, thus allowing spaces beyond genetic coding as may regard physical sex. The cognition of physical sex (the aforementioned spaces) may be considered *gender*; where, though encoded, we ascribe greater meanings to physical sex (especially differences in the population) (Brettel, Sargent, Zuk, 1-16).

Some argue that gender refers to the social aspect of sex; however I find this a dangerous claim as sex binaries are incredibly (if not totally) influenced by societies. Or, in other words, sex binary is defined and regulated by humans, too, as transgender historian Joanne Mayerowitz reminds: “We might think of biological sex as a natural

phenomenon, with unchanging categories, male and female, universally recognized in all cultures and all centuries. But like gender and sexuality, biological sex has a history. Humans have imagined it differently at different times and in different places” (21). Thus, again, sex refers to physical dimensions of being, and here I argue that gender encompasses how individuals, outsiders, and entire societies respond to sexed bodies. Much of gender has to do with assumed characteristics regarding a person’s past, present, or future personality, behaviors, interests, habits, emotions, and so on. Notice that even I seem to be having trouble defining gender? Sex and gender are often lumped together—assumed the same—thus pulling them apart for analysis is challenging (and difficult too for lived bodies and experiences where they are so conflated).

*Sex* is generally something you *are*, while *gender* is something you *feel* and *think* you are. “Gender is *being* and *doing*” (Girshik, 70). So what are some of these thoughts and feelings?

Language is a basic starting point in discussing gender. Beyond the physical manifestation of male, it is assumed that body and mind will line up in social roles as boy, man, sir, father, son, brother, uncle, and a slew of other nouns/titles aligned to a “male” body. Likewise, for “females,” assumed gender applications involve girl, woman, miss, missus, mom, sister, aunt, daughter, and a bevy of more nouns/titles aligned with “female” body. Yet another way of understanding gender is what we *assume* sex characteristics do to body’s mind, desires, and behaviors. Note that I am not offering several variations of a definition of gender to complicate matters; rather, multiple views of the powerful, tangled systems of binary gender add depths to reveal its complexities and nuances.

Sociologist and gender theorist Laurel Richardson outlines six major components of binary sex (sexism) in language. First, “*women* are included under the generic *man*.” This leads to the “exclusion of women in the visualization, imagination, and thought of males and females” (112). Second, the use of gendered pronouns, such as *he*, *she*, *her*, and *him*, reinscribes “differently personality attributes and career aspirations for men and women.” In this second component, Richardson includes the use of sexing/gendering nonhuman objects, such as those controlled mostly by men, like boats and cars. Third, “linguistic practice defines females as immature, incompetent, and incapable and males as mature, complete, and competent.” Here, Richardson is referring to assumptions behind *lady* and *gentleman*, for example, having different connotations, specifically, “the assumption seems to be that certain culturally condoned aspects of masculinity should be set aside in the interests of maturity and order” (113). “Fourth, in practice women are defined in terms of their sexual desirability (to men); men are defined in terms of their sexual prowess (to women).” She is specifically referring here to sexual slang words, and cites research that finds significantly more words to describe women as *prostitutes* or promiscuous than to describe men. Richardson also mentions verbs, where passive verbs are employed in describing women’s sexuality and active verbs often used to envision men’s sexuality. The last two components of sexist/gendered language as outlined by Richardson are, fifth, that “women are defined in terms of their relations to men; men are defined in terms of their relations to the world;” and sixth, words that were once neutral as pertains to sex/gender attain negative or obscene connotations when feminine and no such pattern when masculine, except often to include a broader meaning. For example, *lord* and *lady*, or *mister* and *mistress* (114-115). As gender-neutral

language becomes more popular and accepted, the feminine version is dropped while the masculine becomes universal: *actress* into *actor*, *governess* into *governor*, *waitress* into *waitor*, *stewardess* into *steward*. Richardson's research into language reveals that sex binary (and gender and sexuality) have been ingrained into language. Her work helps demonstrate the universalization of physical binary sex differences through gendered language.

Woman is a noun as feminine/womanly are adjectives, usually. Femininity and masculinity are also gendered language tools used to describe actions, bodies, and concepts where sex does not. Consider an interaction I recently had with my mother that helps clarify the concept of gender.

About two weeks ago, my mother was visiting and staying with me for the first time in years. Lately, she has taken a deep liking to knitting. She was sitting beside me finishing a small blanket, when she excitedly jumped up and walked over to a chair with various colors of yarn on it. I had already shared with her that the blanket was warm, colorful, and beautiful in my opinion. She looks over at me staring at my laptop and asks my advice. "Curtis, what do you think? Should I use purple, yellow, or pink for the border?"

Without thinking hard and with no point to prove, I immediately answered, "purple; it's warm, not used as often, pulls in the other colors you used, and gender-neutral." She arched her head fast and dropped her wrists while holding the blanket and quickly and abruptly responded with, "this is a girl's blanket, silly! It has yellows and pinks."

My mom's polite way of saying, "you are full of shit, or blind," is to sweetly call you "silly." I knew my mom thought I was trying to queer this innocent little blanket, though she trusts me. My answer made her uncomfortable and caused her to lose some of her enthusiasm. Apparently I should have known the blanket was meant for a little girl. Either I was wrong, or the blanket was wrong.

My mom quickly dropped her question, seemingly deciding that I was in fact wrong, and sat back down beside me, saying, "I'll figure it out later." Before she could drop the subject, I quickly asked: "Mom, do you think there is a genetic component to color preference? Seriously, I want you to be honest. Do you think pink is encoded in female DNA?"

Let it not be lost that my mother is a warm, well-intentioned person. If you ask her to be careful, she will consider you. So she took a moment and her face got a little tighter and more serious. She answered after some deliberation, in a manner and voice reminiscent of words carefully chosen—like we were discussing sex when I was young—"Honestly; well, I honestly cannot say yes or no. I do believe there is something about pink and girls and blue with boys, I do not know if it is genetic, but there is something there."

Her strong feelings that pink is for females/girls and blue is for males/boys, at least in the United States, is an example of a gender application. While she knows it may be silly to suggest that it is genetic, she, like many others, is certain there is some *natural* or *normal* component. As if it just makes sense. Perhaps she is not even speaking to the color discrepancies of pink and blue, as these change through time and culture. Rather,

she may simply be stating that something seems (gender) natural (sex) about dividing (binary) boys and girls.

And the assumptions, conflations, and applications of gender onto sex, per culture, subculture, family, and person, seem almost endless. People often take them seriously, but offer almost no proof of *why* beyond *because*.

Gender invades all aspects of our lives where sex leaves off. Or rather, we *define* gender and sex to cover all aspects of mind, body, and soul. At least most of us try to. Some cultures give inanimate objects gendered nouns. Examples of gender are literally everywhere. The Bible is full of ideas concerning the nature and essence of *man* and *woman*, or as Kate Bornstein notes: “Religions may dictate right and proper behavior for men and women, but no religion actually lays out what is a man and what is a woman. They assume we know, that’s how deep this cultural assumption runs” (57). Clothing articles and styles are designated for men, women, boys, and girls. People name children, pets, boats, and hurricanes using gendered names. Ponder more examples of gendered areas of life: shoes, bodily peircings, cooking and cleaning, dancing, conflict and war, agression and violence, access to education, leadership roles, politics, exercise, mathematics, reading ability, modesty, gossip, children’s toys, perfumes and colognes, romance, marriage, etc. In fact, finding cultural areas in the United States where gender is *not* influential may prove a difficult task.

*From Implications to Complications, Part 2*

First, I told you I was a woman, then I told you I was a man, and then I told you I was *real!*’

-Kevin Omni, transgender interviewee (Valentine 83)

If the last section was confusing and nonlinear in ways, then it matches the rules and regulations of gender binary. Gender, here in the United States, with my mom—in nearly any setting in which it has been thought up and enforced—is messy, contradictory, illogical, spasmodic, and most importantly, constantly changing and nearly impossible to define (though we know it when we see it) (Feinberg).

By distinguishing two groups of humans, stratification is likely to occur; and when in favor of males and men, it is called patriarchy, and in favor of women and girls, matriarchy (Booth). If “separate but equal” is deemed untenable, then, neither a patriarchy nor matriarchy benefit all, but rather, increase the privileges and access of one group at the expense of at least one other. Kate Bornstein drives the point home: “Can there be an equality between the genders? Or is “equality of the genders” oxymoronic, making any fight for the equality of the genders self-defeating? Gender implies class, and class presupposes inequality. Fight rather for the deconstruction of gender—it would get to the same place much faster” (113).

We have managed to label nearly every human characteristic, behavior, expression—just think, everything—with some sort of gendered agenda. Why? Do all these things really have to do with our sex characteristics? No, absolutely not. But have we been brainwashed by others and ourselves to believe that all things can relate back to our genitals? Seems so. Why? Because sex is power. Or as McAnulty and Unger note, “[Gender is] important because it is a major way by which society classifies people. Everyone has a gender although it is noticed more by some people than others; [and] power and status are important determinants of when gender makes a difference” (77).



The concept of “opposites” has not been introduced just yet, but now is a good time to consider this with sex and gender. Sex and gender binaries are assumed to be opposites, sometimes compliments, from the first type to the other. Male is... *not female*. Woman is the opposite of man. Together they “complete” one another, or in the least are supposed to compliment one another. Where there is a man with a lot of body hair, there is a woman with very little. Where little boys are destroying playdolls in war reenactments, little girls are pretend-nursing them back to health for pretend families.

Over and over there are sex and gendered spectrums that pit a male or manly characteristic against, or complimentary to, a female or womanly characteristic. One cannot, or better yet, should not, exist without the other, or so we are told. Women wear bras and men do not. Men pee standing while women must sit down to urinate. Women are victims and men are perpetrators. Men invent and women obey. Women have big, painted eyes and eyelashes and men have beady eyes (from hunting, duh). The list goes on and on, and so do the complications. Just as with sex binary, gender binary breaks down quickly, as it never truly worked in the first place. Helen Boyd, theorist and activist of cross-dressing, argues that “Our ideas about masculinity leave men little room for their own self-expression. It’s been shown again and again that there are no ‘traits’ inherent in either gender, but rather that we all have different aptitudes and proclivities, some of which are encouraged if we are women, discouraged if we are men” (45).

For every binary gendered rule, there are more exceptions than neat, lived examples. Yet in the system of “this” or “that,” little to no room exists for “neither” or “both.” But if sex and gender characteristics were so perfect and worked as binaries, why do we not only have so many signifiers of those *within* the categories, but many more of

those *outside* or *between* the categories? Simple: because sex, but especially gender, is in constant panic mode. Consider signifiers as words and actions that police people who fall in between and outside the binaries; whether to call attention *away* from them, or negative attention *to* them. They must be redefined and rethought, mostly *reminded*, that they somehow still work, or apply, as binaries. When a sidestep occurs, the person or behavior is either: 1) reinforced as working within the systems (for example, “male nurse”), or 2) excused out of the systems as abnormal, unintelligible, or at the worst, nonexistent (for instance, “faggot nurse”).

Whether the example is a man who shares his feelings with his loved ones, or a woman who runs a business, or a boy who enjoys romantic cinema, or a girl who plays baseball well, gender binary and gender stereotypes misrepresent the variety of characteristics found in each individual: ranges of masculine and feminine. Sex and gender binaries are abstractions that are not working for everyone, as the exceptions help demonstrate.

Transgender as an umbrella term has in the past two decades come to represent people and sometimes behaviors and desires that fall in-between and outside sex and gender binaries, sometimes in some aspects reinforcing binary sex and gender. Yet, at its core, transgender defies sex and gender through (actual and desired) movement that has been deemed impossible, less valuable, and unnatural. One of the best examples of restructuring sex and gender outlaws to work within binary confines occurs in the next section and was the first thing mentioned in this research.

*Meet Sexual Binary, and its Reassurances*

We have arrived at the third and final major binary to be discussed in this (re)search. All the worry and consideration that goes into defining and maintaining the aforementioned systems is not without “good” reasoning, and that reasoning often boils down to human survival, in other words, human reproduction. Reproductive elements, beyond naming and describing human anatomy through sex, have their own special set of codes and regulations: *sexuality*. Where sex and gender leave off, sexuality takes over, offering a binary take, once again, on the what, how, when, where, and most notably, who to *do* sex and reproduction with. Sexuality is often considered a facet of gender by feminist and queer theorists. In sum, sexual binary is meant to instruct (read: control) pleasure and ultimately its utility in reproduction and state-sanctioned/supported pleasures.

The overwhelming message beamed into our brains from childhood is that, sexually, “male goes with female” and “man goes with woman” (Warner, Feinberg). This is called heterosexual. Like *male* and *man/boy/masculine*, from sex and gender respectively, *heterosexual* is the most valued sexual form, especially as it pertains to reproduction (Rubin). Helen Boyd argues that sexual binary is about more than just reproduction:

Clothes are meant to indicate our biological sex because for some inexplicable reason we need to know if someone is a boy or a girl. Why do we need to know so badly? The easiest answer is that we need to know a person’s biological function, whether she or he becomes pregnant or impregnates. If that were the case, we would separate children not at birth but nearer puberty, when a person’s sexual function begins. But we separate the boys from the girls at birth, which indicates that gender can’t just be about sexual function. We are so insistent upon knowing a child’s sex at birth that those born with Intersex conditions—uncertain genitalia or atypical chromosomes—are often surgically altered to look like a boy

or a girl, even when the child's biological sex (as determined by their internal organs or chromosomes) is uncertain. Some Intersexed children are made unable to become pregnant or impregnate as a result of these anxiety-driven surgeries, which is strong evidence for gender not being about sexual function at all, but more about the human fixation with dividing us up into one of two gender categories. (26)

In the first pages of this (re)search, I brought up gay, lesbian, and bisexual gains made regarding museums and marriage. Why? Because for people who sexually toy with sex and gender binaries, acceptance is being offered by dominant society *as long as* the following occur: “male with male,” “female with female,” “man with man,” “woman with woman,” and sometimes these raising children. The reason gay, lesbian, and bisexual identities are being more welcomed is because they are being pressured into falling into the sex and gender binary slots, even with their sexual binary criss-crossing (Warner).

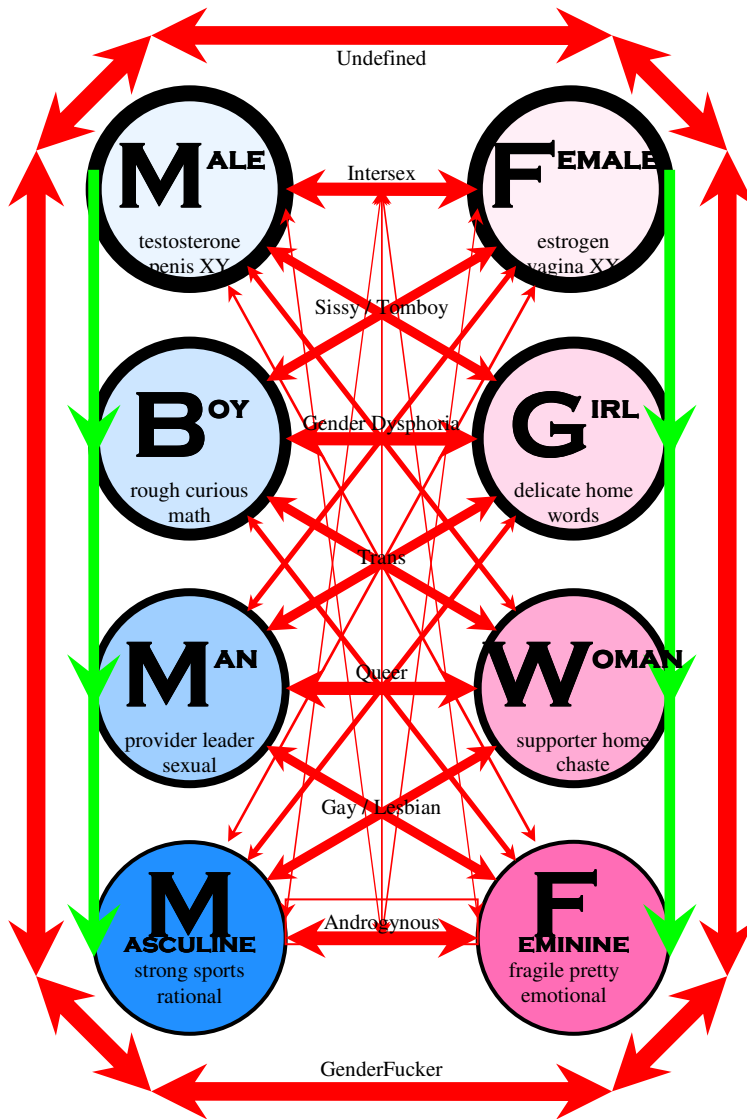
It is as if the dominant sex/gender/sexual binary systems are letting some of the “not so bad” ones limited acceptance and resources in order to further demonize others (transgender others)—not to mention causing splitting and severing ties between GLB and T. Allow some of the “good gays” in and maybe the whole sex/gender/sexual binary monster will stay alive.

Think about it. The most *important* aspect to our sexuality, taken so far as identifying as it, is not *who* we have sex and romance with, but what sex and gender they align with. We have taken the thousands of variables of desire, and focused in on sex and gender, or as social theorist and queer activist Michael Warner finds, “The culture has thousands of ways for people to govern the sex of others—not just harmful or coercive sex, like rape, but the most personal dimensions of pleasure, identity, and practice” (1).

Binary systems of sexuality could focus on pain (sadoomasochism), activity and passivity (top/bottom; butch/femme), or even time of day preferred, number of partners desired, or amount of lighting. We *identify* as the sexed/gendered concept of our desires. This is, indeed, sex and gender binary successfully encroaching into yet another aspect of our lives and identities: our bodily pleasures through sex and intimacy.

The following image is a sketch I drew to illustrate the linear path sex, gender, and sexual binary systems designate in the United States. First, note movement starting with male and female going down, in a way moving through a life. Sexuality is assumed to compliment the “other,” so the left side will desire the right side, and vice-versa. The sketch is by no means “correct” or “rigid;” it represents a failed exercise in collapsing sex, gender, and sexuality into even a two-dimensional plane.

Image 1. Linear Paths and Outliers in the Sex/Gender/Sexual Binaries War



**Gender/Sex “Legend:”**

Circle = circular, confined myth  
 Green = GO!  
 Red = NO!

Outside the circles?  
 Transgender people

Inside the circles?  
 Room to wiggle

\* Those who stay inside the circles, in the blue and pink, and along the green paths, are often represented in history and archives.

\*Those who live and identify outside and in between the circles, in the red and white, with blue and pink or neither, going back and forth and outside, are often lost, deleted, and ignored.

*From Implications to Complications, Part 3*

Well, yeah. We have these micro-peni. Ultimately, we're packing the same equipment; we just have to search for it and fool with it, but it's ours and it works, same as yours. And who the fuck are you to tell us how much mileage we should have on our equipment? Or how to use it? Or how often? Women are taught we're supposed to give it up to one man, or at least to one man at a time. The man can be out there planting his seed all over the damn place, and the woman is supposed to sit at home and wait for him to pay her some attention. It's such bullshit, and the more we recognize it's bullshit the more we fuck with the balance in male-female relationships.

-Whoopi Goldberg, social critic and comic (124)

Similar to sex and gender binaries, the sexual binary that arises from the previous two is once again not entirely true nor the only truth, as Goldberg notes in the above quote concerning male/female sexual relations. Michael Warner finds that "Hierarchies of sex sometimes serve no real purpose except to prevent sexual variance. They create victimless crimes, imaginary threats, and moralities of cruelty" (25). Human sexuality is way more than just the bodies and body parts of others that we may find pleasurable.

Even if sex binary and sexual binary "work" due to most bodies having a penis *or* a vagina, every body, for example, has fingers *and* mouths and anuses. Why we focus on the differences in our bodies rather than the similarities is a question of great importance in considering sexual binary as a system of stratification. Certainly it may be true that some people, even many people, believe the sex of their sexual partners to be the most important factor of their sexuality. But this is not necessarily true for everyone, and thus should not be assumed and enforced as such. Not to mention, some people identify as asexual (not attracted to others), autosexual (attracted to self), or attracted to nonliving objects (leather fetish).

Warner stresses that “The shame of a true pervert—stigma—is less delible; it is a social identity that befalls one like fate. Like the related stigmas of racial identity or disabilities, it may have nothing to do with acts one has committed. It attaches not to doing, but to being; not to conduct, but to status” (28). One way of keeping sex and gender borders fixed and powerful is to tolerate and partially accept those that reinforce these systems through their sexual desires and pleasures. This is why, also, “same-sex” unions and “same-sex marriage,” while threatening in so many ways to many traditional, dominant systems, still manage to reinforce sex and gender through naming and categorizing. People who have desires and sexuality that do not line up with heterosexuality had to first be named and categorically accepted within the confines of sex and gender binary systems before even being considered topics of conversation, science, law, religion, and so on (Meyerowitz). In effect, they had to be branded in the process of achieving some amount of acceptable, public discourse. Why else would there be such heated debate and emotions surrounding who gets to “be” lesbian? “Bodies take on social meaning in relation to, for instance, the lesbian nation only if they can fix themselves in time and space as one gender or another” (Nan Alamilla Boyd, 429).

This leads to, again, serious complications. Gay, lesbian, and bisexual people are not only restricted in sex and gender roles, but further, their own sex and gender is made rigid by identifying and believing in gay, lesbian, and bisexual roles. Not to mention, the “opposite” or complimentary terms “heterosexual” and “straight” also further reduce people to binary restrictions in their sexual expression and desire. Kate Bornstein says this well: “Because of the bi-polar nature of both sexual orientation and gender, one



system strengthens the other. Bisexuality and androgyny also hold two sides in place by defining themselves as somewhere in the middle of two given polar opposites” (133).

It seems, then, that where sex and gender failed to restrict people in movement and expression, sexual binary was created to limit sexuality to a binary, sex/gender system. Rather than illuminating the confines of binary sex and gender, sexual binary in sexuality has added to the strength of sex and gender as rigid systems. Consider an analogy. Perhaps there was a time in the history of the English language when a person’s aunts and uncles, nieces and nephews were known through gender-neutral terms. When these nouns were created, people could have gone one of two ways: 1) to question gendering familial connection; 2) to extend sex and gender into familial connection. Like sexual desire, the latter was chosen: familial connection has been “named” and “fitted” for sex and gender binary systems rather than challenging them.

But how is this harmful? Minimizing people into two possibilities in so many realms severely limits their capacity to live and think fully. As Warner claims, “The politics of shame, in other words, includes vastly more than the overt and deliberate shaming produced by moralists. It also involves silent inequalities, unintended effects of isolation, and the lack of public access. So sexual autonomy requires more than freedom of choice, tolerance, and the liberalization of sex laws” (7). With sex and gender, physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual attributes are given significance where none exists. So you have more leg hair than average? What does this have to do with job performance? My penis has nothing to do with cosmetics, but much of the world would disagree. Helen Boyd’s cross-dressing husband shares this sentiment: “Sometimes I just

like pretty shoes and pretty blouses, but because I have a penis we have to use big words to describe it” (epigraph).

In conflating sex and gender with desire, other issues arise. Leslie Feinberg warns: “The search for a gay gene in a society in which gay and lesbian love is illegal and brutalized is about as ‘objective’ as a scientific study of potential differences between Jewish and Gentile brains would be if it was conducted in Germany during the rise of fascism” (31). We ought to be pressing “rewind” rather than play to sex and gender binary when we play with ourselves and each other.

In sum, sex binary minimizes human bodies in over twenty physical spectrums to male and female. Then, where physical “evidence” is less obvious and provable, gender binary collapses thousands of social and cultural markers into feminine/woman/girl and masculine/man/boy. Finally, sexual binary reinforces sex and gender binary systems by selecting one of thousands of aspects of our human sexuality and focusing on this in enormous ways, so far, in fact, that we identify as the genitals/body (sex/gender) which we desire. The next chapter illustrates how transgender, due to its often threatening and challenging characteristics to these three interlocked binary systems, is excluded out of social institutions, eventually leading to displaced and destroyed archives and histories.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### SHAMING, SILENCING, AND SHUNNING TRANSGENDER

Passing is a form of pretending, which can be fun. In gender, passing is currently defined as the act of appearing in the world as a gender to which one does not belong, or as a gender to which one did not formerly belong. Most passing is undertaken in response to the cultural imperative to be one gender or the other. In this case, passing becomes the outward manifestation of shame and capitulation. Passing becomes silence. Passing becomes invisibility. Passing becomes lies. Passing becomes self-denial.

-Kate Bornstein, transwoman (125)

Now that these three binary systems have been (re)introduced and demonstrated to collapse complexities and nuances into limiting binaries, this chapter concerns the lived experiences of being (considered) outside these binaries. Trans legal activist and scholar Stephen Whittle offers yet another take on *transgender* and its implications:

A trans identity is now accessible almost anywhere, to anyone who does not feel comfortable in the gender role they were attributed with at birth, or who has a gender identity at odds with the labels “man” or “woman” credited to them by formal authorities. The identity can cover a variety of experiences. It can encompass discomfort with role expectations, being queer, occasional or more frequent cross-dressing, permanent cross-dressing and cross-gender living, through to accessing major health interventions such as hormonal therapy and surgical reassignment procedures. It can take up as little of your life as five minutes a week or as much as a life-long commitment to reconfiguring the body to match the inner self. Regardless of the fact that trans identities are now more available, the problems of being trans have by no means been resolved. In many parts of the world, having a trans identity still puts a person at risk of discrimination, violence, and even death. (xi)

These three intersecting binary systems are no laughing matter—as you may already, even intimately, understand—when one does not fit or chooses not to fit.

Shame, as queer theorist Michael Warner noted nearly two decades ago, is often used as a weapon to keep people from challenging these rigid binaries. Yet shame does not always “work” to keep people in line. Brave and courageous—and sometimes simply bold and shameless—people challenge these binaries everyday, and face sometimes intense consequences. Beyond shame, erasure and silencing occurs. Still, when forced invisibility also does not “work” to uphold these binaries, violence and harassment are employed. Transgender activist Stryker notes that “Because most people have great difficulty recognizing the humanity of another person if they cannot recognize that person’s gender, the gender-changing person can evoke in others a primordial fear of monstrosity, or loss of humanness” (6). Finally, when all else fails, the sex/gender police resort to brutality and ultimately murder. The purpose of this chapter is to share real lives and examples of how transgender is not only left out of history and archives, but nearly every aspect of most cultures and social processes when not able to “pass” under the radar. Plus, as Bornstein warns, passing itself is a form of silence and erasure.

As before with gender, the first social institution to be considered as excluding transgender is language and discourse. My own experience with language and social justice serves as an example of dominant discourse intentionally excluding threatening discourses.

*“Hello Expression, Where Have you Been?”*

When I was 18 years old, I decided to sign up for psychology courses at a local university before I started “real” college in the fall. I came across a course entitled: “Sex,

Gender, & Behavior,” and immediately assumed it was centered upon sexuality. It sounded enticing, exciting, and daring. Little did I know that this course would serve as my first and unforgettable feminist instruction and pedagogy.

Why am I sharing this? Because up until that point, since I was five years old, bigotry and oppression had annoyed, frustrated, startled, and angered me. However, I was not aware of *what* or *who* was wrong, and *why*. Things felt and seemed unfair, cruel, unjust, and unchecked, but I myself did not know how to *check* them. I was not quite sure how to *voice* this. From a young age, I had been witness to and experienced racism, sexism, and a slew of other social issues, but had not ever been given much of a language to consider and discuss them constructively, whereas there was much language and discourse trying to convince me to devalue certain groups and traits in people. In sum, I felt powerless to do something. I cared, but was unsure how I could demonstrate that concern.

That is, until, a whole world of ideas, language, discourse, and connection luckily fell in my lap that first day in Jacqueline White’s course in the form of Peggy McIntosh’s “The Invisible Knapsack.” McIntosh, White, and many more have since filled in knowledge, description, expression, and language—all where dominant society intentionally failed. “Knowledge is power,” so the saying goes.

The takeaway point to this story is that the ability to communicate, express, and name what one is thinking, feeling, and experiencing is key to accessing a full and healthy life. Transgender actions and behaviors are intentionally the unmentioned, unnamed, and ignored, sometimes by people who identify as transgender. Cultural and linguistic anthropologist David Valentine adds: “But words, language, and categories do

more than describe the world—they create it too. While every word we speak is a category, some come to have more power to explain who we are, and thus to limit (as much as enable) the possibilities for our action in the world” (233). When not ignored, transgender has been and continues to be *branded*—like red lasers from guns marking the enemies. Of all of the descriptions available to mark what lies beyond and between the three binaries, most if not all are used in negative ways, especially by sex/gender policers. Even when words like “queer,” “dyke,” and “faggot” are intentionally reclaimed and reused in positive, constructive methods, it is because sex/gender policers first named deviants using these terms, and if they were not the namers, then they stole the signifiers and dirtied their meanings to control transgender.

#### *On to Language and Discourse*

From the breakdown of the sex/gender/sexual binaries in the previous chapter, we have noted that there are indeed words, identities, and descriptors beyond the *fe/male*, *wo/man*, and *straight/gay/lesbian/bi*. Consider some of the following: *intersexed*, *tomboy*, and *queer*. Yes, these descriptors and identifiers do indeed exist, but in the mainstream culture and society of the United States, they are often not considered proper, official, safe—if they are used or known at all. Transgender lesbian Leslie Feinberg speaks truth to this: “While there is as yet no language for who I have become, I articulate my gender—silent to the ear, but thunderous to the eye” (33).

As mentioned in the first page of this (re)search, even the term *transgender* has only been recently “created” just in the past two decades, while its *sibling* term, *transsexual*, arose out of medicine in the 1940s. In fact, in languages and identities of the United States and Europe, many of the terms used presently have only been “worked out”

in the last century and a half as concern sex/gender/sexuality transgressions.

Transgender activists and allies have spent the past century detangling sex/gender refugees from one amassed “other,” to oceans of variety, complexity, and fluidity. As Feinberg suggests, “We need more language than just feminine/masculine, straight/gay, either/or. Men are not from Mars and women are not from Venus. We all live on the same planet” (28).

“Invert” and “homosexual,” not to mention “sodomite,” “catamite,” and “pervert,” have been and continue to be used to describe transgender people. “Deviant” is another example. Most often, these terms were created by medical, scientific, and religious leaders in trying to demarcate and fix “problems” related to transgender. Not only were ranges of expressions, bodies, and desires often lumped together as “wrong,” but they were usually described in order to control, shame, and sometimes brutalize. After all, one cannot necessarily attack an enemy until it has become a distinguishable target. When not erased, shamed, or harmed through language, transgender people were “allowed” into language through deceptive means. For example, many trans people sought help and advice from medical practitioners in Britain, Mexico, and the United States in the 1800s to today. In turn, it was not and is not uncommon for many medical practitioners in turn to medicalize and institutionalize their trans patients as deluded, psychotic, perverted, or in the least, disordered (Meyerowitz). Stryker finds that “There is . . . an extensive medical and psychological literature that treats transgender phenomena as a personal (and pathological) deviation from social norms of healthy gender expression” (2).

Following this section on language, I will now turn to other various societal spaces where transgender has been and continues to be silenced, exiled, forgotten, erased, ignored, maltreated, and killed. In other words, you have been introduced to the war, next are the battlefields.

*Little Boxes Made of Ticky-Tacky*

You could write down “not applicable” or “none of the above” or “all of the above” next to those two little boxes, but it won’t get you a job. It won’t get you a driver’s license. It won’t get you a passport.

-Leslie Feinberg (68)

In the 2010 United States’ census data, do you recall new boxes we were able to check in the race and relationship categories? Now, in 2010, the government of the United States’ records will indicate the existence of “unmarried partners” (the new option allowed by the government of the United States). Records are going to show an *incredible* change from zero “unmarried partners” to several million in 2010. In fact, before 2010, they must not have existed in the United States. At one point, the Census data of the United States did not allow people to mark more than one box for race, or for people to fill in their race or ethnicity. When the option does not exist, records will show no existence. *Hidden* experiences and shades of people all of a sudden exist, though we were certain they had existed all along.

These little boxes matter. Why? Because they count—literally. The United States’ government counts these numbers, then people use them. If you are not *listed* as an option, the underlying assumption is that you do not count. What else did the 2010 United States’ Census ask, in its ten questions? Per usual, “What is Person 1’s sex? Mark ONE Box.” Options? First, “Male.” Second, “Female.” The question does not



ask to list birth sex, assumed sex, preferred sex, or even current sex. No, just a person's *sex*. Like sex is owned; "Male" is all mine—except it is not—it came way before me. I was prescribed as such without any say.

I am not exaggerating. "ONE" is definitely in capital letters. "Intersex," "transsexual," "transmale," "once a week," "fuck off," and "undecided" were not options, but that does not mean they do not exist. No, it means the United States' government does not *want* them to exist, or count. Lying on a United States' census about one's sex, though I am not sure, might get a person into trouble. There are no directions or descriptions to help the person fill out the census. The United States' government not only assumes *sex*, but assumes you know what they mean by "sex," "male," and "female." See for yourself below.

Image 2. 2010 United States' Census Form

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE  
Economics and Statistics Administration  
U.S. CENSUS BUREAU

This is the official form for all the people at this address.  
It is quick and easy, and your answers are protected by law.

**United States Census 2010**

**Start here**  
Use a blue or black pen.

The Census must count every person living in the United States on April 1, 2010.  
Before you answer Question 1, count the people living in this house, apartment, or mobile home using our guidelines.

- Count all people, including babies, who live and sleep here most of the time.

The Census Bureau also conducts counts in institutions and other places, so:

- Do not count anyone living away either at college or in the Armed Forces.
- Do not count anyone in a nursing home, jail, prison, detention facility, etc., on April 1, 2010.
- Leave these people off your form, even if they will return to live here after they leave college, the nursing home, the military, jail, etc. Otherwise, they may be counted twice.

The Census must also include people without a permanent place to stay, so:

- If someone who has no permanent place to stay is staying here on April 1, 2010, count that person. Otherwise, he or she may be missed in the census.

**1. How many people were living or staying in this house, apartment, or mobile home on April 1, 2010?**  
Number of people =

**2. Were there any additional people staying here April 1, 2010 that you did not include in Question 1?**  
Mark  all that apply.

- Children, such as newborn babies or foster children
- Relatives, such as adult children, cousins, or in-laws
- Nonrelatives, such as roommates or live-in baby sitters
- People staying here temporarily
- No additional people

**3. Is this house, apartment, or mobile home —**  
Mark  ONE box.

- Owned by you or someone in this household with a mortgage or loan? *Include home equity loans.*
- Owned by you or someone in this household free and clear (without a mortgage or loan)?
- Rented?
- Occupied without payment of rent?

**4. What is your telephone number? We may call if we don't understand an answer.**  
Area Code + Number  
 -  -

OMB No. 0607-0919-C: Approval Expires 12/31/2011.  
Form **D-61** (11-15-2009)

**5. Please provide information for each person living here. Start with a person living here who owns or rents this house, apartment, or mobile home. If the owner or renter lives somewhere else, start with any adult living here. This will be Person 1.**  
What is Person 1's name? *Print name below.*  
Last Name   
First Name  MI

**6. What is Person 1's sex? Mark  ONE box.**  
 Male  Female

**7. What is Person 1's age and what is Person 1's date of birth?**  
*Please report babies as age 0 when the child is less than 1 year old.*  
*Print numbers in boxes.*  
Age on April 1, 2010      
Month  Day  Year of birth

→ **NOTE: Please answer BOTH Question 8 about Hispanic origin and Question 9 about race. For this census, Hispanic origins are not races.**

**8. Is Person 1 of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin?**  
 No, not of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin  
 Yes, Mexican, Mexican Am., Chicano  
 Yes, Puerto Rican  
 Yes, Cuban  
 Yes, another Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin — *Print origin, for example, Argentinian, Colombian, Dominican, Nicaraguan, Salvadoran, Spaniard, and so on.*

**9. What is Person 1's race? Mark  one or more boxes.**  
 White  
 Black, African Am., or Negro  
 American Indian or Alaska Native — *Print name of enrolled or principal tribe.*   
 Asian Indian  Japanese  Native Hawaiian  
 Chinese  Korean  Guamanian or Chamorro  
 Filipino  Vietnamese  Samoan  
 Other Asian — *Print race, for example, Hmong, Laotian, Thai, Pakistani, Cambodian, and so on.*   
 Other Pacific Islander — *Print race, for example, Fijian, Tongan, and so on.*   
 Some other race — *Print race.*

**10. Does Person 1 sometimes live or stay somewhere else?**  
 No  Yes — *Mark  all that apply.*  
 In college housing  For child custody  
 In the military  In jail or prison  
 At a seasonal or second residence  In a nursing home  
 For another reason

→ If more people were counted in Question 1, continue with Person 2.

U.S. CENSUS BUREAU

And the little boxes are ALL over the place. My North Carolina birth certificate says "Male" for sex. My Illinois driver's license just says "Male" at the bottom. My

United States' passport says "M" for sex. Next time someone asks my sex, I am just going to respond "em." I am an "em." What are you? Might you be an "eff?" The assumptions from government and popular culture are, again, two sexes—m/male and f/female—that we are all supposed to agree upon and fit within.

Everywhere we go, forms ask us to fill in boxes for sex, and sometimes gender. Sometimes the question is "Gender?" and the options are "male" and "female," or the question is "Sex?" and the options are "man" and "woman." By asking *sex* and given options of man and woman, the conflation of sex and gender is established. Susan Stryker comments on these boxes:

Birth certificates, school and medical records, professional credentials, passports, driver's licenses, and other such documents provide a composite portrait of each of us as a person with a particular gender, and when these records have noticeable discrepancies or omissions, all kinds of problems can result—inability to marry, for example, or to cross national borders, or qualify for jobs, or gain access to needed social services, or secure legal custody of one's children. (6)

Either you fit into the boxes or you do not. Either way, you *must* answer something, something being one or the other, not both, and not something else. There is no fill-in-the-blank like with race. Job applications also ask sex and/or gender. Sometimes they ask race; and sometimes race is optional. On rare occasions I have seen sex or gender as an optional question. On even rarer occasions, *transgender* and *intersex* may appear.

Especially for transgender people, this is incredibly insulting and very dangerous territory. At the very same time, a person is not to falsify information on government documents AND measure up to the options available via the boxes, WHILE never changing in status from form to form. What are people to do who do not fit? Lie or

change themselves to fit the law? According to members of the American Civil

Liberties Union (ACLU), who research LGBT civil rights,

[R]ealize that the Constitution does not protect any ‘right’ to lie . . . Refusing to answer is one thing: offering false information, on the other hand, is something entirely different. You may face criminal prosecution, civil penalties, or both when, for example, you sign an affidavit and swear under penalty of perjury that the statements contained in the form or application are true. (Hunter, Joslin, McGowan, 5)

These little boxes also train people to apply them outside of forms, as feminist psychologists Crawford and Unger found in their study. In legally determining the world as “male” and “female,” people can go out into the real world and assume what fits best, *F* or *M*? If the government not only makes it widespread but also mandates it, should we not, too? Our government, after all, supposedly represents dominant positions held—binary sex and gender systems clearly being two of them.

I am not suggesting that there is absolutely no practical use for sex and gender boxes, although at the same time I cannot think of any that do not already come out of binary sex/gender systems, like medicine. In perhaps national attempts to monitor sex and race relations (as the United States’ government claims in its census guide website), the government is reinscribing populations into sex, gender, and race/ethnic binaries. Maybe you are thinking, “OK, but what about knowing how many males are in a population in order to treat prostate cancer?” Or, “Yes, but census data revealed female infanticide in several countries and now people are talking about.” Sure, these may be important, but are they not already stemming from sex binary systems and assumptions? Really, who needs to know what genitals and organs you might be carrying in your clothes? Why is it important for the government to know? Most people I know keep

their “sex” between themselves, their bathroom mirror, and a select group of people that is often far lower in number than the United States’ government and the reach of its records. Again, I ask, *why* ask? “How do we define people through bodies when, to date, medicine acknowledges over 60 intersex conditions and one in every two hundred babies is born with a question mark over their ‘sex’. I really have grave doubts as to whether anyone knows my body morphology, apart from a few close friends?” (Whittle, 201).

Surely, some of the reasons why the United States’ government asks are clear. United States’ law discriminates based upon sex, so the government needs to know its sexed population. Maybe President Obama is thinking about another war, and needs to know how many males he has at his disposal for the draft. That is one reason there. Now when I say “discriminates,” I do not necessarily mean unfairly, though I do. Historian Nan Alamilla Boyd argues about “outlaw bodies” concerning the distinction between “abject and intelligible” as they:

Evidence the possibility that while most bodies, even transgendered bodies, fit neatly or fold back into the body politic as readable, comprehensible, and intelligible, some retain or reclaim a fleeting moment of social and cultural unintelligibility, inhabiting a queer space, I would argue, outside, beyond, invisible to, and perhaps, as a result, in confrontation with the state. (431)

Any government holds great power in resource allocation to its citizens, be they tangible goods or intangible rights. When certain people in the borders of a country (and in the cases of war and globalization, outside those borders) do not align with the *boxes/categories* used by the government for resource allocation, issues and problems may arise. For instance, a person’s passport sex may not align with their perceived sex, which may bar them from travel or even lead to harassment by government officials. The issues of boxes and binary categories leads me to ask the following questions. Why

distinguish people if you are not interested in treating them differently? Why force them into little boxes if you are not going to box them in? Susan Stryker offers an answer:

The state's actions often regulate bodies, in ways both great and small, by enmeshing them within norms and expectations that determine what kinds of lives are deemed livable or useful and by shutting down the spaces of possibility and imaginative transformation where people's lives begin to exceed the state's uses for them. This is a deep, structural problem within the logic of modern societies, which essentially perform a 'cost-benefit' analysis when allocating social resources. (51)

### *Employment, Unemployment*

What is one of the surest ways *not* to get a job in the United States? Have a criminal record. And what is one of the surest ways to get a criminal record? Be stereotyped as criminal by "nature." Transgender people cannot even honestly fill out many applications without being forced to lie, which can be a double-bind, as in "A dishonest answer on a job application, if discovered, might have negative consequences, including termination. An honest answer might prevent you from being hired" (Hunter, Joslin, McGowan, 5). It is at once possibly illegal to *not* fill out little boxes as it is to fill them out incorrectly. Until recently, many United States' laws existed and were enforced (specially reserved for transgender and transgender people) that made dressing in "the opposite gender's" clothing illegal. In another example, estrogen and testosterone are controlled substances, only available through doctors and medicine. Namaste makes a distinction: "The reality of health care for US transsexuals is quite a different story: one where poor transsexuals obtain hormones through an underground market economy; wherein a psychiatric assessment of gender dysphoria is a luxury available only to

transsexuals with money” (123). So when transgender people take it upon themselves to obtain hormones outside the system, they are potentially deemed criminals.

Another way of being labeled “criminal” in the United States is choosing and/or being forced into underground, illegal employment. In the United States, many transgender people are intentionally *not* hired at many places of employment. They are turned down again and again, being deemed dangerous, criminal-like (even without a record), and in general just not “desirable” as employees due to dominant society’s negative stereotyping of sex/gender transgressors. At the same time they are shoved out of the official workforce of the United States, they are criminalized for surviving through other means. Transgender youth and homeless transgender people, often feminine males and male-to-female, sometimes enter sex work to survive. There is a significant sex demand for transgender girls and women, and many supply this demand. But as long as prostitution in the United States is largely illegal, transgender people are criminalized through this, too. A helpful analogy may be illegal immigrants in the United States. Often, due to being considered criminal for not taking the official routes into the United States, they lack the official government papers to apply for official employment, and are thus forced out of legal employment. In order to survive, they must often seek employment in “criminal” ways, such as being undocumented or not paying taxes.

Beyond these reasons, United States’ law still does not prohibit discrimination on the basis of gender performance and sexuality, negating some jurisdictions. Although sex discrimination laws could potentially protect transgender people, court rulings often do not allow it to apply (Hunter, Joslin, McGowan, 73-83). On a side note, sometimes and

increasingly, state and federal decisions have held sex and disability non-discrimination clauses to cover transgender. Further,

Many jurisdictions still allow employers to treat their workers unequally solely because of their sexual orientation, placing LGBT employees at risk on a daily basis of being harassed or fired for no other reason than the fact that they are not heterosexual. (73)

The federal civil rights law that bans employment discrimination. Title VII, prohibits employers from discrimination on the basis of race, sex, religion, or national origin, but not sexual orientation. (74)

Employees of religious groups have little protection from discrimination. (Hunter, Joslin, McGowan, 83)

Thus, gay, lesbian, bisexual, and especially transgender employees face employment discrimination often without recourse, especially in the private sector.

### *Religion*

Speaking of the private sector, religion is another means people use to exclude transgender. Pastor Dr. Justin Tanis, himself transgendered/transsexual, explores the often oppression and sometimes liberation can occur where transgender meets religious communities in his work *Transgendered: Theology Communities and Ministries of Faith*. Tanis finds revealing evidence and support throughout religious texts to substantiate transgender and intersex not as antithetical to religious practice and belief, but rather, as important aspects of what the divine has intended. For example, he takes many Biblical verses and explains how they support, rather than refute, transgender desires, actions, and people. Tanis declares that not only should religious practices support transgender, but that transgender may find much positive support and reinforcement from religious belief.

In 2008, I conducted an interview with a locally famous out trans performer, Peaches, and asked her/him about religion. Identifying as all of the following- gay,



bisexual, trans, woman, man, fag, drag queen, human, black- she declared: “I have always been a Christian; raised in the Church and drawn back continually. How can someone tell me *my* relationship to the Lord is wrong, when it is between him and me? I am a proud Christian, even if many claim otherwise possible.” Like the millions of people in the United States who do not fit the gender/sex/sexuality constructed triad, Peaches still maintains a sense of belonging and connection to Christianity.

This does not mean, however, that popular religious beliefs and practices do not exclude transgender, which they often do, resorting to dated gender norms from texts and traditions. Tanis concludes:

Too many of our brothers and sisters spend sleepless nights worrying that they are going to hell for fulfilling the greatest dreams in their hearts. Too many have been told that God condemns and rejects them. Too many have felt that they must make a decision between their spirituality and their need to transition, and have walked away from either their religious practice or their dream of living as a fulfilled transgender person. (185)

The reality of a great deal of religious practice is that it reinforces sex, gender, and sexual binary systems, thus potentially condemning and erasing transgender.

### *Prison*

Many issues arise when any person is sentenced to prison, in the United States and outside it, specifically when they are transgender. Prison is a place where people’s access to resources and privileges are limited, and once released from prison, criminal records may follow people for a lifetime.

A very basic question concerning transgender inmates arises in our sex-stratified world: where are transgender people placed in prison, correctional facilities, juvenile detention centers, war camps, and detainment facilities? In the men’s prison/section, the

women's prison/section, or in isolation? As of now, at least in the United States if not in all the world, prisons are structured based on sex: male or female. When sex is not obvious, often birth sex is employed no matter the physical body being imprisoned. Case in point: a female to male transsexual who has been on hormones for years, had a double mastectomy, a hysterectomy, and partial phalloplasty surgeries may still be placed in a women's prison. Another case in point: a professional drag queen who has been on illegal hormone treatments and has breast implants, but "still" a penis and testicles, may still, most likely, be placed in a men's prison. If her presence disrupts the inmates and guards, they may decide she is "best" in isolation/segregation. Yet, "Segregation also results, however, in the exclusion of the prisoner from full access to things such as recreation, educational and occupational opportunities, and associational rights" (Hunter, Joslin, McGowan, 181).

Whether or not a transgender person is admitted into the sexed section that matches their identity, the likelihood of harassment is increased, as Stryker notes: "Because they were legally men (with male genitalia in spite of their social lives as women and often in spite of having breasts and no facial hair) they would be placed in the men's jail, where their femininity made them especially vulnerable to sexual assault, rape, and murder" (67). First, access to hormone treatments, surgery, cosmetics, clothing, and other resources related to transgender life may be more limited or completely off-limits. Consider, for example, that many transgender people illegally obtain hormones and body alterations. Making a case for yourself that you must have estrogen pills and silicone injections may *not* go over well with inmates and officials, not to mention be made available to you. "Courts are extremely unwilling to second-guess

prison officials regarding their evaluation of the types of material that may undermine the security or stability of a penal facility” (Hunter, Joslin, McGowan, 12).

Second, sexual harassment is a huge issue, especially for effeminate men/males and transwomen. They are often targets by male inmates for rape, as they are not only assumed to be worthless, oversexed, sex workers, and “close enough to the ‘real’ thing,” but also are without protection from officials who degrade and ignore them (Pettiway). “Transgender and transsexual people who have not had genital surgery are classified according to their birth sex for purposes of prison housing, regardless of the extent of their nongenital transition—a situation that puts MTF transsexuals at great risk of sexual violence” (Hunter, Joslin, McGowan, 181).

Third, knowledge, support, and understanding of transgender, like in just about any part of the world, will most likely be lacking if not entirely missing from inmates and officials. Taunting, teasing, ostracization, and many other forms of harassment and violence are likely to be high(er) for transgender prisoners, who may bring out fear, hatred, and bigotry in systems that often devalue all members (prisoners) to the point where harassment and violence suffer no negative, official consequences. “A perceived transgression of normative sex/gender relations motivates much of the violence against sexual minorities, and . . . an assault on these ‘transgressive’ bodies is fundamentally concerned with policing gender presentation through public and private space” (Namaste, 137).

### *Police*

So how can gender expression be mandated by edict and enforced by law? Isn't that like trying to handcuff a pool of mercury?

-Leslie Feinberg (10)

A major difference between official police and everyone else is that official police often carry more authority, power, and weaponry, and less often have their authority questioned. Police are also paid and supported for enforcing dominant values in society. Sometimes police follow the laws and rules from government, sometimes they follow their own ethics—either way, their distaste and maltreatment of transgender has not gone unnoticed. As Feinberg offers, “But even where the laws are not written down, police, judges, and prison guards are empowered to carry out merciless punishment for sex and gender ‘difference’” (11).

This is not to argue that all police officers treat transgender unfairly. I am, however, suggesting, with a lot of evidence from transgender people (and many other disenfranchised identity groups), that police officers also harass transgender. For example, in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, sexuality theorist and anthropologist Don Kulick found that city police were regularly ordered to “clean house” in the city by tricking or forcing transgender sex workers into being removed over 30 miles away from the city to the “middle of nowhere.” In other words, transgender sex workers were thrown out of the city by police. When not ordered to do this, another method Kulick observed was city police brutalizing the faces and bodies of transgender sex workers. Police would intentionally beat transgender sex workers in places where they had had silicone injections, forever displacing and dislodging their cheek, breast, butt, and hip formations. This intentionally lowered the sex workers chances of being found attractive by clients, which in turn led to less income, ultimately leading to further destitution and homelessness.

Accounts of police officers turning a blind eye to violence against transgender are common in transgender literature and stories, as transgender historian Meyerowitz found: “The police rarely offered protection. Both MTFs and FTMs told doctors about their ‘fear of arrest and persecution’ at the hands of law-enforcement officials” (136). A general distrust of official police is found among many transgender people, moreso than the average population. Harassment and mistreatment by police also often occurs when transgender people are “found out” through identification records. Maybe a driver’s license or passport does not match what a police officers “sees” or “feels,” and from there problems may occur. Keep in mind that it was only three and four decades ago that police forces in the United States in major cities were entering bars and clubs and enforcing gender and sexuality codes. If interested in learning more about law enforcement treatment of transgender, many transgender authors, websites, and activists offer their experiences in traversing law and government officials. I recommend Stephen Whittle’s work.

### *Law*

Speaking of prison, police, and Stephen Whittle, where transgender meets government laws is another site of exclusion. Whittle finds that

The socio-legal construction of the transsexual individual results in a deficient ‘common sense’ discourse surrounding ‘sex changing’ and ‘cross-dressing’. This enables the transsexual person to be separated out from the rest of humanity and afforded special discriminatory treatment by the law, through their being ‘non-human’. (Hunter, Joslin, McGowan, xx)

In research published by the American Civil Liberties Union, the overall conclusion surrounding transgender is as follows:

Transgender often face severe discrimination in virtually every aspect of their lives—in employment, housing, public accommodations, credit, marriage, parenting, and law enforcement, among others. Despite these circumstances, until very recently, most courts have held that transgender people are excluded from basic civil rights protections. (171)

Again, as many of the researchers have found regarding transgender, erasure and exclusion are the recurring themes. Laws that either do not recognize or do not support/protect transgender are not necessarily surprising when recognition and support are not found popularly or institutionally elsewhere.

A topic not covered under the “Boxes” section is public bathrooms/restrooms/washrooms and showers. Nearly everywhere a person goes, these are divided into sex and gender binaries, and often policed heavily. As the ACLU research found, “The right to use the restroom corresponding to one’s gender identity is one of the most basic aspects of nondiscrimination for a transgender person . . . the right to use the appropriate restroom is one of the most uncertain and untested areas of the law” (Hunter, Joslin, McGowan, 176). Not feeling safe with nor having access to basic human needs is a terrifying and frustrating reality transgender people must face daily.

*Psychology, Psychiatry, and Medicine*

Unfortunately, this is not an individual crisis. Throughout the United States, masculine females and feminine males, cross-dressers, transsexuals and intersexuals are home alone dealing with pain, fevers, the trauma of gang rape and beatings, and other emergencies, hoping the symptoms will go away so they don’t have to reveal themselves to a venomously hostile doctor or nurse.

-Leslie Feinberg (80)

Just seven years after *homosexuality* was removed from the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM) in 1973, even though *egodystonic sexuality disorder* is still viable today (sexual attractions are at odds with idealized self-

image; is there any confusion over who this is meant for?), *gender identity disorder (GID)* was added in 1980 to cover the older, medicalized issue/term *gender dysphoria*. While the people behind the DSM boldly claim GID is *not* a mental illness, the name includes “disorder” and it is a part of a manual covering *mental disorders*. I am not sure if there exists a huge distinction between *disorder* and *mental illness*, but let us be honest, either and both do not sound positive.

Once again, this was another turning point in the sex/gender binary war. Transgender patients could have caused powerful doctors and scientists to rebel against sex/gender colonizers, but instead, many officials became colonizers themselves, questioning the sanity of their patients rather than challenging the sanity of sex/gender binary. Although some positive developments came out of the establishment of GID (I cannot believe I just said that), such as some access to hormones, medicine, and surgery, there are certainly better ways of supporting transgender people than by slapping them with their very own mental disorder. Why not diagnose the United States with GID?

But this does not just apply to adults; this war targeting gender transgressions is way too crafty to leave children out of the *DSM*. After all, children are blank slates for sex/gender, and may make superb enforcers and colonizers someday. Thus, *gender identity disorder in children (GIDC)*, was also coined in 1980. As nonconsenting adults, people under 18 are easier to manipulate, especially at the will of their parents who always wanted a boy *or* girl. Not a boy to girl or girl to boy, both, or neither. Similar to the doctors who cut newborns into male and female boxes, psychologists and psychiatrists gave themselves power in manipulating children who did not match their birth genitals in mind, body, and spirit.

There is an “interesting” finding in GIDC statistics, that it occurs 5 to 30 times more often in boys than girls. Now, if we are careless, we might believe this claim, possibly attributing it to the supposed higher rate of gay men, or male-to-female transsexuals, or even males having a far higher rate of sexual fetishes. Yet, if we are careful, this wreaks of sexism. It is far more acceptable to be a boy and man in the world, and for girls and women to *want* what is valuable. But for the reverse to occur? A boy to want to be a girl? This *must* be a disorder! This begs the question: how many parents do not take their masculine, tomboy daughters to doctors, or even see a problem with it? Meyerowitz suggests an alternative explanation related to sexism to explain this discrepancy:

The subordination of women may also have played a role. Those who had grown up as girls may not have had the same sense of entitlement to medical service as did MTFs or the same insistent attitude with doctors, and those who lived and worked as women may have had fewer economic resources to finance medical intervention. (149)

Finally, Helen Boyd reflects on sexism in a similar light:

Somehow when a woman crossdresses (that *is* what she’s doing, when she puts on her husband’s shirt) it’s interpreted as either a positive thing or as insignificant. But if a man crossdresses, it’s sick. That idea that any woman would find that man sexy—and sexy especially because he’s wearing women’s lingerie—is even sicker. (2)

Perhaps you are wondering how GID and GIDC contribute to invisibility, erasure, and violence? Labeling a person as sickly, deviant, and disordered is an excellent method of shaming them into silence; it is a superb way of lowering their self-esteem. Mental illness is a burden they must carry with them, especially when they fill out more boxes and forms that ask if they have ever been treated for a disorder or by a psychologist.



Millions of childrens' childhood explorations and identity developments concerning sex/gender/sexuality are denied by parents and put into the "care" of doctors when children are "caught" or go too far outside the norms. Bodily exploration and alteration is policed and guarded by science and medical communities, not the actual bodies seeking expression and comfort. "Several of the people I interviewed had negative experiences with narrow-minded medical practitioners" (31). The act of placing blame and disorder on individuals and expressions when societal sex/gender binary systems are the disorder is the actual sickness, not the people who are challenging sex, gender, and sexual binary systems.

#### *Healthcare and Health Insurance*

Meanwhile, some argue that being labeled disordered offers access to treatment, healthcare, and health insurance. Sure, I cannot deny that this happens. I choose to argue, however, that this is not a wholly positive situation. Consider the analogy of "pimps and hos." Rather than a ho have direct access to her money and clients, a pimp gets a large cut for "protecting" her from men. Likewise, transgender people must pay doctors, psychiatrists, and psychologists large sums of money to have access to treatment, their own bodies, and legal records, while the doctors "protect" transgender people from... themselves? Transgender people, like women in a sexist society, have to pay deeply for "protection" from the very people that threaten them and take their money. Would it not be much more positive to do away with GID and GIDC and simply have doctors, healthcare providers, and insurance plans that support transgender? I believe so.

One of the most sexed aspects of societies around the world is medicine and science of the human body. Scientists and doctors reinforce binary sex (and gender in

turn) at alarming speeds and with heavy results. Everyday, “science” proves binary sex, male and female. Not only does it “prove” these systems, but it reinforces them through practice. You are a male? Then you must need [blank] treatment. Somehow a penis or vagina signifies what is good for the entire body, rather than just signifying what is good for a penis or vagina. If you, as a medical practitioner, get a prostate, then treat a prostate. Instead, common medicinal practice is: “if you get a prostate, treat a man.” Report after experiment after breakthrough suggest what is best for male and female, and, consequently, by ignoring all else, how to *mold*, through science and medicine, people into male and female. Just recently, a South Carolina man was denied Medicaid coverage for his Stage II breast cancer. Why? Because the The Breast and Cervical Cancer Prevention and Treatment Act passed eleven years ago, which directs funds from Medicaid to cover breast and cervical cancer treatment funds to low-income people, specifies the bodies that may fall under the funds: women (Joan Raymond, msnbc.com).

As for health insurance, “the overwhelming majority of transsexual people must pay for any surgeries on their own. As a result, many (perhaps even most) transsexual people are never able to obtain genital surgeries” (Hunter, Joslin, McGowan, 180). On another note,

Transsexual people who have completed sex reassignment are also frequently denied routine medical treatments that are sex-linked, such as the denial of gynecological care for transsexual men who may still have some female reproductive organs. (180)

There may also be unfair denials of coverage for conditions that have nothing to do with sex reassignment, such as cancer or high blood pressure, due to the mistaken assumption that any illness or condition is ‘caused by’ having undergone sex reassignment. (Hunter, Joslin, McGowan, 180)

Once again, as bodies that may not represent nor reinforce dominant binaries of sex and gender, healthcare and health insurance are arenas of societies that literally “make or break” transgender people.

*HIV/AIDS Prevention, Education, and Treatment*

On a related note, concerning health, much research has shown that some transgender populations are at greater risk for HIV/AIDS, both in contracting the disease and suffering from its effects due to limitations in access to treatment. One potential reason for increased rates concerns lack of prevention efforts that target the specific needs of transgender people at-risk (Bockting & Kirk, xx). Several characteristics of transgender populations put them at further risk: “invisibility, poverty, shame, low self-esteem, loneliness, and sharing needles for hormone or silicone injections” (Bockting & Kirk, xix). While I will not go into great detail in this section, the main point is that “the social stigma that transgender people face compounds their HIV risk through neglect, low self-esteem, hunger for validation, rejection, employment discrimination, and disenfranchisement” (Bockting & Kirk, xxiii), and keep in mind that these researchers are referring to a global scale, not just a United States’ population.

*Feminism*

For theorists of gender, transsexuals (and, more often, crossdressers) sometimes serve an analogous function as symbols of the mixed-ness or third-ness that illustrates the multiplicity of genders or denaturalizes and parodies the pure oppositions of imagined binaries. (12)

-Joanne Meyerowitz

In the past, some feminists, such as Robin Morgan, Mary Daly, Janice G. Raymond, and Catherine MacKinnon, have argued that transgender people reinforce binary systems of sex, gender, and sexuality. In this section, I would like to demonstrate

that *through* exclusion from these binary systems, transgender people should be *included* within feminisms as powerful feminist allies in efforts to decrease and perhaps prevent harmful binary sex, gender, and sexual systems.

Many theorists—feminist, transgender, queer, lesbian, and so on—have argued that transgender people problematize and challenge these binary systems. Even though, for example, there are many transgender people who do believe in binary sex and gender systems, and who may desire lining up and passing within those systems, the very desire to move in between systems challenges those systems. As mentioned and depicted in Figure 1, these binary systems are assumed linear, fixed, and “natural,” or biological. Any person, for example, who believes or achieves status on “the other side” of sex and gender is proving mutability, as trans civil rights activist Jamison Green suggests: “The transition itself opens so many windows on the gender system that we may be compelled to comment on our observations, which could not be made from any other vantage point than a transsexual (or sometimes transgender) position” (503). Male is neither fixed nor biological, but rather something we can mold and control. The developments in scientific understandings of the human body may be in part attributed to transgender desires to manipulate their physical bodies. Doctors like Hirschfield and Benjamin were pressured into further understanding how humans exist in sexed varieties, and how these differences might be manipulated (Meyerowitz).

In addition to challenging the supposed rigidity of sex and gender binaries, transgender embodiment deeply offends notions that a person can only be male or female, man or woman, straight, gay, or bisexual. In a lifetime, sometimes at the same time, sometimes back and forth, sometimes not at all, transgender people live or have lived as

both male and female, man and woman, boy and girl. They carry multiple sex and gender identities and experiences like a person may inhabit multiple races and ethnicities. These multiple sites of being not only shatter myths of binary thinking, but also allow a single person to reveal personal experiences on both sides. As Susan Stryker shares, “Anzuldúa’s brand of feminism valued the power to be found in being mixed, in crossing borders, of having no one clear category to fit into—of essentially being impure” (125).

Consider feminist and transman Patrick Califia’s take on his gender journey: “In a world where women are supposed to feel and men are supposed to act, I stand in the middle and comprehend what both of them are doing, and why. But I remain a stranger in each of these territories” (436). Jamison Green somewhat concurs: “I am real; I am an authentic and reliable man. I am also a transsexual man. I am a man who lived for 40 years in the body of a woman, so I have had access to knowledge that most men do not have” (506). Transpeople revealing feelings of not truly inhabiting one binary system or another are, in my experience and research, FAR more common than transpeople claiming to fit and support sex and gender binaries. Ideas of occupying the outside and looking in are common in literature regarding transgender. Below I am sharing some of these:

We never did fit into the cultural binary of male/female, man/woman, boy/girl. No, we are the clowns, the sex objects, or the mysteriously unattainable in any number of novels. We are the psychotics, the murderers, or the criminal geniuses who populate the movies. Audiences have rarely seen the real faces of the transgendered. They don’t hear our voices, rarely read our words. (Bornstein, 60)

Nontransgender people, after all, think of themselves as having a gender, or being a gender, and nobody asks them to defend the political correctness of their ‘choice’ in the matter or thinks that their having a sense of being gendered somehow compromises or invalidates their other values and commitments. (Stryker, 4)

Those whose sex is least threatening, along with those whose gender profiles seem least queer, are put forward as the good and acceptable face of the movement. [...] The others, the queers who have sex in public toilets, who don't come 'out' as happily gay, the sex workers, the lesbians who are too vocal about a taste for dildos or S/M, the boys who flaunt it as pansies or as leathermen, the androgynes, the trannies or transgendered whose gender variance makes them unassimilable to the menu of sexual orientations, the clones in the so-called gay ghetto, the fist-fuckers and popper-snorters, the ones who actually like pornography—all these flaming creatures were told, in an earnestness that betrays no glimmer of its own grotesque comedy, that their great moment of liberation and acceptance will come later, when we “no longer see our lives solely in terms of struggle” when we get to be about “more than sexuality”—when, say, marriage is given the force of law. Free at last! (Warner, 66)

The word 'transgender' is an umbrella term used to refer to all individuals who live outside of normative sex/gender relations—that is, individuals whose gendered self-presentation (evidenced through dress, mannerisms, and even physiology) does not correspond to the behaviors habitually associated with the members of their biological sex. (Namaste, 1)

From another vantage point, some theorists identify transsexuals as emblems of liberatory potential. In critical studies of race, ethnicity, colonialism, and postcolonialism, a number of authors have turned to hybridity, syncretism, and border crossing to highlight the ubiquity of cultural mixings that destabilize concepts of racial, ethnic, or cultural purity . . . For theorists of gender, transsexuals (and, more often, crossdressers) sometimes serve an analogous function as symbols of the mixed-ness or third-ness that illustrates the multiplicity of genders or denaturalizes and parodies the pure oppositions of imagined binaries. (Meyerowitz, 12)

The choices of those who undergo hormone therapy or sex reassignment surgery are as radical, given the structures of the traditional binary, as the choice of those who accept the body in which they were born. Other trans-identified people, who are not transsexual and for whom transition is not an issue, present their gender as neither clearly man nor woman. They have my highest admiration for they stand as living proof that we do not have to choose between two categories. (Girshick, 12)

Whatever made me, I am, and I can no longer say who the 'I' is, except through a descriptive process in which the words man/woman, male/female, straight/gay become absorbed into Queer. (Whittle, 202)

One analogy I find quite helpful involves Brazilian racism. Brazil, far more than the United States, has had reproductive mixing along racial lines, often resulting in the rigidity and power of different “races” in Brazil being confused and weakened. Colorism, with “the whiter and lighter the better,” is alive and well, but racism is constantly being diluted through border-crossing and mixing. A recent study by Brazilian geneticists revealed that 86% of the Brazilian population have at least 10% or more Black African genes (Sérgio D.J. Pena, Maria Cátira Bortolini). Although Brazil has a similar racial history as the United States as far as slavery and stratification are concerned, bi-racial and multi-racial individuals and families are far more common in Brazil.

Transgender and transgender people challenge patriarchy and sexism in similar ways. A man who wants to be a woman, for example, desires a life that sexism deems less valuable than being a man. Likewise, a woman who wants to be a man, for example, makes a claim that women indeed are just as capable as men, so much in fact, that they can *be* men. Just these two examples of “crossing” are very threatening to heteropatriarchy.

#### *Gay and Lesbian Movement and Queer Theory*

Since the inception of a major gay and lesbian movement in the United States from the 1960s and 70s, transgender people have been included and excluded to varying degrees, regardless of always having some degree of presence, influence, and support for this movement. This is not to say that gay and lesbian people have or have not supported transgender people, or vice-versa, or that some gay and lesbian people are not trans; many are. Rather, where gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people share

commonalities as regards muddling and challenging binaries, there are instances where solidarity has not occurred.

Vivian K. Namaste, citing feminist and queer theorist Gayle Rubin, argues:

In Rubin's analysis, lesbian communities should not instantly reject an FTM transsexual, because this individual elaborates a unique version of gender. Rubin reminds her readers that sexual and gender outlaws share a common history. "Lesbian communities were built by sex and gender refugees; the lesbian world should not create new rationales for sex and gender prosecution." (138)

In recent years in the United States, sexual and gender minorities have indeed developed conflicts as they strive for societal inclusion and access to resources. Joanne Meyerowitz discusses this trend:

Those who identified as homosexual, transvestite, or transsexual sometimes attempted to lift their own group's social standing by foisting the stigma of transgression onto others. They lived in a social order in which status derived in part from upholding norms of propriety. Asserting one's upstanding middle-class status meant rejecting other behaviors tainted as vulgar, lower class, or deviant. (177)

One of the larger issues affecting transgender people concerning activism and social change occurs when gay, lesbian, and bisexual populations tack on *transgender* for superficial inclusion rather than active inclusion. For example, the acronym *LGBT* has come into popular use in the past decade or two, but has not carried along with its implementation the transgender support one might assume comes from including a group in a name. Again, this is not always the case. The abilities for these sexual and gender minorities to support and learn from another are incredible sites of positivity. Consider another reflection by Joanne Meyerowitz: "Radical queens, self-proclaimed fairies, and androgynous lesbian-feminists made gender transgression part of their political movements. 'Many of us in Gay Liberation Front,' one publication proclaimed, 'are



traitors to our sex, and to this sexist society. We reject ‘manhood,’ ‘masculinity,’ and all that” (235).

Namaste also finds exclusion among some queer theory: “Although the violation of compulsory sex/gender relations is one of the topics most frequently addressed within queer theory, this body of knowledge rarely considers the implications of an enforced sex/gender system for the people who have defied it, who live outside it, or who have been killed because of it” (9). Similar to a feminist approach to research methods, Namaste claims that queer theorists even erase transgender subjects, a reinscribing of their status as outsider, or as feminist researcher Kum-Kum Bhavnani asks: “Are the researched reinscribed into prevailing notions of powerlessness?” (69).

#### *Family and Childhood*

During puberty, most non-trans people had an opportunity to develop their self-expression, shaped in part by social feedback. Many trans people—straight, bisexual, and gay—never had that experience. Their self-expression emerged in isolation.

-Leslie Feinberg (24)

When I was younger, and still sometimes today, I looked up to and wanted to be like two people in my family: my Aunt Heather and cousin Sara. My Aunt Heather helped me appreciate art, animals and plants, gardening, reading, and love. My cousin Sara taught me how to stand up for myself and what is right and wrong, how to work hard, sarcasm, spades, and video games. They have proven to be lifelong role models.

Aunt Heather inspired me to want to one day be a biologist. Sara helped facilitate my interest in psychology and one day doing research and teaching. Both of these incredible people in my life are women. I was a boy and am now a man. What if, when younger, I wanted to grow to be like them, women?

Is there something wrong with this? How common is it for a proud gendered parent to want their similarly-sexed child to grow up to be *just like them*?

“Aww, you look just like your mother.”

“You should take over the family business from your father.”

“Like father, like son—both womanizers.”

“You must get your maternal instinct from me! Mom loves you, honey.”

How about we turn some of these on their head? If a little girl grows up adoring her professional football player of a father, and she wants to follow in his footsteps, what options do we give her? If a little boy is forever mesmerized by his professional model mother, who dresses in high fashion when not at work, and he wants to be in the spotlight like her and wear pretty clothes, what options does he have? Or how about a little girl who thinks the world of her father and wants what he had in life, including a woman like her mother, including a relationship like her parents, and she wants to be like him and marry a woman like her mom, what options are allowed her?

When a child wants to grow up and be a singer, they might hear, “aww, that’s cute, sing for me. Good luck!” When a child shows a love for animals and says they want to take care of them one day, they might be told, “study hard, you can do it!” When a teenager shows a talent for fixing cars and wanting a job, they may be assured, “There is a place looking for young mechanics down the street.”

Yet when a child wants to grow up and be the gender and sex they were not designated at birth, for work or not, they might be questioned with “Oh my, why? Are you sure? Don’t tell anyone. It’s dangerous. You might be sick. We will get you help. Don’t be silly.” Of course, it is not common but not impossible that some parents do

offer some support. However, this is a rare exception and far from the common (sex/gender binary) rule. What is so wrong about a young boy who thinks the world of his mother and wants to grow up and be a superb mother just like her? He may be “wrong” for challenging sex/gender binary systems. Consider Keisha’s reflections on this topic (one of the gender-variant sex workers Leon Pettiway interviewed): “Well, when I was growing up, only person I looked up to . . . was women. I was going to be a woman, right. I looked in the mirror, in East Jefferson, and I said, ‘Ooh, I wanna be a woman’” (203).

Beyond the issue of disallowing people to be the sex and/or gender they would like to one day be, families are often an incredible sore spot for transgender. Until a certain age, families have the legal right to raise children as they see fit, and the family is, of course, where rigid sex/gender binaries are enforced to great effect. “Parents have enormous authority to direct the upbringing of their children; but those rights stop when it comes to abuse or neglect. This means that if you are under eighteen, your parents or guardians can try to teach you their religious or political beliefs, or in many states they even may require you to see a psychiatrist against your will” (Hunter, Joslin, McGowan, 154). Also under the law, parents and relatives hold a specific amount of power in being able to unleash verbal, emotional, psychological, and physical abuse as they please to certain degrees. A child who shows transgender tendencies and/or interests is at the mercy of their parent(s) and guardian(s), siblings and relatives. Enforcing sex and gender binary is not against the law, but rather, in favor by the law and societies at large. All of the transgender people Pettiway interviewed, for instance, recalled family members, most

often fathers and uncles, who claimed that at young ages the boys were “faggots” and “sissies.”

Thus, it is not uncommon for many families to reject and disown transgender children. Further, if this does not occur, it is also not uncommon for transgender children to be colonized by their parent’s or parents’ ideas of “proper” sex/gender/sexuality. Punishing a child for transgender is common, especially by destroying clothing and accessories that child might cherish. Even if these do not occur, one of the biggest obstacles for transgender children is battling shame and silence, suicide and loneliness. Michael Warner argues similarly: “Almost all children grow up in families that think of themselves and all their members as heterosexual, and for some children this produces a profound and nameless estrangement, a sense of inner secrets and hidden shame” (8).

The threat alone of parental rejection pushes many transgender children into hiding. They are most likely already keeping their transgender a secret. Transgender children are also most likely terrified of being discovered. Many will face deep feelings of fear, shame, and low self-esteem due to feeling alone and unaccepted. While in recent years the higher suicide rates of gay and lesbian children has been in the news, some estimates put transgender suicide attempts at 50-60% in childhood (including teenagers). If the common theme running throughout nearly all aspects of society is to stamp out transgender, then a person who is transgender may consider suicide in line with dominant solutions. Suicide and depression, then, should not be surprising in transgender populations, especially by children, who are more dependent on their families than adults.

Joanne Meyerowitz sums familial relationships as regards transgender in the following way:

Many transsexuals gravitated to the sexual margins in their search for a social home. The stigma associated with gender variance made it difficult for them to feel at home in the social mainstream. Regardless of class, racial, or ethnic background, they often found themselves ejected from the families and social milieus in which they were reared. (186-187)

*Pornography, Sex Work, and Eroticism*

Childhood, in a way, does lead us into this section. Sex work is not an uncommon destination for many transgender children, especially boy-to-girl and male-to-female people. As Don Kulick found in Brazil, it was “normal” for parents of effeminate boys to assume they were not only *viados* (faggots), but to also abandon them in their teenage years. Networks of older, trans and gender-variant women, who are themselves sex workers, would harbor these rejected children and teach them the ways of surviving the streets as *travestis* (transwomen sex workers). This “phenomenon,” though not always resulting in sex work, has been found in many parts of the world, such as with the *hijras* of India, the *khanith/xanith* in Arabic nations, and the *muxe* of Mexico, not to mention plenty of transgender children all over the United States.

Monique, a transgender sex worker, recalls working the streets:

Do you remember the two girls, the two drag queens that was found, and one of them had their legs cut off and were in the park. They were my two best friends, Sidney and Somora. They got their legs cut off and their privates mutilated and put in their mouths. I was incarcerated that night. The next day I heard about it. And I was like, “Whoo!” God must of blessed me and pulled me away from them so I wouldn’t be with them ‘cause I’d probably had the same thing happen to me. (Pettiway, 256)

There are many account of trans sex workers who have been brutalized and mutilated, especially in their genital, chest, and face areas. This violence has been attributed to hatred over sex/gender markers that “deceive” others, such as the presence of cosmetics with breast implants on a body with a penis and testicles. Monique recalls her feelings

toward surviving on the streets as a sex worker, which sometimes causes her to cry: “Because it’s disgusting that things that I have to do in life to make it today” (249).

Porn industries are home to a great deal of transgender. This is not surprising considering how a lot of pornography is about pleasure and deviance. “Chicks with dicks” and “trannies” are a money-making business for pornographers. Visit any sex store or website and you may be overwhelmed by the sudden appearance of transgender compared to the invisibility of transgender most anywhere else.

Yet a strong presence in sex work, eroticism, and pornography is no indication of social acceptance, but rather, a strong indication of social rejection. I am not arguing that people do not ever go into prostitution or pornography because they actually enjoy the work. But the significant populations of people that go into these arenas do so out of survival and necessity. The young boy who wants to grow up to be a gorgeous woman one day will find more support in sex work and pornography for her desire to be a woman than in many other societal institutions.

The likelihood that sex work and pornography will make their way into archives is far less likely when compared to other forms of employment. These aspects of societies are often left to the underground, like transgender, which is why they often share spaces, such as Justin Tanis having a collection in the Leather Archives and Museum.

### *Identity Politics and Multiple Oppressions*

Thus far this (re)search has had limited analysis of exclusion concerning transgender as it intersects with other oppressions. An analysis of transgender as a topic and subject, first and foremost, requires extracting transgender as a lived experience,

desire, and action. This results in a reoccurring absence of analysis of transgender as it may intersect with immigration and citizenship, sexism, racism, poverty, physical and mental “dis”abilities, and many other sites of oppression both in this (re)search and transgender studies in general. Abstractly separating a person’s marginalized identities for useful analysis may prove harmful, because, after all, multiple oppressions are often embodied in experiences where the oppressor’s prejudices and ideologies are not obvious. For instance, a recent Zimbabwean immigrant transwoman in the United States may not know for which identity she is being mistreated: citizen status, woman, trans, race, or other “reasons.”

Feminist historian Estelle Freedman notes this issue in her own research using *lesbian* identity: “We must keep in mind that this narrative rests heavily upon a highly-class and race-specific lesbian identity constructed since the 1960s, one that depathologized white, middle-class womens love for women but simultaneously failed to recognize a range of other sources of identity” (195). Namaste simply charges that “a comparison of transsexuals and African-Americans implicitly assumes that all transsexuals are white” (125).

Yet while this is true, one method of working toward transgender inclusion is to identify and work toward preventing *known* sites of harmful transgender exclusion. Thus, the discussion of transgender exclusion continues with regard to both its limitations and uses.

*History*

Being black or female or disabled or queer—are not deemed to be valuable or worthy in their own right for the people who live those lives. Transgender lives are similarly devalued; they are neither considered useful or happy lives to live nor seen as offering any kind of value to society. (51)

-Susan Stryker

The social arenas that deny transgender access in varying degrees are numerous. I did not bring up politics, popular media, performance art, nor travel and immigration, to name some. Transgender and transgender people are shamed, silenced, and shunned out of access to society through methods and in spaces outside the scope of this (re)search.

There is a way, though, to understand this concept without having to necessarily read through literature or speak with transgender people, and this involves occupying transgender yourself. This may seem silly, funny, or “inappropriate.” Yet the experiences of “mis-matching” sex, gender, and sexuality are often very telling of some of the consequences transgender people must face from others. Try the following in public (and if not in public, imagine doing so): use your dick or a fake dick and wear it with a tight skirt, so the two are obvious together (make sure you sit down wide-legged, too); also sport your facial hair as a beard, or draw on a beard, while wearing 5-inch red heels and bright lipstick. Wear some bright eye make-up, and maybe sport large feminine earrings. Let your underarm hair show. Mix and match any other gender cues to varying degrees. Now, mingle with people, speak with them, maybe even ask a few out to dinner. See if people stare. Listen for remarks. Chances are, outside pockets of acceptable sex/gender/sexuality transgressions (and at times inside these pockets, too), a presentation like this will lead to unpleasantness, discomfort, conflict, and maybe harassment and violence.



Gender historian Ann Cvetkovich adds another dimension of exclusion concerning marginalized groups who suffer trauma and oppression (and here she is referring to sexual trauma, yet here sexual trauma may stand as an analogy for oppression received that may not leave behind evidence officiated or noted by the dominant paradigm):

In fact, the kinds of affective experiences that I explore here are lost in discourses of trauma that focus only on the most catastrophic and widely public events . . . Sometimes the impact of sexual trauma doesn't seem to measure up to that of collectively experienced historical events, such as war and genocide. Sometimes it seems invisible because it is confined to the domestic or private sphere. Sometimes it doesn't appear sufficiently catastrophic because it doesn't produce dead bodies or even, necessarily, damaged ones. (3)

When the “evidence” of transgender oppression does not fit the dominant paradigm of trauma, struggle, and suffering, further exclusion may occur. As Cvetkovich argues, how can emotions and feelings related to trauma be extracted from the psychological and archived to represent marginalization? This challenge may further complicate archives of at-risk groups.

The purpose of this chapter is to highlight numerous societal facets that lack transgender visibility and acceptance, with the end goal of arguing that when desires, behaviors, and people are missing in most aspects of society, the chances of all these appearing in histories and archives is exponentially lower. The chapter shows exclusion, erasure, and bullying in the following societal institutions: employment, law, medicine, healthcare, religion, language, law enforcement, family, prison, identity politics, trauma, and even feminist and gay and lesbian movements. With these absences of support compounded, what affect might this have on people? How might this affect their

histories? Think about it: if something barely if ever appears in any part of society, why or how would someone place it into archives and histories?

## CHAPTER FIVE

### ARCHIVAL REALITIES, CHALLENGES, AND SOLUTIONS

Though their own origins are often occluded and the exclusions on which they are premised often dimly understood, all archives come into being in and as history as a result of specific political, cultural, and socioeconomic pressures—pressures which leave traces and which render archives themselves artifacts of history.

-Antoinette Burton, History and Women's Studies Professor (6)

Archives and archival processes are more difficult than they may seem at first glance. Archives are not about preservation for a decade, or a lifetime, or even for a specific country or people, per se. Just the idea that someone is planning to store and safeguard the essence of something beyond their own lifetime and into a time so far off that no one is able to make plans (the future is far from guaranteed) is enough to make archives beyond challenging. “In perpetuity:” try and wrap your head around this idea (of infinite), let alone wrapping up a document in it (Myers). Most people are not so sure about next week, let alone tomorrow.

The purpose of this chapter, after having explored various aspects of transgender inclusion/exclusion among several binary systems and societal institutions, is to also consider archives as a complex, situated site of human knowledge production as it pertains to at-risk groups. The quote by Burton starting this chapter sums this idea well. Next, this chapter will move into some of the issues and limitations that arise in archival processes. Finally, the chapter and this (re)search will conclude with ideas and possible

solutions of building the intersections of transgender with archives. As mentioned, it is not only archivists who are responsible for the histories of others, but also the people behind the histories, too; in this case, transgender and the general public.

*What are Archives?*

The archive, therefore, is “not a piece of data, but a status.”

-Peter Fritzsche citing Michel Foucault (186)

Consider the importance of archives in this way: they may be the only human efforts in existence that are meant to safeguard certain human materials, regulations, and expressions for centuries. From a radical, or “root” perspective, professor of communication Craig Robertson introduces the origin of “archives:”

The meaning of archive comes from the Greek *arkheion*, the superior magistrate’s residence that also stored official documents. At this location the archon exercised the power of procedure and precedent and enabled laws to operate through his right to interpret documents. (72)

What we have, then, is a relationship between society, officiality, documentation, and most importantly and eventually, interpretation. Archives are just collections—they only reflect the balance of the originator. Archivists may choose among records to show the full range of records but they do not create the records. Interpretations of leftover memories and glimpses of the past offer, sometimes but not always, insights into possibilities, probabilities, and potentials (Cox, 1-7).

For the purposes of this (re)search, however, “archives” most often refer to the same thing but in a “modern” way. Governments, universities, religious organizations, families, and social movements are some of many kinds of interest groups of people that collect, organize, store, protect, and make available documents through certain means and times for others’ interpretations, whether they be specific people (such as group

members) or all people (the public). As societies and cultures move toward building more democratic views, desire to represent all people and all diversity in archives increases. “Indeed, all records—political or otherwise—can provide support for the basic rights of citizens. Well-managed records contribute to higher standards in politics and to a basic continuity in policy. They encourage transparency and openness in political dealings” (Godfried Kwanten, 119).

One of the most supported and common types of archives is governmental. Cultural historian Jennifer S. Milligan, whose focus is modern France, found that “The Archives, in this view, was thus more than a mere repository of governmental knowledge; it was an active articulation of the relationship of nation and state” when she went through the formation of French archives through history (169). A sense of trust, relationship, past, and future are often formed between government and citizen when records are preserved and made available/public.

The issue at hand in this (re)search is not so much that archives have failed transgender, rather, our assumptions and expectations of archives are wildly unrealistic if we do not view them in their human, fallible, biased situations. We must situate archives, with histories, formations, political influences, personal influences, limits, and so on, as a repository of human expression and extraction but not *the* source. Moreover, understanding archives as reflecting relationships and societal power dynamics further requires knowing how to work with their limited resources. Absence speaks just as much truth as presence (Myers, Whorley, Connors, Oberdeck, Booth).

This is where transgender speaks volumes to the situations of archives. In understanding how these two concepts interact in realtime, we are able to learn

significant aspects of both; namely, United States' and world value-systems and power dynamics. With increased knowledge of these, in turn, we may work to change them in radical (root) ways. Sharing the history, structures, goals, and even director of the aforementioned Women and Leadership Archives allows this (re)search glimpses into real archival issues as they pertain to the disenfranchised.

*Meet the Women and Leadership Archives (WLA)*

The WLA was established in 1994, due in large part to the merging of Illinois' last women's only college, Mundelein College, with Loyola University Chicago. To carry on Mundelein's support of women, in addition to Mundelein's archives, WLA was formed. In the following section, via interviews audio-recorded in April of 2009, Myers discusses an archives like hers formed with a basis on identity (women), and archives in general. Keep in mind the similarities between *women* and *transgender* in relation to archives.

Archives, in the United States, are a "painfully young" method, Myers starts, as there was not a national archives until 1934, "but as a profession we lagged behind our European partners." Some individuals, universities, and institutions collected materials before this. Also, government and official documents were also collected, and may contribute to narratives, yet as Myers states, "don't necessarily tell the story of individual lives." The lives of the powerful were most often documented, and other forms of history, such as story-telling, have mostly been excluded until recently.

Next, Myers considers the period from the 1930s to the early 1960s. Although official archival efforts were increasing, there were "people who were not considered important or people who did not have a strong record of their events and their lives—they

were not kept, they were not captured.” Myers reveals that many were ignored, sometimes benignly and sometimes intentionally.

Fortunately, the civil rights movement in the United States marked a turning point, in which people became more aware of and interested in their own sense of place, identity, and history. “Although people were considering the history of presidents, congress, bills, and the Constitution as important,” Myers notes, “they were also saying, ‘I cannot relate to this; this is not my history!’” This turn really started with African-Americans who were (re)discovering records and roots of ancestry, slavery, and a larger collective narrative. In Myers’ words, “This inspired many other groups. Women followed shortly thereafter, asking ‘Where’s my history, where’s my story?’” This has led to what Myers described as a “snowball” effect since then, leading to “more interest in more kinds of people than ever before in our history.”

So why are there still groups that are ignored and missing in archives in the United States? There was a large push in the 1970s and 80s to accept oral history as a legitimate form of collecting records as a way to overcome the challenge of illiteracy, for instance. There have been many individual efforts to include specific voices, such as threatened groups, like the elderly or WWII vets.

Myers went on to note how generally the “everyday” person is downplayed as significant to the donation of archival materials, resulting in “renowned” or “statured” donations. So, for instance, the common housewife is less likely to be “valued” as a donor. Interestingly, Myers notes only half a dozen strong women’s archives in all the United States; compare this to over 100 archives in Chicago alone. “There are still many records at risk; as archivists we too narrowly define what we go after,” says Myers.

On a sidenote, Myers discussed efforts since the 1970s to capture Native American records, such as lost languages. However, she hesitates to signify this as positive as many of the collections were not by Native American communities, but rather extracted by outside interests. Many pockets of interests, such as gay collections, have existed since the 1970s. There is a skewing of archival interest and collection toward the East Coast, and less work on the West Coast.

“If we look hard enough, we will be able to find people beyond the title of the collection, but you have to look harder, and you almost too have to look for their absences,” says Myers of marginalized groups, specifically women. “Many women were hidden within their husband’s collections,” Myers shares in thinking about women’s records and collections. Canadian gender historian Adele Perry expounds on this idea of absence: “Putting the colonial archive on trial shows us how archives are not only about what they contain within their walls. They are also about absence, although the absences in the colonial archive are not neutral, voluntary, or strictly literal” (345).

Recently, there were federal grants allotted for the Black Metropolis Research Consortium to search for African-American records. Myers, when first approached by them, denied having any of these records, but then realized many of Loyola’s past students were African-American and were hidden within archives. Knowing where to look is a key aspect of working within archives for less represented groups.

Of course there are efforts by archivists to get what Myers refers to as the “sexy stuff,” or the documents that people might travel nationally for, such as feminist Mary Daly. As her archives are smaller and less powerful than others, she identifies them as less national. “Many of the potential African-American women get siphoned off to other



archives that I would court,” Myers commented. She was referring to the lack of racial diversity in her archives, after mentioning the existence of a Latina and Lesbian archives in California based from interests in borderline studies. “Collecting in Chicago 15 years ago was considered a bloodsport, but is much more peaceful now,” Myers says.

“Communities that have been most ignored and most persecuted in some way are rightfully the most suspicious” of archivists. “It is hard” to gain the trust of marginalized groups.

Myers summary of being an archivist is to “identify, collect, preserve, and conserve records of enduring value in perpetuity.” Why do it? What is the purpose behind archives, in contrast to other historical processes? Myers responds with her own intentions:

Well, you know that phrase, ‘to the victor goes the spoils, or the history? Its true! Those who have the power and the access and the means have a way of controlling the story. I get *upset* when I think about all of the people who are not a part of this ‘larger power structure.’ (by that I mean government, politicians...) What happens to everybody else as we live our lives in these systems? Where are those stories? Where are those narratives? I shudder to think and it actually makes me mad when I think about the stories that are lost—because they *are* lost. Human beings have such a limited idea of history. The historian in me says you take the long view. In your own life, if you are lucky, you will have an impact, an effect, on the world around you. And your immediate community will know it. 2-3 generations away from that, who will know it? Who remembers? The records outlive us all. It is a little creepy when I think about the fact that I have taken things in my world, in the archival world, that are going to be here in five to six to eight hundred to a thousand years. But there is the power. There is the why you do it. So it does not disappear.

Finally, Myers notes how much power the researcher “has over the entire story,” and that in a positivist model, there are so many investments to collect “truth.” There are assumptions that “if you write it, then it must be true; if it is in a book, it must be true—so say the noncritical thinkers of the world who are not necessarily going to challenge

that. That's a scary idea," Myers exclaims. Outside of a positivist model, one hopes that a person's documents speak for themselves, as opposed to imposing one's views on the life of another. Or, put another way, a positivist model would argue that an archivist may be "non-biased," as if they do not exist in the constraints of culture and time. One awesome aspect of archives is that a person, long out of touch and perhaps dead, may still "speak" their life from their documents.

Although Myers did mention some aspects of identity politics concerning archives, Elisabeth Kaplan, in her article, "We Are What We Collect, We Collect What We Are: Archives and the Construction of Identity," argues that identities are confirmed and justified "as historical documents validate their authority" (126). By using the American Jewish Historical Society as an example of one of the first identity-based archives, Kaplan is able to discover how identity plays a role in archival formation and collection. Kaplan argues:

Shifting, evolving, continually negotiated and renegotiated, individual and group identities co-exist, although their characteristics may not always be consistent. Identities themselves are socially constructed in response to external conditions and needs. Group identities are solidified in contrast to perceived 'others'" (129).

Here, Kaplan suggests that identities are formed intentionally, both personally and as groups, as responses. Moreover, Kaplan considers archives as a method to not only prove and promote a certain identity or identities, but also to fight marginalization by highlighting positive attributes of group members, such as stability, cohesiveness, normalcy, and patriotism, to name a few (134-138).

In addition to Myers' concerns of the archivist's and researcher's power to "create" and shape histories, archivist and prolific archive theorist Richard J. Cox offers

insights into this process in his book: *No Innocent Deposits: Forming Archives by Rethinking Appraisal*. It is not just the dominant historical processes and researchers who shape and choose history, Cox argues, but archivists are also responsible and biased. “Some archivists believe that records do not become archives without the blessing of archivists through an appraisal process... Others place records on a continuum... These complicated matters cut into cultural, political, professional, and personal concerns” (115).

The WLA’s mission to preserve the documents and histories of a commonly forgotten and ignored identity group, women, is a testament to similar issues when considering another marginalized group, transgender. If it was only three to four decades ago that women, African-Americans, and gay and lesbian people were finally making strong headway into archival collections, then we should not be surprised that transgender may be seriously missing in many archives and histories.

Additional archival sources reveal further nuances of the relationship between archives and at-risk groups, and specifically what challenges archivists may face. The following section expounds on this topic.

#### *Additional work on Archives and Marginalization*

Appraisal imposes a heavy social responsibility on archivists. As they approach records, they are doing nothing less than shaping the future of our documentary heritage.

-Terry Cook, prior senior manager at the National Archives of Canada (169)

Ann Curthoys, Australian history professor, focuses on the “history wars” taking place in the 2000s in Australia concerning the founding of Tasmania, what “counts” as historical evidence, and how to handle and interpret archival documents in her essay “The

History of Killing, and the Killing of History.” What is most useful for the purposes of this (re)search is Curthoys’ ideas of nation and colonization. As mentioned previously, I noted a war on sex and gender transgressions—a war intended to uphold sex, gender, and sexual binary systems. One might entertain the analogy of these three binary systems as being part of a nation, and, even further, colonizing the minds, bodies, and preferences of its inhabitants. Using this analogy, in which sex and gender transgressions represent enemies of the “binary” state, Curthoys’ concerns about the limitations of some archival documents as historical evidence is helpful in this (re)search.

First, Curthoys notes, when evidence is missing in history and archives, though we know it occurred, “[W]e must do our best from highly selective and fragmentary evidence to work out what may have happened” (360). This is an important approach to remember when (re)searching at-risk groups in archives and histories, like transgender. Second, Curthoys further suggests that “Readings of colonial archives differ enormously according to the stance of the historian in relation to the colonizers, the colonized, and colonial processes more generally” (366). This concept is also useful in the analogy mentioned, such that transgender may represent lives, desires, and bodies that were colonized by dominant notions of the three binary systems; in other words, the colonization of both archivists and people by binary systems may effectively tamper with historical evidence and the reading of archives. This, too, is important to remember when (re)searching at-risk groups through archives and histories in cultures in which binary systems are powerful influences on all social players. Finally, Curthoys notes another issue pertaining to archives regarding nation-states that were once colonized and have since been colonizers (like the United States and Australia): “In such societies, nationalist

historians seek to justify and praise the nation through a particular version of its past, while revisionist historians aim to redeem and enhance it through what they see as an honest coming to terms with its darker history” (351). By agreeing with Leslie Feinberg and many other transgender theorists, that transgender challenges sex, gender, and sexual binaries rather than reinforcing them, we find use with Curthoys last warning. If, indeed, whether cisgendered, transgendered, or other-gendered, an archivist or historian wishes to align their binary systems with their archival practices—a sort of colonization of binary approaches—then at-risk groups that challenge these approaches, may again, be excluded for fear of not supporting the “binary” state.

Marylin Booth, researcher of literary discourse and gender politics in the Arab world, also argues that there are many hidden histories and at-risk groups wedged inside collections of the dominant, wealthy, and ruling classes. In studying a novel written by a Lebanese immigrant woman living in Egypt in 1893, Booth argues that though fictional, this novel represents a glimpse into an alternative view of events at that time—a woman’s view. Booth notes and questions that women were “excluded by virtue of gender assignment from the possibility of writing authoritative histories—what uses did Arab women begin to make of fiction in rewriting political histories of the Middle East from a (differently, and overtly) gendered-perspective?” (275). Booth further suggests that “highlighting the novel in this way also highlights by contrast the dependence on narrative of archival material that is assumed—by virtue of its presence in the archive—to be nonfictional and thereby somehow uncontaminated by the interested pressures that shape narrative. Two useful points in this (re)search may be gained from Booth’s insights. First, at-risk groups have existed outside the evidence available in archives and

histories (or as the saying goes, “the evidence of absence is not the absence of evidence”), and may *still* exist within archives and histories if we look harder and in different and new ways. Second, fiction as a form of human expression is not without merit, and may be just as telling as non-fiction documents. For instance, an author who wrote fantasy novels about cross-dressing but never was known to be a cross-dresser herself may have used fiction as an acceptable outlet in her own time and place for her cross-dressing desires. Likewise, consider that many people perform and create “fictional” lives as other sexes and genders, be they performance artists, drag kings and queens, or even sex workers. Does this make their desires, behaviors, and/or lives not transgender because of fiction?

“The South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission confirmed what many historians had known to be true for many years: that the South African state archives, charged with minding the documentary records of the nation, had instead engaged in their methodical destruction during the apartheid years” (299). This quote is pulled from Helena Pohlandt-McCormick’s research into the 1976 Soweto uprising. Pohlandt-McCormick’s work in archives may serve as an example of at-risk groups (black South Africans) in relation to dominant institutions and archives. She found that “During the years of apartheid, the State Archives Services had essentially done the bidding of the state, using its extensive powers to govern access to documents and to destroy those potentially injurious to the reputation of the state” (299). *Transgender* may be “injurious” not only to state archives, but any institutional archives that benefit from the reinforcement of sex, gender, and sexual binaries that transgender threatens.

Pohlandt-McCormick finds that “Pervasive violence shaped memories over time and the way in which people remembered and spoke. It also led to the destruction of historical records, and the disappearance of people and, with them, their stories” (301). A similar finding may result in considering the violence and erasure transgender faces. When the vessels for transgender story and experience are hidden and destroyed, their records are far less likely to be found in archives, regardless of archivists’ efforts; such that, violence, erasure, and shaming may influence transgender in such ways that archivists have little chance to consider them.

From Pohlandt-McCormick’s research, we find two larger situations that may occur on a spectrum: (1) archivists and archives working to reinforce the government and dominant ideologies; and (2) archivists and archives making efforts to collect materials regardless of their inflammatory relationship to elites and powerful, oppressive systems.

Pohlandt-McCormick concluded that

The culpability of archives and other government institutions in the destruction of records highlighted the importance of such institutions in relation to public memory and history, and brought into focus that individual experience interacts with the discursive and political power of institutions in the process of articulating, preserving, intervening, silencing, and destroying memory. (315)

Yet we know that many types of archives are and have been established, some governmental, some not. In fact, some archives have been formed with the sole intention of collecting at-risk groups that have been neglected and overlooked by previous archives. Two already included in this research are the WLA and the Leather Archives and Museum. Not only do these archives safeguard the records of women and leather enthusiasts, but they also assist researchers interested in these fields. Similarly, an archives focusing on transgender collections may do the same: create spaces and

evidence for transgender while housing a subject in one location for researchers who are interested. Themed and identity archives are one way of supporting at-risk groups and collections through archives.

One of the most revealing and atrocious archive collections in the United States regarding political pressures is in the nation's archives, the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA). Archivist and library science professor Tywana Whorley discusses the Tuskegee Syphilis Study records, many of which "contain evidence of the federal government's misconduct in episodes in American history, and these have affected public trust" (109). One startling aspect of the experiences of many transgender people is the ongoing theme of violence and exclusion. Much like the records in the Tuskegee Syphilis Study, which Whorley argues are kept under tight surveillance with some forty seven boxes of evidence under restricted lockdown (little to no access) until at least 2030 because they reveal atrocities by the United States' government, some, if not many, if not most, transgender records may also reveal atrocities by the sex, gender, and sexual binary systems. As will be made more clear in a later chapter on transgender exclusion in many societal institutions, transgender, if recognized and collected more in archives and histories, sheds light onto many powerful societal institutions and people. One way to quell the need for change in order to stop mistreatment, violence, and injustice, such as that suffered by the men in the Tuskegee Syphilis Study for several decades, is to *not* allow the public access to the archives and histories of people who reveal such treatments. In short, if the evidence is excluded from archives and histories, then at-risk groups may lose the necessary grounds to demand change. Or, as Whorley states, "The significance of archival records cannot be



overstated. Archival records serve as instruments of accountability and building blocks of collective memory” (111). So if the records are kept locked or are never collected at all, Whorley warns that injustices may go by unnoticed and barely challengable (114-117).

Lesbian archives, a related at-risk group to transgender, have been researched and theorized in-depth by feminist and sexuality theorist Ann Cvetkovich in her 2003 book entitled, *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures*. Cvetkovich notes how trauma can be a site of strength for lesbians: “I have not only found the traces of trauma but ways of thinking about trauma that do not pathologize it, that seize control over it from the medical experts, and that forge creative responses to it that far outstrip even the most utopian of therapeutic and political solutions” (3). Due to oppressive sex, gender, and sexual power dynamics, sexual and gender minorities like lesbian and transgender may indeed create and donate their archives of maltreatment, marginalization, and struggle that may serve current and future generations as sites for reflection, empowerment, and assistance. As Nederlander archivist Eric Ketelaar notes concerning evidence of trauma and abuse:

Classic human rights enshrine these rights in terms of the citizen and the state, under the rule of law. But private business enterprises, associations, churches, universities, and others also have to adhere to them. If human rights are violated, the citizen has to be able to defend him- or herself. Here we see an essential connection between archives and human rights: the violation of these rights has been documented in the archives, the citizens who defend themselves appeal to the archives. (146)

Cvetkovich reveals that “Sometimes the archive contains tears and anger, and sometimes it includes the dull silence of numbness. Its feelings can belong to one nation or many, and they are both intimate and public. They can make one feel totally alone, but

in being made public, they are revealed to be part of a shared experience of the social” (286). This idea of sharing one’s struggles through archives, whether lesbian, transgender, or any of the human experiences of struggle and oppression, resounds with positive social reflection and change. Cvetkovich finds two kinds of archives that may help share lesbian stories and struggles: institutional archives, like a university, that may house lesbian collections; and grass-roots, subject-based archives, such as the Lesbian Herstory Archives. Due to the many differing situations and limitations of archives, such as the populations they serve and the methods they employ for research, having lesbian collections in a number of differing archives may serve to empower this disenfranchised group. Transgender, likewise, will benefit from inclusion not just in identity-based transgender and LGBT archives, but in a variety of archival formations and situations. While a sense of trust and connection may be stronger with a transgender archives, for example, a geographic, government, or religious archives that contains transgender collections may serve more distant populations and researchers, and also illuminate other various nuances to a person’s or organization’s identities, interests, and efforts. For example, housing a transgender liberation organization in the archives of the town with which it operated may help connect the organization to other people and organizations in its geographic boundedness. On the other hand, housing the same organization in a transgender archives several thousand miles away may gain connections to similar organizations and interests within transgender activism. Either way, the presence and inclusion is what is important.

Speaking to this importance in a basic way, the Director of The Leather Archives and Museum (LA&M), Rick Storer, answered a few simple questions concerning his own

inclusion of transgender in his archives; first about how LA&M approaches/gauges transgender, and second how it related to their mission:

Collections from transgender individuals strengthen the collection, in that they provide more accurate evidence of the history and culture of the leather and fetish subculture. If we were to specifically exclude these collections, we would not be preserving an accurate representation of the groups, individuals and art that make the lifestyle what it is.

The institution is defined by leather sexuality and culture and is inclusive of all genders, including trans. Transgender individuals have been a part of the leather and fetish subculture since before the LA&M was created, so it was a goal to collect materials from them as a part of the lifestyle.

How have archivists responded to the challenge of representing underrepresented social groups? What ethics have archivists formed for their processes and missions? The next section concerns an archivist who answers these questions directly.

*An Archives of Social Justice*

Archival records serve as instruments of accountability and building blocks of collective memory. (111)

-Tywana Whorley

Verne Harris, South African archivist and project manager for the Nelson Mandela Foundation, outlines four imperatives that should be applied to archiving. I believe his approach to be incredibly useful for archives that may choose to make a positive impact rather than safeguard hegemonic, harmful practices.

First, he argues, rather than having archives based in truth, memory, or accountability, an “archives for justice” is most useful to archivists and societies in general because “the call of justice is most important of all.” He goes on to say that although justice is not something we “know,” it is something we should seek to one day have, especially because “the obscenities demand that we work for its coming.” Second, he

says: “The structural pull in all recordmaking is towards the replication of existing relations of power, with the attendant exclusions, ‘privilegings,’ and marginalisations. We cannot avoid complicity. But we can work against the pull; and for me it is a moral imperative to do so” (178). Like Harris, I agree that archives and histories are in a constant power struggle—a pull between dominant elites and all other levels of societies.

Third, Harris proclaims: “Those who have power—the elites—use ‘the archive’ as an instrument of power. If justice is not to be forgotten in the process, if ‘use’ is not to become untrammelled ‘abuse,’ then we are obliged in the very least to trouble such use” (178). Finally, fourth, Harris notes that “it is impossible for recordmakers to be impartial, to insulate themselves from politics. Impartiality is a chimera turning recordmakers into the pawns of those who have the power. Any attempt to be impartial constitutes a choice, whether conscious or not, to replicate if not to reinforce prevailing notions of power” (181).

Like many feminist argue with standpoint theory, there is no impartial or objective view. Harris notes this in the last pull-quote offered by arguing that archivists may claim to be impartial, but in doing so they are only helping to reinscribe existing power relations. Because we do not yet live in a just world, we must recognize and help prevent injustices, whether we are researchers, donors, archivists, or the general public. An archives of social justice, then, in this way, recognizes transgender. Simple recognition is a first step toward inclusion. Before moving on to possible solutions to including transgender in archives, investigating some of the challenges archivists must face allows responsibility to be held across archivists, transgender people, and the public in general.

*Archivists' Situations*

Archivists can become active agents for change, in accordance with their existing professional principles, by taking active steps to counter the biases of previous archival practices. (255)

-Randall C. Jimerson, archivist

Yet archives for social justice and archives that are inclusive of marginalized groups and collections do not necessarily conceptualize the limitations and challenges faced by archivists—a search for representing the diversity of the culture to keep the record of the past. Archivists wrestle with this and it is hard work. There are complicated issues for preserving records. The first order of business for the middle part of this chapter is to dispel the myth of archives and history as “truth.” Even the notion of *history* as a singular concept is grossly inaccurate. There are as many histories as there are people. An archive can be considered extractions of human essence, experience, and thought. But our worlds (notice the plural here) are lived in multiple dimensions (not in the science-fiction sense) and modalities of being. A written contract may allow for current notions of officiality, for example, while a verbal contract (unrecorded beyond brain memory) exists as well. Currently, textual documents are more likely to become housed in archives than oral ones (Curthoys, 351-374).

When it comes to “truth,” Feminist and historian Antoinette Burton warns “The fetish of the archive as a surveillance apparatus has been matched in recent years by the fantasy that history is or can be a delivery system for absolute truth” (19). As with any human creation that is not itself living, we must not give god-like power or remove the very human presence that indeed is the only reason our creations exist and continue to exist. “Archives” and “History” are made and remade by people; to treat them as entities

capable of power and influence is to—what sociologist and feminist Michael Schwalbe calls—“reify” them. Archivists and historians have their own truths they follow. A conversation with them is far more possible and helpful than othering nonliving “archives” and “history.” In sum, archives and history are no more “truth” than the next human concoction. The following section includes some of these realities.

*Archival Challenges, Archival Realities*

I can't even begin to talk about the relationship of history and theory without trying to demystify both categories. History is the record of past experience. Theory is the generalization of that experience. It's that simple. But the question of who records the experience, and what lessons are drawn from it, is not so simple. Theory and history take place in the midst of a struggle, and are themselves battlegrounds.

-Leslie Feinberg (114)

Removing the responsibility of safeguarding truth is one way of approaching archives in a realistic, fair manner, taking unrealistic expectations away from archivists. A second complication that arises in archives is the issue of trust. Archivists do not have simple and easy access to documents and records, though this may sometimes occur. Archivists must develop relationships, both business and casual, with potential and current donors (Myers). Because the documents and records of a person or organization must often be overturned in ownership to an archives, they must also trust the archives and archivists who will take over their documents. If not, they may decide to give/donate/sell their documents to a different archives, or may even decide to not turn their documents over to any archives at all. Myers often referred to “preserving the legacy” of any collection, and this also is a trust issue. The person or organization handing over their documents will also likely be concerned about preserving the character and dignity of their name(s). An archives that tampers with legacy and character may

lose the trust of potential collections, and may even have current collections removed.

It is important to remember that archivists enter into legal contracts with the owners of the collections, such that archivists are responsible for preserving the documents once ownership is transferred (Myers).

Beyond trust and relationship lies an issue archivists may have little control over: people may just not desire to make their lives public. There are dozens of reasons any one person or group may opt to keep, hide, or destroy their personal records. Perhaps a reason that comes to mind first involves shame and distrust. Especially for marginalized groups and people, like transgender, people may not feel or believe their records and documents are “worthy” of donation/archiving. Or maybe they do have interests in archiving their materials but worry about potential unwanted consequences from being made public.

Yet beyond this first reason exist many more potential reasons people may stay away from archives. The most basic reason may be that they do not want their documents in an archives, period. Some people are personal and private outside of any worries concerning shame, security, fear, and trust. Some people believe that their own business is “nobody’s business.” When marginalized people do indeed face complications with being “outed” to the public, though archivists (like any other person) play a role in societal formation, that role still may have little influence on the factors that cause any one individual to decide archives are not for them. When this occurs, and archivists out in great efforts to collect at-risk populations, at times there is little more they can do other than wait and hope for people to come around.

A third challenge that arises for archivists is space. Perhaps the fairest way to develop “true” history is to collect ALL people’s histories. This is impossible. Even if it were possible, not everyone wants their histories known. Further, even if possible, where would all the documents and records be housed? Because space is limited for all archivists (some way more than others, especially older, more popular archives or others with less funding), they must make tough decisions on what documents will occupy these limited spaces. For instance, Myers says having a rare book collection would take up too much space in her archives and is not necessarily a priority for WLA. In this way, she frees room for collections, but may miss out on opportunities to keep certain texts that may be destroyed. Fortunately, digital technology may allow a collection of 85 boxes of papers to be housed in a digital hard drive that is smaller than a fingernail. Questions arise, though, as to sacrificing provenance of materials in order to save space; a copy of something, especially a digital tranferance, may risk the original intention and situation of a document (Todd, 305-320). Archivists must constantly make decisions and sacrifices as regards space, provenance, and increasingly, digital technologies.

A fourth complication archivists confront, familiar to anyone, is funding and resources. As mentioned, though, archivists are not just planning for next week, month, decade, until retirement, until the next quarter, or even just in this lifetime. Their scope of planning involves hundreds of years, thus they must be careful with their resources and funding. Funding and support rarely comes without some strings attached. The institutions and individuals who support archives may have specific preferences for how the archives will handle their support. For example, though Myers technically can collect from a person or group that does not fall within the scope of “women and leadership,”



she must answer to Loyola University Chicago and the Gannon Center for Women and Leadership. As mentioned, it is part of her job to uphold the mission of WLA. Other archives are in similar positions, some with broad collecting practices and others with very defined collecting practices. Though one may want to place sole responsibility on the lead archivist of any archives, this would most likely be unfair, as that archivist, like any employee of an organization, must answer to varying demands and influences such as funders, their culture, their patrons, and their fellow professionals, to name some. As Jeff Sahadeo found in his study of Uzbekistan governmental archives:

Other reports from across the region confirm that librarians are purging older material to make way for new Uzbek language publications. The regime's underfunding of archives and libraries combined with tightening censorship has validated local intellectuals' fears that the general population is losing the means to study the Uzbek past, forced instead to rely on state-sponsored historical expeditions designed to enforce the regime's priorities. (63)

A fifth issue that may arise with archivists concerning at-risk groups is access.

Accessing at-risk groups may sometimes be outside the archivist's reach. This is not to say that archivists should not put forth effort in trying to collect at-risk groups, especially when archives are considered a social justice tool. But the more at-risk a group, individual, or organization may become, the more potential there is for the collection to be more difficult to reach. Or, in other words, the more marginalized the potential collection, the more disconnected it may be from an archives that must have at least a base level of privilege and support to exist. Archivists cannot be the only ones held responsible for the disenfranchisement of others. Insofar as an archivist may have access and knowledge of at-risk groups, this is where they may be held accountable for what they do with the resources available to them to reach out with support. Nevertheless,

“For communities excluded, outcast, and marginalized, voice can speak to power: it is literally a weapon of evidence against historical erasure and social analysis that fails to consider the experiences of individuals and communities on their own terms” (Namaste, 124).

One last challenge regarding archives and at-risk groups concerns societal power dynamics and is at the heart of this (re)search. It is more of a question. What comes first? Historical and archival presence and support, or institutional and cultural support? These are so intrinsically intertwined that they most likely must happen simultaneously, and require efforts from all characters; in this case, archivists, transgender people, and the general public are responsible for making inclusive choices. Or as Jeannette Allis Bastian says, “The voiceless population is not the silent witness but a full partner in the record-creating process. In this societal construct, all layers of society are participants in the record-making process, and the entire community becomes the larger provenance of the records” (41). To pull apart these concepts of archives/history and culture is to disregard how they influence one another. History influences culture, and culture influences history. Both exclude transgender to varying degrees, and inclusion must occur in both simultaneously. Thus, archivists, again, are not the only ones responsible for positive change—everyone is responsible.

As most dominant institutions and people hold the most power and influence in the world, which in turn have the most control over archives, and most if not all dominant institutions exist because of and in response to the sex/gender/sexual binary systems, then again, the presence and support of transgender into eternity is highly unlikely. This begs

a significant question and concern in this (re)search, what does it take to have transgender presence in archives?

*Brainstorming Solutions*

The person who says it cannot be done should not interrupt the person doing it.  
-Chinese proverb

Maybe you have been wondering why I have used the term (re)search throughout this work? This is an actual search, too. A search for transgender not just in archives and history, but in many components of societies. The search does not end with a sad, dismal “oh, well,” but further searching for answers, ideas, and solutions. This last part of Chapter 5 is about ways we may be able to resolve issues of transgender erasure, absence, invisibility, and ostracization. First I would like to share some broad steps that may be taken, then I will move into more concrete ideas concerning archives.

*Broad Steps for Everyone*

The culture itself is obsessed with gender—and true to form, the culture as a whole will be the last to find out how obsessed it really has been . . . Some people think I want a world without gender, something bland and colorless: that’s so far from how I live! I love playing with genders, and I love watching people play with all the shades and flavors that gender can come in. I just want to question what we’ve been holding on to for such an awfully long time. (58-59)

-Kate Bornstein

One of the most important and useful first steps we may all take, archivists and transpeople too, is to relax our notions of sex/gender/sexual binary systems. The gates and barriers erected by the colonizers in this war are rusty, ugly, and deteriorating, and rather than restoring them, they ought to be dismantled. We are all responsible, just as we are all affected in various ways by these systems, as David Valentine suggests: “The goal is not to identify the perpetrators of fraudulent categorization but to open the

question of how all of us are responsible for—and subject to—the limits and possibilities of self-making in a broader and stratified political-economic context” (246). The more we weaken this war, the more likely transgender will be allowed into the open, *back* into societies.

This needs to occur simultaneously in all aspects of societies. Continuing to support (or simply ignoring, thus allowing) infant sex mutilation surgeries and GID/C diagnoses while supporting the inclusion of transgender in archives is unbalanced. Allowing shame and violence in one area while trying to build support and space in another is a mixed signal that does not necessarily result in trust and positive change.

Remember Bornstein’s thoughts on this:

In spite of being an official psychopathology, ‘treatments’ for GID are not covered by health insurance in the United States because they are considered ‘elective,’ ‘cosmetic,’ or even ‘experimental.’ This is a truly inexcusable double bind—if being transgendered is not considered psychopathological, it should be delisted as a mental disorder; if it is to be considered psychopathological, its treatment should be covered as a legitimate healthcare need. (14-15)

So, for example, if you are aware of intersexed people and experiences, give your support and understanding. Rather than offer sex/gender/sexual binary ideologies, keep an open mind and listen to the people whose physical bodies do not fit male and female. They may have much to reveal.

A second, related step may seem to conflict with the first. If one may view the first step as a long-term goal, then this second step is more short term. Special efforts ought to be made to reach out to transgender people, with an emphasis on collecting transgender materials. Highlighting transgender as not only existing, but *worthy* enough for archives and histories sends out important messages to the wars on transgender.

Transgender needs reinforcement, support, and spaces. Michael Warner argues

similarly concerning “deviants:”

One reason we have not learned more from this history is that queers do have the institutions for common memory and generational transmission around which straight culture is built. Every new wave of queer youth picks up something from its predecessors but also invents itself from scratch. Many are convinced that they have nothing to learn from old dykes and clones and trolls, and no institutions—neither households nor schools nor churches nor political groups—ensure that this will happen. (51-52)

While considering this second step, we must all be careful not to reinscribe transgender. Paying attention to step one means keeping our ideas of identities and desires open for change. Remember that even the term “transgender” was developed and adopted into wide use in the United States just in the past two decades. If we obsess over this term, policing it with boundaries, restrictions, and exclusions, we will indeed create new generations of transgender issues. Susan Stryker agrees:

The seemingly inexhaustible global catalog of specialized terms for gender variety shows how impossible it really is to group such a wide range of phenomena together under the single term “transgender” without keeping that word’s definition very flexible and without paying close attention to who is using it to refer to whom, and for what reasons. (23)

Further, and our third step, relaxing binary systems *should never* result in claiming neutrality (like gender-neutral, androgyny, race-neutral, and color-blind) in current people. Sure, maybe one day neutrality can apply, but doing so in the present erases people’s lived experiences and real bodies and feelings. Telling someone, for example, they are not “black” may be true in one sense (all of the negative stereotypes that are attached to “blackness” not to mention actual skin color being otherwise), but if they have been treated as “black,” forced to identify as “black,” and have sought and found support from other “black” people, retracting the identity erases whole lives and

histories. This may often lead to forcing people to deny their struggles, histories, and associations. Ignoring pain and negativity will not wish it away (Mohanty).

A fourth and simple step anyone can do on a regular basis is help *create* spaces for transgender. This may be as simple as adding a box (or two or three or even a fill-in-the-blank) that allows for more than two sexes and genders on forms and applications. An important aspect of this step is that these spaces should be made not just for others, but personally as well. Embracing aspects of our own selves and lives that are transgender rather than part of the monster binary system discredits the war. *Lead by example* is key here. Allowing the same fear and shame to invade and colonize you concerning transgender will not create more transgender spaces. As mentioned in previous chapters, language and discourses are simple and large weapons used in negating transgender. Remember this when you are speaking, writing, and developing options in your discourses. Do not assume others; let them speak for themselves. Do not assume your *self*. One way of opening transgender spaces in your own life is to be open to the actions, desires, and behaviors you encompass that are on both sides of, in between, and outside the sex/gender/sexual binary systems. Joanne Meyerowitz sums the view popular culture has on trans (be aware of this):

In the popular culture, various media frequently cast transsexuals as ‘freaks’ or ‘perverts,’ and in the more polite language of scholarly journals, doctors and scientists often portray them as mentally ill. The tendency to homogenize, stereotype, and pathologize transsexuals persists, even in an era when it is no longer fashionable, at least in certain social circles, to homogenize, stereotype, and pathologize women, racial and ethnic groups, or gay men and lesbians. Much of the recent literature on transsexuals depicts them as deficient and dangerous if not diseased. (11)

This concludes some of the basic steps you may take to include transgender for yourself and others. By not taking any action, you may be allowing transgender to continue to be excluded and harmed. As sociologist Sherryl Kleinman would remind her students, social privileges for dominant group membership are received by members regardless of whether or not they want them—you must actively engage against the oppression of others or you are along for the ride. She made the analogy of riding an escalator. You may not be actively moving, but the escalator is still taking you somewhere. You have to get off the escalator. Or you may even have to work hard against the escalator flow to go the other direction.

#### *Concrete Actions and Proposals*

To excavate queer lives and queer desires requires careful considerations, beginning with the fact that they are not the priority of mainstream historicizing and archiving practices.

-Horacio N. Roque Ramirez (130)

An overwhelming response I had as an intern with WLA, especially when processing new collections, was “why continue collecting more from similar backgrounds and experiences?” This is one of my strongest messages to archivists. Take a long hard look at your collections. What do they say? What patterns emerge in the documents? For Myers, whiteness, Catholicism, and higher levels of SES are on repeat through her collection, due in large part to serving as Mundelein College’s repository.

Archivists may further look into the absences in their collections and listen to them—considering at-risk groups in their archives and in general; how might their archives support marginalized people? Centuries from now, people may be frustrated by

how much absence some archivists may have played some part in allowing. Boles

states this pragmatically:

It makes very little sense to establish a collecting policy that will result in a collection that in large part duplicates the efforts of some other archives. If a fine local history collection already exists in the city, founding a second one makes little sense. (70)

Knowledge of what other archives collect should be used to focus collecting policy away from already well-served areas and on to other topics where the field is clear or at least not very congested. (70)

We all have varying degrees of power in shaping history and lives, and we must realize and accept potential positive influences we may be able to effect. For instance, every collection and item that an archivist accepts is an active, political, and important decision. "Archivists have a moral and professional responsibility to balance that support given to the status quo by giving equal voice to those groups that too often have been marginalized and silenced" (Jimerson, 255). Every collection relating to women that Myers decides to accept is a statement that women are valuable contributors to societies, for example.

Obviously, archivists cannot collect every single human artifact. But at some point, some kinds of experiences and histories may be severely lacking or not present at all. As of now, in the United States, the overwhelming amount of archives that relate to white people is a gross message to the value of people not white. "White people are worth histories, while others are not" is the potential message relayed through this.

As this (re)search demonstrates, the wealth of sex and gendered collections and practices is also a bold message to transgender. "We do not make space for you nor have space for you" is how this may be taken. Many archivists may have some power and



various options to make these spaces in their archives. For many trans people, it may be a life or death situation to be pushed out of histories and social institutions.

If you are an archivist who does not have any transgender in your archives, especially primary sources; consider finding one, even several. If you are worried this is challenging, it may be easier than you think. Just from spreading word to 20 people about a questionnaire, for example, at least three people have shown interest in donating their transgender experiences to an archives. Learning where to look, who to speak with, and how to offer respect and trust is helpful when a concern and interest in transgender is present. There are transgender spaces in every nook and cranny of the world, and often they are hidden for safety reasons. But like I said, if you are “safe” and trustworthy, transgender will make appearances, and support is often welcome and appreciated. Likewise, potential transgender donors might consider the potential risks to making some of their materials public—perhaps these risks will be outweighed by possibilities of helping current and future generations.

Because transgender can be missing in serious ways from dominant institutions, in the United States and world, this may make knowledge of transgender less common. Luckily, there is a growing amount of resources on transgender, whether in books, articles, movies, research, the Internet, etc. If you would like to learn more about transgender, I highly recommend starting with several books about transgender history and people. One of my favorites, which runs throughout this (re)search, is Leslie Feinberg’s *Trans Liberation: Beyond Pink or Blue*. By intertwining personal experiences with several transgender profiles, the book is instructive and enjoyable. Another of my favorites, also for its accessibility, is Susan Stryker’s *Transgender History*. Stryker’s

book reads like a story, with rich descriptions and fluent language. Through Stryker, you will meet transgender people throughout United States' history. Lastly, I recommend Joanne Meyerowitz's *How Sex Changed: A History of Transsexuality in the United States*. Though longer and more theoretical than the other two, Meyerowitz delves deeper into the discourse and history of transsexual emergence in Europe and the United States.

Websites concerning transgender are also rich with information. The internet offers more safety, more anonymity, and almost global connection for transgender people. Helen Boyd shares her take on the Internet as concerns cross-dressers: "Despite the creative and energetic efforts on the part of the Transgendered Community to assert rights for transsexuals, drag queens, and crossdressers themselves, the average crossdresser still prefers solitude or secret societies that meet behind closed doors and the anonymity of the internet" (11). Check out their websites and projects to learn much more. Also, too, the works cited at the end of this (re)search is full of transgender activists, theories, and advice.

If you are an archivist interested in helping, may I suggest more than just one transgender collection? If you are indeed wanting to support transgender in a more profound way, I highly suggest starting a special collection in your archives dedicated to transgender. Give your archives a goal of collecting transgender manuscripts and records. If you do decide to go this route, I also highly suggest you do two things: 1) seek the advice of a transgender person and maybe even have them serve an assisting role in the special collection; 2) survey the transgender archives available in your area and country and choose a special collection theme that is underrepresented among

transgender. For example, white MTF transgender people are much more likely to already have some histories and archives in the United States. For your special transgender collection, collect the manuscripts and records of, for instance, black FTM transgender prisoners in the United States. Having a special collection such as this in your archives not only helps support current and future generations of at-risk groups, but also sets your archives apart from other archives in unique ways, such as in the following offered by Vivian K. Namaste: “An attention to people who call themselves transsexual and/or transgender can provide more insight into the relations between gender and violence” (144). Joanne Meyerowitz suggests similar reflection: “The history of transsexuality had already laid the definitional groundwork and helps explain the peculiar configuration that sex, gender, and sexuality had already assumed in American popular culture, medicine, and law” (9).

In recent decades, several academic fields have been created at universities and colleges with the help of more established fields. For example, at my undergraduate university, UNC- Chapel Hill, the Women’s Studies Department began a Sexuality Studies Program while I was a student. Though women’s studies at UNC- CH is one of the most underfunded and understaffed programs, they still found ways to create and harbor a more “underprivileged” field.

Why not do this within your archives? Start a Trans Archives by diverting some of your support and resources. Loyola University Chicago shares some of the funding for its university archives to support the WLA. Loyola feels it is important to support an archives that seeks to remedy an at-risk archive/history group: women. How would you know if your institution, funders, and support are not willing to do the same within your

archives? As mentioned, transgender archives are more likely to be revealing of societal practices and inequalities, making them good candidates for researchers. Plus, there are gaps in transgender presence in archives. Take this situation and help turn it around, or at least try, and see what happens.

If none of these actions interest you, or you are literally in a tough spot that does not allow transgender support in your archives, you still have many ways of supporting transgender in history and archives. Most archivists have higher education, a few with doctorates. Further, most archivists (and employees, too) have academic and research “clout.” Take your education and power and *say* something. Publishing an article for archivists, librarians, and historians is one method. Posting information in your archives and webspace is another option. Doing research, whether supported by your employer or done on your own time, is still another option. Simple communication and conversation among your peers is yet *another* option. Do you understand how much influence you potentially have as an archivist or someone who works in an archive?

Maybe in your career and personal life you are already focusing your efforts on an at-risk group. As noted, *any* at-risk group has transgender. If you are already busy, then simply open your work and at-risk group to include transgender. Remember the following argument from Lori B. Girshik:

One of the tragedies of the struggle to be an authentic self when you do not fit into the gender binary or resonate with the gender assigned to you at birth is that history is full of unacknowledged examples of gender variance. This lack of recognition deprives transpeople of valuable role models and denies everyone of true knowledge gender variance. (73)

One of the most elite aspects of academia can be the fencing off of knowledge.

Only 1% of the world has a college degree, and 3% of the United States has a doctorate;

if you fall into these groups, you are incredibly lucky and more powerful than many others. Another action an educated person may take, like Myers did with me, is to share your archival knowledge with others. Certainly there are transgender people and allies very interested in starting transgender archives. Help them; share your expertise and wisdom.

Still, there are other means of supporting transgender inclusion, specifically as it pertains to archives. The Society of American Archivists' Lesbian and Gay Archivists Roundtable (LAGAR) Newsletter, called "Archival Inquiries," is released twice a year and is in its 38<sup>th</sup> issue. Their newsletter contains global information and news concerning LGBT events, people, and activism. LAGAR also has created *Lavender Legacies Guide*, a digital roundtable guide to LGBT repositories including over 20 states of the United States and four Canadian provinces. The guide highlights various archives and repositories that house LGBT materials. So far, for Illinois, four archives are listed as having some (significant enough to report) LGBT collections. These are: *Charles Deering McCormick Library of Special Collections*, which is mostly lesbian; *Gerber/Hart Library*, which is mostly gay and lesbian; *Leather Archives & Museum*, which has all sexualities and genders; and *Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Religious Archives Network*; a virtual archives mostly concerning LGBT religious leaders. Whether an archivist, ally, or someone with potential materials to donate, consider networking with LAGAR and their guide.

*Do it Yourself Archives*

History, in the hands of those who have the most to gain from change, is a formidable weapon. That's why the colonizers and imperialists always burned and destroyed the historical accounts of those they conquered.

-Leslie Feinberg (124)

The emergence and support of “minority archives” is testament to the need for at-risk groups to be documented. Though we know their histories exist, they were displaced, destroyed, or forgotten. As this continues to occur, transgender people and allies may elect to also establish their own archives. Transgender archives must be made, not postponed longer. This is not insurmountable; as many other minority groups have demonstrated in the United States and world, developing “minority archives” is very possible.

Privileged and resourceful LGB archivists must be held accountable for tacking on the T and Q. If this seems impossible and improbable, consider how many transgender people carve out spaces and support in the face of violence. If police forces can be controlled in rebellions like Compton's Cafeteria and the Stonewall Rebellion, archival efforts are certainly possible as well (Stryker, Myerowitz, Feinberg). Although having official archives by “official” archivists certainly will not hurt, it is not impossible to start collections without official help, funding, or support.

There are, of course, some very wealthy and powerful transgender people, like Dennis Rodman and Chaz Bono. Like any disenfranchised social category, some members have access to power. How else would so many women's, African-American's, and gay and lesbians' organizations have survived? They have privileged donors, and allies, too. If you are worried that starting a transgender archives seems to require an

awful lot of money and resources, you may be right. But there are people willing to help who may have access to larger amounts of money and resources. They may not always want their names and estates involved in the support, but that does not mean they do not find ways to help, nor does it mean you cannot also find ways for them. If there is one thing wealthy United States' citizens seem to love to do, it is giving away money, even if only for tax incentives; take advantage of this. Ask and see what happens.

Or maybe you have tried already. Again, “proper” archives are not necessary. Remember cave paintings and oral histories? Archives come in many forms, none right or wrong. What is more important than getting “proper” approval from government, academics, and archivists is actually protecting transgender documents and records. Yes, transgender people, you are also accountable. Hold on to your evidence, pictures, blogs, memories, and so on. Just because they are less accepted now does not mean that they will always be undesirable and unaccounted. For all we know, transgender archives will take off (after this is published, of course).

No discussion of archives today is complete without some mention and consideration of the Internet and digital materials. Archivists have tough decision to make concerning what technology and the digital age means to their processes and practices (Johnson 291-304). “There is surprisingly little material written by historians on the subject of the Web as an archive” (Sentilles, 138). Younger generations seem quite content with digital representations of almost *anything*—even of themselves. So why not archives? I firmly believe that digital files will replace physical documents in archives, whether to save room or just have a web presence with digital collections.

Reasons aside, digital representations of humans are a major aspect of the future of archives.

So what does that mean to transgender people and allies? Continue and start what are called second-space archives—unofficial repositories of documents and information that include steps towards preservation. Start your own digital collections. Do it on Facebook and in your hard drives. Take digital images and videos of your lives. Digitize transgender whenever you can. What is another good reason? It is cheap, and getting much cheaper. Every few months digital space grows in size and accessibility, and decreases in price. Do not underestimate the power and enormity of a yottabyte. We should welcome its coming (one septillion bytes of data, or  $10^{24}$  bytes).

*Ongoing Conversations, Ongoing (Re)Searches*

When I was young, I faced two narrow doorways—female and male. I was told there were the only routes to human expression and experiences, predetermined by birth. Each of us here, and the trans movement as a whole, is offering trans children today—all children—a roadmap of choice, and the opportunity to speak to us about what we have found on our journeys. With the vital words ‘and others’ we are protecting uncharted territory, to insure that it remains available for exploration.

-Leslie Feinberg (46)

This (re)search may be summed in one sentence: transgender is more often excluded rather than included in history and archives, and this harms not just transgender people in negative ways, but all of us to certain degrees by limiting our human expression and potential, all because we have (archivists and historians, too) fallen into the same bullshit traps of the sex/gender/sexual binary system wars and in turn have excluded transgender, even though including transgender in archives and histories is quite possible and helpful. Vivian K. Namaste puts it succinctly: “Erasure is a defining condition of



how transsexuality is managed in culture and institutions, a condition that ultimately inscribes transsexuality as impossible” (5).

This conflict affects everyone, the globe over, especially as the United States penetrates deeper into more and more societies in the world, spreading wars on transgender to places and peoples that have been peacefully transgender, as it did with the hundreds of Native American tribes that had more than two genders. **No one** is perfectly sexed and gendered, nor sexed and gendered in their sexual desires. The binary systems are harmful lies. Or as Kate Bornstein says, “Eventually the gender system lets everyone down. It seems to be rigged that way. Sometimes, even with all the time and effort we put into obeying the rules, we get hurt. We can get badly hurt by being a real man or a real woman” (80). They limit everyone’s potentials. Some of the bravest people in the world are silenced, shamed, and killed everyday for proving these binaries false with their own bodies and minds.

Whether as desire, action, or identity, transgender threatens sex, gender, and sexual binaries. As this research demonstrates, this had led to erasure, shaming, and displacement of transgender in large, important societal institutions, many of which control access to resources and full lives. Rather than allowing these binary systems to continue to amass power and control, a recognition and acceptance of transgender will help loosen these binary restrictions, benefitting everyone. One way to do this, as outlined in this research, is to allow spaces in archives and histories for transgender. Consider Rachel Lilburn’s approach to the responsibilities of archivists and historians (everybody):

Change will not occur without a concerted effort by, and coalition of, archives and records professional bodies and individuals, political scientists, historians, and activists who want to use these records. By not engaging in the debate, archivists and records managers will be tacitly supporting the status quo and those in power who choose to mislead the public, believing that a democracy survives on never-ending secrecy. Let us remind ourselves again that archivists and record-keepers are not impartial custodians, but are the active documenters of society and shapers of social memory. (224)

Whether transgender, or an ally, or an archivist, all of the above, or none of the above, there are many steps you may take in helping at-risk groups and preventing exclusionary, violent patterns from continuing. Remember, it is as simple as relaxing your own potential binary views of sex, gender, and sexuality. Help others by helping yourself in this regard; this will not only affect you, but the people and organizations that you come across.

APPENDIX A:  
RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE INVITATION

Hello,

I am currently working on research that calls attention to the lack of space and concern in history and archives for trans and gender-variant people. My goal is to not only point out the ignorance, violence, and accountability surrounding this issue, but to also offer solutions to archivists for how they can better serve all people in safeguarding memory and the past, especially past struggles. The struggle to be who you want to be in the face of constant oppressions should not be lost, forgotten, or lived over and over again.

Please help me in this research/activism by participating in a questionnaire I developed for the purpose of empowering the "subjects" by centering their voices in my work (rather than me speaking for others). If you identify as transgender, transsexual, trans, and/or genderqueer, or cross-dressing is a significant part of your life, please take the time to help me keep historians and archivists responsible.

There is a horrific absence of trans and gender-variant people in US and global histories, especially archives. People in power often use history as a tool to deny other people's rights, such as gender expression or employment nondiscrimination. When people and struggle are missing in history/archives, others take advantage of them. Help me change this.

Attached is the questionnaire in Word format and PDF. Simply answer the questions, honestly, in the word document, and return them to me, Curtis, at [jmain@luc.edu](mailto:jmain@luc.edu). If you prefer to use the PDF, be sure and number your responses in a Word document or Rich Text File. Your name will be anonymous in the published work (only known to me). However, if you would like your name and/or identifiable information to be in the published work, sign the attached consent form and return it with the questionnaire.

I NEED THEM NO LATER THAN [date] in order to publish this research!

Thanks so much!  
Please pass this on to interested friends.  
Warmest regards,  
J. Curtis Main

"The fact that gender is problematic for some theorists as well as some transpeople is no justification for an attempt to mandate it out of existence." -Jamison Green

"Many gendered and heterosexist social constructs collapse like cardboard sea-walls against the ocean of my transsexual reality." -Jamison Green

**APPENDIX B:**  
**RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES**

Participant I: Gay, black transman.

Participant II: Tea, Transgender woman.

Participant III: Ethan. White, transsexual (ftm) man.

1) *Are you comfortable discussing the intersection of trans people and experience with history and archives? Why? Why not?*

- I) Yes, because there is such a lack of presence of trans people and our experience in historical archives.
- II) I live full time as a transwoman for the past 3 plus years. I am open about my trans status, so I don't mind discussing these issues.
- III) I am. I perhaps have a minimal or peripheral understanding of archivists' work. However, I understand the notion/concept, and am quite adept at talking about the lived experience of being trans\*and trans\* histories.

2) *What are your first thoughts on this topic?*

- I) We definitely need more presence.
- II) I think often times there is too much focus on the negative aspects of trans and the issues that generate fear in trans person. Given the numbers of person who live in the closet and who fear coming out of the closet for reasons imagined but mostly never actualized when one does come out, I think it is too little discussed how easy it is to live ones soul.
- III) My first thoughts are that trans\* people and trans\* histories are often left out of history. Even in our own (LGB-T) community, the work of trans\* people is often forgotten as such (ie, Stonewall). Part of this is due to the clandestine history of the trans\* community. Those who might have identified as trans often had less means to do so in previous eras of our human history – medical and social paradigms had not come far enough to support trans people. This meant that for much of our history trans\* people are mislabeled as gay or lesbian. Particularly performers, but also, anyone who could only dress in the full regalia opposite that of their assigned sex at birth for only parts of their days, but were unable to fully transition for 100% of their lives. Those people often go unidentified as trans in our histories.

3) *Please describe your most salient identities at this point in your life.*

- I) Gay, black transman who is a special education teacher.
- II) I am a 59-year-old, 6'4" tall, middle class, white, behind the scenes business owner. I hula-hoop, do burlesque and am a leader in a number of mostly women's fashion and art groups.
- III) I identify as a white heterosexual man with female bodied histories who is in a queer relationship with a heterosexual woman.

- 4) *How would you like to be described in the published materials as far as your name, gender identity, race, and so on?*
- I) I would not like my name included. The answer for number 14 with or without the special education teacher is fine.
  - II) Tea, Transgender woman.
  - III) Ethan. White, transsexual (ftm) man.
- 5) *Do you consider yourself a leader in the transcommunity? Why or why not?*
- I) Not particularly because I do not work exclusively or focused on the trans experience. I prefer to make my experience about breaking boundaries. I am consistently the first person with my intersecting identities to accomplish a lot of the things I have done.
  - II) I am an activist personality but to this point I have not become overtly an activist on trans issues except that lately I have gotten involved in activism for CeCe McDonald in Minneapolis Minnesota. I have been active representative of transgender in our GLBTIQ film festival for the past 3 years. Simply by my participation in an otherwise all women's burlesque company, I try to promote, trans is beautiful and age is relative. I have consulted with a number of trans women on line with MySpace and now Facebook and have been told I have been helpful and influential to others.
  - III) I do. I am a leader in the field of Higher Education for expanding trans\* affirming care, policies and procedures at institutions of higher education. In that way, I feel I do a lot of work to expand the rights of trans\* and gender non-conforming peoples.
- 6) *What is your take on history's inclusion of gender-variance? Do trans people have a place, a space?*
- I) Absolutely not. Trans people have made a majority of people so uncomfortable that including us in any way in history would have to force people to validate us, which, most certainly, is going to be a while before that happens.
  - II) Basically I am not really seeing anyone out as historic. I think it is relatively new that persons can live openly as trans.
  - III) I think that there is very little space made for trans\* people in our history. I don't recall ever having seen any mention of a trans\* person in any history book I ever read in school – grade school through undergraduate education. In graduate school, I only read about trans\* people as a modern phenomena; as a population of traditionally marginalized people in the context of cisgender privilege and transphobia, but not in the context of exposing those histories. When trans\* histories are cast, it seems to generally be about the hardship, about the sorrow, about the maltreatment. It is rare, if ever, that one is afforded the opportunity to learn about the successes and contributions of trans\* people through the ages. Again, folks who may have identified as trans in the modern era are rarely identified as trans\* in our collective history, since they did not have the means by

which to identify as trans\* given the social and medical landscape of their time. Often, the most visual representation we have of trans\* people through history are those of native peoples in the Americas revering their trans community members in a spiritual way. But we do not see the link between European Americans and trans\* identities in our American continent history. And when native peoples are discussed it is often in passing as an example of how trans\* is not actually new, but is a variation of human nature that has existed for centuries. This is, of course, an intersection between transphobia and racism; the intersection of two marginalized groups being minimized and hidden from our history books in any meaningful way, and a yardstick by which current white American trans\* activists can measure trans history, without delving too deeply into the meaning within a culture of people of color.

- 7) *What are some ways you believe trans and gender variant people can be included in history and archives in a respectful, safe way?*
- I) Just like any community, our community has leaders and groundbreakers that are worthy of being known and celebrated. They belong in textbooks and history books next to MLK Jr. and Harvey Milk. It would also be really beneficial and progressive for our history to include the little progress made in modern history in the trans experience and the lack of safety.
- II) I think all of this will change. I see this as inevitable.
- III) In San Francisco, at the LGBT history museum, I was pleasantly surprised to see how much care was taken to present the history of trans\* persons in the United States. Trans men and women were each individually given space as complete exhibits. They were not lumped into other groups or minimized, but recognized as having bolstered their own community in significant ways, and by proxy, bolstered the entire LGBT community. I think it is important that trans\* identities be recognized as something separate from LGB identities. I think all too often the LGB community forgets the trans\* community, and takes ownership for the contributions of the trans\* community as if those contributions were solely of the LGB community. For example: Stonewall. Stonewall is often regarded by members of the LGB community, and of the cis\* straight allied community, as a tremendous step forward in ‘gay rights’ in the United States. What is often forgotten is that transwomen (drag queens and crossdressers) were those who were there at Stonewall. I think that it is important that our stories are allowed to be ours, and are not simply used by the white gay cis\* male dominated ‘LGBT’ movement to propel the mission of that movement, as so many of the equal rights talking points are today. I think we have to be aware of the roles that privilege and oppression plays in our own community, and not fall victim to power dynamics within our own community. We have to recall that trans people have historically been fighting alongside our LGB brethren for rights, but that our LGB brethren have not always been fighting alongside us for trans\* rights. I think in many ways we have to be given our own place in history and not continue to be tacked on as an afterthought. There ought not be a laundry list of gay and lesbian activists and then one or two lines about trans people at the end. The ‘T’ ought



not be just tacked on to the end out of obligation because it happens to have been lumped into an acronym.

8) *How do you think you fit as an individual into history? How about trans people as a group assuming they can be designated as one?*

I) Well, as every person has a different experience as a trans person, the same thing could be said for my black experience. The best way to have history inclusive is to include multiple experiences and histories. For example, I would **not** with a white trans man's history because their experience usually includes gaining a lot of privilege as a white man; whereas, my experience got significantly more difficult as a black man.

II) I would say I am locally significant for my "strength of being out and being myself. For my work with the groups that I have mentioned before as well as my activism with community and business issues for decades as a well known and well liked "man" in the community.

III) I am not sure that this fits this question, but I think it is an anecdote that is worth sharing in here to elucidate some of my earlier points. Quite often, as a transman, I encounter lesbians of the generation above me (baby boomers), who tell me that they do not understand why I would transition but they are willing to support me doing what I think/feel I need to do to be happy. And sometimes I encounter lesbian women of that generation who disagree with my decision to transition. And sometimes I am met with abject anger and am seen as a traitor to the lesbian community. Every time this happens it is from a butch or stud lesbian; someone who is masculine of center. In all of these instances I think there is something deeper going on. Each of these instances is one that is either subtly or overtly, consciously or subconsciously, intended for me to walk away feeling bad about myself. I think the negative reaction to me has to do with either a jealousy or a guilt that generation of studs and butches carries. I think it stems from a longing. I think some of those women are women who would have liked to have transitioned, but feel they are too far along in life to do such a thing now. I think there is some resentment in that. I think that there is the sense that if they wouldn't have been safe going through a transition, it is unfair that my generation should be able to. Or if the means were not around in their coming of age, there is resentment that I am standing on their shoulders and now have a means. Those women certainly did pave a path for me to be able to realize my authentic gender. I think this is a thing for us to be aware of; this notion of standing on the shoulders of the work someone else has done such that we are able to live our lives in a more relative peace and safety. And I think the work of gender non-conforming folk is often forgotten through the ages, even if those folk did not explicitly identify as trans\*. I also think this is another example of intersectionality; a place in which class and gender performance and sexuality are converging. Many of these women are of a working class. Much of our history has relegated gender non-conforming persons to a working class status, and our current political and social climate continues to do so. Butch and stud lesbians, and, to a differing degree effeminate men, are shunned from our economy. So say

those women even had the means, they would certainly have not been able to afford the health care I am in decades passed. And this still plagues our community today.

9) *Archives may be set up around social position, like leadership archives, or gender, like women's archives, or even sex and gender minorities, like LGBT archives. History has similar groupings. Where might trans people fit, if they do?*

- I) We don't fit into any other social group as the LGB"T" community has demonstrated time and time again. Our experience is completely unique and needs to be treated as such.
- II) I think the most important historic gains would be recognitions for things other than being transgender. Just the act of being a person of achievement. If recognition is going to come from transgender issues, then it probably needs to be like the movers in the civil rights era. Those who by actions gain new rights and new acceptance for all trans persons.
- III) As I before alluded to, I think that trans\* people fit in a variety of groupings. To affirm a person's gender, one cannot simply place a trans\* person into anyone slot and that be the end of the story. Myself for example; I may fit into an archive for men (though aren't they all?). Or I might fit into an archive for transmen. Or I might fit into both. If one were to place me into an archive for men, I would say its worth noting that I was also a transman, though not harp on it. Though if I were placed into an archive for trans\* people, I think it is important to note that I am a transsexual man, not genderqueer. If I were to be placed in an archive for women, I think that it would be to elucidate my early life. But there are trans\* people who also identify as sexual minorities. Take, for instance, a transman who partners with other men might identify as gay. I think this shakes the core/foundation of our groupings according to gender. Trans\* people fit in a lot of places. We walk amongst you\* and you\* don't even know. We walk amongst history and no one knows. I think we have a place in a great many archives and cannot be relegated to just one. I think it has to do with each of our own very personal identities. There are as many ways to identify as trans as there are transpeople. We are very much like snowflakes, and there is no overarching way to take a snapshot of us all at once. History needs to pay attention to our very individual identities. There are scores of ways to identify, to talk about our present, and to talk about our past personal histories, let alone collective history.

10) *Do trans people need their own archives?*

- I) Yes.
- II) I suppose on some level for those who study these issues. On the other hand I have been very moved lately by this idea. Everyone gives Martin Luther King (MLK) credit for the civil rights advances for persons of color. I am very optimistic for our future now, because MLK's methods where non-violent and peaceful... but at the same time The Weather Underground, The Black Panther's and Malcolm X where taking a very different tack. I expect if you where in

MLK's camp you were thinking that their work was anti productive, but in truth all of it worked together. For that reason, I think the Gender Queer movement; the recognition of Drag Queens and the outness of CD are going to be an eye-opening improvement for Transsexuals as well. Perhaps some will rightfully never be accepted fully and broadly in public, but unlike the feeling of many Transsexuals who think they are harmed by association with others, I think society will recognize gender variance more and respect the respectable.

III) Yes. Resoundingly yes.

11) *What issues and strengths do you feel exist with the identity trans in relation to history and archives?*

I) Trans history currently focuses on MTFs, which is a reflection of our society's interactions with trans folks. A focus on MTF is reflected in laws in regards to gender reassignment, name change, gender markers, etc. There is a historical lack of visibility of FTMs.

II) Not much myself. I guess I am just not that much into history.

III) See previous answers.

12) *So if you were, for instance, asked to be included in a men's archive as FtoM transgender, how might your documents be taken or included?*

I) I don't know what you mean by this question, but I'd love my experience to be included in a men's archive because my experience is just another male experience.

II) I don't get this question, I am MtoF.

III) I am not sure that I understand this question entirely. I would want my assigned name at birth to be excluded. I would want for my PGPs (preferred gender pronouns) to be used consistently through the archive. I would not want for someone to refer to me as 'she' in my early life. Though, these are personal desires, and I imagine would/might be different for other trans\* people. In some documentation instances, though, this is not possible. Birth records and news articles written about me prior to legal transition would then have to be redacted, which I think is also a disservice to the authenticity of history. I think it is important to make footnotes in these cases about the rationale for leaving documents un-redacted, but indicating that respectful understandings of trans\* people include applying preferred name and pronouns consistently through a person's life, even though legal documentation makes that exceedingly difficult.

13) *Should a trans status be included in a nontrans archive? In other words, considering what personal documents might reveal one's trans identity, should the documents speak for themselves or should the archive be "listed" as trans?*

I) I think they should be listed as trans, but without people's birthnames.

II) This is not my thing, but I would think that there should be a cross-reference so that persons could study the achievements or the facts of an individual either way.

- III) I think so. I think that is the only way to pay homage to the work and the lives of trans\* people. Though some people might disagree. Some people feel as if they were born into the wrong body, and do not wish for their trans\* identity to be public. In their cases, listing them as trans would be a great disservice and offensive, to be sure.
- 14) *Would you consider your own life as contribution to an archive?*
- I) Yes.
- II) I suppose.
- III) Ha! I think that might be mighty presumptuous of me on some levels. But on other levels, yes. I am a real-live transperson who is living and breathing in America. I am surviving a system that is pit against me every step of the way. Any of us that are living are miracles and are contributions to history.
- 15) *If so, which archive, if separated into certain societal positions, would you choose if you could?*
- I) I would want to be included in gay history because I primarily identify as a gay man, but I also have the trans experience.
- II) Business owner, community and trans activists, Burlesque artist.
- III) I would choose an archive for transmasculine people. But I would also be comfortable being a regular ordinary every day archive of the general populous, with no special hashtag associated. I think we have a place there too. We are a part of this society. We are shaping it and changing it, just like everyone else. And we have a place in history that is equal to everyone else; not just 'separate but equal'.
- 16) *Would you consider inclusion into the Women's and Leadership Archives at Loyola University? What aspects of this archives would you demand be present in order for you to feel comfortable?*
- I) No, because it is not gender appropriate. I would not demand anything. I'm not a woman and it is not appropriate.
- II) I would be willing to discuss this more but am not ready to answer this given this document and time frame. I am not opposed, but just not ready to give a more detailed answer.
- III) I would not. I don't identify as a woman, though I one time presented as a woman. I think that, as a transman, I had to do the important work of giving up certain 'membership cards'. I have to understand that I am not a woman, and as such, my masculine presence is a threat to women's safe spaces. Because I present as a privileged member of society, I must allow myself to now be excluded from certain identity markers that I no longer have right to lay claim to, like 'woman.'

17) *What life documents would you NOT want included, if any, and why?*

I) [no response]

II) [no response]

III) See previous. Perhaps birth certificate. But the more I pontificate on that, the more I am not sure. I do not come out as trans\* to every person I meet, but I do often come out to those I develop significant bonds with. I do this because I believe that in order to know me, you have to know my history and my past, and where I am coming from. And that means, you have to know that I presented as a woman for the first 25 years of life. And I think I feel similarly when thinking of being archived. In order for someone using the archive to really know me, they have to know that part, or they are getting a grossly incomplete picture of the human in the archive. And therefore, my life and my struggle and my success is not done justice.

18) *Do you have any more thoughts, ideas, suggestions, and feelings on this topic?*

I) [no response]

II) [no response]

III) [no response]

19) *What do you think of this project?*

I) I think this project is important in raising awareness.

II) As I said, just not really my thing. It might be a great resource tool in the future. I can see that we do need a way to generate jobs for Trans persons. As a successful business owner sometimes I wish I could come up with the business model that I could build that business.

III) Thank you.

APPENDIX C  
EMAIL INQUIRY TO ARCHIVE

Hello,

I am a graduate student at Loyola University Chicago, currently working on my thesis. I was wondering if your archives has any manuscripts of trans or gender-variant people? Or records of any organizations concerning trans or gender-variant issues?

By using the umbrella term "trans," I am referring to transgender, intersexed, transsexual, two-spirited, or any people who live/d their lives moving between fe/male, man/woman, masculine/feminine, heterosexual/gay/lesbian. More often, it involves people who do not feel they "fit" into their physical birth body, whether psychologically or physically.

Please, if you do not have manuscripts/records, let me know either way! I greatly appreciate your help/guidance.

Thanks!

J. Curtis Main

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## VITA

J. Curtis Main is a white, queer cis-gendered trans-ally who was born and raised in Greensboro, North Carolina, a city rich with diversity and activism, but still rife with many of the same issues affecting various parts of the United States. This environment shaped his life course to include deep interests in social justice and feminism. He attended The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, where he earned a Bachelor of Science in both Biology and Psychology, with a minor in Chemistry, while taking many Women's Studies courses. From high school to Loyola, Curtis has engaged and supported various feminist, queer, trans, and anti-racist efforts and groups.

While at Loyola, Curtis worked as a graduate assistant for the Women's Studies and Gender Studies program while pursuing his MA in the same field. Through this, combined with efforts to launch a digital feminist magazine through the program, Curtis has been able to obtain hands-on experience applying feminist principles and theories in traditional settings, such as Loyola University Chicago. This environment has shaped his approach seeking pragmatic solutions regarding feminist aspirations.

Currently, Curtis is working in Student Development at Loyola University Chicago and continues to pursue further understanding, knowledge, and practice in Sociology, Women's Studies and related fields, graphic design, higher education, and computer science.