LGBTQ Youth Citizenship and

Subjectivities

by

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ABSTRACT

In this dissertation, I explore how LGBTQ youth negotiate understanding of their subjective positions and alliances as cultural citizens through art creation. This work addresses the manner in which LGBTQ youth express their subjective positionings within the context of an art creation forum that becomes generative of conversations and artistic creations that inform on the subject. Because it is believed that when youth engage with each other in the context of a safe social forum, they feel allowed to share openly with their peers about critical issues that impact their lives. It is through the context of sharing life experiences that reveals new understandings of the self and can become both inspirational and generative. I propose this form of engagement, when paired with art-based methods, allows LGBTQ youth to inspire narratives that are highly informative. Through application of both traditional and non-traditional research methods, data creations and data analysis the researcher and participants became entangled in a process that resulted in multi-layered understandings. This approach was generative of a variety of visual artwork, which included acrylic paintings, clothing patches, pencil drawings and digitally altered photographs. What was found was that subjectivities are fractured, but participants realized the power of their subjective positionings through identification of individual and creative potentials as the conversations and art production revealed the power of technologies of the self and care of the self. Because of this, participants were able to consider their how their individual growth could contribute to a better future for themselves and their community.

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TRAVELING AND EXPLORING LGBTQ YOUTH CITIZENSHIP AND

SUBJECTIVITIES

Working through art

Artistic representations have long been used throughout history to reflect the

political climate of the time, therefore, art can also be applied to express subjective

connections to the present-day cultural and political conditions in this country. This is a

unique time in American history, as well as the challenges that are presented for the

subjective positioning of LGBTQ youth, which also include a rapidly growing world

community (Hurtado, Haney & Garcia, 1998). The concept of cultural citizenship

becomes problematic as marginalized groups, such LGBTQ youth, who also share

other subjectivities that become marginalized, such as those of people of color, race or

gender, and fail to experience an equitable sense of belonging to the society in which

they live. The arts have shown to offer creative mechanisms for making inroads

between marginalized groups, particularly youth, and their community. This allows

citizens of diverse backgrounds to make connections through expressions of culture in

ways that are relational with the community they live in. In the opening forward,

Dryfoos (1998). makes a poignant and eloquent statement about the condition of

adolescence:

> Adolescence is a time of profound biological transformation and social
>
> transition characterized by exploratory behavior. Much of this behavior is
>
> adaptive, but when carried to extremes, and especially if it becomes

habitual, it can have lifelong adverse consequences. Many dangerous

patterns, in fact, commonly emerge during these years such as substance

abuse, premature and unprotected sex, the use of weapons, alienation from

school.

To have a promising future, adolescents must find a valued place in a

constructive group, learn how to form close, durable human relationships;

earn a sense of worth as a person; achieve a reliable basis for making

informed choices; express constructive curiosity and exploratory behavior;

find ways of being useful to others; believe in a promising future with real

opportunities; cultivate the inquiring and problem-solving habits of mind

necessary for lifelong learning and adaptability; learn to respect

democratic values and the elements of responsible citizenship; and

altogether build a healthy lifestyle (pp. opening forward).

By means of a creative advance, as offered by mechanisms the arts have

traditionally utilized to explore possibilities and outcomes, all subjects are afforded the

potential to create expressions beyond the limits, or restraints, of individual ability.

Manning (2013) describes that what neurodiversity teaches us is that a broader set of

techniques, which allow us to become attuned to a "more-than", allows us to become-

attuned to an ineffable modality of experience. In context, she describes a creative

experience as an experience that activates the contours of an event toward a moving, an

encountering afforded by movement and of being-moved, within a complex ecology of

practices (Manning, 2013). Guattari (Sullivan, 2010) speaks of an ecology of practices in

which he claims is much like a community of rituals that activate the minor gestures which transform the ground of experience into a greater event for new understanding. As a result, these examples have the potential to manifest within the analysis of our own research and observation. An event where observations and critique of inverted icons and/or assemblages may render new insight for a creative process, subverted and contrary to a neurotypical approach in creation. Manning (2013) offers this description of becoming activates a transduction where new processes are always and continuously underway in a continuous phasing and dephasing, where new bodies are composed in a continuous multiplicity of forms, subjectivities and new becomings (Manning, 2013). Manning describes this generation isa result of emergent lures; lures that do not necessarily achieve their own form, but instead generate attunements and subsequent tendencies which force the creation of forms. It is in these occasions where an object or a body, as a node of relation, expresses itself momentarily as a this or that. An edging into an object – a recognizable form.

Manning asserts that these relational nodes are the occasions of a subjective form that exhibit qualities of recognizable attributes and may be attributed to representations of race, gender and so on. Manning also states it is important to remember that each individual comes equipped with its own set of assemblages, accompanied by a unique set of interpretations, all of which have been constructed in its own world. Whitehead (1938) describes these events as a broad variety of species of subjective forms, such as emotions, valuations, purposes, etc., color the process of an occasion, that are fueled by appetitions that determine the shifting field in a circular fashion – events driven from appetite to event and back to appetite (p. 23). Whitehead (1933) asserts that, if what

drives life is the creative advance, always active within a field of occasions that make up experience. It is within this field where new forms emerge, but also to some degree co-constituted by previous forms. Whitehead describes these forms as reactivations, in new form, as the lures for feeling and creativity which are generated at the heart of the difference – a multi phasing process of individuation (cited in Manning, 2013). "To have emerged as this or that constellation is to have colluded into a dephasing that activated a differentiation between what was and what will have come to be" (Manning, 2013 p. 24).

Manning asserts that Whitehead's notion of the "creative advance" is dependent on the "becoming of continuity". That the creative advance is never restricted to the "never before" but rather the capacity of an event to activate new possibilities that may have once been backgrounded, but in effect generate a field of difference (Manning, 2013). The regenerative nature of such events may also be interpreted as a form of repetition. A series of repetitions sharing similarity only by virtue of their shared origin and thus reconstituted as a differential. Manning asserts that for a work to be successful, enabling constraints must be embedded within a conceptual design. That through the unfolding of a creative work, the established constraints, namely habit or technique, as practiced through repetition, must be activated, but then released to divert, through their own differential, which result in new unfoldings or creative directions of the creative process, thus discovery of new understandings of the self and multiplicity of subject. Manning describes this repetition as an ecology of practices. A field of events where habit and technique are essential, as a form of repetition, for establishing the platform from which new diversions and multiplicities are spring

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boarded into existence. This emergence and dephasing of subjectivities is generally

categorized as and emergence of minor gestures (replete) with a potential for

becoming a major gesture, each resulting in its own unique form. This field can be

(personified) as a constellation of bodies moving through space. An ecology, as it

were, of elements constantly in motion. The creative process, as an experience

movement, maybe observed as a structured choreography, where improvisation,

techniques and technicities come into play. Often engaged upon as a result of habit, or

otherwise described as the repetition mentioned previously. This movement, like

process, provides the necessary platform from which the differential springboards into

newly reconstituted manifestations of individuation. This becomes an essential

component in the analysis of the visual art, the art objects produced, as we will

examine the movement and how it relates to this notion of emergent structures of

chosen techniques, albeit a form choreography, and the emergent individuations of

subjectivities. This "thinking-feeling" mentality, as an activity within the event, works

in unison to co-compose with an occasion's physicality to generate new creations

during an event that creates an opening in the occasion to new and novel motifs.

Motifs that are essential for the creative advance in its generation of new unfoldings

(Manning, 2013). A moving, ever moving and recalibrating to recompose the

environment. Manning asserts that nature is a relational field through which motifs are

activated in which they in turn activate new fields of relation in the time of the event…

"it is, in all of its eventness, a multitude of modes of existence, a field of creativity" (p.

215).

LGBTQ Youth as citizens

According to the CDC (Zaza, et al., 2016), 18% to 23% of LGB youth experience some form of sexual violence, ranging from physical dating violence to forced sexual intercourse. This unfortunate reality is further impacted by pervasive cultural assumptions that early sexual behaviors are damaging for young people (Filax, 2011). Filax adds to this broadly held cultural belief with the following assumption that, if we have happily matured sexual innocence, then we must have had successful parenting that leads to happy adult lives. The significance and impact of this belief cannot be underscored enough, as I believe this signals a crucial failure in our society to accurately address the realities all youth experience, particularly those who are at risk of experiencing stigmatization as a result of a human quality inextricably tied to their sexuality – their sexual being. Critical issues in the LGBTQ youth community are extensive. As stated before, LGBTQ youth are susceptible to a plethora of health issue ranging from mental illness to violence and suicide. The concept "adult moral panic," describes of how society, namely adults and institutions, respond to the topic of youth sexuality. He credits "phenomenon" as the culprit that incapacitates a society from being able to properly and justly address issues of youth sexuality and the subsequent health issues they are faced with, and consequently, the focus tends to be on a problem a group of people imposes on society, rather than the problem that is imposed on them (Filax, 2011; MacDonald, 1997). By authorizing a moratorium on sexual activity, adults not only force youth to negate their true sexual selves, but also encourage them to "practice" appropriate gender roles and practices that are contradictory to who they are (Filax, 2011). These messages are disseminated not only through social and familial

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interactions, but also transmitted through popular culture messaging. As a result, youth come to assume the subjectivity expressed through film, television, music, etc., and subsequent behaviors are reinforced by other youth as expectations of a social code (Filax, 2011). Adolescence is a critical time for youth development and such messaging leads to conflicting views on the civic choices that are made, as early perceptions of citizenship are being shaped and as the subjectivities that are established (Ginwright, et al, 2006). Unfortunately, youth studies do not provide literature on the issues LGBTQ youth experience, particularly on the essential topic of suicide (Filax, 2011). Filax makes the point that, although gay youth are fourteen times more susceptible to commit suicide, few researchers have yet to explore the links between sexuality and self-imposed injury. It is my expectation the experience of art creation, such as what is generated during an anarchive event, can be used to explore in a manner that is favorable, through an ethics of sensitivity, for participants who are currently lacking in essential tools that help mitigate a broad variety of issues they face in society.

In proposing anarchive as a guide for this study, the consideration hinges on a notion that our subjectivities are in a continuous state of change. Anarchiving means approaching matter from a new and different viewpoint which allows discovery and understanding of self, not only an acknowledgement of previous perceptions of self, but rather to understand and accept future potentials of becoming. Manning (personal communication) suggests the anarchive event, a process that involves entering in the middle, allows us to generate an account of experience, a concept borrowed from Whitehead (1936), an event is a process that involves entering in the middle, it allows us to generate an account of experience that is pulled in at least two directions, which

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enables us to 'grow together.' Manning (personal communication) associates Whitehead's (Whitehead, 2010) concrescence, in which that account is imbued with an excess of creativity that accompanies the process of becoming. Manning states, "anarchiving needs documentation – the anarchive – from which to depart and through which to pass. It is an excess energy of the archive" (Manning, personal communication, p. 21). In effect, the anarchive acts as a springboard from which documenting allows for the recognition of other forms that come into view and might be otherwise lost in a traditional archived moment. For example, when we view a photo, video, or other form of archived material, what is lost are the alternate elements, such as smells, sounds, bodies, etc. The hope of following the anarchive as a model is to take what the archive does offer and to use this event as a consideration of the juxtaposition of other elements that may offer alternate points of departure in new becomings forward. Subsequently, the dialogue that is generated, and the art objects that are produced offer departures not previously considered present powerful opportunities for engagements and discourses that are essential for the good health of participants in a community. In this case, it is the conversations participants engage in that represent their awareness and subjective positionings within a cultural group, the LGBTQ community and the subsequent roles participants will adopt as citizens.

CHAPTER 2

BRINGING TOGETHER CITIZENSHIP,
BELONGING, AND NORMALIZING
DISCOURSES OF SEXUALITY

Citizenship and subjective places in the nation's history

Notions of citizenship are rooted in a long history of liberal and conservative

perspectives, such as the republican citizen and the liberal citizen (Flores, 2014). These

opposing concepts have been long been at odds not only in how they present the meaning

of citizenship for students, but also for which populations the offer a more complete and

equitable interpretation. This distinction has become even more problematic in recent

times as questions of who is allowed membership in American society and culture

become more prominent in a political debate. Our current political climate is increasingly

reaching a point in which meaningful conversations about what citizenship means, who it

includes and what is expected from the (arbiters) of this distinction. This is paramount to

the needs and demands of a nation with rapidly expanding multicultural and transnational

interests and perspectives. I believe this topic has consequential effects on the

subjectivity of LGBTQ youth, who are very much in need of productive methods of

negotiating understandings of self, particularly as they construct individual perceptions of

citizenship within their society.

The idea of a good citizen is not modern-day concept, but actually dates back to

Greek and Roman times when civic participation was considered of intrinsic value to a

well-functioning democracy. In that period, good citizenship was considered to be one of

the highest aspirations of humans living together (Kymlicka & Norman, 1994). I allude to

this historical element because it is important to recognize the extent to which educational concepts of citizenship are rooted in extensive institutional (parameters). Basically, public school education curriculums, namely social studies programs, have long based notions of good citizenship as they have been defined by (eons) of historical groundings that have come to shape definitions of citizenship, such as the republican citizen philosophy. As a result, this particular mindset has persisted within educational spheres over time and extensive period of time with little change in its definition to this day. More recent notions of citizenship have come to define good citizenship as "individuals who, as members of a society, share a devotion and dedication to a nation state," which is opposed to previous notions that were commonly based on a belief that good citizenship was an inherent component of hereditary and biological origins. This change occurred around the eighteenth century and eventually gave way to the notion of acquired nationalism. This concept places a greater emphasis on personal involvement, as it relates to more commonly articulated expectations put forth by a civic republican discourse of citizenship (Abowitz & Harnish, 2006). As a result, republican citizenship constructs came to dominate how the idea of citizenship is defined, which are individuals who are well-rounded members of society and place civic participation and involvement at the forefront of their existence, within their society (Abowitz & Harnish, 2006)). These notions of citizenship emphasize an individual's contribution to their society. In particular, responsibilities of active citizenship and active involvement in the democratic decision-making process, are therefore a constant and overarching force over elected officials (Abowitz & Harnish, 2006). Westheimer and Kahne (2003) detail a notion of what it means to be a good citizen as one who is a personally

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responsible, participatory and justice-oriented person; a fundamental function of most civics education curriculums and a fundamental implication of education curriculums designed to promote democracy. In their study, distinctions of ideological and political camps are rooted in both conservative and liberal ideologies. As I mentioned earlier, the concept of a republican citizen signifies the "good citizen," whose primary service to society is to become engaged in the community and democratic processes, contrasts with a definition of the "Liberal citizen," which is the creation of a citizen who is not only engaged in awareness of critical issues within his/her society, but also strives to understand the root cause of social problems that typically affect disenfranchised and marginalized groups. These authors suggest, for example, that students should be asking questions about issues that pertain to corporate responsibility and manner in which industries should be regulated. This means that students should be encouraged to engage in deeper discussions about the purpose and effectiveness of governmental policies and their impact on social issues.

A Culture of Belonging

Kymlicka and Norman (1994) assert that increasing political events and trends around the world have sparked an interest in citizenship theory, as problems have increased about the general attitudes about citizenship. It is also believed that what has augmented is an increasing voter apathy due to feelings of underrepresentation, particularly within marginalized and multicultural communities. Kymlicka and Norman (1994) also note recent trends of nationalist movements throughout Eastern Europe have been increasing and are mirrored by similar nationalist sentiments taking hold here in

the U.S. They cite a root cause that stems from growing multicultural and multiracial populations across Europe and the U.S. Kymlicka and Norman (1994) suggest the importance of citizenship education as an integral force that shapes qualities and attitudes of citizens and is a paramount function that helps assure modern democracies can function properly.

In this research my aim is to address more fundamental notions of citizenship, which involve responsible, contributing members of society. Within this realm lies an emphasis on cultural and social aspects of citizenship, as they pertain to membership and belonging for marginalized groups. Primarily, I address the question of how LGBTQ youth construct individual notions of subjectivity, as it relates the perception of citizenship. As a result, this charge is not so much concerned about examining conservative or liberal ideas of citizenship, but rather how the notion of citizenship is perceived and processed in subject formation as relates to social citizenship.

Rosaldo (1994) defines cultural citizenship as a concept that goes beyond dichotomous categories, such as those described by educational philosophy, to encompass a broader range of gradations. He asserts that cultural citizenship defines qualitative distinctions, in terms of belonging, entitlement, and influence, represented by distinctive situations within a variety of local communities. This notion elucidates a distinction I want to make as it applies to the definition for this study. Even though I believe legal implications of citizenship, as they pertain to the rights afforded all citizens and the democratic process of a nation, the purpose for employing the concept of cultural citizenship stems from a foundation in context to culture and subsequent distinctions that relate to marginalized groups, such as the LGBTQ youth community, and their equal

belonging in society. The concept of cultural citizenship is described as a process by which rights are claimed and expanded; the manner by which groups claim cultural citizenship, and the subsequent effects of renegotiation of a basic social contract of America (Rosaldo, 1994), illustrates the significance of the subjective positioning of citizens who are endowed with the capacity to influence this renegotiation.

The idea of cultural citizenship is a right of all citizens, inclusive of a (non-dominant) groups' right to be allowed to be different, with respect to the norms set forth by a dominant national community without compromising the groups' sense of belonging or right to participate in a nation's democratic process (Rosaldo, 1994). He asserts that cultural citizenship, within a democracy, should employ a social justice that upholds the notion of full membership for all members of society, and that they are allowed to have influence in their own destiny as provided by an equal and significant voice in the decision-making process (Rosaldo, 1994). Unlimited to how a state's specific subjects conceive of full enfranchisement, pertaining to their unique culture and emotional ties that bind them to their country (Tan, 2015).

It is a known fact that not all groups are afforded the same equal membership to their society and, as is the case with the queer community, disenfranchisement is commonly determined as it opposes the existing sexual norms. Johnston (2018) describes this as a phenomenon in which sexual norms condition who and what is deemed to be a "legible," or rather, recognized as valid members of the community. Johnston goes so far as to summon the need for feminist and queer geographers to examine the ways sexual norms condition this "legibility." From another vantage point, Ong (1999) states that cultural citizenship is a non-unilateral subject formation process in which newcomers are

socialized and integrated by civil institutions into the nation-state. Prime examples can be referenced to a long American history of social rights movements which gave birth to once powerful movements created by marginalized groups who demanded a claim to their "new" citizenship and subjects who demand recognition as full citizens (Rosaldo, 1994). Ong's (1996) view contrasts with Rosaldo, in that Ong asserts the notion that subjectification of citizenship is shaped by a negotiation of ambivalent power relations, with the state, that impose subsequent hegemonic forms that establish the criteria for belonging (Ong, 1996). What results, by means of conventional thought, is that a marginalized group is too often granted default citizenship status, within a national community. Consequently, this leads to the assumption of a default second-class status, or marginalized first-class citizenship, which is a result of political processes or policies that lead to unfavorable encounters between groups, such as the queer community, and the state resulting in further marginalization (Daniels, 2013; Richardson, 2017; Puar, 2007).

Key events in American history are a prime example of how the state has utilized its capacity to enfranchise, or disenfranchise, marginalized groups, while downplaying a twin capacity to disenfranchise those same groups as well (Rosaldo, 1994). This interplay of public versus private expressions of sexuality exemplify the continuous struggle of acceptance for "sexualized" minority groups, such as the queer community, within state institutions. The impact of forced hetero-normalization of the queer community is impressed upon through social ideologies and institutions that offer a vision of the good life (Berlant & Warner, 1998). As a result, sexual practices become entangled with a heterosexual culture (mindset), in which love and intimacy – and familialism, signifies a

belonging to society through an imagined scene of intimacy, coupling and kinship, that is
restricted to the general narrative of heteronormative standards (Berlant & Warner,
1998). Berlant and Warner also assert this process shapes a generalized narrative relating
to all things sexual and non-sexual, and thus creates a "privatized" sexual culture that
bestows sexual practices with an implied sense of what is righteous and normal, and
effectively have a wider influence through the impact of hetero-normativity on more than
just ideologies and prejudices against (gays and lesbians); that is thus produced in nearly
every aspect of social life, such as the nation state, the law, commerce, education, etc.

This "hetero-normalization" of sexuality, which in a certain sense may produce a broader
acceptance of (sexually divergent views), also has the potential for detrimental impacts on
marginalized communities. Furthermore, this type of acceptance and privileging can have a
double-edged sword effect. Through "equalizing" legislative efforts, what sometimes
happens, is marginalized populations experience a double-edged sword effect, in that they
suffer negative impacts that result from efforts intended to make a group more equitable
within a larger, homogenized society. As is demonstrated through "equalizing" efforts, in
education environments, concerns have arisen about what happens to the disenfranchised
when their distinction as such is taken away. Basically, when they are no longer perceived
to be at a disadvantage, they may suffer from losses of beneficial policies and other
programs essential to their well-being. As a result, many times school education programs
fail to address the unique and individual student experiences that keep them from feeling
like they are part of a fair and just community which results in the failure of attaining one
of the main goals of multicultural education, which is to make all students feel as though
they are part of an inclusive social community (Banks & Banks, 2009, p. 7). In addition,

voluntary grassroots movements can also have as much negative as positive outcomes when participatory social relations hinder progressive efforts for a community that becomes entangled in a power struggle with the oppressive influence of heteronormativity (Ong, 1999).

Normalizing sexual tensions

Sex is an inextricable component of the conversation about the LGBTQ community (Miller, 2006; Seidman, 1996). This unavoidable discursive characteristic place sexuality at center, an overt and sometimes consequential characteristic of LGBTQ social negotiations. It is important to make the distinction between sexual and cultural citizenship. Nasurdin (2015) makes the point that citizenship, as a sexual subject, has historically been an undeniable quality that has informed judgements about whether certain groups or individuals are allowed to participate within their democratic and social-political contexts in both a responsible and desirable manner (Farrer, 2007). In effect, this has resulted in the state's treatment of "sexual" citizens as a special class for which such individuals are inherently granted special rights. As a result, this shapes the debate, amongst LGBTQ citizens about how best to secure certain rights and privileges (Bell & Binnie, 2000). Nasurdin (2015) emphasizes the significance of this issue in how it shapes homonormative sentiments around ideals pre-set and subsequently determined be heteronormative ideals sanctioned by the state. Jagose (2004) and Puar (2007) assert a "homo-nationalism" becomes (indoctrinated) and therefore defines which homosexual acts and identities are compatible with a nation's ideals. Nasurdin (2015) cautions that such assimilations may risk and forgo the right of "sexualized" citizens to critique the possibility and desirability of the types of citizens outside a "normalized" spectrum. This

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notion of normalized "homo-normalization" is very revealing about the social

constructs, as they result from interplay amongst the LGBTQ community and the state-

sanction ideals, as they compare to heteronormative ideals and expectations that, in

effect, "queer" anything that falls outside a particular heteronormative spectrum. It

should come as no surprise, that social norms are shaped first and foremost by the

heteronormative values of a particular nation state. It is not only the power of the

heteronormative ideals to shape what becomes acceptable, as a homonormative standard,

but also the (policing) of such marginalized communities to shape and determine which

homonormative ideals, practices and expressions are acceptable, as well as to move the

discourses involving sexual practices into the private sphere. Nasurdin (2015) argues

that the sexualization of LGBTQ citizenship and the sexualization of non-normative

groups has resulted in a heavy contouring of what kind of sexual citizenship is

acceptable. Furthermore, he illustrates same-sex marriage as a prime example of the

strict shaping of a right granted to a group endowed equal and legitimate state-

sanctioned membership as long as it is modeled by heteronormative ideals and standards

(Nasurdin, 2015). This notion builds on Ong's (1996) assertion that cultural citizenship

is co-constructed by individuals and the state.

A highly investigated area that has expanded greatly in recent times, particularly

as it relates to globalization and more nation states expanding rights of "gay" citizens. In

this discussion, the topics of institutions vs the public sphere were also addressed, such as

the discourses that are deemed appropriate in public discussion, as they are shaped by

institutions, or the state. This led to a further explanation of the impact of

heteronormalization of sexuality, and how homonormalization has been largely shaped

and influenced by standards set forth by the dominant culture of heteronormativity. also discussed was the role of "sexualized" citizens and how their subjectivity is shaped, and how their subject may also play a part in expanding their roles and responsibilities as citizens.

CHAPTER 3

ART AS EDUCATION IN PUBLIC SPACES

Researcher positionality

Why I decided to focus on LGBTQ youth as a topic of this study, and not another

aspect of topics that I feel I have emotional or cultural connections with, is partly due to

the idea that my experience as a self-identified cis-gender gay male is a truth that runs

through the course of my every day existence and has an impact on my life in one form

or another. This distinction pervades through my everyday existence in a way that is felt

deeper than other facets of my identity and intersectionality have impact. My cultural,

social, and ethnic background as a first-generation Hispanic male, also shapes myself

perception and how I realize my subjective positions within the LGBTQ community

and beyond. These are reasons why I became interested in knowing more about what

drives LGBTQ people to make certain decisions and negotiations in a world full of

diversity and oppositions. It is proposed that the way an individual draws from and

negotiates multiple group experiences stems from socially constructed identity

categories (McDonald et al, 2020). This basic notion of intersectionality suggests that

we are shaped not only through social or group interactions, but rather the possibility

that we identify with a particular group of people. Although I have been impacted by

negative social attitudes held towards Hispanics, I feel a deeper connection with

sexual/gender identities and the ways in which those distinctions shape my own

subjective positionings as they relation to the LGBTQ community and the greater

society I live in. As I have aged as a member of the LGBTQ community, my interests

have been piqued by the current social state of the LGBTQ community, how it is

affected by technology as well as sharp political shifts, and what this means for the future direction of this community in a rapidly changing world. It could be because of my previous experience as middle grades educator that felt a unique insight could come from the younger generations, such as youth who are currently negotiating their own place within the LGBTQ community and how those negotiations shape their subjective positionings and notions of citizenship. I felt this could ultimately shed light on how current day impacts will shape the future direction of the LGBTQ community.

My intersectionality impacted the data collection and analysis portions of this study with key focus on the fact that I identify as a cis-gender gay male. Along with the attribute of being a member of the LGBTQ community, my various other intersectional distinctions inadvertently impacted my involvement with the participants and how the topics of conversation emerged. Discussions that ranged from topics about race, social injustice, disability, artistic ability, and so on, commonly coincided with the sentiments shared with the participants which likely shaped the attitudes and opinions that were expressed during the art sessions and interviews. This could be perceived as a limitation, as the makeup of the participants/researcher was a small group of people that excluded the input from a larger and more diverse set of participants. My experience as a middle grades Social Studies teacher might have also impacted how I approached the context of a setting that involved youth participants. My positioning as a person of authority, researcher, or a person from an older age group and generation likely dictated how I would interact with the participants. My intention was to have minimal impact on guiding or influencing the direction of the art creation sessions, with the exception of my pre-planned interview questions for the one-on-one interviews. What resulted was a

jovial interaction with participants who shared intimate experiences and views.

The context of the Zoom sessions likely impacted the timing and participation as the digital format tends to dictate how people engage in conversation and establishes a pattern in which speakers take turns sharing, cued by the screen camera about who is talking, allowing individuals to comment but also hold back from interjecting when others are speaking. This digital format might have also the impact where more timid individual hold back from participating and also can limit how much we see of their facial expressions. The reality of lacking in-person, physical contact also alters the way in which people interact with each other and may increase or minimize emotional support and feedback when participants shared their art project progress and ideas. My philosophical leanings, as indicated earlier in this project, lean towards a non-method approach, meaning that I embrace an idea that is free from conventional restrictions, expectations and predicted outcomes. What is suggested does not necessarily mean a rebuttal of method, but rather how the research process engages with method. Springgay (2018) suggests that it is the traditional logic of procedure and extraction that needs dismantling, which requires a disruption that involves an engagement of practice that involves being inside the research event – an ontological experience where creative modifications inspire new modes and directions of thinking. To experience this first-hand, I involved and immersed myself in the event from the position of co-participant instead of researcher/observer. My personal involvement and observation would become an entanglement within the process, which meant that I would make the effort to present myself as a fellow LGBTQ member and ally, in a sense an equal rather than researcher who is observing the project. In regard to "frontloading" a discussion topic at the

beginning of the session, I would present a topic for discussion simply as a prompt to activate the conversation in relation to the research questions, such as I would ask the participants what their thoughts were on being a citizen of the LGBTQ community. I wouldn't present any specific information that narrowed the definition of key terminology, such as citizenship, so as to not narrow or change previously held perspectives and/or perceptions as that kind of manipulation could impact that authenticity of the information presented by participants unless they asked for further description regarding a topic. This generalized approach helped to present the seeds of anarchiving in a way that they would feed forward in a context different from previous events (Manning, personal communication).

Through entanglement I became a co-participant during the art creation sessions and my purpose, at least from the perspective of the youth participants, was to engage in the process as a free-flowing event and experience first-hand the directional flow of the creative engagement, in which discussions were often generated and even led by the artwork that was being produced. I would offer my own personal experiences as artist, LGBTQ member, or whatever topics emerged where I had relevant experience to offer that would inform the conversations in a way that elicited additional conversation from the participants, thus adding to the layers of insight. The conversations that emerged would subsequently impact the discussions and art produced. Through enlightenment of what the participants offered, in terms of their own world experiences as LGBTQ youth, I garnered deeper understandings of my own experiences, some of which had not been reconciled. Many of those ideas, or seeds, would carry with me in my art creation relating to the data generated from the art creation and one-on-one interviews to offer

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additional layering insight during the data analysis processes. The entanglement as co-creator with the participants and exposure to continues references involving situations commonly unique to young people, and especially in this case, the context of an LGBTQ youth. This generated memories and emotions long forgotten but, in recollection, allowed me to understand the experiences the youth adding to the insight that emerged. One thing I realized is how distinct each person's experience is, the multiplicity of intersectionalities and struggles with acceptance I had never been aware of as a gay individual. Despite my own subjective awareness of within the context of the sessions, I also became aware of my own subjectivities as participants shared their experiences. In my effort to maintain the open approach of the Anarchive, my disposition with the participants was relaxed with the hope of learning more and help understand their experience. With the exception of proposing conversation topics, I opposed any effort to front-load too much information that would impact the data that emerged during the conversations and the way participants would behave during the context of the art creation sessions and one-on-one interviews.

A Phoenix community and the participants

The Phoenix LGBTQ community can be described as inner city, being that the concentration of openly visible LGBTQ owned and LGBTQ friendly businesses, residential areas and cultural and support programs and organizations are located within what is considered the central corridor of the city. Phoenix ranks fifth largest city in the U.S., with a population of roughly over seven million residents, which is increasing in

size rapidly. The geographic layout of the city is extensive as it sprawls into the adjoining cities and suburbs, and resembles the Southern California landscape in terms of architecture, and street/highway infrastructure layouts. Phoenix, of course, is known for its high dessert summer temperatures that consistently stay above the one hundred degree mark during the summer months. Because of its sprawling, urban to suburban nature, many LGBTQ residents don't reside within the central corridor district, but are drawn to the central corridor, particularly an area known as The Melrose District. The Melrose, which spans the length of a mile long stretch of road along seventh avenue between Indian School road and Camelback Road, is characterized by gay-friendly or gay owned businesses that cater to the LGBTQ community, consisting of bars, nightclubs, restaurants, shops, cafes etc. The LGBTQ presence in this part of the city is visible and offers a welcoming environment to LGBTQ individuals. Although the community has been integrated as part of one of the largest cities in the U.S., it has enjoyed the distinction of a small-town culture, in which long-time LGBTQ residents, performers, involved through small businesses and organizations helped form and maintain a small and tightknit community culture of people dating back to the nineteen seventies. Many of these people, who helped establish the LGBTQ community, are still around and lay claim to being the early founders of what they would consider to be the original Phoenix Gay Community. This socio-cultural and economic landscape is beginning to change drastically. One of the reasons the LGBTQ community had established strong roots within the central corridor is because, until recent years, the socio-economic landscape in the central part of the city offered considerably affordable standards of living, as compared with other larger cities. Until now, central Phoenix had been considered a

fairly affordable place to live. In recent years, in part due to the COVID pandemic and a changing national political landscape, has seen an influx of people moving to the Phoenix area with a rough estimate of over eight hundred thousand residents increase over the last ten years, as reported by the United States Census Bureau (U.S. Census Bureau, 2021). The cost of living in the central Phoenix area has also skyrocketed. Home and rent prices have increased sharply, which has had the effect of forcing many residents to move outward into the suburbs where property and rent prices remain lower. It is not yet evident how this trend will impact the growth or sustainability of the LGBTQ community, especially as it compares to the original tightknit culture that it in previous years.

The participants for this study consisted of a voluntary group selection from the Central Phoenix based One-n-ten youth group. The participants consisted of four females ranging in age from fourteen to nineteen years old. Pseudonyms were used to identify all the participants in this study. Bailee, the youngest at age fourteen, self-identified as bisexual cis-gender female; Cassandra, age nineteen, self-identified as lesbian cis-gender female; Alex, age eighteen, self-identified as trans male; Erin, age sixteen, self-identified as trans male. All participants were regular attendees/members of the Central Phoenix location One-n-ten youth group, located near Central Avenue and Portland St. Due to the COVID pandemic restrictions, the meetings and interviews took place via the digital application Zoom, and subsequently all participants attended from their residence. It is unclear if all participants were living in the central Phoenix area at the time, or if they resided in one of the outlying suburbs. The One-n-ten youth group had recently expanded it's outreach by opening thirteen other satellite locations located in other cities around the

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Phoenix metropolitan area, as well as in Flagstaff and Prescott Arizona. The ethnic background of the four participants is considered to be white Caucasian and all came from middle-class socioeconomic backgrounds. All participants were currently still living at home with their parents/guardians during the time of the study.

Participating with purpose

The purpose of this study is to explore the notion of subject/subjectivities of LGBTQ youth, as it relates to cultural citizenship and subsequently investigate how those subjectivities are created and expressed through art creation within the context of a public outreach program. The purpose and importance of this project is rooted in a personal desire by dedication to a community whose hope for survival seems to rest on the notion that an individual who identifies as LGBTQ discovers his/her value as a cultural citizen and member of a community in a productive and meaningful way. According to The Center for Disease Control study (Zaza, 2016), in 2015 42.8% of school age 9 to 12 GLB youth seriously considered attempting suicide, with 9.4% actual attempted suicide. According to Zaza (2016), For LGB youth to thrive in their communities, they need to feel socially and emotionally supported, as well as physically safe. Zaza (2016) goes on to suggest that a positive school climate is associated with decreased depression, suicidal feelings, substance abuse, as well as unexcused school absences. In response to this understanding, nationwide community-based organizations, like Phoenix based One-n-ten, have been established to provide a variety of services for LGBTQ youth. As in the One-n-ten organization, a primary service offered is to provide youth with the tools necessary to help them improve their self-esteem and self-acceptance. This is done by manner of providing a safe environment in which youth have positive access

to other peers and contacts that allow them to express their true identity. As is expressed by current and past members of One-n-ten, self-discovery and acceptance has arguably been the guiding principle of being allowed to explore not only their place in the world, but also the subjective creation of self that leads to meaningful relationships with self as well as Community. This function of One-n-ten is particularly valuable, as it positions youth in a context where they can consider their contribution not only to the LGBTQ community, but also as cultural citizens of the larger community.

It is important to understand the relational meanings of subjectivity in regard to the ways in which youth identify and associate their negotiations of ethnicity, gender, age, etc., and how those negotiations are conveyed within the acts and purpose of research (Mayo, 2017). The intersectionality of LGBTQ youth is a significantly important element that must be considered, particularly as new discussions are created about critical issues that involve today's LGBTQ youth, and how new revelations might compare to previous understandings derived from queer theory, social relations and institutionalized assumptions and how those might impact future directions of understanding (Mayo, 2017). This is important to consider, as previous efforts to "legitimize" this particular group and create greater equity often has resulted in privileges that impact only certain segments of the LGBTQ population, such as the institution of gay marriage has been beneficial to some in the gay community, but has also resulted in the exclusion of other categories/identities/labels that did not benefit from newly created protections (Warner,1999). In doing so, Mayo suggested giving voice to the LGBTQ community will help challenge institutional-related barriers in how they chose to

represent and critique themselves. The potential disruptions, as they occur through intersectionality, also lead to better understandings of the relational meanings of subjectivity, and also complicates the perceptions of researchers and participants through entanglement in a variety of identifications and associations (Mayo, 2017). Mayo suggests a subversion of the normative citations of identity, as it applies to the use of queer theory, needs to become an inadvertent, yet conscious effort to help underscore the processes of queerness over an "achievement of a stable queer identity" (Butler, 1990). Here, Mayo also states that by focusing on subjectivity as a critical action, queer theory helps scrutinizes exclusions perpetrated by a stabilized and normalized subject. Britzman offers that young people who meet at LGBTQ centers, as well as Gay-straight alliances, are intent on queering the very identity of the organization in an effort to challenge the provisional normativity (Britzman, 1995). Many LGBTQ youth are wary of how institutions discipline radicalism and subsequently discourage students from marginalized groups to openly express themselves, particularly queer students of color, many find it easier to be out in non-school spaces (Mayo, 2013). Many students find non-school spaces a more welcome place to express their distinctness, as well as a place where LGBTQ students have the opportunity to interact and talk with other queer youth without the imposed pressure that comes from other youth, or school mates who don't share their fully intersecting identities (see Blackburn, 2005; Mayo, 2013).

LGBTQ youth actively work to find spaces where they can meet with others who share their concerns. Such caveats have created complications to questions about how we study sexuality and gender, for example. The diversity of LGBTQ youth, in its complexity of queer youth identity of sexual and gender identification, in its continuous

state of negotiation within the complex forms of subjectivity and associations, is at odds

with the natural inclination to not consent to the biased structures they often find

themselves, and therefore push against the restrictions of normativity (Mayo, 2017).

Therefore, efforts to study marginalized groups, such as the LGBTQ youth in this study,

should offer methods/non-methods that are open to any and all possible interpretations,

not only from the researcher's perspective, but also the participants' in how they chose to

portray and negotiate their own understandings of environment and intersectionality and

its subsequent impacts on subjectivity. Mayo (2017) also refers to the complications

around self-representation and advocacy, especially when it involves community

building, become key tasks for LGBTQ youth and how they navigate within their world,

either in public or institutional spaces, and subsequently create their own scenes realities

within which they exist. Mayo (2017) offers a perspective where we broaden the kinds of

questions and approaches not only to legitimize, but also define the end means for

LGBTQ research. This means that research with LGBTQ youth should be geared to help

us understand more the kinds of risks that LGBTQ youth face and how they navigate and

oppose those pressures of their society, as well as being sensitive to the material impacts

of environmental spaces. Mayo (2017) asserts that researching how queer youth negotiate

positions and alliances within social groups helps expose the processes of negotiation as

well to create elucidating conversations of LGBTQ youth negotiations of subjectivity.

This relationality helps further complicate how we do research and how we think about

key definitions and even practices (Mayo, 2017). The proposed open approach to

research can help us understand the kinds of risks LGBTQ youth face and how they

navigate/oppose such pressures. A defining role of citizenship is

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marked by how youth interpret their role as citizens, hence the more LGBTQ youth find

openings to improve their schools, institutional and public spaces, the more they become

interested in the research involvement and objectives that lead to better understanding of

self and individual subjectivities that contribute to a better care of the self (Mayo, 2017).

Although there is a plethora of issues within contemporary K-12 public education

that includes everything from violence, to discrimination and poverty, I want to address

the topic of subjectivity/subjectivities, and how LGBTQ youth express not only their

belonging, but more importantly the moral obligations they possess, through their

subjective makeup, to their ethnic and other shared experientially obtained cultures they

share experience with. I believe subjectivity is an important marker for how individuals

negotiate place and the contribution they ultimately feel compelled to assert. This notion

is something that can most effectively be explored and expressed through creation of art

as I feel art production offers the ability to explore and express one's innermost thoughts

and sentiments that are not always capable of being put into words. The subject

positioning of LBTQ youth is complex and gender identifications are in a constant state

of flux (Mayo, 2017). This state of sexual and gender identifications is a process in which

the positioning refuses a stable subject for queer youth that challenges provisional

normativity and pushes against hetero-normative restrictions toward queer possibilities

(Mayo, 2017). The possibilities of arts-based research approaches may offer

understandings of the subject formations in ways that examine the processes and disputes

involved through open conversations, particularly on how LGBTQ youth negotiate

positions and alliances within social groups outside of school or other institutional spaces

and it is suggested that LGBTQ youth and their allies have had to take care to understand

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the negotiations of being out (Mayo, 2017). It is suggested LGTBQ caught in a perpetual state of linearity of subjective positioning subjugated by an inability to break away from the temporal boundaries set forth by the previous discourse of what gay and queer are and have been (Sedgwick, 2008; Talburt & Rasmussen, 2010).

The National Council for the Social studies (Herczog, 2010). The NCSS (Herczog, 2010) defines a citizen as a member of society who possesses the civic competence to make informed decisions for the public good; as a member of a culturally diverse, democratic society (Herczog, 2010). I believe this notion is extended as part of a greater American educational philosophy, conveyed through educational contexts beyond the civics classroom, and is therefore a consistent philosophy imposed upon all students as they develop and construct individual conceptions of citizenship. In the negotiation of individual subjectivity, as it relates to the definition and expectations of citizenship, becomes problematic particularly for students from marginalized populations who are often individuals who struggle to establish equitable positioning as "citizens" of their world. Furthermore, these same youth are typically forced to contend with notions of acceptance and significance to the larger American society, often to the detriment of their psychological health and well- being when they don't conform (Zaza, 2016).

Artful Impacts throughout History

It has been suggested that art allows us to think and learn in new ways and that it allows us to communicate when other forms of language fail us (Knowles & Cole, 2008). Throughout history, public art has been used as a means to influence people through the public sphere as well as through institutions. This is why it is important to begin this

section by making a clear distinction about art and education, particularly as it applies to this thesis in terms of art production vis-a-vis institutional environments. Historically, art has largely been used as a passive means of education, rather than an active means that invites the public to participate in a creative process that is educational and productive; the art experience has largely been an inductive form of learning. Meaning, we observe artistic expressions and are subsequently impacted in ways that are more profound than most people realize. Through the power of film and media, the impact of these art forms are more obvious and easier to understand and/or recognize, as opposed to other forms - such as murals, sculpture, and even architecture - in which the overtness of the messaging may not be as clearly construed by its audience. Therefore, it's important to keep in mind that, because the truth of art is defined by a multiplicity of negotiations and interactions, elements continuously in flux, art has the distinct ability to activate a community that becomes assembled by the artwork, and effectively mobilized by the art itself. As Dietachmair and Gielen (2017) describe it, the community itself becomes a link in a chain of social events that demand the truth spoken by the artist. In essence, the artist informs and educates the public about the truths of the community in which he lives; it is a profound and effective method of public pedagogy. Prior to the Modernist period, public art that was placed in public spaces was intended to address large audiences. It served primarily to commemorate important people or events which were, in effect, intended to celebrate widely shared views on religion or social issues (Stokstad, 2011). For example, mural and fresco art has been highly influential in speaking to a broad range of social issues. More importantly, these approaches have helped contribute to a public consciousness and dialogue extending to larger social realms.

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Historically, one of the best preserved examples of art as an educational device is the relationship between art and the church. Piero della Francesca's *Last Supper*, a depiction of both the crucifixion and entombment of Christ, is significant to this essay; it exemplifies both the design and the execution as an ideal example of the effectiveness of incorporating the style of the time, commonly applied through church frescoes, to impress upon the viewer religious themes intended to impose the power, dominance and influence of the church. The powerful modeling of forms and atmospheric perspectives were ideal for emulating otherworldly projections that were further emphasized by means of impressive proportions and geometric, volumetric constructions that greatly emphasized the forms inhabiting the space. In other words, creating an otherworldly experience (Stokstad, 2011). These settings, which typically framed depictions of religious figures, were essential to the end goals of the church. That is to say, they were largely driven to assert their influence over the public. Religious frescoes were usually located on the walls and/or ceilings of churches, utilizing the overarching heights of the architecture to emphasize unrivaled height, which further impressed upon the viewer upward projections towards the heavens, ultimately bringing the viewer into a felt experience, namely with God. This appeared to have a successful effect of imposing power and strength over the individual. It is believed that these mechanisms of form and design, imbued via frescos, were very effective at imposing religious doctrine. It is evident as a system of power and control that permeated through a large segment of society which persists to this day.

Diego Rivera is an example of how art joined forces with politics and was equally successful at promoting a political movement powerful enough to influence a

national government. In the Rivera example, his art was able to energize its audience to take a stand against the existing government. Rivera, as a political force, benefited from his celebrity status and reputation as a well-known artist/muralist. Recognized for his bold and beautiful creations, he manipulated the power of his images to create powerful socio-political statements. As a result, Rivera came to be known as one of the most politically influential painters in modern history. Furthermore, Rivera, who was profoundly impactful, established a style that other Mexican artists soon adopted, such as his wife and fellow artist Frida Kahlo, who came to incorporate a similar style within her work. Rivera's art often utilized fresco method, with its roots in ancient Aztec methods of wall paintings, as well as utilizing similar aspects of style from indigenous Mexican art, which can be seen in many of his most famous works. His techniques, such as the boldness of shapes and figures, were frequently depicted in his murals. Rivera's impact exemplifies not only the power of art in swaying political views across a far-reaching geography of highly polarized political climates, but also in how his style inspired other artists, namely Chicano mural artists who utilized similar, bold and colorful images of everyday, working-class people to convey a coherence of ethnic similarity.

Two significant events in LGBTQ history contributed to an advancement in the arts through which prominent historical figures from the LGBTQ community achieved a prominent place in art history. The events of the 1969 Stonewall Riots in New York City and the AIDS epidemic that emerged in the early 1980s, inspired connections between the gay community and art world in ways that were significant because those events resulted in powerful social-political upheavals that helped define the gay community as

well as give it a place in society as a cultural identity. A recent achievement is

recognition as a minority group within the United States (Hay& Roscoe, 1996). This is

important because much of the mural art that depicts images of sexuality has focused a

spotlight on the attention gained by forces related to social and political upheavals that

came about largely as a result of a ravaging and deeply stigmatizing epidemic (Reed,

2011). Furthermore, according to Reed (2011), the art world's attitude toward sexual

identity had been, up until then, highly dismissive. Art journals and news periodicals

such as *The New York Times* routinely dismissed the queer community's contribution to

the world of art.

The events of the Stonewall Riots inspired Thomas Lanigan-Schmidt's *Mother*

Stonewall and the Golden Rats (1989), an example of a work produced to convey to the

world this significant event in gay history. Although it was produced 20 years after the

Stonewall Riots, this piece commemorates the victims of the Stonewall Riots and consists

of photographs digitally stitched into a quilt-like pattern, positioned around a centralized

text that recalls the artist's memories of the event (Reed, 2011). The style of lettering -

purposely reminiscent of religious letterforms - combines a homemade Baroque aesthetic

that contrasts the grandiose and mundane elements of a small-town church setting. This is

intended to be reminiscent of the place where the artist grew up; it's an interesting

juxtaposition intended to recall and celebrate the Stonewall legacy via the style and

depiction typical of a gay camp aesthetic. Lanigan-Schmidt intended to not only provoke

conversation but reflect a shared image from the gay community. This piece also invites

the viewer to interact and take photocopied pieces from the mural. This is also symbolic

of a lesser known body of work that foreshadows the art that would soon follow in the

1980s, much of which become known because of both the homoerotic imagery provoked by the gay lifestyle as well as the AIDS epidemic.

Keith Haring's work, in particular his mural paintings, are a testament to the power and impact art can have on a community. Celebrated as a "youthful hero," (Smith, et al, 2019), Keith Haring was able to bring much needed attention to the gay community during a growing AIDS epidemic that took root in the early 1980s. Fueled by his belief that art could change the world, Haring produced works that were striking and powerful in a way that they appealed to a culture that extended far beyond the realm of the New York art scene. Works, such as the *Crack is Whack* mural, are representative of the immediacy of his art and are emblematic of the power of simplicity of form and bright color, capable of engaging people in a positive and welcoming way. Perhaps it is because of this easy to read style of simplified images and shapes, which were also made popular as a Pop art style of the day, speaks to Andy Warhol's intention of creating art meant for the public. In utilizing styles that are unassuming and uncomplicated, people are able to embrace the art with fervor and a certain "uplifting" enthusiasm. The eager acceptance of Haring's style, easily translated to commercially accessible objects such as posters, t-shirts and clothing and greatly helped spread his popularity, all the while transforming his art into an impactful vehicle for conveying social-political messages about the AIDS epidemic. His work is genuinely emblematic of how art makes people pay attention and create dialogue about important social topics.

Judith Baca, a Chicana muralist, became well known for her creations that depict the plight of the Chicano and other minority populations. Her work titled *Great Wall of Los Angeles* (1946), is best known for its extensive size (it measures 2,500 feet along the

wall of a drainage canal in San Fernando California) and just happens to be located within a predominantly white neighborhood. *The Division of the Barrios* (1976-83) is another of Baca's provocative pieces and remains consistent with her themes and images of racial minorities portrayed in settings that emphasize the role they play within their community. It richly illustrates the struggles minorities faced; they included themes of deportation during the Great Depression or the difficult working conditions they experienced (Stokstad, 2011).

Baca's work was largely intended to create an awareness of the conditions that people from marginalized backgrounds faced as they suffered through their existence in a predominantly white society. This is especially implied by her work *Great Wall of Los Angeles*. The site location and impressive size demand the attention of a predominantly White San Fernando community. In connection to the questions posed at the beginning of this paper, Baca's work not only implies an intentionality to provoke thought and awareness about racial minorities who live in Southern California, but also her themes aren't always necessarily negative. Many images within her work speak to the progress minorities have experienced in American society, in particular are some of images that reflect the advantages afforded to minorities such as civil liberties and freedoms gained during the 1950s and '60s civil rights movements. This choice by the artist to locate much of her work in public, particularly in neighborhoods with predominantly White populations, speaks to the intentionality of making issues of the social struggles minorities face visible to white society. I believe these topics, of race and unequal treatment, are still highly relevant today. They continue being introduced into the local discourse via murals located within urban city locations and are becoming particularly

noticeable in neighborhoods that house high populations of disenfranchised or marginalized citizens.

Pablo Picasso, also well-known for expressing his political views through his art, is a good example of how an artist has used his stature as a means for communicating an important social issue to the public. The impressive and influential mural titled *Guernica* (1937) is one of the most recognized murals in the world. Executed in a manner that portrays dramatic scenes caused by the ravages of war and executed in Picasso's signature style of Cubist painting, it presents a highly effective style for evoking a sense of nervousness and tension through the distortions of images that offer multiple perspectives of orientation – perhaps causing intended disorientation to accentuate chaos and confusion within an emotional scene. This piece, highly charged through the images of people and animals suffering from a bombardment attack on the small Spanish town of Granadilla during the Spanish Civil War of 1937, the work accentuates the powerful and monumentality of war impressed upon the viewer by means of its large scale of proportion. The color palette, in various shades of dark grays and blacks, evoke an ominous tone. What makes this piece such an important social statement, is that it poignantly illustrates and symbolizes the atrocities of war, clearly a message the artist intended to educate and inform about the reality of war. *Guernica*, to this day, remains one of the most powerful statements against war and continues to evoke conversation about the reality that human society largely still hasn't moved past the possibilities of such atrocities as they continue to occur in many parts of the world. The power of art has a great potential for energizing and giving a group of people a shared identity. Throughout history, communities and groups of people who identify as racially cohesive

groups, have largely turned to the power of their cultural identities as expressed through art to inform about their presence in light of political and/or social oppression. Cultural imagination has the power to encourage and define new, broader horizons in which such communities can strive for (Dietachmair, et al., 2017).

In a similar fashion, fresco murals painted by the artist William E. Scott are yet another example of how contemporary artists have used the imagery of religious themes in contemporary society to challenge social norms on race and culture. In Scott's depictions, the illustrations of religious figures are non-typical racial representations, such as Christ and other religious figures, portrayed with dark skin features and curly hair. The location of these murals is purposeful and paramount in emphasizing his message; they were painted inside Pilgrim Baptist Church in Chicago on very large scale, and are unique because the church is in a district that became largely racially segregated. It became one of the largest inhabited communities by a predominately Black society during a time when many Black people were leaving the South. In this example, the artist's renditions of religious figures are depicted in non-traditional forms that subvert the Aryan race, which allow members to perceptualize themselves through the life-size figures as part of the story of Christ, acted out on the walls of the church (Pinder, 2016). This example demonstrates the artist's effort to not only educate, but also help members of a congregation identify with their religion, and their Christ by placing them in a location where they can feel at home in their worship (Pinder, 2016). Through other similar efforts - for example, Garveyism and other Black nationalist movements of the time - Scott was able to inspire racial pride and preservation of an identity for the Black community (Pinder, 2016).

A Community Effect

In a current-day example, Phoenix mural artist Hugo Medina, an immigrant from Bolivia, is involved in an art practice for what he calls bringing community together. Hugo, who is involved in the local Phoenix art scene, enjoys teaching community members the art of mural creation. He regularly incorporates youth participation in the creation of his murals, largely aiming to educate by fostering conversations among people who wouldn't normally consider themselves art connoisseurs. Hugo believes that through his murals, he can create dialogues among casual observers in ways that art museums cannot (Hwang, 2014).

Like other urban artists in Phoenix, Hugo creates images representative of Hispanic minorities - such as his "Mi Tierra" series - which portrays people of indigenous backgrounds in scenes from his home country, as well other recognizable locations in the U.S. Hugo claims his paintings are "emblems of the values the downtown community he identifies with – values like creativity, enterprise, civic responsibility and diversity" (Hwang, 2014). In this vein, Hugo, like many other minority artists, uses the power of the mural to make direct contact with the community with the goal to educate and inform the public about the omnipresent diversity that exists within the local downtown Phoenix community. Hugo's murals are emblematic of the power of art as a political force that can be highly impactful, not only on the public but also as a means of generating governmental funding for the arts. This effort illustrates how arts-related efforts have shaped the redevelopment and conservation of a local, cultural community within a large urban setting.

Central Phoenix hosts public art events such as First Friday which, as the name implies, happens on the first Friday of every month and helps provide a platform for educating the public on cultural and ethnic diversity. By means of celebratory experiences, First Friday events take place within a realm of a large number of local artist galleries which have also inspired the creation of various murals that depict traditional, ethnic, minority and cultural images of Arizona. This effort is intended to revitalize and establish the Roosevelt community which is a largely diverse and impactful artistic community and which has proven to be transformative for downtown Phoenix. This example illustrates how the shared cultural capital of an ethnic community can emerge as a shared artistic effort to produce results that are transformational and impressive. But this is not a phenomenon unique to Phoenix. Other urban communities across the country, such as the Little Tokyo in Los Angeles, have also recently received large amounts of grant funding for the development of arts and culture strategies and have subsequently experienced dramatic transformations (DiMaggio, et al., 2018).

These early examples are some of the earliest known depictions of human expression and, despite the adverse conditions in which they were painted, the renditions were executed and stylized in a purposeful manner to capture and captivate the attention of the viewer. These earliest examples are ideal in demonstrating how an intentional manipulation of form and perspective was used to accentuate visual power and thus create a visual impact that spoke about the everyday struggles faced by man. These fundamental elements have persisted throughout history, as demonstrated by the multitudes of public art creations we will examine in the murals and frescoes presented

in this work; they are intended to convey important messages to the public about the human condition.

It is my assertion that there has not been enough emphasis placed, either by the state or local communities on the power education can have in public art spaces. In this study, one of my objectives is to investigate how subjectivities are produced, as an ontological experience that occurs through art generation. The following lit review should help illuminate what is known and has been studied on this topic which could help inform on ways that offer new understandings of the power of education through art. Pedagogical benefits of art in the public sphere can be harnessed to inform about the conditions LGBTQ youth experience as cultural citizens. A concept, proposed by the Herberger College at Arizona State University, proposes a framework for 'creating creative spaces'. This idea stipulates that anyone from the public can express themselves and their culture through art in public venues for the purpose of promoting and maintaining communities with a strong cultural identity. Questions about what makes art practical, as well as provocative and beautiful, sum up a basic function of how art pieces speak to their power. Elements, such as the visibility and provocative placement of the Chicano murals in San Fernando elicit confrontation and response from the surrounding community, largely composed of a white population; bold images and political figures depicted in Rivera's murals cause controversy and violence against the art itself; the practicality of pop-art images, simplified and bright elicit immediate attention and inspire hope. The power of these elements is particularly emphasized when it is placed in highly accessible public city location. The beauty of frescoes painted on medieval church

ceilings help provoke religious astonishment; brash shapes of contrasting hues in blacks and whites help emphasize imposing doom and dread, as through Picasso's Guernica. These elements are key in the consideration of how public art exercises its power and influence as an educational device.

Engendered perceptions

Debaise (2017) contends that subjectivity hinges on a metaphysics of experiences, some of which may or may not be compilations of "superhuman or infrahuman as well as human" (p. 42) varying cognitive influences that make up the world. A proposition Debaise applies to a "construction of a speculative scheme" that serves as a function or means from which a subject can make sense of a multiplicity of manners in which experiential elements are presented. Debaise follows with the notion that subject creation is a process in which the individual negotiates perceptions from a perspective of feeling; a process in which affective tonalities of experience are felt in terms of a unified experience. What he means by this is that sensations and impressions are grouped together as one experience with the manners and tonalities in which they are experienced. In essence, he suggests that we can't separate a sensation, or response to a sensation, from the context and place from which it is felt. He asserts that the everyday experiences of an environment, a surrounding or (unseen) experience where the many modalities of experience come together as a "feeling" which may or may not be based in actual experiences. Or, even, experiences that are perceived in a way that is different from how they actually exist. Therefore, reality is perceived as a series of constructions that may or may not be real, and are not the actual. This presents the issue of multiplicity.

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A multiplicity of possibilities dependent on what is perceived by varying experiences and individuals who create their own subject constructions of reality. The multiplicity of real or non-real, material or perceived elements become unique experiences from which an individual subsequently creates his/her subject who perceives the world, and all of its experiences, perceptions and feelings in a unique and distinct way (Debaise, 2017).

Practices that emerged during the Postmodernism era subverted this notion of identity. In photography, Kapsidou (2012) describes an initiative to accentuate the impossibility of realistic representation of subjectivity. Adding that some contemporary photographers have taken this step further by erasing the features of the face to remove any trace indicative of meaning or identity. A process in which the face in contemporary portraiture, therefore, "becomes a void; facial features are literally effaced, erased, rubbed off, rendering the self an estranged, amorphous locus of alienated and undefined subjectivity" (Kapsoudi, 2012). This "un-making" of the face marks an overt and somewhat radical attempt to change the conventions of portraiture to divert focus away from a mirror image which, in effect, infers that by redirecting the gaze from the subject as the source of interpretation, to the subject portrayal as a mirror in which it is viewed by others (Kapsidou, 2012). By emphasizing that the portrait must be viewed from the point of the gaze, according to the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan, "the gaze is not embodied in a subject, but exists prior to the self as well as outside the boundaries of the relation to photography, implying that the subject participates in a network of gazes and is thus formed through the interplay of different gazes, rather than being a product of one particular way of looking at it." (Kapsidou, 2012). Kapsidou (2012) also proposes a further implication in which a portrait, in this case a

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photographic portrait, is in no way capable of sustaining previously established dichotomies relating to a self/other binary. He adds that this development in portrait-making raises the question of whether it is possible to offer such a definition. He goes so far as to stipulate that a contradiction exists at the heart of portraiture that exposes the impossibility of an assumptive "self" or "other," but rather the possibility of generating new forms of subjectivity (Kapsidou, 2012).

Both Deleuze and Guattari offer a possibility of extending this notion a bit further. The idea that the face is neither subjective nor objective, but rather a potential that makes meaning possible. Through its features, there is a particular facial grammar from which we are able to "read" meaning. Deleuze and Guattari also describe the depiction of the face as a possibility where meaning can be inscribed beyond the phenomenological space of intersubjectivity and interrelationship extends beyond the self and the possibility of the other as circumscribed, through the self, all the while expressing not the just emotions and ideas of self, but also the other (Cited in Kapsidou, 2012). The other merges the subject with the object, effectively blending categories of finite and infinite representations and subjectivities. This supposition proposes an infinite possibility (Kapsidou, 2012.) Deleuze and Guattari further argue that images of the face are constructed… that they are produced as a result of a social system they refer to as the "abstract machine of faciality" (cited in Negri, 2001, p. 168). They claim that the faces generated within a particular social system, every individual becomes the equivalent of their face (Kapsidou, 2012). As Kapsidou (2012) explains, this has resulted in a system of commodification resulting in a proliferation of faces on magazine covers, news broadcasts, and even on social media that have developed a uniform production which is

a symptom of a quest for the consistent and infinite reproducibility of the perfect human. In this case, the face acquires socio-political significance through its involvement in a nexus of meaning and identities created within a specific social environment. As to how this relates to our analysis, we are particularly interested in the concept of self-awareness and how it manifests during the creative process. Because Bromberg (as cited in Trub, 2017) asserts that a healthy self-aware functioning is characterized by having access to multiple ways of being in the world, including the individual's relation to others without losing awareness of self at any given moment. Therefore, it is expected that the artist's awareness of his/her multiple subjectivities, either consciously or subconsciously, during the creative process is in a natural order and will therefore influence the forms that are generated and recorded on the canvas (Trub, 2017).

Multiplicity of subject

In the process of making art, the creative process, our subjective assumptions and decisions are based on a multiplicity of notions and fixed concepts of self. These subjectivities, which are relational and fluid, emerge from our own unique experiences but are not necessarily fixed in truth (Debaise, 2017). The creative process, which is dynamic and fluid, a multiplicity of representations emerges within flux and movement; During this event, individuations (Manning, 2013) occur and are presented as singular snapshots/representations of a subject and can be captured and recorded on a canvas. Such representations by an individual are a result of his/her perception of reality, a subjective experience and perception of self that is multiplicitous. The process of art making is always a subjective experience, particularly when the art is intentionally

designed to become a reflection of self, such as in portraiture (Gomez, 1976). In these

events, the art itself becomes a fashioning of subjectivity, a decision by the artist to

choose from a multiplicity of elements from which the artist perceives himself. This

preconceived notion of "I" where the previous notion loses its meaning. Deleuze and

Guattari (1994) contend that these initial preconceptions lose their necessity and thus

such presuppositions take on new meanings. Through this philosophy, we presuppose

that our subjectivities are grounded on a constructivist foundation where, by means of

experience and experienced problems, new concepts must relate to those problems and

because concepts are not eternal or belonging to any one particular time in history, they

are continuously subject to change (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994). In this context,

multiplicity is what becomes when we activate an ecology of practices in play during the

creative process. Deleuze and Guattari (1994) assert that in order for the artfulness of an

object to be activated, an object must be capable of more than its initial transduction

from the everyday; that it must continue to vary and that its variation must continue to

vary (Manning, 2016).

When we engage in anarchive, we carry the memory of our previous and current

selves and all that is attached into new forms of becoming. The artfulness is thus

activated which produces multiplicities of variability, stemming from a memory of an

initial seriation (Manning, 2016). What this means is that during the anarchive event

participants engage in the creative process and become attuned to the multiplicity of

elements that come into view. Because the anarchive event is a process that involves

entering in the middle, it allows us to generate an account of experience that is pulled in

at least two directions, which enables us to 'grow together.' As Whitehead (1936)

explains, this account is imbued with an excess of creativity that accompanies the process of becoming; a place from which to depart and through which to pass (Manning, 2016). In effect, the anarchive acts as a springboard from which documenting allows for the recognition of other forms that come into view, and might be otherwise lost in a traditional archived moment. As an example, when the structure of an existing object or art piece becomes altered, the artfulness of the object becomes activated as it experiences a new becoming, an offering of different directions in which that art piece can be refabricated through its material content into something new. This moving from a previous construct is a force of memory, awakened and recreated in the form of a new variation of itself (Manning, 2016).

Subjectivities and the creative process

At its most basic interpretation, research-creation can be described as the juncture where philosophy meets artistic process. Both terms, in their own right, retain a singularity joined only through a hyphenation which opens up a "differential between making and thinking" (Manning, 2016). The research-creation process embodies an approach of inquiry and knowledge creation that extends beyond the "traditional" forms of academic inquiry based solely on linguistic and language-based evaluation. Hence, in this study, the experience of research creator, the artist is analyzed and observed for the very purpose of creating new knowledge as it is linked to the philosophies and theories that drive our methods. By visual analysis, and entanglement, we aim to achieve a better understanding on themes of identity by asking the artist: what concepts of self are carried in the advent of a project? How do perceptions of self-change during the creative

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process? As Manning (2016) describes, the creative process as a journey of events that at one point lead to a cross-road where the participant experiences a state of flux. As a result of the creative process, art-making, in the space of flux where the concept of subjectivity is suspended, new representations of subjectivity emerge – a plethora of multiplicities with which the artist has to contend, and subsequently decide which to choose for representation, expression, and knowledge creation. In portrait making, this event presents a threshold activity. A physical act, that involves movement, provides the setting for the subconscious transfer to occur where the previous concept of subjectivity detaches from the tether of its previous embodiment, encounters a transversal experience where multiplicities of subjectivity emerge and subsequently attach to a new representation, an embodiment of self. Through this research creation process, we hope to gain an understanding of what happens to the artist's subjectivity, and perception of self during these events of transversality. We believe this form of inquiry offers reflection on the multiple ways an individual may view himself, as well as an opportunity to explore and question the topic of multiplicity when the normative identity has been suspended.

Multiple creating subjects are forms of subjectivity that exist inside and outside of our realm of existence and experience. Our very own lives and experiences, interactions and cultural influences contribute to the social construction of the various forms we choose to adopt as our own. These multiplicities enter the creative process and present themselves untethered to both previous and future bodies of existence (Deleuze, & Guattari, 1994). This research creation will help further our understanding, leading to conclusions that inform the events that occur during events of transversality, meaning our

relational subjectivities to the world and hierarchies in which we live, thus affirming or dismissing previous notions of self, as described by the artist.

Subject in portraits is largely held that the subject in a portrait is a direct representation of its "source." Nevertheless, it can be argued that the "version" captured at that moment in time already comes "tainted" with the impressions of its environment representative of a multiplicity constructs shaped well beyond the orbital range of a singular individual's identity. The concept of diaspora – a generalized force which perpetuates a particular perception – generates a Cartesian plane where cogito is allowed to expand and flourish (Freund, 2013). What Freund describes here, is the notion of cogito works in unison with a diaspora that exemplifies the power of cultural influence, such as ideals generated through popular culture, where large and fixed norms become embedded in the psyche of a generalized population (Freund, 2013). This helps to provide some understanding for how and why individual expression becomes pervasive to the point at which expressions normalize thus becoming a signifying mark (ideal) of a culture and therefore celebrated. This celebration of idealized norms helps describe the use of visual elements and structures, which help define a subject within portraiture, and this has been commonplace throughout history. Freund (2013), provides an example of how portraiture was used as a central method for challenging post-1789 French revolution sentiments. In one example of using the power of an idealized subject, he describes the initiative of transforming subjects into citizens, as a top down approach to confront the problem of regenerating the nation as a means of legislating swift changes with the political, social and cultural structure, by normalized method of how subjects were represented in portraits. French citizens responded by portraying the values of

transparency. Because at this point in time, the idea that power of sovereignty lay within the people had gained broad acceptance and popularity, portraiture was then used as a means to convey this ideal of virtue through the portraiture. Therefore, representation of this ideal via the subject became a powerful tool for conveyance of essential truths to the viewer (Freund, 2013). This proves how the concept of self, or identity, as a political force, is very effective in shaping norms of how we wish to portray ourselves. In no other time in history has this phenomenon been more prevalent than with today's social media. With the popularity of the "selfie," many people have tuned in to the power of taking control of the camera lens and by taking on both roles of photographer and subject, they directly choose how they are portrayed. For the individual to create new, and sometimes alternate subjectivities, as Manning asserts, feeds into a greater force moving forward... or power of agency. Albeit, not in the form of a normative acceptance, but rather, as she describes, an "agencement." Manning (2016) asserts the political creation of identity is created within an ecology of practices that provides room for new modes of existence to be created. In her description, she illustrates Deleuze and Guattari's example of a book, as a metaphor, for not being a singular entity existing as a static object. "The meaning of agencement, as it applies here, is that a book, or an individual's subjectivity, is part integral to a process in continuous change influenced its connection to other assemblages that that contribute to its shape by relation to past, present and future becomings" (Manning, 2016, p. 134). With this example, Manning offers the possibility of

transformation, as with the book, what else might it become and turn into, if the material object as we know it were to be modified and transformed, say into an accordion?

As we believe such examples have the potential to manifest within our own analysis, where observations and critique of inverted icons and/or assemblages may render new insight during the creative process, subverted and contrary to a neurotypical approach in creation. In Manning's description of the continuity of becoming, she asserts that every new resolution activates a transduction where new processes are always and continuously underway (Manning, 2013). That within this realm of continuous becoming, there is a continuous phasing and dephasing, where "new bodies are composed in a continuous multiplicity of forms, subjectivities and new becomings" (Manning, 2013, p. 23). These becomings, as Manning illustrates, are generated as a result of emergent lures. Lures that do not necessarily achieve their own form, but instead "generate attunements and subsequent tendencies which force the creation of forms" (Manning, 2013, p. 23). Manning's (2013) assertion stipulates that it is in these occasions, where an object or a body as a node of relation, expresses itself momentarily as a this or that, produces an edging into an object – a recognizable form. Manning asserts that these relational nodes are the occasions of a subjective form that exhibit qualities of recognizable attributes and may be attributed to representations of race, gender and so on. In addition, each individual comes equipped with its own set of assemblages, accompanied by a unique set of interpretations, all of which have been constructed in its own world (Manning, 2013). Whitehead (1936) describes these events as "a broad variety of species of subjective forms such as emotions, valuations, purposes, etc., color the process of an occasion, that are fueled by

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appetitions that determine the shifting field in a circular fashion – events driven from appetite to event and back to appetite" (Manning, 2013, p. 23). Whitehead also asserts that, if what drives life is the creative advance, always active within a field of occasions that make up experience. That it is within this field where new forms emerge, but also to some degree co-constituted by previous forms. That these forms as reactivations in new form are the lures for feeling and creativity "which are generated at the heart of the difference – a multi-phasing process of individuation" (Manning, 2013, p. 24). "To have emerged as this or that constellation is to have colluded into a dephasing that activated a differentiation between what was and what will have come to be" (Manning, 2013, p. 24). Manning asserts that Whitehead's (1936) notion of the "creative advance" is dependent on the notion of a continuous becoming, or a becoming of continuity (Manning, 2013). That the creative advance is never restricted to the "never before" but rather the capacity of an event to activate new possibilities that may have once been backgrounded, but in effect generate a field of difference (Manning, 2013, p. 24).

The regenerative nature of such events may also be interpreted as a form of repetition. A series of repetitions sharing similarity only by virtue of their shared origin and thus reconstituted (as) a differential. Manning (2013) asserts that for a work to be successful, enabling constraints must be embedded within a conceptual design. That through the unfolding of a creative work, the established constraints, namely habit or technique, as practiced through repetition, must be activated, but then released to divert, through their own differential, which result in new unfoldings of the creative process. The concept of repetition and experience are what affects and impacts our own research creation process, as is depicted by the artwork generated by the researcher.

Manning (2013) describes repetition as an ecology of practices. A field of events where habit and technique are essential, thus a form of repetition which effectively establishes the platform from which new diversions and multiplicities are spring boarded into existence. This emergence and dephasing of subjectivities is generally categorized as an emergence of minor gestures (replete) with a potential for becoming a major gesture, each resulting in its own unique form. This field can be (personified) as a constellation of bodies moving through space. An ecology, as it were, of elements constantly in motion. It is instrumental that we discuss movement as a metaphor when we analyze and discuss the creative process as an experience movement. We also observe this movement as a structured choreography, where improvisation, techniques and technicities come into play. As we generate new illustrations of subjectivity (drawings), we engage upon as a result of what had already been created… what might at times be considered habit. Habit might manifest in the form of how we approach the canvas/sketch pad, or how we hold the pencil. This can otherwise be described as repetition, as mentioned previously. It is essential to note that this movement, as process, provides the necessary platform from which the differential spring boards into newly reconstituted manifestations of individuation. It is in these habitual movements, brought into play, that generate a field of movement. Manning (2013), describes dance as resulting in producing a style of its own, where a new style emerges and exceeds the habitual way of movement and diverting from the habit of technique into the magic of technicity. This becomes an essential component in the analysis of the visual art, the portraiture, as we will examine movement and how it relates to this notion of emergent structures of technique through choreography and the emergent individuations of subjectivities. Manning also describes

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this as a "thinking-feeling" mentality. An activity, within the event, working in unison to co-compose with an occasion's physicality to generate new creations during an event; an essential more-than where appetition that produces a hunger within the process that creates an opening in the occasion to new and novel motifs. Motifs essential for the creative advance in its generation of new unfoldings (Manning, 2013). A nextness… a moving ever moving and recalibrating to recompose the environment. Manning asserts that nature is a relational field through which motifs are activated in which they in turn activate new fields of relation in the time of the event… "it is, in all of its eventness, a multitude of modes of existence, a field of creativity (Manning, 2013).

Subjective yet ecological creations through art

It can be argued that subjective representation through art is the "version," captured at that moment in time, is already "tainted" with the impressions of its environment representative of a multiplicity of constructs shaped well beyond the orbital range of a singular individual's identity. The concept of diaspora – a generalized force which perpetuates a particular perception – generates a Cartesian plane where cogito is allowed to expand and flourish (Freund, 2013). What Freund describes here, is the notion of cogito works in unison with a diaspora that exemplifies the power of cultural influence, such as ideals generated through popular culture, where large and fixed norms become embedded in the psyche of a generalized population (Freund, 2013). This helps to provide some understanding for how and why individual expression becomes pervasive to the point at which expressions normalize thus becoming a signifying mark (ideal) of a culture and therefore celebrated. This celebration of idealized norms helps

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describe the use of visual elements and structures, which help define a subject within artwork; this has been commonplace throughout history.

Freund (2013), who uses portraiture as an example, illustrates an example of how portraiture was used as a central method for challenging post-1789 French revolution sentiments. In one example of using the power of an idealized subject, he describes the initiative of transforming subjects into citizens, as a top down approach to confront the problem of regenerating the nation as a means of legislating swift changes with the political, social and cultural structure, by normalized method of how subjects were represented in portraits. French citizens responded by portraying the values of transparency. Because at this point in time, the idea that power of sovereignty lay within the people had gained broad acceptance and popularity, portraiture was then used as a means to convey this ideal of virtue through the portraiture. Therefore, representation of this ideal via the subject became a powerful tool for conveyance of essential truths to the viewer (Freund, 2013). This proves how the concept of self, or identity, as a political force, is very effective in shaping norms of how we wish to portray ourselves. In no other time in history has this phenomenon been more prevalent than with today's social media. With the popularity of the "selfie," many people have tuned in to the power of taking control of the camera lens and by taking on both roles of photographer and subject, they directly choose how they are portrayed. For the individual to create new, and sometimes alternate subjectivities, as Manning asserts, feeds into a greater force moving forward... or power of agency. Albeit, not in the form of a normative acceptance, but rather, as she describes, an "agencement." Manning (2011) asserts the political creation of identity is created within an ecology of practices that provides room for new modes of existence to

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be created. In her description, she illustrates Deleuze and Guattari's example of a book, as a metaphor, for not being a singular entity existing as a static object. The meaning of agencement, as it applies here, is that a book, or an individual's subjectivity, is part integral to a process in continuous change influenced its connection to other assemblages that that contribute to its shape by relation to past, present and future becomings (Manning, 2016), as with Manning's description of modification or transformation of material objects.

A way of queering being and becoming

Much of the discourse on topics of traditional humanist qualitative research stem from a push to become unchained to the obligations set forth by empirical and positive origins. These conversations have evolved with opposing and sometimes conflicting ideologies and binaries, within traditional qualitative research, can no longer be ignored. With this in mind, and how I ascribe this to queer theory, is the proposed methodology be unrestricted to fixed identifications, realities and categorizations and instead be emblematic of a natural growth and move in a direction that offers new discoveries and questions of a human ontology that results from an awareness and acceptance of a multiplicity of possibilities. What this means for engaging in a "post-qualitative" or a "method-free" approach, is the requirement of engaging in an event already in action, or at least the awareness thereof, because an event already in action precedes the engagement, (St. Pierre, 2013). The entanglement of the participant, as he comes in view of non-human and material elements, must be also be free of preconceived traditional and, for lack of a better description, positivist structures in order to be able to better

observe unspoiled and unshaped be previous conceptions. I associate these basic tenets to the (framework) of Queer Theory, as these concepts align with post-qualitative (beliefs).

According to Husserl's theory of orientation, what lies in front of us is what is familiar to us; to turn to or acknowledge what is behind us requires a deviation from the proper course (Ahmed, 2006). This basic premise undergirds the critical theoretical assumptions offered by queer theory; That because knowledge is not an objective truth and produced intersubjectively, it must therefore be challenged and critiqued (Marshall & Rossman, 2014). Marshall (2014) asserts the Queer theoretical framework is derived from lesbian feminism and Post-structuralism, stemming from the civil rights and gay and lesbian political movements of the 1960s, and therefore Queer theory is rooted in a history steeped in social and political upheavals which in turn has offered researchers a counter approach used address the codified norms and expectations predominant in a society based on Western and colonial views (Marshall, 2014). The course of history and transformations of society has held at its core efforts to define the sphere of sexuality and its relative parts. In effect, an effort to organize bodies, desires, pleasures and acts in relation to personal as well as public life, has entailed the construction of sexual, gendered identities thus shaping cultural representations and the accompanying discourses that helped define political and social policies and laws interlaced with the evolution of Western societies, as well as an openness to non-Western or colonial views (Seidman, 1994). Marshall (2014) contends that Queer theory has also been used to help deconstruct the social categories that create the binaries of sexual identities, a problematic issue which has oftentimes led to the pathologization of the gay community and other marginalized groups.

Butler (1990) and Ahmed (2006) espouse a notion that there is a certain fluidity of sexual orientation; that the expectations of strict norms in ideals, that counter queerness, have historically worked against this understanding and have very much been strongholds since the advent of Christianity. Marshall (2014) champions Butler's work as pivotal and credits her work, *Gender Trouble*, so significant that it marks her as the founder of Queer theory, in which Butler makes the assertion that gender and sexuality are performative. Meaning that gender performativity is a subconscious act in which individuals construct their own identity categories, shaped to serve a specific contextual purpose within their society (Marshall, 2014). In Butler's description of subjective forming, she utilizes the concept of the "I" as always to some extent detached from the social conditions from which it emerges. She claims this condition presents an ideal condition for moral inquiry, in which morality itself may emerge (Butler, 1990) and that it is through this critical inquiry the "I" goes through an ethical deliberation, a process of critique, in which it ultimately finds its position and self-meaning. This process of inquiry can be regarded as a form of knowledge creation, which is how we come to know who we are, as proposed by the norms presented within our community at the time of self-concept creation. Butler states, we must know who we are to be able to not only present who we are, when we encounter the other, but also to be able to identify the other as a party, or reflection, of who we claim we are. Here Butler (1990) proposes the notion of giving an account of oneself. Butler (1990) contextualizes Nietzsche, as she describes this event of coming into contact with "other," a positioning of the individual to not only question the other with "who are you," but also to negotiate with self-narration, in face of responding to the other in return. This example also leads to the Foucauldian notion of "self-crafting"

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(Bernauer & Rasmussen, 1988). Butler (1990) goes on to describe the significance of this event in the context of a negotiation with a regime of truths that set forth the terms in which self-recognition is made possible. Similarly, Ahmed (2006) offers an account of race, a condition aligned with being that closely parallels the disproportionalities experienced by the LGBTQ community as a marginalized group of people, in which she asserts that one can say that bodies, or groups of people – a community – come to be seen "alike," as described for instance "sharing whiteness," a characteristic that comes into being as an effect of proximities, where certain "things" are already pre-established, prior to the individual.

Relational objects

In the creation of subjectivities, Ahmed (2006) invokes an example of the family, which is a group that shares the familiar within a world that is not only similar, but also implicitly known to be organized in specific ways; a place where an "implicit knowledge" is informed about the individuals' positionality, and vantage point from which knowledge is exercised to inform the individual towards a particular orientation to other objects. In the case of Butler's subject, the positionality and orientation are understood to be towards others (Ahmed, 2006). Ahmed (2007) takes this notion a bit further, as she proposes proximity is a determination not only for recognition of the other, but also as a determining factor of familiarity, and such the capacity to determine that to do with the object (other) by means of a proximal distance to negotiate "how they are within reach as objects we do things with" (p. 155). In a historical context, Ahmed (2006) alludes to "compulsory heterosexuality" (p. 557). being a result of historical

repetition. In this framework, a set of concealed principles come into view, and are revealed through the acts of repetition, such as institutional practices that enforce heteronormative behaviors, and subsequently enforce forms and orientations through institutionalization (or social interactions) (Ahmed, 2006). Butler (1990) suggests that, what occurs during a proposal of recognition, is that one is pushed to question the norms of recognition that govern what is to be recognized and is therefore compelled to accommodate those norms (Butler, 1990), a basic tenet of queer theory that illustrates a deviation from the straight path determined by mainstream social norms. It is in this constant state of deviation that Muñoz (2019) describes queerness as a state of being that is ungraspable, a state of being queer is the future and the past because it is always elusive and so far from the mundane and predictability of the heteronormative that it can only ever remain ahead on the horizon because, if it were attainable, then it would cease to be queer.

There is an ethical, critical revision when the rules set forth by established norms fail to offer any possible way to live and exist within the existing social conditions. In a sense, this is an event where self-questioning has pushed the boundaries of accepting the rules set forth by the established norms. Because we are to some extent dispossessed by the social conditions during the emergence of "I," and therefore the "I" is not one (at this time) with the social norms, then the dispossession provides an opportunity for the individual to deliberate upon the norms which entail a critical understanding. This, therefore, presents a consideration of ethical involvement (Butler, 1990). Self-questioning effectively becomes an ethical consequence for the self, where the positionality of self, within a place, results in a questioning of self. Butler (1990) asserts

this results in an imperiling of the possibility of not being recognized by others as a subject. It is within this possibility, within a particular site, that Butler (1990) proposes the possibility of a rupture that puts into question the given nature of prevailing norms and calls for the institution of new norms; a site where critical revision can take place and induce a shift in opposition to previously established norms. Butler also addresses the condition of the other, as a result of these events. Butler (1990) stipulates that the other simply does not collapse into the sociality of norms, and therefore remains present within those norms. Butler offers that the resulting unrecognizability of the other brings about a crisis within the norms that are governed by recognition, and that the resulting repeated attempts for recognition fuel an emboldened desire for recognition that ultimately reach a critical point of departure in the interrogation of available norms (Butler, 1990).

Butler (1990) extends Foucault's view on the event, which stipulates the risking of self is an evident sign of virtue, to point out that sometimes the very calling into question the regime of truth, the very truth by which my own truth is predicated, is motivated by one's own desire to either recognize another or be recognized by oneself. Butler (1990) claims this very impossibility of being able to do so within the established system, and as a result compels a criticism of the available norms from which the individual is forced to ask the ethical question "how can I treat the other?" (p. 25). In her personal account of going through customs, Ahmed (2006) describes that experience as a politics of mobility, which further leads to an event of questioning. In this, she asserts that the vestiges of our past are carried with us, only to emerge in situations, such as the one she described of being asked by a customs agent who her father was simply because her name didn't sound English. Through this, she suggests that we sometimes are forced

to look back, behind us, perhaps even to connections of our past. It's during this kind of event that we look into other spaces, which may be places of extension of our bodies. In the example of how skin color extends our bodies into other spaces, we are forced to negotiate those experiences as they may be experienced by another.

Sexualized bodies

Butler (1990) proposes that when a collective ethos, as an orientation, is no longer shared (such as a community divided), moral questions arise that may result in an ethical violence, as the collective ethos tries to maintain a commonality no longer shared. In effect, what occurs is a disruption to the continuity of the straight line, where new directions of attention come into view, although not recognizable as the same, they nonetheless draw the individual's attention and therefore disorients from the focus on objects directed by established norms. Ahmed (2006) describes a disorientation of perception, in which objects and bodies disturb the frame of reference, thus creating disorientation in how things had been previously arranged. In Ahmed's (2006) anecdotes from her childhood experiences, growing up as a mixed-race child, she addresses the issue of skin color. Ahmed refers to comments made about her complexion as being disorientations from the fixed perspective that had been set before her, as a privilege of being a "white" person. Other elements Ahmed (2006) makes mention of run the gamut on diversity of material and non-material objects, such as descriptions of unknown cousins from Pakistan whose names became familiar, to visits to Pakistan, which opened up new worlds of tastes, sights and sounds, altogether disrupting and disturbing her focus. In a sense her experience was a disorientation of an orientation enforced by the norms of sameness.

The notion of subject formation largely adheres to the Deleuzian concept that the subject becomes constituted as a result of encounters, both with the empirical and pre-conceptualized world, created from the multiplicity of objects coming together (Ahmed, 2006), but instead it constitutes the subjectivities of an individual as a multiplicity, not from collective sameness but rather from collective differences (Deleuze, 1994). Ahmed (2006) describes this as a force compelling enough that it resists the compulsory force of heterosexuality. Ahmed (2006) proposes that one needs to "ask how lesbian tendencies shape and are shaped by how bodies extend into worlds; and how even if this desire does not simply reside within the lesbian body, how such desire comes to be felt … as a natural force" (p. 94). Ahmed (2006) goes on to elaborate on the "pull" of desire as an important example of how, although this example is contingent on lesbian desire, shows how this pull can put an individual in contact with others that are "off the vertical line" (p. 94). In defense of a common argument, that homosexuality is an "unnatural" pull or draw because it is a result of a "contact sexuality," it can be argued that the draw of heterosexuality, lured not only by desire, but also the demands and expectations of normativity, is just as much a "contact sexuality" (Ahmed, 2006, p. 94).

Ahmed illustrates Freud's example in which lesbian desire is read as a rejection of men, as based on Freud's indication that, in the case of lesbian desire, it is the father's desire that establishes the direction of the straight line. This notion of disorientation becomes problematic in discussions of gender and sexuality, not only because these topics are inextricably tied to sex, but also because a discussion on gender becomes an altogether separate endeavor that merits its own focus and study and the relation between sexuality and gender, as Jagose and Kulik (2004) indicate, can never be definitively

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specified. They suggest the effort to pin down a precise relationship between gender and sexuality is a futile effort, as it appears there are ceaseless imaginings of genders in new ways. As Barad (2011) suggests, in relation to queer theory, performativity is an essential component that continues to define, almost exclusively, the gendered condition of the human. A contradiction derived from a theory intended to "account for matters of abjection and the differential construction of the human, especially when gradations of humanness, including inhumanness, are often constituted in relation to nonhumans" (Barad, 2011, p. 30). Hence, as this suggests, the focus remains on the topic of human sexuality, either gendered or ungendered, and yet remains as undefinable and fluid as the performance of a multiplicity of subjectivities.

Ahmed (2006) extends the example of the straight line to propose the demarcation of the straight line as a tool of violence, or at least acts upon the individual as a violence in that it places strict determinations to be followed. Ahmed (2006) follows the analogy of desire and the straight line to propose that sexual orientation is not merely a choice, or an element of agency which directs an individual to either stay on course with the straight line or to veer off in a deviant direction, but instead suggests that orientations can operate simultaneously as effects of what is lived and experienced. Bodies are, in effect, steered in different directions in the world, and the straight line merely demarcates the position in which the individual lands, either on this or that side of the straight line (Ahmed, 2006). Benozzo (2016) illustrates, there is a potential for anti-discriminatory discourses to create a heterogeneity of once considered marginalized categories, such as the labels of gay and lesbian, that render "acceptable" forms of diversity, but in effect invalidate the existence of other non-normative sexualities through

the creation of false normative conceptions of truths. In other words, there should persist a continuous effort of ethics in defense of categories always at the peripheries of what is considered acceptable, or normative. In Ahmed's accounts of her own sexuality, and identity as a multiracial individual, she offers a view on negotiation that involves proximity. In her description, Ahmed informs us that our own orientation is shaped by societal and cultural norms, largely shaped by the objects and material elements determined by our proximity to them. A similar threat is drawn from Foucault and Hay's accounts (Akram, Emerson & Marsh, 2015); how social norms are constructed by what is perceived as relational, what is bear and what we inherit from the past. Through proximity, an object is allowed to represent what is acceptable and what is not. This account of ethics, as is explored by the views presented by Butler, Ahmed, Foucault and Hay, can be considered the framework for a project that helps us understand that the acceptance of others. A venture that always comes with a risk. But, the risk itself is an ethical value essential for the acceptance of others.

Ethics and the individual

Through openness and refusal of categorizations, the post-qualitative approach is effective in that it not only presents possibilities that are divergent in perspective, but also that it is an ethical approach to inquiry. What this suggests is that an individual can engage in inquiry that consistently offers places of entry where a multiplicity of deviations may occur. The discourses that involve Queer theory have come to be used not as a means to explore the sexual nature of an individual, but instead help explain the operations of the hetero/homosexual binaries in its openness to interpretation that may involve any gradation and identification of gender as it emerges in various multiplicities

(Seidman, 1994). Lather and St. Pierre (2013) propose that, if we refuse privilege of knowing over being, positivist and phenomenological assumptions about the individual and the world and representational and binary logics, we consider human, material and language, not as separate entities, but instead a mixture of imbricated elements, not possible by means of traditional methods. This notion helps define the basis of questions researchers face for breaking away from "pseudo" positivist links that have, until now, provided the qualitative field with a certain amount of "credibility" and "legitimacy," as a valid scientific approach to research. In going against positivist leanings, Lather and St. Pierre (2013) describe the "research problem" as a conglomeration of elements that aren't only unique to a singular concept or individual, but rather a multiplicity of elements that are in a constant state of intra-action, and never stable. This then becomes a non-definitive of representation, of a difference that becomes impossible to identify as a singular agentic assemblage. This also implies that the individual is forced to assume a greater disposition for patience with others, as he realizes he could not demand the same of himself (Butler, 1990). In this sense, the notion of ethics comes from the understanding that prior to the judgment imposed on an "other," an individual must be in some relation to him or her (the other). As a result, this relation will ground and inform the ethical judgment the individual makes about the other (Butler, 1990).

As a notion of recognition, or as Foucault describes, "self-crafting" implicates a regime of truths from which self-recognition is made possible. Butler (1990) contends that the terms that determine the formation of "I" are outside the subject to a certain degree but are nonetheless presented as the norms from which self-recognition can take place and subsequently limit and constrain what the "I" can be, in advance as set forth by

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the regime of truth. This, as Butler (1990) claims, will also determine what will and will not be a recognizable other form, and will also determine who will qualify as a subject of recognition. Butler (1990) recalls Foucault's view, in his description of relation to the regime, where a mode of self-crafting occurs, and ultimately negotiates and determines an answer to the question of who the "I" will be in relation to the norms set forth by the regime. Butler acknowledges Foucault's assertion that any operation of self- critique cannot take place without the reflexive action requiring not only that there is always a relation to such established norms, but also that any relation to a regime of truth must also concurrently be in relation to the self (Butler, 1990).

Ahmed (2006), who also describes recognition as an observation, places the subject within a realm, or position, from which a differentiation can be made between objects that are either near or far. In the context of heterosexual love, Ahmed (2006) presents an analogy about how differentiation of things near or far are determined through recognition, and that we are only, or at least should be, capable of recognizing things that are in the near horizon as those that we are expected to reflect. In this case, the expectation of heterosexual love, which is the requirement of what we must bring home, is a reproduction of a shared cultural attribute (Ahmed, 2006). Recognition, as I believe Ahmed presents as an example of openness and acceptance of the other, is how she describes the recognition of a "queer" object. In her illustration of queer gatherings, Ahmed (2006) proposes that upon the encounter of a queer object, meaning an object that is somehow inverted or disorients, the question is not so much about how we perceive the queer orientation, but rather how the queer orientation orients us. She asks, do we retain a hold on such objects in an effort to return them back to being in line, or do we instead

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allow them to go and acquire new shapes and directions? This question is pivotal in that

it determines our willingness to either try to reorient those objects or instead allow the

certain oblique to present another angle in which we can view the world (Ahmed, 2006).

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCHING AND STORYING WITHOUTH AND WITH 'METHODS'

Multiplicities of methods

Because art creation can be used to generate and collect data, arts-informed data can also help address topics in ways that is not possible through text data alone (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Although the precise technical terminology used to describe the role/application of art in this study is referenced as, "art in research," I chose to use the term, "Art Creation," throughout because it felt connotative of an event that is special– a celebration. Even the structure of the letter form that compose the words, art and creation, both with capitalized fonts, evokes a c certain emotion, especially when those words are nestled within the context of a section header. Due to my background as a graphic designer, I'm thoroughly aware of the potential of written language, even in digital form, to extend its textual meaning through visual expression that emphasizes a denotative expression beyond the parameters for which it was intended. Nonetheless, the graphic artwork produced remained bound to the expression or meaning of the original text from which it was composed. Such graphic applications are rather rare and are typically used for commercial advertising and routinely plays on the connotative meanings that can be drawn from the material qualities of the text. Unlike written text, visual art creation is typically unlimited in its potential of expression that produces something new in the world, regardless of researcher intervention, and becomes a function defined as research method approach that has the potential of offering multiple ontological dimensions and perspectives that produces what is understood as non-representational as it doesn't aspire to represent a preconceived reality that existed before

the research and yet extends far beyond the limitations of textual and linguistic applications (Østern, 2021; Wang, 2017). As I describe in the

These understandings mark a strong hold within qualitative research making it a significant component of the (post)qualitative movement, which implies that when used in tandem with (post)qualitative approaches and an onto-epistemological shift indicating a subsequent paradigmatic shift in the manner that knowledge-creation is understood as knowledge-in-becoming on the plane of constant creation (Østern, 2021). This description falls in line with the philosophy of the anarchive, which also stipulates an engagement in the process of creation. Manning (Personal communication) applies Whitehead's (Whitehead, 2010) notion that suggests that to understand experience one must become thinkers in the middle and in doing so one must enter the event the middle, an event in progress, which offers the participant an opportunity to view both sides, the side of creation as well as the side of its perishing. A point of departure in (post)qualitative research is the move away from human-centered concepts to instead embrace material, ethical and speculative realisms (Leonard, et al., 2020). These concepts dovetail with the unique ability of art to co-construct with art in the creation of new relations and possibilities. This pairing is both a logical and essential underlying structure for this project, as it presents the opportunity for the researcher to engage in data collection and analysis from the standpoint of artist-researcher. Subsequently, this affords an application of both concepts, (post)qualitative research and Art creation, to interact in a dynamic way that extended the limits, or rather thresholds, where one orientation ends and another one meets to take over and extend on the concept portrayed in that rendition. This process held a circular motion, where I, as researcher participant,

engaged with and entangled myself in the research process, would go from one event to another and then return again to the same place to add to the new layers that had been created. By adding to the layers being created, what happened while I was away at another event, the circular motion of tending to art creation session, would be followed by developing a drawing that was inspired by my experiences during that session, whatever the experience revealed to me in the becoming of force to form, it might impact me in a particular way so that my creative potential is activated and I produce a drawing, or a digital image, and so on. This process was not a linear experience, and sometimes it took a different directional flow guided by the lures that would manifest during one of those events. This process began from the moment we had our first meeting, which involved very little generation of artifacts, such as the drawings, digital images, reading through transcripts when they became available, and ultimately the data collections sessions ended, which involved that art creation Zoom sessions, followed by the one-on-one participant interviews. Ultimately, the data collection, analysis, my personal entanglement experiences and the artwork I produced established multi-layers of insight.

The resulting layers of data generated by the events and the impressions that were made on that data was the result of knowledge created from experience. The perceptions captured when I, as researcher participant, entered in a process already underway offered deeper understandings of the experience. An example of this entering in the middle is when I engaged in developing a drawing that was inspired by my experiences of interaction with the participants or what came about as a result of engaging with the data, such as the transcripts, digital images I would manipulate in photoshop. Oftentimes those artistic renderings weren't completed, but I would revisit them and reenter the process of

executing the drawing in the middle, only the next time I came around I had new and

fresh experiences, new information that could add to the information already put down in

the unfinished drawing, and sometimes the drawing took on another direction and

became more complex as I would sometimes add bits and features of symbolism

enmeshed into the drawings. It was during creation of the drawing "body of the

community," which is the one of a chubby man wearing a bear suit and a theater mask.

This drawing in particular really captured my focus on the idea of citizenship. As I was

drawing this piece, it was one of those that was left unfinished for a bit, but then I kept

coming back to it, and I remember being inspired to add details to it after circling

through the data and reading through the narratives that I began adding layers, Initially, it

was just going to be a half-naked man, wearing the theater mask, which indicated his

shame about coming out. I imagine there are a lot of closeted men out there who appear

in my mind as frumpy, run-of-the-mill, nondescript middle-aged men who likely

wouldn't get much attention anyway if they ever went out, but yet they seem to be

terrified about exposure. When I went back and added the bear suit, initially I was going

to draw a clown costume, and that's probably how he ended up with the big clown shoes.

But they oddly balance out the bulbous proportions of the man. I think I decided to do a

bear costume because it would be more concealing than a clown suit would, as it could

be zipped up over the head. Like I mentioned earlier, I was inspired by the body of the

community artwork created by one of the participants. I would occasionally scroll

through the pictures on my computer files. I don't believe I was ever intentionally

looking to see the pictures, but I would happen to come across them and I would be

triggered by a certain detail and I would go add to the drawings I was creating. With the

body of the community, I was inspired to replicate the image drawn by one of the participants, which I found to be a clever creation. This participant basically drew a picture of human lungs, very 2-dimensional depiction, but intentionally so to as to depict a Picasso-like rendition of a cubist painting. The drawing of the lungs was segmented into geometric shapes, individually painted a different primary color. They actually had a stained-glass quality. The participant titled the piece "body of the community," indicated as a body part was the rendition of two lobes with a heart in the middle and the aorta and other veins running over the surface of the lungs. I carried this detail forward to the drawing of the man in the bear suit, hence the title "body of the community." I think I wanted to extend the drawing of the lungs and take it a step further in development by rendering a more life-like, which would also be feel like an evolution of the concept, being the concept was progressing, appearing to evolve. This routine became common, in that I would circulate, leave a piece unfinished because I knew I would come back later with new ideas to attach.

This is why some of the drawings depict images that are deeper and more layered in content and in some examples, elements of the images appear to morph from one object or form into another. Those elements that emerged in the drawing or digital images can be described as experience observed, felt and subsequently expressed. The manifestation was a creation that followed activation of potential by the seed, which would then be carried forward and allowed to take on new potential in other contexts. The variety of methods incorporated in this study are considered to be (post)qualitative methods, such as art creation events, inspired to emulate the anarchive, the drawings I created in response to the events that involved rich conversations about the current state

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of LGBTQ culture and how LGBTQ youth participants negotiate their place within that community as citizens, cultural citizens and participating members who possess a variety of subjectivities.

It is suggested this study design emulates the concept of Performance Paradigm, and it stipulates four basic perspectives (Østern, 2021). In brief, the first is understood in terms of creation and that what is generated from the study is something new in the world, regardless of researcher involvement and as a result, the research is perceived as non-representational.

The research produced can be analyzed presented and analyzed through various modes and materialities in creation. Doing research with performative approach towards languaging as well actively languaging in new ways.

The researcher is decentered and during the research process of the in-becoming. The researcher is also to be fully entangled with the research, not only cognitively capable of critical reflection but able to use his own body to engage and analyze and understand. Perceives the researcher body as a resource and outcome of the research as situated knowledge. The research operates on an onto-epistemological level and the materiality, sociality and discursivity are entangled and continuously performing on one another.

The performative paradigm is proposed in the context of a post-qualitative inquiry, and that to be the central insight of the paradigm that produces, or requires, that knowledge is a knowledge-in-becoming. That this should be a constant creation of difference and researcher entanglement with the world. After all, states Koro (2022) "qualitative inquiries do not function within a world without a difference, and they are

often conceptualized as the other, multiple, and diversified." How this applies more specifically to this study, is how it present the idea of performance. Here, the definition of performance correlates with how our own approach can be considered a performance, being that participants in the study are active during the research process, they are engaged in a "performance" of art production and they act out through gestures, intentional or not, meaning they may not be aware of their body language and movement, but for the purpose of research, there is a lot of data that can be garnered from observing their body movements. Also, a central insight produced by the paradigm, is the concept of knowledge-in-becoming as a constant source of creation and of difference during researcher entanglement with the world. Here, Learning, becoming and knowing is considered to be performative, and always in the process of becoming, which is the paradigm itself.

Manning's anarchive demonstrates an event where creative potential can be activated through art creation. A place where participants for this study can engage within a context that has the potential for being highly generative of a variety of data. This would include the art that is generated, informative conversations as well as human and material interactions that including the visual art such as the human participants and within the context of a non-method, and approach the production and research, as a non-method approach process the anarchive, in the most basic terms and illustrate why it, But as a data collection process this approach was altered due to COVID restrictions. One of the most distinct changes was the context of setting in which the artwork was created. What would have happened during an anarchive event, such as participants engaging in person with one another as well as within the context of a facility or an outdoor public

space. Instead, the art creation events took place through Zoom meeting, where each

participant engaged in the event from their respective settings, typically their own home

setting. Nonetheless, the sessions remained collaborative events in which participants

would engage in conversation that inspired the direction of the art projects while sharing

ideas, feedback and encouragement. This data creation was key in that it would impact

my own extension of the artwork, as I would later reflect on the narratives and the

particular elements inscribed into the artwork, such as symbols and semiotics and then

apply those ideas to my own art creations, adding to the layers of information. These

reflections also influenced how I would later interpret and analyze the narratives and

visual data when I would write the researcher interpretations. This can also be described

as an ongoing data analysis approach, in the process of a narrative analysis, in which the

process is marked by moments of reflection on the data that is being either generated or

analyzed (Rossman & Rallis, 2016) and how the contexts of where the storytellers are

positioned impacts the possibilities and limitations of the storyteller (Järvinen & Mik-

Meyer, 2020). How this process was applied in this study was shaped by different micro-

processes which included reading through the data, taking notes on key structural and

content events within narrated stories, transferring main narrative ideas to flow charts

drawn in Ndesign, revisiting data and clustering groups of narratives in themes and

subthemes, which later were categorized as main and sub narratives. This was then

followed by structuring data maps I would create using Ndesign, a process also utilized

to identify main and sub narratives, as well as where I would indicate subjective shifts

found in the data. Part of the discovery process was how the context of the narrative

revealed possibilities and limitations about the storyteller, which would mark a

connection between the immediate context of the narratives to a wider context. The initial reading of the data highlighted performative aspects revealed by the storyteller during the context of the Zoom art creation session, then those elements were connected to broader contexts that fit examples from the LGBTQ community (Järvinen & Mik-Meyer, 2020). As per Järvinen & Mik-Meyer (2020), the performative narrative analysis is not exclusive and other elements of narrative analysis are considered in the development of the narrative, such as considerations of plot, structure and theme analysis. During this process, time was taken to reflect on the narratives and the content that were identified, which inspired pencil drawings and digitally enhanced photo narratives. The digitally enhanced photo analysis began by taking photos during a walking tour of several central Phoenix locations that are relevant to the LGBTQ community, such as the downtown arts district, which is also the area surrounding the One-n-ten youth center (*See Figures 6, 8*). I wanted to capture images that might represent the local LGBTQ community in some manner, which I believe also has an impact on the youth who attend the One-n-ten location. These landmarks are murals on buildings, as well as artwork by local artists, and some sculpture as well. This was followed by a visit to the Melrose district where various businesses that cater to the LGBTQ community are located, such as nightclubs, bars, restaurants, etc. Photographic images were taken of murals, buildings, sculpture and artwork, then were digitally enhanced in photoshop to extend meaning drawn from reading of symbols and semiotics, which were inspired by the data as a creation of visual analysis. Grbich (2013) describes this process as a structural approach in which the meanings of signs and symbols are constructed and/or deconstructed as I applied through a reading of the photographs and

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artwork. Many parts of the meanings that I assigned to the participants stories were crafted and created in my art. Furthermore, I identified symbols and extended their application through a framework of my own experience as an LGBTQ individual, and artist, which, in turn, created new representations of the symbols resulting added layers of analytical insight. This aspect of taking a core story and sequentially segmenting event clauses into building blocks defined by the narrators, and then extended by a third party interlocutor, being me as the researcher and artist, defines the interactional/dyadic performance factors of where meaning transpires to the drawings and digitally enhanced photo artwork (Järvinen & Mik-Meyer, 2020). Järvinen and Mik-Meyer (2020) note that the units of analysis, consisting of content, form, interaction, and visual become a multi-party context and therefore, my involvement in the context becomes an inextricable aspect of the data that is generated because my involvement in the zoom art creation sessions and one-on-one interviews illustrate an active participation in the production and ongoing interpretation of the narrative (Järvinen & Mik-Meyer, 2020; Holstein & Gubrium, 1995). These interpretive and visual processes impact the performativity of the narratives. The drawings and digitally enhanced photos that resulted from this process subsequently extended the data as an ongoing process that would offer new meanings and insights about the perceived realities and subjectivities of LGBTQ individuals. The photos I took were then used to create digitally altered images using Adobe Photoshop, where I applied the use of filters as special effects to distort and create abstract versions of the originals, thereby extending the meaning of the original images (*See Figures 6, 8*).

Description of participants

The sample criteria for participants is largely, if not entirely, met by the youth who attend the one-n-ten Organization. One-n-ten is a Phoenix-area based nonprofit, youth organization that is dedicated to serving lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) youth ages 11 to 24. As described in their mission statement, the organization offers to create a safe space, both mentally and physically, for youth of all socio-economic and cultural backgrounds, as well as offer resources to help promote healthy lifestyle choices. Participating youth are also offered access to other peers and volunteers, within a supervised setting, in which they can express their true selves in the aim for developing tools and opportunities that will increase self-esteem and self-acceptance. The sample criteria for my study included, more specifically, participants who fell in the 11-18 age range, and attended the downtown Phoenix location. I chose this age range, as this more closely reflects the junior high to high school age youth who share a more similar world-view and experiences. In addition, youth in this location generally fell into an inner-city demographic, which consists of a broad ethnic and socio- economic demographic. Selection of particular individuals also relied on participants who demonstrated an eagerness to share their experience as well as an inclination to engage in the production of group art projects. Because the youth involved are participant/researchers, the data collection process entailed participants sharing narratives of self-discovery and subjective awareness. As researchers into their own subjectivities, participants applied the visual autoethnographic approach as they considered topics discussed previous to the field trips and art creation, as well as discussion and visual analysis of visual data after it was produced. This process

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rendered a more personal and direct subjective experience as participants explored and created art during the anarchive events. Subsequent discussion/interview sessions also provide the reflective platform that helped elicit new information about subjectivity. Leavy (2018) asserts that through intersubjective negotiation, researcher and respondents connect in the unpacking of intricate performance, the art creation experience, and thereby mobilize knowledge exchange through a will to knowledge. She also suggests autoethnographic performances ignite embodied connections and understandings by method of visual connections.

In keeping with the dynamic progression of the anarchive, the process of events described were tentative and in flux. Participants were not be given strict guidelines, but instead were encouraged to consider their participation as membership in the research creation process as participant researchers. In structuring and planning of the events, it was understood that the anarchive process, as Manning describes, is a choreographed moving moment. Participants are encouraged and expected to move about freely, not to remain tethered to any particular art piece, and to interact with others to utilized each other techniques in the production of new becomings. I hoped that the experience was generative of new understandings of self and the potentials of new emergent subjectivities. With the inclusion of other elements, such as visceral reactions to field trip observations, relationalities to personal/shared objects, and the introduction and participation with community role models, the resulting artwork discussions are intended to open new understandings of subjectivity. In relation to this approach, I made the move to inject the element of unexpectedness during an ongoing event, by scheduling a visit by a prominent member of the local LGBTQ community. This visitor was well-known drag

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performer, who goes by the name of Barbra Seville, who made a surprise visit with the participants during one of the Zoom art creation sessions. The reaction of the participants reaction was sheer surprise when Barbra Seville appeared in the Zoom meeting dressed in drag. The participants eagerly greeted her with brief introductions about themselves, and quickly engaged in conversation about LGBTQ history, pop culture and representations in media, as well as stories about Barbra Seville's own involvement with One-n-ten and the impact that had on her early years as a young person living in Phoenix. Participants shared their progress with the art projects and were offered ideas on how to continue with their art, and discussions also involved citizenship and civic duty to their community. With this intervention, there was no presupposition of outcome or intention of methodology. As suggested earlier, methods such as visual autoethnography and visual analysis were only considered as methods for interpretation of data collected, but do not guide events or the research creation process. My intention as researcher participant was that I would engage in the conversations and offer my own experiences, as a source of knowledge and inspiration in the art creation events. The intention was that discussions and interviews would ultimately yield new insights, not only from what was discovered through my personal reading and creation of narratives or images, but also what that data might offer in terms of understanding future directions for the LGBTQ community. As illustrated by the drawings I produced, they were inspired by the many compositional elements contained in the participant generated artwork, the resulting images became data indicative of a self, entangled with a history shared by others living a similar experience. What resulted was a past and present self that spoke through differing registers of affective components in which recollections of past and present experience resonates

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with the current social political condition of the LGBTQ community, thus offering new insights and understandings. In effect, that the multiplicity of subjectivity was represented in relation to cultural citizenship.

Researching and storying without methods

Law's (2004) problematization of methods in social science research illustrates a current and important question about stability and linearity of methods and the role they play in creating fixed reality. Not unlike other prominent scholars who are questioning the role of methodology in qualitative research practices, Law's assertions are part of a growing consensus that traditional qualitative research practices are fundamentally limiting in that formalized methods too often lead to a predication and limiting of knowledge, particularly if garnered from contexts not beholden to conventional and normative interpretations of being (Law, 2004). In other words, conventional (formalized) methods run the peril generalizing contexts that are inherently unique, when a "one size fits all" approach is implemented. In their description, Lather and St. Pierre (2013) address the topic of humanist qualitative methodology as an assumption of a beginning. This means that the researcher/observer not only assumes a depth of entanglement that places him/her superior to and separate from the material, but also who's existence, as a knowing subject, is set to a prior event that is unavoidable for predetermining an outcome. This is the reason the anarchive as a guide intrigued for this study. Because I wanted to employ the use of arts-based techniques, such as visual art creation, I wanted the context in which the art was being generated to be as free from a preconceived approach as possible. Essentially, I hoped that the art generated would emerge naturally through

conversations and social interactions, like the one described with the visit from Barbra Seville, in a way that thoughts and ideas, as well as support and advice from other participants was generated in an "in the event" manner. A context where things happen spontaneously and elements that come into view and impact the are creation have a transactional impact, but aren't tethered to a preconceived notion of an expectation.

Similarly, through this type of assessment, many scholars are led to critique traditional humanist qualitative methodologies that rebuke traditional and formal structures inherited from a once positivist history that has long relied on pre-established categories and labels, research questions, literature reviews, data collection methods/analysis (Koro-Ljungberg, et al., 2020). Consequently, those methods are considered to create representations for purposes of validation that are considered 'valid' and 'truthful' presentations that lead only to 'single answers' (Law, 2004). Law goes so far as to suggest that, in a world caught up in ethnographies, histories and statistics; inherently composed of slippery, ephemeral, emotional and elusive or indistinct realities, conventional methods used in inquiry have the potential effect of distorting realities into what is easier to be understood and accepted, which serves only to reinforce conventional and normative ideas that are often attached to the traditional discourses of method (Law, 2004).

Law suggests, much of reality is ephemeral and elusive, therefore there it should be expected that there are no single answers. In order to address the messiness of reality, we must therefore teach ourselves to think in new ways that will subsequently lead us to practices that become relational in new and different ways some may consider unusual or

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unknown to social science (Law, 2004). The key approach to this project involves Law's suggestion of (methodological) openness. Openness to new forms of knowing that may lead us to embrace whatever new and unusual forms or embodiments emerge, which will also require us to use our own sensory perceptions, such as tastes, hungers, discomforts or pains, and ultimately allow us to rethink previous ideas of clarity we associate with our own perceptions of reality, and what is "normal." Through this, Law suggests that techniques of 'deliberate imprecision' help put us on a trajectory for rethinking what we already know, how far that reality extends and how or whether it still makes sense when applied to other contexts (Law, 2004).

In the process of realizing subjective positionings, notions of subjectivity become enacted because as it is called upon the individual to become attuned to the possibility of a multiplicity of realities that exist in our world. This concept coincides not just with the identification of a singular reality, being that a particular process may incorporate multiple methods for the identification of one thing, but rather that it opens up the possibility of recognizing any or all possible alternatives (realities) for being (Law, 2004). For the creation of a subjective self, my hope is that this effort, a non-method that involves the anarchive, presents (learned strategies) that lead to a broader and more inclusive society. The anarchive, as it presents a process of discovery, allows the participants to question and inquire in a fair and honest manner. This (post)qualitative direction calls to mind several key characteristics of queer theory. The predominant feature being a refusal of labels and fixed, or singular realizations of reality, fosters openness willingness to engage/subscribe to divergent lines of flight, as the anarchive process allows a treatment of data in which representations of both human and non-

human elements are considered (Manning, personal communication). Such as in Law's (description) of the possibilities the indefiniteness of the out-thereness opens up. Law's notion of a (post-method) approach, a process of "thinking through modes of crafting" (Law, 2004. p. 116), is emblematic of the process proposed through the anarchive. Law asserts a fundamental flaw of (traditional) methods approaches as being biased against the process of discovery and in favor of an end product. Law contends that an exploration on the various ways in which realities are created, such as the process in which a cake is cut, is not to only consider the means to an end, but also the alternative possibilities of what may occur during such a process, thus considering the uncertainties and undecidabilities as an ontological process that reveals possibilities beyond the expected and helps divert a push towards singularity (Law, 2004). As St. Pierre (2018) asserts, a refusal of method means a refusal of capture. This notion, fundamental to the basic tenets of queer theory and how notions of sexuality and sexual identity are fluid, should resist adherence to singular labels or categorizations. Moreover, how institutional definitions of a subject should identify extends beyond the predeterminations that might be imposed through methods.

In thinking about the creative process during art creation, I was inspired by Manning's concept of technique, which she also defines as a technicity (Manning, 2016). I decided to apply this concept as it relates to the group collaboration of LGBTQ youth as they engage in art creation and explore if and how those engagements produced acts of harmonization. In Manning's description, technicity operates in a multiplicity of modes that are unlimited in range and application, which subsequently act as a catalyst for the activation of a "choreographed" movement shared by the participants that "become a

modality for creating out of a system of techniques the more-than of systems (Manning, 2013, p. 32). In essence, the "technique" or "techniques" that emerge as the process of doing something most typically resulting out of repetition. Manning (2018) describes this application of technique as, "making-operational of conditions of emergence that work as platforms for relation" (p. 5). The forms created by the technicity may then branch off in a trajectory of unlimited directions and potential to impress upon the other participants a response in return, such as a Tango dance performance is evidenced by techniques that, after activated, divert into other directions of movement that may be new and unexpected (Manning, 2007). In effect, directions that lead to new understandings of the subjective self. With respect to what this means for this study, the location for these events was first intended to take place in the context of a youth group center. A place that unavoidably presents a context for subjective formation, such as the influence of the institution, peers, mentors, LGBTQ community elements that seep into this environment. Similarly, the classroom or art studio setting, offered by the (1n10) classroom has an impact on the subjective formation, and realization, of the participants.

Because of the impact and restrictions set forth by the COVID pandemic, this factor changed. Consequently, the data collection process for this study became limited in that participants could no longer interact with each other and their physical environment. This is not to say that the intention was to have the element of environment, such as the (1N10) location, to have an influence on the course and results of the study, but no less the dynamics of what happened when individuals/participants interact with each other, in person, was now being altered. As a result of what became common practice for people to be able to communicate with each other subsequently became our only option for

proceeding with the data collection portion of the study. The use of Zoom, an technological application for "video conferencing" meetings became the means for conducting data collection, where the participants logged into an event and "entered the event," from their respective settings. The impacts of this application will be further discussed in the findings section. Otherwise, all other pre-planned, preparational methods continued to be the same, such as making sure all participants had access to and sufficient artistic materials and mediums, which of course, the material and medium choice was left open to their choosing. In this event, because anything new that comes into the realm of the forum had the possibility of having an impact on the artful progression of the event and what would be generated, such as the resulting artwork, poems and conversations, was therefore welcomed as a seed of process.

These creative turns were expected, by means of affective influence that each participant would bring with them, to have an impact as springboards that would inspire new directions of creative flow (Cseh, et al., 2015). The art objects and the subsequent evolution then carried forward, through affect, into other art creation sessions which would undoubtedly influence what would emerge during those events. As this process unfolded during an art creation event, participants, as performers, would then collaborate in discussing ideas that would both relate or not relate and thus impact the art being created. It should be addressed that questions presented by the research, also considered a method of verbal cueing to generate discussion on a particular topic, never involved topics specific to the research questions. All conversation in which the research engaged was not coercive in any way that asked for direct response from the participants, but instead based on immediate ideas that came into view and were intended to maintain a

steady flow of dialogue. The data generated from the art creation sessions, such as all conversations, dialogue, artwork produced, zoom video footage, was collected and (archived) on the secure server so that it could later be transcribed as data for further analysis, such as the text transcriptions that were later incorporated in the textual and visual story narratives. This process was significant to the idea of subjective creations because of the effectiveness in garnering insight about individual participant expressions of self, autonomy and their subjective positionings in relation to others, such as peers, family members, LGBTQ community members, and the larger cultural citizenship, all within the context of a group event.

As a theoretical framework, queer theory helped undergird philosophical concepts I was interested in learning about, regarding Bodies and Orientations, as proposed by Ahmed (2006). These bodily orientations were also carried forward by Manning in how she described the artfulness as an event as a process. Through these kinds of explorations, Manning asserts that opportunities arise for artful transgressions where new shapes emerge that offer glimpses of understandings. Through this event, she also indicates what is generated is a set of tools that can be carried forward to be used in newand different applications. That these tools can serve as lures that help generate new events throughout different contextual settings.

My hope was that LGBTQ youth, when presented with a similar forum where they could engage openly and without expectation, would help generate insight as the artfulness of an event develops and that they would tap into their own arsenal of tools that reside within. Tools they already possess, which would help inform through exploration and/or discovery of their subjectivities, in the context of a collective engagement in a

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group. The intention of using Manning's concept was to place participants in a setting where the event catches participants in the immanence of experience and they tap into the immediacy of knowledge and experience they carry with them to generate new creations, ideas, conversations (Manning, 2013). Therefore, an anarchive-like approach resembles an event where, despite limitations set forth by the medium of communication and interaction (zoom meetings), participants engage without pre-established expectations. Each participant was allowed to utilize whatever art supplies and medium they chose, as well as being allowed to engage in the event in whatever manner they chose and whatever conversational topic that emerged. Because the art sessions were continuous, it was common for conversations to begin with touching on a topic from the previous session. The overall process did not adhere to any predetermined structure or preplanned expectation, although I would occasionally pose a particular question or topic of conversation as a cue to continue the flow of conversation, but no questions were ever posed to purposely generate response to the research questions. Because of this, the approach of "kicking off" an event was not based on an inclination of predetermined methods.

This "non-method" approach aligns with a basic notion of Queer theory that rebukes predetermined categorizations or labels, often imposed on by methods that are oftentimes believed to predetermine an outcome. It was hoped the non-method approach would limit the effects of predetermined categorization set forth by methodology. The expectation was that discussions and actions the participants engaged in would be driven by what emerged naturally, including the sharing of personal beliefs or ideas, and that the individuality of the participant was encouraged even if it deviated from social norms and

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expectations. There was also no expectation that what resulted would not resemble a methodological application of a conventional method, or anything that could be associated with pre-established methodological practices, but at the very least, the intention was to not engage in the event with a mindset of expectations that are commonly set when a predetermined method is applied. At best, this can be described as an experiment on engagement through non-methods, particularly as it would apply to the context of a digital communication format of a Zoom meeting session, and the insights this could provide about the use of alternate data collection methods. As Manning describes the anarchive event, or how it is interpreted for this project, is that the art creation event was intended to offer an open forum in which participants were able to tap into the immanence of their potential and what emerged through conversation or art creation was based on the experience at hand and in action. It was hoped that this forum would offer a place where multiplicities would come into view and subsequently offer deviations from a previous self and subjective understanding of self. What was also hoped for was that this forum, a digital zoom encounter with other participants, would become engaging and that resulting conversations and art production would allow a small group of LGBTQ youth to openly and freely explore possibilities and new realizations of subjectivities to help them consider alternate paths previously presented as a deviation from the norms and expectations of norms set forth by the expectations and conventions of a straight world – a straight path. As with the examples described by Manning's anarchive, where participants engage in art production, here too the art production was a tool – not a conventional method – of activating the immediacy of the event and a place in which all elements became part of a choreography of movement that worked in tandem

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in the generation of new ideas and creations (Manning, 2013). These actions and events continued to serve as lures that generated new events throughout different settings, or as Law describes, what puts us on a trajectory for rethinking what we already know, but also how far it travels and how or whether it still makes sense in other locations (Law, 2004), in which LGBTQ youth reside and express their collectivity as subjective individuals. The anarchive, as a theoretical alignment with Queer theory, offered strong methodological and practical possibilities. In this respect, I believe this non-method approach presented a forum in which a multiplicity of deviations occurred and where LGBTQ youth were allowed to explore, in regard to their subjectivity and consider alternate paths that may have deviated from the norms of a social community.

Anarchived models

The approach of non-method in this study is defined by the model anarchive offers as a concept previously explored through applications relating to process philosophy by Manning, particularly with her work involving the "Sense Lab" (Manning, personal communication). Further application has been adopted by other contemporary academics and philosophers, such as Springgay (Springgay, 2018) where much of her work now encompasses and pushes the realms of post- qualitative research. What is interesting for me, about the use of the anarchive, is that by means of its openness to method, or rather "non-method," the contexts in which the anarchive can be applied offers limitless and unrestricted possibilities for what can be learned when directed towards a particular focus. In this case, an exploration of subjectivity as LGBTQ youth and social citizenship. The anarchive takes shape as a "set" of events that occur within an enclosed environment. The exploration takes place within the bounds of a singularly

determined site of exploration, such as the Senselab, and although the setting of these experiments are not limited to a particular culture, group, society or national setting, there is a certain limit of scope. Regardless of these distinctions, the technique and application of the anarchive remains largely the same throughout a broad variety of applications, regardless of who or where it may be applied. The previously stated "alignment" with queer theory asserts there is a strong correlation with the openness of the anarchive and its refusal of "capture," as in the refusal of method, the same way precepts of queer theory are based around the notion that sexuality is largely fluid and does not claim or offer categorization to any one particular form of subjective identification. This functional and philosophical alignment offers an innovative approach for exploration that encompasses the realm of post-qual perspectives that are beyond the subjective and offer the opportunity to experience individuations (Manning, 2007) that present themselves in a continuous state of flux.

In Manning's description of force-form event as the occasion of experience as an embodied relation of experience where many things come together (Manning, 2016). Because there is no a priori, or connecting thread of experience, there is no generalized concept of process there are no limits placed upon the potential of being, as well as what may become (Manning, 2018). Interestingly, the fluidity of application and openness to methods and tools that hold the capacity to become transformed take on new forms as the need arises. This, as Manning describes, is the process of the artfulness of an event. These explorations present an opportunity for the artful to transgress and thus allows new shapes to emerge and offer glimpses of understanding that become generative tools carried forward in new and different applications.

Because it is suggested the anarchive offers unique and practical possibilities, such as inquiry that is not restricted to any particular form or method, the non-method approach then, even as it takes place in a digital forum (zoom session), allows the utilization of elements unique to the LGBTQ youth in how they construct subjectivity. As Manning proposes, the idea that technique becomes the operational factor is a key element in that it operates in a multiplicity of modes, unlimited in range and application and function as a catalyst for the activation of technicity. As participants engaged in conversation and art production, the Heuristic process became generative of new understandings, new knowledge, and was therefore very powerful in the revelation of subjective creation and awareness of other subjectivities not previously considered by the participants. Manning (2018) describes this application of technique as, "making-operational of conditions of emergence that work as platforms for relation" (p. 5). This methodological tool explores technique and which was utilized by the participants to conceptualize their subjectivity in the philosophical terms of technique and technicity. This was used for identifying everyday procedures relevant to their lives as functioning citizens, which also became the basis of technologies of the self. For LGBTQ youth, this context of intersectionality was significant because it helped the participants position themselves within a larger homogenous society. This intersectionality, as a concept, also helped participants define their current understanding of subjectivity within the larger community and helped them position their subjectivity in terms of not only how they fit into their community (and larger society), but also what roles they realized they were responsible in assuming as cultural citizens. It was through this creative potential and the agency that certain elements came into view that informed each one of their uniqueness

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as a member of the LGBTQ community. Manning (2018) describes the use of technique as a "making operational of conditions of emergence that work as platforms for relation" (p. 5). Similarly, the context of activities performed in the art (zoom) sessions, the LGBTQ youth to developed and made operational elements that became generative as new forms to be carried forward. In some instances, the use of technique, or techonology of the self, became a realm largely adopted by LGBTQ youth and they were highly inspired to make their mark. By applying this agency, participants tapped into their individual talents and abilities to the generation of new creations of self and perceptions of subject. Manning (2013) describes this process as the formation of objects in "becomings" of more than just what it does; a new speciation that calls forth implicit forces which effectively act as conduits that create vectors of force that impact on the object's capacity for the becoming of a more-than.

In this context, creativity became a pivotal and important element that produced the subject, either born of technique, conversation, performance, or art creation, which resulted in an artifact that was (pregnant) and alive as it manifested through the continuous (in act) reshaping, while being honed and pushed forward. These artifacts were the result of an "outdoing of technique," which was manifested in various forms; new technologies of self, subjective realizations, and artwork that offered insight about the self and history of the community. Through this process, Manning (2018) also describes an occasion of acquaintance with which techniques – or a place in which a technique that subtracts differently – and becomes an "engagement with the seeds of a process without re-embalming those seeds into a digestible, representational form" (p. 6). This proposes that as a course for entering in the middle, as is described in an anarchive

event, allows participants to produce their own account of experience, which is that of being pulled in more than one direction at once (Manning, 2018).

A method approach

The amount of data collected turned out to be rather extensive and richer than I had first imagined. Because the events took place through the technological application of Zoom, this proved to be beneficial in that not only was all the dialogue during the art sessions captured in digital form, but also an extensive amount of video footage. This made data collection easier than the initial plan, which would have included setting up a video camera and tripod at some location within the physical space of the art sessions, as well as relying on the video camera/cameras and field notes to capture as much as possible about the discussions taking place, sharing of ideas amongst participants and then parsing out all those elements into distinguishable fragments that could later be processed and transcribed for further analysis. Instead, all dialogue was captured, then easily transcribed through a digital transcription service, and video footage captured individual facial and body actions as they responded to one another's commentary during the discussions. Video footage also allowed participants to hold up and share some of the artwork, as it was being generated by the participants, and individual verbal expression about their work were much easier to read. The data collection consisted of two parts, the first being the art creation events, which took place during seven Zoom sessions that lasted approximately one hour and took place once a week, with the exception of session number two and three, during the months of July and August of summer 2020, followed by a one hour one-one-one interview with the four participants. During the art creation zoom sessions, participants logged in to the scheduled meeting time and engaged in

conversation with each other that usually included topics about the community, One-n-ten events, and those topics quickly led to individual sharing of experiences relating to group events, community events and then related to family experiences regarding support with attending events, the One-n-ten youth group, summer camp and so on. These family related conversations would lead to talk about issues with family members, attitudes they were struggling with and so on. Needless to say, the talk always related to LGBTQ issues, how the participants positioned themselves in the community and how those topics impacted their artwork. After the Zoom art creation sessions were completed, individual one-on-one interviews were scheduled with each participant as a way of getting additional information or clarification about topics the participants shared during the art creation sessions. The interviews were also intended to collect more direct information about the art pieces the participants created and to document more specifically how the artwork was inspired during the art creation sessions, how their creative process flowed, explanation of symbols and semiotics, description of subjective awareness, and input about how the participants perceived their citizenship within the LGBTQ community. Participants were also asked to share, if they felt comfortable, details about disability, how they feel they were impacted and/or inspired by the art creation sessions and the interactions with the other participants.

Participants were also asked about their thoughts on the future of LGBTQ community and issues of equality. Ideas of emancipation and equality seemed to be an overarching theme as participants shared early experiences that were difficult, as well as current tensions they experience with family, peers and the school institution.

From a critical perspective, Grbich (2012) asserts that emancipation and equality can be worked towards in the process of knowledge sharing that occurs through narratives that describe the life experiences and the stories of individuals, especially for LGBTQ youth who can offer a vast richness of information as their subjective understandings are in their early stages of development. Because the original plan was to conduct in-person sessions, which would most closely resemble the anarchive, as described by Manning, but then the approach was altered due to COVID restrictions, the only reasonable alternative to unite participants for the art creation sessions would have to be a digital event, as offered by Zoom meetings. The final number of people and participants who attended the art sessions included four youth who regularly attend One-n-ten LGBTQ youth group meetings.

The narrative analysis

A factor concerning data collection methods that had been predetermined since the beginning of this study was one that placed the researcher as an (integrated) participant during the art creation creation/data creation sessions. Grbich (2012) asserts that as a pursuit of equality, the researcher should be required to become part of the group of participants during the course of a study because, as knowledge is constructed jointly through those interactions, participants are effectively exposed to the researcher's own life experiences. How this this notion applies to this study, is that I believed sharing of my own life experiences would be an essential component in contributing to the conversations and subsequent sharing of experiences during the art creation sessions. In part this philosophy comes from my personal experiences as an educator, which meant engaging and working closely with youth in a way that my own experiences could enrich

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their understanding of the creative processes, which also sometimes became part of the discussions that emerged during learning and/or art creation. This practice was common particularly when I taught civics and history classes and real-world experiences could be shared to enrich discussions of cultural citizenship. The idea of becoming entangled in the art creation sessions would be an intuitive experience from which I could draw richer, first hand understandings about the data being generated. I also felt my self-identification and subjectivities as an LGBTQ individual, inextricably tied me to the experiences and narratives lived by other LGBTQ people. This was key particularly as the art creation sessions were intended as social engagements from which human connections and interactions with others who identify as LGBTQ would generate new understandings through narratives that yield insights about the subjective positionings and cultural citizenship membership of the LGBTQ community.

The Narrative analysis came about after digital files generated from the Zoom meetings had been collected and uploaded to a secure server. Files were then categorized by date of the event and separated in into individual folders where all other data corresponding to events that could be associated as taking place during those dates, if applicable. Digital audio file, from the Zoom video recordings were then run through a digital transcription service offered by Microsoft Word online, transcripts were downloaded to the secure server and any residual data that was processed through the Microsoft website were removed and deleted. After the files were uploaded to their respective and dated folders on the secure server, a transcription "cleanup" process was done to each individual transcript, cross-referencing with original audio to clarify and/or correct any mis-read or interpreted text and meaning that commonly occurs through the

automated digital transcription process. The next step, after transcribed files had been cleaned, I read through the transcripts to begin identifying clusters of meaning that could be categorized into individual narrative sections. After reading through the transcripts several times, I began to identify meaning clusters and created main headings for each. This narrative clusters process was borrowed from Järvinen & Mik-Meyer (2020), which I utilized their approach for sense-making after a "core story" has been determined, such as my main heading categories, and in which the participants' dialogue could contribute deeper meanings related to the topic described by the main heading. As per Järvinen & Mik-Meyer (2020), I developed a list of sentences and sentence fragments taken from the transcripts that related to the larger conversations I defined as main narratives. As this process developed, I realized various sub-narratives would emerges from each individual transcript. I then began to identify smaller sub-narratives that would fall under the category of a larger, or main narrative. The sequencing of events consisted of a deductive approach in which there was no preconceived notion of what I would be looking for, but rather the richness of the text itself and the stories being told during the conversations that emerged in the Zoom art creation events, became revelatory and insightful gleaning interesting perspectives from the participating youth. Another technological element that I utilized to help organize the data that was emerging, was the use of a document (*See Figure 1)* that I created through the use of a digital application, Ndesign, that allowed me to apply my creativity with a graphic design approach in developing a visual system of information "architecture." An graphic design strategy for identifying and categorizing information in a visual format that depicts relation and hierarchy, as well as a directional flow of narrative and the expressions of subjectivity. The way the system was structured

resembled a "thinking map" in which categorized information is placed within a linear process and particular events can be identified and highlighted. I used this approach to not only lay out the directional flow of a narrative, meaning that the stories being told had a beginning, middle and end, as well as I identified and included subjective positioning shifts. The subjective positioning shifts were places within the narrative where a realization and expression of subjectivity, of the participant, could be tagged, labeled and described. The idea behind this was that subjective creation, as results from the flow of power relations (Scott, 1992), is a characteristic of subjective perceptions an individual carries within himself, but emerges during certain contexts thus making itself evident. It is during those revelatory experiences, where a participant makes a statement that reinforces a subjectivity, that I illustrated a change in flow of direction within the narrative flow chart. I did this mostly to create a visual illustration of the movements in directional flow that would offer a visual of the constant impact of subjective realization and how prevalent it becomes during an (narrative) event, or discourse.

What is interesting about laying out the flow chart of the character map was how easily my system of numbering passages from the transcripts worked in transferring information in a consecutive and summarized way that was easily applied to the character map boxes. Each passage provided the necessary information for identifying an action or thought, then I was able to determine the subjective mindset of each character, which also determined how if was either impacting, or being impacted by another character. This resulted in an interesting flow from participant to participant, and the conversations were regularly motivated by one of the participants who turned out to be the most talkative and eager to share her thoughts. Because of this participant, many

of the narratives that were derived from the transcript data revolved around a topic she had instigated, which also put the focus on her as a main character. The narratives usually began with the main character's subjective positioning as a springboard for establishing the tone of the conversation, meaning that if the subject positioning entailed talk about LGBTQ youth in a position being suppressed and under influence by power stemming from an institution, this was identified, and then developed from there as more subjectivities were revealed throughout the course of a particular narrative. How this appeared in the structure of the data maps, these subjective positions were noted and then subsequently impacted the directional flow and placement of squares indicating the subjective realization at that moment, such as: Bailee expresses her subjectivity as an influential artist. Every time there was a new subjective realization, the directional flow of the squares would change, as indicated with the arrows on the flow chart. For example, if square followed directly after a subjective shift, the direction of the conversation progressed from topic to topic as a result of subjective positioning impacted the development of topics and directions the conversation would take. Horizontal and vertical movement on the data map was impacted as a result of whether the conversation maintained a particular subjective positioning, which was indicated by a vertical flow, but if a new subjective positioning emerged, and subsequently impacted the topic of the conversation from a new perspective – being the perspective of a new subjectivity – the directional flow would move in a horizontal direction, being either left or right, which was random and depended on the space given to each main narrative to contain the flow chart within the limits of a vertical column on the data map (*See Figure 1*).

Figure 1

Data Map of Narratives and Subjective Performativities
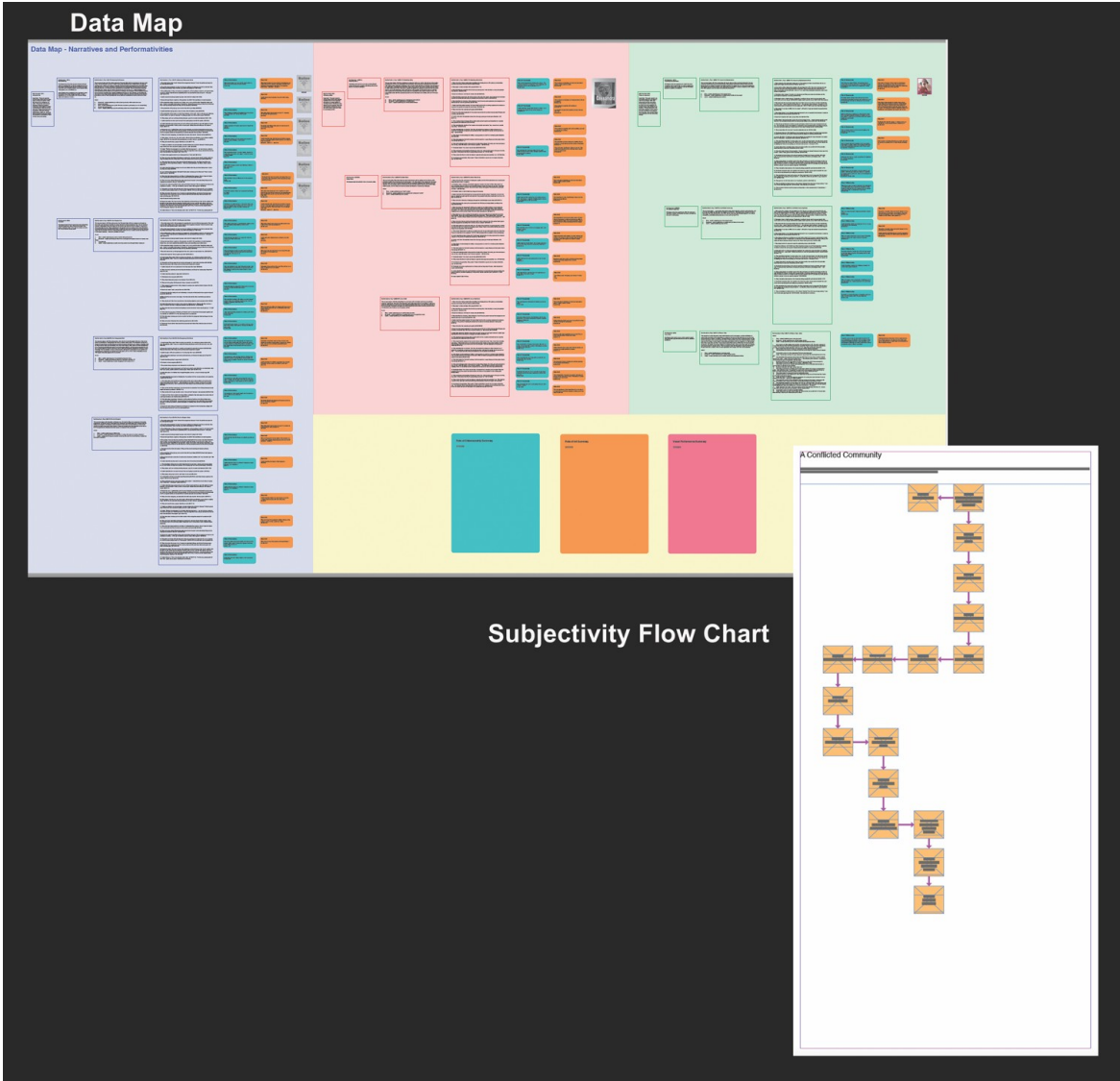
A visual analysis

In reference to Deleuze's "Anti-Oedipus," Manning (Manning, 2013) highlights a consideration that the actualization and expression of creative potential is a (force) which works against the normative pathways of neurotypicality. In application to this project, this impacts the research process and how we should consider traditional approach of how we create and view art, particularly as it applies to art creation as a method. Through conscious awareness, we apply this concept of subverting the neurotypical approach within the creative process. In working against neurotypicality, we consider other methods of experience with the artwork, such as image elicitation, and therefore discuss about an investigation of identity as not a fixed, but rather temporary form, and how it can possibly reveal new information as the researcher is emerged, consciously aware of the contradiction to fixed perceptions. Manning asserts that, what neurodiversity teaches us is that a broader set of techniques which allow us to become attuned to a "more-than", meaning to become-attuned to an ineffable modality of experience (Manning, 2013).

The research events and data analysis that transpired through this project were an experience that activated the contours of "moving forward." An experience of encountering as afforded by movement – a so-called being-moved through the creation of new drawings, inspired by conversations and artwork generated by the participants, as "complex ecology of practices," which provided the ground of experiences for greater events that resulted in new understandings (Manning, 2013, pg. 132). I believe such examples have the potential to manifest within this analysis, where observations and critique of inverted icons and/or assemblages may render new insight during the creative process, subverted and contrary to a neurotypical approach in creation. In Manning's

description of the continuity of becoming, she asserts that during a new movement, or intent, what occurs as an activation of a bifurcation that marks a shift within a process that is continuously underway (Manning, 2013); a realm of continuous becoming where there is a continuous phasing and dephasing in which "new bodies are composed in a continuous multiplicity of forms, subjectivities and new becomings" (Manning, 2013, p. 23).

Manning (2013) describes repetition as an ecology of practices. A field of events where habit and technique are essential, thus a form of repetition which effectively establishes the platform from which new diversions and multiplicities are spring boarded into existence. This emergence and dephasing of subjectivities is generally categorized as an emergence of minor gestures (replete) with a potential for becoming a major gesture, each resulting in its own unique form. At its most basic interpretation, research-creation can be described as the juncture where philosophy meets artistic process. Both terms, in their own right, retain a singularity joined only through a hyphenation which opens up a "differential between making and thinking" (Manning, 2016). In essence, the research-creation process embodies an approach of inquiry and knowledge creation that extends beyond the "traditional" forms of academic inquiry based solely on linguistic and language-based evaluation. Hence, in this study, the experience of research creator, the artist, is analyzed and observed for the very purpose of creating new knowledge as it is linked to the philosophies and theories that drive our methods. By visual analysis, and entanglement, we aim to achieve a better understanding on themes of identity by asking the artist: what concepts of self are carried in the advent of a project? how do perceptions of self-change during the creative process… etc. As Manning (2016) describes, the

creative process as a journey of events, at one point leading to a cross-road where the participant experiences a state of flux. As a result of the creative process during portrait-making, in the space of flux where the concept of subjectivity is suspended, new representations of subjectivity emerge – a plethora of multiplicities with which the artist has to contend, and subsequently decide which to choose for representation, expression, and knowledge creation. In portrait making, this event presents a threshold activity. A physical act, that involves movement, provides the setting for the subconscious transfer to occur where the previous concept of subjectivity detaches from the tether of its previous embodiment, encounters a transversal experience where multiplicities of subjectivity emerge and subsequently attach to a new representation, an embodiment of self. Through this research creation process, I gained an understanding of what happened to the artist's subjectivity, and perception of self during these events of transversality. Our very own lives and experiences, interactions and cultural influences contribute to the social construction of the various forms we choose to adopt as our own. These multiplicities enter the creative process and present themselves untethered to both previous and future bodies of existence (See also Deleuze and Guattari, 1994). This research creation helped further participants' and my understanding, leading to conclusions that informed the events that occur during events of transversality, thus affirming or dismissing previous notions of self, as described by the artist.

By means of the research creation process, we as the researcher/observer entangle ourselves into the research analysis process as a springboard from which new data is created, hence the extending of visual elements derived from participant generated artwork that result in the layering of new narratives, drawings and images manipulated in

Photoshop. As a form of elicitation, what is provoked is the creation of new drawings that may or may not directly tie to new previous or future dimensions of understanding. When the artwork was analyzed, the researcher created new drawings as a response and subsequently establishes a new analysis for interpretation of emerging subjectivities. This analytical move was based on the notion that the experiences of art-making offers a space, between identifiable categories of subjectivity, where multiplicities come into play that have the tendency to untether previous and future bodies of existence as well as past notions of self. This creative movement also presented opportunities for new subjectivities to be generated and realized, which also may have resulted in moving forward as shifting representations of self are realized (see, Deleuze and Guattari, 1994).

The visual content analysis in this study is a (consideration) of how multiplicities of visual variables link together to offer insights about notions the participants carry with them as a consistent set of realities, how they perceived their subjectivities within the community and the roles they come to assume as cultural citizens. These may be reflections about how they feel they are represented throughout contexts of their community as well as mainstream settings. This subsequently helps participants convey those perceptions through the art they create and also becomes instrumental in the symbols create that can also be linked to generalized cultural expressions that can be visually or textually identified and compared within the contexts of language one observes from their respective context.

These symbols, such as the rainbow colors, lungs representing the body of the community, the foot marching forward, the fist representing empowerment, etc. then are appropriated and can be identified through the context of the artwork generated by

the participants. These identifiable variables can be categorized as visual content that is explicitly, and more or less unambiguously, defined as reliable evidence of a relevant hypothesis due to consistency of their applications (Van Leeuven & Jewitt, 2001). This is important because the identifying of "values" or "variables," as is demonstrated through the researcher interpretations and drawings. Discussion of variables, such as the use of the rainbow flag, feeds into an analysis in which independent elements hold purposeful and unique meaning and cannot be confused with other variables that would render them redundant (Van Leeuwen & Jewitt, 2001). This approach isn't limited to creating categories, but rather to identify elements (variables) that were independent from one another and identify threads that connect layers of meaning as they emerge through the conversation narratives and artwork being generated. The acknowledgment and recognition of unique variables that appear through the data analysis help bolster reliability of what is being asserted about subjectivity creation and realization, how they repeat (which reinforces validity) and feeds into understanding the perceived realities experienced by the participants and therefore produce a richer understanding the participants, including the art that was generated. In the following paragraphs, I briefly describe and list compositional elements that are utilized for describing artwork. The list of compositional elements that are traditionally used in consideration for analyzing artwork is extensive and I intend not to capture it all here. Rather, I briefly offer a glimpse of what is considered to be the makeup of a traditional piece of visual artwork, and then describe how those elements were categorized and/or applied to a structure of visual analysis that would become instrumental in this research approach. The list is extensive, but I ultimately identified three categories that would embody and help

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categorize some of the more salient compositional elements, which were semiotic visual analysis, content analysis and representation

Putting words into art

Throughout the analysis process of this project, a primary objective was to "deconstruct" images for deeper meaning (Grbich, 2013), in effort to transfer and extend the meaning of elements drawn from those "dissections" and appropriate some of those elements into new contexts which made up part of the content of the resulting drawings/photographs created by the researcher. The visual analysis for this project (employed) the use of traditional methods such as making overall assessments of the artwork generated by the participants, such as producing overall assessments and descriptions of the artwork and compositional elements as well as conducting a closer, focused look at those same compositional details to make connections with the art the researcher created as an inspiration from that participant generated artwork. The descriptions presented in this project offer (somewhat) generalized impressions of the artwork that helped define structures and use of visual elements, such semiotics, symbolism, content, presentation, context, text analysis, iconography and so on. Manning (2016) describes art creation as the creation of knowledge, which leads us to a new level of knowledge creation, an entanglement of process and creation that yields new insights and understanding through its process. an upward trajectory. What are traditionally considered as compositional elements of art is extensive and varies from what is seen on the surface to the actual physical makeup of the medium and materials used by the artist. Compositional elements that were observed and analyzed consisted of many components that would feed into the identification of a unique variable, such as when the depiction of a

symbol was observed, and it could be determined that the execution offered a distinct and unique meaning not associated with other similar executions that likely had a different meaning. These kinds of symbols, although may look different from others, hold enough similarity in visual elements that connect them toother recognizable symbols seen in other artwork or contexts outside of a visual piece of artwork, such as on an advertisement or television (Leeuwen & Jewitt, 2001). This method of identifying key elements, such as symbols that emerged, either through repetition within the contexts of the artwork being generated or comparative links that could be made to symbols regularly seen (out in the world) was key in that those elements were used to generate the researcher drawings I produced as a process of layering that occurred throughout the narrative and visual analysis portions of this study. Although artist's intent can arguably be described as the basis for inspiration in what the participants created, particularly as they artwork resulted from conversations based on LGBTQ issues, more specific attention can be paid to these compositional elements found within the artwork, such as style/genre, execution, cultural appropriation, tone, mood, and placement that can more clearly help inform about the particular use of semiotic elements (*See Figure 18*). In this approach, contextual connections were made with LGBTQ history, including any other topics participants discussed, and were inclined to help provide insight on the research questions. Through this process, traditional methods of visually analyzing artwork were used to help identify how the artwork spoke to the research questions undergirded the framework those readings.

The researcher interpretations both in written form and illustrated drawings were extensions that add helped add to the various players of data in ways that related to

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execution, color choice/scheme, etc., and subsequent researcher interpretations utilized those traditional compositional methods to help provide specific insight about why the participants may have chosen a particular color, or secondary/tertiary color choice, placement of images, iconography, semiotics, etc. Also, interpretation of applications used in brush stroke, canvas/support choice, framing, medium (oil, tempera, watercolor, etc.), help generate considerations about how and why the artist may have chosen to express certain emotions of effects through the artwork. By analyzing those compositional elements, it made it easier to summarize and explain why a piece of artwork was created and how the different parts of the image together as a whole. Attention to placement is particularly powerful, as Van Leuwenn and Jewitt (2001) suggest that consideration of placement of objects on the canvas can be tied to cultural conventions that help explain the reasoning behind the artist's choice, such as the example how western writing conventions dictate the reading of information from right to left and how that convention reinforces a reading of values stating that "information placed on the left is thought of as a given, as opposed to information placed on the right indicates new information" (p. 148). How those elements work together, such as color, line, shape and positioning of elements, offers insight on the compositional impact of how the art that was generated was effective in conveying meaning. Techniques, such as the creation of mood, lighting, depth, symmetry, balance and placement of objects within the canvas. The placement, or use of designated fields, called framing (Van Leeuwen & Jewitt, 2001), are intended to either emphasis or impact by conveying a particular meaning contained within that field. Sometimes those field are literally framed using boundary lines, or other design elements that indicate demarcations, such as the surface

area of a face on a canvas may be utilized include elements that convey a particular

meaning, whereas the field area around the face is used to convey different meaning This

approach may be more obvious and easily read than others, such as the use of a bright

color to draw attention to it, which renders it more salient by means of becoming a

dominant feature on the canvas (Van Leeuwen & Jewitt, 2001). The use of texture,

semiotics and any identifiable use of theory, symbolism, ideology, and how those

elements were portrayed through the structural elements of the piece. The use of

metaphor as well as the mood and general feeling about the piece. How this was

emphasized through the use of color, line movement/shape, object/subject choice, setting,

lighting, time of day. Temporal elements, such as time or period in history and expression

of the human condition.

With regard to the research questions, this analysis aimed to help shed light on the

topics of citizenship, subjectivity, temporality of participant, cultural citizenship. Sufficed

to say, the various compositional elements just described were carried with me, the

researcher, as I revisited the data, entangled with it and can be described as a process that

ebbed and flowed in a somewhat unstructured fashion. The reason for this inconsistently

can best be explained by saying that this was a learning process as well as a pushing of

boundaries that were new and sometimes uncomfortable. Personally, the creative process

for me has always entailed a (certain) detachment from what was perceived as a

structured world, often with specific expectations that all too often feel restrictive and

intimidating. In this project, I was forced to contend with the merging of two worlds, the

textual and the visual. Not only was this disruptive for the ways in which I had once

approached creating art, but it also meant having to contend with making sense of

different ways of looking at a set of information, a new way of looking at reality. What emerged was a process that was highly generative.

The drawings, which became representational of the textual data, became a process that resulted from a sifting through the data, a going back and forth to make connections which resulted in the drawings themselves revealing new insights about the textual data and how it was being interpreted. In a way, the drawing process clarified and helped identify key aspects about the textual data that helped illustrate key elements that were informative about the research questions and (beyond). How this process can best be described is, as mentioned earlier, an ebb and flow where text from the transcripts is written into narratives, subsequently inspires visual ideas from which translations are turned into drawings with pencil and paper, or in the case of the photo creations, the digital format of photoshop commands alter and shape photographic material into new and sometimes abstract interpretations (*See Figures 6, 8*). This process would pick up speed, and which alsoacted as a temporal element that impacted the manner in which data was understood and interpreted. The reading of textual data often moves at a faster pace, but then the process is suddenly slowed down as drawing tends to require more attention and a slower and deliberate focus can turn turning into hours of laser-focused attention to certain details.

As Van Leuwenn and Jewitt (2001) describe, this process of identifying representation is revelatory not only in that it helps prioritize and identify salient information, but also helps to identify ways in which shared representations are viewed differently by individuals and what representations may include or exclude. Through this process, the perspectives of producers and viewers come into play in how narrative and visual data is

interpreted, thus creating layers created from both perspectives. This method of "blurring the lines," can be described as shifts in modality, where the concreteness of what a photographic image conveys becomes more abstract, such as when a photographic image is manipulated in Photoshop to alter colors, textures, boundaries, and so on, to create a more "organic" and abstract image which offers new directions of interpretation (Van Leeuwen & Jewitt, 2001). This process also applies to the instances where photo narratives were utilized interchangeably with the pencil drawing approach. This was in part due to my comfort in using both mediums for creative expression. As mentioned earlier, there are times when I tend to become absorbed with the drawing process, which through the deliberate actions of sketching, slow the pace down and draws attention to a more tactile experience of discovery which becomes a creative process evoked by a course inspired by what the pencil drawing generates. This aspect in itself becomes a mode of expression that is guided by the boundaries of what can be stated by the pencil mark on paper. Movement, texture, marking spark new directions of discovery and creations that depict the symbols I carry in my mind that can become even more fluid and organic than what a digital application, like photoshop, can produce. The photographs taken around the community perform as springboards from which those same ideas, such as the symbols, semiotics, and representations carried from the reading of narratives and visual data, become new layers that happen with a less fluid control than the pencil drawings and also become more definitive statements (Van Leuwen & Jewitt, 2001). What is generated from the digital application is more instant and representational, but then can be easily manipulate through a photoshop filter to alters the definitiveness of the image. Because the original representation is altered, a new perspective can emerge with

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offers new directions of understanding from an altered view of previous and fixed perceptions.

Mastering a narrative

The data analysis process involved identification of key points that became "road markers" used to plot a course for the narrative. The Mastering Performance narrative was derived using this process, in reading through transcripts collected from Zoom video recordings which comprise the data collection for this project. From the researcher observations, notes and reading through the data, one of the things that impressed me is how well the participants express confidence and awareness of their individual capacities. Participants shared their ideas and past experiences as LGBTQ youth, which inspired creation of work that is responsive to social issues that concern them and their community. These conversations and art projects speak a language that feels familiar to the youth participants and represents thoughtful understandings of art, ability and talent as it may be applied to real-world issues. Personal awareness of LGBTQ struggles and history are used to negotiate understandings of self and come to new subjective awareness. Because of this, I found it fitting to create a master narrative that highlights this element. During the data analysis process, I created a master template worksheet that includes a series of narratives that illustrated a variety of themes drawn from the data. The sub-narratives that fed into the master narrative included The Ransom Note, Pomegranate Shirt, The Art of Support, Stellar Roles, and Care of Self. I chose these sub-narratives to be integrated with the Mastering Performance narrative because they specifically detailed how participants realized their talents and subjectivities as artists and citizens within the LGBTQ community.

As I immersed myself in the data analysis and identification of story narratives, I was inspired to create visual illustrations that extended my reading of the data. In this process, I drew pencil sketches that depicted combinations of expressions from the narratives as well as my own views and experiences as an LGBTQ individual. The drawings became creative explorations elicited by the ideas and concepts being discussed in the narratives. As I sketched out the images, I contemplated my own relationalities to the LGBTQ community, its history, the current state of social politics as described by the participants, temporal implications and various other thoughts that occurred. When I sketched, I had a difficult time producing rough sketches, as I'm inclined to develop vivid details in the drawings and therefore find myself producing more developed drawings, as opposed to what is considered "sketching." Because of this, the attention to detail allowed me to explore in a more investigative fashion about what was being produced, which often led to drawings that were richer, with deeper details and connections to other parts of the drawings, emphasizing their symbolic connections. I like to refer to my style of artwork, whether it's pencil drawing or painting, as surrealism. What intrigued me about producing drawings that relate to the data, are the possibilities of distorting identifiable images which led to new suggestions of meaning. This process can be described as a creative advance in which new forms are co-constituted by previous forms (Whitehead, 1938). Through the making of surreal images, I enjoyed toying with whimsical expressions that played with the possibilities in developing storylines for the narratives. In this case, the narratives helped create the basis for some of the drawings I produced, thus extending the meaning of what I encountered through the data. I also created photo narratives, in

which I took photographs from locations around downtown/central Phoenix, including

the informally designated LGBTQ community known as the Melrose district, used to

extend the themes from the narratives.

CHAPTER 5

A STORIED APPROACH

Figure 2

Transformative Individuations

In the following chapter, examples are presented of the main narratives and sub-narratives to illustrate how the main narrative established an overarching theme, or story, as well as how those narratives were translated into the drawings I produced. Executed in similar fashion to the hand drawn pencil sketches, I injected my personal interpretations as an LGBTQ individual and what I brought with me personally about my own experiences. As I worked on those drawings, also applied the same creative approach when processing and digitally altering the photos into Photoshop produced images as abstract representations. These art creations illustrate my own impressions, how I received the data and subsequently analyzed the data and turned it into the resulting narratives, and how I translated those narratives in consideration of my own experiences as a member of the LGBTQ community and its extensive history. The pencil and photograph creations compliment the story narratives derived from the data, and what resulted are extensions of how the participants and I view our subjectivities as LGBTQ citizens. What is depicted as well is how awareness of duty and responsibility as cultural citizens integrates with the evolution and shaping of a future for the LGBTQ community.

Masters and Supporting roles

The main narrative, mastering performance, offered several key points that were relevant. First, they helped illustrate how participants drew from personal talents in negotiating conflicts and social challenges that were presented by family members, friends, schoolmates, adversaries and so on. In effect, how participants applied their talents in self-fashioning, comic ability and artistic ability, used to help shield or push

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back against oppression. In realizing these abilities, participants described how they were impacted and thus how they may counter negative stereotypes produce by popular culture. Some of those examples include social media, video games and movies, which also led to new understandings for the study participants, and I to new narratives of subjective positionings. Through the conversations depicted in this narrative, participants expressed how possession of mastery, or a unique ability had contributed to positive self-efficacy. This subsequently allowed participants to overcome personal challenges. Also demonstrated within the context of the narratives, participants exhibited support for each other, particularly in the art creation processes that helped inspire and generate new ideas. For example, when I analyzed the data, it became obvious that Bailee, a gregarious talker, often led the conversations, leading to a variety of topics that would become the main focus of the conversations. One of the most poignant is centered around a difficult issue relating to family expressions of acceptance and tolerance.

Mastering Performances

The Mastering Performance narrative was inspired by a discussion Bailee described about a Facebook quarrel she had with her grandparents. In this instance, Bailee expressed frustration about her grandparents' narrow minded and conservative views, relating to a variety of topics including LGBTQ people, BLM, and other controversial issues of the day. Subsequently, the topic of this narrative began with a conversation Bailee and the group were having about this issue. This was then followed by mention of an idea Bailee had to write a mini essay as a response to her grandparents. As this idea developed, it grew as an inspiration beyond simply informing her

grandparents, but rather how art in general can be used to send a powerful message to the world. Examples of citizenship within the narratives also depicted how participants developed sentiments about duty to inform the public about what they believe is justified. These and other examples portrayed how the participants have negotiated understandings of sexuality, which also led to personal expressions about conflicting attitudes on the subject. The narratives inspired discussions about the ransom note design, its development, use of symbols and the execution. This also inspired other participants to chime in by describing how self-fashioning has become a central means of personal expression in their lives, as a tool used for protection and a way to push back against oppression. Participants described how they also used such tools to combat personal attacks, such as bullying or difficult social situations. The narrative conversations also led to discussions about frustrations participants feel about inequalities within the LGBTQ community. Bailee began with talking about what divides the community, such as discrimination against members with disabilities, race and marginalization of bi and trans people. This inspired other participants to share a common understanding about duties they feel as citizens, that related to the mistreatment of minorities and people with disabilities. Participants shared individual stories of awareness and overcoming challenges, which also inspired participants to present their project ideas openly leading to productive discussions of possible techniques and methods that illustrated their mastery. These expressions sometimes indicated newfound strengths for the participants, and in some cases, even disability or a perceived weakness was no longer considered a limiting factor in their abilities, such as when Bailee described how she was terrible at writing in cursive, but then realized her mathematical abilities and stated that she was a

smart student and "always got good grades anyway." This is not to say that participants always expressed a conscious realization about this shift, but rather their focus shifted from talk about a particular disability or weakness to an acknowledgement of a character trait that empowers them. In Bailee's discussion about how her inability to execute proper cursive writing was an obstacle, she then shifted the conversation to an acknowledgement of her strengths as an advanced placement math student. In a similar context, Alex indicated how autism augments their other senses. Alex also expresses the subjective positioning as an individual with autism who is empowered to correct misperceptions about the disability, as well as help others overcome their own issues with autism. These kinds of narratives illustrate an evolving awareness of strength over weakness. Altogether, the narratives I selected to be combined accentuated examples that reinforced the main narrative, especially as to how awareness of mastery became a source of empowerment. The conversations eventually concluded with talk about the current state of the LGBTQ community and with realizations of subjectivities that helped participants define roles and place within the community.

Crafting a response

In this sub-narrative, the participants were drawn to discussing art project ideas as Bailee brought up an issue she was having with her grandparents about commentary on social media regarding Black Lives Matter and the acceptance of gay people. Bailee began this conversation by complaining that she was prevented from responding to her grandparents. After her dad finally gives her the go ahead to post a response to her grandparents' commentary on social media, there was no response from the grandparents. Because the grandparents didn't respond, Bailee then decided to write a

mini-essay as a reply, in which she explained to them the reason gay people have pride celebrations. One of the arguments Bailee points out, is that gay people celebrate their pride as form of countering oppression inflicted on the LGBTQ community.

Because Bailee was frustrated that didn't get a response, she then decided she was going to make the best of a negative situation and make something good of it – make art. "I'm hmmm, I'm gonna take this and I'm gonna make art out of it 'cause I feel like there's something in there I can just feel like make art out of" *(See figure 3)*. This topic led to a group discussion about content possibilities for the ransom note and effectively began to create a framework, which later became the showcase art project for Bailee. Bailee explained how the ransom note idea came to fruition, after her mom's boyfriend made some commentary about crafting a ransom note, when Bailee asked if he had any old magazines she could use to cut up into pieces. "Basically, when this first entire thing started, I was like OK, I have some ideas. I don't really know what I wanna do. The first thing I did was I just got magazines 'cause I was like if I wanted to make words I want to use like letters from magazines and then when I asked my mom's boyfriend if we have magazines I could destroy he was like 'Are you making a ransom letter?' So now I'm like, I may work with that somehow but at the same time I think I have the perfect inspiration for the work itself."

Bailee's ransom letter project is received with a positive response from the group and she is encouraged and inspired to pursue the idea. The ransom letter becomes Bailee's showcase project that elicits deeper conversations about social issues and personal conflicts participants experience as LGBTQ youth, as well as talk about their perceptions of the LGBTQ community. During the art sessions, Cassandra gives Bailee

suggestions for the content that result in some interesting responses from Bailee. "What if it was a ransom note to your grandparents about your sexuality holding you hostage and they're scared but you're not 'cause it's something that you asked for or whatever." Bailee responds, "Well, I didn't ask for it – I don't … OK, I mean I'm happy I'm gay, but, I wasn't like please make me sexual … this sexuality. They can be gay." *(See figure 1).*

The participants demonstrated positive encouragement and support for each other in their creative efforts, which remained consistent throughout the conversations. Bailee was very enthusiastic during the discussions and she eagerly shared her thoughts that would further impact the direction of the creative process. In one instance, she detailed how certain visual elements evolved from their original concept. "I like drawing like floral stuff like doodling type flowers. That's kind of like my go to, it's like I'm either gonna draw a floating rock, or flowers, so I'm like what if I took like an envelope type thing or something that could fold up or something that put it in the middle. So, like it takes up this much space time around their flowers and then like you open it up. Like maybe it's an envelope and it opens up or like it's just like a paper that you want bold and then it has a ransom note on it. So like, it's kinda like you have to work with it - depicts two sides…"

In presenting this progress, Bailee revealed how the two-sided structure of the ransom letter came to be. Split into two halves, one side illustrating a rendition of BLM images where she explained how the government was holding the country hostage. The other side illustrated hateful rhetoric Bailee had heard coming from her grandparents. During the discussion of a two-sided structure, Bailee was inspired to extend Cassandra's

suggestion to include depictions of sexuality in the ransom letter. Bailee responded to Cassandra, "I have a bit of an idea that could play off your idea for the ransom note where it's like, 'to my grandparents for my sexuality,' what if, OK so we said we could take multiple pictures, right? So, what if and what I did was like maybe there are two notes or was double sided or something where one note is like to my grandparents, had they seen it, where it's like kind of scary words like ransom note style. Then the other could be like completely different, where it's like beautifully written and stuff and like not that I can write beautifully, but I'll try. I don't know. Maybe I try and make it look pretty or something. Basically, I channel my cottage core energy in there so that we can show like how I view my sexuality versus how they view my sexuality. Maybe that could be cool. I'm really inspired here" *(See figure 3)*. As Bailee expressed enthusiasm for her ransom letter art project and how she would depict views on sexuality, the participants became charged with new enthusiasm to share personal anecdotes of their first experiences when they realized their sexuality. This conversation evolved to a mutual sharing of first experiences of sex and sexuality, which occurred for most of them at an early age.

As participants shared how they negotiated childhood understandings of gay, Alex shared with the group that they would intently seek out other trans people so they could be taught how to be gay. "The other day, talking about how when I was a kid I like When I first found out that gay and trans people existed, I like desperately wanted to be gay, so I would like try to gain attention and approval of gay people hoping they would teach me how to be gay." In the sentiment of seeking out role models, Cassandra described how she utilized the Sims video game to create her own make-believe gay

world. How she would model make-believe lesbian characters that acted out romantic scenarios of "making out." Bailee described her first experience seeing something "gay," in which she talks about the *Call Me Maybe* video and not becoming aware of the underlying gay theme, until a later time when she fully realized the existence of gay sexuality. This section concluded with participants sharing first experiences and realizations of sexuality, which transitions to the next section, First Encounters *(See Figure 3)*.

Figure 3

Making Art Out of It
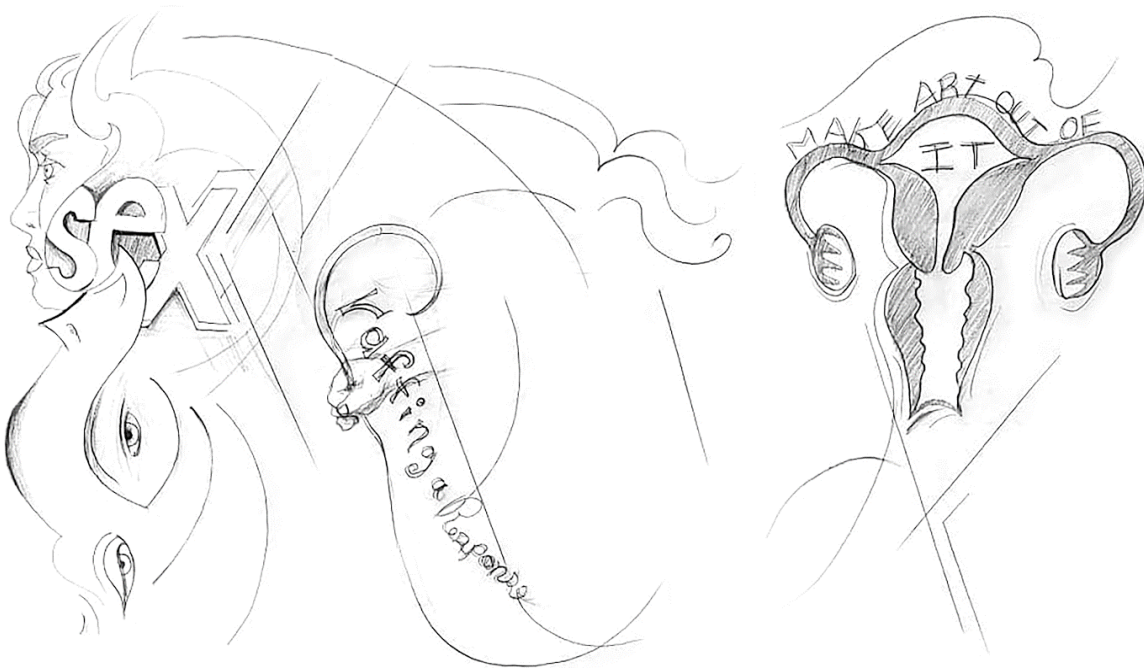
Researcher Narrative The art creation reveals an awareness of the many binaries that we live with in everyday life. In a sense, a deviation from the straight path

one is expected to follow is considered unacceptable by social standards, hence comes the notion of "deviant" (Ahmed, 2010). This concept stood out for me as the discussion involved art creation that depicts two sides. The discussion involved one side being good and the other negative. The ransom letter rendition triggered my own application of the straight path, which is not necessarily straight. The tool line runs throughout the illustrations as a connecting element, but instead the straight path becomes a curved line, nonetheless demarcating two sides. Appropriated is the concept of the straight path in the creation of a concept of a path, the curved line, but instead the curve flows gradually in natural curves, sways and sometimes turns. The folds concept, by Erin Manning, which is described as a "cuff," that marks a point of turn in direction. In my illustration, the curved line also indicates "cuffs," where the change in direction is where the line curves to a certain point, then folds back upon itself and goes in the opposite direction. Similar to Manning's (from personal communication) concept, this is where my rendition indicates a new direction. Where a continuous flow stops and becomes something different, changes direction, changes form and becomes something different that goes in a new direction.

The use of a continuous line becomes a motif that runs the length of the sections in my project. This illustrates how binary thinking, commonly used in society to set parameters of two sides, one good and one bad. That there are only two choices, the one that is right and another that is wrong (Foucault, 1988). This indicates there are always opposing views that cause tension, as the line indicates by the distinction of two sides, and that those two realms are always on opposing sides causing tension, therefore the tension results in an uneven path, as it occurs in nature in which opposing pressures shape

curvatures on a line that result as twists and turns. The symbolism of the ransom letter art project illustrates a sexuality that has been taken hostage. This representation symbolizes the tensions, conflicts, and fears that many LGBTQ youth and families/friends contend with. An interesting discovery is the realization of how divergently the topic of sex is received. In this context, being that some participants are still quite young, the idea of sex is repulsive. Which results in expressions of disgust and frustration that LGBTQ people are depicted in overly sexualized ways through mainstream media.

Another realization is how much emphasis is placed upon the idea of sex in sexuality, which diminishes and reduces an individual to a sexual being, which is often the source of stigma placed on LGBTQ individuals by heteronormative society. The purpose of the message in the ransom letter illustrates a broader problem, that although our sexuality is not a choice and we do not choose to be sexual beings, we as LGBTQ individuals are burdened with the stigmas associated with sex. What is being expressed is an expression that rebukes the norms established by discourse. That the influence of gender discourse has not been internalized and thus not been an accepted view of gender by the subject (Butler, 2002, p. 155). The right to define our own sexuality is taken for ransom. This binary, as is depicted in the ransom letter, with one side beautiful and colorful, and the other dark and ominous, also indicates the binary of a constant struggle LGBTQ people are faced with. That LGBTQ people are tasked with an ongoing duty of how they present to the world. One makes regular choices of presenting what is acceptable, being a cis-gender, straight-acting male who dresses and behaves according to the proper mannerisms and so on. The counter option would be the dark and the dangerous that is

the result of non-compliance, a depiction common in LGBTQ history such as the

Stonewall Riots. All the negativity that comes with hate and hateful actions work in

counter tension, living on both sides of the path. What is also indicated in the illustration

A Fractured Subject (*See Figure* 4), is the notion of a fragmented subjectivity, that which

is a collective of imposed subjective positionings that might contradict each other, in

which this illustration depicts sentiments by the participants to put themselves beyond

the behaviors of the powers imposed by the fractured subjects (Scott, 1992).

Figure 4

    A Fractured Subject
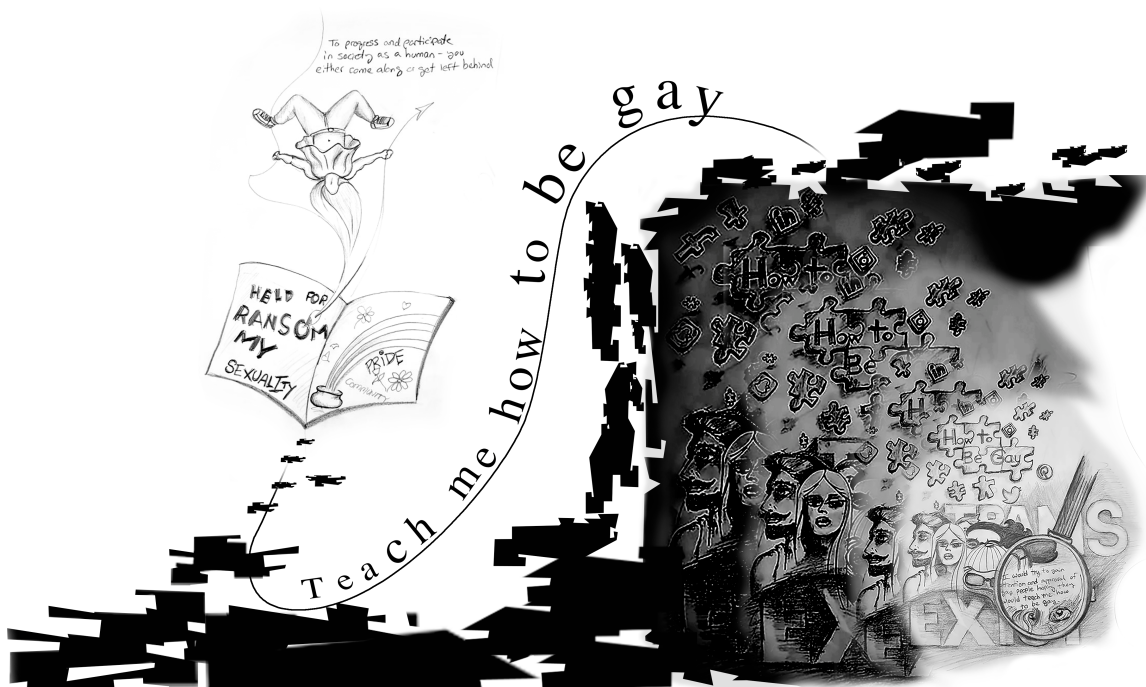
Early encounters

The early encounters Main narrative tells a story of discovery when participants had an experience, early in the realization of their sexuality, in which they encountered portrayals of gay sexuality in mainstream society. Here, they shared anecdotes of those experiences and how they perceived mainstream interpretations of being gay, as well as how they negotiate understanding themselves as subjects of both gay society and the mainstream world. Participants absorbed first impressions predominately through mediums of popular culture, such as music, movies, video games, and through art and poetry. Also revealed is how, in some instances, the participants have utilized those mediums as a tool to counter oppression and thereby become empowered subjects who are able to overcome conflicts they face both inside and outside of gay society. A criticism that sets the course of the conversation is the topic of oversexualization of gay people through mainstream representations. Bailee brings up this topic when she described her first experience seeing a gay love interest portrayed on TV. Here, she talked about when she first saw the *Call Me Maybe* music video and she stated it was the first time she became aware of gay sexuality, and because she didn't know this could be a possibility, she didn't fully understand what was happening in the video. "I remember the first time I ever saw something that was gay was the ... I remember exactly ... The *Call Me Maybe* music video, where at the end she likes the guy and he gives the number to the boy. I didn't know gay was a thing, I thought only straight people exist. I didn't even know that could happen. So, when he didn't give her … so when he gives the guy his number and she's all, she's kind of down and about it, I thought that they were friends and I was like why is she upset? They're just friends, speaking as friends, I'm confused,

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does he not wanna be her friend? And it was I think that maybe my gay awakening is I didn't know what gay was and I still didn't at the end of the music video and I didn't question it. I was just like they're friends. What's the problem here? And I thought they were just friends 'cause I didn't know what gay was and it's like and now I'm bi and I'm proud and all that and it's just like I feel like we need to get more representation so that kids can really see that and be like, oh that's alright" *(See Figure 5)*.

Due to this impression, Bailee believed gay love interests were over sensationalized and expresses frustration that inaccurate representations and depictions of being gay do a disservice to young kids in the real world. Basically, Bailee hoped that gay lifestyles should become a normalized facet of society. Alex responded by adding that they too have struggled to find adequate examples of gay representations that serve as essential role models for LGBTQ youth. Sharing in Bailee's frustration, Alex told about a desire they felt early in life to seek out other trans people as role models who would help teach them how to be gay. "The other day, talking about how when I was a kid, I like … when I first found out that gay and trans people existed, I like desperately wanted to be gay, so I would like try to gain attention and approval of gay people hoping they would teach me how to be gay." In recalling their childhood efforts, Alex now shares sources who have come to inspire them as impactful role models, such as Jane Grace, a queer music artist and poet Marianne Moore. These, among others helped Alex define their subjectivities in profound ways, such as the self-fashioning Alex has created that helps them combat oppressive situations. Through these examples, Alex was guided on how to push back against bullying and even (school) systems, such as the school

administration who instructed Alex to stop wearing controversial clothing patches *(See*

Figure 19).

Cassandra added to the conversation with similar a similar story as Alex. In seeking out

gay role models, Cassandra was led to utilize the Sims video game as an aid for

exploring how gay romance was enacted. Cassandra's story detailed explorations of gay

sexuality and romantic interactions when she was first exploring her sexuality. At a

young age, Cassandra utilized the modeling features of the Sims World video game to

design and act out romantic scenarios with characters she created. Cassandra also stated

that she kept this activity secret from her family. As she pointed out, although her family

is generally liberal minded and accepting of gay people, she still lacked real world

examples of gay romantic relationships that her heterosexual family members could not

provide. This is how Cassandra describes the Sims World as a creative tool to model

digital characters to act out romantic scenarios: "The Sims taught me what gayness was

because I was like, oh they – nobody ever was like homophobic or whatever in my family

– but it just wasn't a thing we talked about. I didn't know about it forever. It was just

weird and then I was like, oh wouldn't it be funny if two women got to be married and

then I saw that that happened (in real life) and then I'm – and then I was like, oh my God,

OK, I'm gonna have to do this."

As participants discussed an existing mainstream deficit of representation in

LGBTQ role models, the conversation turned to a consideration of what each participant

could do to create change. Participants discussed their individual talents and creative

abilities which offered the potential for making positive changes in the LGBTQ

community. This discussion, as it coincided with talk about the art projects and their

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progression, inspired the group to generate new ideas for Bailee's ransom note design.

This fed into the topic of sexuality, and how Bailee would inform her grandparents of her

views. Bailee described how she would structure the ransom letter, that emerged as a

binary structure in which one side was depicted as dark, negative and scary elements that

represents the grandparents' negative view of her sexuality, Whereas, the opposite side,

that represented Bailee's view of her sexuality, was a colorful and happy element, with

illustrations of flowers and beautifully handwritten letters. In effect, the ransom letter

served as a clarification the participants wanted to make to the world. That this is real

representation, rather than what was portrayed through mainstream media. As a result of

the discussion up to this point, participants' complained about misrepresentation lead to

newfound missions where participants were charged with informing their view of what is

true to others.

Figure 5

Ambiguous Directions
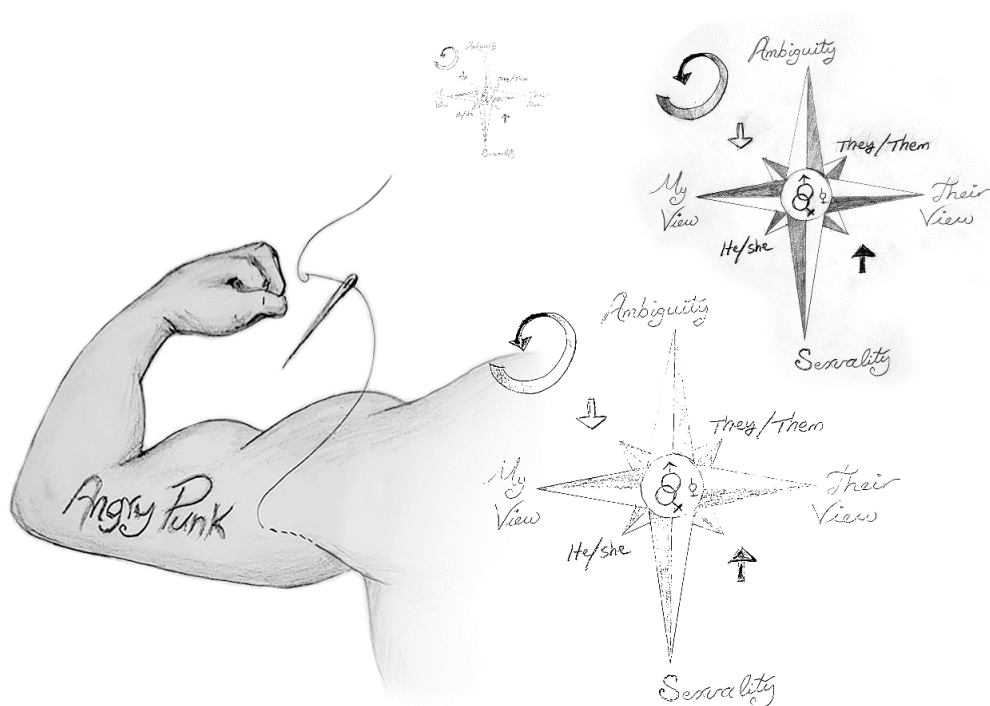
Researcher Narrative The impact of popular culture and the various forms of media, including social media, have a profound influence on how many LGBTQ youth develop understandings of what it means to be gay and how that determines their function in the gay world This juridical formation of discourse comes to shape the way subjects are shaped and reproduced (Butler, 2002). As this discussion reveals, some youth experience their first impressions of being gay through such mediums. For some, this may be the only source of information as they begin to seek out examples and role models at an early stage of their life when they come to the realization of sexuality. The discussion about first impressions reveals that youth seek out examples at a young age and are deeply impacted by what they discover. In some cases, youth respond to portrayals in a negative way. As it is expressed in the conversation, the idea that sex is a defining distinction of a gay individual, is a big cause of frustration. In contrast, some of the examples offered illustrate how positive role models, such as in the portrayals of gay super heroes, musicians, celebrities, poets and famous painters are generally received well. Yet, the observation about oversexualization sexualization of gay people is problematic.

This leads to the notion that because being gay is consistently paired with sex, or more specifically the act of sex, reinforces outsider views that gay sexuality reduces an LGBTQ person to nothing more than sexual beings. This inspires the youth to feel charged with a duty to change social views and established norms, such as with the purpose of the ransom letter. The ransom letter, as it is designed to inform not only the grandparents, but also the world about a deeper meaning of sexuality, beyond the trope of sexuality as no more than a sex act. Because this reality becomes a point of

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contention, it can also cut both ways. Youth realize that sex, as a distinction, becomes a point of emphasis that wields significant power as identification of being part of a community. Some youth, who embrace this element, like to accentuate their sexuality and subsequently wear it as a badge of honor. What emerges in this conversation is a realization of the importance to inform others of what they believe is the truth. A common theme of the conversation reveals a strong connection with art.

Most participants have either experienced or explored their sexuality through creative means. This is not a novel notion, but one taken on by other artist activists, such as Anzaldua, who take it upon themselves to use art as a tool to bear witness to what haunts us and to help repair "the damage" through application of imagination and vision (Anzaldúa, 2015). Whether it is modeling gay characters in the Sims video game, or creating art inspired by Picasso or Haring, the participants exhibit a profound connection with art and the creative process in exploring their subjectivities. The inspiration of transgender music artists and poets inspire clothing fashions designs that become protective armor. These examples demonstrate the influence of artistic representations in media and popular culture, and the tools technology affords for participants to push back against oppression.

Artful fashioning

In the sub-narrative, artful fashioning, the narrative illustrates how art session forum offered participants a productive sounding board where thoughts and ideas could be expressed and participants shared authentic stories about struggles and conflicts they had experienced. The art generation process offers participants a pathway to become introspective and elicit thoughts and discussion that comes from an inner self not typically

accessed. Through creative potential and discussion, the participants tapped into new understandings of self which helped us understand how they fashioned who they are. In this conversation, participants' subjectivities emerged through the course of conversations that described the forces bringing them to their current place in LGBTQ society.

Through this narrative, participants explored creative potentials and the skills/methods they apply to fashion the way they present themselves. In most cases, this fashioning came as a result of conflicts that participants had experienced and therefore responded to those challenges. In describing the artwork she was creating, Cassandra revealed she had insightful experiences as an art history student, which were instrumental in shaping how she created her artwork. One such example was the inspiration of Pablo Picasso in her paintings. "Kind of yeah, it was based off of the project we did in art in art history class in middle school and I believe that was a Picasso section that we were doing, so I'm glad I kind of captured that an it was kind of the vibe I was going for." Bailee chimes in enthusiastically with sharing her affinity for making art. Bailee proudly described how she was once selected to participate in an art exhibition, and then went on to state how she had an extensive collection of art supplies consisting of all sorts of mediums in a large supply *(See Figure 6)*.

As she described her personal relationship with art, Bailee expressed a belief about how art had the power to influence change. "people can understand things, and it's like if someone sees something like this, maybe that's just the way they think, and it'll make them think..." In speaking about this with authority, Bailee demonstrated she viewed herself as an experienced artist, and then she made the assertion that art can be used to change minds and social attitudes. As in the recollection of the *Call Me Maybe*

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music video, Bailee offered other examples of gay representations in movies that impacted her personally. In this instance, Bailee indicated superhero movie characters and celebrities were impactful on her as a gay individual. "… a lot of like big celebrities, yeah, I don't even like, I might not even be a fan of it. Just hearing like hey, you know that super famous person? Yeah, they're part of the community thereby or something. Just always feels very validating, I suppose to be like, oh people like that person a lot in there like me." Bailee complained that, although she was grateful there are positive role models, as seen in the character of some of her favorite super hero movies, she wished there was more representation that made her feel seen. "I guess they're technically not a real person, but me and my dad watching shows that are made by DC, the Flash, Supergirl, Batwoman, Legend Tomorrow, Watch all that and a lot of them. They don't have a super big amount of representation. I want more, always want more, but they do have representation and seeing these characters literally be friends with superheroes, be superheroes, and be like, Oh yeah, I've got (?) woman and I'm a lesbian. It's just like it's really cool to see on TV and be like, 'Hey, someone wrote this and that's me.'" Bailee was inspired to bring up other artistic interests where she believed she had talent, such as with her comic and theatrical ability, she tells the story of how she utilized comedy to mitigate challenging situations.

As Bailee illustrated, these situations have taken place both in and out of the comfort zone of her LGBTQ peer groups. "I remember I was so scared for the first couple times I came to Queen Creek. Like I wouldn't talk to anyone. I remember sitting in the back of the classroom just sitting there, nearly crying every time. But then towards then I started warming up, but then we moved to the couch where I was like. Hello, this is

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my spot. I'm Bailee, you all know me and I have rambling issues and I talk too much. Also I'll give you a supply of gay jokes. Here you go." Bailee's comic ability was also described as a care-of-the-self strategy. "I also use laughter and comedy as a coping mechanism. I'm that person who tells you about their trauma out right now. We can consider a trauma. I'm still figuring that stuff out. I'm the type of person who's like, oh yeah, this terrible thing happened to me, right? But jokes." Bailee is open about what she views as her weaknesses. In the discussion, Bailee openly talks about receiving psychological counseling about anxiety, but she also maintains a positive attitude within the context of the art session forum.

Bailee was also inspired to talk about her future interests of doing theatre. She described her college goals, which she hoped would someday lead to a unification with family in Ireland – family with whom she believes she has a closer connection. "… my goal one day is to be able to go there and there are also a lot of my family in Ireland is in the theater business. I have, OK, my extended family is a lot more like me than my closer family, my like, close relatives." In rebuttal of her current family, Bailee expressed a closer connection with the Irish relatives. "… when talking about people in my family, we're all like jocks and all that stuff so I don't really fit in. But then the other one. They're all musical theater nerds and I'm like I'm sorry I think I'm in the wrong place, my bad, I guess something went wrong, but I'll just go there – bye-bye. So, that's gonna totally happen. One day I want to be where I belong." Bailee's description, of how her comic and theatrical abilities have helped her make the best of difficult situations, inspired Alex to share how they have come to apply their creative talents in mitigating bullying and other oppression.

In self-fashioning, Alex created an outward appearance of a rebel through bold statements printed on clothing patches. Along with this style, Alex appropriated visual cues reminiscent of punk rock styles, such as spiked hair and studded spikes on leather bracelets. This style helps Alex combat oppression, as experienced at school. "I got called to the office and they told me to take the button off because it was causing a distraction and that was it. Like the other people never got anything. So, I got this vest, put the button on the vest and started wearing it to school every day – that's what started me getting into punk rock and that kind of fashion. not only because it was like it started as just a way to express myself and put like it was specifically just for that button that I put on it. But like the more I learned about it, like the more I got into it and it became like not just expression, but like kind of protection too Like nobody's gonna mess with the kid who's covered in spikes." Alex went on to describe the artwork they were creating, as defined by bold color use and sharply contrasting lettering in bold-lettered phrases. "Just don't, yeah – I just like to be obnoxious, obnoxious colorwise."

Alex then stated they were going to "smash the system." Alex talked about how they were inspired to fight back against the system in recollection of role models, singer Jane Grace, who helped "teach" Alex what it means to be a trans individual *(See figure 8)*. Alex says, "(she) inspired an understanding that what others expect of you, is not necessarily the path that I will choose." Alex also indicates that Jane Grace is the singer of their favorite band, a source of inspiration for their patchwork designs. "She's trans, yeah, especially like with my vest, I've got a couple patches from different songs of hers like this big one right here. It says, do you remember when you were young and you wanted to set the world on fire? And that's from a song called *I was a teenage*

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anarchist." Alex's description of how the angry punk image was derived, recalling a school experience, culminates in the group's discussion about an agreement and common understanding that individual strength is afforded through the power of creative expression. Alex recalled how this realization has impacted how they responded to authority as someone who has been victimized, "like, I kind of figured out that no one was going to help me, so I just didn't do anything but one of my friends had not learned that lesson yet, so he went to the office and like tried to report it, and what had happened was they had seen this button on my backpack and that's what started it. So I got called to the office And they told me to take the button off because it was causing a distraction and that was it. Like the other people never got anything. So, I got this vest, put the button on the vest and started wearing it to school every day. It never came off the backpack." In describing progress on their art projects, Cassandra revealed how art history inspired her work to be reminiscent of Picasso, which was depicted by the two-sided face painting. Through the evocation of prominent artists, Alex also admitted being inspired by artists, such as artist Keith Haring, as well as poetry that has shaped (their) philosophical thinking on politics and human rights. Alex shared the poem, "Inkskinned," which Alex uses to frame the view that the notion of a "Christian nation" is hypocritical. Alex's social political views are re-emphasized in the poem, Inkskinned.

Researcher Narrative Relationship with art and creativity transforms youth into individuals who feel empowered to take on the world and combat most difficult situations and oppression. What is discovered in this conversation is that youth learn to apply art and individual creativity, harnessed through talent, to help overcome difficult situations as an approach to jolt into awareness of the problems that oppress them so that

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then can work to repair them (Anzaldúa, 2015). What also emerges from this discussion are valuable road maps that offer new destinations in which participants realize the possibilities of where they can go and the benefits that offers them as well as others, essentially possibilities opened up in new directions of flight (Manning, 2013). In the artful fashioning conversation, participants talk about knowledge they possess, such as art history, their expertise with using art mediums and tools, or how they were inspired and shaped by power role models, and understanding self and subjectivities emerges, with strong connections to the LGBTQ community as a legacy in gay history. This awareness that shapes who they as a form of care of the self and offers potential as a source of inspiration and subjective creation (Foucault, 1988).

The influence of prominent artists, such as Pablo Picasso, or Keith Haring, also help shape the creative potential and meaning making that lead to the participants' subjective realizations of self as creative individuals who possess talent and capabilities for inspiring change. Through this discussion, participants often speak with a high level of authority when they describe individual experiences, such as that of being a camp counselor, friend, role model, or teacher who have come to realize the impact of their contribution to the LGBTQ community. What is impressive about the art sessions, is how the participants demonstrate an ability to blend the styles of other artists with her own ideas in the creation of meaningful art pieces. The lungs painting that Cassandra painted, is emblematic of the "body" of the LGBTQ community, styled with a Picasso flair, is appropriated through deeper knowledge and understanding of art. This exemplifies the significance of art, and possession of knowledge based in art. A good example of how strength is gleaned from role models, is Alex's descriptions of

music artists and poets who have inspired and led them to create self- fashioning that serves as armor against social oppression and personal attacks.

Youth draw inspiration from many facets of popular culture, such as music and poetry that often offer that become a source of inspiration and care-of-the-self (Foucault, 1988). Through a realization of their creative abilities, participants are empowered to push back against what once "put them down," and are now emboldened to "smash the system." A response used to speak out against institutional oppression. A school system that failed to serve all youth. This discussion illustrates awareness of mastery in crafting abilities youth to negotiate difficult situations. Also, Alex's "angry punk" persona demonstrates how participants realize the transformative potentials of their abilities and become fortified with inspiration to push back against oppression, moving the LGBTQ community forward.

Figure 6

Like A Superhero

A conflicted community

As participants discussed problems and situations they have encountered in mainstream society, this main narrative led to talk about issues that commonly exist within the LGBTQ community. The discussion ranged from topics of inequality to discrimination and generational differences that pull the LGBTQ community in opposite directions. This sentiment came about when Bailee expressed frustration about attitudes held against bisexual people, an issue commonly experienced within the gay community by people who feel betrayed by those who straddle two worlds of sexual orientation. Bailee, who identifies as bisexual, stated that although she has never personally experienced biphobia, she has seen it on "the internet and stuff." From her perception, Bailee believed issues of trans phobia and bi phobia are problems fueled by expectations set forth by social norms that demand a person can only be one or the other, and therefore she felt "forced to pick a side." Bailee then expressed resentment about the belief that bi people are cheaters and appeared especially bothered when she stated, "this is just false one hundred percent! – the whole idea that you have to pick a side, because that's really stupid, you know because it's really stupid. I mean, I haven't even picked. I haven't picked. Like if I picked you, I really think I like straight dudes *(See figure 10)*. No, that would not be happening okay, but yeah that is the sad truth, like I have to be attracted to straight men."

Alex responded to Bailee's idea of acceptance by stating, "My aunts still claim that domestic partnership was not recognized earlier because of people who didn't fit the whole they are just like everyone else" *(See figure 9)*. This prompted Bailee to comment on generational differences within the gay community, "… the older generations always

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find some way to make fun of younger generations," and "Older generations always find something wrong with the New Generation 'cause it's different, yeah?" Cassandra offered her perception that generational problems can hinder progress, "it's a choice whether or not you choose to adapt or you don't. 'cause like some people are just like I can be willfully ignorant, forever. And then that's fine. But like other people are like, I would like to progress as a human and participate in society and just – a lot of things are like you either choose to do it or you – either get left behind or you get or you can come in progress." When asked if this is also true in the LGBTQ community, Cassandra responded, "Maybe through things like trans men and "gimps" where it's people who are like, these certain people shouldn't be a part of our community blah blah blah, and they're taking away resources from us like all these other stupid people. And it's just like, or they're like, if you identify with this then straight people aren't gonna take us seriously and you're taking away from my resources and you're making it harder for people to get stuff and I'm like, oh no, no I'm not. But, okay, Karen. It's just stupid." Frustrated, Cassandra then asked, "what happened to everybody banding together?" Cassandra then expressed a call for unity, "people who defend Trump, or that people don't stand up and speak out when they should, a lot of you were like oh my God, we have to band together and I'm like where the heck did that go? What happened to all this and they're like, you just don't care about Trump's policies. You don't, you just want him out of office." Bailee chimed in by saying she found an anti-gay marriage statement in a Trump video that she could use in her battle against her grandparents.

This led the conversation to generational differences in standing up for the community, where Cassandra presents her artwork of a rainbow foot, and describes the design as emblematic of gay history in its march forward (*See Figure 16*). Through her art pieces, Cassandra expressed interesting hybrids of styles she had learned in art history and her own portrayals of the LGBTQ community. Cassandra was clever with her creations and merged her views of generational differences well with art styles she borrowed from prominent artists, like Pablo Picasso and Keith Haring. Cassandra then presented the lung painting, which she described as being representational of the body of the LGBTQ community, offering different parts of the lungs as segmented distinctions within the LGBTQ community. This included generational distinctions, which she also described as different parts of one working body. Interestingly, she described the depiction of different generational groups as a depiction of different weird people. "So, basically I think my theme that I picked up for like all this is kind of how we have different generations of like weird people and how their experience is kind of like, except ours and all mine kind of started taking on a weird sort of like bodily organs or like body parts" *(See figure 12).*

This conversation led to a realization that personal responsibility was necessary for fostering unity within the community and discussion of roles participants would take on as part of the future of an LGBTQ community. Discussion helped define the impact of art/pop culture and how participants develop an understanding of their role as cultural citizens, such as Cassandra's expression about the need for positive role models. In her recollection as camp counselor and youth mentor, Cassandra demonstrated an understanding that she had become mature and her new obligations were to "let got"

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and allow youth to "figure things out on their own."

Figure 7

Stonewalled

Researcher Narrative This discussion flows from the previous conversation where participants describe their relationship with art and how it has enabled them to self-fashion themselves as individuals who are now equipped to better contend with the struggles and conflicts they face as LGBTQ youth. In their subjective realization, participants also discover a place within society. Sadly, through discussion, they also voice frustrations about inequalities that plague the LGBTQ community, such as issues of racial discrimination as well as inequality faced by people with disabilities. A poignant frustration expressed by a participant is the topic of trans and biphobia. Although this participant identifies as bisexual and expresses awareness of negative attitudes against bisexuals, she states she has not experienced much discrimination. This is likely due to her young age. Nonetheless, this participant appears to be fully aware of social prejudices, as expressed through social media, and she seems well aware of the pressure on bisexual people to "choose a side."

The sentiment of prejudice against bisexual people, being those who straddle two sides of sexuality, ties back to my earlier description of the binary, and how society has tendencies to enforce binaries, sides that one must chose to be in compliance with what is acceptable (Butler, 2002). Sadly, this is also true within the LGBTQ community. I believe this conversation points out the fact that many of the social inequalities that exist in mainstream society are also prevalent within the LGBTQ community. As the participants describe rhetoric they have heard, the discussion indicates that there are LGBTQ people who castigate others who do not conform to social standards because they believe they are the ones that keep the community from gaining wider acceptance.

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In effect, those who non-conform impede the chances of other gay people from being accepted by mainstream society.

The rifts caused by inequality and discrimination within the LGBTQ community impact mostly those who do not conform to expectations set forth by mainstream social expectations, as well as race-based biases against people of color, and even people with disabilities. These prejudices keep many LGBTQ people, who fall into categories that align with those in mainstream society, also from being allowed a place of equality within the LGBTQ community. Another distinction of difference that emerges during this conversation is the view of temporal awareness, such as generational differences associated with age. Some of the participants express a disconnect from older LGBTQ populations and a belief that views and beliefs held by older generations are detrimental to the progress of the community. A participant responds by addressing her opinions about older gays as being out of touch with current day society, in terms of not understanding younger peoples' views, as well as not keen on technology.

This view may not be unique to the LGBTQ community, yet commentary that critiques older generations as well as complaints about the acceptance of non-conforming individuals generates conversation about the better interests of the LGBTQ community. Despite this, participants express positive attitudes and voice a call to action in a push for unity, as they warn of the political consequences if people don't act together, such as what happens if people don't band together to vote against Donald Trump. This discourse inspires subjective realizations for the participants, as it forces them to consider their own stakes as citizens of their community.

The presentation of the rainbow footprint, emblematic of the LGBTQ community's

march forward, is a creative expression that symbolizes the importance participants feel about the future of the gay community and the need to keep marching forward as one community. This also highlights how traditional LGBTQ iconography is used and interwoven from the perspective of a young LGBTQ person. It also presents some interesting questions, such as what is considered traditional and what is new? It also calls to question how iconography has evolved and what is the impact of that evolution, how does it change and why? This also brings forth questions about the future of the LGBTQ community and how it will continue to hold together? The list goes on and on about other questions such as the impact of social media and other new technologies on the future of a cohesive LGBTQ community, and even calls to question whether it is even worth preserving? The fact that the participants are explicitly voicing these issues makes them real. The power of silence also has the power to suppress, and therefore expression and voice given to an oppression reveals its existence and subsequently work can begin to act against it (Sedgwick, 2008).

Newfound roles

This sub narrative culminates with a notion that had been carried through the previous narratives. A coming to understanding of individual responsibility. This was reinforced by commentary expressed by Cassandra, in which she indicated a desire of participants to always model a positive image of the gay community. As Cassandra indicated, she believed she could impact an outsider's view in a positive way through her actions. Cassandra realized this from an awareness she had developed about the impact of online social media platforms. In her description, Cassandra referred to new youth

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group members who expressed views formulated from interactions with other people online. "… they're like people who like, come in and then they're like, they have pretty preconceived notions of what we're like based on what they found on the internet. To like go back to like Serfs, one of the insidious practices they have is that they'll be like presenting themselves. Usually, someone will figure out that they're like gay on the internet now and they're like okay, this is who I am, this is how I get to safe and then there are these communities of people who prey on these kids and they're like this is how it is ... so they come in and these kids are like I don't know anything. All I know is from what I picked up on the Internet." Cassandra then pointed out a subjective role in which she felt she had to become a "fighter," who fought to give people the education that they needed. With this, Cassandra admitted a shift in her positioning and stated that she now had, "older sibling vibes" and felt like her job was to kind of let the reins go and let the younger generation lead because she had done her part. "… it's just you get older and then you're like, it's time to let the babies try their hand at being – being like whatever."

The notion of misrepresentation re-emerged and rekindled Bailee's frustrations about the stereotypes and portrayals of gay people in popular culture and the impact this has on LGBTQ youth perceptions, in which Bailee stated, "… and I feel like that's why it is, every time that there is a gay character is they go through the same thing. If someone of it not being accepting and its true reality is that a lot of us are accepted, but at the same time I think we need to see that you can be accepted more like I'm accepted. I know not everyone is, but I think it's important to see, hey things aren't going to just be sad, look, they are happy. they're fine, but we don't see that a lot, and I thought that can be very negative for people in the community." Bailee's rhetoric was positive and supportive,

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and her commitment to community appeared to be strong, especially as indicated by her response to an intrusive spam phone call she received during the art session.

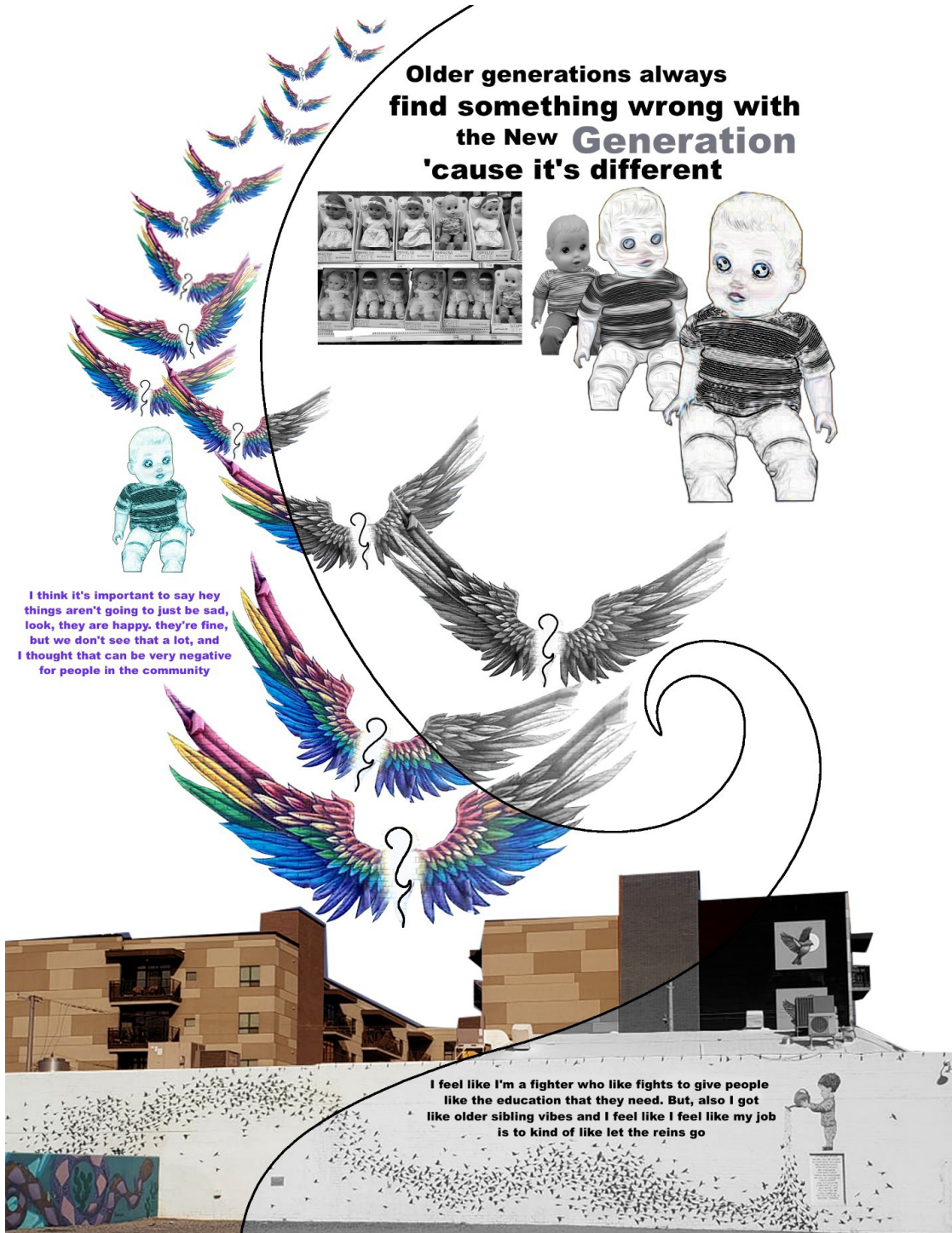Bailee responded by saying, "I'm being gay right now with my fellow gays." Bailee's tone and spirit of camaraderie was consistent throughout the art sessions. The sentiment of unity persisted throughout the art sessions, accentuated by Bailee's forthcoming and enthusiastic storytelling. In sharing anecdotes about her experiences at public schools before coming to One-in-ten, Bailee described how being bullied made her feel like an outcast in her previous school settings, which was also emblematic by her response to the intrusive phone call. Bailee has now come to a stage where she expressed a positive sentiment of feeling at home amongst a group of supportive peers, an LGBTQ group of peers who are like her. With regard to working together as a community, Cassandra stated, "to progress and participate in society as a human – you either come along or get left behind – you either choose to do it or you don't. Either get left behind or you can come in progress." This idea carried through the conversations as participants shared expressions of their duty through leadership. Cassandra commented on the importance of being a positive role model, who was charged with encouraging positive views of gay people *(See Figure 6).*

In recounting previous duties and roles within the community and One-n-ten youth group, Cassandra realized a long-held subjective position as a counselor/teacher, which can be substantiated by her work history as youth camp counselor and supportive friend to incoming youth, such as Bailee. Here, Cassandra and Bailee recalled their first meeting, when Cassandra befriended Bailee at a One-in-ten summer camp. Cassandra reinforced her commitment to community when she expressed that she was "not going to

stop engaging with the community, but it's just you get older." Cassandra's art illustrated how she felt about the importance of the history and future of the gay community. The rainbow feet painting she created symbolizes a march forward. Alex was also is inspired to describe their leadership roles with One-in-ten, and that they joined the Youth Advisory Council with One-in-ten because a lot of the larger events that One-in-ten was doing were not sensory friendly for people who are on the autistic spectrum. Alex explained the reason they joined this way, "like, alright, y'all need someone who's autistic to come in and make sure you can fix that." Similarly, Erin states (they) became a leader because of their personal experiences with being bullied, "When I saw them do it to someone else that I cared about … they started to, and it was like, I saw the signs of it on my friend and I had known that they had done the same thing to me and so I just told them (my friend) was like they're not gonna do anything. And they're like, but they said this and they're like way tougher than me – and it kinda just lit a fire under me that they were trying to harm someone I really cared about. And, so if I was afraid still, I couldn't stand up for them, so I had to not be afraid anymore." These expressions of courage inspired Bailee to share that she believed she has matured. That she has grown as a youth member of the LGBTQ community and was now ready to take charge, "I'm like … now being like kinda the older sister got some more like parent vibes."

Figure 8

A New Generation

Older generations always **find something wrong with** the New **Generation** 'cause it's different

I think it's important to say hey things aren't going to just be sad, look, they are happy. they're fine, but we don't see that a lot, and I thought that can be very negative for people in the community

I feel like I'm a fighter who like fights to give people like the education that they need. But, also I got like older sibling vibes and I feel like I feel like my job is to kind of like let the reins go

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Researcher Narrative This narrative concludes a discussion of observations shared about the direction of the community. Here, realizations of subjectivities relating to a cultural citizenship guide the discussion about the direction of the LGBTQ community and the roles people play that contribute to a positive move forward. In the realization of role as a good citizen and the obligations for becoming a good citizen, the subjective positions that emerge bring about talk of generational differences that marked an awareness of temporality and once again illustrated the subjectivities of participants from a temporal perspective – youth as members of the community. Because participants see themselves as distinct from previous generations, expressing claims of being more progressive and advanced because of technology, similarly those sentiments indicated a feeling of uneasiness about the future direction of the community.

There were also expressions that contradicted a belief that technology is a positive element for the younger generations. As Cassandra indicated, many young LGBTQ people have their first experiences and interactions with other LGBTQ people online, where they oftentimes fall prey to bad influences. This is considered a problem because it can skew attitudes and impressions before many LGBTQ youth ever come into contact with another gay individual, in person, and may have the potential to discourage future generations from choosing to engage in community groups. Nonetheless, the participants offer productive insights and ideas about what they can do to contribute in the benefit of the community. In doing so, the participants share experiences and expertise they possess, such as previously held positions and roles as camp counselors, group leaders and models that help promote positive views for outsiders. Some

participants even expressed shifts in subjectivity that indicated they were becoming more

mature, such as the example of the participants realizing that future generations of

LGBTQ youth, particularly younger members from groups such as One-in-ten, need to

have their reins loosened so they can figure things out on their own.

The experiences that participants described are negotiations of understanding of

self and the sense of subjectivity that places them within their community. On cultural

citizenship, participants expressed solidarity with their group and community, such as a

sentiment of camaraderie, in which participants expressed belonging and membership,

such as Bailee's comment of being amongst "fellow artists." This discussion also

accentuated the distinctions and separations between the gay and straight world. Binary

distinctions emerged as participants considered their subjective positions and roles within

the LGBTQ community, as they realized there are roles that require them to straddle the

line between two worlds. An assumption of a role that instills youth with a duty to

represent the LGBTQ community in a positive way, tasking them with becoming good

citizens of a mainstream society. This notion was not new as we can find examples of this

in gay history where artists, such as Keith Haring, took it upon themselves to illustrate

images of the gay community in ways that were productive. In ways that could be

considered protest art intended to create change. Other participants realized that

empowerment of all members of the LGBTQ community is essential, despite disabilities

such as autism, and is essential for promoting positive changes in the community.

Participants also realized expressions of over-sexualization of LGBTQ people in media and

pop culture are challenges that can be addressed through efforts of creating impactful art.

Generally, the attitudes expressed by participants were positive, open and accepting of all

abilities and membership, such as when Alex described their role as a youth advisory council leader and subsequently expressed the need for a person with autism, like they are, to come in and "fix that."

CHAPTER 6

SURFACE VIEW

Figure 9

An Uneven Path

The narratives presented in this section were drawn from the one-on-one interviews I conducted with each participant after the Zoom art creations had ended. The purpose of these narratives is to extend topics that were discussed in the narratives drawn from the art creation sessions and to further illustrate, as well as with my drawings, examples that deepen the insight from what was learned during the discussions and artwork production during the initial Zoom sessions.

Enabling abilities

In the enabling abilities main narrative, Bailee stated she is trying to figure out her own opinion on things and that she wasn't emotionally triggered by any one topic in particular. When it comes to talking about sensitive topics, she said she gets "double uncomfortable" and covered her wrists. "I'm not suicidal and I do not self-harm. I never have, I just did a couple years ago… deal with some thoughts." She indicates that anxiety about the realization of harm prevents her from doing any actual harm to herself. She says she's just too scared of pain to ever do something. Bailee says she feels fortunate she was just too anxious to do follow through on anything and that "it didn't even happen." Bailee goes on to describe an event during a summer, between 5th and 6th grade, and recalls she is in the 8th grade now, so it happened a "while ago." A friend stated she didn't want to be her friend anymore. Because Bailee was depressed and thought she'd never get anywhere. In the end, that made Bailee feel uncomfortable and it has not been discussed since. Because she has been affected by it before, she feels it messes with her a bit. At this point, Bailee states, "lucky for you I'm very comfortable talking about it 'cause I commonly overshare." Bailee states she is just like an open book. That she has never really considered mental health issues as disabilities. "I thought disabilities were just

physical and stuff. But, when it comes to disability, I don't have anything wrong." Bailee states she has been dealing with the issues of depression and anxiety for a long time, which probably developed about three years ago. She says she is currently trying to get tested for ADHD. As she recalls early indicators, she mentions the summer between 3rd and 4th grade, when she moved to a new school, after which she believes she may have then developed depression. Baille says, "I don't know if it's the kind that just develops over stuff, or if it's the medical kind where I have a chemical imbalance. Don't know if it's going to be this way the rest of my life, or I will get through it." Nonetheless, Bailee says she doesn't think of this condition as being sick, but just a mental health struggle.

Researcher Narrative The main narrative, Enabling Abilities, is depicted by an illustration (*See Figure 9*) in which Bailee's struggle is emphasized through elements she described in her showcase art project, *The Ransom Note*. Here, the illustration depicts a representational image of Bailee, who is seen walking along a path with an uncertain destination. The setting of this drawing depicts symbolic representations of Bailee's fear and uncertainty about a future faced with problems related to her anxiety and ADHD disorders. The images of cliffs and pitfalls indicate the possibility of an unavoidable doom. The obstacles that threaten a stress-free path moving forward in life, marked by a pitfall awaiting her approach. In previous conversations, Bailee talked about issues that frustrated her, such as her experiences with anxiety, particularly as it involved social situations.

Through those events, Bailee described the stresses she once experienced, as well as how she negotiated her survival in those situations. Bailee is keen to talk about her abilities. As topics of the art session discussions and the one-on-one interview,

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Bailee proudly recalled her abilities of being a talented actress, comic, straight-A student (an example of positive self-efficacy). This awareness suggests Bailee has a good self-esteem and self-efficacy despite her awareness of ADHD disorder, which even leads her to the belief that anxiety has the positive attribute of preventing her from the infliction of self-harm. In effect, in some instances, she views her anxiety as an enabling force. A belief that anxiety, particularly in social situations, pushes her to employ her abilities as a comic and actress (Fooling her observers into believing she is on the phone). The rendering of the girl on the path depicts Bailee's stride with confidence. Her walk is upright and uninhibited. The shadow cast on the ground stands strong with hands on hips, as may depicted by a strong person/soldier. Although Bailee's path is marked by nearby doom in all directions, even as unavoidable doom awaits down the path, it appears Bailee's self-awareness has kept her sights open to her surroundings with a focus on the path ahead. Bailee's accounts of "mental illness," which she also blames for the painful experience of losing a friendship, indicates the struggle for her has been real. As Bailee mentioned in her interview, feelings she once had of desperation made her feel like she would never get anywhere.

The drawing illustrates, the path ahead is marked by an unavoidable pit. The short walk ahead appears to lead to doom, yet the motif of strand illustrated as a vine that enters this setting also dips into the abyss. This indicates the vine, or the path and life journey that offers many diversions to obstacles, also offers a lifeline of escape for this character. This offers the possibility of escape to another dimension, a new beginning that is separate from the one indicated in this setting where the character of Bailee is forced to contend with issues of family and the Ransom Note. The place Bailee currently

finds herself in is shown to have an escape, a connection to the theme of the vine carried throughout the different sections of this project. I conveyed a notion that ties in to the idea of the binary as is illustrated as the "straight" path one is expected to take on their life journey, and in these renderings, this vine offers more than a singular path. Along its path are possibilities of deviation that sprout in the form of offshoots that lead to new directions offering new possibilities and alternate ways of being. This setting not only represents conflicts that plague the character, but also indicate positive elements. The character is illustrated with a confident stride, indicating the person walking on this path walks with a stride of taking charge in effort to overcome challenges of confronting oppressors and to help educate others about what is believe to be the truth. The conversations from the art creation sessions and the interview responses often touched on topics about race and homophobia. Through these recollections, representations of LGBTQ people in popular culture are not portrayed accurately or true to the actual experience of an LGBTQ person. These themes were expressed with frustration and the participants expressed they wished to see more true-to-life representations of LGBTQ people. Yet, the participants expressed a strong willingness to help inform about what they believed the truth to be. Bailee stated that she was like an open book, thus producing the concept of the project, *Ransom Note*. Although participants regularly shared negative experiences, either with once close friends, peers or family members, they expressed a newfound interest to revisit those topics and share stories that can influence change. In Bailee's case, who often tended to overshare, stated that although she has avoided the topic of dealing with a terminated friendship, she was now comfortable talking about it and basically said, "why else?" – meaning, why not share this? Much of the disposition

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shared by the participants turned upbeat during the art creation sessions and during the interviews. It is possible that, at this juncture, participants realized subjective positions that placed them at a new maturity level through which they could apply newfound strengths for confronting previous painful events and turn that energy into a force through which they, as subjects of their community and greater society, could become educators, mentors, informer, and so on and. The overall attitudes they projected expressed a shift from a powerless, disabled person, to one whose disability was no longer disabling but instead became empowering (Butler, 2015). Bailee offered, "I don't think of it as being sick, just a mental health struggle." This notion resonates with Kaul's response to the sentiment of disability as a failure of experience, "we counter this with the positive: with disability as a way of encountering and identifying with a diverse, interesting, resourceful community, with the energy of activism, and even with the pleasure of critique" (Kaul, 2013, p. 94). Participants express a newfound charge to confront and fight against forces that oppress. What is learned from the art session discussions, is that participants inspired each other as they discussed possibilities for a better future, and despite disability, what was evoked was a sense of strength in a refusal to accept mental health issues as a sickness or disability that would not impede growth, and even though it might be something to contend with in the future, the subject this creates is one that possess strength.

Figure 10
Tree of Life

Tainted fruit

In this sub-narrative, Bailee states that her parents are finally listening to her and that they are going to test her for ADHD. Bailee says she believes she has probably had it all her life but just didn't know any different. Bailee says because she gets better grades, it isn't easy to self-diagnose, because she believes that a lot of people with those issues usually don't get better grades because they can't focus. Bailee says she also puts a lot of pressure on herself, by telling herself that, "if I don't do this, I'm probably gonna end up having to just cry a bunch." This fear of consequence, and the anxiety it produces, forces Bailee to push harder in achieving good grades. Because of this, she believes that this disability doesn't affect her as much as she believes it affects others. She also describes behaviors she has adopted as mechanisms to help her negotiate difficult situations. As she describes, "I'll just stand here and pretend to be on my cell phone," meaning this helps her deflect attention from others by acting out a "normal" behavior. Bailee says there are also some good things about her anxiety. One of which is that it prevented her from hurting herself. Meaning that anxiety about the realization of physical harm has served as a preventative measure. Meaning, in this case, it's a good thing. Bailee expresses confusion about understanding ADHD. She does not know which parts of her brain are "ADHD," and which are not. Bailee goes on explain that she is currently trying to get tested for ADHD. She says that during the summer between 3rd and 4th grade she moved to a new school, and as a result, she later developed depression. She said she didn't know if her depression is some kind that develops over different causes, or if it's the "medical kind, where one has a chemical imbalance."

Bailee states she doesn't want to use medication for ADHD because she believes she has it under control, and also believes the main concern is that she gets good grades. Which, of course, is something she gets regardless of ADHD. An addition to expressing apprehension for Bailee getting tested for ADHD, she says her parents also suggest not to take medication if she doesn't need it. Regardless, Bailee says she wants to know if she has ADHD anyway. She says she believes her parents don't understand labels. In contrast, Bailee says she believes labels help her a lot. Bailee then describes the experience she had when she first began talking to her therapist about being bisexual. Bailee says when her therapist asked why she wanted another label, she responded with frustration and stated, "like, why do you call yourself a girl?" She then complains that her therapist made an entire "issue" about labels. "She didn't think they were needed, and I said, you're completely comfortable with boy and girl labels." In this narrative, Bailee describes labels in the context of confronting her problems with anxiety and ADHD. Because she says labels are something that make her comfortable, she says she also accepts the fact that she affirmatively has been identified as having anxiety and/or ADHD. Bailee expresses fear of not knowing if the issues with anxiety and ADHD are going to remain with her the rest of her life, as well as an uncertainty that she will get through it. Nonetheless, Bailee doesn't see, or accept, those issues as a state of being sick. That they are merely a mental struggle.

Researcher Narrative In Forbidden Fruit, Bailee's narrative inspires the image of a tree, a rhizomatic image from which forms emerge through the continuation of the vine path. What is shown are points of engendering from which new individuations come into view and dissolve from their recognizable form and flow in new directions. This

creation of reality, is a creation of multiplicities of real and non-real material and perceived elements that become unique experiences from which an individual creates his/her subject through perceptions of the world and all of its experiences, perceptions and feelings in a unique and distinct way (Debaise, 2017). The tree symbolizes the personification of many forms, entities, both human, material sometimes even hybrid-like or virtual creations. As the vine weaves its way through this setting, as it becomes part of the tree entity, including its branches and off-shoots, the resulting "sprouts" offer new meanings and embodiments – the resulting leaves on the tree are the endpoint on the stem that defines the tree itself. The leaf, which can be used to identify a variety of tree species, is itself a type of label that displaying a multiplicity of (forms), hence the leaf types illustrated resulted in many different forms. Forms free of a bound description or label, labels of disability, that branch out into other possibilities and expressions and orientations (Ahmed, 2006). This drawing represents how a multiplicity of qualities, both human and non-human, become identities and representations that may be contained by one particular individual. In this narrative, what was learned is that Bailee's experiences about acceptance due to her anxiety and ADHD, no longer considered disabilities, is then confronted with pushback from parents and therapist alike to not embrace the label of a disability.

Despite this, Bailee expresses that it is important for her to formally identify these "issues" as identifiable labels. By this, she means that she wants to follow through with an official diagnosis, which she believes will help her establish a tangible and defining aspect about herself. Bailee states she does not have a problem with associating herself to those labels. Bailee reinforces this idea in her description of how she has battled against

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both her parents and therapist in choosing to have those labels applied to herself. Contrary to her parents' judgement, Bailee states this is something she needs to have identified. By stating, "you don't have a problem labeling yourself a girl." Bailee associates the comfort of that certainty with the comfort of being able to identify the problem she is confronted with. With this, Bailee feels comfort, and possibly strength, in knowing her position – her "oppressor" and thus becomes better armored in her battles. Bailee expresses uncertainty about whether these issues will remain with her the rest of her life. Because she refuses to accept them as a sickness and views them instead as a struggle, she seems prepared to fight against the rest of her life. As she described in her narrative, they become her coping mechanisms, such as her ability to deflect attention by pretending to be on her cell phone, the use of humor to dispel tense situations as well as to help her assimilate with her peers. Through this discourse, she is inclined to point out her strengths as an A student and how those issues associated with disability have not really been a problem because she still gets good grades. The good grades being symbolic of a normative social expectation of self-sufficiency and normalcy. The illustration of the *Tree of Life* (*See Figure 10*) extends this idea, in that individuals draw from their own resources to generate new representations of themselves, create adornments, such as the leaves, as well as invent new directions and possibilities and creations of self.

Figure 11

Masking Up
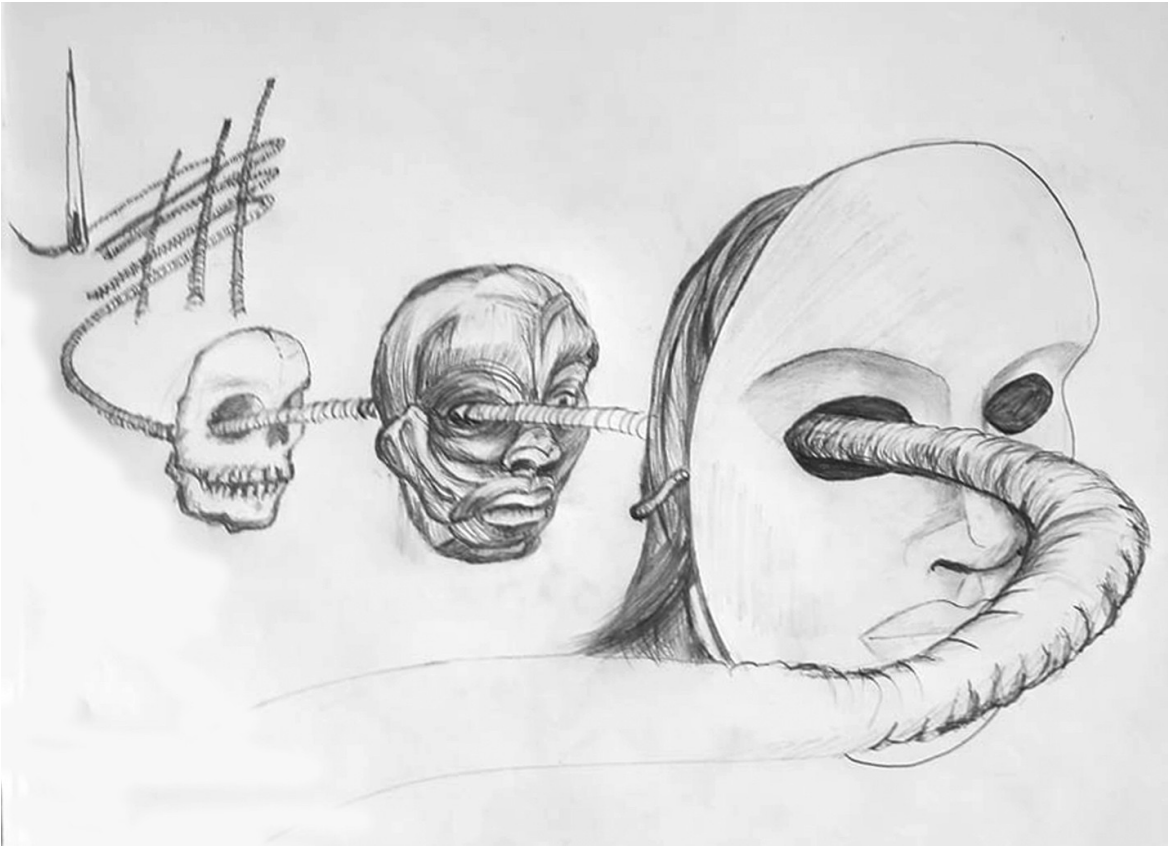
Masking reality

In this sub-narrative, Bailee stated her parents are finally listening to her and are willing to let her test for it. Meaning ADHD and (anxiety). She says believes she has probably had ADHD all her life but just didn't know any different. She says she gets better grades because she puts so much pressure on herself, and says, "if I don't do this, I'm probably gonna end up having to just cry a bunch." Meaning, the anxiety of itself turns into a motivator. Bailee also says she believes ADHD and (anxiety) doesn't really affect her as much as it affects others, in part because she has developed mechanisms to help her negotiate difficult situations. "I'll just stand here and pretend to be on my cell phone." She says there are some good things about her anxiety because she hasn't hurt herself. Bailee also says her parents her parents don't understand why she wants to be diagnosed for ADHD and states they also suggest not to take medication if she doesn't need it. Nonetheless, she says she wants to know if she has it. She says her parents don't understand labels, yet she says labels just help her a lot. She also describes a conflict with her therapist, when she first began talking to her about being bi, and says she was asked why she wanted another label. That her therapist made an entire issue about labels and said she didn't think they were needed. Bailee's reaction to this was frustration and she responded with, "like why do you call yourself a girl? You were completely comfortable with boy and girl labels." Bailee states labels are something that make her comfortable. She says that, in a way, labels are just something that really helped her because they help her relate to people. In response to her parents who don't understand why she needs to be diagnosed ADHD, she explained to them that labels help her understand what's going on. That they make her happy, She states, "it's like my little square."

When it comes to the LGBTQ community, Bailee calls herself gay "24/7." She says also says that she feels like labels are very controversial. She believes some people say you're just asking for stigma. Bailee says her problem is that people like (that) don't like people, with certain labels, and don't respect people who don't (?). She says you have to respect both sides. Bailee says that in the end, it's a matter of comfort. In describing her talks with her dad, Bailee talks about the struggle in conveying the importance she feels about respecting individual people's wishes for how they want to be acknowledged. In one particular discussion, Bailee explains how she tries to explain to her dad the meaning of (different labels – pull from data on dad discussion)

In regard to opinions about labels as a stigma, Bailee says that labels become like sticky notes. That seeing that stuff is like the calendar on her wall and sticky notes don't really help her remember stuff. Because it's just like it just becomes "visual background noise," where you just stop noticing it after you see it enough times. This is validating to her. She says that if you see something enough times, that you just become desensitized by it and then you just see it as normal. Similarly, Bailee explains that there's a reason that lot of people with ADHD can have messy rooms. That it doesn't bother her because she just locks it out at some point because she becomes used to it. Bailee also explains that she personally has not experienced homophobia as a bisexual person. Even though she believes people see bi people as greedy, because they "can't commit to one side." And states she believes this opinion comes from a (???) that is based on a belief that says, "we're told we're going to hell is coming from a "book that not everyone believes in," she doesn't experience any of this discrimination because she can pass as straight, thereby defying the stigma of a label.

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Researcher Narrative This drawing was inspired by a notion, described by Bailee, in this narrative about the many layers of masks an individual assumes for a variety reasons and purposes. In her narrative, Bailee talks about the struggle she has encountered with both parents and therapist about the need to be able to identify and recognize her issues. Bailee's issues with anxiety and ADHD are expressed as "negotiable" or "manageable" problems, rather than as illnesses. Bailee also mentions the importance of labels for her, that they somehow provide comfort and give her a point of recognizing what she faces. She states this as being, "my little square." Through this, I believe Bailee expresses the desire to lay claim and ownership of her afflictions in a way that allow her to be able to overcome them. By owning those labels, Bailee is given an identity, or mask, that she can place over another self. When Bailee describes herself as being bisexual, she also mentions that she has never really encountered any homophobia because she passes for being straight. Meaning, Bailee is well aware of the power of outward appearances and perhaps she can utilize that ability to help mask other afflictions that might be used to stigmatize her. Also, in descriptions about mechanisms she used to negotiate difficult situations, participants embrace talents or abilities for dispelling tension. When they utilize their abilities, technologies to act out as a comic, or pretend to be on a cell phone, they are putting on an act, a mask that acts as cover against uncomfortable confrontations, such as those she has experienced by school bullies, or groups of students by whom they feel to be a target (*See Figure 12*).

Figure 12

Masked Performance
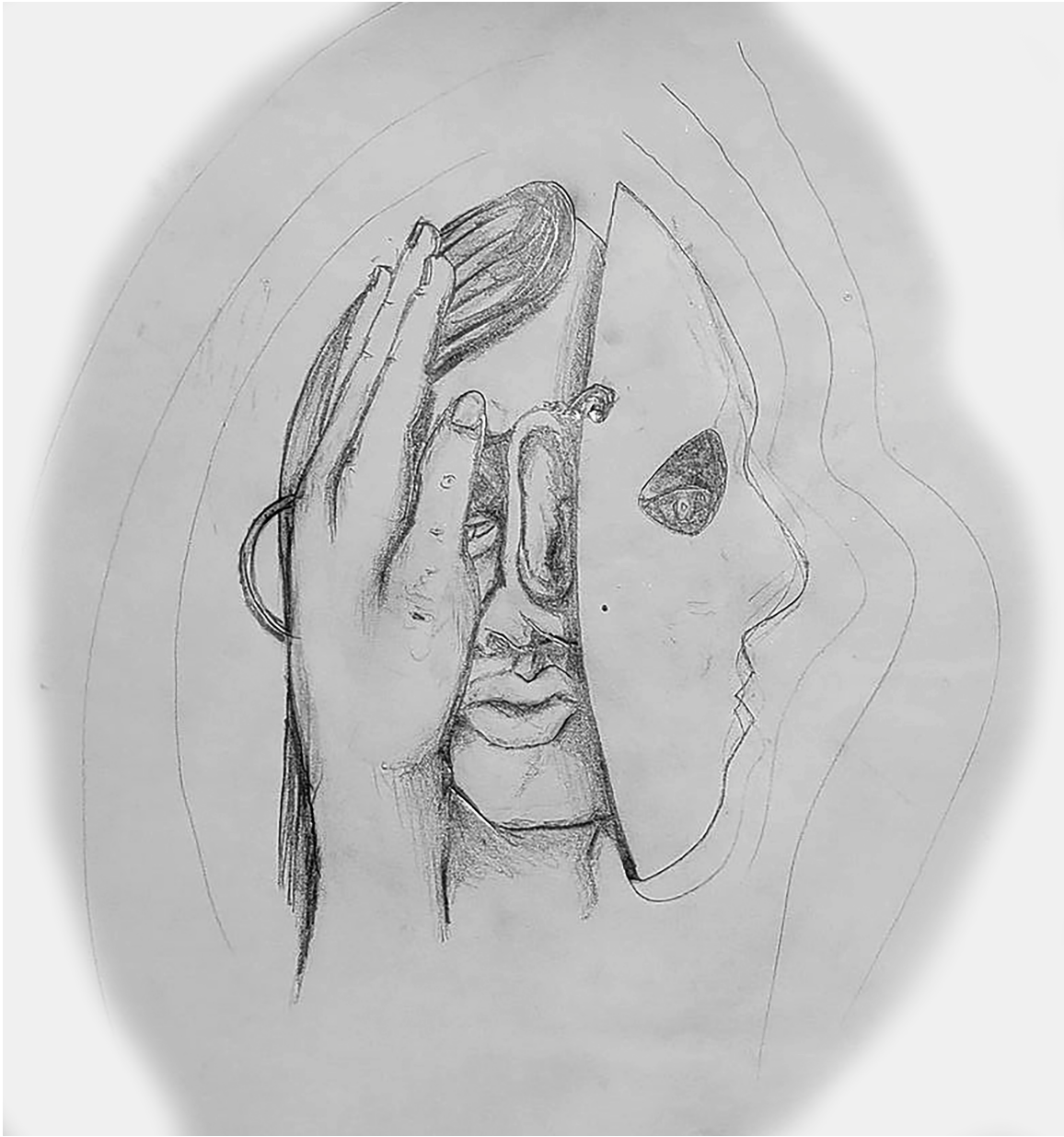
Figure 12

A Steady Life
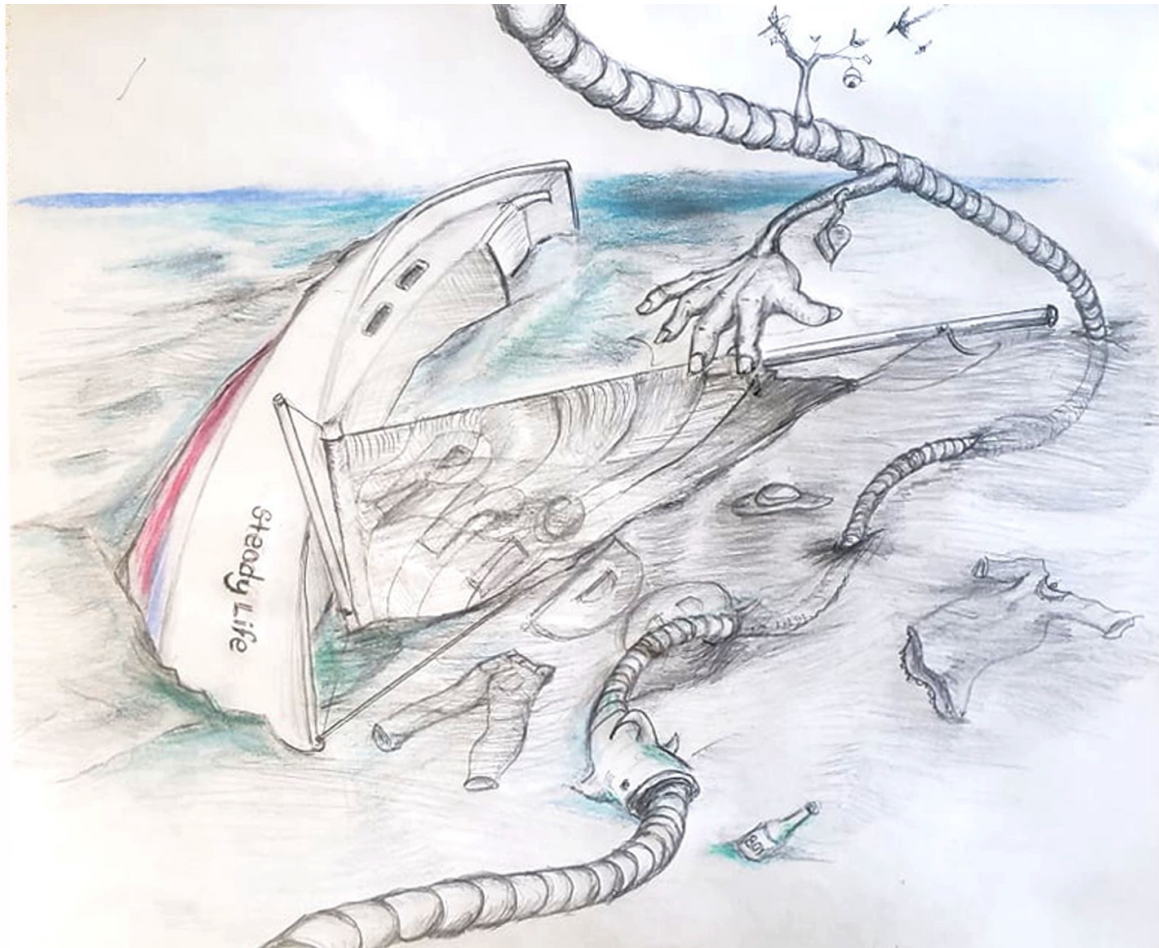
Symbolic roles

In this main narrative, Bailee says she feels fortunate enough to appear straight, or straight passing. She says she could be straight, really. Bailee says that, although it is painful to say so, "if you can't tell, and I'm definitely straight acting, you don't really have that kind of pressure put on you." She states she is also still very young – "I AM 13!" She believes she has not yet been put into a position where people are "really doing

it." Meaning, that other people have not yet targeted her for attack. She says she believes that fourteen-year-olds do not face that kind of stuff. "I guess, me, where I am and my age and all that stuff and also the fact that I can't really go outside right now for obvious reasons." Bailee also considers the situation of the pandemic has helped shield her from having to confront other people. Bailee also adds that she is still not forced to face certain issues in life with much seriousness. In response to a question about meaning and symbolism in her art, she says, "as a musical theater kid, and when it comes to my drawing and art – which I am still learning – overall, it's for fun and not so much for symbolism."

In contrast, Cassandra states that depression and ADHD is a big problem for her. Cassandra says she is confused about whether it's a disability, but she does acknowledge or not that it makes stuff harder for her. That it has led her to self-harm and that it has caused depression. In a joking manner, Cassandra describes how from the ages of 15 to 17, she thought about killing herself, and calls it a "minor inconvenience." She now acknowledges that it is not all-around mentally good for people. She says she has been very depressed and suicidal in the past, and now says she once had the belief she was not going to live past the age of 21. One-in-ten changed that feeling for her. She says, "you see queer adults and things you couldn't imagine before, like being happy." However, Cassandra states that homophobia was not an issue for her at home. That her parents were very accepting. Even though her parents don't get the non-binary thing, but they are very supportive and accept her. Cassandra also says that a lot of people fall into the trap of falling for the first person they meet. The first person that is nice to them and "tolerates their existence." She says that they pick up those traits. She believes this is

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what contributes to a lot of the bad jokes, meaning self-depreciation, that people tell about themselves. Something she believes is an inherent trait people use as a tool social-acceptance.

Cassandra goes on to emphasize, "I would say so, yeah, I would think I think that like it just boils down to I have ADHD. People have never really been like into me as a person. People are like into my brother more. That's just like a factoid. It doesn't really matter. It doesn't come into play very much. We're adults now. Who cares anyway? It's just who cares what you think? You weren't gonna like me anyway, so you may as well not like me – for some." Cassandra now stands her ground for what she believes in herself. She says that she is now proud of who she is. She states that she likes being proud of who she is and that gives her strength when it comes to countering people who protest and push against who she is. Such as the protesters at gay pride. Cassandra goes on to describe a feeling of nervousness when she has encountered protestors, and explains that, if you've never experienced that feeling, it makes you feel like you're going to vomit. Cassandra also describes an experience when she was at a pride event, when a protestor was yelling at her, she threatened that she was going to puke on him if he didn't leave her alone. Which became a source of empowerment for Cassandra to push back against that oppression. Cassandra says, "if you don't leave me alone, I'm gonna puke on you. Let me walk away, I swear to God, I feel like I'm going to and I will definitely puke on you, leave me alone dude!"

Alex says, when people say, "oh, it's not a disability," is because in some ways it is because there are things that they can't do because of autism, but also, there are things that they can do differently, or even better. Alex says that being autistic impacts their

hearing ability. That their hearing, compared to neurotypical people's hearing, is hypersensitive. So, because of this, they believe crowds are too loud to tolerate. But, as an advantage, listening to music is an entirely different experience for them because they can hear every single detail of the music. This has led Alex to adopt a mantra, "your perception is not my purpose." This attitude, as Alex explains, has driven them to assume a lot of trans symbolic expressions, such as "Genitals don't equal gender, got boycott the binary pretty boy, trans punk smashed the system," for example as well as a lot of other pro-trans expressions. Alex believes that being able to express themselves through their clothing, has brought a lot of awareness to different issues, and issues that aren't necessarily related. Alex states they have a lot of queer stuff on their clothing, but also autism related items. Like the one, "I've got nowhere to go," for example, expresses that no human being is illegal. Alex explains they feel it is important to talk about different issues. Alex also says that a lot of autistic people are statistically more likely to be trans and more likely to be queer than neurotypical people.

Alex believes there are a lot of cases in which disabled people are left out of the gay community. Such as with the gay pride events, in that they aren't very accessible for a lot of disabled people. Alex states, "we just tend to get left out when in reality we're still here – it's just like a lot of it's really loud like I said I can't do noise very well and a lot of like the over 21 queer scene is bars, which again tend to be crowded and loud and not a good time." Alex says this has definitely gotten them to think more about why they were drawn to punk and why they to present this way. Alex says they wrote an article for an upcoming blog about coming to this stage in their life. Alex says, when they were in high school, as a sophomore, they had gotten a little pin for their backpack that had a

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rainbow flag, and made a statement, "it's about damn time," as it was right after the nationwide legalization of gay marriage and therefore a popular topic for debate on the morning bus ride. Alex describes how on the bus ride, one of the kids saw the button and started throwing trash at them. As a result, the entire bus began to chant, kill the fag. Alex says they didn't do anything, because they were used being treated that way their entire life thus far. Alex recalls that they learned pretty young that nobody's going do anything about it. They mention an incident where they got called down to the school office and they were told to take the pin off their backpack because it was causing a distraction. Alex also complains nobody else on the bus was spoken to at all about their behavior. In response, about a week later, Alex bought their vest. Alex claims it is still the same one they wear today. They took the pin off their backpack, put it on the vest and started wearing the vest every day. Alex says it's like existing, "obviously, like being outside of what people expect and Being around and being loud and obnoxious."

Alex says, "It's like I just never really did want to just sit there and do nothing if I don't agree like I've always been pretty. No, that's not right. I'm not going to. I'm not going to do this thing if that's not what I think is right." Alex states that being autistic is only part of it. They believe, to a certain extent, being raised in the Southern Baptist Church where there are very strict gender roles, it has led them to rebuke identifying with a specific gender role. Alex says they go out of their way to make sure that they are "not placed in either box, I exist as myself And I really don't care what anybody thinks about it." Alex says they think, particularly when they joined the Youth Advisory Council at One-in-ten, they became part of a larger events initiative that established awareness of what was not being done in a sensory friendly manner. As for being

autistic, Alex laid claim and jumped in by saying, "alright, y'all need someone who's autistic to come in and make sure you can fix that."

Researcher Narrative The drawing was inspired by the notion of a stable life. An idea that, despite adversity, one is able to find a place of even footing. As the participants describe, they all face personal issues, that seem to go beyond the topic of sexuality, and yet they all describe an ability to overcome and sometimes even go beyond by utilizing their disability as a tool for negotiating other problems. In the first narrative, Bailee appears to be well aware of her temporal positioning when it comes to age. Although she knows she is young, Bailee is aware of issues that exist around her, in her world, relating to sexuality and disability. Problems she claims she has not yet experienced personally. Here, Bailee mentions her abilities as a theater kid and art skill, which ground her in a place of comfort as well as provide her an ability for care of the self. Similarly, Cassandra offers anecdotal examples of how her disabilities drove her to near self-destruction, but has instead overcome depression and oppressive treatment by others, leading her to a place where she feels empowered to push back and stand up for herself and her beliefs. Alex goes to farther extremes, particularly in the way they have rebelled against oppression and oppressive systems. In Alex's narrative, and particularly what inspired elements of the drawing, is how clothing and self-fashioning become transformed and utilized to speak to the world. The drawing of the overturned boat includes articles of clothing, a tattered sail, in the colors of the rainbow flag, that bleed into the water. What we learn from Alex, is how they transformed their appearance in response to something they were told they couldn't do – display a controversial statement on their bag. Instead, Alex applies those symbols on their exterior for the world to see.

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They wear the clothing with pride, and despite being "overturned," they continue to express who they are and what they believe in.

Figure 14

Virtual Futures

A virtual existence

In this sub-narrative, Bailee describes her experiences with racism and homophobia on Facebook as "just a lot of bad stuff." She said there were lots of homophobic posts, and a bunch of other things, but mostly homophobic. That gays specifically get vilified on Facebook, and this is what inspired the artwork that was created. Bailee stated, why not use that experience? Her showcase art piece, which is the ransom note project, distinguished by a structure in which the canvas is cut in half, one side in color and the other side in black and white, symbolically illustrates two sides: her grandparents' view in black and white, which she understands as homophobic and "colorless," while the other side is rainbow, in what she describes as "basically gay." As she says, how gay people view would view (the situation). Well, not all of them, she says because of internalized homophobia, this is from a more accepting version, that says you're valid. Bailee says it expresses LGBTQ and that you are valid, signed: sincerely, the truth. Bailee describes the other side is scarier, which shows it's written by the homophobes and they're perspectives about being gay. Bailee also admits that color-wise and material-wise, she's not very good at symbolism. Because Bailee claims her grandparents are "just kind of bigots," LGBTQ plus people give her strength as an LGBTQ individual, as well as a lot of big celebrities, which she finds very validating. Bailee says she is inspired by movie characters, like the ones she sees with her dad. "Me and my dad like watching shows that are made by DC, the Flash, Supergirl, Batwoman, Legend Tomorrow, watch all that and a lot of them. They don't have a super amount of representation, I always want more. But they do have representation and seeing these

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characters literally be friends with superheroes and be like, oh yeah, I've got woman and I'm a lesbian, it's just really cool to see on TV, and be like, hey, someone wrote this and that's me. That's part of the reason I love Batwoman so much, because the main character is a crime fighting Batwoman – who's a lesbian or likes girls too." Bailee sees she likes to see characters on screen be more like her, as well as she likes to see allies on screen that validate the characters. Bailee says that's an important thing for her, and that she wants equality. She believes that the main thing is that if we keep saying LGBTQ plus, we're valid. Bailee also admits that, as important as it is for her, she feels like for some people that's not going to do anything, "they're such trash of course, but seeing straight people be allies, it's super validating to see representation."

Cassandra introduces the trans flag which includes a brown stripe because BLM started "getting big again." She says that the flag has a brown stripe for the queer community, for LGBTQ people of color, because they are an endangered part of the community and need help. In her painting of the foot picture, Cassandra states it symbolizes specifically the history of the community. The black stripe symbolizes the aids crisis, which she believes is also a huge part of the LGBTQ history. Cassandra adds, "we're missing an entire generation of those stories that died with those people because of government negligence and people not caring." She suggests that we have to quote Hamilton (the play) and tell their stories even if we don't have them; that we need to have them counted as part of our history. Cassandra claims part of the inspiration for her artwork (*See Figure 18*) is that we need to pass stories on about people in gay history and how we survived and so on. Cassandra believes people want to be remembered and you have to ask people who "were there" about the AIDS epidemic and safe sex because one

can't let it happen again. She added, we need spaces like One-in-ten because they are helpful and offer a consistent refuge. The statement that many LGBTQ things, like older queer people, get left out of things (are out of touch), because people are shocked to see a trans person in their 50s and are amazed they lived to that age. Cassandra stated, "I'm gay, so I thought someone would have hurt me by now," and she explained how acceptance and socially acceptable behavior has changed since the 1950s. She also claimed homophobia in the '80s and '90s, when the aids crisis began, led to self-loathing and how other gay people became bigoted against one another. Cassandra said that older people in the community were not as connected and accepted, and that older people in bars got weird looks and sometimes were considered creepy. She said older people get cut off and don't have outlets or were sometimes talked to like children. She then went on to recall famous artists from gay history, such as Frieda Kahlo, who was an inspiration for her, or Katja from drag race, with whom she didn't relate to on her religious struggles, but instead related to her struggles with depression. Cassandra said she was fortunate to have always been around queer people, as her mom and aunt are bisexual. Cassandras says that Queerness has always permeated her space.

In similar fashion, Alex says a lot of people they have talked to online, as well as their familiarity with queer artists, like Jane Grace, the singer of their favorite band, is a trans figure from whom they have drawn a lot of inspiration from. Alex says this has inspired them to follow suit and express themselves in how they display symbols and patches on their actual clothing, namely the vest that is directly related to Grace's music. Apollo states that being able to talk and bring awareness about different issues, that aren't necessarily related to each other, like the autism topics and the notion of

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being an "illegal human," feels empowering because it allows them to exist. Because it allows them to be outside of what people in a way that is just "being around and being loud and obnoxious."

Researcher Narrative This narrative illustrates the impact of popular culture on the participants and how they become inspired by figures/images portrayed through virtual sources, such as movies, social media, technology etc. to create a virtual subject (Ahmed, 2006). In the example Bailee described the issue she was having with her grandparents, and the frustration she encountered with others on social media platforms, such as expressions of racism and homophobia, the conflict became a source of artistic inspiration which was then channeled as a tool of expression and communication that could then be utilized to communicate not only with the grandparents, but also to a larger audience. During the development of this art piece, peers became inspired and the participants became involved to develop and structure this creation. In doing so, participants were forced to contemplate different elements of symbolic meaning and semiotics, such as the colors of the pride flag, and other human elements of the LGBTQ community, such as what led into the discussion of inequality within the LGBTQ community. Through this, subjective considerations emerged that positioned participants as allies within the gay community and also helped them consider how they would convey and communicate through those images as represented in popular culture. Considerations of those symbols involved experiences watching movies that included mention of favorite superheroes that represent the LGBTQ community in ways that are inspirational (*See Figure 14*).

Similarly, recollections of gay history inspired a desire keep alive the memory of

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landmark struggles and battles that were once fought for what has been achieved today. Participants pointed out issues that still exist today within the LGBTQ community, as well as how older members of the community are mistreated. Cassandra recalls icons of gay history as a source of inspiration for her, and states that as she matures she realizes how she once struggled with impending thoughts of a hopeless future. Cassandra subsequently realized the importance of remembering the past, where the community once was, how things improved and the need to keep those memories alive for the sake of the future of the LGBTQ community. Similarly, Alex recalls their personal connection with icons from popular culture that have provided a lifeline for their own development and existence as a trans and autistic individual. In their description, Alex describes the profound impact gay trans icons and how they have negotiated a very difficult path in becoming an openly gay/trans individual. Through this, Alex describes the self-fashioning that evolved, how it came about in response to systemic oppression and is now utilized to present to the world, as care of the self that assisted in a self-fashioning and also utilized as a technology of the self (Hammerberg, 2004).

Visualizing narratives

The art-creation portion of the data analysis consisted of a traditional art analysis approach, as described in chapter three. In this section the visual compositional elements from the art pieces generated by the participants during the art-creation Zoom sessions, were analyzed and elements from the categories, semiotic visual analysis, content analysis and representation were identified in connection with drawings created by the

researcher as an effort to add layers of interpretation that extend the meaning of the following art pieces.

Figure 15

Hidden Monsters

Figure 16

Rainbow Steps

A cubist approach

Cassandra's painting, *Hidden Monsters* is an (acrylic) on canvas painting
executed in a style reminiscent of Picasso's (cubist/surreal) paintings, in which the
subject matter is fragmented into distinct geometric fields of color. The face is divided
into two halves down the middle, in which with each separate side painted in distinct
colors. The left side in green, the right side in pink. In effect, the figural portions of the
piece depict multiple angles simultaneously that offer opposing views of the face. The
disembodied face floats freely within a field of fragmented background sections that
consists of five irregularly-shaped sections, each of contrasting primary and secondary
colors. This surrealist approach creates the illusion of a dreamlike channeling of the
artist's subconscious. This (dream-like) presentation is emphasized by a loose execution
of varying brush stroke and boundary/margin line widths, as well as disproportionate
details of human-like characteristics. Dimensional detailing is flat with little variation in
modeling of color and texture. Representational details of nose, eyes, mouth, etc., are
basic and boldly executed, giving the overall piece a pop-art quality through application
of minimal detail and bold shapes and color that create geometric abstraction.

The palette consists of basic primary and secondary color applications applied in
flat brush strokes with minimal (modeling) and gradation. This approach creates the
effect of a pop-art-like boldness through the creation of distinctly contrasting shapes of
solid color and delineated lines/borders. The sections of the face are delineated with bold
black lines, which indicate all of the features, such as basic shapes that create the nose,
eyes, mouth, eyebrows, teeth, etc., This approach indicates an appeal to the cubist style of
painting, that is defined by simplified shapes and contrasting views of a subject. The

simplicity of color and shape also present bolder contrasts between opposing views of the subject. One side implies evil, and the other good. This style is consistent throughout the entire piece, which makes it cohesive. The use of basic colors and shapes direct focus to the face as a primary subject, depicted as two separate entities. The left side, colored in green, presents a particular "demonic" quality, emphasized by the rendition of sharp teeth and saliva dripping from the mouth. The execution of the eye adds to the notion of evil through the use of color, presented in red and black, the shape of the iris is non-humanlike and appears mechanical in a fan-shaped design, which implies a circular movement. The right side of the face is colored in pink, and is marked by softer features, such as a rounder nose shape (unlike the pointed shape of the nose on the demon side of the face), the shape of the lips are upturned in a smile gesture, the eye is executed in soft, human-like colors of blue and white, which also create an airy and sky-like impression. The shape of the eyebrow is shaped like a bird (possibly a dove) spread-eagle that extends the width of the brow.

Researcher Narrative Cassandra's painting, as she described, was inspired by her understanding of Picasso's cubist period pieces. The focal point being a figural image of a face, depicted as described in this introduction, as a disembodied face presented in the cubist style that allows for multiple opposing views. Cassandra employed this technique to offer two representations of a face, one of which is depicted in a "pseudo" demonic form painted in a primary green color, with the opposing side executed in a contrasting depiction of "good" in a secondary pink hue. Other elements that add to this contrast are applications that emphasis visual and symbolic differences, such as the use of sharp/jagged lines vs softly rounded curves, a beast-like mouth with jagged teeth dripping

with saliva vs a softly upturned smile, and so on. As described in the introduction, those details altogether contribute to the notion that there are two forces, good and evil. An existence of binary forces that are continuously at odds against one another as they impact the divides between straight and gay, as well as cultural divisions that are carried into LGBTQ social contexts as well. As this work was generated during discussions held in the art sessions, I extend my own reflections and reaction to those conversations as I analyze Cassandra's piece.

Cassandra's painting depicts, as a primary focus, a disembodied face executed in the style of cubist surrealism. My drawing extends this concept through my depiction of a disembodied face. The idea of multiple opposing views, as shown with a front facing face, partially covered by a hand, divided down the middle with the opposing view facing to the right side of the (canvas), only that rendition of the face is covered with a mask. Both mine and Cassandra's pieces depict a face that is partitioned down the middle. I interpret this to be a division that illustrates the concept of a binary. Two sides that represent opposing views. In Cassandra's piece, she clearly depicts good vs evil, as illustrated through the use of color, and visual cues (line, shape, clouds, doves, sharp teeth) as symbolic elements that emphasize this notion. My rendition extends this, through my inclusion of hands and masks as coverings that imply several things. One idea, as is indicated by the hand and mask as a covering, is the notion that individuals cover their true identity and project a subjective position as one who is subjugated by society. That even a multiplicity of subjectivities is subject to the implications of shame that is imposed on an individual who prevents a full and authentic representation of oneself.

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As experienced in the LGBTQ community, one is often subjected to a hyper-awareness of self and superficial qualities that are often scrutinized by others. In my experience, I often find myself presenting in ways that I feel will be accepted by others. In the many social situations we find ourselves in, whether it is in the context of a (gay) social setting, such as a bar, or in the mainstream community, where one becomes hypersensitive to the scrutiny of others, and the concern that one might be identified as different. In Cassandra's piece, she presents several color choices. Some of these become literal interpretations of good and evil, such as in the use of green and pink hues. In Cassandra's application we also see a geometric abstraction of shapes and color that make up the background in which the disembodied face is positioned. Cassandra's use of free-form shapes, colored in solid primary and secondary colors, makes it appear that the face has been torn and composed from the shapes that surround the face. As we discussed community, both the LGBTQ and the mainstream world we live in, I interpret Cassandra's rendition to depict how different elements are inextricably connected to each other. While the disembodied face projects a binary of opposing views, it still retains elements from other parts of the canvas, such as the primary green, the solid blues and reds, perhaps melding together to form the secondary colors of pink hues. This indicates an awareness that we are constructed and shape our subjective awareness as part of a larger community of elements that contribute to our personal makeup. In my rendition, I extend this notion through the manner in which I execute the drawing. The opposing sides of my face blend together, as the nose on the front facing image of the face becomes part of the ear, in an organic metamorphosis in transition from one face to the other. Even though there is very little information presented about the hidden face on

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the right, the mask itself becomes representative of what we sometimes try to project. The mask is depicted in a simplistic style, as one sees in representational renditions of theater masks. The surface features are nondescript, with smoothed out features, minimally indicating human qualities without any clear attribution to sex, gender or emotional expression. In my perspective, these are the gestures I, a self-identified gay individual, oftentimes aim to express, or perhaps others who shield themselves from the scrutiny of an unforgiving society. Emotionless expressions that refuse ties to a particular side of a binary, are safe and shielding shielding practices.

Figure 17
Lungs of The Community

Breath of life

Cassandra's painting, "Body of The Community", is an (acrylic) on canvas painting executed in a style reminiscent of Picasso's (cubist/surreal) paintings, in which the subject matter is fragmented into distinct geometric fields of color. Here, a pair of human lungs are executed in a geometric abstraction technique, in which each lung is painted in distinct primary, secondary and tertiary colors. The lungs are fragmented into multiple geometric pieces that compose the greater portion of the canvas, an image of the (human) lungs. Instead of the technique Cassandra applied to the previously discussed piece, "the face", which is executed in a more traditional application of cubist surrealism, in that multiple angles offer opposing views, the image of the lungs does not display the three-dimensional characteristic of cubism. Instead, the image of the lungs is flattened out in a two-dimensional fashion. A second anatomical element is layered directly over the image of the lungs. The figure of a blue aorta is placed over the lung depiction, colored in a medium blue hue; it includes directional arrows to indicate blood flow. The depiction of the lungs possesses a map-like quality, with the segmented geometric abstraction of various roughly drawn shapes, each colored in a different hue. The color choice for these shapes involves primary, secondary and tertiary colors, but does not appear to utilize a complimentary color scheme for the color choice, nonetheless the color choices create a well-balanced rhythm of shape and color. Another organ-like element that floats directly over the image of the lungs is a vein-like structure, which is perceived to be an "aorta." The aorta image indicates the blood flow as a source that nourishes the vital organs of the "body" of the community. The fragmented background sections of the lungs consist of several irregularly shaped sections, each one is executed

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in a singular hue . The overall image of the lungs, and color choice, implies a melding of backgrounds that come together. This (pseudo), cubist-surrealist approach indicates the illusion of a dreamlike channeling of artist subconscious in a presentation that is emphasized by loose execution of varying brush stroke densities and widths, as well as inconsistency in boundary/margin line widths. Overall, this piece exhibits a disproportionate consistency in detail that model the organ-like structures. Lack of multi-dimensional detailing is emphasized by a flat application of paint and color, which offers very little variation in modeling and gradation, particularly of color or texture.. The lungs are an organ vital to the existence of a healthy body, which is symbolic for the body of the gay community. The paint application, although basic, is boldly executed. This styling gives the overall gesture of the piece a pop-art quality but is also a powerful depiction of how the artist views a healthy and functional LGBTQ community.

The color palette, which consists of primary, secondary and tertiary colors, is executed in a style that offers a unique cohesiveness of the entire piece, which also is evident through other styling techniques the artist employs. Evident similarities can be seen in the execution of geometric shapes, such as consistency of how irregular geometric shapes are created, how boundaries for shapes are demarcated (use of bold black line), and the manner in which paint is applied to the surface. In this piece, it is obvious the artist desires to portray a certain degree of casualness, or Laissez faire, in how color and paint are applied, (Nonetheless, each shape or subdivision on the canvas is painted in a distinctly different and opposing color to that of its adjacent shape). The choice of color sometimes may compliment the adjacent shape, but there is no significant indication of that as a purposeful design choice by the artist. With very little variation of color

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blending, modeling and color saturation through gradation or texture, what identifies this piece as a pseudo pop art and cubist surrealism, is that the use of color is consistently limited to solid and flat applications that are cleanly isolated to basic geometric shapes. For each solid hue, a basic geometric shape can be identified. The method of application of the paint also has an impact on this approach. In this styling, acrylic paint is applied to the canvas with flat and broad strokes. The inconsistency of paint saturation onto the white areas of the canvas displays a moderately crude execution and method. More importantly, this approach is successful in producing the pop-art-like boldness desired by the artist. This is indicated by distinct and contrasting shapes of solid color, delineated by simple black lines that form the borders of the basic shapes that makeup this piece. The various shapes are delineated by bold black lines that recall the cubist style of painting.

Researcher Narrative In this second piece by Cassandra, she recreates a similar rendition to the previous piece that was presented, in that the artist once again incorporates a cubist period style, influenced by Pablo Picasso. Once again, the focal point is of a figural image, only this time it is of a vital human organ, the lungs. The style in which this focal image is presented resembles the approach of the disembodied face in her other artwork. The main difference in this piece is that it departs from a basic and essential tenet of the cubist approach. Here, instead of presenting a work of art in which multiple geometric pieces function as a tool for depicting multiple (three dimensional) perspectives of a singular object, the pieces themselves become independently demarcated sections of a singular object. I understand this to mean that Cassandra, as she states this is the "body of the community," views this as an artistic expression of a (vital) organ, which is part of a body, becomes representational of the many (sections) and

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facets of the LGBTQ community. Through the use of puzzle-like shapes, in a variety of

solid colors, represent the many different parts and dimensions of the LGBTQ

community, which is still identified as a distinct group, separate from mainstream society

– a marginalized group of people, who are viewed as a whole.

In the drawing I generated, what inspired me most about Cassandra's description

of a "body," is the notion of a human form. Hence, I produced a drawing of a human-like

creature but remains unidentifiable. No sex or gender is overtly expressed. In fact,

identifiable features are not only hidden, but rather the idea of attributing a clear and

specific identification is ridiculed by the whimsical bear-like suit, over-sized gloves,

clown shoes and nondescript theater mask. In homage to Cassandra's appropriation of

the human lungs, a symbolic depiction of the "body" of the LGBTQ community, I reveal

those organs underneath the unzipped bear costume, perhaps exposed against its will.

Recall the violence of those who are exposed to the world when sexuality is used as a

weapon. The bear costume itself is tattered and bears the scars of a long history of

wounds inflicted on the LGBTQ community. My rendition of the lung organs is more

graphic because I wish to emphasize the violence that is inflicted on the LGBTQ

community. How, most oftentimes against their will, a marginalized group of people are

violently attacked, stripped of their dignity and plundered like a slaughtered animal.

Hence, the arteries that flow out of the human heart flow out of the body, in a symbolic

escape, and flow into the mainstream world and offer elements for others outside the

community to experience. This is depicted by the gushing artery, turned to water hose,

that spews recognizable images such as the drag queen, artistic and cultural elements,

and so on, which are areas typically known to have contributions from the LGBTQ (the

body) experience. This is depicted by the gushing artery, turned to water hose, that spews recognizable images such as the drag queen, artistic and cultural elements, and so on, which are areas typically known to have contributions from the LGBTQ (the body) community.

In Cassandra's piece, the segmented, geometric shapes, also described as geometric abstraction, which defines the segmented pieces as non-objectified elements. What is interesting about Cassandra's piece is the organic quality she used to describe the "body" of the community. The irregular shapes, in multitudes of colors are reminiscent of the cultural and individual diversity that exists within the parameters of the LGBTQ community, or the body. Although separate and distinct, the pieces fit together like a jigsaw puzzle and serve one function. The vital function of the lungs is to pass essential oxygen to the rest of the body and other organs. The whole of the piece is representative as one body. The shape of the aorta is itself is a humanlike depiction. I extend the idea of binaries, as the visual depictions of a set of lungs is perfectly divided into two lobes, split right down the middle. In my drawing, I tie in the visual motif of the vine, which represents the straight path (Ahmed, 2010), and is being held by the creature in the bear costume, who directs the flow of the path (the hose) as it spews its culture, ideas, people out into the world.

Figure 18

Body of the Community

Figure 19

Patching Back

A patched existence

Alex's "Art Patches," Alex produced a series of activist art illustrations that would be displayed in the form of clothing patches. These pieces depict persuasion through social consciousness raising that is commonly used by activists and social movements to encourage awareness of social issues or injustices. It is also believed this kind of artwork is helpful in creating social networks in which like-minded people can communicate, express their social/political views and even set the foundation for possible branding tools that may be used as organized propaganda. Alex's artwork employs the

use of bold language, color, font, and symbols. In the context of their artwork, color is strategically used as literal presentations of symbolism, but also includes semiotics for conveying personal beliefs that are interlinked with traditional symbols used by the LGBTQ community. During the course of the art creation sessions, Alex produced several pieces, of varying colors, font, messaging, etc., that are intentionally designed to attract immediate attention and jar the viewer to respond. The color palate typically includes bold primary colors that are intended to generate a lasting impression.

One of Alex's pieces is formatted in the colors of an LGBTQ rainbow flag. The boldness of the colors and recognizability of the rainbow flag image immediately informs of the purpose of the artwork. Being that these patches fall within the framework of activist art, the primary point of focus is placed on (forceful) statements, in bold lettering, typically placed over a background that accentuates contrasts for a more powerful impact. The messaging is also typically short, as the information presented is intended to be consumed instantly and provide a repetitive tool to persuade social consciousness. This artwork is highly emblematic of several things. One is Alex's own personal experiences with oppression, as a gay individual, and how this type of artistic expression has inspired and fueled their motivation to overcome oppressive people, situations and even institutional discrimination. The language Alex used in these pieces includes powerful terms that have an almost visceral effect on the viewer. It is believed that people who view this artwork may have either an association with a social injustice or possess historical knowledge of the language and symbolism contained in these pieces.

A less explicit tactic is the use of repetition. Because this artwork is constructed with the purpose of being attached to clothing, it is believed that through constant

exposure to these patches, viewers will begin to pay closer attention to a cause they normally wouldn't feel they have a connection with. The use of bold colors and sharply contrasting designs employ the most basic primary color palettes. The purpose of which is to make the visual and textual information have the most immediate impact, and unlike other visual artwork, the attention to abstraction or deeper constructs of fine art are not important. Alex utilizes a color palette that can be as simple as bold, white lettering over a pure black background. As described earlier, the prominent and highly recognizable colors of the rainbow flag are commonly used. Red (bulls-eye) target shapes also demand immediate attention. The (gender) identification symbol, for trans individuals, is less bold and utilizes the soft pink and blue colors of the trans flag. It is also important to note that those types of visual/symbolic elements fall within the lower rungs of the hierarchy structure in importance. Although such symbols are important, it is also essential to minimalize distraction from the larger message being presented.

Researcher Narrative Through my extended reading of Alex's artwork, I was inspired to emphasize the "power" concept of activism. Not to go into a deeper discussion about power exchanges, as might be described by Foucault, I drew a commonly used image. The fist represents a visual cue that comes to mind when I think of activism and pushing back. As per how I interpret Alex's artwork, I created an image that positions the fist as a symbol of power and resilience. Here, the fist is punching through a barrier that appears tough to break through (*See Figure 20*). Stretching the limits of oppression until a breakthrough is achieved. The patchwork on the arm is inspired by Alex's own ideas of activist artwork and renderings of clothing patches. Here, they bolster the push of the fist and provide the necessary support to achieve gain.

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The barrier is depicted as a clear membrane, as I believe oftentimes barriers are only perceived to be greater than they are. That one is capable of overcoming any form of oppression if you have the will to do so. That barriers should be perceived as fictional forces and their potential to oppress should be dismissed. Flanking this clear membrane (barrier) are the words, "Don't walk like that," which is a poignant memory I have of growing up, when I personally faced criticism from a family member who bullied me about my "unspoken" sexuality

Figure 20

Breaking Through

CHAPTER 7

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

The Zoom sessions and how the technology created a unique culture can be described as the creation of a forum that inspires a sense of togetherness and support in which the participants reaffirmed themselves as unique individuals who possess talent, ability and strength to overcome and inspire change. What emerged from the meetings despite the absence of actual human contact, was the affirmation of subjective positionings. Through a digital choreography, similar to what is described by Manning, what emerged was a movement through conversations where participants fed into each other, inspiring responses that revealed a shaping through contact. Regardless of whether the participants weren't fully aware of their sexuality or subjective positions prior to or during the art creation events and interviews, what emerged was dialogue that reinforced perceptions of themselves and that attitude with which they embraced that reality. Ahmed (2006) describes this as a notion of "contact sexuality," or a becoming through contact with other bodies that encourages bodies to extend into other worlds, or other contexts, that might have previously been considered unacceptable. And that it is through narrative that "you can come to understand and know yourself and make sense of the world" (Anzaldúa, 2015, p. 6).

What I hope this study does, is shed light on the needs of a marginalized group of young people, as well as how candid discussions about disability and the dynamics of interaction within the context of safe spaces can offer. Can this kind of Zoom platform for art creation serve as a model in other applications? Participants also expressed the need for places like what is offered by the One-n-ten youth center, particularly as they

described their experiences in mainstream public school settings and the importance of finding peer groups they saw as refuge. I believe that not only LGBTQ youth are in need of these kinds of spaces, where they feel safe to explore themselves and express who they are without concern of being victimized, but that youth from all backgrounds can benefit from these kinds of settings. As a social studies educator, I was tasked in conveying the importance of becoming a contributing citizen to our society. What was learned from this study is that the youth participants involved expressed an affinity for assuming subjective roles that positively contribute to becoming good citizens. What was learned from the art production is the freedom of expression, beyond text, allows individuals to imagine and consider possibilities that are beyond limit.

Discourse of ability and disability

According to Siebers (2013), "The human body is both the subject and object of aesthetic production" (p. 32). Siebers goes on to state that not all bodies are created equal. In this assertion, what is described is a notion that ideals of beauty surpass a singular perspective of what is considered to be beautiful, or "perfect." When put into context, the notion of what is beautiful requires a break from conventional notions of what is acceptable. LGBTQ youth demonstrate an understanding, as expressed through discussion and production of art, that beauty comes in many ways, some of which are not considered beautiful or conventional by others. As I mentioned before, the participants in this study expressed themselves candidly and openly, mostly uninhibited in their discussion, likely because they felt safe within their environment (Flensner, et al., 2019). This often led to open discussion about perceived strengths and weaknesses that often include discussion about personal disability. What was interesting is that most of the

participants don't view their disability as a "disability," but at worst a hinderance that sometimes needs to be tended to, and at best a form of ability that offers alternative benefits. Despite this, some youth embrace their disability and turn it into a positive aspect in their lives. As described earlier, the multiplicity of real or non-real,material or perceived elements become unique experiences from which an individual subsequently creates his/her subject who perceives the world, and all of its experiences, perceptions and feelings in a unique and distinct way (Debaise, 2017). Therefore, to some, the actual identification of such is embraced as a tangible (entity) that allows them to make sense of who they are and can better arm themselves for working against the negative aspects a disability may present. Others embrace their disability and harness subsequent benefits that coincide. Such as the participant who describes their autism and the ways in which it heightens their other senses so that they describe their disability as a source for empowerment and growth. As a particular issue of disability were discussed, what often was realized during those conversations was that awareness of a certain disability urged consideration of possible solutions for overcoming those issues. At times, what was realized was the possession of other abilities that help counterbalance limiting aspects of the individual. In some cases, the impact of a disability also fueled the production and/or stimulation of other talents into action. Sometimes, what is considered a point of weakness gets turned into a point of strength, especially when the individual learns to overcome the issue, they go on to apply what they have learned to help others in similar situations. In one example, the participant describes how this has becomes a source for defense mechanisms that help them negotiate difficult social situations. In talk of acceptance of their disabilities, this participant also describes a situation they had with

convincing their parents about the importance of being diagnosed, even if it meant the assumption of a label not considered favorable. In regard to the notion of labeling, this participant, also describes an experience with a psychologist who tried to discourage them from assuming a label that categorizes as bisexual. Despite the advice from parents and psychologists, youth sometimes believe that knowing their truths, even if it means adopting non-conforming labels, will somehow empower them and allow them to survive. Meaning, in part, that if she can identify her challenge – attach a label to it - then an individual is better prepared to push back as they channel their strengths as a form of technology of the self (Hammerberg, 2004). This unique sensitivity allows empathy to develop, establish subjective positions, such as leadership that are inclined to nurture others. The example of autism as empowerment becomes a voice in which others with a similar disability can benefit. Connections are made with others who share similar qualities and talents are realized with new potential for overcoming oppression. This was often the example, which shaped artistic talents and self-fashioning. A process that reframes sexuality as more than just about sex, but rather a way of forming a self and a life (Linville, et al, 2010).

This optimistic attitude about disability is pervasive within the discourse of disability as participants express empathy for one another as well as others within the community who are often victimized. This defining quality presents the participants and their views on social issues from a perspective of understanding and concern for others, inclusive of the greater LGBTQ community and the ways in which people are treated. When discussing gender pronoun choice, one of the participants describes an ongoing, and what feels like exhausting effort, to educate family members about the importance of

respecting other people's gender pronouns. Almost in desperation, this participant exclaims, "It doesn't matter if you don't understand it, just do it." As she advises her father on the importance of respecting a person's chosen gender pronoun. This sentiment is carried into discussions about the LGBTQ community, as participants describe injustices that have seen and experienced amongst others within the community. This leads to discussion about the subjective creation of the participants and how they subsequently position themselves as subjects who assume roles of defiance and/or support. Openly gay youth appear to be very much in tune with the current social and political condition of their community. As participants expressed, they are aware of the tensions that exist as well as issues that seep in from the outside world, such the aforementioned problems of racism, prejudice and mistreatment of non-conforming individuals or people with physical disabilities. An interesting insight that emerged from the conversations, was the temporal awareness of LGBTQ youth and the notions they perceive in regard to older generations, as well as their assessment of the direction of the LGBTQ community.

Realization of Subjectivity

In this section, I present what was learned about how participants expressed subjective positionings, either as they have been previously held, emerged or evolved. In a broader sense, Subjective positioning is a result of recognition of one's truths, which come about with the discourses we engage in (Bernauer & Rasmussen, 2001, p. 52). In this context, the data that was gathered came about as participants not only engaged in a particular discourse, that being the context of the social interactions of LGBTQ youth who participated in art creation sessions, but also the fact that they

spoke freely about their own life experiences out in the world, and subsequently described their views of how they "fit" into those various discourses. In most cases, the participants talked about their own background, family life, peer group associations and so on. In doing so, what emerged from and was gleaned from those conversations, was a temporal awareness of the subjects and not only how they believe they fit into their society, but also the subjective positions they assumed that located them in positions of power and potential to influence change for the future, particularly as it applies to their community. In the following paragraphs, I will describe several points, which emerged through the data that help illustrate these assertions.

LGBTQ youth, as demonstrated through the context of the art creation sessions, are encouraged and inspired by their peers to express their views openly in an uninhibited manner when in the comfort and "safe space" of other's company. As the conversations progressed, participants recounted early childhood experiences in the discovery of their own sexuality, which often led to sharing of how each participant negotiated their own understanding and making sense of their sexuality, as well as what that meant in the larger context of the world's approval. Through those discussions, participants shared anecdotes about the burdens they experienced, which often led to the mention of seeking out examples through role models who would, as one participant put it, "teach me how to be gay." Something that indicated an interesting point about the discovery of sexuality, is that regardless of the amount of support an individual may receive from positive and reaffirming family members, is that despite the kind of support, a young LGBTQ person still relies on the examples and support from outside

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sources with whom they can associate their sexuality identity (Butler, 2002). One

participant stated that, although they

felt they had full support from their family, and that they never felt any hostile attitudes

against gay people from family members, that they felt the need to seek out positive and

true-to-life examples. In other cases, participants described experiences with family

members who were not as accepting of gay people. It was this particular participant who

described the influence of popular culture on their early perceptions of sexuality. They

described first becoming aware that homosexuality exists from a portrayal in a music

video. They admit not understanding, at first, what was happening in the music video

until they had time to contemplate the experience. Later, this participant recalls turning

to other representations of "gay" in other pop culture mediums, such as characters in

movies and TV shows.

Participants are aware of oversexualized representation of gay people in popular

culture, and they view that negatively. What comes into play as well are related attitudes

about sex, as a temporal view sex and sexuality exhibited by a young participant who

still views the subject of sex with an aversion of disgust. This carries forth and impacts

the frustration they feel about oversexualization of gay people, as viewed through

popular culture mediums most commonly seen on television or movies. This leads to an

expression of desire to view representation of herself in on-screen depictions in a more

accurate and true-to life representation of what it means to be gay. A desire to

experience representation in main-stream culture that isn't based solely on sex. This

particular conversation led to discussions about the inadequacies of gay representation

in mainstream pop culture. This involved the topics of sex and a feeling that there is a

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constant trend of "hyper-sexualization," of gay characters within mediums of television and movies. What came about during these discussions, was that most of the youth have become aware of their subjective positions as specified by social expectations that speak to gender and sexuality. One participant describes a subjective position as a young LGBTQ individual who is aware of their subjectivity as a young LGBTQ individual who is not yet ready to accept a position of a mature individual who considers themselves sexually active. Despite their refusal of sex-related labels, this participant does accept their subjectivity as a young, bisexual individual. What is interesting to point out is how youth at this stage in life, are willing to adopt gender related labels, but not the implications of being recognized as a sexually active individual (citation?). This example illustrates how youth become aware of binaries that establish the divide between opposing sides of what is viewed as either right or wrong. As this participant illustrates, the topic inspired the creation of a piece of art that symbolized this kind of division. In an effort to counter regimented belief systems, the ransom note project illustrated how this participant views a distinction set forth by a binary that involves the straight world and the gay world at opposing sides. In their description, the participant also discusses how the distinction of being labeled a bisexual subject imposes the strain of having to straddle two separate worlds, the gay and straight. Because this participant passes as being straight, they nonetheless suffer the impact of discrimination that comes from both straight world and gay world prejudices. It is commonly known that bisexuals feel torn between two worlds, as a result of bi-phobia (Weiss, 2011). Participants discussed topics about sexuality and gender in a manner that showed a high level of understanding and respect for individual choice with gender expression. This could be

attributed to the fact that participants have commonly experienced their own issues of confrontation related to socially perceived stigma and discrimination. It is also this sense of self-awareness of "not fitting in" with

mainstream expectations of what is considered normal, but are instead members of a world that exists in non-conventional ways. In addition, many youth are also forced to contend with the topic of disability, in addition to what they have to contend with in regard to their sexuality. This could also explain the openness with which participants express acceptance of gender identification choices and labels. In one particular discourse, a participant describes the effort to convince family members to be respectful of gender pronouns, whether they agree with the topic or not. Because they find themselves in a world in which they are subjugated to preconceived definitions of themselves, participants are forced to accept a stark reality of being different. In describing Foucault's experimental process, what sometimes happens is a fragmentation of subjectivity. This experimental process is a response to the forces that we are all subjected to and usually have their origin from sources derived from our institutions. This transfer of power, as Foucault describes, can have a deep impact on how it forces us to shape our subjectivities. When we have these encounters with such a force, we are tasked with a moral decision for "checking" with our moral code to reconcile acceptance of the subjective position we will assume. Sometimes we encounter conflicting forces of power that causes us to assume contradicting subjective positions. This is what is referred to as fragmentation. These fragmentations are different from what the powers that flow through us that the subject that power would normally constitute (Scott, 1992). Essentially, when a subject develops a subjective awareness.

Several examples emerged, during the course of the conversations, that involved awareness and acceptance of disability. One participant described how struggling with her family to accept her desire to be diagnosed with ADHD. implies people who are not LGBTQ do not share the same level of comfort with accepting a label about themselves that doesn't align with what may be considered "normal." In getting tested for ADHD, she says her parents also suggest not to take medication if she doesn't need it. Regardless, Bailee says she wants to know if she has ADHD anyway. She says she believes her parents don't understand labels. In contrast, Bailee says she believes labels help her a lot. Bailee then describes the experience she had when she first began talking to her therapist about being Bi-sexual. Bailee says when her therapist asked why she wanted another label, she responded with frustration and stated, "like, why do you call yourself a girl?" She then complains that her therapist made an entire "issue" about labels. "She didn't think they were needed, and I said, you're completely comfortable with boy and girl labels."

As mentioned earlier, LGBTQ youth are forced to contend with understanding of their own sexuality at a young age, and many resorted to creative measures in their road to discovery. As one participant describes, her early experiences involved the use of the Sims World video game to explore notions of gay love relations when they invented their own world in which two female characters could act out a romantic involvement. Later, this same participant generated artwork that was included a variety of LGBTQ community related symbolism. The art they produced, in effect, exemplified the "body of the community," as they perceived the community as a working, body organ, that held together as a system dependent on others to function properly. In her descriptions

of self, this participant commonly referred to their subjective position as a counselor and role model, which depicts an understanding that they are inextricably involved in the function of a larger part of their community.

Another participant describes a more painful experience as they encountered a good amount of bullying and discrimination in their early years. This particular participant also describes the impact of autism and how they have had to negotiate that aspect of themselves in conjunction with being gay. Regardless of the difficulties suffered by this individual, they have assumed subjective positionings of strength, which as have empowered them to overcome bullying and oppression from institutions. Through art this participant produced, it became evident that elements of strength and (anarchy), as defined by the visual characteristics of protest art and other examples of inspiration they have discovered, such as well-known poets, singers and artists, has led them to adopt a subjective position of power. As Barad (cited in Shelton, 2019) describes, the power to oppress can also become a jolt to energize a response against oppression. It is through that kind of "jolt" this participant has gone so far as to model their outward, physical appearance in the way they fashioned their outward appearance in a literal sense as a form of rebellion against oppression. Other participants have also taken the inspiration of famous creative figures in the creation of their own subjective fashioning. Similarly, other participants take on the challenge of changing public perceptions when they assume the subjective position as protest artist, who are inspired to apply their artistic abilities in effort to use art as a method to inform the public and change views.

As well as their own experiences, participants are aware of social problems that exist for LGBTQ people in both mainstream society as well as in their own community. They express experiences of oppression that range from family, to peers and institutions. As one participant put it, in a figurative sense, her sexuality has been held for ransom. They also express awareness of inequalities that cause tensions within the LGBTQ community and how prejudices and discrimination seeps in from the outside world. They see examples of this played out by examples of racism, sexism, as well as discrimination experienced by individuals with disabilities at events like Gay Pride, in which inadequate accommodations are provided. It's these kinds of experiences that embolden youth, such as the participants of this study, who self-proclaim to have of disabilities, such as anxiety disorder, ADHD, autism, and so on, to adopt subjective positionings of counselors,

activists, allies, teachers, etc. These discussions encourage participants to share their experiences in which school teachers and administrators drove them to a place where they were forced to negotiate their place within that context and push back against the oppression those systems presented. In some instances, participants found a safe place amongst the support of LGBTQ peer groups, in which they found a safe place to be. Other examples illustrate how participants felt compelled to rebel against the system and incorporate tools they had adopted as a form of rebellion, which materialized in self-fashion as an anarchist who pushes back against the system. This particular example drew their empowerment from role trans role models they found expressed character traits of empowerment, such as famous trans figures who are poets, artists, and music performers.

These examples of subjective realization evolved over the course of the art sessions and conversations, in that participants expressed a growing awareness of their place within the community. In later conversations and art production, participants exhibited a growing awareness of their subjective positions not only as subjects of the community, family or institutions, but rather began to refer to previous roles as allies and counselors to others. The artwork generated by the participants exemplified positions of power. Through bold use of color, line and content, the participants demonstrated they understood their position within the community as well as a subjective positioning that place them in the context of power. As a matter of subjective realization, one participant realizes the impact they can have as an artist. This participant realized they can utilize art to turn a negative situation, like mainstream views of sex and sexuality, and create something beautiful that has the power to inform the public. In her own words, this participant stated, "I can make art out of it – maybe I can try and make it look pretty or something. Basically, I channel my cottage core energy in there so that we can show like how I view my sexuality vs how they view my sexuality." This expression contends that, "if people can understand things, and it's like if someone sees something like this, maybe that's just the way they think, and it'll make them think…"

"You call yourself a girl?" Bailee complains that her therapist made an entire issue about labels. "She didn't think they were needed, and I said, you're completely comfortable with boy and girl labels."

Technologies of The Self (Foucault, 1988)

Participants recount early encounters with sexuality and how they negotiated understandings of themselves as well as how they overcame individual burdens

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associated with the realization that being gay had placed them in a difficult position in terms of accepting their truth. This awareness leads youth to seek out examples that reinforce their subjective creation, such as the quest to find positive role models who they wish will teach them how to fit in to their world in socially acceptable ways. In doing so, they try to establish an understanding of how they can negotiate their way through a world that demands certain expectations. One example is the power of the school institution and the discourses it generates through its subjects. Also, what happens within the school environment, is youth are forced to contend with the expectations place on a subject of that environment. As the power of the institution flows through subjects, it is carried by them and passed onto other on to others (Foucault, 1980), thereby shaping LGBTQ youth into discursive carriers who become subjugated as subjects who then comply with social expectations. Interestingly this also directs subjects who gravitate toward one another in search of others who share similar experience. As demonstrated by the participants in this study, youth often become armed in response to social pressures and act out in a sort of rebellion, which becomes evident in the way they utilize their abilities, or technologies, they incorporate as tools for modes of operation conducted on their own bodies to achieve a state of happiness (Hammerberg, 2004). The systems that impact LGBTQ youth can be described as engagements with a family unit, other straight and LGBTQ peers, the LGBTQ community, and so on, which lead LGBTQ youth to utilize methods that become the process of technologies of the self as a source to contend with difficult situations youth experience within those systems. Because youth are left to their own devices in this process, the crafting of technologies requires and individual to draw from an arsenal of

personal talents and abilities contained within. In applications of those methods, youth act individually, or with the help of others, as they acquire knowledge of literacy in skills for self-regulation which helps them contend with problems faced within that system (Hammerberg, 2004). The formation of self, or subject, is fed from the resources they utilize in the development of a particular technology offering unique solutions for the playing field. In this section, I illustrate examples of how participants created/recreated technologies of the self, as a "modes of operation" that help guide youth through their playing fields (Hammerberg, 2004).

Early on, youth seek out examples from which to shape their subjectivities beyond the family unit and (close) circle of peers. Even though they may enjoy the full support of their family in respect to their sexuality, as one participant describes, they still lack the guidance and examples they desire to help them manifest a true sense of self. As this pertains to care-of-the-self, youth turn to methods based on their moral truths that in turn helps to feed their inner desires as well as fulfill their true nature (Dahlberg, et al., 1999). Even though some youth feel compelled to seek out positive, true to life examples, who will then "teach" them and model subjective possibilities as well as provide an example of how they too can shape their creative potential in the development of technologies of the self, they will refer to those sources as inspiration that helps fulfill their understanding of a moral truth, an act as care of the self but also utilized for a positive moral application. As these youth describe, they yearn for a world that is better understanding and accepts others, despite race, disability or non-conformity, they turn to practices that also fulfill a care-of-the-self, sometimes not even realizing the full impact of their actions. As one participant put it, "I just like to create

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beautiful art." While some youth face other common social issues, such as racism, inequality, mistreatment or prejudice against non-conforming behaviors and presentation, they are keenly aware what they must do to survive. Through the discussions, what was learned was how adept youth become in realizing their individual potentials. In one example, the participant describes a variety of strengths and talents they possess, that outweigh the consequences of disability. In that example, it can be determined the participant has learned to harness their talents as a "theater actress," as a technology that is utilized in shaping a subjectivity that applies those abilities for the purposes. Possession and ability with utilizing specific tools, such as paint brushes, paint mediums, pencils, etc., become part of the technology the self.

Examples of artistic ability and affinity for producing artwork are also other tools that become part of the technology of the self that is to negotiate interactions with others, as well as create communication. Subjective realizations are created, such as artist who feels empowered to impact change. This is in spite of the fact they assume the labels of self-proclaimed disabilities that include anxiety disorder and ADHD. Similarly, another participant refers to their autism as an ability, rather than a disability. They go so far as to embrace their disability as a defining character trait that makes up their subjectivity as an empowered individual whose technologies of the self involve the harnessing of unique abilities afforded to people with autism, which include - but aren't limited to – the enhancement of other senses. This participant also describes the influence from inspirational role models who have helped them harness their artistic abilities and apply them in the creation of a self-fashioning that incorporates the visual and symbolic characteristics of protest art. Through that creation, the technologies of the

self were derived from creative and inspirational sources who shaped the participants

own development of a technology that helps push back against oppression and

oppressive systems (Hammerberg, 2004). Other participants described the impact of art

on their subjective creation and have also utilized their artistic and creative abilities in

the development of technologies of the self. In the third example, this participant taps

into their arsenal of art history knowledge and combine their own artist abilities in

generating art that becomes impactful. Similar to the protest art approach previously

described, this participant utilizes their knowledge of famous artists and art styles, such

as Picasso and Haring, in creating their own art that is reminiscent of cubism and activist

art, as it depicts bold shapes, that offer multiple perspectives that depict opposing views,

as well as the use of bold color, line and symbolism, appropriated to represent this

participant's personal views related to their struggles.

Moving Forward and Applications

Despite social political advances for the gay community, such as the 2015 U.S.

Supreme Court's ruling in favor of extending nationwide government recognition of

same-sex marriage, sexual gender nonconformity continues to be framed as a threat to

thenational community (Hoy, 2020). This reality is bolstered particularly by current

politicalefforts that are being targeted against the trans community, as seen by current

legislationssigned into law by states such as Florida and Texas, that target the LGBTQ

community, and particularly "trans" individuals, through creation of policy in which the

state imposes an erasure by prohibiting and form of acknowledgement or discussion

about topics relating to gay people. These efforts demonstrate the LGBTQ community

continues to struggle with achieving equal status, which makes the importance of

studies relating to the topics and research questions posed in this study even more significant as the information and data gleaned from these sources can be applied in creating literature that will inform educators and school administrators about the social conditions and needs of youth who identify as LGBTQ.

The data collections methods, and non-methods, were intended as art-based, creative means of data collection approaches to subvert conventional approaches, such as top down/one-way models of doing research are often neither effective nor relevant (Fischman & Tefera, 2014). traditional approaches of evaluating research goals may be impacted. It is hoped this information will a better understanding of how art-based methods can be applied in doing research, particularly when there is consideration of varying intersections and explorations of creative involvement that allow for negotiation of various forms of multimodal expressions (Albers & Harste, 2007). This type of approach also offers a place for creative explorations and involvement that allow negotiation of various forms of multimodal expressions which accompany developmental understandings of self and others within the context of their community (Albers & Harste, 2007). Amdur (1993) suggests these types of explorations are relevant as cultural experiences, sometimes perceived as strange to our own understandings, yet are impactful in that they become embedded in our own life experience and understandings of life worlds that help shape how we constitute ourselves in relation to others. The "methods" presented in this project can be applied in other settings, such as the classroom, particularly in how these examples of an open art creation forum can be effective in the context of conventional learning environments. These methods, in which the guide/teacher engages as a co-participant helps engage all participants in a joint

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learning process that is nurtured through sharing of personal stories and experiences that help break down inhibitions, preconceived notions as well creates empathy. As participants submerge themselves in an open and cooperative art creation experience, especially when offered as "in the moment" practices, with no predetermined or structured expectations, opens and inspires a multiplicity of creative directions in discovery of self and others where personal experiences are shared openly and discussed freely through the momentum engagement with others in a dynamic process of discovery.

Grbich (2012) asserts that as a pursuit of equality, the researcher should be required to become part of the groupof participants during the course of a study because, as knowledge is constructed jointly through those interactions and consequently the participants are effectively exposed to the researcher's own life experiences. This idea was relevant to this study for several reasons, but primarily because of my personal connection with being a member of the LGBTQ community and an underlying desire to make better sense of what it means to be a citizen, a cultural citizen, of this community, this lifestyle, this affliction… I sincerely do not mean that in negative terms by any means, but it does go without saying, whether some members of the community would agree with me or see it from my perspective, it is a defining characteristic of most LGBTQ individuals, of who I am and how it has impacted me deeply my entire life. Sadly, sometimes not so good and sometimes good. If dare to recall, many childhood traumas were inherently born of the sheer presence of my sexuality. Regardless, somewhere deep in my psyche I felt that this project could possibly help make better sense of who I am and what my roles, subjectivities are and

how and why they have been shaped the way that they have. I also believed sharing

my own life experiences would become an essential asset in the contributions offered

during the art making sessions. Those contributions consisted of the conversations the

participants shared and ultimately created venues for understanding in the that my

stories, whether they were openly share or not, fostered responses from the participants

that were sincere and deeply personal. In some cases, those experiences I had once had

took on a new life or meaning when a participant shared a similar experience. In those

instances, layers of understanding were created and revealed the possibility of

reconciliation for experiences that haunted my past. I should again clarify that not all of

those experiences were either traumatic or negative. Interestingly, until I approached

this topic, I actually knew very little about queer theory. Come to find out, it is rather

exhaustingly broad in its interpretations and covers an entire spectrum of individuals

and lifestyles, which is rightfully appropriate because the heteronormative world is only

a small fraction of the diversity that exists beyond that group of people. A good thing,

and probably the most important thing that I've learned about queer theory is that it

represents (and tries to explain) a way of being in the world that is about celebrating

beauty in the most uninhibited ways. This I can relate to because I've been a keen

observer of beauty ever since the moment, so my mom says, I learned to hold a pencil.

She sometimes recalls an anecdote she likes to tell people about me when I was a

toddler, She says that I began drawing pictures the instant I was able to hold a pencil.

"He would just start scribbling all over the paper, but he looked like he knew what he

was doing… he was making marks with intent – he was drawing." Now, I actually don't

recall if those were her exact words, being I haven't heard her tell that story in a very

long time, but what does stay with me is that I expressed my innermost life-long passion at a very young age. When I think about my artistic or drawing abilities, I wonder what that talent is born of because I don't believe I possess an ability that is particularly different or better than those of anyone else. But, I have come to realize on some occasions, that I see the world differently than most people I know. For me, every visual experience is emotional. The lighting outdoors at a certain time of the day, or the intensity of light or dark when I walk into a room, and how the lighting interacts with the shapes and colors all have an emotional impact. These experiences are also temporal. sometimes a certain impression triggers a memory of a past and distant history and a different place. I also recall how I have changed, how people close to me have changed. I have images of my mom smiling and think how different her behavior and outlook on life is today. I wonder why people change and sometimes it makes me sad. I recall my first experiences with drawing, which interestingly go back much later in life than when my mom described me as a two-year-old frantically scribbling with a pencil. In those recollections, I remember the happiness and excitement I felt when I had a blank piece of paper in front of me. It was almost as if I couldn't wait to see what would emerge and sometimes I would astonish myself because what resulted on the paper held a deep emotional connection. I soon realized I was making drawings of things that made me happy, such as mountain landscapes and faraway places that were much more beautiful and interesting than the small southwestern Kansas town where I grew up. A tiny, one-mile-square town with nothing but endless miles and miles of farmland and prairie. My only escape to other dimensions was through my drawings. I still don't understand why drawing and painting makes me so happy, and I don't believe it was

because it was my only escape from that small town. But, what do understand is that I have the ability to create my own worlds. Worlds that are perfect from my perspective and I can control and manipulate how those places and things look. I can make beauty. I am still surprised when someone tells me that they like my artwork because even as a kid I felt like I was the only one that understood my drawings. The nuances of every line and contour held meaning and sometimes even looked odd. I'm not sure if it was the precision of wanting to replicate something as true to life (verisimilitude) that I would erase and erase and erase until a certain contour took the correct shape. Either way, I was creating perfection in my mind. When life wasn't very good to me or certain people weren't treating me well, I knew that I could escape to my own world where I could create perfection. It was a gift. I've always had the ability to render images with fairly impressive verisimilitude and veracity. I think that I held on to that quest for perfection for a very long time. Always striving to create renditions of realism that were as close to photographic quality as they could possibly be rendered. I have to admit that it wasn't until this project that I began to appreciate abstract art and images with any kind of enthusiasm. I always felt that when people were complimenting me on my work was because of the precision and "verisimilitude" of the rendering. In doing this project, and how I applied my own art creation to the methodology, was very enlightening. It forced me to look into a deeper dimension of visual expression I hadn't ever explored before. But, when I made the connections that raw and pure emotions derived from a story being told of profound impact through personal and sometimes painful experiences, my creative horizons broadened. The contours that I had one time found too inaccurate – too queer – were not erased. Instead they took on new meaning. And not only that! They

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inspired new contours and new dimensions that went into the horizon. Those lines felt

so full of energy and potential that they could not be restrained. They remained elusive

and non-conforming, but always creating something new and different. Different from

the norm that once felt like a comfortable space, but now I could appreciate their

queerness and unbridled potential for creating beauty that can only be appreciated from

a distance because it is unattainable. And, somehow, that is Okay now. If those lines

were to be restrained and forced back into the stiff geometric shapes that are lifeless and

static, it would signify a certain death. The place where some minds choose to exist out

of fear of the unusual and unknown. Those same minds, some of which chose to not

only remain static but instead move our world in a backward direction are represented

by the oppressive conformity of the straight lines and perfect angles.

What has inspired my interest in the arts and arts pedagogy, is the idea that art

creation (a personal experience that has been my guide), could be shared with others

with which I share similar experiences. I carry with me this inner knowledge that

empowers me, being that I possess an ability for creating a better world. In my

experience with meeting others who are involved in the arts, I have sensed that same

spirit of knowing the power of creative potential. I strongly believe the power of

experimentation through artistic creative expression offers experiences that result in an

enlightenment that reaffirms alternate paths that deviate from the straight line of

convention is a viable option. That alternative solutions born of individual creativity are

key to make things better for you in your world. But, you must allow yourself to leap off

that straight and conforming path and let creativity guide you. For me, this philosophy

has been bolstered my experience as an educator. A driving force for this was my own

experience as a primary and secondary school student in a tiny southwest Kansas town. In many ways, that small town was a safe harbor as it is strikingly different from many school environments you find in larger cities. My experience growing up was marked by close relationships with teachers who, in many ways, became our idols. Tiny classroom sizes largely played a factor in teacher/student relationships and the influence that was fostered in creating adults who have a strong appreciation for their community and citizenship. Not all of our teachers were equally significant, but they were nonetheless respected and it was apparent they were integrated well into the daily lives of their students. I feel I still remain shaped by those teachers that I very much looked up to. Clearly one, as a student, is drawn to certain educators because of individual interest, such as mine were mostly related to art and the social studies/world cultures classroom. The teachers who impacted me the most in my development and subjective positions were the teachers who would emanate a vibrant enthusiasm in the classroom and upheld learning and creativity within the context of tight-knit teacher/student relationships. Self-expression was openly encouraged and celebrated and schoolwork, at least from one's favorite teachers, rarely felt burdensome because close communication between teachers and students offered essential scaffolding. The support systems felt strong because of those unique relationships. It was those school experiences that offered positive and inspirational role models and thus provided essential examples for the kind of citizen one should become. I still carry that inspiration with me today and the self-esteem that was encouraged through the positive feedback that comes from (small scale) environments where teachers and students share close and personal communication. Because of my own experience, I became driven to carry on those practices as an

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educator who strives to inspire and impact students through intimate teacher/student communication and experiences. Because art and being creative was such an important aspect of my school years, I desired to carry forward that same spirit when I became an educator. During my time teaching junior high students, and art-based teaching methods we employed at our school, the importance of conveying the value of creativity was reaffirmed and became a regular approach for executing lessons in the civics and history classes I taught. The importance of citizenship became embedded in my own philosophy during my high school years, and subsequently became the foundational topic that shaped curriculum plans and was reinforced through intimate classroom discussions that upheld the importance of sharing every person's views. Creating awareness of real-world events and individual experiences was an important component of my curriculum design and was brought to life by application of art-based teaching methods that were very similar to the structures presented in this project. Open forum discussions were enriched through art creation and tableau creation exercises. The methods applied in this study, albeit through the online Zoom application, becoming entangled was still an effective component as I, the researcher, engaged in the events as a co-equal who shared my own experiences as an LGBTQ individual, who is a cultural citizen the same community these participants live in. The art creation sessions were intended to be intuitive experiences from which first-hand accounts generated richer understandings about concepts of subjectivity and citizenship and through sharing my experiences as an LGBTQ individual, inextricably tied me to the experiences and narratives lived by other LGBTQ people. This was key particularly as the art creation sessions were approached similar to the Anarchive, in which engagement was open to flow in any direction,

perhaps guided by the art that was being generated or the course of the conversations. These social engagements fostered and environment where human connections and interactions, particularly with others who identify as LGBTQ, would generate new understandings of the subjective creation of LGBTQ youth and how they perceive their community and the roles they will assume as cultural citizens of that community. The subsequent narratives derived from the collected data would help yield knowledge about the forces that impact the youth who will be the future of the LGBTQ community.

By becoming entangled in the process, a joining in as an equal co-creator, the instructor/guide is offered a unique experience of intimacy with the participants and is subjected to a richer experience of learning. This is especially beneficial for teachers who are new to their profession and allows them to learn about their students in how they learn or process information, they establish closer relationships that encourage efficacy as students develop trust and feel encouragement for the possibility of their own success. This process of entanglement, the act of joining in the process that breaks down barriers, essentially becomes an intellectual experience (Wells, 2020).

In utilizing art tools, such as painting, sketching, drawing, or just about any conceivable form of creative visual expression, expands the boundaries that limit a student's voice as willingness to express themselves. In writing pedagogy, Carlson (2020) offers examples of efficacy when students are presented with a free-writing exercise as compared with a tightly structured assignment in which students are expected to follow the structured conventions of writing. Similarly, it can be argued that artistic expression goes even further in expanding and possibly even removing any boundaries presented by a writing assignment. It is important to note that, even in the

context of an art creation session as I described in this study, it is still important to be clear about the openness of expression, that there are no expectations of conventional performance or rules. The "beginning in the middle" approach, where participants engage in art creation without a defined beginning. Meaning that students are encouraged to engage in art creation at will. That there is no expectation of producing a predetermined amount of work. Students should also be offered to circulate and join or assist others with their projects as cooperate efforts. Through the sharing of ideas, opinions and technical abilities, students learn from each other and this approach also encourages conversations that are empathetic and productive. When offered an open art creation forum, feelings of self-efficacy are nurtured and what is produced can be richer in what it contains. The observer, or reader, can also benefit from this approach as what is presented is a tighter and more in-depth correspondence about the multiple personalities expressed by the creator (Carlson, 2020). What is also offered by this experience is that youth are capable of learning, by examples and sharing, what it means to be a good citizen, through others shared life experiences and are able to develop empathy for others with whom they would otherwise have no access to understanding their life experience. By working in cooperation to generate art, participants experience first-hand the benefits of working together and sharing ideas. Participants also learn to appreciate the value of others and also learn to identify their own talents and specific abilities and how they can be applied. This bolsters self-worth and confidence as a participating member, a citizen, of a larger community.

An unforeseen impact was the COVID pandemic, which affected the initial plan of applying Manning's anarchive as a research approach in this study. Because of the

effect COVID restrictions imposed on human subjects and data collection practices, which had been planned as in-person art-creation sessions as data collection events, the only viable approach was the digital communication/conferencing format of the Zoom application. Although this approach turned out to be effective and thus produces a fruitful context for participants to meet, interact through visual and audio conversations, and generate artwork inspired through those meetings, it remains unknown what the results would have been if the original approach had been applied. The inability to meet in person and do walking tours, as inspirational and cues for the creation of art events also remains unknown, as well as the how the data would have resulted had participants and researcher had met in person to participate in those events.

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