Oral Defense Announcement
University of Missouri – St. Louis Graduate School

An oral examination in defense of the dissertation for the degree
Doctor of Philosophy in Education with an emphasis in Teaching and Learning Processes

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

Date: October 6, 2017
Time: 1:00 PM – 3:00 PM
Place: College of Education, TLC, Sigma-Aldrich Room

Abstract
The purpose of this research was to critically examine the gender identity work of transgender and other gender non-conforming identified (TgNCi) people through their stories and the meanings they attach to important artifacts across the lifespan. A single question directed this investigation: How do TgNCi individuals describe gender identity work through lifespan narratives? Thirteen volunteers participated in two interviews: the first, a narration of their life stories and in the second, descriptions of the significance of personal artifacts selected by the participants and photographed by the investigator. Participants’ ages ranged from 22 to 66, according to four pre-determined age ranges of the study design. This allowed for investigation within each age group, and also across all age groups. Qualitative analyses were conducted in three layers: (1) content analysis, (2) Critical Discourse Analysis, and (3) multimodal analysis. Content analysis identified three primary categories describing gender identity work: (1) oppression (from outside), (2) suppression (of preferred gender expression), and (3) the desire for visibility (longing to be recognized by others, and to see the self, as Who-I-Am). Critical Discourse Analysis revealed that in response to violent oppression, participants interrupted their natural agentic actions, speech, and thought processes. The term Interrupted Agency was coined to convey these strategic responses of hiding and secrecy. Multimodal analysis of participants’ expressed relationships with material objects exposed three primary functions of the artifacts: (1) tools of visibility, (2) messengers, and (3) laminations. The closing discussion features the researcher’s meaning making of this gender identity work and addresses future study and research.

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

Defense of Dissertation Committee
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