



GENDER AND SEXUALITIES IN PSYCHOLOGY

NON-BINARY
GENDER
IDENTITIES
THE LANGUAGE OF BECOMING

SEBASTIAN CORDOBA



‘This book is a vital addition to the burgeoning research literature on non-binary experience, and to gender studies more broadly. It presents the first study of its kind to examine the language that non-binary people use to make sense of their experience. Beautifully written, accessible, and engaging, this book invites the reader into exciting and innovative theories and methods, as well as some truly fascinating findings.’

*Dr Meg-John Barker, author of *Life isn't Binary**

‘This important text persuasively argues for scholarship to understand how trans and non-binary linguistics centres practices and subjectivities, important to any understanding of gender. They cast new light on gender and the power of words, the ephemeral nature of categories, and their significance to embodiment.’

Dr Zowie Davy, De Montfort University, UK



Taylor & Francis

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

NON-BINARY GENDER IDENTITIES

Non-Binary Gender Identities examines how non-binary people discover, adopt, and negotiate language in a variety of social settings, both offline and online. It considers how language, in the form of gender-neutral pronouns, names, and labels, is a central aspect of identity for many and has been the subject of much debate in recent years.

Cordoba captures the psychological, social, and linguistic experiences of non-binary people by illustrating the multiple, complex, and evolving ways in which non-binary people use language to express their gender identities, bodies, authenticity, and navigate social interactions – especially those where their identities are not affirmed. These findings shed light on the gender and linguistic becomings of non-binary people, a pioneering theoretical framework developed in the book, which reflects the dynamic realities of language, subjectivities, and the materiality of the body. Informed by these findings, the text offers recommendations for policy makers and practitioners, designed to facilitate gender-related communication and decrease language-related distress on non-binary people, as well as the general population.

This important book advances our understanding of non-binary gender identities by employing innovative methodologies – including corpus-based research and network visualisation – furthering and developing theory, and yielding original insights. It is essential reading for students and academics in social psychology and gender studies, as well as anyone interested in furthering their understanding of non-binary gender identities.

Sebastian Cordoba (he/him) is a lecturer of Psychology at the University of Suffolk and an adjunct assistant professor at The City College of New York-CUNY. Sebastian is a social and LGBTQ+ psychologist. His research interests include: gender, sexuality, and language; new materialist approaches to research; and corpus linguistics.

Gender and Sexualities in Psychology

Series Editors: Elizabeth Peel and Elizabeth Stokoe

Gender and Sexualities in Psychology is a book series showcasing scholarly work over a wide range of areas within gender and sexualities in psychology, and the intersection of gender, feminism, sexualities, and LGBTQI psychology with other areas of the discipline.

The series includes theoretically and empirically informed scholarship including critical, feminist, queer, trans, social, and intersectional perspectives, and encourages creative and innovative methodological approaches. The series adopts an inclusive approach to the discipline of psychology, as well as its cross-cutting relationship to related disciplines, and recognises diversity in research on genders and sexualities.

Titles in the series:

Bisexual and Pansexual Identities

Exploring and Challenging Invisibility and Invalidation, 1st Edition

Nikki Hayfield

Queer Ink

A Blotted History Towards Liberation

Katherine Hubbard

Reproductive Losses

Challenges to LGBTQ Family-Making

Christa Craven

Emergent Identities

New Sexualities, Genders and Relationships in a Digital Era

Rob Cover

For further information about this series please visit: <https://www.routledge.com/Gender-and-Sexualities-in-Psychology/book-series/GSP>

NON-BINARY GENDER IDENTITIES

The Language of Becoming

Sebastian Cordoba

Cover image: Getty Images

First published 2023

by Routledge

4 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

and by Routledge

605 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10158

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

© 2023 Sebastian Cordoba

The right of Sebastian Cordoba to be identified as author of this work has been asserted in accordance with sections 77 and 78 of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilised in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

Trademark notice: Product or corporate names may be trademarks or registered trademarks, and are used only for identification and explanation without intent to infringe.

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

Names: Cordoba, Sebastian, 1989- author.

Title: Non-binary gender identities: the language of becoming / Sebastian Cordoba.

Description: Abingdon, Oxon; New York, NY : Routledge, 2023. | Series: Gender and sexualities in psychology | Includes bibliographical references and index. | Identifiers: LCCN 2022017061 (print) | LCCN 2022017062 (ebook) | ISBN 9780367637095 (paperback) | ISBN 9780367637101 (hardback) | ISBN 9781003120360 (ebook)

Subjects: LCSH: Gender-nonconforming people. | Gender identity.

Classification: LCC HQ77.9 .C67 2023 (print) | LCC HQ77.9 (ebook) | DDC 306.76/8--dc23/eng/20220425

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2022017061>

LC ebook record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2022017062>

ISBN: 978-0-367-63710-1 (hbk)

ISBN: 978-0-367-63709-5 (pbk)

ISBN: 978-1-003-12036-0 (ebk)

DOI: 10.4324/9781003120360

Typeset in Bembo

by MPS Limited, Dehradun

To all the women and queers who helped me *become*.



Taylor & Francis

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

CONTENTS

<i>List of Figures and Tables</i>	<i>x</i>
<i>Notes on the Author</i>	<i>xi</i>
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	<i>xii</i>
<i>Preface</i>	<i>xiii</i>
1 Becoming non-binary: Language and identity	1
2 Gender and linguistic becomings: Beyond positivism and social constructionism	28
3 Materialist methods: The research-assemblage	44
4 Gender and linguistic becomings: Affective intensities	57
5 Language-related distress: Proximities and intentions	81
6 The non-binary corpus: A network of linguistic and material intensities	105
7 Non-binary assemblage: Becoming something else	144
<i>References</i>	<i>156</i>
<i>Appendices</i>	<i>171</i>
<i>Index</i>	<i>177</i>

LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES

Figures

2.1	Alok Vaid-Menon, performance artist, poet, and LGBTQ+ rights activist	29
5.1	Intensity of distress, levels of social proximity, and intentions	84
6.1	Non-binary Corpus' collocational network	113
6.2	Co-collocations for the keyword woman	114

Tables

3.1	Participant demographics	48
6.1	The 50 most frequent words in the NBC and the enTenTen13	106
6.2	Top 50 keywords in the NBC ranked in order of keyness when compared against the enTenTen13 corpus	108
6.3	Collocations for the top 10 keywords	110
6.4	Co-collocations for the top ten keywords	111
6.5	Collocations for the 10 most intense keywords	111
6.6	Words of interest	114

NOTES ON THE AUTHOR

Dr Sebastian Cordoba (he/his) is a Lecturer in Psychology for the School of Social Sciences and Humanities at University of Suffolk and an Adjunct Assistant Professor in Psychology at The City College of New York, CUNY. Sebastian is a social and LGBTQ+ psychologist. His areas of expertise lie in the psychology of gender and sexuality, language, and identity. His research interests include: gender, sexuality, and language; new materialist approaches to research; and corpus linguistics. Sebastian holds a BA in human development from California State University Long Beach; an MA in general psychology from The City College of New York; and a PhD in psychology from De Montfort University. Sebastian is also the co-founder and co-lead of the LGBTQ+ Staff Network and the Gender and Sexual Minorities research theme at University of Suffolk.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am eternally grateful to my husband, Cooper Gatewood, for his patience and unconditional support throughout my studies. This project would not have been possible without Zowie Davy's and Vivien Tartter's words of encouragement, mentorship, and infinite wisdom. Thank you. I would also like to thank Brian Brown for his support throughout my PhD studies. I am thankful to Elizabeth Peel and Elizabeth Stokoe for their work as editors of this incredible book series. Lastly, I would like to thank my (chosen) family in London, Los Angeles, New York, Lima, and Bogotá for always believing in me and allowing me to thrive. Les amo.

PREFACE

This book offers a nuanced analysis that clearly illustrates the multiple, complex, and evolving ways in which the language of non-binary gender identities is articulated, formulated, and deployed in a variety of social contexts – both online and offline. This research examines a robust dataset comprised of 22 open-ended interviews, 22 writing samples, and a bespoke, 2.9 million-word language corpus of non-binary online language.

These data were analysed by employing a materialist approach to research. *Assemblage theory* (DeLanda, 2006), which was inspired by Deleuze and Guattari (1987), was used as a theoretical framework in this research. Using this lens allowed me to frame gender as something one *becomes* rather than something one *is* (Linstead & Pullen, 2006) – a relational process (a constant journey with no final destination). Furthermore, this book develops a novel theoretical framework (*gender and linguistic becomings*) to the study of gender, language, and identity. The experiences of non-binary people are therefore understood in terms not only of language but also of society, the body, and other material factors – all contributing to the *assemblage* of non-binary gender identities. Additionally, corpus linguistic tools were employed to uncover linguistic patterns within the non-binary language corpus.

This book aligns with the *Gender and Sexuality in Psychology* series' ethos of creative, inclusive, and diverse approaches in research, and it offers an important contribution to the field of psychology. This research makes important theoretical and methodological contributions to lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, etc. (LGBTQ+; queer) psychology and gender studies through its application to non-binary populations. This book also makes a significant contribution to their visibility – and further understanding – of non-binary people in the social sciences. By exploring these affective intensities and the influence of language, this research

contributes to the knowledge base of non-binary gender identities and their linguistic becomings.

Chapter outlines

Chapter 1 (**Becoming non-binary: Language and identity**) will situate the research on non-binary gender identities and language by offering some key definitions (e.g., non-binary, trans, cis, intersex, etc.), as well as by outlining the historical precedence of non-binary gender identities across the globe and cross-culturally. I will show the ways in which non-binary thinking and its linguistic features have emerged in the West in academic writing, activism, and online. I will show how non-binary identities have been sensationalised and widely misunderstood, contributing to the high levels of stigma, victimisation, and discrimination that non-binary people face. Previous research has suggested that language is central in enabling or inhibiting the articulation of gender; therefore, this chapter will argue that there is an urgent need to understand the *gender and linguistic becomings* of non-binary people.

Chapter 2 (**Gender and linguistic becomings: Beyond positivism and social constructionism**) will outline some of the research and theoretical underpinnings that continue to shape the ways in which trans and non-binary people are understood within the field of psychology. The first part of this chapter will examine the historical emergence of research that focused on gender diversity within the fields of medicine, sexology, and psychiatry. I will then offer an overview of the two main epistemologies of gender within the field of psychology: the positivist and the social constructionist perspectives. I will argue that a *non-binary* perspective is necessary to account for the nuances, complexities, and embodied plurality of gender. I conclude this chapter by defending the employment of *assemblage theory* as an analytical tool for the study of non-binary gender identities, as this epistemological framework allowed me to explore and conceptualise the continuous emergence of non-binary gender identities and the language surrounding this emergence. I will explain why I conceptualise gender as a *becoming* – a constant process of emergence, shifting, (re)assessment, and (re)configuration. Gender will, therefore, be reframed as neither essential nor solely socially constructed, but as *assembling* and *producing* multiple *intensities* in an ongoing movement of *affects* – which are both material and linguistic. I will discuss how materialities were analysed and the multiple ways in which these materialities both affect and are affected by discursive forces.

Chapter 3 (**Materialist methods: The research-assemblage**) will briefly outline the methodologies I employed in this research, including the interviews, short writings, and the non-binary corpus – which are all part of the *research-assemblage* (Fox & Alldred, 2014). This approach understands research as an *assemblage* of events, researchers, research tools, ideas, etc. which are used to produce knowledge. I will argue that the combination of these methods was productive, as it offered a variety of ways to generate knowledge and to shed light

on the *gender and linguistic becomings* of non-binary people. This chapter also includes details about my positionality as a researcher and the specific methods employed in this research (e.g., demographics, research design, recruitment, collection of data, ethics, and corpus analysis techniques).

Chapter 4 (**Gender and linguistic becomings: Affective intensities**) will summarise the analysis that I conducted of both the interviews and the short writings. I will outline four *affective intensities* (clearly defining this *DeleuzoGuattarian* concept) which contributed to the ongoing emergence of non-binary gender identities among participants – that is, their *gender and linguistic becomings*. These included: discomfort with assigned gender at birth, discovering linguistic possibilities, language adoption (a *linguistic becoming*), and embodiment. I will argue that these *affective intensities* are in constant development, reconfiguration, and evolution, as they were negotiated in multiple ways and at different levels: individual, social, and societal. Importantly, the concept of linguistic becomings – the adoption, reassessment, and negotiation of language within social interactions – will be further developed in this chapter.

Chapter 5 (**Language-related distress: Proximities and intentions**) will explore the effects of misgendering. I will demonstrate how non-binary people navigate the world using *non-binary language*, the distress that originated from social interactions in which their language was not affirmed, and the various ways in which non-binary people managed these situations. Such language-related distress was found to be context-related and mediated by social proximities and perceived intentions. Therefore, this chapter outlines the different ways in which this *intensity* was experienced within a variety of social contexts: among friends, family, place of work/study, strangers, as well as societally. These interactions will be mapped out, showing a topography of social interactions among participants.

Chapter 6 (**The Non-binary corpus: A network of linguistic and material intensities**) present the quantitative and qualitative results that emerged from the non-binary corpus (NBC). Analyses were conducted using corpus linguistics tools, including frequency, keyness, and collocation. A visual network of *non-binary language* was also created. This corpus-based approach led to a systematic analysis of the NBC, as they narrowed down this large dataset (2.9 million words) to a more manageable subsample. This robust, systematic approach led to the qualitative analysis. This chapter will discuss how *linguistic becomings* were found to be significant to the ways in which non-binary people sought authenticity online, consistent with previous findings. This chapter will therefore describe the various processes of linguistic emergence: discovering, adopting, and (re)negotiating language. I will also outline the material elements or *affective embodiments* involved in this process, including fluidity, neutrality, and (body) dysphoria.

Chapter 7 (**Non-binary assemblage: Becoming something else**) will evidence the significant contribution to knowledge that this research offers in terms of methodology, theory, outputs, and praxis. This chapter will therefore summarise the findings for each of the empirical chapters, offering a list of implications and applications for each. For instance, I will provide

recommendations for policymakers, academics, and practitioners regarding the impact of language-based discrimination on non-binary people. This chapter will emphasise the multiple applications that the theoretical framework of gender and linguistic becomings has to offer to academia, activism, and wider society. I will also show the multiple benefits of employing research methodologies such as corpus-based research and network visualisation which are rarely used in psychological research. I will end this chapter by urging researchers to consider using these theoretical and methodological developments. I will incentivise researchers to use this book as a springboard to develop research projects on a variety of intersecting subjects such as sexuality, race, disability, body positivity, etc. – across different cultures, contexts, and languages. This chapter will also position the research findings as useful and productive for the non-binary community, as multiple forms of non-binary identities, language, and embodiments will be represented in this book.

1

BECOMING NON-BINARY: LANGUAGE AND IDENTITY

In recent years, non-binary gender identities – and the language surrounding them – have gained a great deal of attention in the media and in academic research (Richards et al., 2016). It has been suggested the number of people who identify as non-binary is increasing (Richards et al., 2016), including celebrities such as singer Sam Smith, who came out publicly in 2019 and now uses they/them pronouns. While the cultural awareness about non-binary gender identities seems to be increasing, research surrounding the experiences of non-binary people is still lacking. And a very limited amount of research has focused on the ways in which non-binary people use language to articulate their identities, (i.e., pronouns, titles, and gender-neutrality) (Barker, 2016), even though language has been shown to be a central element (Zimman, 2018).

This book examines the ways in which non-binary-identified people discover, adopt, and negotiate these linguistic shifts such as the adoption of gender-neutral pronouns, names, and labels. It also explores the role that embodiment plays in these linguistic expressions of identity, as it has been argued that queer and trans theorising has sometimes disregarded the material aspects of self-embodiment (Monro, 2000). Furthermore, this book captures the linguistic, social, and psychological experiences of non-binary people, as well as the ways in which they negotiate their identities, authenticity, and embodied experiences, by exploring the multiple, complex, and evolving ways in which the language of non-binary gender identities is articulated, formulated, and deployed in a variety of social contexts – both online and offline.

This introductory chapter situates the social science research on non-binary gender identities and language by offering some key definitions and by describing the historical precedence of non-binary gender identities across the globe. This chapter outlines the ways in which non-binary thinking – and its linguistic features – have emerged in academic writing, activism, and in the online sphere, particularly in

2 Becoming non-binary: Language and identity

English-speaking societies. This chapter also outlines some of historical precedence of non-binary gender identities across the globe, demonstrating that non-binary gender identities have existed for millennia. While non-binary genders have also existed in the West, their histories have not been recorded or have been erased due to the predominance of the gender binary. I will show how some of the most significant non-binary thinkers such as Kate Bornstein are influential to the resurgence and proliferation of non-binary thinking. The current prevalence of non-binary gender identities will be discussed, outlining some of the studies that have attempted to measure the number of non-binary-identified people in the general population and within the trans community. Despite the growing number of non-binary-identified people, these identities are still largely invisible in the mainstream consciousness. Therefore, in this chapter, I will also show some of the ways in which non-binary identities have captured some social awareness in mainstream media. This chapter demonstrates that knowledge around gender diversity is still scarce. Such social unintelligibility carries some consequences for non-binary people in the form of poor mental health outcomes due to discrimination, stigma, and language-based violence. Lastly, this chapter will summarise some of the literature on the linguistic negotiations of non-binary people, exploring the significance of language among non-binary communities in terms of its continuous emergence, development, and negotiation, as it demonstrates the urgent need to understand the *gender and linguistic becomings* of non-binary people. The theoretical framework of *gender and linguistic becomings* will be outlined in Chapter 2.

Key Terms

One of the key objectives of this book is to elucidate the linguistic parameters around non-binary identities in the English language. It is for this reason that I will outline some of the ways in which complex and multidimensional concepts such as sex, gender, trans, non-binary, intersex, and cis are discussed in the rest of this book. By doing this, I will situate this research within the current linguistic landscape of non-binary discourse. I aim to show that these concepts, and the language surrounding them, are not stable or muted but rather constantly evolving and being redefined.

Sex and Gender

The process of sexing a person starts before birth. Typically, a pregnant person (anyone capable of childbearing) might have sonograms (typically at 13 and 20 weeks in the UK) to learn about the foetus' health and body, including the sex organs – that is, in most cases, the presence or absence of a penis – which will dictate the baby's "sex" (either male/boy or female/girl). Though sonograms are not always accurate, once the child is born, the process of gendering often starts and will continue through time. Such processes become reinforced through a variety of factors, such as society's gender expectations, the person's biological markers (primary and secondary sex

characteristics), the culturally informed discourses about binary gender, etc. As such, these factors – along with many others reinforce the gender/sex binary. Therefore, the gender assigned at birth, which is based on the baby’s visible sex characteristics, renders the person intelligible (Butler, 1990), meaning that people will quickly decipher the person’s sex/gender as they grow up, mostly through visual and linguistic cues. There is of course a legal process of gendering individuals, which is underpinned by the assumption that all people belong to a binary gender category. In the UK, for instance, there is no formal legal recognition of non-binary gender identities (Newman & Peel, 2022). Thus, sex and gender are often seen as inseparable, as they are sometimes understood and used in the same way in public and medical discourse.

Gender and sex, however, are different constructs within psychological research and are unreservedly more complex than the common conception. Gender has typically been understood as “a social and psychological construct used to describe one aspect of how we experience ourselves in a world where the category ‘gender’ is made to matter” (Ellis et al., 2020, p. 291) whereas sex is typically “based on the presence of external genitalia” (Ellis et al., 2020, p. 39). Thus, one is abstract and socially constructed (gender) while the other one is physical and biological (sex). Within psychology, Stoller (1968) has been credited with distinguishing between sex and gender identity, arguing that the former is a product of nature while the latter one is a product of nurture. As such, Stoller introduced the term “gender identity,” which illustrated that “sex and gender are not inevitably bound ... each may go in its quite independent way” (Stoller, 1968, p. vi–vii) and that one’s sense of gender identity may be different than one’s biology. Kessler and McKenna (1978), however, made the case that, while sex and gender are independent constructs, they relate to one another as mind, society, language, and body are indeed all interrelated. While sex and gender typically correlate, both constructs are multidimensional and bimodal rather than linear and binary.

Historically, sex has been understood as the biological components that make up maleness and femaleness, typically differentiated in terms of chromosomes, gonads, hormones, internal reproductive systems, external genitals and, according to some research, brain (Kipnis & Diamond, 1998). However, Fausto-Sterling (2000) asserts that

complete maleness and complete femaleness represent the extreme ends of a spectrum of body types. That these extreme ends are the most frequent, has lent credence to the idea that they are not only natural (that is, produced by nature) but normal (that is, they represent both a statistical and a social ideal). (p. 76)

Furthermore, Fausto-Sterling (2000) suggested that sex is made up of a variety of dimensions which typically (but not always) align in a bimodal fashion: male and female. Yet, it is entirely possible that these layers or dimensions can develop

4 Becoming non-binary: Language and identity

independently of one another, as it is the case with intersex people (see definition of intersex below).

Sex and gender are therefore not stable features of the self; rather, they are elements that are in constant motion and in processes of *becoming* (Fox & Alldred, 2014). Monro (2003, p. 442) argues that the current binary systems of gender categorisation “fail to address the fluid and developmental nature of identity” and envisions a “pluralist” perspective of gender that is not limited by the sexed body (the material) nor the socially constructed, performative (the discursive) elements of gender, but rather acknowledges the importance and active influence of both (Monro, 2005). Therefore, gender can both influence – and be influenced by – sex in a plurality of ways. Sex is therefore both the biological and the socially constructed aspects of gender.

In terms of sex, this book will employ the terms “assigned female at birth” (AFAB) and “assigned male at birth” (AMAB) when referring to the sex of the participants. This information was not directly asked, but all participants commented on this aspect of their lived experience. As such, it will be used to contextualise the ways in which non-binary people in this research embodied their gender identities and gender expression. In terms of gender, this book will use the gender identity labels that participants used to describe themselves at the time of the interviews.

Trans

The sex someone is assigned at birth based on their visible sex characteristics (i.e., having a penis or a vagina, and sometimes intersex) may not always “align” with their gender identity throughout their life, as is the case with trans people. Trans (the abbreviated form of the word transgender) is often used as an umbrella term for people who do not identify as the gender they were assigned at birth (Currah, 2006). This does not mean that people who fit these criteria identify with the term trans, as some may use other terms such as transsexual, cross-dresser, non-binary, etc. to refer to themselves, or simply use the terms girl, boy, man, or woman. Among some of the most common terms for trans people in English-speaking societies nowadays are trans men and trans women. A trans man is typically someone who was assigned female at birth (AFAB) and identifies as a man, while a trans woman is typically someone who was assigned male at birth (AMAB) and identifies as a woman. However, as previously mentioned, many trans people do not use the label “trans” to describe their gender – they may simply refer to themselves as women or men.

In terms of gender expression and embodiment, some trans people do undergo gender-affirming procedures such as taking hormones, surgery (chest surgery, breast augmentation, vaginoplasty, phalloplasty, to name a few), depending on their embodied desires, as well as the financial and social resources they possess. Other trans people, however, do not undergo any procedure and only transition

socially. Thus, trans people too are a highly heterogeneous group experiencing genders and bodies in a variety of ways.

Non-Binary

Multiple genders – and terms associated with them – that challenge the gender binaries of boy/girl, woman/man and masculinity/femininity are becoming more prevalent in Western discourse (Nestle et al., 2002), particularly in the form of “expanded vocabularies of gender identity/expression” (Bragg et al., 2018, p. 1). Among these multiple genders, “non-binary” is one of the most commonly used terms and is sometimes used as an identity category by people whose gender assigned at birth does not align with their current gender identit(y/ies) and/or gender expression(s), but who do not identify (exclusively) as the “opposite” gender (Beemyn, 2005). Non-binary is often used as an umbrella term for individuals who may identify as and/or express: no gender, two genders, a partial gender, an additional gender, a fluid gender, and/or a political and/or personal gender that disrupts the gender binary (Richards & Barker, 2015; Monro, 2019). Within this umbrella, there are a variety of terms that are sometimes used by individuals to describe (and label) their gender identit(y/ies). According to Barker and Richards (2015, p. 166), these include, but are not limited to:

- Having no gender: gender-neutral, non-gendered, agender, neuter, neutrois
- Having aspects of both man and woman: mixed-gender, androgynous, pangender
- Having a partial identification with one gender: demi boy/girl, pangender
- Having an additional gender: third gender, other gender, pangender
- Moving between (multiple) genders: bigender, trigender, genderfluid, pangender
- Political and/or personal disruption of the gender binary: genderfuck, genderqueer

Because non-binary people generally do not (solely) identify with the gender they were assigned at birth, these genders are typically subsumed within the larger umbrella of trans identities and expressions (including, for instance, transgender, transsexual, transfeminine, etc.) in trans literature (see, for instance, Currah, 2006). However, not all non-binary people identify as trans and vice versa (Titman, 2014). Terms such as “genderqueer” may have different meanings to different people but are often share “dis-identification with rigid gender binaries [and/or] a direct challenge to the social institutions that perpetuate binaries” (Monro, 2019). Therefore, meanings are not always stable and, as I will demonstrate in this book, are always shifting (or *becoming*) in both predictable and unpredictable ways.

In terms of embodiment, non-binary people may or may not want to go through gender-affirming intervention such as hormones and surgery. For instance, some non-binary people might choose to take “conventional” trans

6 Becoming non-binary: Language and identity

masculine or trans feminine treatment paths, while others may choose to combine them, or not go through any procedure (Richards & Barker, 2016). And while some non-binary individuals might want to undergo gender-affirming procedures, they might be unable to do so because they might not fit into the medical/psychological binary trans narrative of being “trapped in the wrong body” (see, for instance, Bornstein, 1994). Stone (2006) and Vincent (2020) both argue that this narrative is still prevalent within the medical and psychological discourses of transness. Nonetheless, in terms of gender expression, non-binary people might index their gender identities through a variety of visual markers such as clothing, accessories, hairstyles, etc. (Richards et al. 2015), as well as performative acts such as mannerisms, gait, pitch, etc. (Butler, 1999). Therefore, in terms of the materiality of their bodies and gender expressions, non-binary people are a highly heterogeneous group.

Intersex

While the focus of this book is on non-binary gender identities and the numerous and heterogeneous ways in which gender can be experienced and articulated, it is important to illustrate some of the ways in which “sex” is also as diverse. The endosexist perspective of sex stipulates— and prioritises — sex as an immutable binary system (Peel & Newman, 2020). However, intersex people demonstrate that sex is far from binary.

Intersex refers to a wide range of biological sex variations that include chromosomes, hormones, primary or secondary sex characteristics, among others. According to Fausto-Sterling (2012, p. 25), some of the most common intersex conditions include, but are not limited to:

- Congenital Adrenal Hyperplasia: A genetically inherited malfunction which affects the production of steroids. It can cause masculinisation of genitalia in XX children.
- Androgen Insensitivity Syndrome: A genetically inherited malfunction which affects the reception of testosterone. XY children with this condition are typically born with highly feminised genitalia and develop a feminine body shape during puberty.
- Gonadal Dysgenesis: An umbrella term for a variety of conditions where gonads do not develop customarily, typically affecting XY people.
- Klinefelter Syndrome: A form of gonadal dysgenesis wherein males have an extra X chromosome (XXY). Adults are typically infertile and may develop breasts.
- Turner Syndrome: Another form of gonadal dysgenesis wherein females lack a second X chromosome (XO). As a result, children develop neither secondary sex characteristics nor ovaries.

Intersex people and their sexed bodies do not entirely fit the constructed binary notions of the body (Fausto-Sterling, 2000). For example, a male-identified intersex person might have a uterus and not a penis. While it is estimated that 1–2% of the population is intersex, these conditions might not be detected until later in life (when people try to become pregnant, for instance) or might not be detected at all (Intersex Society of North America, 2018). It is therefore likely that the number of intersex people is larger than current estimates. As such, the idea that sexes are entirely binary, concrete, and absolute has been contested by biologists such as Fausto-Sterling (2000) who argue that the biological aspects of sex are just as diverse as the gender identities that are encountered in society. Similarly, sociologists such as Hird (2000) argue that the binary nature of sex is socially constructed rather than a biological fact. Intersex people therefore break the sex binary, making it difficult to identify concretely when male/manhood and female/womanhood begins or ends. Recent theoretical perspectives within the field of psychology conceptualise both sex and gender development as multiple rather than as binary (Schweizer et al., 2013).

As previously mentioned, some non-binary people, at a physical level, may opt to alter some of the aforementioned sex characteristics through hormones, sex reassignment surgeries, and facial and vocal surgeries, thus altering both their primary and secondary sex characteristics, as well as a wide range of gender expressions. Therefore, like intersex people, non-binary people blur the boundaries of sex as well as gendered possibilities.

Cis

The term cis (the abbreviated form of cisgender) literally means “on the same side.” In terms of gender and sex, it refers to people who are not trans; that is, people whose sex aligns with their gender identity (Aultman, 2014). Serano (2007) argues that the employment of cis(sexual) is useful in that it demonstrates the privilege and legitimacy that is given to so-called “normal” men and women. Positioning cis people as “normal,” thereby framing trans people as “abnormal,” has been labelled *cisnormative* – that is, the assumption that “those assigned male at birth always grow up to be men and those assigned female at birth always grow up to be women” (Bauer et al., 2009, p. 356). *Cisnormativity* operates in a similar way to *heteronormativity* (Kitzinger, 2005), which places heterosexuality as the default sexual category. Cisnormativity therefore operates by erasing all genders that “deviate” from cis, e.g., trans and non-binary. Cis is therefore a gender category among many rather than a universal or default form.

Cisnormativity can lead to cisgenderism, or the ideology that undermines and invisibilises trans and non-binary genders by placing cis people as the norm (Ansara & Hegarty, 2012). This is done by framing binary sexes/genders as superior and more desirable than trans and non-binary people’s genders and bodies, thus delegitimising their existence.

It is important to note that the term cis is controversial and is still not widely used in public discourse. In academia and in trans communities, the term cis is becoming more frequent, especially when discussing trans and non-binary issues. There has also been opposition from “gender critical feminists” who claim that this categorisation has been imposed upon them and, as such, they do not actively claim the term (Peel & Newman, 2020). This is in and of itself a form of cis-genderism, as it is often used to invalidate the existence of trans and non-binary people. On the other hand, Enke (2013) argues that the term cisgender can reaffirm, normalise, and naturalise cisgender people, framing transness as different.

This book considers the trans/cis binary unhelpful, as gender – and the language surrounding it – can be re-assessed and re-negotiated in continuous ways by individuals, communities, and societies. As such, this book uses the term cis when relevant, and in the context of drawing meaningful distinctions between trans and non-binary people and the cisgenderist systems in which they navigate their genders.

The following section will outline both the history and the research on non-binary gender identities, showing the ways in which this concept has been understood across the globe, in activism, and in contemporary research looking at prevalence, social representation, and health outcomes.

Non-Binary History and Research

Gender Diversity Across the Globe

Measuring the degree of masculinity and femininity that a person has is context-dependent; it is different across time and place. For instance, what is considered masculine in the Japan of today is not the same masculinity of 50 years ago – and both may be quite different to the masculinities found today in the UK. For instance, Cook (2019) notes that the “salaryman,” a white-collar male salaried employee at a large company, used to be considered the hegemonic type of masculinity in Japan; however, in recent decades, “alternative” masculinities have emerged such as ikumen (e.g., stay-at-home dads) or herbivorous men (e.g., uninterested in marriage or assertiveness), which are socio-historically and economically contingent. Likewise, the mere concept of masculinity might not have existed as we know it today in early societies. Therefore, gender is not a fixed and innate characteristic of a person: it is culturally dependent and malleable. West and Zimmerman (1987) term this “doing gender” (West & Zimmerman, 1987), referring to the various ways in which different societies and cultures understand gender.

The notion that there are more than two genders is not novel in some non-Western cultures, where – in some cases – gender diversity has been around for millennia (Stryker, 2008). Indeed, gender diversity has been documented throughout history and across cultures (Herdt, 1996; Matsuno & Budge, 2017). Nanda (2000) argues that “cultures construct their sex and gender systems

differently and these systems do not always neatly divide into male and female, man and woman” (p. 1). This section will discuss some of the most notable ways in which non-Western cultures have understood – and continue to understand despite colonial erasure of – gender diversity, in places such as the Indian subcontinent, Thailand, North America, Brazil, and Polynesia. These diverse ways of understanding gender will illustrate how our current understandings of non-binary gender identities (and gender diversity more generally) may not be as *new* as some may think; indeed, gender diversity has been part of the human experience for millennia.

In the Indian subcontinent (India, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Pakistan) the Hijra have been present for thousands of years. The word Hijra, however, is an umbrella that is not as easily defined as a “third gender.” This umbrella includes people who are intersex, transvestite, transgender, and feminine bisexual, and homosexual men (Jami & Kamal, 2015). Hijra people are almost always AMAB and are seen as having both masculine and feminine attributes – from a Western understanding of the binary. While the Hijra are currently recognised as a “third gender” by most of these governments (Khan et al., 2016), their history is quite tumultuous. British colonial rulers in the nineteenth century sought to criminalise and eradicate the Hijras, a process that caused the Hijra to lose some of their sacred status in society. It was not until India attained independence that some of these laws were repealed, but the effects of colonialism persist. For instance, while the Hijras are, in some ways, still revered in society and some people still seek blessings from them, they are also a marginalised community that faces a great deal of discrimination and stigma. Nowadays, some Hijras resort to begging or sex work to survive (Chakrapani et al., 2004).

Similarly, in Thailand, multiple genders have been part of the Thai worldview for a very long time and a third, mixed-gender was part of the traditional belief system (Matzner, 2001). There, the term “kathoei” was traditionally used to refer to intersex people and those who “mixed” genders. In Western terms, kathoei has been used to refer to AMAB people who would be considered gay and/or effeminate, as well as trans(feminine) women. While kathoei people do not enjoy legal recognition in Thailand, it is much easier to acquire gender-affirming services such as hormones and surgery than in many other countries, such as the UK and the US where the requisite psychological examination and diagnosis can prove to be obstacles to access these services. Kathoei people are very visible in Thailand and are often featured in the media, so Thai people are very used to their presence (Winter, 2002).

Gender diversity has also been observed in North American indigenous cultures (two-spirit), in Brazil’s sex workers (travestis), and in Polynesian cultures (fa’afafine in Samoa; māhū in Tahiti and Hawaii; fakaletī in Tonga; pinapinaaine in Suva) (Nanda, 2014). One thing that all these genders have in common is that across cultures AMAB people are usually the subject of study and emphasis (Nanda, 2000). Within academic research, there are very few mentions of AFAB people who break the gender binary; however, these individuals do exist. For

instance, in Thailand, the Tom are AFAB who, in “Western” terms, would be considered transmasculine. This term is also used for lesbians. In Albania, the Sworn Virgins have been described as “the biological female who, later in life, after having been socialized as a woman for many years, reconstructs herself as a ‘social man’” (Grémaux, 1993, p. 244) to maintain the economic stability of the household. Nonetheless, the overemphasis on AMAB and trans femininity might be due to what Julia Serano (2007) describes as the demonisation of trans femininity, or trans-misogyny. Serano argues that those on the transfeminine spectrum receive more societal attention, fascination, and thus demonisation as a result not only of transphobia but also of misogyny. Therefore, Serano argues, misogyny is at the root of transphobia – and the erasure of other gender-diverse people/identities. For instance, “gender critical feminists” consider sex/gender as immutable and biologically derived, a conceptualisation of gender that upholds traditional gender roles which are inherently misogynistic (Vincent et al., 2020).

Gender, therefore, has not always been nor does it currently exist as a strict binary. It is important to also note that some of these “third” genders may be conceptualised differently depending on the cultural and historical contexts in which they emerged. And while these genders have been around for a long time, gender-diverse people have faced continued discrimination and marginalisation because of their “non-normative” gender (Nanda, 2014), a result of colonialism, which inflicted their set or gender rules upon these communities (Tompkins, 2015).

Gender in the West has not always been understood as binary in nature. However, much of the history around gender diversity has either not been recorded, has been erased, or has simply not been conceptualised using the nuanced linguistic developments we have today (Namaste, 2000). The concept of “transvestite,” for instance, was only created in 1910 by German sexologist Magnus Hirschfeld (1919). Hirschfeld was a pioneer in the development of taxonomies of gender and sexual identities; however, he has been criticised for developing these concepts without much input from his research participants (Hill, 2005). As such, the history of these linguistic movements has been largely influenced by the psycho-medical endeavours to study these phenomena, which often disregarded the individuals’ accounts of their own identities. In the following section, I will discuss how gender diversity (in the form of genderqueer and non-binary identities) has in fact been recorded and conceptualised in the West since the 90s by non-binary people themselves.

Emergence of Non-Binary Thinking

In the early 1990s, trans(gender) studies became a more prominent area within gender studies. During this time, theorists, activists, feminists, and academics began to explore gender diversity by deconstructing the gender binary and outlining the limitations of binary thinking (see, for instance, Whittle, 1996, and Butler, 1990). While the terms genderqueer or non-binary were not commonly used at this time

(more on the emergence of this concept in this chapter under linguistic emergence), gender was understood to be socially constructed and, as such, not limited to the gender/sex binary. This new understanding of gender as socially constructed was framed through the lenses of poststructuralist and postmodern theories which rejected “the claims of totality and universality and the presumption of binary structural oppositions that implicitly operate to quell the insistent ambiguity and openness of linguistic and cultural signification” (Butler 1990, p. 40). Gender theorist Judith Butler (1990), for instance, posited that gender was fundamentally performative and socially constructed rather than an essential biological fact or reality. In her view, gender was a result of people’s behaviours (or doing) rather than their internal or intrinsic essence (or being). As such, gender was said to be constructed through discourse or “practices which systematically form the objects of which they speak” Foucault (1972, p. 49). In postmodern thinking, language and communication were central to the ways in which gender identities were constructed. Furthermore, these theoretical developments contributed to the creation of queer theory, an area of study that challenged heteronormativity as well as cisnormativity by examining the complexity, diversity, and fluidity of sexuality and gender (Jagose, 1996).

Using a poststructuralist lens, Sandy Stone published a canonical text entitled *The Empire Strikes Back: A Posttranssexual Manifesto* (1991), as a response to Janice Raymond’s *The Transsexual Empire: The Making of the She-Male* (1978). Raymond’s book positioned transsexual women as reinforcing traditional gender roles. She also positioned transsexual women as detrimental to cis women’s political causes such as women-only spaces and combatting violence against cis women. Stone (1991) argued that Raymond’s claims were overly simplistic and misleading. Using a poststructuralist lens, Stone argued that transsexualism was socially co-constructed by medical institutions and trans patients and, as such, trans women were required to overly-perform their desired gender to meet the expectations of the medical gatekeepers. Stone theorised the “territory between” (p. 225), which metaphorically signified any number of potential gendered spaces that transsexual people could inhabit and which existed outside the boundaries of the gender binary. Stone, therefore, encouraged trans people to name their own “territory between,” opening up the idea that living outside of the gender binary was a possibility. This non-binary thinking allowed people to “speak from outside the boundaries of gender, beyond the constructed oppositional nodes which have been predefined as the only positions from which discourse is possible” (Stone, 1991, p. 351).

Similarly, Kate Bornstein’s (1994) *Gender Outlaw: On Men, Women and the Rest of Us* has also been credited by many queer scholars as one of the most influential books in the field of trans and queer studies. Using a poststructuralist lens, this book detailed the existence and experiences of genders beyond the gender binary. Ze (Bornstein’s pronoun) challenged the binary by providing the reader with a personal postmodern narrative of hir (ze’s possessive) life and gender journey. In this book, Bornstein also focused on language and categorisation of identities, arguing

that rigid labels (particularly binary ones) are unhelpful and that individuals' identities are fluid and in movement. In his view, people who are genderqueer subvert society's expectations of their gender as they "recognize no borders or rules of gender." (Bornstein, 1994, p. 52). Trans people who "pass" as the "opposite" gender (i.e., transsexual people) do not support the gender deconstructing revolution and are submissive to the oppressive, binary gender norms imposed by society (Finn & Dell, 1999). It is evident, then, that for some genderqueer theorists, refusing to "fit into" binary gender categories as well as refusing to "pass" as male or female were considered crucial for destabilising (deconstructing) the gender order – and that these concepts were central to their gender identity and linguistic becomings.

Such a line of thinking has been, consequently, problematised and deemed unhelpful by other trans theorists within academia. For instance, Roen (2002) argues that such divisions create unnecessary hierarchies of transness. These hierarchies are said to create subdivisions within trans communities, which are politically polarising: they create a divide between those who wish to "pass" as male or female (either/or) and those who do not (both/neither). Davy (2019) has argued that such polarisation is unhelpful, as gender identity becomings are not limited to the concepts of "passing," but to a myriad of assemblages which produce diverse embodied intensities and desires among trans people. Nonetheless, while some trans people do not see passing as an end-goal, others do. For those that do, striving to "pass" is of utmost importance for a variety of reasons, including safety and comfort (Roen, 2002). Richards and Barker (2013) have also argued that genderqueer theorists risk falling into another set of binaries by depicting trans individuals as either subversive (genderqueer, non-binary, etc.) or conforming (transgender, transsexual, etc.)

Poststructuralist queer theories have been the subject of much re-assessment and re-thinking (Prosser, 1998; Namaste, 1996); they have, in a way, enabled a discussion around genderqueer and non-binary gender identities (Yeadon-Lee, 2016). Building on Bornstein (1994) poststructuralist thinking, Monro (2005), for instance, developed a theory of gender plurality, which conceptualised gender as a "spectrum, a field, or intersecting spectra or continua" (p. 37). In terms of the emergence of linguistic categories, Monro (2005) suggested that, in naming particular spots within this spectrum, non-categories ultimately become categories "which people can inhabit" (p. 37). This theory has been productive in bridging the aforementioned polarising perspectives on the politics of identity, as it provides a space where identities can be adopted by individuals seeking an embodied, gendered home after or during transitioning (Prosser, 1998).

According to these perspectives, trans people who did not (want to) conform with the socially prescribed binary requirements for womanhood or manhood could potentially inhabit other social categories of their own which were outside or between these territories, thus queering (challenging normativities) the gender and linguistic landscapes.

Prevalence of Non-Binary

While people have been identifying as something other than male or female for a very long time, as demonstrated in previous sections, this information has not been recorded or measured in many studies, censuses, or historical records. While data collection techniques have evolved to become more inclusive since I began this research in 2016, there are still many gaps in the way non-binary gender identities are captured in surveys, online forms, and questionnaires, which can render non-binary-identified people invisible in research (Valentine, 2016). Guyan (2022) argues that capturing accurate data about queer populations such as non-binary people “can elevate stories previously excluded from history but also question assumptions [...] that naturalize the categories of ‘cisgender’ and ‘heterosexual’ as default positions” (p. 188). Recent studies aiming to estimate the prevalence of non-binary people in the general population have offered some insights regarding the number of people who might identify as non-binary.

In some studies, the term “gender ambivalent” has been used to operationally define when people identify equally with both sexes (Van Caenegem et al., 2015). Van Caenegem et al. (2015) conducted two population-based surveys in Belgium (one among the general population and another among sexual minorities (lesbian, gay, and bisexual people only). The results indicated that, in the general population, 2.2% of AMAB and 1.9% of AFAB were gender ambivalent, meaning that they identified as having two genders. Among sexual minorities, the prevalence for gender ambivalence was almost the same as in the general population for AMAB (1.8% versus 1.9%); however, among AFAB the percentage rose to and 4.1%, meaning that those who were assigned female at birth were more likely than AMAB to identify with two genders. While gender ambivalence might imply gender non-binary, the term non-binary was not used in the study. In a sexual health study among the general Dutch population ($n = 8064$), it was concluded that 4.6% of AMAB people and 3.2% of AFAB people self-reported as gender ambivalent (Kuyper & Wijzen, 2014).

Another study on the general population ($n = 2225$) in Israel also found that over a third of people surveyed felt to some extent that they were the “other” gender, or both male and female, and/or neither; however, they did not explicitly identify themselves as non-binary (Joel et al., 2013). While it is possible that some of these individuals identified as non-binary or genderqueer, the study was mostly about gender experience and expression rather than identity. A 2011 survey by The Equality and Human Rights Commission that explored identity in the UK population ($N = 10,039$) found that 1 in 250 people (0.4%) identifies as non-binary (Titman, 2014).

A few studies have attempted to identify the prevalence of non-binary people among the trans community specifically (Trans Media Watch, 2010; Harrison et al., 2012; McNeil et al., 2012; Kuper et al., 2012; Government Equalities Office, 2018). These studies indicate that it is likely that the number of people who identify as non-binary among trans-identified people is larger than in the

general population and that it is likely increasing. For instance, in a survey among 215 transgender people in the UK, Trans Media Watch (2010) reported that 17.9% of respondents identified as androgyne/genderqueer/polygender, while 8.5% identified as being a gender not listed. Similar results were found in a nationwide study of anti-transgender discrimination in the US where 20% of trans people were “part time as one gender, part time as another” and 13% were “a gender not listed” (Harrison et al., 2012, p. 14). Moreover, a study on trans mental health and wellbeing conducted by the Scottish Transgender Alliance – the largest trans-related survey ever conducted in the UK – found that over a quarter of survey participants identified as non-binary (McNeil et al., 2012). Yet, only 65% of participants in this study identified as gender binary (exclusively male or female), suggesting that while the 35% of participants did not identify as non-binary directly, they did not necessarily identify within the gender binary either. Kuper et al. (2012) surveyed a group of transgender individuals online and found that, of the 292 participants surveyed, 55.1% identified themselves as genderqueer, sometimes in addition to another gender, which was reflected in a larger survey in the UK of 14,320 trans people where 42% identified as non-binary (Government Equalities Office, 2018). A 2021 online survey of 34,7591 LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, and queer) youth (13–24-year-olds) across the United States conducted by The Trevor Project (2021) showed that 26% of respondents identified as non-binary while 20% questioned their gender identity.

Across this research, young(er) trans people represent a significant portion of those who identify as non-binary (Rankin & Beemyn, 2012; Clark et al., 2018; Yeadon-Lee, 2016), signalling a cultural shift wherein people feel more comfortable identifying as non-binary and breaking away from hegemonic gender roles and expectations. There is also an increasing public awareness about gender diversity both offline and online, which may also contribute to this increase. This opens up spaces into which identities narratives and trajectories can unfold.

(Lack of) Social Awareness

Non-binary gender identities have been garnering a great deal of media attention in recent years (Richards et al., 2016), as more people claim these genders and speak out about their identities. For instance, some celebrities such as Asia Kate Dillon, Sam Smith, and Ruby Rose have all embraced the label non-binary, as an umbrella term, to describe the ways in which they experience their gender. Many of them have rejected their assigned pronouns and have been very outspoken about their journeys (or processes of becoming) in the media. Their “coming out” narratives, in some ways, have facilitated the discussion around gender identity in Western societies, thus visibilising gender diversity, informing the general public about non-binary gender identities, and promoting them as acceptable gender possibilities. In January 2017, National Geographic published a “Gender Revolution” issue wherein many non-binary identities were showcased. The term “non-binary” was discussed in the context of young people being trailblazers for “radical” change in how gender is

understood and lived, i.e., rejecting traditional gender roles. Several non-binary people were also interviewed for this issue, along with activists, clinicians, and academics. A documentary by the same name was also released, furthering the reach of non-binary genders in mainstream media, and aiding with the linguistic solidification of the term.

This type of representation has been impactful in creating positive social changes for non-binary people. For instance, some private and public organisations have already recognised that there are more than two genders and are taking steps in including them in their policies. For instance, in 2014, after collaborating with various LGBTQ+ advocacy organisations, the social network Facebook created a new “custom gender option,” which allowed users to select from an extensive list of gender identities beyond the traditional categories of male and female. Users are now able to select up to 10 (out of 58) gender options, ranging from “agender” to “two-spirit.” People who select a custom gender may also choose the pronoun by which they would like to be referred to publicly: male (he/his), female (she/her) or neutral (they/their) (Zimmer, 2015). Some organisations in the UK such as HSBC and Metro Bank have recently allowed their users to identify as non-binary, making it easier for non-binary customers to access services without being misgendered. And TeenVogue magazine published an online article in 2018 instructing its readers how to use gender-neutral language (Corcione, 2018). Therefore, non-binary people have made some progress and gained some social representation in these domains, further establishing some parameters around the language surrounding non-binary gender identities.

As of September 2020, and as a result of an Employment Tribunal decision, non-binary people may now become legally protected from discrimination under the Equality Act 2010 in the UK (Peel & Newman, *frth*), and most organisations have not yet included non-binary genders in their Equality Index, which means that organisations do not have the legal requirement to be inclusive of non-binary people. And while LGBTQ+ organisations such as Stonewall (a charity in the UK) supports the legal right to self-define one’s gender, including legal status as non-binary, there are still many social and legal rights that non-binary people do not enjoy in the UK. According to the Transgender Equality Report published by the UK House of Commons Women and Equalities Commission (2016), non-binary people are not recognised in UK legislation, and thus are not able to obtain a gender recognition certificate – unless they use a binary gender to be recognised as trans women or men. Similarly, medical procedures are not yet inclusive of non-binary people, despite the increased visibility of non-binary-identified people in clinical settings (Koehler et al. 2018). Indeed, not all non-binary people (want to) access gender-affirming services. But among those who do, there is great diversity in the ways in which they take up gender-affirming interventions such as hormones, surgeries, voice training, etc. (Richards et al., 2015). Nonetheless, Vincent (2020) suggested that some non-binary people often expressed “not feeling trans enough” in health settings due to the existence of historically traditional binary trans narratives (McGuire et al., 2016). Vincent’s (2020) research suggested that

many non-binary people in the UK felt obligated to lie about their gender in order to receive the gender-affirming services they needed from the Gender Identity Clinics. The self-determination/declaration model of trans health (Singer, 2006) is therefore required to fully depathologise gender-diverse individuals and their experiences (see, for instance, Suess, 2014 and Winter, 2017).

Trans people in countries such as Argentina, Malta, and Ireland can change their gender identities legally solely based on self-determination – without having to go through a psychological diagnosis or medical procedures (O’Toole, 2015). Yet, non-binary genders are still not recognised in these countries. In countries such as Denmark, Australia, India, Canada, Malaysia, and the US (Oregon and California only), people can change their gender in their legal documents (driving licences, passports, etc.), which includes non-binary genders (Parsons, 2019). These societal movements exemplify the ways in which a depathologising model of trans health (in the form of self-declaration) is indeed possible – and should be implemented in the UK.

In the UK, trans people are still required to go through various forms of gatekeeping to have their (binary) genders legally affirmed. This includes being diagnosed with gender dysphoria (Gender Recognition Act, 2004, section 1). Indeed, there are campaigns in the UK to add non-binary identities unto the Gender Recognition Act (Stonewall, 2019), and fighting to add neutral options in passports, by for example adding an X to traditional gender markers of F and M (Elan-Cane, 2014). However, these campaigns have as yet been unsuccessful.

Overall, the trans-normative belief that all trans people necessarily transition from one gender to another (Nicolazzo, 2016) persists in the medical, psychological, legal, and social arenas. And while it is true that genderqueer and non-binary people are increasingly being recognised in these domains, as their advocacy and activism becomes stronger, there is much to be done as far as social recognition (Taylor et al., 2018). Such lack of representation can have negative impacts on the mental health and well-being of non-binary people.

Mental Health Among Non-Binary People

Two things that gender-diverse people seem to have in common are the degree to which their identities are marginalised (Nanda, 2000) and the high rates of suicidal ideation and suicide. Some research has suggested that trans people are four times more likely to commit suicide when they are marginalised (Goldblum et al., 2012), showing the direct link between victimisation and suicide. In the US, the 2014 National Transgender Discrimination Survey found that 44% of AFAB and 38% AMAB trans people have attempted suicide (Haas et al., 2014). A smaller study conducted by Clements-Nolle et al. (2006) concluded that “28% had been in alcohol or drug treatment, 59% had been raped, 62% experienced gender discrimination, 83% experienced verbal gender victimisation, and 36% reported physical gender victimisation” (p. 59). However, none of the aforementioned research mentions non-binary identities explicitly.

Only a few studies have suggested that non-binary people face a significant amount of stigmatisation and prejudice that may be similar to, or even be more dramatic than, the stigmatisation that binary trans people experience (Harrison et al., 2012; McNeil et al., 2012). Harrison et al. (2012), for example, inferred that “gender variant” individuals (those who, in the survey, reported either a non-binary gender or no gender at all; that is, 13% of all the people surveyed) reported higher levels of discrimination and violence than their binary transgender counterparts. The same study found that 40% of non-binary people had attempted suicide in the past, 17% of participants had experienced sexual assault, and 33% had experienced physical assault based on their gender.

Some research has indeed suggested that non-binary people experience greater risk for negative mental health outcomes than trans men or women. For instance, Budge, Rossman, and Howard (2014) found that over half of the non-binary people in their study reported having depression and over one-third reported having anxiety. Other research has suggested that non-binary people experience (and assessed themselves as having) more serious psychological distress such as hopelessness and worthlessness (James et al., 2016), disability, illness, and depression than their binary trans counterparts (Burgwal et al., 2019). However, it should not be assumed that these negative experiences are intrinsic to non-binary people’s experience. These high levels of distress are often due to a lack of societal understanding and the rejection gender-diverse people have endured due to this lack of understanding (Dodge & Sandfort, 2007). This has also been termed as minority stress (theory), which posits that gender and sexual minorities (who are likely to be stigmatised) experience greater prejudice, social exclusion, and victimisation. These experiences therefore lead to poorer mental and physical health (Meyer, 2003). As such, it is discrimination rather than psychopathology that causes distress among gender-diverse people.

Non-binary people have been shown to avoid certain situations in order to diminish their distress. For instance, a 2016 study in the UK found that over 75% of non-binary people avoid social situations because they fear being harassed, misgendered, and/or outed. In the same study, 67% of non-binary people felt as though their genders are never included in services such as mental health services, sexual health services, education settings, police interaction, at the GP, etc., and the majority feel unable to be out in their professional or educational settings (ScottishTrans.org, 2016). Such avoidance therefore reflects society’s lack of understanding rather than non-binary people’s internal sense of self – that is, psychological distress is not inherent to non-binary people.

Why Is Language Important?

In the previous section, I demonstrated that non-binary people are consistently under-researched within the social sciences and there is much we still do not know about their experiences. Therefore, studying this population is crucial, especially considering that transphobia and non-binary invisibility (as expressed through

language) may have serious psychological repercussions on non-binary people (Richards et al., 2016). Such lack of intelligibility poses a variety of social challenges for non-binary people, particularly in the linguistic realm. As such, this section will make a case for the need to investigate the continuous emergence of *non-binary language* such as gender-neutral language, as well as how non-binary people navigate social interactions in a variety of contexts.

Linguistic Emergence

In the previous section, I also showed how the theoretical foundation for non-binary thinking was laid by postmodern theorists such as Butler, Bornstein, and Stone. Such theoretical developments helped to form some of the foundations for queer theory (Gamson, 1995; Halberstam, 2005; Kulick, 2005), which opened up the possibility to name the experiences of those who lived their lives beyond the limiting constraints and hierarchies of the sex/gender binary. This section will outline the emergence of the terms “genderqueer” and “non-binary,” showing how these concepts have been used to challenge and transcend rigid gender norms and, in some cases, challenge social institutions that perpetuate these normativities (Monro, 2019).

In naming these experiences, a variety of identity labels that described these experiences began to emerge in the 1990s. Activist Riki Wilchins (1995), for instance, wrote extensively about the gender binary as an oppressive system. Wilchins has been credited for being one of the first persons to use the term “genderqueer” in their writing and to identify openly as such. Wilchins explained the concept in the spring 1995 newsletter called *In Your Face*:

the fight against gender oppression [is] about all of us who are genderqueer: diesel dykes and stone butches, leatherqueens and radical fairies, nelly fags, crossdressers, intersexed, transsexuals, transvestites, transgendered, transgressively gendered, and those of us whose gender expressions are so complex they haven't even been named yet.

(Wilchins, 1995, p. 4)

This passage alluded to the continuous emergence and constant development of gender terms within queer communities, as well as the need for new terms to describe bespoke gendered experiences. Wilchins therefore understood the term “genderqueer” as a transgression to gender norms as well as an identity category.

Another influential book includes Carol Queen and Lawrence Schimel's (1997) anthology entitled *PoMoSexuals: Challenging Assumptions About Gender and Sexuality* – which employed a postmodern lens (hence the name). Though a variety of stories from people who experienced their genders and sexualities in diverse ways, this book challenged heteronormative and cisnormative assumptions around the body, language, and gender expressions. A few years later, *GenderQueer: Voices Beyond the Sexual Binary* (2002), an anthology edited by Joan Nestle, Clare Howell, and Riki Wilchins,

explicitly told the first-person accounts of people who experienced their genders in a multitude of ways – which extended beyond the gender binary. In this anthology, the term “genderqueer” was further territorialised as a term that described the experiences of people who lived their lives between or outside the gender binary. While no single story or description of genders was the same within this book, these narratives were united by the rejection of the gender binary as a hegemonic force. By queering gender, this anthology opened up the possibilities for new genders to emerge while also framing “genderqueer” as an umbrella term for gender diversity. Google’s Ngram viewer – which visualises the frequency of usage of a given word in published texts – has shown that the term “genderqueer” had a “small increase from nothing in the mid 2000s” (Bergman & Barker, 2017, p. 32), showing the impact of these publications on the lexicon of gender (diversity). Nevertheless, genderqueer, as an identity label, seems to have fallen out of favour, particularly among young people who use “non-binary” to define their identity (Monro, 2019).

The term non-binary, which has been reported to first be used as an identity category in Haynes’ and McKenna’s (2001) collection *Unseen Genders: Beyond the Binaries*, has in recent years become one of the most common ways to describe the experiences of those who do not identify as exclusively male or female. And it is now considered an umbrella term for a wide range of identity labels describing specific gender “territories.” As McKenna and Kessler (2006) noted, the number of categories, identities, and behaviours outside of the binary has increased since the 1990s – and they continue to increase. Stryker (2008) hypothesised that this rise might be a product of the “Internet age,” as it is now easier than ever to access information and connect with like-minded people on social media. Therefore, this project explored this and many other *affective assemblages* that contribute to the ongoing linguistic negotiation of non-binary gender identities, especially since non-binary has indeed become a social category capable of fuelling social change by decentring binary genders (Monro, 2019).

Language has the potential to both enable and inhibit the articulation of gender (Lev, 2004). In the fight for gender recognition, many non-binary activists have taken an approach to gender identity that can only be described as “strategic essentialism” (Spivak, 1985). This position understands identities as (temporarily) stable and fixed in order to legitimise and achieve political, legal, and economic recognition (as well as linguistic recognition). For instance, many non-binary activists have campaigned for the recognition and (legal) legitimatisation of gender-affirming language such as gender-neutral labels, pronouns, titles, etc. (All About Trans, 2016; Bergman & Barker, 2017). Such language is said to be affirming in that it does not deny the existence of multiple genders. Gendered language is therefore positioned as a stable part of the self, requiring affirmation and legalisation. These campaigns have gained a great deal of recognition in recent years, affecting the ways in which gendered language is employed in places like university campuses, banks, social media platforms, etc. (Bennet, 2016) by advocating, for instance, that gender-neutral language such as Mx should be an option in official documents (Elan-Cane, 2014). The following section will

explore how gender-neutral language has been employed by some non-binary people to express their identities linguistically.

Gender-Neutral Language

While not all non-binary people change any of their linguistic features assigned at birth, a significant number of non-binary people do prefer to use gender-neutral language such as pronouns, titles, etc. that best reflect their genders, even if only contextually or momentarily. For instance, the singular pronoun “they” (they/them) may be one of the most common pronouns. According to Barker (2013), some non-binary people like “they” for a variety of reasons, including because it challenges the notion that people are single selves. However, others do not like this association with plurality (and duality).

The gender-neutral use of “they” has a long history in the English language. In the 1300s, the word “they” was employed as a genderless pronoun that was both singular and plural (a singular and plural third-person pronoun), the same way that the pronoun “you” (singular and plural second-person pronoun) is used. In fact, several writers such as Shakespeare, Chaucer, and Fielding used they/them as genderless and numberless (O’Conner & Kellerman, 2010). Nevertheless, towards the end of the eighteenth century, several influential grammarians such as Lindley Murray (1795) and Anne Fisher (1750) suggested that using “they” as singular and plural was simply illogical (Baron, 2020). Since then, the use of “they” as an encompassing, genderless third-person singular pronoun has been essentially banned, making “they” strictly plural. Nowadays, several grammarians anticipated the inevitable “return” of the singular “they” (see, for instance, Zimmer, 2015). In fact, in 2015, the singular “they” was named the “word of the year” by the American Dialect Society for its “emerging use as a pronoun to refer to a known person, often as a conscious choice by a person rejecting the traditional gender binary of he and she” (American Dialect Society, 2016). In 2019, Merriam-Webster dictionary added to the definition of “they”: A pronoun “used to refer to a single person whose gender identity is nonbinary” (Merriam-Webster, 2019). The same year, the American Psychological Association (APA) endorsed the use of “they” as a singular third-person pronoun in the upcoming edition of their publication manual (Lee, 2019), providing a societal and academic legitimatisation to the usage of this pronoun. These linguistic movements are said to be inclusive of non-binary people, as well as creating a standard in academic writing where gender is not assumed, and the generic male is decentred.

While “they” seems to be one of the most common gender-neutral pronouns, others have indeed been proposed over the years, including “ey/em/eir/eirs/,” also known as the Spivak pronouns, Nunn, 2015), “ze/hir/hir” (Feinberg, 1992), among others. Yet, most of these have failed to attain mainstream acceptance (Zimmer, 2015). For example, “ze” and its possessive “hir” were introduced in the 90s, but neither has gained enough popularity to become a relevant part of the vernacular – most changes in vocabulary sound clumsy and are grating to the ear

(Langer, 2011). According to Matsuno and Budge (2017), some non-binary people may use more than one type of pronoun (e.g., they/them as well as she/her) or no pronouns at all (using their name instead, for instance). For some, the use of a fixed pronoun is not even necessary. It is important to note that pronouns are typically “selected based on comfort and alignment with the gender identity of the non-binary individual and/or safety of their environment” (Matsuno & Budge, 2017, p. 2) – and some people might not disclose their pronouns to everyone. Furthermore, the use of they/them pronouns is not a monolith among non-binary-identified people.

In addition to pronouns, some non-binary people may choose a gender-neutral title such as Mx rather than Mr/Sir or Miss/Mrs/Ms/Madam (Hord, 2016). Non-binary people might also request others to refer to them in neutral ways: person, human, child, sibling, and parent (rather than with gendered terms, such as boy, girl, man, woman, son, daughter, sister, brother, father, or mother). Moreover, some non-binary people may also change or shorten their birth name to index androgyny.

Linguistic Negotiations

While there is more to one’s gendered experience than language and discourse, language is of special interest given that a great deal of non-binary people use linguistic markers such as pronouns, titles, and labels which differ from the ones they were assigned at birth. It is also important to note that not all non-binary people change these linguistic markers; however, there is broad understanding and use of these linguistic markers within the non-binary community. Those outside the community, however, may not understand, recognise, or validate such linguistic markers, thus knowingly or unknowingly invalidating the (linguistic) identities of non-binary people. In other words, *misgendering* may occur. The concept of “misgendered” and “appropriately gendered” was first proposed by Julia Serano (2007, p. 179) in reference to the concept of “passing.” Serano (2007) argued that, in naming these experiences, transgender people could shed light on the “cissexual gender entitlement” (p. 179) – that is, the privilege that cisgender people hold. As such, misgendering is often a cisgenderist tool used to undermine gender diversity (Ansara, 2015, p. 15).

There is a limited number of research that examines the linguistic experiences of non-binary people, despite it being one of the most salient themes that emerge in non-binary identity discourses. For instance, Richards and Barker (2013) argue that some non-binary people have adopted a gender-neutral language which enables recognition and representation of their identities. This shift in language has produced the need of an “ask etiquette” during social interactions – that is, asking people what pronouns/titles/name they use, which is now common practice within some non-binary and trans communities (Richards & Barker, 2013).

Some early findings on the impacts of gendered language have suggested that prioritising men and assuming people are cisgender can have negative impacts on

individuals. For instance, Weatherall (2005) has suggested that women's comprehension, perception, and memory of texts are affected when the masculine generic is used, as they are typically understood as referring to men only (i.e., chairman, policeman, fireman, mankind, etc.). Ansara and Hegarty (2012) have also suggested that this is also the case for trans people whose identities are not represented in mainstream discourse, furthering their sense of exclusion. Barker and Richards (2015) argue that this might also be the case for non-binary people, as their identities are not represented in discourse. Most people are typically referred to as he or she based on their appearance, a cisnormative assumption that delegitimises linguistic gender diversity.

Saltzburg and Davis (2010) suggested that genderqueer youth in the US feared that their genders were not being recognised through language. Their participants wanted to dismantle the binary language used when referring to them. The researchers mentioned that the participants struggled with titles, pronouns, gendered language, and birth names because they misrepresented and mislabelled them. Additionally, participants' families had a hard time accommodating and some refused to use the language they requested (Saltzburg & Davis, 2010), thus invalidating their identities – and cisgendering their experiences.

Negotiating linguistic choices such as gender-neutrality may be challenging for some non-binary people, as a significant proportion of people might not be aware of the mere concept of non-binary gender identities – and some may, knowingly or unknowingly, not acknowledge their existence through discourse. For instance, a survey among non-binary people in the UK revealed that 76% of participants did not disclose their gender and pronouns to others because they feared negative reactions such as the ones outlined in the previous section (Government Equalities Office, 2018). Similarly, Baldwin et al. (2018) suggested that non-binary people reported being misgendered in health settings, which had negative impacts on their mental health. Misgendering is therefore a particular concern for non-binary people.

Friedman (2014) argues that social representations of gender cause people to judge others' gender solely based on physical characteristics (regardless of the person's gender identity) unless they consciously attempt to disregard their essentialist notions. Using gender-neutral language, therefore, requires individuals to re-negotiate their binaristic assumptions around language. English, which has a "natural" gender (where gender is only assigned to semantically gendered elements) rather than a grammatical gender such as French or Spanish (e.g., gendered nouns, adjectives, etc., which do not necessarily have a semantic gender), proves to be one of the "easiest" languages in which linguistic gender-neutrality can be achieved. There are, however, limitations and situations in which gender-neutral language needs creativity. For instance, niece/nephew, uncle/aunt, boyfriend/girlfriend, to name a few, do not have a direct (official) neutral word. Consequently, within some non-binary communities, a great deal of word genesis has taken place. Some have adopted words such as *nibling* for niece and nephew,

pibling for aunt and uncle, and *date* for girlfriend and boyfriend. But these words might not become widely used and have not yet filtered through mainstream forms of communication.

Language has been central to the continuous emergence of non-binary gender identities, as challenging cisnormativity – the idea that linguistic categories such as man and woman are “normal” or “natural” – is at the heart of non-binary thinking. Zimman (2018) argues that genders are self-determined; therefore, people’s genders are not always *visible*. As such, one of the general principles in non-binary activism is not to assume people’s genders – and the language surrounding their gender – based on their appearances. Zimman (2018) also argues that asking people about their pronouns along with their name should be a standard practice outside of non-binary circles. This line of thinking has become the subject of much debate, as many have postulated the act of asking others about their pronouns as difficult, excessive, unnatural, and impossible. Airton (2018) has theorised these negative views on gender-neutral language as an *excess-assemblage*, which frames gender-neutral pronoun usage as impossible – *act of excess*. Airton (2018) argues that this excess-assemblage only occurs when people “do not conform to cis-normative standards of femininity or masculinity” (p. 798). In other words, it primarily affects non-binary people. Instead, gender-neutral language should be reframed as possible, despite being an extra effort. To contribute to this process, Airton developed the NBD campaign (from “no big deal”) www.nbdcampaign.ca which aims to depoliticise the use of pronouns on college campuses in Canada.

While the present research explored the ways in which non-binary people navigate language socially, it was also concerned with the ways non-binary people negotiate this linguistic emergence within themselves. Recent research on non-binary and genderqueer people’s identity negotiations has alluded to the various ways in which these gender subjectivities emerge. For instance, Moon (2019) suggested that feelings and affective forces – which they referred to as “trans-emotionality” – were decisive in people’s decisions to embrace non-binary linguistic markers. Such emotions included gender disorientations and liminality, a feeling of being in-between genders. Moon (2018) argues that it is through these feelings and affective embodiments that people are no longer constrained by the linguistic parameters of the gender binary, permitting a flourishing of gender subjectivities to emerge (Bornstein, 1998). Therefore, non-binary linguistic emergences are constantly being (re)imagined and (re)embodied, given that non-binary people themselves are complex, diverse, both static and fluid, and influenced by internal and external factors. This book endeavours to examine some of the ways in which these gender and linguistic possibilities emerge, become territorialised, and are constantly transformed. The following section will discuss the approach I have taken in researching language and identity among non-binary people.

The Focus of My Research

The present book explores the gender identity and the language usage of people who identify as non-binary both offline and online. While the materiality of the body will be present throughout this research, this project focuses on language, given the seemingly new, emerging, and rapidly evolving discourses around gender diversity and the language surrounding non-binary gender identities. For instance, the mere emergence of words such as non-binary, genderqueer, agender, bigender, etc. (to name a few) has gained a great deal of attention in academia, traditional and social media, and in political discourse in the past five years, a development which the National Geographic (2017) characterised as “The Gender Revolution,” as mentioned earlier in this chapter. It is possible that such linguistic movement has allowed individuals to communicate their relationships with gender more “effectively” – that is, a wide variety of linguistic resources and terminologies have been devised, employed, and legitimised. Many have framed this as a positive development, given the constraints of the gender binary and the limited language surrounding it. Moreover, it has been suggested that many non-binary-identified people indeed request others to use a gender-neutral pronoun such as they/them when referring to them (i.e., “they are happy” rather than “he is happy”); use neutral language such as sibling, parent, partner, etc.; and may use titles such as Mx. While not all non-binary people employ this language, it is evident that non-binary people are “in the know” about the linguistic parameters around linguistic gender-neutrality (Bennet, 2016). These linguistic features may be used to index their gender identity to/by others. However, requesting other people – especially strangers – respect this language can sometimes be difficult and, in some instances, dangerous (ScottishTrans.org, 2016). This poses a predicament that most cisgender people do not typically face: to be misgendered, or have their gender misunderstood and sometimes disregarded, due to the lack of understanding about gender diversity. Misgendering is also common among other butch lesbians or “unfeminine” cisgender women who may be perceived as men.

The *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5)* states that transsexual, transgender, and gender non-conforming individuals “feel uncomfortable being regarded by others, or functioning in society, as members of their assigned gender” (American Psychiatric Association, 2013, p. 454). Yet, no research has examined the ways in which non-binary people negotiate this linguistic emergence, navigate social interactions in which their genders are assumed, and whether non-binary people experience a sense of exclusion due to the use of cisgenderist language. And, in fact, no research has examined whether the use of gender-affirming language has any benefits among non-binary people. The present research fills these gaps in the literature, as it explores these linguistic negotiations at various levels of interpersonal interaction – both online and offline.

This book extends the theoretical field of psychology by implementing Deleuze’s ideas of affect, referring to the ways in which the human body can both affect and be affected by its environment (Deleuze, 1988). *Becoming* is important

Deleuzian concept and is used here to theorise gender as “rhizomatic, nomadic, a constant journey with no final destination” (Linstead & Pullen, 2006, p. 1292). This theoretical approach steps away from purely positivist or constructionist theoretical commitments often found within the field of psychology, arguing instead that a non-binary approach to theory is required to understand non-binary people’s gender and linguistic becomings. This research also employs theories and perspectives from social psychology and queer theory, while also acknowledging the importance of the material body through assemblage theory (DeLanda, 2006). Assemblage theory, which draws from Deleuze and Guattari (1987), acknowledges the multiple components (linguistic and material; human and non-human) that merge at particular points and in ongoing ways to produce (or assemble) a becoming. Affective flows have the capacity to either territorialise (or stabilise) or deterritorialise (destabilise) the assemblage (Deleuze & Guattari, 1988), thus creating the possibility for a becoming to emerge and to reterritorialise.

The present book explores the ways in which non-binary-identified people come to embrace and/or understand gender-neutral language (including the label non-binary itself), and how they negotiate and navigate social interactions in a society that, in most cases, is still unaware of what is meant by the mere concept of non-binary gender identities. Specifically, this research explores the experiences of non-binary people by analysing 22 semi-structured interviews alongside 22 short writing samples from non-binary people living in the UK which were collected in 2017. Additionally, a bespoke corpus of non-binary language (hereafter, the non-binary corpus, or the NBC) was created for this project. The corpus data were collected in 2018. This corpus consists of online language originating from an anonymous support forum where non-binary-identified people discuss their experiences and share information online. The corpus data were initially analysed using quantitative corpus linguistic tools which aided in deciphering the linguistic patterns (in the form of *intensities*). All data were then analysed qualitatively through the lens of assemblage theory, which aims to uncover the non-hierarchical, relational affects that contribute to the continuous emergence and negotiation of a given assemblage – in this case, the assemblage of non-binary gender identities both offline and online.

The interview data as well as the writing samples were analysed together in the first stage of the research, serving as a guiding compass for subsequent analysis. The NBC was analysed using corpus linguistics tools which allowed me to extrapolate the most salient discourses within the dataset in the form of keywords, collocations, and concordance lines. These were then used to create a rhizomatic network of collocations. An in-depth analysis of these linguistics patterns was then conducted to reveal the most salient affective intensities within the corpus – that is, the interconnected meanings, metaphors, representations, and stories (Burr, 2003) that are assembled within the data. According to Baker (2014), this mixed methods design provides a more robust analysis. The research design and mode of enquiry provide a novel, empirical insight into this severely under-researched population. While corpus linguistics methods have not been widely used in the field of

psychology, this method has been found useful in other social science disciplines (e.g., psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics, cultural studies) for analysing large amounts of data. One of the main advantages of combining these methods is that it allows the researcher to study high volumes of data at once, making it possible for the researcher to explore a variety of themes within the data; something that, if done manually, would take a long time or it would be impossible to do. Combined, the interviews, short writings, and the NBC make a significant contribution to the knowledge base on non-binary gender identities, their continuous emergence, linguistic assemblage, and ongoing negotiation.

Concluding Remarks

This chapter provided several definitions for key terms that will be employed throughout this book including, sex and gender, trans, non-binary, intersex, and cis. I also outlined the historical precedence of non-binary gender identities, across the globe and cross-culturally. I have also shown the ways in which non-binary thinking and its linguistic features emerged in the West, intensifying in the 1990s and early 2000s and solidifying their usage in the second half of the 2010s. Such intensification, in the form of knowledge dissemination online, for instance, has been linked to an increase in the number of non-binary-identified people, as well as linguistic movements such as the push for gender-neutrality and inclusivity. However, non-binary identities have been sensationalised and widely misunderstood, contributing to the high levels of stigma, victimisation, and discrimination that non-binary people face. Furthermore, all these factors have been shown to contribute to the high rates of psychological distress experienced by non-binary people.

I have also demonstrated the ways in which language is often at the centre of these tensions. Non-binary people, therefore, negotiate the language they use to describe themselves on an ongoing basis. These negotiations are not simply internal but require a social negotiation with other bodies, entities, histories, sexualities, etc. I have demonstrated some of the ways in which these factors contribute to the continuous emergence of non-binary gender identities and linguistic becomings – and this book will continue to show the way these and other factors affect and are affected by this emergence.

The concept of *linguistic becomings* (in DeleuzoGuattarian terms) will be developed throughout this book as a contribution to the theory and the knowledge base in the area of trans and non-binary studies. This theoretical development conveys the important role that language has on the assemblage of non-binary gender identities while demonstrating that the material body is also an intrinsic element that contributes significantly to this assemblage. I argue that the importance placed on language by non-binary people helps assemble a new set of social contexts and parameters, which are constantly being adopted, (re)negotiated, and (re)configured by non-binary-identified people. These processes are understood here as linguistic becomings.

Non-binary gender identities are negotiated in fluid, relational, and unpredictable ways in an ongoing process of emergence and becoming. For instance, Vincent (2020) argues that these negotiations could entail shifting from a binary trans identity to a non-binary one, and vice versa. Some non-binary people reject the notion of attaching a (single) label to themselves, given the complexity of their gender experiences (Richards et al., 2016). Therefore, the present research also investigates the material elements of gender which are part of the assemblage of non-binary gender identities online and offline.

This introductory chapter evidenced the significant contribution to knowledge offered by this project in terms of methodology, theory, outputs, and praxis. By taking a robust approach to research that mixes both quantitative and qualitative methods and a bricolage of perspectives originating from psychology, sociology, sociolinguistics, and applied linguistics, this research fills in a gap in the literature.

2

GENDER AND LINGUISTIC BECOMINGS: BEYOND POSITIVISM AND SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONISM

This chapter will outline some of the research and theoretical underpinnings that continue to shape the ways in which trans and non-binary people are understood within the field of psychology. The first part of this chapter will examine the historical emergence of research that focused on gender diversity within the fields of medicine, sexology, and psychiatry. I will then offer an overview of the two main epistemologies of gender within the field of psychology: the positivist and the social constructionist perspectives. I argue that a *non-binary* perspective is necessary to account for the nuances, complexities, and embodied plurality of gender. I conclude this chapter by defending the employment of *assemblage theory* as an analytical tool for the study of non-binary gender identities, as this epistemological framework allowed me to explore and conceptualise the continuous emergence of non-binary gender identities and the language surrounding this emergence. I will explain why I conceptualise gender as a *becoming* – a constant process of emergence, shifting, (re)assessment, and (re)configuration.

Being non-binary is not just about my gender, but also about rejecting dichotomies and oppositional thinking, affirming my own complexity and simultaneity. [It] isn't just about being defined by my absence, but also by my abundance. [It] is about embracing my fluidity, my becoming, my journey without fixed destination.

–Alok Vaid-Menon (Figure 2.1), interview for *The Huffington Post* (Arora, 2018)

Sexology, Gender Diversity, and Gender Dysphoria

In the first half of the nineteenth century, gender diversity went from being considered a crime and a sin (a perversion) to a sickness (a pathology) (Hird, 2002). This shift occurred as the scientific study of sexuality and gender issues emerged

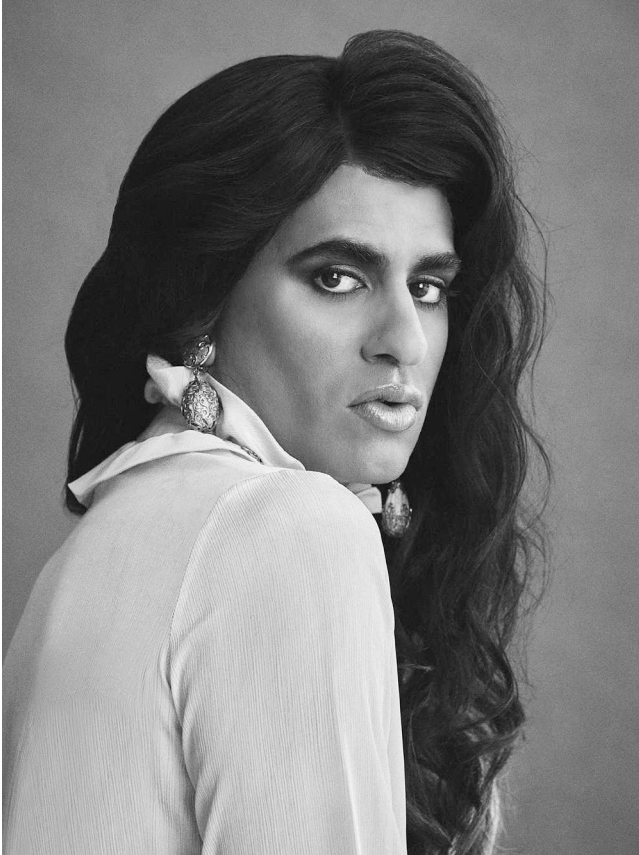


FIGURE 2.1 Alok Vaid-Menon, performance artist, poet, and LGBTQ+ rights activist. Photograph by Branson Farr. Used with Alok Vaid-Menon’s written permission.

within the field of medicine in Europe (Foucault, 1978). This medical research into “non-normative” genders and sexualities gave birth to the field of sexology, with researchers such as Karl Heinrich Ulrichs, Richard Freiherr von Krafft-Ebing, Magnus Hirschfeld, and Henry Havelock Ellis who, though empirical research, advanced this field of study (Beemyn, 2014). Foucault (1978) argues that the mere concepts of a sexual and gender identities were devised at this time through a process of naming and labelling. For instance, Ulrichs developed the “third sex” theory of sexuality, which described individuals who were neither male nor female, but “urnings” (AMAB) or “urningins” (AFAB) who experienced a “migration of the soul” – that is, “a female soul trapped in a male body” and vice versa (Oosterhuis, 2000). Richard Freiherr von Krafft-Ebing, an influential Austro-German psychiatrist, further developed Ulrichs’ ideas and developed the concept of a sexual invert (Krafft-Ebing, 1886). This concept described people who displayed cross-gender presentation and identification, as well as same-sex

desire. This nomenclature challenged the prevailing view that these individuals were perverted, and it allowed to produce research into this increasingly visible population.

In 1919, Hirschfeld founded the Institute for Sexual Science in Berlin, where one of the earliest gender reassignment surgeries was conducted under his supervision (Meyerowitz, 2002): Lili Elbe, whose story was depicted in the 2015 film *The Danish Girl*. One of the most remarkable contributions at this time was the separation of sexuality (same-sex desires) and gender (cross-sex presentation/identification) (Hirschfeld, 1910; Ellis, 1938), as these concepts were typically conflated and studied together. During this time, transsexuality (as an identity) was also distinguished from transvestism (cross-dressing) (Hirschfeld, 1910; Ekins & King, 1996). Much of this research, however, was systematically eliminated by the Nazis in 1933, as they burned the Institute of Sexology in Berlin.

It was not until 1953 that German-American endocrinologist Harry Benjamin re-introduced the concepts of “transsexuality” and “transvestite” in the United States (Benjamin, 1953). In his book, *The Transsexual Phenomenon*, Benjamin (1966) challenged the prevailing view that cross-gender expression and identification should be seen as illegal or sinful, akin to Krafft-Ebing’s, Ellis’, and Hirschfeld’s advocacy several decades prior. In Benjamin’s view, transsexuality was a physical condition rather than a mental condition. As such, he argued that the “transsexual condition” could be resolved endocrinologically (by taking hormones) and through surgical interventions (Ekins, 2005). Indeed, Benjamin (1966) evidenced this by showing that trans people were better adjusted after transitioning medically – that is, Benjamin “found that among fifty-one of his *male-to-female* patients who underwent surgery, 86 percent had ‘good’ or ‘satisfactory’ lives afterward” (Benjamin, 1966, as cited in Beemyn, 2014, p. 16). The Harry Benjamin International Gender Dysphoria Association (HBIGDA), now known as The World Professional Association of Transgender Health (WPATH), was then established, which proposed the “Standards of Care” for transsexual people (Benjamin, 1966; Coleman et al., 2012). As such, the demand for these services increased, and more than forty gender clinics were opened in the US. Thus, Benjamin’s research aided in institutionalising a medical model of the “true transsexual” and setting up inclusion/exclusion parameters around this medical condition – that is, being “born in the wrong body” and being attracted to people of their same birth sex (Stryker, 2008).

The field of psychology and psychiatry had different theories about the “causes” of transsexuality, however. The theory of social gender identity development (Money et al., 1957), for instance, understood gender as merely a product of socialisation and, as such, different from a person’s biology. These socialisation theories often blamed parents for the gender non-conformity of their children (Green & Money, 1969), as they drew from psychoanalytic doctrines (Freud, 1905). Nevertheless, these theories began to conceptualise gender as different from sex (Stoller, 1964), thus establishing the view that sex and gender are a result of nature and nurture, respectively. Furthermore, the field of psychiatry became

“involved in the assessment and care of transgender people” (Murjan & Bouman, 2017, p. 127). Around this time, the term “gender dysphoria” was not only devised but widely employed, thus solidifying its usage. This term symbolised the sense of misalignment between sex and gender (e.g., being in the “wrong body”) and the need to align these two concepts through medical and psychological care (Hines, 2010).

While Harry Benjamin showed that transsexuality was not mental disorder, diagnostic criteria for transsexualism were nonetheless implemented in the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-9; WHO, 1978), as well as in the American Psychiatric Association (APA) Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-III; APA, 1980). In the DSM-III, the diagnostic criteria appeared as “Gender Identity Disorder,” and “transsexualism” was defined as a disorder causing “a persistent sense of discomfort and inappropriateness about one’s anatomic sex and a persistent wish to be rid of one’s genitals and to live as a member of the other sex” (p. 261–262). This was due to the widespread belief among psychiatrists that transsexuality was a mental condition. Hines (2010) argues that, during this time, “the site of pathology was thus transferred from the body to the mind” (p. 2). Trans people have ever since been required to undergo rigorous psychological evaluations to access gender-affirming services – a gatekeeping model which has been criticised for pathologising gender-diverse people (Bockting et al., 2010).

Since then, there have been some changes to the ways gender diversity is diagnosed; however, the gatekeeping model is still mostly in place. The fifth edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5; 2013) reconceptualised its controversial and pathologising “Gender Identity Disorder” to “Gender Dysphoria,” a “distress that may accompany the incongruence between one’s experienced or expressed gender and one’s assigned gender” (APA, 2013, p. 451). This new diagnosis explicitly recognises non-binary genders in the use of the word “alternative” gender rather than “opposite” (p. 452) gender. The DSM-5 also asserts that gender dysphoria is not a mental disorder; however, it specifies that the element of distress is a core element of this diagnosis (APA, 2013). And while some trans and non-binary people can develop gender dysphoria as the DSM-5 conceptualises it, not all trans and non-binary people do (Davy, 2015; Davy & Toze, 2018).

The fact that “Gender Dysphoria” is still classified within the DSM-5 in and of itself stigmatises trans lives, as it associates their experiences with mental illness, i.e., being diagnosed with a psychiatric condition, which is oppressive and problematic (Lev, 2013). Thus, some trans activists from around the world argue that gender dysphoria should be declassified altogether, the same way that homosexuality was declassified in the 70s and it is no longer considered a mental illness (Cabral, 2011; Drescher, 2010; Suess et al., 2014; Winter, 2017). Suess et al. (2014), for instance, argue that gender diversity should instead be recognised as a human right, not a mental disorder. One of the main concerns with declassification is that in some countries a diagnosis is needed to receive some (private or public) gender-affirming services as well as legal gender recognition: passports, IDs, licenses, etc. However,

some argue that having gender dysphoria as a diagnosis does not make sense, as those who are diagnosed with gender dysphoria have similar levels of psychopathology as the rest of the population (Simon et al., 2011; Hoshiai et al., 2010; Cole et al., 1997; Mustanski et al., 2010); therefore, trans identities should not be equated with psychopathology.

Gender dysphoria is therefore not an essential characteristic of trans and non-binary individuals. Instead, poor mental and physical health among trans and non-binary people should be attributed to minority stress (Meyer 2013) and marginalisation stress (Bouman et al., 2010) – that is, the idea that stigma, prejudice, social exclusion, and discrimination (in this case, gender-based) lead to poorer mental and psychical health (Lick et al., 2013). Trans and non-binary people are indeed victims of discrimination and harassment based on their gender identities and expressions (Hendricks & Testa, 2012). As such, they are likely to experience minority stress (Meyer, 2003).

Countries such as Belgium, Sweden, and Netherlands have already taken steps to depathologise gender diversity by allowing people to access endocrinological services without a psychiatric diagnosis (Murjan & Bouman, 2017), thereby reducing stigma among trans and non-binary people and allowing them to make decisions about their own bodies (Arcelus & Bouman, 2016). In 2019, the World Health Organisation approved an update to the International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems (ICD-11) in which “gender identity disorders” were re-named “gender incongruence.” This new classification is no longer considered a mental disorder, as it is now classified under a chapter on sexual health. However, it is still unclear whether subsequent editions of the DSM will declassify gender dysphoria as well.

This section has outlined the emergence gender theorising within the fields of medicine, sexology, and psychology – and some of the ways these disciplines intercepted historically to assemblage the “true transsexual” narrative. Gender diversity has been (and still is) considered a pathology, which further stigmatises and pathologises their experiences. Within the field of psychology, trans and non-binary people have historically been under-researched (Hyde et al., 2018), and, as I have shown, their experiences have been narrated by the psycho-medical institutions and not trans and non-binary people themselves.

In the study of gender issues, the field of psychology has primarily focused its attention to gender differences between cis men and women. The following section will outline some of the research on gender differences, showing how the gender binary has been privileged and perpetuated within the field of psychology. As a result, non-binary genders have been rendered unintelligible (Nicolazzo, 2017).

(Cis)Gender and Psychology: A Positivist Perspective

Within psychology, particularly quantitative research, the study of gender has focused primarily on doing comparative work that places (cisgender) men and women in separate categories (as independent variables), and often focusing on

differences rather than similarities (Barker & Richards, 2015). This type of research has reinforced the notion that there are only two genders (men and women) and that they differ significantly from one another (Richards & Barker, 2015). Psychological gender research has, therefore, mainly focused on cisgender people, while disregarding the experiences of those who do not identify with or express the gender that they were assigned at birth: trans, non-binary, gender non-conforming, etc. Equally, they have greatly ignored the experiences of intersex people who may or may not fit nicely into the essentialist, binary models of both sex and gender.

Historically, within the field of psychology, biological differences between men and women, and the way these biological markers (hormones, chromosomes, primary and secondary sex characteristics, etc.) affected – and were related to – behaviour and identity were the focus of early research on gender (or sex). The study of biological differences was grounded in the assumption that these were genetically pre-programmed, apparent at birth with the morphology of the body, and stable (Hyde et al., 2018) – a cisnormative assumption. This theoretical approach to gender and sex is sometimes called biological essentialism, as it presupposes that gender is natural, inevitable, and biologically determined (Irvine, 1990).

The research on biological differences – and their effects on psychological traits – became increasingly prevalent after Darwin (1871)s work *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex* was published. Some of this research has focused on differences among cisgender men and women, including in the areas of sexual behaviour, intelligence, memory, aggression, personality traits, empathy, emotion, mental health, cognitive control, etc. (see McGeeney & Harvey, 2015 for a full review). However, a great deal of this work lacks replicability and the results are often mixed, inconclusive, and/or context-dependent (Hyde, 2005). In light of 46 meta-analyses demonstrating little differences between men and women in a variety of psychological domains, Hyde (2005) proposed the gender similarities hypothesis, stating that men and women are more similar than different on most psychological variables and that the small differences are trivial and cannot be definitively associated with biology. Additionally, Hyde (2005) argued that social, cultural, historical, and economic factors are often not considered, making some of the claims hazy. Stereotype threat theory (Spencer et al., 1999), for instance, has posited that when individuals are made aware of stereotypes associated to their gender (i.e., boys are good at math), perceptions of their own gender-stereotypical abilities intensify – affecting their performance in stereotypical ways (Fine, 2010). As such, gender differences can be re-produced by a variety of factors, including stereotypes and social expectations – and not due to inherit, essential, and/or purely biological forces.

Before the gender similarities hypothesis was proposed, Sandra Bem, one of the first feminist researchers to discuss the problems associated with rigid gender binaries in the West, developed a ground-breaking theory on gender roles in the early 70s. Bem proposed that gender inequality needed to be dismantled by acknowledging that gender can fall between or beyond the gender binary. The Bem Sex-Role Inventory (1974) measured stereotypical masculinity and femininity, as

well as neutrality (in the form of as neutral filler items), regardless of the respondents' gender. Respondents then scored in both masculinity and femininity measures, which was ground-breaking in that it deviated from the – then unquestionable – view that masculinity and femininity were discrete categories. Participants were classified in one of four categories: sex-typed (high scores on gender assigned at birth), sex-reversed (high scores on the “other sex”), androgynous (high scores on both), or undifferentiated (low scores on both). Additionally, Bem and Lenney (1976) suggested that rigid adherence to a binary gender role is not psychologically healthy and, thus, recommended that gender flexibility – specifically what they termed androgyny – would lead to more positive psychological outcomes. Bem's stance on androgyny evolved later in her career because androgyny assumes that psychological traits such as masculinity and femininity are inherent to the individual rather than contextual. Thus, Bem hypothesised that gender roles are learned through gender schemas rather than being innate forces (Bem, 1981). Her focus on the learned nature of gender schemas, while controversial at the time, opened multiple doors for more critical analysis of gender in Western societies. Specifically, the possibility that gender can have fluidity, flexibility, and plurality. Bem (1995) later argued that the proliferation of genders (which she expressed as being ideal to undo the privilege of cisnormative genders) can lead people to create further restrictions and policing, as people struggle to fit into a newly created category. Barker (2013) argues that this proliferation of identities is what we are seeing in the present day with non-binary gender identities. Like Bem, Barker argues that this proliferation of identities can create new sets of norms which simultaneously include and exclude people, a trend that is common within marginalised communities.

Despite Bem's work and early assertions about flexibility, the discipline of psychology continues to produce work with essentialist and positivist assumptions concerning gender by focusing on gender differences and by not acknowledging the diverse and expansive articulation of identities evidenced in the research (Hird, 2002). As such, Hyde et al. (2018) call for “scholars [to] recognize that male and female are insufficient for capturing the full range of identities and [to] acknowledge that gender/sex may be irrelevant to individuals' sense of who they are” (p. 10) and that maintaining such binary classification of gender can produce a “myriad negative consequences of gender stereotyping and prejudice” (p. 18). It is for this reason that a different approach is necessary to fully understand the complexity of gender – one that acknowledges not only the contextual nature of gender but also the ways in which material and linguistic intensities aid in the production of gender identities.

In health psychology, the biopsychosocial model (Engel, 1977) has been employed to understand some of the relationships between the biological, psychological, and social elements of health. This approach, while useful, has indeed been criticised for privileging individuals and portraying bodies as static, simple, and linear (see, for instance, Brown & Stenner, 2009). Similarly, Duff (2014) argues that an assemblage occupies all levels of reality, which, in turn, avoids making

reductivist claims that often position one level of reality (i.e., biology) as primary and under-privileges or positions the others as secondary or even tertiary (i.e., that biological sex determines gender identity, which in turn determines the way we speak about gendered bodies).

The present project conceptualises the biological, psychological, and social elements of the self as non-linear and non-hierarchical. Instead, assemblages are made up of all these elements at once, but with various intensities depending on a multitude of factors such as history, politics, language, desires, etc. – and a particular juncture in and through time. As such, this project does not negate the fact that there are material morphological differences among male- and female-bodied individuals; however, the claim that these material elements have an essential effect – an ultimate ontological truth – on people’s behaviours and identities must be understood among all the other affectivities. Nonetheless, the biopsychosocial model is a useful way to delineate some of the main components that make up an assemblage, without making simplistic assertions.

Within psychology, a variety of ontological approaches have emerged to dismantle the gender (and sex) binary – that is, the social constructionist approaches such as critical psychology, discursive psychology, and discourse analysis. Some of these new approaches oppose the essentialist notions upon which psychological research on gender has generally relied. However, this has created a new set of research binaries within the psychological research – namely, the essentialist approach versus the social constructionist approach. This research aims to break through this research binary by proposing a non-binary ontology in which both new materialist and discursive practices are acknowledged to provide new insights into non-binary identities, language, embodiment, and social experiences.

I will now outline the “discursive turn” in psychology (Potter & Wetherell, 1987), which is typically positioned as antithetical to essentialist notions of the self. While the present research sees language as an important part in the continuous emergence and negotiation of gender identities, the materiality of the body is theorised to be equally important.

Social Constructionism

Inspired by French philosopher Michael Foucault’s (1972) writings on power, discourse, and sexuality – and in an attempt to move away from the essentialist and positivist view of gender – some theorists, activists, and many feminists in the 1990s challenged and aimed to expand the gender binary by examining gender through the lenses of postmodernism and poststructuralism. This movement helped develop what is now known as social constructionism. This epistemological framework posits that knowledge is the outcome of social interaction, wherein language is an intrinsic (and the core) element of knowledge (Burr, 2003). Furthermore, social constructionism claims that language plays a significant role in creating meanings and social identities such as gender (Burr, 2003). This theorisation opposes essentialist notions of the self as it sees knowledge as partial and

contextual. As such, this epistemological approach claims that nothing is fixed or inevitable about the world or about the self; there are no absolute truths about who we are (e.g., sexuality, gender, etc.) because these identities are socially constructed through the available ways of thinking and speaking – and the discourses surrounding these constructs. As such, social constructionism is used as a lens to understand how “taken-for-granted” ways of representing the world come to be treated as absolute truths through discourse (Coyle, 2021).

A discourse, according to Foucault (1972), is made up of the “practices which systematically form the objects of which they [people] speak to” (p. 49). Therefore, knowledge is constructed via social interaction. Burr (1995) defines discourse as

a set of meanings, metaphors, representations, images, stories, statements and so on that in some way together produce a particular version of events ... Surrounding any one object, event, person etc., there may be a variety of different discourses, each with a different story to tell about the world, a different way of representing it to the world. (p. 48)

It is through discourse that we become subjects; that is, we submit ourselves to the socially constructed gender norms and practices (Butler, 1990).

Within the field of psychology, this approach has been coined as discourse psychology or discourse analysis, which places language not only as a resource but as a central element in constructing identities, attitudes, and emotions (Antaki & Widdicombe, 1998; Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Edwards, 1997). Discursive psychologist Jonathan Potter (1996) posited that “language reflects how things are in its descriptions, representations and accounts” (p. 97). As such, language is a construction yard wherein “descriptions and accounts construct the world, or at least versions of the world [... , and] are themselves constructed” (Potter, 1996, p. 97). In other words, language enables us to make realities in situ to do particular kinds of social business; language is not only social but productive. Celia Kitzinger (2008), for instance, has employed conversation analysis – a form of discourse analysis which typically uses “naturally occurring” talk to examine how verbal interactions accomplish particular social actions (Stokoe, 2018) – to show how “gender – or sexuality, or power, or oppression – is produced and reproduced in interaction” (p. 136). Discursive psychology approaches see language not as representing social realities but as the core aspect in constructing them. Therefore, these approaches examine how people use language to construct different realities of their world, as well as the social functions (what is gained) from these constructions (Coyle, 2021).

With respect to gender, discursive psychological approaches focus on how gender is not something we are but something we do (West & Zimmerman, 1987). As such, in poststructuralist terms, gender is seen as a form of social and cultural practice. Butler (1994) argued that gender is “a mechanism by which notions of masculine and feminine are produced and naturalized, but gender might

very well be the apparatus by which such terms are deconstructed and denaturalized” (p. 42). Butler (1994) also argues that gender cannot be limited to the constraints of the heterosexual matrix, wherein people are assumed – and often forced – to be(come) cis, heterosexual men or women. In her influential book *Gender Trouble*, Judith Butler (1990) sought to destabilise and denaturalise the gender binary by rejecting the view that biology is the main factor influencing gender differences, arguing instead that social practices are pivotal to the gender binary. Butler conceptualised gender in terms of performativity (Butler, 1990) – that is, the outcome of linguistic and social practices, not the property of individuals or something we essentially are. In other words, people do not speak a certain way because they are of that gender, they use language to perform their gender identity – which was most likely assigned to them at birth and, as such, interpellated (Butler, 1990). This view de-essentialises the belief that gender is inherent, biologically dependent, and solely material. Our social norms structure our understanding of biology, which renders sex a social construct as well (see, for instance, Fausto-Sterling, 2000).

Drawing on this constructionist perspective, and including a political critique, queer theory is similarly an area of study which seeks to de-stabilise and de-essentialise gender, sex, and sexuality by examining their fluidity, complexity, and multiplicity (Jagose, 1996). Queer theory understands gender/sex/sexuality as socially constructed, thus rejecting the notion that heterosexuality and cisgenderness are the unmarked categories (also known as the heterosexual matrix) (Butler, 1990). As such, queer theory has brought critical research to the areas of heteronormativity and cisnormativity (Motschenbacher & Stegu, 2013). Queer theory has also critically examined the oppression and discrimination that LGBTQ+ people face due to these notions (Nanda, 2000).

In terms of research within this school of thought, spoken word and written texts have been analysed to illustrate the myriad ways in which gender identities are not only socially constructed, but how these identities are maintained, performed, indexed, and interpreted by others. Discourse analysis, for example, aims to identify dominant (powerful) discourses and their influence on the ways people think and talk about things such as gender and sexuality. We are, accordingly, subject to these hegemonic discourses of gender: the way we speak, our gendered actions and behaviours, etc. These hegemonic gender practices and performances, however, are context-dependent and they vary over time, cross-culturally, and individually over the course of our lives. For instance, hegemonic masculinity in the United Kingdom today is not (completely) similar to the hegemonic masculinity in South Korea in the 80s (see, for instance, Seidler, 2006). It is by revealing these discourses that gendered discourses (Sunderland, 2004) can be uncovered.

Another important notion in the poststructuralist account of gender is Butler’s (1993) concept of (un)intelligibility. Butler states that anyone who deviates from the hegemonic practices of gender and sexuality (for instance, non-binary people) is seen as socially impossible – or unintelligible. In terms of gender, it could be argued that those that “deviate” from the hegemonic gender binary are seen as

incoherent and hard to understand, given that there is a lack of general familiarity. Non-binary genders are therefore seen as unintelligible, rendering them invisible and illegitimate. How then do non-binary people cope and manage being rendered as unintelligible? What mechanisms do non-binary people use to make their genders valid/intelligible? If social constructionist accounts of the self are determined by discourse alone, is there room for agency and self-determination? Where does this leave the bodily experience?

Although social constructionist accounts of gender have demonstrated how gender subjectivities and identities such as masculinities (Kaminer & Dixon, 1995) have been “shaped by socially contingent systems of thought” (Fox & Alldred, 2015, p. 203) through language, Monro (2000) argues that social constructionism fails to account for the sense of self within social structures. Therefore, conceptualising gender as entirely socially constructed denies the individuals’ sense of identity, their bodily experience, and their psychological states, thoughts, and history – the materiality of living. In queer theorising, agency and identity are formed by dominant discourse while the individual is “decentred” – specifically, individuals lack both biological and psychological materiality as well as agency and autonomy. Monro (2000) argues that trans theories should include both a sense of self-construction and self-embodiment and that these theories should be willing to understand the gender experiences of all trans people – their expansion, desires, and fluidity.

While there have indeed been many feminist and constructionist engagements with materiality (see, for instance, Fausto-Sterling, 2000; Haraway, 1991; Harding, 1989), discourse analysis has not been without criticism. According to Brown and Stenner (2009), the discursive turn in psychology often lacks an engagement with embodiment. Similarly, Monro (2005) argues that these theories display “a lack of attention to lived experience of the body, a denial of the need for gender categorisation, and a lack of political awareness” (p. 3). The material body, therefore, must be included in the conversation, as it interacts with the rest of the elements: society, language, and the self. A more materialist approach is clearly needed to address these gaps.

The present project offers a more effective analysis of gender as assemblages, examining the embodied and linguistic desires of trans selfhood (Crawford, 2008). This project, therefore, explored the ways in which particular materialities are activated, formulated, and deployed to produce particular kinds of social business (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2010) – and the multiple ways in which these materialities both affect and are affected by discursive and material forces. The following section will outline the theoretical and ontological perspective this project embraces and further develops.

Gender and Linguistic Becomings – New Materialism

I have argued that in conceptualising gender as purely biological or as purely discursive is unhelpful, as these interpretations do not fully account for the

complexities of gender identity, and they often perpetuate binary thinking: essentialism/constructionism, nature/nurture, subject/object, mind/body (Duff, 2014). These binaries, nonetheless, continue to frame much of the psychological research on gender (Brown & Stenner, 2009). While this research investigates how language and gender identity among non-binary people are interrelated, it also acknowledges that there is more to identity than language and discourse. This book examines the complexities of gender as well as the multitude of relations that affect and create multiple gender ontologies. As such, a theory of gender that incorporates both personal and material embodiment and linguistic performativity – and how these interact with the social world – is necessary in order to establish a broad picture of the experiences of non-binary people. In an effort to overcome some of the epistemological and ontological limitations of previous research, this project employs a new materialist perspective to language, embodiment, and affective desires. This approach extends the poststructuralist commitments of challenging essentialist notions of the self and reality (and the importance of language in constructing these accounts), but it understands matter and meaning as dependent from each other. Therefore, this new materialist ontology aims to examine the role of *matter* without returning to essentialism (Monforte, 2018). This approach is *non-binary* in that it takes a both/neither ontological stance to gender by centring *both* discourse and materialities in terms of what they do – their capacities to produce, affect, and become – and *neither* is prioritised.

This materialist approach draws from the highly influential work of French philosopher Gilles Deleuze, as well as his collaborator Félix Guattari, who developed some of the foundational framework for a new materialist ontology of reality and human activity. In *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987), for instance, Deleuze and Guattari employ the concept of *becoming*, as opposed to being, which de-essentialises and de-stabilises the idea that a single force – or intensity – is responsible for the emergence or production of subjectivities. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) state that

becoming is a rhizome, not a classificatory or genealogical tree. Becoming is certainly not imitating, or identifying with something; neither is it regressing–progressing; neither is it corresponding, establishing corresponding relations; neither is it producing, producing a filiation or producing through filiation. Becoming is a verb with a consistency all its own; it does not reduce to, or lead back to, “appearing”, “being”, “equalling”, or “producing.” (p. 239)

As such, processes of becoming are made up of a multitude of affects, referring to the capacity to affect – and be affected by – material and non-material forces. As such, affects such as human bodies, society, language, history, the material, and the abstract are all interlinked in non-hierarchical (rhizomatic) ways, as they affect one another constantly (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). Currier (2003) argues that, in the materialist ontology of becoming, human agency is replaced by affects, which produce capacities to act, feel, and desire in bodies. DeLanda (2006) stresses that

the realist social ontology [...] is all about objective processes of assembly: a wide range of social entities, from persons to nation-states, [...] constructed through very specific historical processes, processes in which language plays an important but not a constitutive role. (p. 3)

This research will also draw from assemblage theory (DeLanda, 2006). Assemblage theory, which was inspired by Deleuze and Guattari (1987), has been called a “second wave” of social constructionism [...] in which [...] non-human actors such as technical artefacts and the like can play an active role ...” (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2010, p. 38–39). Furthermore, materialist ontologies are said to not only be interested in language, discourse, and meaning but also “objects, materials, and processes by which entities are constructed and maintained” (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2010, as cited in Price–Robertson & Duff, 2016, p. 2). While assemblage theory moves beyond the solely linguistic, it does not disregard its importance and understands it as an affective intensity. In that sense, assemblage theory draws from social constructionist theories, the “linguistic turn,” but it extends these theoretical commitments by acknowledging the multiple social, material, historical, linguistic, etc. affective forces that are involved in the emergence, production, and overall assemblage of this knowledge (Anderson et al., 2012).

Indeed, within the field of psychology, the “materialist turn” has been employed by researchers such as Steve Brown and Paul Stenner who have argued that these theoretical developments are powerful tools for research innovation (Brown, 2010; Brown & Stenner, 2009). This ontological framework has also been applied in studying sexualities within psychology. For instance, Fox and Alldred (2013) examined the ways in which sexuality-assemblages are produced and manifested via the territorialisation of desires and bodies. Included in this approach is desire – arousal and conduct – as well as the way in which all these material factors relate to one another within the sexuality-assemblage.

Assemblage theory is therefore employed in this book to theorise gender as an assemblage of multiple affective forces, including discursive and material forces. A material assemblage can include the body, physical contexts, and structures, whereas a discursive assemblage may include norms, gender roles, etc. (Duff, 2014). These assemblages are, again, not constructed hierarchically but rather in a chaotic, rhizomatic, and unpredictable fashion. Assemblages can be *territorialised*, *detrterritorialised*, or *reterritorialised* through affective flows – namely, interactions between the different elements that are part of the territory. Furthermore, a territorialisation works to stabilise the assemblage’s identity, to solidify it momentarily, whereas a detrterritorialisation transforms the assemblage, forming new functions, capacities, flows, and forms, which results in reterritorialisations or boundaries. These concepts are important in the present project, as they map out the movements that exist between and within affects. These territorialisations are therefore only temporarily stable and never linear. Assemblage theory rejects the essentialist notions of the gender binary while, at the same time, affirming the body’s materiality in relation to people’s identities. Like discourse analysis, this

theory is interested in the workings of power, language, discourse, and desire (Williams, 2005), but it also provides a non-binary model of the ways linguistic and material forces affect and are affected by one another – and how these interactions aid in the formation of complex concepts and processes of becoming – in this case, non-binary gender identities.

Furthermore, assemblage theory would argue that gender is never static, always in a process of becoming. This project, therefore, applied this framework to develop a theory around gender and linguistic becomings of non-binary people. A *linguistic becoming* refers to the importance that is placed upon language in the processes of gender becomings among non-binary people. Such emergence is by no means linear, hierarchical, or chronological, but a messy, unpredictable process of gender and linguistic emergence that can be (de/re)territorialised in multiple ways, thus contributing to the assemblage of non-binary gender identities online and offline.

I also draw upon the concept of *becomings* as a useful metaphor for the experiences of change, transformation, and constant processes of emergence of gender. As such, this research adds to the theorising of gender as becoming (Linstead & Pullen, 2006). This is by no means done in an organised fashion; it is messy and complex. This book, therefore, understands gender and identity to be always relational, always in a process of becoming (a constant journey with no final destination) – territorialised, deterritorialised, and reterritorialised through affective flows that move through the body, society, language, and other material and abstract elements. When these relations between and within affects develop around actions or events, an assemblage or a territory is created (Braidotti, 2006). Thus, rather than merely an outcome of the performativity of social practice and social construction, gender is an assemblage formed on an ongoing basis through these affective flows (Linstead & Pullen, 2006).

The theoretical framework of gender and linguistic becomings, therefore, sheds light into the multiple *affective intensities* that make up the non-binary-assemblage of study participants – both online and offline. By employing and developing this theory, I will demonstrate the ways in which both linguistic and material affective forces contribute to the continuous emergence of non-binary gender identities. This theoretical perspective will therefore be developed throughout this project. Brown and Stenner (2009) have argued that this ontological orientation can help rejuvenate psychological inquiry.

Concluding Remarks

Gender from a binary perspective has been discussed *ad nauseum*. This chapter has reviewed some of the predominant ways in which gender has been conceptualised and studied within the field of psychology. Firstly, I have outlined the psychological positions on gender diversity. Transness has historically been understood as pathological, requiring individuals to be diagnosed and treated for their (mental) condition. While this is changing, such stigmatising view is still prevalent within

psychology. While the field of psychology has examined trans people, it has failed to account for gender-diverse individuals. Research has typically disregarded the experiences of those living between or outside the gender binary. Such lack of research on gender-diverse people has been due to the belief that there are only two genders (including trans genders) – a cisgenderist position.

Secondly, I have demonstrated the ways in which the positivists' perspectives of gender have historically positioned the gender/sex binary as an essential part of the self – one which was unquestioned and had no mobility or capacity for change. As such, cisgender men and women have been traditionally positioned as different rather than similar. Because of this, studies have focused on drawing out the differences between men and women on a variety of psychological and biological domains. However, these views have been challenged, as few differences actually exist between men and women, especially when considering the contextual and situational elements that might produce them.

As a response to these positivist theories, critical perspectives such as queer theory and discursive psychology have emerged, challenging binary assumptions such as heteronormativity and cishnormativity. While these theories have positioned gender/sex/sexuality as socially constructed, they have also assumed that the gender binary is the hegemonic force that allows people to move between masculinity and femininity, arguing that these hegemonic forces ought to be deconstructed. These theories have overemphasised the discursive construction of gender identities, leaving little to no room for the materiality of the body, affective desires, and the capacities these can produce within and between individuals.

Both constructionist and new materialist ontologies examine the power dynamics; however, materialist ontologies like assemblage theory do not aim to examine its social construction. Rather, they examine the social production, emergence, and becoming of power and subjectivities, thus focusing on materiality rather than discourse (Coole & Frost, 2010). Assemblage theory does not assume a hegemonic force exists or that it should be deconstructed. Instead, it argues that some forces become territorialised at specific moments in time due to a multitude of affects, but these intensities are fluid, messy, and in constant processes of becoming.

This project therefore draws from these theoretical and analytical developments, furthering their understanding by examining the ways in which gender identities emerge, operate, and are negotiated in a constant process of becoming. As such, this project posits that language is an important aspect in the emergence of identities; however, it does not position it as the main intensity in this emergence. While this materialist ontology shares constructionists' understandings of power and the role of language, it also recognises “a more dynamic interplay within assemblages that opens up the possibilities for aggregative forces to be resisted, enabling new capacities and desires to emerge, for bodies to affect and be affected in ways that they have never done before” (Allred & Fox, 2015, p. 207).

Assemblage theory (DeLanda, 2006) goes beyond social constructionism and discourse analysis and explores how non-linguistic elements such as the body, society, context, and the self all affect and are affected by the processes of becoming.

Assemblage theory is therefore used in this project as a tool to understand the different affects that contribute to the assemblages and processes of becoming non-binary both online and offline. Thus, the experiences of non-binary people can be understood in terms of not only language, but also society, the body, and other material factors. These affective intensities, according to assemblage theory, are connected, producing an ongoing becoming, a journey with no final destination. As such, this project examines materiality not in terms of what it is (its “essence”), but in terms of what it does (its productive capacities) (Fox & Alldred, 2017).

While this theoretical framework sees identity as constantly being negotiated and in the process of becoming, it is crucial that the identities of the participants who contributed to this research are respected and validated. DeLanda (2006) argues that, through the study of individual assemblages, we can “assert that all these individual entities have an objective existence independently of our minds (or of our conceptions of them) without any commitment to essences or reified generalities” (p. 40). Furthermore, gender, as theorised by assemblage theory, is not an essential part of the self and can be affected by multiple processes of (de/re)territorialisation. The fact is that non-binary people self-identify as non-binary, and that this identity is significant to them, is important to acknowledge, as this research does not aim to erase their identities or impose cisgenderist theories upon them. Thus, some non-binary people in this research may continue to identify as non-binary for the rest of their lives while others may not (Twist & de Graaf, 2019). Deconstructing non-binary people’s embodied experience would be detrimental as they are currently fighting to find a place in a highly heteronormative, cisnormative society. The identities of the participants in this study therefore represent a snapshot of their process of becoming at a specific time and place. This project is interested in their linguistic, material, embodied, and context-dependent experience.

3

MATERIALIST METHODS: THE RESEARCH-ASSEMBLAGE

In line with the materialist ontology that I employ in this book, I followed Fox and Alldred's (2014; 2015) methodological approach. This materialist approach understands research as an assemblage of events, researchers, research tools, ideas, etc. which are used to produce knowledge. As such, research production is in and of itself a material, relational, and interactive assemblage, having the potential to affect (and be affected by) other bodies of research, researchers, bodies, social formations, events, praxis, etc. in unpredictable ways. The orientation of this materialist research, according to Fox and Alldred (2014) must be towards what material and discursive affects "do" (and what they produce) rather than what they "are" (their essential components), as well as an analysis of "processes and flows rather than structure and stable forms" (p. 407). Fox and Alldred (2014) suggest, to conduct materialist data collection using a materialist framework, researchers should move away from the humanistic objective of researching beliefs, experiences, and reflections, while also cutting across matter/meaning and micro/macro dualisms. One way of doing this is by collecting data from a variety of sources as well as using a variety of methods aimed at (a) identify assemblages and intensities; (b) explore how elements in assemblage affect and are affected, and assess their productive capacities, and (c) identify territorialisations and de-territorialisations within assemblages.

My research, therefore, examined the *gender and linguistic becomings* of non-binary people in three different settings: (a) semi-structured interviews, (b) writing samples, and (c) discourse from an online forum. Combined, the data and subsequent analysis contribute to the knowledge base of non-binary gender identities both offline and online, as a research-assemblage.

- a. **Interviews:** A sample of 22 non-binary-identified individuals were interviewed either face-to-face or via teleconferencing software. A variety of questions related to non-binary language usage, identity, and any instances of

discrimination were covered during these semi-structured interviews (see Appendix A). Each interview lasted approximately one hour and was transcribed verbatim.

- b. **Writing samples:** Prior to the interview, participants were asked to write a short story (500 words minimum; 1,000 words maximum) about themselves. It was suggested that participants write a few sentences in the third person (using he, she, they, zie, etc. pronouns or a pseudonym) to show the ways in which they would like others to refer to them. This allowed participants to cover any topic they would want to discuss without much influence from the researcher.
- c. **Non-binary forum:** A public forum (anonymised – see ethics section in this chapter) where non-binary people discussed their identities and asked others for advice was scraped and turned into a language corpus for analysis. This non-binary corpus (or NBC) was created and analysed using corpus linguistic tools. These linguistic patterns were used to produce a network of non-binary language, which was then analysed qualitatively. This analysis provided a different level of insight into the continuous emergence of non-binary identities and language online.

Overall, the research participants and the research tools that this book employs are used as a heuristic device in the production of knowledge. This *research-assemblage*, therefore, uncovered some of the complexity found within non-binary discourses and their material reality, bounded by the time and place these data were collected, the reliability of my research method, the statistical techniques of corpus linguistic and their principles, and the limits of my ability as a researcher and my interpretations. In that sense, my epistemological and ontological frameworks aim to uncover and interpret patterns in the data, but it does not aim to simplify their complexity. Research, as an assemblage, produces new capacities for knowledge which are neither stable nor essential but in constant flux and becoming (Fox & Alldred, 2015).

In line with this approach, and as part of the research-assemblage of this research, it is important for me to describe my positionality as a researcher before I outline the methodologies employed in this book. I will then outline the methodologies I employed in interview and short writing, as well as the corpus linguistics portions of this book. I will outline the technical procedures for data collection, ethical considerations, and analytical framework within each section.

Positionality

In the interview and short writing portions of this study, where I interacted with non-binary individuals, a primary concern for me was to engage with participants in the most respectful way possible. This entailed being well-aware of trans and non-binary language and acknowledging the power disparities that existed between myself as a researcher and the participants. With this in mind, and as recommended by trans researchers/activists such as Jacob Hale (1997), Lal Zimman (2017), and Benjamin

Vincent (2018), I familiarised myself with the literature relating to non-binary people's language, well-being, and social representations. This literature showed that non-binary people were regularly misgendered and invalidated in research, and that these linguistic invalidations have been shown to have negative impacts on research participants (Ansara & Hegarty, 2012; Serano, 2007). Therefore, I made it a primary issue to become well-acquainted with the terminologies, language negotiations (such as asking, "what are your pronouns?"), and not assuming people's gender based on their appearance. I also made my position as a gay, cisgender man who grew up in Colombia and immigrated to the US and then to the UK clear to my research participants. This information was disclosed during the interviews as a way not only to establish rapport but also to index my insider/outsider role within this community (Wilkinson & Kitzinger, 2013).

Informed by non-binary activism, this book employs a (trans)gender-affirming (Raj, 2002) stance to research and language, which, "[i]n practice, [...] means expressing an attitude that is respectful, sensitive, accepting, validating, affirming, empathic, caring, compassionate, encouraging, supportive, and mutually trusting and trustworthy" (Raj, 2002, para 1.1). This was particularly important as, in recent years, trans-exclusionary radical feminists (or TERFs; sometimes known as "gender critical") have been given a platform in print media to devalue the identities of trans and non-binary people, portraying them as illegitimate and dangerous to cis women's safety (see, for instance, JK Rowling's (2020) blog post). This book rejects any type of anti-trans rhetoric. Instead, my research stance respects and honours gender diversity, thereby affirming non-binary people's various (linguistic and material) experiences. This will be reflected in the employment of gender-affirming language throughout. While doing so, I do not intend to make an epistemological claim on a given reality of gender as an essential part of the self, but about the multiple linguistic and embodied possibilities of gender – of gender plurality (Monro, 2005). This project, therefore, understands gender as relational, fluid, shifting, and plural.

I will therefore refer to participants using the pronouns that they suggested were the most appropriate and respectful to them. In fact, most of the interview participants embraced they/them pronouns at the time of the interview; however, this was not the case for all. When language choices were not specified, particularly in the context of the online forum, I used they/them pronouns and other gender-neutral languages when referring to forum users. I do not assume that all these forum users embrace gender-neutral language; however, since this type of information was not consistently available within the forum, gender-neutral language was deemed the most respectful when describing forum users' experiences.

Interviews and Writing Samples: Recruitment and Ethical Considerations

The 22 participants who took part in the interview and writing portion of the study were all recruited online in 2017. An advertisement for the study was placed on my

Twitter profile and was shared (retweeted) more than 600 times; therefore, this study used snowball sampling as a recruiting mechanism. This advertisement outlined the recruitment criteria, some information about the study, the financial incentive, and finally the researcher's contact information (email and phone number). The requirements for participating in the study were (a) to identify as non-binary, (b) to reside in the UK, (c) and to be over 18 years of age. Participants were told that the study would relate to language use and gender identity. And the incentive for participating in the study was a £20 gift voucher. I met with the participants face-to-face or via teleconferencing software. Prior to the interview, participants sent to me their short writing samples. However, these were not discussed during the interviews. Participants were given the option to only partake in one portion of the study and not the other; however, all participants completed both.

All three areas of this study were ethically approved by the Faculty of Health and Life Sciences Research Ethics Committee at De Montfort University. All participants were over 18 years of age and consented to the study. Participants were not asked about their age, aside from ensuring they were all over 18 years of age. They were also not asked about their specific location in the UK, educational level, occupation, or race/ethnicity. However, this information did come up during some (but not all) interviews, as participants contextualised their experiences in relation to their gender identity and linguistic experiences. This potentially represents a limitation of this study, as this information could have been incorporated into the analysis in a more systematic way.

Participants were provided a participant information sheet about the study and were given two consent forms: one prior to the submission of the short stories and another prior to the interviews. Once participants agreed to and signed the consent forms, they continued with the study. Additionally, the researcher ensured confidentiality and emphasised the fact that their name and personal information will not be shared. Their short stories, the recordings, and the transcriptions are stored in a locked cabinet and a password-protected computer, which is only accessible to the principal investigator and his supervisors. Data will be stored for up to five years following publication. This was made clear to participants on the participant information sheet.

Reports of participants being distressed by this kind of research are extremely infrequent. There were no known risks to taking part in the study, and no explicit disadvantages to individuals participating in the study were anticipated. The interview included questions about their personal experiences with discrimination and mis-gendering, which may be upsetting for some individuals. If, during the interviews, participants became distressed, they were given the opportunity to take a break from the interview, to withdraw from the study, or to avoid areas that caused distress. Participants were reminded that they did not have to participate if they did not want to, and that they could withdraw their data up to 48 hours after participation. Individuals were also referred to relevant support organisations to assist them with their needs. The contact details of these organisations were included in the debrief sheet. These included the CliniQ, an organisation that offers counselling services in

the context of sexual health and well-being for trans people, as well GenderedIntelligence, which provides support groups, counselling, and mentoring.

Participant Demographics

The table below (Table 3.1) outlines the demographic information for the 22 participants in the interview and short writing portion of this study. All participants were given a pseudonym to protect their privacy and to anonymise their answers. While all participants identified as non-binary (this was an inclusion criteria), many participants employed other identity labels in addition to non-binary. Participants were asked directly about their pronouns. Additionally, all participants mentioned their sex assigned at birth and sexuality during the interviews and/or the short writing samples. Participants were not directly asked about their assigned sex or sexuality; however, this information was frequently relevant to the discussions around gender and language. All this information is included in the table below.

TABLE 3.1 Participant demographics

<i>Pseudonym</i>	<i>Gender identity</i>	<i>Pronouns</i>	<i>Assigned sex at birth</i>	<i>Sexuality</i>
Shawn	Agender	They/them	AFAB	Asexual
Blaine	Agender	They	AFAB	Asexual
Charlie	Femme boy	They	AFAB	Bisexual
Ari	Non-binary	They	AFAB	Bisexual
Adrian	Non-binary	They	AFAB	Bisexual
Elliott	Transfeminine	They	AMAB	Bisexual
Ryan	Trans guy	He	AFAB	Bisexual
Carroll	Non-binary	They	AFAB	Gay
Addison	Woman	She, they	AFAB	Gay
Gaby	Non-binary	They	AFAB	Lesbian
Chris	Genderfluid, transmasculine	They	AFAB	N/A
Toby	Agender	They	AMAB	Pansexual
Aspen	Agender	They	AFAB	Pansexual
Jamie	Genderqueer	E/eir/em	AFAB	Pansexual
Tanner	Agender	They	AFAB	Queer
Kennedy	Genderfluid	They	AFAB	Queer
Bay	Genderqueer	They	AMAB	Queer
Brook	Genderqueer woman	She, they	AFAB	Queer
Tyler	Non-binary	They, any	AFAB	Queer
Harper	Trans and genderqueer	They	AFAB	Queer
Rudy	Non-existent	They	AFAB	Queer
Dana	Genderqueer	They	AFAB	Bisexual

In terms of gender identities, only five individuals identified as non-binary alone – that is, they did not employ any other identity label during their interview or the short writing sample. Notably, five individuals identified as agender and five others identified as genderqueer in addition to non-binary, one of which also identified as a woman. Four participants identified as trans: transmasculine, transfeminine, trans guy, and trans (and genderqueer). The remaining three also identified as woman, femme boy, and non-existent. There was, however, some overlap as three participants inhabited more than two categories. Therefore, non-binary, as an umbrella term, encompassed a wide range of gender identities and expressions. Almost 91% (n=20) of all participants employed they/them pronouns, although two of them did not exclusively use they/them: one used she/her, and another used any pronoun.

Most participants in the study described their sex assigned at birth as AFAB (n = 19; 86%) and only three described themselves as AMAB (14%). These findings are not surprising, as previous research has shown that similar results – namely, there are more (younger) non-binary people who were AFAB (60% in Yeadon-Lee’s (2016) research) than AMAB. Lastly, most participants described their sexuality as queer (n = 7; 32%), bisexual (n = 5; 23%), or both queer and bisexual (n = 1; 5%). Three participants identified as pansexual, two as asexual, two as gay, and one as lesbian. Only one individual did not comment on their sexuality. The Trevor Project (2021) found similar results among non-binary youth in their research, with 28% identifying as bisexual, 27% as pansexual, 22% as queer, 14% as lesbian, 6% as gay, 2% as questioning their sexual orientation, and less than 1% as straight. As such, the demographic information is “typical” in comparison to other research findings.

Analytical Process: Interviews and Short Writings

Participants were asked open-ended questions about their identities (in general terms) – namely, what part of their identity they considered important. They were also asked specific questions about their gender identities and the language surrounding them. Importantly, participants were asked about disclosure or “coming out,” navigating social interactions where the gender binary was assumed and not assumed and managing gender-neutral language. Participants were also asked about positive, negative, or neutral experiences they might have experienced while navigating social situations in different contexts. Lastly, participants were given the chance to express any points that were not covered during the interview or the short writing. These open-ended questions were asked to specify the most significant elements of their identities (McQuillen et al., 2001), as well as how these identities relate “within assemblages, and the kinds of affective flows that occur between these relations” (Fox & Alldred, 2014, p. 402). This interview schedule was therefore informed by a materialist ontology of assemblages, which understands “narration as a performative practice [which] is not about representations of ‘reality’ or linguistic turn-taking [. . . but as] a material articulation of the world” (Barad, 2007, p. 139, as cited in Juelskjaer, 2013, p. 759).

The short writing portion did not have a specific prompt, other than using their pronoun in all or part of the writing. These data collection technique also allowed participants to express themselves without much influence of the researcher, thus disrupting hegemonic notions of power within the research-assemblage. This additional source of data also allows for a pluralist, bricolage approach to data collection. This approach, which is aimed at enhancing the data and subsequent analysis, opens the possibility of incorporating additional insights emerging from the participants' autobiographical, historical, phenomenological, material, and discursive accounts (Coyle, 2010). Combined, these interviews and short writings provided a wide range of perspectives relating to the gender and linguistic becomings of non-binary people in the UK, as well as some of the possible ways in which they negotiate and manage social interactions.

I transcribed, coded, and annotated all 22 interviews using NVivo 11 (QSR International Pty Ltd.). The short writing samples were also uploaded to this software and coded along with the interviews. These data were analysed both deductively and inductively, using the interview schedule as an initial framework for the analysis, but branching out rhizomatically as patterns emerged in the data. This involved becoming acquainted with the data in the transcription process, reading and re-reading the interviews, and mapping out the relationships between the different codes. As such, these codes were not assumed to be discrete – they had the potential to affect and be affected by one another. Deleuze suggested that “in assemblages you find states of things, bodies, various combinations of bodies, hodgepodes; but you also find utterances, modes of expression, and whole regimes of signs” (2007, p. 177). Therefore, this research does not use strict codes or themes as analytical tools since, ontologically, these themes are related to one another, can possess movement and fluidity, and can divide themselves into something new (Deleuze, 1994). In this materialist methodological approach, networks of meaning – rather than simplistic accounts – were examined. This allowed for non-hierarchical relationships to emerge, accounting for the ways in which knowledge is produced by the territorialisation of affects such as the researcher's interpretations, the theoretical framework, the research participant's descriptions, etc. These affects can produce more than one capacity – which makes the knowledge production a rhizomatic process rather than linear one (Deleuze & Guattari, 1988).

Furthermore, the present analysis uses the DeleuzoGuattarian language of “intensities” when referring to these affective and relational “codes” or “themes” within the data. The employment of this term is purposeful, as the term intensity accounts for movement: something might be less intense or even dormant under certain conditions and in relation to other affects. Becomings are therefore formed through the intensifying of affects (Braidotti, 2002). According to Fox and Allred (2015), aggregations such as “codes” or “themes” can “exclude the outliers and aberrations that in social life may be extremely significant” (p. 14) and, as such, this framing must be subverted to account for flows within assemblages, understanding events as relational, in flux and becoming rather than as stable or hierarchical. As such, intensities accounts for this relational and non-hierarchical ontology.

This analytical framework was employed in the first stage of this study (the analysis of the interviews and short writings) which served as a guiding basis upon which the subsequent stages of analysis drew (the analysis of the corpus). The same analytical framework was applied in the qualitative portion of the corpus analysis. However, this analysis also employed a quantitative approach in the form of corpus linguistics as a starting point. This methodology will be outlined below.

The Non-Binary Corpus

This section will describe the design and compilation of the NBC, a specialised corpus that was designed specifically for this research. I will outline the inclusion and exclusion criteria that was employed in the development of this corpus. I will also substantiate the design in terms of design, ethical considerations, and compilation, as well as how this analysis will complement the other qualitative methods and findings – and its relevance to this research-assemblage.

This project aimed to not only examine the gender and linguistic becoming of non-binary people offline but also online. Ekins and King (2010) have suggested that the internet has become a place where people are able to find communities based on any type of affinity, no matter how specific or small. The internet, therefore, is a vital source of information, community-building, and support for trans and non-binary people (Stryker, 2008; Yeadon-Lee, 2016). The growth of platforms dedicated to these issues has also been reported to increase the visibility of gender-diverse people (Raun, 2016). For this reason, a forum where non-binary people discussed their identities was chosen for its specificity, as well as its active participation. While this forum is not UK-specific, a thorough reading of the forum revealed that a significant number of the participants were based in the UK. However, many forum contributors were also based in the US. Regardless of their location, non-binary people experience similar issues in both countries. As I have previously suggested, non-binary identities are still not fully recognised, medical-psychological gatekeeping practices are still in place, the marginalisation and victimisation of non-binary people is similar, and the number of non-binary-identified people is increasing.

Some ethical concerns were raised, particularly in terms of privacy. In accordance with The British Psychological Society's (2017) ethical practice in psychological research online, the collection and reporting of this internet-mediated data do not pose threats to privacy over and above those that already exist, as the forum is already publicly available. The forum I accessed was publicly available and I did not use any type of password to access this information. However, to protect the anonymity and diminish the traceability of forum users, usernames were deleted from the corpus. These usernames did not typically correspond to the user's given or chosen name, so traceability is unlikely. And, as previously mentioned, the name of the forum itself will not be disclosed in the analysis, as an extra layer of anonymity. While this research does include quotes from the forum, these are difficult to trace back to the original forum, the

usernames, and the forum users. Data will be stored for up to five years following publication. Furthermore, this forum will remain anonymous in this book to protect its users.

Sampling

This specialised corpus consists of all the written data from an online forum. As previously mentioned, these data were compiled in 2018. In order to substantiate the selection of this anonymous forum over other online content. While this forum is not the only online forum that focuses on non-binary issues, it seems to be one of the most popular ones in terms of content volume and user activity – a fact that is mentioned in the forum’s description and their statistics, which are both public. The selected forum refers to topics related to identity, language, gender expression, discrimination, social status, etc. Such topics were also identified in the interviews; therefore, data from this forum was assessed to be complementary to the dataset and subsequent analysis, providing a novel approach to growing the knowledge base on non-binary people’s identities. Another important feature of this forum is that all forum posts are in English. This is beneficial in that it is consistent with the interviews and the short writing samples that were collected in the first stage of this research, which were also in English. While this forum is not UK-specific, many of the issues discussed within it are relevant to the issues non-binary people in the UK face, and some of its users can be identified as British. However, it is not assumed that everyone has the same linguistic competency or that everyone who writes on this forum is in a similar culture. Some might be in particular social and economic situations in which their identities may or may not be expressed in the same way. As previously stated, the only thing that they have in common is their gender identity – or their interest in learning more about non-binary issues – and the fact that they are writing and sharing information in English. No demographic information was publicly available to non-forum users. As such, this information was not compiled.

One of the benefits of doing online research is that the researcher does not have any influence in generating any of the information included in the corpus – that is, I did not initiate any prompts nor contribute to the forum in any way. In other words, the data occurred naturally without any influence from the researcher. This is therefore a naturalistic observation of social interaction and the generation of online discourse. Within this forum, non-binary people post about issues related to their identity in the form of threads. Other users are then able to comment on these threads or to create new ones. This allows for a natural interaction between forum posters – and for the development of arguments and different perspectives.

The NBC contains messages from 45,111 posts in 6,919 threads, adding up to 2,931,342 words. This is a medium-sized corpus, compared to the English Web 2013 (also known as enTenTen13), a reference corpus containing 19 billion words, which will be used in the analysis.

Corpus-Based Techniques and Analysis

A corpus is a large collection of naturally occurring language data (McEnery & Wilson, 1996). Corpora are typically very large (ranging from thousands to millions of words) and are usually used as representative samples of a specific type of language. For instance, the British National Corpus, a reference corpus that consists of 100 million words – both written and spoken – is said to represent a wide range of genres (spoken, fiction, magazines, newspapers, academic, etc.) of British English from the late twentieth century. The fact that these corpora are encoded online means that they can be explored systematically using software, which can be used to reveal linguistic patterns that the human eye might not be able to detect through qualitative analysis alone.

In general terms, the purpose of corpus-based analysis is to identify the most salient statistical patterns and themes from a large language corpus – a body of language – using computational techniques. Typically, the patterns and themes that emerge from this computational technique are, subsequently, explored in a qualitative way. One of the main benefits of using a corpus-based analysis technique is the mere fact that, given the size of the language corpus (the number of words within it), patterns would otherwise be extremely difficult to examine without the use of linguistic software. Please see Appendix B for a detailed outline of corpus-based analysis employed in this book – namely, the different frequency-based techniques that were applied in the quantitative section: frequency, keyness, collocation, network creation, and concordance lines.

While corpus linguistic approaches tend to be quantitative in nature, this does not mean that the outputs must be interpreted using a positivist, essentialist lens. Baker (2006) argues that corpus linguistics can indeed be employed using the social constructionist's commitment to questioning the status quo in social sciences in the form of action research, a type of research which has the potential for change and intervenes in social issues rather than simply discovering unquestionable facts (see, for instance, Burr, 1995). In this research, discourses are understood to be context-dependent and in constant development – that is, they have the potential to be fluid and in constant processes of becoming something else. In other words, they are not static. It is for this reason that corpus linguistics fits in nicely with the theoretical underpinnings of assemblage theory, as corpus linguistics is one of the possible ways in which the social world can be understood (e.g., statistically), but not the only one. As such, the researcher becomes an active participant in the creation of knowledge, not simply an observer – thus becoming another element of the creation of assemblages (Fox & Alldred, 2014).

Another important point that needs to be highlighted is the context in which the corpus of interest emerged – who the authors are, their intentions, and their audience – given that understanding these elements can add an extra layer of insight into the analysis. Several studies using corpora draw from existing bodies of language such as the British National Corpus to understand specific aspects of language; however, other studies often build their own corpora from scratch, thus creating a specialised

corpus, a “carefully thought-out collection of texts that are representative of a language variety or genre” (Baker, 2006, p. 26). I created a specialised corpus from an internet forum where it was assumed that the authors of the corpus were non-binary people seeking and writing useful information about their gender identity.

This research takes a bidirectional, non-hierarchical stance to research in which both systematisation and human intuition can be employed to analyse these salient themes, fitting with the theoretical and epistemological framework of assemblage theory. Human intuition and a higher level of analysis are necessary for this analysis, as computers can only explain part of the story – the salient themes require further extrapolation. In fact, Baker (2006) argues that corpus approaches to discourse analysis can break down the qualitative versus quantitative binary that is present within the social sciences.

Within the field of psychology, discourse analysis has traditionally involved the analysis of small amounts of language data such as interview and focus group transcripts, media reports and counselling sessions. These data, however, have typically been studied manually without the help of computational methods. In recent years, and partly due to the popularity of computational research tools such as corpus linguistics, it is now possible to conduct research that includes large amounts of language data for qualitative analysis using quantitative methods (Baker, 2006). This method allows the researcher to compile, explore, and extrapolate the most salient patterns in the data, which can then be explored in terms of their significance and representativeness.

Within psychological research, however, corpus-based analysis research is not common, especially within research related to gender and sexuality. Other fields, particularly (queer) linguistics, have employed this method in recent years to investigate a variety of topics related to gender and sexuality (Baker, 2014) – most employing poststructuralist models of discourse analysis. While applying corpus-based research within psychology is still uncommon, this project aims to reveal the potential of this method, as it fits nicely within the tenets of psychological research, especially discourse analysis, given its interest in analysing linguistic material that can perform particular social actions and functions. It is for this reason that corpus-based analysis offers a unique way of looking at language patterns and the ways in which these patterns are related to one another.

As with any other research method, corpus-based analysis has not gone without criticism (McEnery & Wilson, 2001). This section will outline some of the critiques and potential limitations related to this methodology while also offering supporting evidence that this methodology is appropriate for the present research. I will therefore defend this methodology, as it has proven to be useful and insightful in a variety of research contexts.

One of the major critiques of corpus-based analysis is that a collection of language – a corpus – is often decontextualised and sometimes made up of a wide range of genres, e.g., newspapers, books, online content, journals, etc., and these texts have a reflected reality which does not always travel with the text (Widdowson, 2000). However, for

the present study, a specialised corpus from a single linguistic context (an internet forum) was built; therefore, it is not composed of a variety of unrelated sources – all of it originates from the same medium. Having a smaller corpus from a single, specialised genre, as with this present study, is considered an advantage since it allows for data to be analysed contextually – it is not too broad (Koester, 2010).

Another common critique is that corpus linguistics research does not provide information about the discourses that are absent (Hunston, 2002) – that is, the meta-linguistic information that is not present in the corpus. These absences can be related to the person’s age, race, background, language proficiency, nationality, etc. This research, for instance, assumes that most people writing on the forum are fluent in English. However, it might be that some of the people writing on the forum might not be native speakers or their writing skills are not on a par with some other forum writers. This sample, therefore, does not intend to be a representative sample of any of these domains. In fact, the only commonality that is assumed from the forum is that people identify as non-binary – or that they are questioning this identity. One of the positive aspects of the corpus that was built for this research is that it is large enough (2.9 million words) that some of these issues might be normalised given the large sample. This research is also informed by other research methods such as interviews with non-binary people, which, I argue, helps fill in some of these absences. In fact, the corpus section of this book is used to complement the other sections and is not intended to be the main area of research. Thus, this book uses multiple research methods to ascertain insights. These insights, in turn, inform and complement each other to generate a more robust analysis.

Another important point to highlight is that, as Baker (2006) points out, “frequent patterns of language do not always imply mainstream ways of thinking” (p.19), implying that some of the most relevant discourses are often left unspoken. In other words, “‘normative mundanity’ is typically ‘unmarked and unremarkable’” (Bostock, 2002, p. 352, as cited in Harvey et al., 2007, p. 775). As such, analysing (negative) keywords will help mitigate this limitation. However, the corpus technique employed here does not reveal all discourses directly, hence why this is not the only research method employed in this research. Employing these corpus linguistics methodologies, however, adds an extra layer of insight into the gender and linguistic becomings of non-binary people.

Concluding Remarks

This chapter outlined the mixed methodologies that were employed in the analysis of the non-binary gender identities and their linguistic becomings both offline and online. This chapter was divided into two main sections, each outlining the ways in which data were collected, the analytical framework, and the ethical considerations.

Through the materialist analysis and interpretation of the interviews, short writings, and the NBC, I will show some of the most intense affective forces that contribute to the (de/re)territorialisation of non-binary gender identities offline and online. These methods will be useful in examining the interactions between

macro and micro levels of discourse, as well as the space within them (or meso). An assemblage, as argued by Fox and Alldred (2014), may “contain different elements from these levels whose relationship is rhizomatic rather than top-down or bottom-up” (p. 402). Together, these analyses will show the ways in which these forces come together to territorialise a non-binary gender identity and linguistic assemblage through this online forum. Of course, these data do not intend to represent the entire complexity of non-binary identities and their linguistic becoming; rather, they are a snapshot into the experiences of non-binary people at that specific time and place.

In the second portion of this chapter, I outlined the data collection techniques that were carried out in building the NBC. I also outlined the analytical framework that was undertaken in this portion of the study: the quantitative and the qualitative elements of corpus-based research. I demonstrated the fruitfulness of corpus linguistics in uncovering not only the lexical environment of these intense words (keywords and their interconnected collocations) but also in deciphering the most significant – intense – discourses within the NBC. Therefore, I outlined the multiple methodological steps that were taken, including the production of frequencies, keywords, collocations, the network, and concordance lines. These steps allowed me to build a smaller dataset from which a materialist analysis was conducted.

The interviews, the short writings, the forum, its participants, and the discourses surrounding them are theorised to be affected as well as affecting the ways in which non-binary gender is understood in wider society. These methodologies are one part of the research-assemblage of this book. I argued that these methodologies complement one another by taking a robust approach to the linguistic and material emergence of non-binary gender identities. Furthermore, the theoretical framework of gender and linguistic becomings will be further developed in the following chapters.

The following two chapters (4 and 5) will present the empirical findings using the data from the interviews and the short stories. These data were analysed in isolation from the corpus data at first and the findings were used as a guiding compass for subsequent analysis. Chapter 4 (Gender and linguistic becomings: Affective intensities) will outline four *affective intensities* which contributed to the ongoing emergence of non-binary gender identities among participants – that is, their *gender and linguistic becomings*, a theoretical framework that was developed from this analysis. Using these data, Chapter 5 (Language-related distress: Proximities and intentions) will explore the psychological effects of misgendering – namely, how non-binary people navigate the world using *non-binary language*, the distress that originated from social interactions in which their language was not affirmed, and the various ways in which non-binary people managed these situations. Chapter 6 (The non-binary corpus: A network of linguistic and material intensities) will compliment these analyses by presenting the quantitative and qualitative results that emerged from the NBC. Overall, these empirical chapters will present the various processes of linguistic and material emergence within these data.

4

GENDER AND LINGUISTIC BECOMINGS: AFFECTIVE INTENSITIES

This chapter outlines the most significant affective intensities (hereafter: intensities) that influenced the participants in the interview and short writing portion of this research in becoming non-binary. As such, this chapter expands on the conceptualisation of gender as a becoming (Linstead & Pullen, 2006) by exploring the material and the linguistic affects that make up this assemblage. Four major intensities were identified during the analysis. These important and influential intensities included: experiencing discomfort with assigned gender at birth, learning about gender diversity and discovering the language that best describes their relationship with gender, adopting that language (a linguistic becoming), and embodiment. While these four intensities were identified in the data, this research does not use strict codes or themes as analytical tools. As such, these four intensities possess movement and fluidity; they are non-hierarchically related. This analysis, therefore, accounts for the ways in which knowledge is produced by the territorialisation of affects such as the researcher's interpretations, the theoretical framework, the research participant's descriptions, etc.

These intensities were reflected in the both the qualitative interviews and the participants' short writing samples. Participants were asked a variety of questions regarding the importance of their various identities, their gender(s), language usage, embodied experiences, and social interactions. Thus, the quotes in the current chapter are taken from both the interviews and the writing samples, rather than emerging from a single, straightforward question. As a reminder, these data were analysed both deductively and inductively, using the interview schedule as an initial framework for the analysis but branching out rhizomatically as patterns emerged in the data. These codes (in the form of intensities) were not assumed to be discrete – they had the potential to affect and be affected by one another.

These four intensities, I argue, aided in the territorialisation of non-binary gender identities (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). While these intensities appear to be

linear, causal, and hierarchical, this book theorises them as rhizomatic, “an acentered, nonhierarchical, nonsignifying system ... defined solely by the circulation of states” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 21). Therefore, this analysis pulls apart the intensities in order to examine them, but they should be understood as intrinsically interconnected in a meshwork of affects (DeLanda, 1999) which can be deterritorialised (disrupted) and reterritorialised (reemerged).

The following sections will explore each of these important intensities, providing further support for their pivotal role in the continuous emergence of non-binary gender identities. While each section will be explored separately, these “themes” were pulled apart for the purposes of structure and organisation; however, these intensities are again intrinsically relational and affective. They included particular memories, proximities, realisations, discoveries, and linguistic and material emergences which were experienced throughout the participants’ lives. These intensities affected – and were affected by – one another both before and after participants adopted non-binary as an identity label, showing the continuous, multidimensional, and complex processes of gender becomings among participants. Some intensities had more influence than others – and affected each person differently – in the participants’ processes of becoming. This is consistent with previous research that suggests that non-binary people are a highly heterogeneous group who experience their gender in a variety of ways – and that this process is ongoing (Levitt & Ippolito, 2014). This chapter concludes that non-binary gender identities are continuous, multiple, and influenced by several affective intensities, which inevitably evolve over time.

Discomfort with the Binary

All participants expressed having a long-standing and complicated relationship with the gender binary. This was a common in both the interviews and the writing samples. Many expressed feeling as though the gender they were assigned at birth – and the roles associated to this gender – did not (fully) describe or represent them. For some, this meant having a complicated relationship with their body and/or their gender expression. While some participants were happy expressing a gender that “matched” their assigned gender at birth, others mentioned that indexing an androgynous gender through bodily aesthetics was important to them. Yet, most participants questioned the idea that gender identity and gender expression had to “match.” Gender expression was therefore modulated by their desire to be comfortable and, in many cases, safe.

One common thread among participants was the feeling that the gender they were assigned at birth did not match their identity entirely or at all, which made them uncomfortable. Moon (2018) theorises these feelings of discomfort as trans-emotionality, an “experience when bodily feelings and required male/female sex-role behaviours are incongruous and naming oneself as either a boy or a girl is far too limiting” (p. 11). I found that these feelings – in the form of affective intensities – were indeed a common experience among non-binary people in the present study. One of the main ways in which these feelings were expressed was in describing their

discomfort with the gender binary from an early age. Most participants in the study challenged gender stereotypes from an early age – some openly, others privately. As such, many participants described instances in which they defied gender roles growing up:

When they were a child they asked their father “am I a boy or a girl?” because they were surrounded by boys and girls at school and they honestly did not know what gender they were. Their father said, “you’re a girl” and that, for a long time, was the end of the discussion. [...] Because transitioning into a man terrified them (it didn’t feel quite right for them) and because they knew their family would not accept or understand them being trans, eventually Alex suppressed these feelings and continued to identify as a female.

(Adrian, they/them, non-binary, AFAB. Short story)

I kind of always knew in the beginning where I was, like, very young. I honestly didn’t know what gender I fell into. Like, I knew that it was a thing that you had to do, and you had to sort of choose. But everyone kind of sort of knew but I didn’t. And I actually asked people and they just told me, yeah, you know, you’re this, you know – stick to that. And, you know, for a while that was enough for me. But then, you know, when I got older it just sort of became, you know – it became clear, you know, that something was wrong, something didn’t match up, something wasn’t adding up in my mind.

(Adrian, they/them, non-binary, AFAB. Interview)

Adrian commented on their early childhood experiences of being pushed into a binary gender category by the people around them. And while they conformed with these expectations for a while, their discomfort intensified as they grew older. These experiences were reinforced throughout their life, but they were eventually able to challenge the restrictions when they grew up and discovered new ways of describing their identity. Adrian eventually realised that they no longer had to fit into the gender binary. Some participants, therefore, drew from early childhood memories to interrogate and make sense of their discomfort with the gender binary. These early moments of confusion or disjuncture were often marshalled as precursors of gender identity. As such, gender identities were often narrated as continuous, possessing a history, thus territorialising the durability of their genders. Similarly, Shawn recalled feeling as though they did not fit in with the gender they were assigned at birth. This intensity (in the form of a memory) helped them realise (later in life) that they could reject the gender binary altogether. This was seen across the interviews and in the writing samples, for example, Shawn said:

Growing up I was considered a tomboy, but I always knew that I didn’t fit in with being a cis woman. I didn’t feel that was who I was, but at the same time I didn’t do any sort of identification with being a boy either.

So, throughout most of my life I don't think that there was another option, so I was like, "well, if I'm not a boy, then I guess I must be, you know, a girl". And then when I realised that you don't actually have to fit in with, you know, the categories of man and woman, then I was like, "oh, well, that describes me. I'm non-binary."

(Shawn, they/them, agender, AFAB. Interview)

Shawn's memory of their discomfort with their gender assigned at birth was used as an authenticating narrative which, in their view, led them to later realise that non-binary described the ways in which they experienced their gender. It has been suggested that non-binary people rely on stereotyped representations of gender incongruence in describing their childhood to legitimise their trans identities (Garrison, 2019). Furthermore, early experiences were often given a particular gloss, as precursors for their current gender identity, and as something that pre-saged and prefigured the present identity. According to Garrison (2019), non-binary people do this by demonstrating their lack of interest (and discomfort) with the gender they were assigned at birth and their interest in "cross-gender pursuits and behaviors" (p. 629) from an early age. While the present study also saw a high rate of early-childhood authenticating narratives, these were not the only defining elements in the continuous emergence of non-binary gender identities. As such, these narratives were merely an intensity that aided in the territorialisation of non-binary identities as a subject category, but they were not the defining factor. Furthermore, non-binary authenticity was not only gained by recalling childhood experiences of gender non-conformity but also by myriad affective intensities, as I will show in the following sections.

Another important aspect within this intensity was the fact that some participants had complicated relationships with their appearance (i.e., gender expression and/or gendered body). Brook and, for instance, talked about their gender expression, explaining:

Like an oversized shirt, "girl" had never fit me properly. I'd assumed that one day I'd grow into it, I got older, but the shirt still hung off my shoulders. It might have been because children used to say I wasn't one of them [...] It might have been because I liked the look of dresses but hated wearing them, greatly preferring jeans and t-shirts. I was 22 when I found out that there were other options, that I didn't have to keep wearing the oversized shirt. I didn't have to be a Woman or a Man, I could just be an Adult without gender. It was a relief knowing that I could toss off the excess fabric and finally wear something that fits me properly. It took me a while to explore this aspect of myself, and just as I was making progress my then-job took me aside, forced the oversized shirt over my head and told me to paint my face.

(Rudy, they/them, non-existent, AFAB. Short story)

When I was a little girl I didn't really, you know ... I sort of was presented with this concept, this binary concept of gender, and I never really felt ... Like, I felt like a little girl at the time, and then I got older and realised that some days I wanted to ... I felt like ... I felt male and so I would dress more masculine. And, you know, not wear makeup as stuff like that. And then on other days, like, most days, I wouldn't feel particularly female but I would still ... It became, I guess, my expression became more about what feels comfortable and what makes me feel good. And as I got older the way I dress, the dress I sort of do my makeup and stuff like that has become more femme even though I actually feel less female as I go along, like I feel more androgynous or agender as I go along.

(Brook, she/they, genderqueer woman, AFAB. Interview)

Like other participants, Rudy and Brook expressed their discomfort with her gender assigned at birth from an early age. Brook's gender expression (and her dis/comfort around it) were highly related to the ways in which she expressed her identity linguistically. In other words, her discomfort with her assigned gender led her to experiment with her appearance, which in turn affected the ways in which she employed language to describe herself. However, in Brook's ongoing process of becoming, her embodied dis/comfort is constantly shifting "as [she] go[es] along." While her discomfort with the binary identification affected her embodied expression, all these factors are constantly evolving; they are neither stagnant nor moving in a linear fashion. Similarly, Ari mentioned how their discomfort with their gender assigned at birth (as an affective intensity) related to their body (skin colour and large chest) and gender expression, thus contributing to their gender becoming:

Having huge tits means that I'm always read as female no matter what. I can be wearing the most masculine clothes and I'll still be called ma'am. And sometimes that's a problem and sometimes that isn't. But no matter what I'm wearing or not wearing, I am non-binary. I used to identify as a woman or a girl because I thought that was the only option I had. I knew I wasn't boy or a man. But I knew I wasn't a proper girl or a proper woman. Actually, I used to get told I wasn't. And that became ... that was a very kind of racialised thing as well. I wasn't just told I'm not a proper woman - I was told I'm not a proper black woman. Or I'm not a proper black girl. And I've had that since I, like, five years old. But I never fully felt that. I just didn't know you had any other options until recently and so, non-binary describes me. [...] I thought, because of these ... because of my boobs, that I couldn't be non-binary, because I'm not androgynous. I haven't got a flat chest or a flat profile. But I feel non-binary in my brain and inside myself.

(Ari, they/them, non-binary, AFAB. Interview)

Ari's account of their gender becomings was unlike many of the rest in that they were one of the few people of colour in the present sample. The ways in which

they felt uncomfortable with their assigned gender were not only related to gender stereotypes but also racial stereotypes – that, is they never felt as though they embodied a “proper black woman” subject position. As such, at the intersection of race and gender (Crenshaw, 1989) or, in *DeleuzoGuattarian* terms, at the place in which these two concepts assemble, a productive capacity emerged – that is, to become non-binary. For Ari, however, becoming non-binary came with a new set of contradictions. For them, non-binary people were often portrayed as androgynous, white, slim, and middle class (Boldly go, 2012). However, Ari identified as older, poor, disabled (long-term chronic health and mental health issues), and a survivor of childhood and domestic violence. Nonetheless, they saw their gender identity as existing within them (their “brain and inside”), regardless of these stereotypical non-binary embodiments (i.e., androgynous, white, etc.). This was corroborated by their affective “trans-emotional” narrative of always knowing that they were neither a man nor a woman, as well as positioning their place as an outsider within the “proper black woman” subject position which was assembled as a warrant for redefining (their) gender.

Overall, participants described having an uncomfortable relationship with the gender binary growing up. Many presented their embodied experiences such as gender expression as significant contributing factors to their trans-emotional narrative of discomfort. As such, their relationship with their bodies and gender presentations were complicated and occurred long before they adopted the label non-binary. While many participants articulated these narratives of gender discomfort from childhood to authenticate their non-binary identities, these narratives are just some of the many affective intensities that assembled to produce non-binary gender identities among participants. In other words, this intensity is not hegemonic or a requirement to become non-binary, but simply one of the many ways in which the non-binary-assemblage can be formed.

Learning About Gender Diversity and Language

For most participants, one of the most important moments that contributed to their understanding of gender diversity was when they learned about the existence of genders beyond the binary. Drawing on Denzin’s (1989) notion of epiphanies or “turning point experiences [that] have the capacity to impact individual lives and bring about transformational experiences” (as cited in Denzin, 2010, p. 206), I argue that discovering non-binary genders generated an affective intensity that led participants to adopt (and/or become fluent in) non-binary language – what I term a linguistic becoming.

This process was not simple or immediate, but it often culminated in the realisation that linguistic shifts were possible. Many participants described these linguistic becomings as productive, given that it allowed them to describe their (relationship with) gender more accurately. For instance, when asked about a defining moment in relation to gender, Dana and Elliott made a connection between reading and learning about non-binary identities:

I don't know if there was really one moment. I think it was sort of a slow dawning. I remember reading more and more magazines and blogs over the space of a few years where people talked about being genderqueer. I remember reading this anthology called 'genderqueer' or something like that that came out, maybe in the early 2000s or something like that. And I remember reading that and thinking "this is very interesting" but I feel completely alienated from this, I don't identify with this at all. Um and then years later that slowly changed.

(Dana, they/them, genderqueer, AFAB. Interview)

I think they were a combination of possible moments for a long time. But then, like, maybe two years ago I ... I started reading about non-binary identities and it really clicked loads, like, it was at that points that I realised, "oh, this is actually how I understand myself." And reading those articles and reading other people's experiences was really helpful in that sense.

(Elliott, they/them, genderqueer woman, AMAB. Interview)

For these participants, learning about the possibilities of genders beyond the binary was a significant factor contributing to their gender becomings. For Dana, this moment of realisation took some time, but the information they collected contributed to the assemblage of their identity along with other factors such as their embodied experiences. However, for Elliot, their process of non-binary emergence was "a combination of possible moments for a long time" which finally assembled (or "clicked") after they read about non-binary identities. Learning about the possibility of non-binary genders, therefore, affirmed their feelings (and discomfort) with the gender binary and allowed their identities to become. For example, Tanner said that learning about trans identities (including gender diverse people) through the media (TV and books) was a significant moment, which ignited their curiosity and motivated them to continue learning about this topic:

I remember sort of things when I was, like, a child, like, seeing the, like, street creatures on TV and, like, a man wearing a dress and I was like, "wow, a man can wear a dress?" And then, sort of, I remember learning about ... seeing that there was a documentary on TV about trans guys and I was like, "oh wow, that exists!" and kind of, sort of a series of, I think, becoming aware that transgender people existed, um was a most significant thing, um. It wasn't just one moment; it was kind of a series. And yeah, I can't pinpoint one moment in particular, but kind of a series of dawning awareness, and leading up to actually finding out about non-binary people, which there isn't a sort of academic way in the way that I sort of read things online and I was like, "oh wow, that's interesting" and then I went to my university library and found, like, books in which the author's talking about gender and it was really eye-opening.

(Tanner, they/them, agender, AFAB. Interview)

While education data about the participants was not collected directly, some participants described having studied gender theory at university, which meant that they had acquired a well-versed understanding on this topic and, as such, possessed the language and information to support their claims that gender is constructed, fluid, multiple, and volatile. For instance, nine participants described gender as “socially constructed” and some quoted Judith Butler’s theory of performativity when explaining what gender meant to them. Furthermore, many participants had indeed studied gender theory and were highly knowledgeable about gender theory, terminology, and linguistic practices. Brook and Tyler commented:

I think that gender only exists socially and only exists as we create it on a societal level and on a personal, individual level as well. So in that way [...] gender isn’t anything tangible as opposed to something like biological sex or ethnicity. Gender is just a concept – and that means that we get to play with it a lot.

(Brook, they/she, genderqueer woman, AFAB. Interview)

When I was at Uni, I started looking a lot more into, like, feminism and LGBT rights and that sort of thing. And started, like, really getting educated on that subject. And when I was at [university name], I did a dissertation about [singer] Miley Cyrus. [laughter] Long story. But that tied in with ... I did a lot of reading about, like, how women are supposed to present. [...] I discovered, I think it was Judith Butler – wrote a book on gender performativity and that was real kind of, like, eye-opener for me ‘cause I was like, “oh my god, it is just this. Gender is a social construct!” And it was really, like, I loved finding out about that. To me, it felt like someone had put into writing all these stuff that I was kind of thinking but not really ... it hadn’t really come to the surface because I didn’t know enough about it or something. So I felt like that majorly helped me in understanding not only me, but like, a lot of society’s attitudes as well.

(Tyler, they/any, non-binary, AFAB. Interview)

While this was an interesting finding, not all research participants were as well-versed in this academic understanding of gender. However, the common thread among participants was recalling the moment(s) when they learned about the possibility of gender plurality and the (immediate, for some) realisation that this knowledge spoke a truth about their gendered experience. For instance, Gaby mentioned that their process of becoming was a journey with no final destination:

Self-discovery is a strange thing. It is often described as a journey, but that implies there is an ending. A final point where everything makes sense and everything fits. I have learned lots of things as I’ve gone through this process,

but the main thing is that there is no end point. Aspects that were certain at 16 have changed, even aspects that were certain yesterday have changed. It does feel weird and frustrating to be having an identity crisis in your 30s.

(Gaby, they/them, bigender, AFAB. Short story)

I argue that the affective intensity created by discovering the possibility of existing outside or between the gender binary was a significant (and perhaps one of the most important) factor in the participants' process of emergence. Without knowledge about this possibility, adopting a non-binary label would be impossible. This, of course, does not mean that the participants in the study had a comfortable relationship with gender to begin with. Nor does it mean that other material factors (such as their physical appearance and expression) had a minimal influence on their gender becomings. In other words, their embodied experience can exist pre-discursively. The following section will explore the linguistic elements of gender becomings; however, it is important to note that the materiality of gender permeates the linguistic elements.

Linguistic Becomings

As I have discussed, discovering gender-neutral terminology such as labels, pronouns, etc. was an important aspect in the research participants' gender becomings. In this section, the adoption, reassessment, and ongoing social negotiation of gender-related language will be described as linguistic becomings. While not all non-binary people in this study used gender-neutral language exclusively, all participants were aware of neutral language, respected it, and enjoyed the idea of having the option to adopt such language openly.

The number of people who identify as non-binary seems to be increasing (see, for instance, Koehler et al., 2018), and this might be partly due to the spread of information regarding gender diversity. For instance, Bragg et al. (2018) have suggested that "many young people have [...] principled commitments to gender equality, gender diversity and the rights of gender and sexual minorities" (p. 1) and that their gender and sexual vocabularies are more expansive than we have seen in previous generations. This was also apparent in the present study: the language non-binary people employed to describe their genders was rich and expansive. Furthermore, discovering, adopting, reassessing, and negotiating gendered language (in the form of linguistic becomings) was a significant affective intensity that also contributed to participants' gender becomings as non-binary. As previously argued, the continuous emergence of non-binary language can be attributed to a variety of factors, including the widespread of online communities where identities become accessible, tangible, and real. Whittle (2006) argues that

trans identit[ies are] now accessible almost anywhere, to anyone who does not feel comfortable in the gender role they were attributed to at birth, or

has a gender identity at odds with the labels ‘man’ or ‘woman’ credited to them by formal authorities. (p. xi)

Such widespread of information has allowed more people to feel comfortable embracing trans and non-binary identities, thus territorialising some of the ways in which these identities are indexed and spoken about.

This section will explore the linguistic becomings of non-binary people in the present study at three different levels: individual (micro), interactional (meso), and societal (macro). While these levels are separated for the purposes of this analysis, I argue that these levels are relational, as assemblages work and involve a combination of elements from all these levels (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987).

Micro-Level

At the individual level (micro), adopting non-binary language (a linguistic becoming) resulted in an important intensity that allowed the participants to feel authentic and legitimate. In their process of gender becomings, most participants reassessed the binary language that was affectively interpellated (Moon, 2019) to them at birth through performative utterances such as a doctor/nurse claiming that a newborn “is a boy!” (Butler, 1990). Sinclair-Palm (2017) describes the concept of deadnaming, which emerged from the trans community, as the act of calling “trans person by their birth name after they have adopted a new name” (p. 5). I draw from the notion of deadnaming more generally to discuss dead language, which includes not only names but also labels, pronouns, titles, and other general descriptors such as relationship and family terminology. Outlined below are some of the ways in which non-binary people in the present research reassessed some of this language. This chapter will present evidence for these linguistic shifts and negotiations.

- **Names:** Most participants either changed their name completely or used a gender-neutral version (typically a shortened version) of their given name. The most significant factor was having their older friends and family members adapt to their new names. Most participants had a strong group of queer (-friendly) friends who supported them in experimenting with new names.
- **Labels:** Due to the lack of terms that describe specific gender and sexual identities, people who challenge the binaries man/woman and straight/gay are beginning to create and adopt new labels that they feel better to describe their identities. This proliferation has, in part, been possible, they report, because of social networking platforms (e.g., Tumblr, Facebook, and Twitter) where people who identify as non-binary can create a mutual dialogue about their similar experiences with gender. This dialogue has resulted in a proliferation of labels that describe highly specific genders and sexualities. At the same time, the term non-binary is considered the larger umbrella in that its name clearly specifies that these identities are not confined within the limits of the gender binary. While “non-binary” is currently considered the larger

umbrella term, less than a decade ago, the term “genderqueer” used to be the main label to describe these identities. As the dialogue continues and the community becomes stronger, some labels have begun to be contested as inconsistent, redundant, or offensive. These linguistic shifts are just a few examples of the ways in which these gender identities and labels are in constant development and reassessment, thus becoming more concrete – and happening at a faster rate because of the internet.

- **Pronouns:** Pronouns are extremely important within the non-binary community. Most participants in the current study used the pronouns they/them. Most considered these pronouns to be the easiest to remember and for others to articulate. This is because the singular they/them pronouns already existed and have been used before in the English language. Most participants have nonetheless experienced some type of distress when people misgendered them by using the pronouns they were assigned at birth (PAB). This will be explored in detail in the following chapter. While most participants used they/them as their pronouns and this was extremely important to them, it was more important to them that people refrained from using the binary pronouns they were given at birth, even if this implied not using they/them pronouns. In most cases, “anything but” their PAB was tolerable for them. For instance, an AFAB participant would rather be addressed as he/his than she/hers when they/them was not possible.
- **Titles:** Most participants used Mx as their title, except for two: one was comfortable with Ms and the other one did not want to use any title for themselves.
- **Gender-neutral language:** The largest issue related to language came from family and romantic relationships. The words for relatives such as sibling, child, and nibling (neither nephew nor niece) were some of the most awkward, most difficult to remember for family members. In terms of romantic relationships, couples were very creative, calling themselves words such as date, mate, babe, partner, lover, etc. in addition to binary terms such as boyfriend/girlfriend. Only one participant did not mind being called wife by their husband, because, as they perceived it, it did not have a strong gendered connotation.

The importance placed on language – its affective intensity – was observed throughout the interviews. For instance, Elliott commented on their process of linguistic emergence and its relationship to their embodied gender experience:

[Learning about non-binary identities was] so important! I think it pushed me towards finding new ways of and expressing my gender identity. And also new ... it gave me new words to understand my sense of self and it gave me a drive to take steps towards seeing what feels good and what doesn't feel good, and and and what other [language] I want to use about myself and what other ways I wanna express my gender.

(Elliott, they/them, genderqueer woman, AMAB, emphasis added. Interview)

Elliot expressed the ways in which these “new words” propelled them to explore their gender identity and to become comfortable (an affective intensity; a feeling) in their own embodied and linguistic expression. In their short story, Elliot also alluded to the ways in which language influenced their embodied expression:

[T]he only way for us to make sense of our material existence and our relationship to our bodies and identities is through words. Elliot believes that this search for vocabularies is a collective effort to build up new categories, or perhaps to get rid of them altogether. It’s clear for them that they are not a gay man, not only because their gender identity is much more complex than being either a man or a woman, but so is their sexuality. Understanding themselves as a non-binary transfeminine person is something that makes sense to them within their current material reality and the vocabulary available to them, but they also understand that just like all other identities, it exists in relation to our particular historical moment. Perhaps one day they will find new vocabularies that will fit them better, or perhaps they will feel differently about their bodily experiences and will need to create new words themselves to describe and understand their existence better. But right now, they prefer to be called as a non-binary person, addresses as ‘they’ or their chosen name, and use the title Mx.

(Elliott, they/them, genderqueer woman, AMAB. Short story)

Elliot understood their linguistic becoming as relational – that is, it only existed in relation to the historical emergence of these terms, their own ability to embrace these terms, as well as their embodied relationship to these terms. Elliot also suggested that the language they employed now to speak about their body might shift and become something else (a linguistic becoming) in a few years depending on their embodied experience; however, for the time being, non-binary, transfeminine, genderqueer woman, etc. were linguistic tools that Elliott deployed to make their gender intelligible to themselves and to others. These terms then have fluidity, and their meanings can shift over time – both at the individual level and dependent on the social context.

Meso-Level

Negotiating language during interaction by, for example, requesting others to use gender-neutral language when referring to them, was a significant part of this linguistic assemblage. These interpersonal negotiations were not easy and were indeed context-dependent. However, once the participants disclosed their chosen language to people, they expected this language to be respected. In the interviews, participants were asked to comment on the importance of language. Participants reported feeling distressed when their language choices were not employed by those to whom they had communicated their desires (e.g., someone using their dead language). On the other hand, when their linguistic choices were affirmed,

participants reported feeling euphoric. Most of them mentioned that not being misgendered was very important to them. For instance, Tyler commented on these negotiations:

With my close friends and family, I'd say it's pretty important. Like, it shows what a strong relationship or friendship you have with people when they make the effort to respect what you've asked. So, and I think it would be insulting if someone who didn't know didn't, like, didn't make the effort or couldn't be bothered or something. So with friends and family who know about it it's quite important to me. With people who don't know, like, at work and stuff. Like I said, I think I'm so comfortable in me, with people who are not in my very close circle, it doesn't matter half as much. But with, like, yeah, friends, family, like, my husband and stuff, it's really important. Like, I'd be really upset if my husband suddenly started not referring to me like that - which he never would, but you know, it is important to me that the people that I love and the people that I'm close to do it. It's not important to me with strangers or colleagues.

(Tyler, they/any, non-binary, AFAB. Interview)

Participants expressed how important it was for people around them to employ the linguistic markers they had requested, especially from close friends and family. Moreover, it was crucial that they were not misgendered by those who they had already told about their pronouns, names, and labels changes. When the "correct" language was used, participants expressed feeling validated, content, and accepted. Aspen, for instance, commented on how these affirming interactions:

It feels really good. It feels great. um yeah, hearing my brother talk about his sibling is, like, the best feeling in the world um because I think it ... it shows, like ... it shows the level of respect. It shows that somebody cares for you and wants to um represent you right, and wants you to make you feel good about yourself. um Yeah, when hear people say - not necessarily in relation to me - but when I hear people use sort of um, you know ... "men, women, and nonbinary people" or use gender-neutral language in the broader sense, that feels really good 'cause, like, you can feel ... you can feel society sort of changing around you. um and yeah, the ... you know, they're not doing it ... they're not doing it because they know that you're nonbinary, but you'd be angry if they don't. They're genuinely just doing that because that's ... that's right to them. You know, that's really good.

(Aspen, they/them, non-binary, AFAB. Interview)

Most participants expressed having extremely positive feelings when their genders were recognised linguistically. Such affirming interactions were not generally common outside of their queer circles, however. Negative experiences were

evident in the participants' narratives and, in many cases, outweighed the positive ones. For instance, in their short story, Ari narrates their personal experience of communicating their pronoun in a photography class which encapsulates the experiences of many of the participants in this book:

In week one, the teacher gets everyone in the evening class on photography to introduce themselves. It feels fine until [Ari] says their name and adds, "My pronouns are they and them". There are furtive glances around the large table. Someone asks, "What's a pronoun?" [...] My pronouns are they and them. Please don't call me 'she' if you don't mind." The man shoots [Ari] a hard look. "How am I supposed to remember that?" [Ari] looks to the teacher for support. The teacher looks away, goes over to another couple of students instead. The man is still glaring at [Ari]. He has remembered all the f-stop readings for different light settings, he remembers the names of everyone in the class, even correcting the teacher when she got it wrong. But [Ari's] pronouns are too difficult for him. [Ari] sighs to themselves, is very much aware of the way the man has curled his hands into two fists. They shuffle away a little and look at their camera instead.

(Ari, they/them, non-binary, AFAB. Short story)

Some of the most painful experiences came from the participants' inner circle. Not all participants were out as non-binary to their families, which meant their families unknowingly used dead language to refer to them. Given that language was an important affective intensity for most forum users, these familial interactions were significantly distressing to these individuals. Nine participants described not being out to their parents, which meant, in some cases, living a "double life" and a double linguistic identity; that is, for part(s) of their lives, they employed different names, titles, pronouns, etc., but for the other part(s) they used dead language. Chris, for instance, spoke about the linguistic-related distress that was caused due to not being out to their families:

I still have to go home to my parents once a week, I'm not out to them. And they still see me as just their daughter. Like, I'm female, they use my birth name, female pronouns and such. And sometimes it will really deeply distress me. Sometimes it will just be a mere annoyance.

(Chris, they/them, genderfluid, AFAB. Interview)

This language-related distress will be further explored in Chapter 5. However, these examples demonstrate the ways in which non-binary people negotiate their linguistic becomings among different social proximities, as well as the ways in which these interactions are part of their gender becomings more generally.

Macro-Level

I have shown how the linguistic emergence of participants' non-binary identities occurs and how they negotiate language use with other individuals. I will now turn to the (macro) societal impact of linguistic emergence. In general, participants hoped that society as a whole will one day recognise their gender and their linguistic diversity.

I think [language] is very important. You know, we all know about, sort of the impact of slurs and things like that. But, you know, language has such a massive effect on our society and on our culture. Like, when people are referring to sort of an unknown person and they say him or her. It's, like, you can just say they. And it's more accurate, it's more concise, it's, you know, that sort of thing. And sort of talking – stop saying “opposite gender.” You want to talk about men and women. Those kind of little things that kind just normalise the idea of non-binary genders and alternative genders. I think it's really important.

(Aspen, they/them, non-binary, AFAB. Interview)

I think it'd be nice if language shifted so that people use “they” as default until they knew people's pronouns. I've been in some queer subcultural spaces where people do that. I'd be nice if that happened generally. I've heard some people say that, “oh, we know, but my pronouns are she, you know, I'm cis and my pronouns are she, and I get offended when people refer to me as they”. And, you know, fair enough, that sucks when people don't use your pronouns, but when people are using it in a deliberate, exclusive stance because they don't know what your pronouns are, you know, I don't think you can really get offended. You know, then when they get to know you can be like, “my pronouns are she her, she and her”. And they can say, like, “okay”. But if they're calling at somebody at the doctor's office or, you know, in some sort of setting where they just don't know you, and they're using it to be more inclusive, I can't think people can really be offended by that, you know.

(Dana, they/them, genderqueer, AFAB. Interview)

Most participants expressed the need for gender-neutral and gender-inclusive language in society. Both Aspen and Dana spoke about the need to incorporate gender-neutral language into all aspects of society to be more inclusive. Many participants called for this kind of language to be more widely used and, in fact, to become the standard. This was seen as a positive movement that would increase gender equity and allow for a more just and diverse society. Yet, some felt as though gender-neutral language was becoming too linked with non-binary people, which they thought was not entirely appropriate. Participants mentioned that linking non-binary people with gender-neutral language could create

new sets of stereotypes about non-binary people. Some participants such as Gaby and Charlie were aware of these correlations and challenged these ideas:

Non-binary is not gender-neutral. It can be, but isn't for everyone. Ideally, there would be more pronouns than "he/she/they" that are easy to use. There are lots of pronouns out there, but getting people to accept "they" is already a battle and that's a word that is used all the time. Getting the general public to accept something like "ze" is not something that will happen in the next 10 years. We have to sub out "ladies and gentlemen" for "everyone", but wouldn't it be nice to be "ladies, gentlemen and genderqueers". There are so many genders that someone will always be left out and so neutral is the closest there is to inclusive.

(Gaby, they/them, bigender, AFAB. Short story)

Gaby mentioned that gender-neutrality is one of the ways in which societies can become more gender-inclusive. However, Gaby also affirms that gender-neutral language does not necessarily apply to all non-binary people. Some non-binary people, including some in this study, are comfortable employing a variety of linguistic markers including she/her, e/ey, or he/his pronouns, for instance. Therefore, the use of they/them pronouns is not universal among non-binary-identified people. Nevertheless, non-binary gender identities are starting to be correlated with gender-neutral language (especially the use of they/them pronouns), a territorialisation that, in some ways, begins to stipulate who gets to be(come) non-binary, who does not, and under what (linguistic) conditions this manifests. As such, in the process of deterritorialising the gender binary linguistically, a reterritorialisation of a "third" gender category emerges, taking these stereotypical linguistic forms. These territorialisations can be both productive (solidifying the place of non-binary people in society) and unproductive (essentialising the linguistic territory of non-binary identities). Nevertheless, the language of gender diversity is constantly reassessed and renegotiated by people at all levels of social interaction, and it seems as though this linguistic proliferation is only just now getting some momentum – and it might shift in (somewhat) unexpected directions.

While gender identities beyond the binary are gaining more visibility and public awareness is increasing, cisgenderist thinking is still prevalent in society, rendering non-binary genders – and the language surrounding these identities – relatively unintelligible. Non-binary people in this study did not think that their identities were yet recognised, respected, or acknowledged in society. As such, the right to self-determine their genders was largely denied by social institutions. Many participants commented on the multiple ways in which society renders their identities invisible:

The government doesn't even fully recognise non-binary [people] yet. I mean, they can't even institute the laws that are currently in place to protect non-binary people. Like, I found this when I was changing my name and, you know, just being more out in politics. Like, there were people who

were telling me that it's not legally recognised, you can't do this, when actually they could. Even through their own ignorance of the law or because they don't want the law to protect non-binary people, so they just spread misinformation. It took me so long to even know that non-binary was even an option. And that was, like, with "LGBT resources," which didn't include non-binary people as part of their education. So I think the fact that I got any kind of education on non-binary people, you know, is an improvement over a few years ago, but it still sucks. Like, really badly. And it's more so than I think people realise [...] because we're a minority within a minority, so they can't be bothered with that 'cause it's just so small. But that causes a lot of problems with people, including me. So, yeah, we've got a long way to go, I think.

(Adrian, they/them, non-binary, AFAB. Interview)

Trans women can be trans women, but not women, they say, and then, later, they say non-binary is a fad, there is no specific detriment to inhabiting this identity, enbys [non-binary people] don't need or deserve civil rights. So trans women can be some category outside of "woman" but there will be no recognised categories outside of "woman" other than "man". And while Malta and India and Germany and Australia legislate for the possibility of a 3rd option, UK weds itself to the binary. They rarely talk about assigned-female trans people like me at all, of course.

(Harper, they/them, genderqueer, AFAB. Interview)

Both Adrian and Harper alluded to the fact that non-binary genders are typically not recognised in UK law, a fact which renders their identities illegitimate. Such de-legitimisation is presently due to the prevailing cultural schemas which posit gender as a two-and-only-two system (Lucal, 1999), leaving no space for gender identities between or outside of this system. Harper asserts that non-binary genders can indeed become intelligible in the UK, in the same way as other countries that have allowed their citizens to self-determine their "third" gender. This is because most participants asserted that societal recognition was pivotal to their comfort, safety, and (linguistic and material) self-determination. Harper also expressed a desire to establish the durability of their gender, suggesting that their identity should be understood as not a "fad" but an essential identity they should be legally allowed to inhabit, thus alluding to Spivak's (1990) strategic essentialism. Rudy and Harper made the following statements about their fight for recognition:

I'd like to be optimistic here and think that if enough of us are very loud about it, then there will be changes. But it just depends on, like, people being really, really loud, and say, like, "this is what we want! we shouldn't be made to keep picking between these two options." Especially when that's not even true and it actually alienates a lot of other people anyway and it's

something that could be genuinely useful to a lot of people who aren't even non-binary. So I feel if we manage to make breakthrough in some areas, it would actually benefit a lot of other people. [...] I'm one of those people who'd like to have the option because I'd like the whole thing to become more mainstream. [...] So there might be someone that doesn't want to be assumed to be a particular gender on their passport, so they might just have, like, a gender-neutral one, just because, like, that might just be how they prefer it. Like, people should not make assumptions about them being one hundred percent comfortable with themselves.

(Rudy, they/them, non-existent, AFAB. Interview)

I just feel there will never be gender liberation, queer liberation or trans liberation if non-binary people are not given legitimacy, and that means legal recognition, but also to be able to tell our stories and have them heard, and that begins and ends with language.

(Harper, they/them, genderqueer, AFAB. Interview)

In Rudy's and Harper's view, non-binary gender identities will only become legitimate when non-binary people declare and demand their (linguistic) place in society. Harper asserts that this liberation "begins and ends with language." Rudy and many other participants expressed a strong desire for gender-neutral options to exist and to "go mainstream." For instance, Rudy wished to have the option to have a gender-neutral marker in their legal documents, which they feel will enable non-binary people to feel less alienated. This battle for recognition, therefore, was seen as productive; it would help eradicate the various forms of discrimination that are hidden within language:

I guess, you know, because gender segregation and, you know, transphobia, everything has become so entrenched in our culture and in our language, it's now becoming an issue, and we have to, like, force people to recognise that, like, actually, you know, it is perfectly permissible to use [... gender-neutral language ...] There is no prejudice within the language, there's prejudice within people – and that's basically what it comes down to. You know, there isn't any barrier in language, there's nothing really to say there. You know, that they/them is not a good pronoun – or any other pronoun is bad to refer to people. It's just people's attitudes towards it. And it just makes me really angry 'cause it's, like, I was even taught this at school. [... Gender neutral pronouns] are fine, those were the rules. It's just people are inventing them for their own agendas.

(Adrian, they/them, non-binary, AFAB. Interview)

Language for many participants like Adrian was not arbitrary. Language has a productive power as it is "entrenched with culture." As such, language carries

cisnormative schemas within it that disallow – and push back against – any creative iteration of gender. This, of course, is slowly changing. They/them pronouns, for instance, are slowly becoming normalised in public discourse and in writing style guides such as The Washington Post, the Associate Press, National Public Radio, the Modern Language Association, and the American Psychological Association (Nunberg, 2016; Lee, 2019).

In this section, I have suggested that linguistic becomings, as an affective intensity, was one of the most important factors contributing to the gender becomings of non-binary people. This was shown at three different levels: micro, meso, and macro. Yet, these levels assemble and overlap and affect one another in multiple ways. For instance, at the micro-level, the language that people like Elliot use to describe their embodied experience might shift as they recognise that their embodied desires might also change over time. The language that non-binary people use to describe themselves was also guided by the available linguistic resources that have emerged over time. At the meso-level, the language that people employ was shown to have mobility and was context-dependent. For instance, some participants navigated different interpersonal contexts such as family interactions where dead language was often expected. Language, therefore, was negotiated on a case-by-case basis and was not always consistent with their experiences. At the macro-level, participants expressed the need to become socially and linguistically intelligible, and thus expressed the need to implement gender-neutral language in all areas of society. However, participants also recognised that language was constantly shifting and that the linguistic parameters of non-binary identities should be understood as fluid. As such, some participants acknowledged that the solidification of gender-neutral language as strictly non-binary is not entirely accurate for all.

Linguistic becomings were shown to be in flux at all levels: individual, interpersonal, and societal. These forces can indeed affect and are affected by one another. The following section will explore the ways in which embodiment was also an affective force for non-binary people in the present study, but one which was expressed in a multitude of ways.

Embodiment

Where Am I? Harper looks in the mirror. “Where are you? Who are you today?” Their mousey grey hair is growing out and looking more feminine, but the stubble on their chin takes them in the other direction. Nowhere.
(*Harper, they/them, genderqueer, AFAB. Short story*)

Participants expressed having a variety of gender embodiments, including femme, androgynous, masculine, and genderfuck. However, these definitions varied from person to person, were contextual and situational, and were often modulated by their level of comfort as well as safety. Some participants were on hormone replacement therapy; however, none of the participants had undergone any other

type of physical transition at the time of the interviews in 2017. While gender embodiments were not the same for all participants, most participants found that this was an important element in their process of becoming. For instance, many participants mentioned that their gender becoming emerged from a need to feel comfortable in their own embodied and linguistic experiences and, as such, this was both an individualised as well as a social process. This is because people's perceptions of their body and aesthetics mattered a great deal to them, and participants, generally, did not want other people to assume them to be the gender they were assigned at birth. Such negotiations were not easy, as most people in a cisgenderist society are accustomed to assuming people's genders based on their looks, voice, gait, etc. According to Kennedy (2013), "the responsibility for determining gender is placed on the observer rather than the individual" (p. 5).

For some participants, the idea of a non-binary gender expression was greatly territorialised. For instance, some participants mentioned that their gender expression was androgynous – that is, they made it a point to index a non-binary identity through their aesthetics: clothing, hairstyles, and make-up. This was often a conscious decision, as it allowed them to not be mistaken for the gender they were assigned at birth. Shawn commented on their conscious attempt to present more androgynously:

I think very few people are going to perceive me as being nonbinary [and] very few people perceive me as being a man, even though occasionally I do bind my chest and things like that if I want to ... I don't now, if I'm in a situation where I am trying to be more obviously transgender, if that makes any sense. So, like, at the weekend, I'm going to buy a man shirt, so I bind my chest and go to a men's wear shop, I still think people will perceive me as a woman because maybe I have a more feminine face or whatever. So I think, yeah, people don't perceive me as being agender or androgynous, really.

(Shawn, they/them, agender, AFAB. Interview)

Although Shawn attempts to look more transgender or androgynous by dressing more masculine, people might not perceive their gender as non-binary. In that sense, their gender expression and embodiment were socially unintelligible. Yet, in their process of gender becoming, explorations were crucial as they produce new material meanings. Similarly, Charlie, who described their gender expression and overall embodiment as "femme," and was undergoing hormone replacement therapy (HRT) at the time of the interview, said:

When I say I'm femme, what it means is that I like to wear skirts and dresses. But I also like to have a beard. [...] I started HRT just because, like, at some point I hope to be so masculine psychically that I'm not gonna get gendered wrongly when I wear skirts. [...] When I try to be more neutral or more androgynous, people will approach me more and make really uncomfortable expression. [...] When people still mistake me for a woman,

I'm not gonna have as many problems unless I actively speak out and say I'm not a woman.

(Charlie, they/them, genderfluid, AFAB. Interview)

Participants like Charlie described their experiences of negotiating the thin line between authenticity and safety. For many, expressing themselves meant embodying various gender expressions typically associated with masculinity and femininity. However, these embodied configurations often generated negative reactions such as rejection, violence, and harassment, thus affecting the psychological and physical health of participants. For other participants, androgyny provided them with safety, but it was not their ideal expression of their gender. Bay commented on this:

I usually dress pretty masculine and a bit androgynous. I would dress more feminine if I could. If I felt confident enough or safe enough ... [...] I don't want to risk anything, you know. I don't want to face any backlash from it. And it's a lot of hassle in a professional work space. I mean, yeah, it's difficult because I don't usually express myself in those situations [...] it's the fear that keeps me not experiencing it.

(Bay, they/them, genderqueer, AMAB. Interview)

Bay felt that their desires to embody their gender were limited by their own fears that, doing so, would have negative repercussions on their career. Bay was not out as non-binary at work and, as such, had not requested their employer to use they/them pronouns nor had they been able to express their gender in the ways they desired. Furthermore, Bay feared the rejection from wider society which would deny them the opportunity to express their gender in creative ways. For many non-binary people in this study, fears of (physical and verbal) violence, social ostracism, and being unable to make a living were indeed primary concerns.

Many participants rejected the idea that gender expressions ought to line up with their gender identities. In fact, many questioned the idea that a non-binary person needs to necessarily look non-binary in order to be non-binary. Chris, for instance, mentioned:

I identity as genderfluid, but I prefer to look male. I know there are nonbinary people who are happy to look female. And I noticed, like, going around in, like, online spaces, and finding more nonbinary people and genderqueer people and hearing their stories. A lot of it is to do with um ... with, like, "you must be androgynous, you must look androgynous, you must sound androgynous to be nonbinary [... and] if you like to dress masculine, but you're genderfluid, that's not okay." Apparently, that means, "oh, you just want to be male." Like, "you want to be a guy and you're just ... you're furthering the gender binary. You're still putting that ... that gender binary is still in place if you dress as a certain way – whether you're feminine or

masculine.” [...] But people don’t seem to realise that you don’t have to be nonbinary to dress in a specific way. You can be cisgender and dress feminine. You can be trans and dress feminine or whatever gender you were assigned at birth. Gender expression and gender identity are not the same thing.

(Chris, they/them, genderfluid, AFAB. Interview)

The idea that gender identity and gender expression were related, but did not necessarily have to correlate, was common among participants. Most of them indeed questioned this stereotype about non-binary people and saw their gender expression in terms of comfort. Brook, for instance, was AFAB and comfortable presenting in a feminine way:

I present quite femme and identify as genderqueer woman. So biologically I’m female – and that is quite an important part of my identity as well. But that doesn’t ... I guess my gender doesn’t always line up with that.

(Brook, she/they, genderqueer woman, AFAB. Interview)

Overall, participants embodied their genders in a variety of ways. As previously stated, some participants found it particularly important to index a so-called non-binary aesthetic in the form of androgyny by mixing and matching pre-established gender aesthetics such as “borrowing” from “the lesbian (butch/androgynous) and gay (effeminate) appearance” (Hayfield, 2020, p 72.). These visual identities and performances were sometimes a tool to gain social legitimacy and visibility. However, for the most part, these presentations were simply a matter of comfort as well as safety, and not necessarily to produce positive social change in the form of gender-inclusivity, although many wished this was the case. As such, many non-binary people questioned the idea that their gender identity had to “match” their gender expressions and embodiment.

While gender embodiments were diverse, these represented a significant affective intensity, as social perceptions of their gender determined the ways in which people related to them, as well as the language they employed to refer to them. Gender embodiments were not stable, as people’s relationships with their bodies change over time, affecting – and being affected by – the historical and social processes that assemble to (in)visibilise non-binary aesthetics.

Concluding Remarks

This chapter has explored some of the most significant affective intensities which aided in the territorialisation of non-binary gender identities among participants. I have argued that some of the most relevant factors in their gender becomings relate to: experiencing discomfort with assigned gender at birth, learning about gender diversity and discovering the language that best describes the relationship with gender, adopting that language (a linguistic becoming), and embodiment. These intensities were expressed in the form of memories, proximities, realisations, and

linguistic and material emergences. These affective intensities are in constant development, reconfiguration, and evolution, as they are (de/re)territorialised in multiple ways, at different levels of social interaction. As previously mentioned, these intensities are not in any specific order and may not affect all non-binary people in the same way.

Experiencing discomfort with their assigned gender at birth was a common experience among the participants. Such discomfort is here understood as a “trans-emotional” feeling. Furthermore, participants shared early childhood memories in which they expressed the feelings of discomfort with the gender binary, as well as the ways in which they had always (attempted to) challenged it. For instance, participants shared how this discomfort led them to express their gender in ways which defied the gender binary from an early age. Many of them expressed not having a language to eloquently communicate these desires back then.

Linguistic becomings are constantly adopted, reassessed, negotiated within social interactions. This was demonstrated at three relational different levels: individual (micro), interactional (meso), and societal (macro). Adopting gender-neutral language – their linguistic becomings – was found to be one of the most important intensities at the time of the interviews. This adoption was negotiated individually, but with a great deal of influence from other factors such as their own embodied experience, as well as the available linguistic resources, which are said to be reassessed over time. Contextual and social interactions were also found to be significant in the linguistic emergence and negotiation of non-binary gender identities. While participants’ linguistic becomings were not possible at all levels of interaction due to the prevailing cisgenderist ideologies, most participants were aware of the context of their linguistic choices.

Other aspects related to linguistic becomings included: the need for linguistic recognition, affirmation, and validation, as well as challenging the gender-based discrimination and inequalities embedded in (binary) language. Moreover, mis-gendering language proved to be a significant source of distress among participants. These issues will be explored in more depth in the next chapters, as I continue to examine the various linguistic and non-linguistic challenges that non-binary people experience because of their identity.

Lastly, embodiment was explored as an affective intensity which affected – and was affected by – research participants in a multitude of ways. While many participants (attempted to) index an androgynous, non-binary expression, this was not a universal goal among participants. Most, in fact, understood their gender identities and their gender expressions as separate, yet intrinsically related. Many regarded their gender expressions and overall embodiment in terms of comfort, wherein mixing stereotypical masculine and feminine expressions were realised depending on their feelings. Yet, many participants struggled to come to terms with their embodied desires, since these were not always fully realised due to safety concerns. Participants emphasised the role of language, which was on the same level as physical security, *communitas*, and livelihood. Many of them wished their identities would be more visible and that people did not assume their genders and

80 Gender and linguistic becomings

the language surrounding them based on their appearance. Overall, participants actively took a stance in naming their own gendered experiences, which allowed them to feel more authentic. These affective practices further advanced their gender and linguistic becomings in a variety of domains: individual, interactional, and societal.

5

LANGUAGE-RELATED DISTRESS: PROXIMITIES AND INTENTIONS

In the previous chapter, I argued that linguistic becoming is one of the most central affective intensities among research participants, thus contributing to the gender becoming of these individuals. Language was therefore found to be an important issue among non-binary people. One of the major issues surrounding non-binary language is misgendering – that is, the linguistic misrepresentation of a person’s gender. Within research that focuses on non-binary people, little attention has been paid to the language-related issues that emerge from navigating the world as a non-binary person. This chapter therefore focuses on language, particularly the issues that emerge from adopting a language that is not yet broadly accepted in English-speaking societies. Specifically, this chapter explores the ways in which non-binary people navigate the world using non-binary language, the distress that originates from social interactions in which their language is not affirmed, and the various ways in which non-binary people manage these situations.

Participants in this study indeed expressed that misgendering was a major source of pain and distress. However, the data also revealed that there was a degree of context-dependency associated to this distress. As such, the levels of distress depended upon the levels of proximity, as well as the (perceived) intention (whether intentionally or unintentionally) of the individual who misgendered them. This is consistent with assemblage theory (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987), as the intensity of distress branches out from different intersections, with different affective intensities, and in very different ways. Such intensities are not linear but rather they are influenced by different affects – in this case: proximities and intentions. This chapter maps the social topography of the ways in which non-binary people assemble their social worlds and manage social divisions linguistically.

This chapter also unpacks the concept of misgendering, asserting that misgendering is a multidimensional concept – that is, misgendering is not always intentional; it does not always have the same negative effects on people; and when

distress does emerge, it does not hold the same intensity for each person. Yet, the language-related distress that misgendering generates can build up over time, thus producing long-lasting psychological repercussions on these research participants. Cisnormativity is at the heart of non-binary erasure, and it is expressed linguistically through misgendering – whether purposeful or not. As such, the prevailing assumption that gender is a two-and-only-two system affects the social invisibility of non-binary people (Lucal, 1999).

Lastly, this chapter outlines some of these psychological repercussions, including distress, distancing, and isolation. However, I argue that the emergence of non-binary communities (both online and offline) is an important protective factor against these negative repercussions. These communities can therefore produce connectivity, belonging, and social representation which can counter language-based discrimination.

Social Proximities

In the present research, proximity refers to not only the social and physical proximity to other individuals but also to the level of emotional importance of a social interaction. In that sense, bodies can become in relation to other bodies, but only to the extent that they produce an intense, affective response. For instance, an interaction with a significant other is likely more emotionally charged than an interaction with a stranger. Similarly, it is likely that an interaction with one's parents is more emotionally charged than an interaction with a distant relative. However, if a stranger or a distant relative becomes violent or aggressive, this interaction can become intense and emotionally charged. Additionally, proximity does not have to be physical, as a person might be miles away but still affect an individual, e.g., cyberbullying or arguing with a troll on Twitter. The important aspect of this intensity (the proximity) is, therefore, its connection to emotionality – that is, some interactions are more emotionally laden than others. Nonetheless, social proximity (in physical form) is generally a good indicator of the ways in which bodies can affect one another, as these close proximities can generate emotional responses in individuals. Therefore, mapping out levels of physical and social proximity is useful, albeit imperfect.

I found that the emotional distress that misgendering generated on research participants was mediated by the social proximity to other individuals; it was context-dependent. For instance, those who were in close proximity to the individual were expected to affirm their gender linguistically, but this was not expected for those who were not in close proximity. As such, this chapter maps out these social proximities and the levels of emotional distress that these interactions generated on these individuals. This social proximity also influenced (but did not necessarily determine) whether participants came out as non-binary and/or disclose their linguistic becomings to others. These findings were consistent with recent research on “proximal stress experiences” which suggested that trans and gender non-conforming individuals expect rejection (or felt stigma) in “intense and often life-threatening; upsetting and

disparaging; and an expected part of their existence” (Rood et al., 2016, p. 160), consistent with minority stress model (Meyer, 2003).

Intentions

When asked about the ways in which misgendering – and language more generally – affected their mental health, most participants asserted that it depended on the situation. Sometimes these interactions were more distressing than others, as participants were focused on – and were constantly interpreting – the meanings behind others’ language usage. In other words, they were keenly aware of – and paid close attention to – the intentions behind misgendering, depending on the context and the level of social proximity. I will outline below when intentional and unintentional misgendering was likely to occur. This is, however, not a strict binary. Linguistic becomings are constantly negotiated at the individual, interpersonal, and social levels. These affect one another and constantly create new becomings.

As this chapter will demonstrate, intentional misgendering occurred when participants perceived that others misgendered purposely. Therefore, intentional misgendering only occurred when the interlocutor was aware that the participant used, for example, gender-neutral language, but refused to use it. According to the participants in this study, intentional misgendering occurred for a variety of reasons, including hurting the person, refusing to use gender-neutral language because it is “ungrammatical,” or claiming that it was too difficult or excessive. Furthermore, those who intentionally misgendered participants (as perceived by participants) were most likely within close proximity to them. For instance, close friends, close family members (i.e., parents and siblings), colleagues, and classmates, to name a few.

On the other hand, according to the participants, unintentional misgendering occurred primarily for two reasons: being unaware of gender-neutral language, thus gendering the person based on their appearance; or accidentally calling them by their dead language out of habit or lack of practice. Participants suggested that people’s perceptions and assumptions about their gender were often based on their gender presentation or bodily aesthetics. These perceptions were described as some of the biggest challenges in navigating the world as a non-binary person. Thus, participants were well-aware that the way they expressed their gender (clothing, hairstyle, gait, etc.) and their bodily aesthetics (facial structure, chest size, curves, etc.) were some of the key reasons why they were misgendered by others, particularly strangers. In other words, people’s assumption of their presentation and bodily aesthetic rendered their non-binary genders unintelligible (Butler, 1993). Indeed, Tee and Hegarty (2006) suggest that people’s beliefs about the hegemonic gender binary are a reliable predictor of whether a person will reject and invalidate the gender of a person. Likewise, Israel (2005) argues that the difficulty to affirm someone’s gender may be related to the cognitive effort it takes to re-evaluate the gender presentation of a person. However, my research did not measure the speaker’s intent and the aforementioned categories are based on the participants’ perceptions of why they were misgendered and made unintelligible.

84 Language-related distress

It is therefore possible that some forms of misgendering could involve other motivations not studied.

Strangers, acquaintances, and extended family were among those who were most likely to unintentionally misgender non-binary people in the present study. These individuals were the least likely to be in close (emotional) proximity to the participants; therefore, the intensity of the language-related distress was lower than among those in close proximity.

Social Topography: Mapping Out Proximity and Intentions

Based on the participants' accounts, I mapped out the social topography of the language-related distress that misgendering caused them. This distress was affectively related to the levels of social proximity as well as the intentions; therefore, these factors were accounted for in mapping out this affective intensity. Figure 5.1

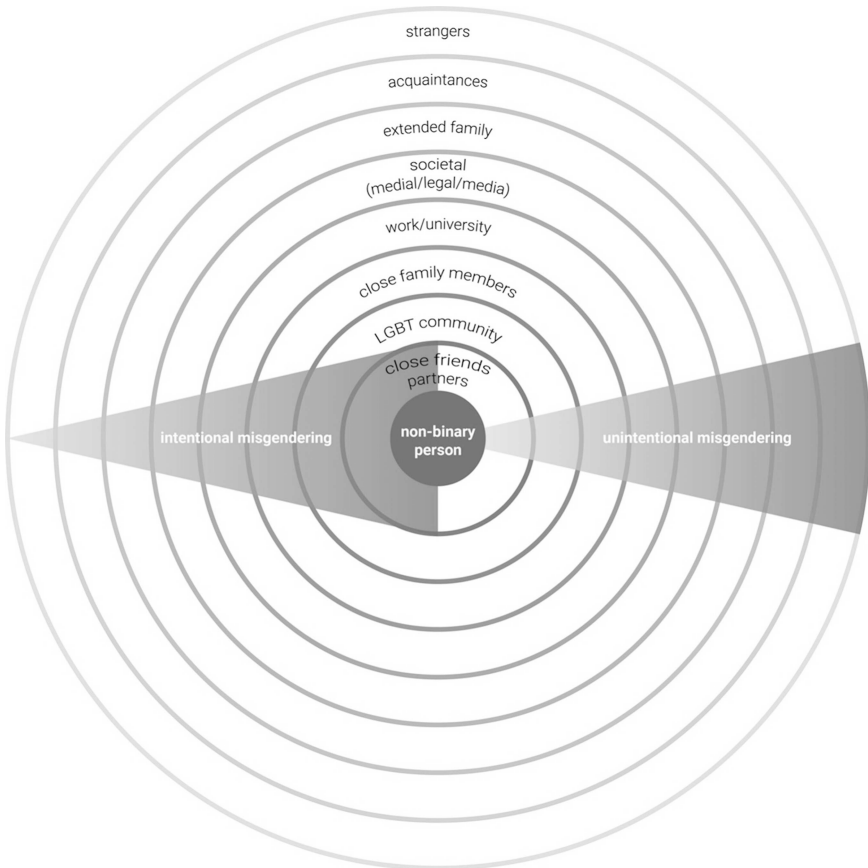


FIGURE 5.1 Intensity of distress, levels of social proximity, and intentions (illustrated by Ynda Jas)

(below) illustrates the intensity of language-related distress caused by misgendering, as it relates to the level of social proximity and the intentions.

In this figure, the circles represent the level of social proximity to the participants. While this model is neither perfect nor static, participants mentioned close friends and partners represented the most important proximity, as it was the most emotionally affective. This was followed by members of the LGBTQ+ community, as this was found to be an important proximity that frequently offered a safe space for non-binary people. The next circle represents close family members (parents and siblings), as these relationships are particularly emotional. These social proximities were then followed by work/university environments, societal (medical/legal/media), extended family, acquaintances, and, lastly, strangers (least emotional).

Intentions are represented in this figure by the two shaded areas. The one on the left-hand side represents the intentional misgendering, while the one on the right-hand side represents the unintentional misgendering. The size of the area they cover within each of the levels of social proximity represents the intensity of the language-related distress these interactions were likely to generate. For instance, in the inner circle (close friends/partners), intentional misgendering was likely to cause a great deal of distress, as shown by the size of the shaded area, whereas unintentional misgendering (perhaps in the form of an occasional mishap), was not considered as distressful. It is therefore argued that intentional misgendering is generally more distressful than unintentional misgendering, but this is mediated by the level of social proximity.

It is also important to mention that, while the misgendering occurring within the outer circles of social proximity is potentially less painful, it can accumulate over time, generating distress that is equally intense as the distress experienced within the inner circles. It is for this reason that the shaded area of unintentional misgendering is large in places of social proximities like acquaintances and strangers. Moreover, the fact that the non-binary (NB) person is in the middle does not imply that they do not have the capacity to move around the outer circles, meaning that sometimes those interactions can be extremely intense, i.e., experiences of outright discrimination and violence.

The following sections will provide further evidence for the language-related stress at each of the proposed proximities: close friends and partners, members of the LGBTQ+ community, close family members, work/university, societal (medical/legal/media), extended family, acquaintances, and strangers. I will therefore show how the intentions within each of these proximities play an affective role in the intensity of this language-related distress.

Close Friends and Partners

Close friends and partners were typically closest in proximity to the participants, and represented one of the most socially important groups. Participants were more likely to inform their close friends and partners about their gender and linguistic

becomings. As such, close friends and partners were (expected to be) the most supportive and affirming. Participants were also likely to spend more (meaningful and emotional) time with this group than any other group – either online or offline. For instance, Shawn commented on the importance of language in their polyamorous relationships with both their husband and boyfriend:

They asked me, “what would you like us to say? ‘cause I don’t wanna start calling you my girlfriend to people ‘cause if that’s gonna make you feel uncomfortable ... So, my husband calls me his wife, which I like because, to me, it’s like, we are married, so, like, I do like using that term. [...] it’s never had any particularly feminine connotations to me. But he’ll use my pronouns in conjunction with that, which makes me feel better about it. So, it would be something like, “oh that’s my wife, do you want to meet them?” So, it’s a feminine gendered title, but like I said, he’ll use my pronouns to negate that a bit, kind of. And my boyfriend tends to just, like, make up whatever at the time. He calls me various things, like, “my lover, my lover, my partner, my special friend”. He’ll make up, like, different things, ‘cause I’m not comfortable with girlfriend [...] has a lot of, like, specific gender connotations. And not even just to do with gender. I think it kind of has expectations attached to it as well. Like, if you say girlfriend people think of you in a certain role. And it’s always been more like that, as supposed to wife. You know, like, wife, I don’t really associate with feminine or a certain way of acting. But girlfriend, I really do. So I’d be really uncomfortable of anyone started referring to me using that. [...] Everyone has their own things that they’re comfortable with. But for me, that’s what it is.

(Shawn, they/them, agender, AFAB. Interview)

Close friends and partners were therefore less likely to misgender participants intentionally, as they were generally supportive. For Shawn, language was context-dependent and highly related to their comfort level. This language had to be negotiated with their significant others, who were supportive and open to experiment with language. When unintentional misgendering did occur, close friends and partners were reported to correct themselves almost immediately, making the participants feel validated and accepted. However, these experiences were also reported as painful. Tanner, for instance, drew a distinction between intentional and unintentional misgendering and their effects:

“If a friend [misgenders me] it’s, like, it feels, like, “oh”. Even though I know that they’re not doing it on purpose, it still hurts me. It hurts me.”

(Tanner, they/them, agender, AFAB. Interview)

For Tanner, these interactions were painful; however, Tanner interpreted and perceived their friend’s intentions – they “knew” that their friends did not intend

to hurt them. Close friends were a great source of support and affirmation. Tyler mentioned about their experience being non-binary around supportive friends:

All of my friends were very, very accepting. I'm lucky to have the most chilled out, malleable group of friends ever. We're really close and the minority of us are actually straight, cisgender people. Like, there's not many of them at all. Everyone is something, so they were all just like: "yeah, totally fine. I'll try and remember." I had a couple of people message me being like, "remind me of your pronouns," or "I'm really sorry that I kept calling you this. I'll try not to do it again." We learn together and make mistakes, and experiment with it and stuff.

(Tyler, they/any, non-binary, AFAB.)

Like Tyler, most participants described having very strong friendships and relationships with other queer and non-binary people, or as "something," as Tyler described it. Coming out to them was very easy, as some already had the language to validate their identity.

Among these friends, it was also common to disclose one's name and pronouns while introducing oneself, a practice that is becoming more widespread in queer groups (Richards & Barker, 2013). As such, among these groups, participants often experimented with names, pronouns, titles, etc. These friends were in very close proximity to the participants – either in person or online – which allowed the participants to have a strong support group with whom they could share experiences, commiserate about similar issues, and exchange useful information that pertains to their gender. Participants suggested that people within these communities spoke the "same language" – that is, these communities were fluent in non-binary language: the labels, pronouns, and other gender-inclusive and affirming language. The data also suggested that these linguistic practices were extremely important to non-binary people in this study, given that they helped to build spaces where non-binary gender identities could be expressed safely and effortlessly, without experiencing any form of sexism, transphobia, misogyny – and where cis- and heteronormativity were not the dominant tendencies.

Although intentional misgendering from close friends and partners rarely occurred, when it did happen, the intensity of the language-related distress was greater. This distress is here theorised as being due to the level of close proximity, the emotionality of the interaction, and the high expectation that misgendering should not occur within these groups. The participants speculated that this type of intentional misgendering was done to hurt their feelings. Blaine discussed how this type of misgendering made them feel:

[The importance of language] really depends on who it is. If it's somebody who knows that I'm agender and who had offered to use gender-neutral pronouns for me, it's very important that they [don't] screw it up or anything. I have a bunch of friends who have known me since I was, like,

seven, and it's totally fine if they accidentally use that. If they were to deliberately refer to me as female either to hurt my feelings or just because they didn't think it was hugely important, that would hurt. I have one friend who insists on introducing me to his mates as a female, as a girl gamer. And that one is really annoying just because I've talked to him about it before and he still does it, so that one is just kind of rude.

(Blaine, they/them, agender, AFAB. Interview)

Blaine makes it clear that, for them, it is hugely important that their close friends use and validate their language; yet Blaine does not expect those to whom they have not disclosed this information to do so. Therefore, there are certain expectations related to disclosing gender and linguistic becomings to close friends and partners. When these expectations were not fulfilled, non-binary people in this research were disappointed. These disappointing interactions sometimes led them to distance themselves from those relationships. Kennedy wrote about a friend who they were sure would not understand their gender and linguistic becomings as non-binary:

They've (Kennedy) seriously considered ending this friendship because they're so sure she just Would. Not. Get. It. But they think about how heartbroken she would be if you ended things. After all, in her mind, you two are still friends and nothing bad has happened between them two from memory.

(Kennedy, they/them, genderfluid, AFAB. Short story)

This evidence supports Saltzburg and Davis' (2010) work that found that young non-binary people found it difficult to have a sense of authenticity without having their identities acknowledged by those around them, especially by those in close proximity. Participants in this study also had a hard time embracing their own identities without being surrounded by people who affirmed their identities. Most non-binary people in this study held close relations with other non-binary people because they were the ones who were more likely to "speak the same language," and to validate and accept their identities linguistically.

LGBTQ+ (queer) Community

Having close relationships with other LGBTQ+ (or queer) people was a significant affective intensity. This intensity allowed non-binary people in this study to feel comfortable and validated. However, understanding about the gender and linguistic becomings of non-binary people was not always consistent within the queer community. Many participants expressed that some queer groups were at times resistant to their identity and language use, particularly cisgender lesbian women and gay men. The participants described experiences of linguistic rejection and intentional misgendering coming from within the queer community. Harper,

for instance, commented on the language-based discrimination they experienced from within the queer community:

There's horrible stuff online all the time, and the lesbian community I used to be a part of can be quite anti-trans, as can the gay community. The worst has been a local LGBT organisation that relentlessly bullied me until I left, it started with misgendering but got worse and worse. And I was asked in a job interview how my gender identity affected the clients I work with, that was pretty blatant discrimination, and they looked at me like I was a piece of shit, something I never experienced even as an out lesbian.

(Harper, they/them, trans and genderqueer, femme, AFAB. Interview)

Others described experiences of rejection emerging from some (binary) trans people who claimed that they did not understand non-binary identities – or saw these identities “not trans enough.” Furthermore, participants described how difficult it was to be openly non-binary, even in spaces where they thought their identities would be affirmed:

The trans masculine [group I go to] can be kind of weird, because, apart from the fact that they have really gendered things, you can see how they relate differently from people who are passing as a man, and people who decide not to fall into all the stereotypes that come with it. People who are just as transphobic as cis people who say there's two genders [or who say] you can't wear skirts if you're a transgender man and things like. At some point I've had a phase where I have to pass otherwise I'm not really transgender. I think it's a lot of insecurities and I'm wanting to feel real or trans enough, but it shouldn't be like that.

(Charlie, they/them, genderfluid, AFAB. Interview)

Participants also stated that some of these tensions emerged due to the lack of awareness regarding non-binary identities – that is, most people are not aware that non-binary genders are a possibility. Others related these tensions to the privileges that some queer people, particularly gay men, have gained in recent years (representation, legal rights, etc.). Participants saw non-binary identities as lacking any privileges and being at the bottom of the hierarchy. Kennedy commented on this:

I'm not expecting non-binary people to be represented on the same level as binary trans people and I'm not expecting binary trans people to be necessarily on the same level as cis gay and or cis lesbian people. There will still be that hierarchy I just described, but the gaps between binary trans people and cis queer people will be much smaller.

(Kennedy, they/them, genderfluid, AFAB. Interview)

Given the highly emotional proximity of these interactions, participants had expectation that their identities would or should be affirmed within these communities. These expectations quickly turned into disappointment and distress. Kennedy described hierarchy of privilege within the queer community. In this hierarchy, binary sexualities such as gay and lesbian are at the top, followed by binary trans genders such as men and women, followed by non-binary sexualities (such as bisexuality, pansexuality, asexuality, etc.) and, lastly, non-binary genders. As such, non-binary people expressed feeling as though they were a minority within a minority. This minority status, which was reinforced by microaggressions (Nadal et al., 2012) within the LGBTQ+ community, significantly contributed to the language-related distress that these participants experienced.

Non-binary people, however, formed their own communities – either online or offline – which positively contributed to their gender and linguistic becomings. Most of the participants in this study had a consistent group of friends and/or partners who were supportive and affirming of their gender expression, histories, and identities. Therefore, when extremely painful or distressing circumstances occurred, many had a community to rely on or someone with whom to commiserate. Kennedy commented on the positive effects of their non-binary communities:

I turn to my friends for support and usually my non-binary friends for the understanding that they have.

(Kennedy, they/them, genderfluid, AFAB. Interview)

The construction of community through language, therefore, was a critical element in countering the negative effects of misgendering, even then these occurred from within the LGBTQ+ community. Forming their own communities was considered a protective factor against the language-related distress that originated from these interactions.

Close Family Members

About half of the participants were out to their close family members (parents and siblings). However, it was not always easy for those who were out. Some parents simply refused to address their adult children using this language. This generated a considerable amount of distress on the participants, given that this type of misgendering was generally perceived as being intentional. Adrian explained how distressful it was to be misgendered by their family:

[Language] is important to me because I don't feel genuine, and I would like people to refer to me by my pronouns – especially don't use she her pronouns. That's not always the case, though. Especially with my family. They do not get it or understand it, and they just flat out refuse to call me by my pronouns. They only call me by my legal name now, because I legally changed it. So they have to legally refer to me as that.

(Adrian, they/them, non-binary, AFAB. Interview)

Adrian stated that when they were misgendered they did not feel genuine or authentic about themselves; therefore, these interactions with unsupportive family members made them feel devalued, erased, and rendered unintelligible. This, in turn, affected Adrian's self-esteem. Psychological research has found that priming people to focus on their gender causes them to have lower confidence and self-esteem (Fine, 2010). Barker and Richards (2015) suggested that it is perhaps non-binary erasure, discrimination, and lack of visibility that is responsible for the higher rates of mental health issues among non-binary people. Moreover, Harrison et al. (2012) found that over 40% of non-binary people had attempted suicide at some point. The present study supports these research findings, adding that intentional misgendering from people in close emotional proximity is one of the most significant factors for this distress.

Unintentional misgendering, while painful, was less distressing for participants.

Some family members were supportive of their children's gender and linguistic becomings. Shawn, for instance, who recently came out to their parents, explained how their parents reacted to their coming out and how they negotiated this linguistic becoming:

I came out to [my parents] last Christmas and they found that quite confusing at first, but they're quite supportive and they've gotten a lot better at switching pronouns and things like that. I do have to keep reminding them. [...] I kind of came out to them by mentioning another friend of mine who is non-binary 'cause they were getting their pronouns wrong, so I was like, "oh, this person uses they them pronouns", and they were like, "what?" I had to explain that, and then I was like, "and I would also like you to do that for me 'cause I'm also non-binary."

(Shawn, they/them, agender, AFAB. Interview)

Shawn's coming out to their parents was not dissimilar to other participants'. These participants commented on the challenges they faced in ensuring their families would validate their identities linguistically. For most participants, this process was ongoing since family members were accustomed to naming them by their dead language. As such, when family members used this type of language, participants understood – and were keen to perceive and make interpretations about – the intentions behind it.

To make their identities intelligible to their parents, some participants found it easier to explain their gender and linguistic becomings using examples. By drawing from visible concepts or people they knew, participants made their identities not only more concrete but more digestible for their families. For instance, Shawn mentioned that they came out to their parents by pointing out that their friend (a person they knew) was non-binary. Similarly, for Charlie, mentioned that using a concept their parents knew about (transgender) made it

easier for Charlie to come out to their parents. Charlie, who spoke Italian with their parents, commented:

I couldn't explain what it means to be non-binary, I just said that I'm transgender and that I'm gonna transition. [...] But I think they're finally getting used to it, even though they still refuse to use my name and pronouns, or even address me. In Italian we don't have the neutral – everything is gendered. They're generally used to me as a woman instead the masculine, although sometimes my mom and I are having a conversation and she will try and talk in dialect because, in my slang, the last letter of the word is generally cut. The last letter of the words is the one that uses gender. She tried to speak in dialect, even though I know she doesn't like it, just so that she cannot gender me – which is kind of cute.

(Charlie, they/them, genderfluid, AFAB. Interview)

In Charlie's case, explaining to their parents that they identified as transgender (understood here as a trans man) rather than non-binary allowed them to be out and, in fact, worked to their advantage. Italian has grammatical gender, which makes it harder to convey gender-neutrality linguistically. However, their mother used gender-neutral language in the form of an Italian dialect to refer to them, without realising that this was their desired language. However, while Charlie was pleased with this outcome, it could also be interpreted as a microaggression (a subtle, covert form of discrimination) in that Charlie's mother would rather use ambiguous language than to refer to Charlie as male. Charlie's case exemplifies the complexity of linguistic becomings as well as the context-dependency of misgendering. Sometimes the language-related distress was more intense than others. These intensities, I argue, are often modulated by the emotional proximity as well as the intentions of the interlocutor.

About a half of the participants were not out to their family members. These participants reported feeling uncomfortable around their families, as they felt as though they were living a double life – one in which their linguistic choices were affirmed and another one in which these were non-existent. Chris wrote about the unintentional misgendering they endured from their family, which they understood as temporary:

Chris still has to go back home to their parents every Sunday (to look after their pets, who are their responsibility), and be called by their birth name and female pronouns, but Chris could cope with that only once a week, as long as they could go back to their university life, where they are happy and comfortable.

(Chris, they/them, genderfluid, AFAB. Short story)

Chris started to resent their family, so spending time with them became increasingly difficult:

Hiding my gender identity and experimenting with my gender was extremely difficult while I was living with my parents. It was very stressful – which is why I was so glad when I moved out. I was able to be free to express myself how I wanted to, and I live my life how I wanted to. I'm here [at university] six days a week, and only at my home [with parents] one day a week. I can kind of deal with that one day a week where my parents don't know anything and that I'm still closeted. But it's okay 'cause it's just one day a week and then I know I can always go back and be myself again. So it's kind of half and half – mixed emotions.

(Chris, they/them, genderfluid, AFAB. Emphasis added. Interview)

Unintentional and intentional misgendering from family members caused different intensities of distress. For the most part, intentional misgendering was said to be more distressing than unintentional misgendering. However, for some participants, living a “double life” was difficult and, in many ways, equally distressful as intentional misgendering. Yet, participants typically understood the intentions behind misgendering, especially coming from family members, as processes of adapting to their new linguistic choices were slow, complex, and mediated by affects. For instance, parents are accustomed to employing the language they help select for their children (e.g., names, nicknames, pronouns, etc.). Furthermore, some participants sometimes did not mind this type of language around their families, as they understood this language as what they themselves were also accustomed to in these contexts. Tanner explained:

I definitely don't like it when people use female pronouns to refer to me. I mean, although I put up with it, if it's just people I don't know or whatever. But um it definitely um feels wrong. For other gender words I'm not so bothered, um, like, I don't really. Well, I don't ... I don't really like girl or woman, I wouldn't, like, I don't like that. But I don't really mind being called a daughter or a granddaughter. I don't know why, but um so ... Although my auntie calls me her nibling, which I quite like, I think that's nice. But um it doesn't particularly bother me, like, some. yeah, some gendered words definitely bother me more than others. um but yeah ... but also, yeah, it becomes more important the closer I am to someone.

(Tanner, they/them, agender, AFAB. Interview)

Misgendering from close family members was therefore highly contextual, and unpredictable, relating to the ways in which the linguistic processes of becoming are always emerging and transforming as they are affected by multiple affective intensities.

Work/University

Occupational environments such as work and university were in the inner circles given that participants tended to spend a great deal of time in these spaces. Thus,

there was a great deal of exposure and proximity. Out of 22 participants, 15 currently had jobs, one was unemployed, and five were university students at the time of the interview. Out of the 15 participants that were employed, seven were out as non-binary to their employers, although one of them, Toby, had not informed their employer about their pronouns, and another, Ryan, told his employers that he was a trans man rather than a non-binary person. And although these seven participants were mostly happy that they had come out to their employers, four of them regretted doing so. This was due to issues related to language and discrimination that they had faced at work since coming out. For instance, Rudy came out at work, and they said:

I had to deal with so many really rude questions – from one blonde girl in particular. There was one night out where they kept misgendering me and they ended up getting really nasty towards me at the end of the night when I called them out on it. And the worst thing was that, because they’d been drinking a lot, they did not remember. Other people who saw what happened didn’t actually take my side and, in fact, no one took my side in that incident. They all took her side. And, it really, really stuck because I had to go back into work the next few days and pretend that I was okay. And I really, really wasn’t and I just had no support. And I eventually got called into the office and was told I wasn’t wearing makeup.

(Rudy, they/them, non-existent, AFAB. Interview)

Rudy was eventually dismissed from their job. Rudy thought that the main reason they were let go was because they did not embody a stereotypical “retail girl” persona; they also suspected that it had to do with the fact that none of their colleagues were willing to employ their pronoun. Now Rudy thinks it is best to not talk about their gender identity at work, especially in retail jobs, because of the negative repercussions that they have previously endured. Similarly, for Charlie, coming out at work was very difficult and distressful. Charlie described being harassed and threatened at work by their former workmates:

There is a really thin line between being too visible and being unsafe, because the people at my job have attempted to punch me in the face if I say that I’m not a woman again.

(Charlie, they/them, genderfluid, AFAB. Interview)

Safety, therefore, was a non-trivial issue for non-binary people in this study. Participants had to navigate workplace environments in which binary gender stereotypes are still highly prevalent. In many cases, language became a very distressful issue, given that the misgendering that they experienced tended to be intentional. In addition, the threat of psychical and verbal violence became imminent when they stood up for their gender and linguistic becomings. In many cases, this led participants to avoid social situations in which their identities were

not linguistically affirmed. These findings resemble ScottishTrans.org's (2016) findings which suggest that over three-quarters of non-binary people avoid situations for fear of being misgendered, outed, or harassed. Additionally, ScottishTrans.org. found that only 6% of non-binary people in the survey felt confident being out at work, whereas 55% never felt comfortable. In other research, 80% of the sample thought that they had to pass as male or female in order to be accepted at their workplace (Valentine, 2016). In the present study, eight participants had not come out to their employers. These participants expressed their fears of being out at work. For instance, Adrian explained:

I've never been out at work for anything, because I've just sort of had this fear. And now I still have that fear of being rejected and questioned. I do feel like I could've gotten other [job] opportunities. And either I didn't take them or I wasn't offered because of this sort of layer of "we don't want you here [because of your gender]." I've had some bad experiences.

(Adrian, they/them, non-binary, AFAB. Interview)

Adrian thought that most employers have cisnormative expectations (Worthen, 2016) about their employees. Participants reported that employers typically expect their employees to be cisgender and to fit within the hegemonic gender binary. These employers might not have any type of diversity training, and Adrian did not have the emotional energy to negotiate their gender and linguistic becomings with their employers. Others were strategic about not coming out, as doing so represented a burden to them. In these situations, therefore, the misgendering is unintentional. As previously argued, however, this does not mean that it is not painful. As Dana herself mentioned:

Sometimes it hurts more than others when people use language to refer to you that is misgendering. But even when you sort of blow it off, like I said, most of the time at work, it's just fine. But sometimes it just feels like a thousand paper cuts. And you know, by the end of the day you're like, "how many times has someone misgendered me today?" It's really difficult to speak about someone without using a pronoun, particularly when you're not aware that's a problem. And so, sometimes by the end of the day you just feel like, you've just been robbed raw and you're like, "how many billions of times did someone refer to me as she and Miss today?"

(Dana, they/them, genderqueer, AFAB, Emphasis added. Interview)

The use of the metaphor "a thousand paper cuts" encapsulates the feelings of the non-binary participants who are constantly misgendered (both intentionally and unintentionally) at work. There is a clear trade-off between being out and safety – that is, for some, it is simply not possible to be out as non-binary at work for fear that they will be removed from their jobs, intentionally misgendered, harassed, or threatened. Therefore, even though the misgendering might be unintentional for

those who are not out, to them, it is just a reminder that they are unable to express their gender – both visually and linguistically. I argue that this, in turn, can become distressing, causing psychological harm.

Being out at work or university, therefore, was not easy. Many employers and higher education institutions are unaware about the existence of non-binary people and the language surrounding these identities – or have not taken any action to implement gender-affirming policies. Participants in this study suggested that these interactions were significant, as they spend a great deal of time in these settings. Those who were out at work sometimes risked losing their jobs due to the view that their linguistic choices required an excessive amount of work (Airton, 2018). Many participants decided that coming out at work was simply too difficult at the time of the interviews. Furthermore, the distress that these interactions caused was largely mediated by the level of social proximity as well as the intentions. The fact that participants spent such a great deal of time in these settings, however, suggests that the amount of distress was similar whether the misgendering was intentional or unintentional.

Societal

In terms of the societal interactions (i.e., in organisational settings such as medical, legal, and media arenas), the distress that linguistic misgendering caused on the participants was severe. Linguistic invalidations in society were seen as invisibilising non-binary people's gender experience on a daily basis. Participants commented on some of the ways society is changing its views on gender diversity; however, they suggested that this is happening at a very slow pace. The misgendering emerging from these social institutions can be both intentional or unintentional, depending on the individual or the organisation. For instance, a bank that refuses to allow its customers to use Mx might be doing this intentionally, whereas a doctor who is unaware of gender diversity might misgender a non-binary person unintentionally.

Similar to the issues of disclosure in the workplace, some non-binary people did not feel comfortable disclosing their gender to their doctors. Some did not think it was relevant information and did not want to deal with it. Others, more purposely, feared that doing so would complicate the process of receiving gender-affirming services. For instance, Charlie was in the process of acquiring hormones from a gender clinic in the UK; however, they did not disclose that they were non-binary to the gender clinic because they feared that doing so would delay the process:

I read horrible experiences people have had with [gender clinics]. People have to wait longer for having what they wanted, and considering that is already between one and five years, I didn't want risk having to wait even longer, which is really stressful. [...] To be fair, it's not like I lied. They just told me to say my gender, so when they said, "are you a woman?" I just said, "no." And they just assume that I was a man. So, like, yeah, they wrote

down on the form that I was pretending to be really masculine because I was wearing trousers and a jumper. And for them that's masculine, that's fair enough. They just assumed I was gonna use he/him pronouns, but I use they/them pronouns. They just assumed that I was a trans man. So, it works with me because I was gonna [take hormones] anyway.

(Charlie, they/them, genderfluid, AFAB. Interview)

Similarly, Dana was able to get a hysterectomy due to a health issue; however, Dana was careful not to mention anything about their gender because they suspected that disclosing would delay their treatment:

I know that, if I did want to think about any sort of medical transitioning, it is difficult for non-binary people. About a year and a half ago, I had a hysterectomy, because I had a long-standing health problem. And from a gender standpoint, I was pleased to get a hysterectomy anyway. I was also pleased from a gender standpoint because I thought “ha-ha, you don't know I'm non-binary, but you're giving me a surgery that I would possibly want anyway.” But the whole time I was jumping through the hoops to get this hysterectomy, which took about two years, I was so careful never to say anything about gender because I thought if I did then that they would say the only reason you're pushing for this is because you think you have this gender issue.

(Dana, they/them, genderqueer, AFAB. Interview)

Both Charlie and Dana feared disclosing their gender to their doctors due to their fear that it would delay treatment. In a sense, both Charlie and Dana inferred that the medical establishment foregrounds physical issues as more legitimate than gender identity issues. Research by Vince (2016) suggested that to be medically legitimised, transgender people are expected to conform to the binary medical models of gender/sex, as discussed in previous chapters. Within this model of trans health, non-binary people are often required to be diagnosed with gender dysphoria to receive gender-affirming services. Moreover, participants suggested that when these parameters were disrupted (e.g., not fitting binary models, not displaying dysphoria, etc.), they risked being rejected or delayed for services. This generated a distress similar to the one experienced in the workplace, as their identities were rendered as illegitimate or not “trans enough.” I argue that the misgendering in these cases was also unintentional. Yet, the secrecy had to be maintained in order to receive the appropriate services, which added to the distress of these (highly distressful) interactions generated.

Shawn agreed that non-binary people were typically forced to fit into a (binary) trans narrative:

If you're non-binary and want to have some type of medical transition, you basically have to lie to the doctors to be able to get what you want or what

you need and you have to fit in more with the kind of standard trans narratives of, you know, “I’m a man trapped in a woman’s body kind of thing, which is very outdated.”

(Shawn, they/them, agender, AFAB. Interview)

This is immediately related to legal and societal recognition. In the UK, The Gender Recognition Act requires evidence of a person having been diagnosed with gender dysphoria. (Gender Recognition Act, 2004, section 1); however, to receive this certificate, the person needs to identify as either a man or a woman for at least two years. Therefore, anyone who identifies with a non-binary gender is not recognised. This, in turn, creates a lack of societal recognition, delegitimising non-binary identities. Shawn commented on a variety of societal circumstances in which non-binary genders are intentionally delegitimised:

I think that legally there’s very little legal support for non-binary people. There’s no protection under the law. Also, just getting things like a title change in a bank card. You can’t really legally contest things without having a documents to back you up, even though technically you don’t need one. It’s just like a title change. There’s a lot of gate-keeping and paperwork and it’s just very hard to do things like that. There’s very precedence as well. In the Jack Monroe’s case against Katie Hopkins – in the judge’s judgment, their [Jack’s] pronouns had to be written down as she/her. And even though they use the title Mx, they had to be written down as Ms. just because the legal system is not able to accommodate non-binary people.

(Shawn, they/them, agender, AFAB. Interview)

Jack Monroe’s case was brought up because it was relevant to non-binary people being delegitimised in society, particularly in the UK. While there have been some movements in the UK to allow people to use X on identity documents (Elan-Cane, 2014), these have been largely unsuccessful. However, a court of appeal in the UK has recently ruled that not recognising non-binary genders is unlawful, arguing that it is a human rights issue (Bowcott, 2019). Many participants in this study, like Shawn, saw this as an example for the intentional delegitimisation of their identities in society. This erasure, in turn, produced an affective intensity of distress, as their minority status was not recognised (Meyer, 2003).

Extended Family

Due to the lack of proximity with extended family, most participants had not disclosed their gender and linguistic belongings with extended family members. Many of their extended family members lived far away or had different religious or political views, which meant that coming out to them was difficult and, in some

cases, undesirable. For instance, Adrian described their experience with extended family members:

I haven't told the rest of my family, which is my aunts and my cousins, and stuff, because [...] I'm not as close to them, and they're pretty heavy on the Christianity, so I'm not entirely sure whether I should come out to them or not.

(Adrian, they/them, non-binary, AFAB. Interview)

When extended family members were around, participants were often misgendered. However, this misgendering was generally interpreted to be unintentional, as these family members were mostly unaware about their gender and linguistic becomings of these participants. The distress that emerges from these interactions was, therefore, minimal. Yet, like the rest of unintentional misgenderings, the distress can intensify over time. Dana, for instance, spoke about the discomfort they often feel around their extended family:

Around extended family, my family in general, but particularly my extended family um, so I think some of this actually connects to being mixed-race because um so like I said I have a haircut and an aesthetic but sometimes people read as queer, and you know, certainly not traditionally as feminine. And as somebody who is mixed-race, I often felt like I was in valid as, you know, a Filipina or whatever. And, you know, a lot of my cousins are very traditionally feminine, with great, flowing long hair and perfect make up and stuff. They speak Tagalog and do Filipino things that I was a raised to do or I'm not familiar with. And then the fact that I fail at gender, I fail at, you know, being a proper Filipina or something. So when I'm around my extended family, um, and this is true as well for the Finnish part of my family, um, you know, the ways that I don't fit, um, so I think when I feel like I fail at gender that makes me feel even more vulnerable round them.

(Dana, they/them, genderqueer, AFAB. Interview)

Many participants, like Dana, expressed feeling vulnerable and uncomfortable around extended family since, in many cases, there were familial expectations to perform a traditional gender role. This was especially true as most non-binary people in this study described not being out to their extended families. While these interactions were mostly negative and distressing, they were also described as temporary – and therefore not as emotionally intense as close family members. Participants, in many ways, placed their extended families at a safe, emotional distance, thus discounting the emotional intensities of these interactions. I argue that this was done to protect themselves from potential distress, and to escape the dominant discourses and expectations around gender which are often embedded in traditional family interactions.

Acquaintances

Given that acquaintances were also not in close social proximity to non-binary people in this study, the intensity of distress was very similar to the one experienced by extended family, although slightly less. Like extended family, not all acquaintances were informed about the linguistic becomings of the individual. Therefore, most of the misgendering was unintentional. Aspen stated how unimportant it was for them to come out to acquaintances, given the lack of emotionality:

Day-to-day and sort of acquaintances and stuff like that, it's not that important, 'cause otherwise I have to be explaining it forever and you can't. You don't have the energy to explain it to every single person that you meet or interact with.

(Aspen, they/them, non-binary, AFAB. Interview)

Most participants found that it was not necessary to disclose their gender and linguistic becomings to acquaintances. Aspen mentioned that they did not have the “emotional energy” to come out to acquaintances, inferring that it would be impossible to disclose this to every single person they met. There was no emotional attachment. Therefore, misgendering was often unintentional, not as distressful, and in some cases, expected. Ari, however, did make it a point to come out to everyone they met:

It's never a one-time thing. But, because I know I get misgendered left, right, and centre, that if I don't say something then it's just gonna be worse. [...] I won't just say my name, but also my pronouns are they and them. And that's very important for me. And sometimes I wonder: does it make a difference? should I even bother? But it is important to me because this is who I am. [Yet,] if I'm on my own with just, like, one person I've just met, sometimes I feel uncomfortable with people I don't know very well.

(Ari, they/them, non-binary, AFAB. Interview)

For Ari, it was important to disclose their gender and linguistic becomings to acquaintances (in this case, during an evening class they were taking). Not doing so, in their view, implied that they were constantly misgendered. Thus, by coming out, they attempted to avoid future misgendering, pain, and distress. Nevertheless, Ari later emphasised that they only disclose their gender and pronouns when they feel safe doing so:

I've had had some bad reactions in the past, not even talking about myself but mentioning trans people. You have to be aware of personal, physical safety. Being a survivor or a lot of violence, I don't want to be closeted

about it but I also don't wanna bring up stuff that might make things more – not every battle I have to fight.

(Ari, they/them, non-binary, AFAB. Interview)

Safety is, again, a very important issue to consider here. There were situations in which coming out and requiring people to use gender-neutral language was simply impossible and were therefore avoided:

Not everybody has the same opportunities to use this language because it will put them in danger – sometimes even violence. If they use a certain type of pronoun and someone doesn't like that, and decides to escalate it, it can get pretty deadly. I don't think many people are sympathetic to non-binary people or really understand that fully. They get the language to refer to them, this, that, and the other. But they don't really understand that people's choices might be shaped because we live in pretty violent and horrible society. So there are people who will escalate things beyond reason. And that doesn't negate anyone's identity, and we have to deal with that aspect of it as well as the language. It's not enough to just use my pronouns, you have to sort of be willing to create a society where I feel safe enough to use it – where it's just normal to use those pronouns, where I don't have to go around wearing a little badge.

(Adrian, they/them, non-binary, AFAB. Interview)

Adrian's comment about safety and violence alluded to an important issue regarding language among the non-binary community in the UK: privilege. Who gets to be out as non-binary and who has the cultural capital to do it safely? As mentioned earlier, those who were students or worked in trans-affirming jobs did not have as many issues coming out and requesting others to use their pronouns as much as those who worked in more conservative environments, or those who worked in "blue-collar" jobs such as customer service or retail. It can be argued that those participants who held trans-affirming jobs might have made considerable efforts to get themselves into positions where they could be out as non-binary. It is also true that most of the participants were of white British descent and masculine-of-centre in terms of gender expression. Arguably, these categories come with pre-established societal privileges, which others might not enjoy, e.g., Ari, an older black, bisexual, disabled person. Furthermore, safety was a major concern in coming out to acquaintances. Participants understood the context-dependency of these interactions and made decisions about disclosure based on these assessments.

Strangers

Misgendering originating from strangers was almost certainly unintentional, as interpreted by participants. Most individuals make assessments of people's genders

based on context cues such as gender presentation, voice, and gait. Strangers were, therefore, very likely to misgender the participants in this study. Brook, for instance, mentioned the ways in which their appearance resulted in assumptions about their gender from strangers:

Most people that I've encountered, especially, you know, strangers on the street or people who I might not have told I'm genderqueer, um, unless is one of the days where I feel female and I'm identifying as female, then they'll be assuming that I am female. And it's sort of something that I've started to think about in the last year because I just sort of had a moment one day where I was like, "oh, no one else knows I'm genderqueer unless I tell them or make it obvious through my self-expression". So that means that most people are misgendering anytime I go out. um and I stood there in a weird moment because, ultimately, it only matters to me when it's someone that I would expect ... when it's something that's in my life and important in my life.

(Brook, she/they, genderqueer woman, AFAB. Interview)

While these interactions and misgendering were, for the most part, tolerable, they still generated uneasy feelings among the participants. As argued previously, these interactions have the potential to build up over time and can create irreparable damage to non-binary individuals. There is also the potential for verbal and physical violence from strangers, especially when the participants' gender expressions were "too feminine" (particularly for AMAB participants) or "unclear" to strangers:

It feels like the more feminine I express my gender identity, or the most things I wear that are read as feminine, the more street harassment I get. People walking behind me for long periods of time, and following me. People taking video, people yelling comments. And, the interesting thing is that they often conflate homophobic abuse and transphobic abuse to a singular thing. And one really interesting example was when I was at a bus stop coming back from a pub a month ago, this person came to me and my friend and started threatening. [...] He also yelled homophobic slurs while also saying that he hates "bangers" like me. So it's really interesting mixture of homophobia and transphobia and how people conceive these things - and that you can see through street harassment.

(Elliott, they/them, genderqueer woman, AMAB. Interview)

Elliott's experience is related to Julia Serano's idea of trans-misogyny. Serano (2007) argues that transphobia is strongly linked to misogyny in that those who present feminine traits can be seen as inferior to cis men, and thus experience both types of prejudice. Therefore, safety was also a crucial issue for non-binary people. It is important to note that recent reports have shown that 69% of non-binary

people in a UK survey did not feel comfortable sharing their non-binary identity with the police, which is likely to prevent non-binary people from reporting hate crimes (Valentine, 2016). This is particularly troubling, as non-binary people who present femininely or are on the trans-feminine spectrum are frequent targets of harassment and discrimination.

Overall, it can be said when strangers misgendered participants, the intensity of distress was minimal, as the level of emotional proximity was small. The (emotional) intensity of these interactions was also safeguarded by non-disclosure – that is, participants were not expected to come out to strangers, and everyone simply moved on. However, when gender expressions were unintelligible, interactions with strangers could potentially become violent (verbally and/or physically). As such, interactions with strangers could potentially become greatly distressing. It can also be argued that being a masculine-of-centre non-binary person can be a protective factor for some types of street harassment (verbal and physical), but this too would be an oversimplification.

Concluding Remarks

This chapter has demonstrated the ways in which social proximities and intentions related (affected and were affected by) the concept of misgendering and its psychological consequences (distress) among non-binary people in this study. A topography of social interaction was therefore mapped out, wherein the intensity of distress was shown to be dependent upon these affective intensities (proximities and intentions).

I found that misgendering emerging from close (emotional) proximities often resulted in more intense distress; however, the perceived intentions behind such utterances often diminished this effect. In (emotionally) distant interactions such as extended family, acquaintances, or strangers, the distress caused by misgendering was found to be less intense. However, this distress could accumulate over time. In other words, this chapter showed that the amount of emotional energy participants “invested” in helping people understand their linguistic becomings was a significant affective intensity. While this model is not perfect, it is a close approximation to the different intensities that non-binary people experience in different contexts.

Levels of safety and the ability to disclose were not uniform for all non-binary people in this study. There were indeed several intersections (or assemblages) that would allow or disallow someone to be out as non-binary safely: class, education, race, presentation, etc. For instance, regarding education, it can be stated that those who have the cultural capital, education, and the language to come out as non-binary have a societal advantage over those who are not as educated or as involved in non-binary discourses regarding identities and language. Many of the participants in the present study were, as argued in the previous chapter, well-versed in gender theory and discourse; therefore, this research may not fully represent the voices of those who experience other forms of oppression (homelessness, domestic violence, poverty, etc.) and who might not be out to anyone at

all. As such, most participants have used the knowledge accumulated through the affective intensity of “learning about gender diversity” to craft their own narrative and define and discount prospective opponents.

The prevalence of societal cisnormativity was found to be expressed linguistically in a variety of social contexts. This ideology was expressed through linguistic erasure in the form of intentional and unintentional misgendering. Their effects on non-binary people, particularly poor mental health outcomes (e.g., distress, isolation, low self-esteem) were evident in this chapter. Regardless of the context and social proximity, non-binary people in this study hoped that their identities would, one day, be (linguistically) recognised more widely:

They wish people in society would just accept our existence as we are and believe that we exist and understand our own selves enough and stop questioning the validity of our genders, stop making jokes about our existences and stop having the power to try and prove whether or not we are the gender we say we are.

(Charlie, they/them, genderfluid, AFAB. Short story)

6

THE NON-BINARY CORPUS: A NETWORK OF LINGUISTIC AND MATERIAL INTENSITIES

As previously discussed, the interview and short story data were analysed and presented in the previous two chapters, serving as a guiding basis upon which the present analysis will draw. In this chapter, I will turn my attention to the corpus data. These findings will add to the present analysis and will continue to shed some light on the gender and linguistic becomings of non-binary people in the online realm, and will show how this virtual environment was used to communicate the linguistic and material elements of the non-binary-assemblage.

This chapter presents the quantitative and qualitative results that emerged from the non-binary corpus (NBC). Analyses were conducted using corpus linguistics tools, including frequency, keyness, collocation, and a visual network. This corpus-based approach led to a systematic analysis of the NBC, narrowing down this large dataset (2.9 million words) to a more manageable subsample. This chapter also outlines the qualitative analysis of the NBC and discusses the significance of “linguistic becomings” to the ways in which non-binary people seek authenticity online. As such, this chapter describes the various processes of linguistic emergence: discovering, adopting, and (re)negotiating language, as well as the material elements (or affective embodiments) involved in the processes of gender becoming, including fluidity, neutrality, and (body) dysphoria.

A Quantitative Analysis of the Non-Binary Corpus

This section offers a quantitative, descriptive overview of the linguistic patterns that emerged from the NBC. The NBC is composed of 2.9 million words from an online forum where non-binary people discuss their identities, ask for support, and share information pertaining to non-binary identities and discourses. Sketch Engine (Kilgariff et al., 2004) was used to produce frequency, keyness, collocation, and concordance analyses of the NBC. A network map of the language used

in the NBC was also created using Gephi (Bastian et al., 2009). While these analyses aided in identifying the most saliently intense words within the forum, they were simply a mechanism used to narrow down the NBC (a large data-set) and turn it into a more manageable sub-sample of concordances, which were then analysed qualitatively.

Frequency Analysis

The fifty most frequent words in the NBC are listed below (Table 6.1). To contextualise these frequent words, I have also included the fifty most frequent words in the enTenTen13 reference corpus. The words that are not common between the two corpora have been highlighted.

TABLE 6.1 The 50 most frequent words in the NBC and the enTenTen13

<i>NBC</i>		<i>enTenTen13</i>	
<i>Word</i>	<i>Freq</i>	<i>Word</i>	<i>Freq</i>
I	503534	the	964787346
the	453616	to	558301035
to	423720	and	553532182
and	381507	of	516717484
a	308900	a	427921752
of	261580	in	318494241
that	228086	is	245015015
it	222190	that	215149066
is	209183	for	195970779
in	172401	I	174347982
you	139935	you	160428344
n't	118902	with	149250264
my	118250	it	138417245
are	113169	on	138409664
on	111754	are	125108605
be	110093	The	120204565
have	109206	be	119613102
for	109024	as	119300060
by	103780	was	100497282
me	96145	have	97328322
as	96014	or	89181343
do	95944	this	85899632
with	94398	at	82939458
they	94097	not	82625892
but	92791	your	82027624
not	87829	from	81389534
or	86447	by	76204657
was	76636	will	73924331

(Continued)

TABLE 6.1 (Continued)

NBC		enTenTen13	
Word	Freq	Word	Freq
this	69494	can	71664613
like	65871	an	67319888
just	65637	they	58495383
so	57754	but	57048661
can	56511	we	56708475
them	55807	has	55665374
all	54085	all	55179592
about	53642	their	53900633
we	53356	n't	51985913
what	51574	more	49907525
more	49835	do	48091201
people	49424	he	47909142
out	49144	one	46813651
at	49096	his	46399792
if	48182	my	45206844
your	46536	about	44655633
will	46028	which	44645342
one	44980	out	40610952
It	44424	up	40045592

It can be immediately observed from this frequency list that function words (pronouns, prepositions, articles, conjunctions, and auxiliary verbs) are the most common in both corpora. Function words account for over 50% of the words people use to communicate (Rochon et al., 2000); therefore, these findings were to be expected, and show that the NBC was “normal” with regards to these frequencies. The only evident difference between the two corpora was the frequent use of the personal pronouns *I* and *my* and the inclusion of *me* in the NBC. This was an expected finding, as the NBC was built from a forum where non-binary-identified people wrote about their own identities from a personal perspective. Aside from these obvious findings, there are not many differences in terms of frequency between these two corpora.

Keyword Analysis

The top fifty content keywords are listed below (Table 6.2). Supplemental information such as overall frequencies in both corpora is also included.

It is immediately evident that words which refer to trans and non-binary genders – and observed discourses – were highly prevalent in the NBC. For example, the words *gender*, *trans*, *transgender*, and *non-binary* were the four most salient words in the corpus. This implies that these words were not as common in the EnTenTen13 corpus, compared to the NBC. In fact, the word *non-binary* only occurred 79 times in the

TABLE 6.2 Top 50 keywords in the NBC ranked in order of keyness when compared against the enTenTen13 corpus

<i>Rank</i>	<i>Keyword</i>	<i>NBC freq</i>	<i>enTenTen13 freq</i>	<i>Score (simple maths)</i>
1	gender	9293	570531	23
2	trans	6194	87112	18.8
3	transgender	5230	56056	16.3
4	non-binary	4581	79	14.7
5	female	4255	1722127	7.8
6	male	3431	1669870	6.5
7	dysphoria	1771	3157	6.3
8	binary	1585	181135	5.3
9	identity	2199	1025927	5.2
10	transition	1974	761551	5.2
11	feminine	1332	190422	4.6
12	hate	1853	1255106	4.2
13	LGBT	985	106948	3.8
14	feel	8011	13056662	3.7
15	gay	1340	814159	3.7
16	self	1680	1689015	3.5
17	hormone	1102	565441	3.4
18	masculine	845	96952	3.4
19	bathroom	1201	822578	3.4
20	HRT	803	22097	3.4
21	cis	792	35320	3.3
22	sex	1849	2202787	3.3
23	pronoun	786	29328	3.3
24	woman	5642	10324834	3.2
25	hell	1184	994708	3.2
26	MTF	689	5295	3.1
27	fuck	1007	871365	2.9
28	transsexual	624	21570	2.8
29	feeling	1487	2269803	2.7
30	surgery	1209	1590397	2.7
31	hurt	1072	1297230	2.7
32	hair	1836	3298871	2.7
33	girl	2269	4454291	2.6
34	guy	2048	4165848	2.5
35	discrimination	612	316639	2.5
36	accept	1535	2865530	2.5
37	transitioning	509	52067	2.5
38	lesbian	574	232810	2.5
39	fear	1300	2294491	2.4
40	queer	500	73398	2.4
41	people	11528	31466725	2.4
42	restroom	490	83445	2.4
43	androgynous	461	941	2.4
44	genderqueer	460	1622	2.4

(Continued)

TABLE 6.2 (Continued)

Rank	Keyword	NBC freq	enTenTen13 freq	Score (simple maths)
45	happy	1658	3520820	2.3
46	androgynous	445	7874	2.3
47	love	4778	12713320	2.3
48	truth	1241	2360542	2.3
49	wear	1653	3635717	2.3
50	society	1489	3148931	2.3

EnTenTen13 corpus, showing that this identity category had not been widely discussed online at the time of its construction. This was not a surprising finding, as the word *non-binary* (as it pertains to gender identity discourses) did not gain a great deal of traction until 2014 when Facebook allowed its users to self-select their own gender, while the EnTenTen13 corpus only originated in 2013.

Collocational Analysis: Word Sketches

Each of the 50 keywords yielded an average of 8 collocations, ranging from 0 collocates (for example: *hate, fuck, genderqueer*) to 28 collocates (*gender*), producing a total of 385 collocates. Table 6.3 (below) presents the collocations for the top ten keywords.

Words which only appeared once either as a keyword or as a collocate were excluded from the analysis. This process resulted in a total of 173 collocation pairs (212 fewer words than the original analysis), averaging to four words per keyword. After eliminating words which only appeared once, six of the original keywords (*hate, fuck, transsexual, transitioning, queer, and genderqueer*) were found not to co-collocate with any of the other words; therefore, they were removed from the final analysis. This reduced the number of keywords to 44 and the number of unique words to 85 (44 keywords and 41 interrelated collocations). As such, these 85 words represent not only the most salient words within the NBC but also the ways in which these words are connected to one another: their *intensities* (in DeleuzoGuattarian terms). Table 6.4 shows the top ten keywords and their collocations after elimination of words which did not co-collocate.

Keywords were then re-arranged in order of “most intense” words – that is, the keywords that contained the highest number of co-collocations and were, therefore, the most relational. The keywords *woman* and *gender*, for instance, contained the most co-collocates, 17 and 15 respectively. As such, these words were deemed highly relevant, central, relational, and therefore *intense*. The ten most intense words (inter-connected keywords and collocations) are listed below (Table 6.5).

Reducing the number of collocates ensured that the words of interest were not only intense in terms of keyness, but also in terms of their relationship to other words. This analysis, therefore, begins to illustrate the relational and productive ways in which language was used within the NBC.

TABLE 6.3 Collocations for the top 10 keywords

<i>Gender</i>	<i>Trans</i>	<i>Transgender</i>	<i>Non-binary</i>	<i>Female</i>
fine	cis	androgynous	bigendered	male
construct	woman	christian	transition	declare
identity	women	people	entering	presentation
certificate		transsexuals	binary	human
difference		woman	enter	body
identify		bigender	identify	present
confuse		student	transitioned	mostly
neutral		black	mtf	biologically
birth		being	gender	prefer
sex		community		bear
do				fully
fluid				identify
sexuality				
live				
confusing				
role				
think				
dysphoria				
more				
talk				
non-binary				
expression				
perception				
non-conforming				
identify				
part				
your				
question				
<i>Male</i>	<i>Dysphoria</i>	<i>Binary</i>	<i>Identity</i>	<i>Transition</i>
female	suffer	non-binary	research	begin
body	body	trans	gender	option
birth	trigger	system	consistent	want
everything	cowardice	transfolk	expression	full
present	alleviate		orientation	non-binary
identify	depression		person	concentration
neither	power		struggle	to
bear	deal		clinic	hormone
	gender		base	go
	spike		did	change
			sense	
			basis	
			disorder	
			crisis	
			woman	
			sexuality	

TABLE 6.4 Co-collocations for the top ten keywords

<i>Gender</i>	<i>Trans</i>	<i>Transgender</i>	<i>Non-binary</i>	<i>Female</i>
identity	cis	androgyne	transition	male
identify	woman	people	binary	body
neutral		woman	identify	present
birth		community	mtf	bear
sex			gender	identify
do				
sexuality				
live				
think				
dysphoria				
more				
talk				
non-binary				
expression				
perception				
<i>Male</i>	<i>Dysphoria</i>	<i>Binary</i>	<i>Identity</i>	<i>Transition</i>
female	body	non-binary	gender	full
body	deal	trans	expression	non-binary
birth	gender		base	hormone
present			sense	go
identify			basis	
bear			woman	
			sexuality	

TABLE 6.5 Collocations for the 10 most intense keywords

<i>Woman</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>People</i>	<i>Identity</i>	<i>Sex</i>
man	identity	colour	gender	birth
colour	identify	discrimination	expression	sexuality
trans	neutral	lot	base	basis
live	birth	talk	sense	gender
room	sex	life	basis	birth
restroom	do	transgender	woman	base
clothes	sexuality	trans	sexuality	good
dress	live	perception		
cis	think	do		
look	dysphoria	deal		
transgender	more	general		
identify	talk	be		
top	non-binary			
feel	expression			

(Continued)

TABLE 6.5 (Continued)

<i>Woman</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>People</i>	<i>Identity</i>	<i>Sex</i>
girl life identity	perception			
<i>Guy</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Restroom</i>	<i>Non-binary</i>	<i>Female</i>
hair	female	room	transition	male
girl	body	restroom	binary	body
present	birth	public	identify	present
clothes	present	woman	mtf	bear
guy	identify	man	gender	identify
more	bear	use		
gay				

Non-Binary Language Network

Using the software *Gephi* (Bastian et al., 2009), a visual representation of these keywords and co-collocations was generated. *Gephi* allowed the visualisation of some of the most intense linguistic patterns within the corpus, as well as their relationship to one another. Figure 6.1 presents the collocational network for the NBC.

As shown in Figure 6.1, the most intense keywords appear as larger circles, thus showing the *intensity* of these words within the NBC. This figure reflects the most intense words (listed in Table 6.5); it shows, for example, that words such as *woman*, *gender*, *people*, *identity*, and *sex* were intense within the corpus. The (key) word *woman* collocated with 17 different words, making it the most *intense* word within the network. Figure 6.2 shows the type collocations that branched out rhizomatically from the keyword *woman*.

The word *woman* collocated with the words *man*, *color*, *trans*, *live*, *room*, *restroom*, *clothes*, *dress*, *cis*, *look*, *transgender*, *identify*, *top*, *feel*, *girl*, *life*, and *identify*. These words were, in turn, connected to other intense words, showing the ways in which the discourses within the forum were connected to one another.

Concordance Lines

The analysis thus far has shown the quantitative findings for the NBC without examining the expanding on the contextual environments of these words. To create a more manageable sample of *non-binary language* which will be analysed qualitatively, the top ten keywords (Table 6.4) and the top ten most intense keywords (Table 6.5) were combined, resulting in a list of fifteen words of interest (Table 6.6).

These fifteen words of interest – and their interrelated collocations – will be further explored via concordance lines. Below I have listed the fifteen words of interest, their collocations, as well as the number of times the collation occurred

2. Identity

- Gender identity (n = 877)
- Sexuality and identity (n = 23)
- Discrimination on the basis (or based) of gender identity (n = 31)
- Sense of identity (n = 20)
- Identity as a woman (n = 11)

3. Sex

- Sex and/or gender (n = 82)
- Birth sex (n = 50)
- Discrimination on the basis of sex (n = 15)
- Based on sex (n = 24)
- Sex and/or sexuality (n = 42)

4. Male

- Present male (n = 29)
- Male and female (n = 581)
- both (n = 64)
- neither (n = 29)
- between (n = 47)
- either (n = 39)
- Born male (n = 16)
- Male body (n = 103)
- Assigned male at birth (n = 10)
- Identify as male (n = 26)

5. Female

- Both/neither/between/either male and female (n = 581)
- Identify as female (n = 21)
- Present(ing) (as) female (n = 19)
- A female body (n = 112)
- Born female (n = 20)

6. Dysphoria

- Gender dysphoria (n = 246)
- Body dysphoria (n = 161)
- Deal with dysphoria (n = 20)

7. Non-binary

- Gender is non-binary (n = 95)
- Identify as non-binary (n = 41)
- (I am) MTF non-binary (n = 19)
- Binary and/or non-binary (n = 53)

116 The non-binary corpus

8. Binary

- Binary and/or non-binary (n = 53)
- Binary trans (n = 66)

9. Transition

- Full transition (n = 114)
- Transition hormones (n = 33)

10. Trans

- Trans people (n = 530)
- Binary trans (n = 66)
- Trans women (n = 620)

11. Transgender

- Transgender women (n = 310)
- Transgender people (n = 684)
- Transgender people +bathroom/restroom (n = 57)
- The transgender community (n = 155)

12. Woman

- Identity as a woman (n = 11)
- Transgender women (n = 310)
- Trans women (n = 620)
- Woman and girls (n = 39)
- Dress as a woman (n = 19)
- Wear women's clothes (n = 22)
- Identify as a woman (n = 34)
- Feel like a woman (n = 23)
- Live as a woman (n = 37)
- Life as a woman (n = 12)
- Women of color (n = 39)
- Women's top (n = 13)
- Cis woman (n = 175)
- Use the women's (rest)room (n = 56)
- (Between/both) men and/or women (n = 333)
- Look like a woman (n = 20)

13. People

- Transgender people (n = 684)
- Trans people (n = 530)
- People of color (n = 39)
- Deal with people (n = 23)
- Talk to people (n = 51)

- People + do (n = 404)
- People's perceptions (n = 11)
- Discrimination against trans(gender) people (n = 17)
- People in general (n = 15)

14. **Guy**

- Present as a guy (n = 16)
- Guy with long/short hair (n = 16)
- Guy's clothes (n = 39)
- Guy and/or girl (n = 65)
- Gay guy (n = 47)

15. **Restroom**

- Men's/women's restroom (n = 40)
- Restroom and/or rooms (n = 34)
- Use the restroom (n = 124)
- Public restroom (n = 66)

On the surface, these quantitative findings begin to indicate some of the most intense *affective intensities* within the NBC. For instance, the prevalence and centrality of the keyword *woman* indicate that issues surrounding womanhood – as a subject category – were greatly discussed throughout the corpus, especially in terms of what it means to be a *trans(gender) woman* (n = 930), a *cis woman* (n = 175), as well as *living* (n = 37), *feeling* (n = 23), *dressing* (n = 19), *identifying* (n = 34), *looking* (n = 20), etc. as a woman. However, it is difficult to assess the context of these collocations without analysing them qualitatively – that is, it is difficult to know whether forum users discussed “womanhood” because they found it problematic (i.e., a critique of sex-role stereotypes), as something they wanted to move towards (i.e., desiring to live or dress as a woman), or something else altogether.

Gender identity (n = 877) was one of the most intense and frequent collocations throughout the corpus. This was not a surprising finding, as this was the forum's focus. Yet, discussions around *gender and/or sex* (n = 59) seem to be of interest in the corpus, particularly as the collocation *gender and sex are not the same* (n = 13) was also prevalent within it. It is likely that these issues (separating gender and sex) were discussed at length within the corpus, reflecting the psychological models of transness (Stoller, 1968). Relatedly, the collocation *gender dysphoria* (n = 246) and *body dysphoria* (n = 161) were highly frequent throughout the NBC. The concept of *body dysphoria* has only recently been discussed and theorised in the academic literature (Pulice-Farrow et al., 2019); therefore, the discussion of this term in the forum demonstrates that this community has had an engagement with this term for a long time – and that this term may have originated from online communities such as this one.

Male and female (n = 581) was also one of the most frequent collocations. Within it, male and female were discussed in terms of *both* (n = 64), *neither* (n = 29), *between* (n = 47), and *either* (n = 39), thus reflecting some of the ways in which

non-binary gender identities have been conceptualised within non-binary discourse, activism, and academia (Barker and Richards, 2015). Similarly, *(between/both) men and/or women* (n = 333) also reflected the way in which some non-binary people describe their identities.

The network of *non-binary language* was taken into consideration during the analytical process, as it reflected the ways in which language was employed in complex (rather than simplistic) ways. In the following section, the NBC will be analysed through the lens of *assemblage theory* (DeLanda, 2006) by examining the material and discursive elements within the corpus. This theory emphasises the fluid, non-linear, and non-hierarchical relationships between both material and discursive components of gender (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2010). As such, the language used within the NBC can be mapped onto an *assemblage* of non-binary *gender and linguistic becomings*. I will extrapolate some of the most important *intensities* within the corpus using the collocational network as a guiding compass.

A Qualitative Analysis of the Non-Binary Corpus

This section presents the qualitative analysis of the NBC. It explores a variety of keywords and collocations in their contextual environments. In the analytic process, several affective intensities were identified and were artificially pulled apart for the purposes of clarity. However, I will show the ways in which these affective intensities are interconnected and relational, as shown by the network of non-binary language. These intensities reflected the linguistic as well as the material forces that make up the gender becomings of the forum users within the NBC. Combined, these discursive (linguistic becomings) and material intensities (affective embodiment) are part of the non-binary-assemblage online. I will also show how these intensities come together to territorialise multiple versions of non-binary gender identities – both linguistically and materially. These different versions can appear to be both fixed and fluid at the same time, but they are not always consistent. Instead, they are in an ongoing process of becoming. Furthermore, I will show how these intensities are interconnected in non-hierarchical ways, as they affect and are affected by one another. This interconnectedness can be observed in the NBC network wherein the keywords and collocations used in the forum are interrelated in a rhizomatic ways – with “multiple, shifting and increasingly internal and external connections” (Bonta & Protevi, 2004, p. 10).

I will also show some of the ways in which these affective intensities come together (in complex, dynamic, and often messy ways), thus allowing forum users to become non-binary as they negotiate this online environment. Multiple versions of non-binary gender identities appeared within the forum at the time these data were collected. It is important to note that the NBC is used here as a heuristic device to investigate the gender becomings of non-binary people at a specific place and time – that is, within this online forum and when the data were collected. Therefore, this analysis is not intended to be a comprehensive representation of a global non-binary-assemblage online, but rather a snapshot of non-binary genders within these parameters.

Additionally, while certain portions of this analysis might read as linear and causal, these interpretations are not intended to be read as essentialised notions of non-binary identities. Instead, this analysis illustrates the diverse ways in which non-binary gender identities are assembled in complex and unexpected ways.

To show this intrinsic connectivity and further visualise it, all keywords will be underlined while all concordances will be in **bold**.

Linguistic Becomings

As explored in previous chapters, and in the context of this research, linguistic becomings are characterised as the ongoing adoption, reassessment, and negotiation of a given language shift pertaining to gender. For instance, a linguistic becoming can be enacted when an individual learns about, and consequently decides to embrace, a new label, pronoun, or title, which more closely reflects or resembles their gender identity, e.g., a person who embraces the *agender* label and uses *they/theym* pronouns as well as the *Mx.* honorific. This process is not simple or linear; but involves a continuous negotiation of affects and then reconfiguration – creating the conditions for this linguistic possibility. These affects are therefore territorialised through discourse, context, and material forces.

The intensities that will be explored in this section were salient in the context of keywords and collocations such as *sense of identity* (n = 20), *gender identity* (n = 877), *identify as male/female* (n = 47), *gender neutral* (n = 18), among many others. In a general sense, the linguistic becomings that were identified within the forum appeared within specific sections of the forum with titles such as “Forum’s policies,” “New Member Introductions,” and “Defining Concepts.” Within these sections, forum users discussed the reasons why they joined the forum, reflected on their own gender identity and their journeys, asked for guidance, and sought authenticity. Forum members also shared some of their experiences with gendered language, gender expressions, and body modifications, and shared tips about navigating the world as non-binary persons.

This section will outline some of the affective intensities that were identified in the NBC: seeking authenticity, identifying as non-binary, exploring gender-neutral language, adopting gender-neutral language, (re)defining linguistic parameters; and territorialising meanings. These intensities are said to contributed to the assemblages of linguistic becomings within the forum.

Seeking Authenticity

Many forum users expressed a desire to belong to a community of like-minded people who understood gender in similar ways. Interacting with other individuals who shared similar experiences around their gender identity was seen as positive and productive by many forum users. This was particularly important for forum users who found that their identities were invisibilised elsewhere, even among LGBTQ+ online communities. For instance, many expressed that some queer

communities disregarded their experiences as non-binary and deemed them to be illegitimate. Furthermore, many forum users complained that their voices were not being heard in these spaces and, as such, felt alienated from these communities. This desire motivated many of them to find this forum, which proclaimed to be “a safe place for those who **identify as non-binary** to speak with one another,” according to its founder. One forum user shared about their experience in transmasculine spaces:

Way back in the early stages of my gender questioning, I used to join ftm [female-to-male] spaces and talk about how I wanted a more masculine body. See if anyone there was like me. Despite the fact that I made it clear I was gender questioning (therefore possibly still female or another gender) and despite the fact that they told me that was fine...ftms would vent in these spaces how they hated dealing with women who wanted to go on T or get top surgery. That being trans wasn't a game, that women like this mocked their situation, and women like this brought out all their insecurities. At first I sat in on these kinds of conversations and let them vent thinking “Well I can't hold it against them for just saying what they feel. Its not a personal attack against me, and I can see how gender nonconforming women could make a transguyfeel uncomfortable”. And I tried to let it go. But I couldn't. They were talking about me. It made me realize that if I ever told them I identified as female they'd be directing these kinds of feelings at me. And I just felt so guilty and awful I couldn't bring myself to visit those spaces anymore, or even talk to the friends I'd made there. It was around that time that I quit going to any trans support group for a while. I felt awful about myself and hated that I'd been stupid enough to question my **gender identity** when I clearly wasn't like so many **trans people**. But over time, the feelings came back. Less strong but they're there, and I still have urges to be more male sometimes. I couldn't **talk to** any **cispeople** about this, couldn't afford a therapist. So I came back to online support groups. I still don't talk to most of my old friends in the trans community. I'm still embarrassed.

The affective desire to belong to a community of non-binary people online was therefore related to authenticity. As such, having their identities (linguistically) validated by other like-minded individuals was deemed important by many forum users. The forum was conceptualised as a place where non-binary identities and the messiness of gender could be openly discussed without judgement. This affective desire to share, to learn, and to be listened to (all linguistic forms of interaction) enabled their capacity to become non-binary while being supported by others. Open, honest, and respectful communication was expected within the forum, as this was clearly articulated in the forum's guidelines and “golden rule” policies. These affective desires were a common thread within the forum, resulting in the territorialisation of an online community where identities could be “spoken

into existence.” In fact, this forum was created as a reaction to transgender-focused forums that either did not consider non-binary identities at all or undermined their existence. According to the forum creator:

This forum was originally created to be a safe space for nonbinary folks to discuss matters as our voices were silenced due to military moderators on (transgender forum) who believed binary **transgenderpeople** were superior, more important to NBs. There was also the issue of acceptance of NB folks and their diversity in which they transition or may not transition. A select few binary transgender folks over at (transgender forum) began to “encourage” NB folks to pursue full-transition, at the cost of their life and losing their family. [...] There is already a severe lack of Non-Binary support forums just solely supporting NB folks.

Forum users, therefore, shared a need to express their non-binary identities in an online environment in which they did not feel pressured to undergo binary transition paths or use binary language to describe themselves. Anyone who joined this forum was encouraged to share things about themselves (including their label, pronouns, title, etc.), to ask questions about gender, to share their stories and experiences, and (if they desired) to debate controversial issues related to gender.

Forum users’ introductions included a great deal of information about the ways in which they “arrived” to the forum and about their relationship with gender:

My name is [name] and I have literally never knowingly talked to another nonbinary person in my entire life, and for some reason it only just occurred to me to go looking for a forum, so here I am! (It took me over 25 years to discover the nonbinary label that abruptly allowed me to make **sense of** my whole **identity**, so clearly I’m not always too quick on the uptake: smile:). So yes, I’m here to talk a little bit and listen a lot and continue the learning process that I’ve started by reading a bunch of different nonbinary blogs. I’m AFAB, trying to present as masculine as possible (which is difficult, since I’m only out to one person in real life) and hoping to soon start physically transitioning (top surgery and low-dose HRT). I’ve lived in small towns in conservative areas my whole life, so I’m really excited to be part of a community where there are people like me!

For forum users, their sense of authenticity as non-binary – which they had already embraced before joining the forum – was reinforced by finding a place where this language was commonly accepted, seen as normal and, in some ways, expected. Online spaces and the information contained within them are herein conceptualised as *territories* that individuals can (temporally) inhabit and where their linguistic becoming could be enacted. Placing themselves in this *terrain* allowed them to absorb the linguistic parameters of this community, which enabled them to produce a gender and linguistic becoming of their own.

The lexicon of non-binary genders that was used to describe identities, sexed bodies, and gender expression was generally very similar within the forum, even among those who were new to it. For instance, it was common for forum users to use expressions such as AFAB (assigned female at birth) or AMAB (assigned male at birth) to describe themselves. These acronyms were primarily employed in sections where forum users introduced themselves but were also seen throughout the posts. These acronyms were typically used without defining them, indicating an assumption that the readers were well-versed in these terminologies. This was the case in the previous excerpt, for instance. While this individual had never met another non-binary person, they were well-versed in the linguistic parameters that existed within trans discourse online. This is shown by their seamless use and understanding of concepts such as HRT and AFAB. This shows that some forum users were indeed well-read and well-informed about the linguistic parameters of non-binary identities and the language of gender transitioning, even without belonging to an online or offline community. Nonetheless, some forum users arrived at the forum with many questions. These individuals typically desired to learn more about non-binary identities to make sense of their gendered experiences.

Identifying as Non-Binary

Many forum users described their desires to become a different gender both linguistically and materially. Linguistically, these forum users wanted to know, for example, which labels they should embrace, given their specific experiences with (the) gender (binary), as well as, in many cases, their sexuality:

I've been looking for a place to hang out and chat through the confusion that is in my head about my gender, or lack there-of. I guess I've known I don't really **identify as female** since I was tiny, way before I realised I was gay. Now I am just beginning to work out who I think I am and who I want to be. But I think I probably have lots of questions to ask along the way. I think I probably fall in the nonbinary bracket, I've always been happiest with short hair, dressing androgynously and am often really unhappy with the fact I have breasts. But in saying that I don't want to be a man, I just feel like I am neither. Some days I feel more one than the other but always somewhere in the middle in a way that just isn't easy for me to manage day-to-day.

Although some forum users arrived to the forum seeking assistance about language (e.g., whether they should embrace non-binary as their identity label), their narratives were often rich in details about the materiality of their gender experiences: embodiment, expression, and desires. These affects extended beyond the linguistic to the material realm: "I think I probably fall in the non-binary bracket, I've always been happiest with short hair, dressing androgynously and am often

really unhappy with the fact I have breasts.” The materiality of the body is evident in this excerpt, but also the need to categorise affective desires linguistically – to become.

These types of posts (which typically came from new forum users) were always received with enthusiasm from other forum users. For example, longstanding forum users shared their gendered experiences and offered some reassurance and guidance. Seeing, for example, one reply to the previous post reassured them that their identity was valid and authentic:

Feel free to hang out, comment, question, reflect, challenge, query etc. We are a pretty diverse and friendly group who have found each other by chance and it works! Mutual respect is pretty much the only rule applied. Many interesting threads and some very interesting links and resources. Our lived experiences, **sense of identity**, narratives and journeys differ but we are here for each other. Understanding, accepting, expressing and celebrating yourself as authentically as possible may be a fairly simple, linear process or one that is far from linear, simple or quick. The important thing is that this is your life, your sense of self and your journey. [...] There is no right way or no wrong way, only your way. Most of us have found a good gender counsellor and later a good endo very useful, but each of us have found support and acceptance critical. That is why we are here.

In their response, this forum user emphasised the plurality of experiences among non-binary individuals, as well as the non-linearity of subjective experiences of becoming non-binary. Authenticity was developed within these interactions, as forum users exemplified the endless possibilities that can exist within the continuous emergence of gender identities. This response contains several productive qualities to it. First, it reaffirmed to the previous forum user that their gender and linguistic becomings (their “sense of self and journey”) were normal and accepted within this forum’s territory. They also reassured them that “working out” their gender was a normal part of the “journey” to become non-binary. Secondly, their response also served as a guide that produced – and assembled – one of many gendered possibilities through material embodiments, i.e., finding “a good endo[crinologist],” which they deemed as a normative experience in their use of the expression “most of us.” In that sense, a material parameter of non-binary was territorialised – that is, the idea that “most” non-binary people might end up desiring some type of hormonal treatment. Yet, this was ultimately framed as a possibility and not a rule that had to be followed. It was unclear whether the individual who asked the question ultimately adopted the non-binary label/bracket or not. However, the positive and validating environment of this forum could have propelled these kinds of gender-questioning individuals to embrace non-binary as their identity label, albeit temporarily. These interactions, I argue, contributed to the production of multiple non-binary-assemblages within the forum.

Exploring Gender-Neutral Language

Similar to the previous example, other forum users used the forum as a safe space to ask questions related to gender which allowed them to make sense of their linguistic and material experiences. Some of these questions related directly to language usage, particularly gender-neutral language (labels, pronouns, titles, etc.). As such, some forum users sought advice about navigating the world using gender-neutral language since they were unsure about the mechanics of this linguistic becoming. For instance, a new forum user who was also actively questioning their gender identity posted some of these questions:

I'm new here, searching for my identity and one that I have difficulty identifying. [...] I was born female, I feelfemale and I always liked, and still do, being female. I never had any problems seeing my body as female, I really like it. I never questioned my **gender identity** up to now. [...] I'm thinking of how cool would it be to have male genitals. [...] Is that a non stereotypical cis femaleidentity? Is it nonbinary female? is it genderqueer? Gender-whatever? Have searched for a while but you can find a lot of meanings to a single word.

In their search for the most appropriate language for themselves, this forum user encountered a variety of labels that may have different meanings depending on the context in which they are employed. The affective relationship between language and their body was also evident in their desire to have “male genitals.” Despite all their research, this forum user inferred that, because they were comfortable with their female body, certain labels such as “nonbinary female” might be more appropriate than simply non-binary. There were two assumptions embedded in the questions this forum user posited. The first assumption was that a label describing their gendered experience *existed* – that it was nameable and classifiable. The second assumption was that, if this label did indeed exist, they could embrace it for themselves because it was “correct” or “appropriate” to do so. Questions like this one were typically answered by other forum members, particularly those who were more active (frequent posters). One of these active forum users replied:

I think that you can come up with a number of labels for yourself if you wish but more and more we are finding out that the labels tend to box us in and it's so much better to just be you and live in the moment. Many of us consider ourselves to be nonbinary internally, meaning **neither fully male or fully female** but a composite expression of both genders. So let me extend a warm welcome you because you obviously belong here with us.

As shown in previous replies, forum users often problematised the fixity of identity while simultaneously welcoming forum users to their community. In other words, forum users shared a common identity as non-binary, but this identity in and of

itself was not bound by a fixed set of characteristics other than the rejection of one's assigned gender/sex at birth. As such, non-binary gender identity was discussed as both fluid ("labels tend to box us") as well as fixed ("non-binary internally"). It defied definition while simultaneously defining it. Therefore, the linguistic and material parameters of non-binary gender identities can be understood as complex processes of emergence and subjectification.

Other forum users had more specific queries about gender-neutral language such as pronouns. These questions were shared and answered within the forum's territory. Many users wanted to gauge how others enacted these pronouns (e.g., asked their family and friends to use them) in their day-to-day, given that they imagined this to be challenging. One forum user asked:

I'm coming here to get an idea about nonbinarypronouns. I identify as a gayfemale but I've always been more comfortable in **guy's clothes** and accessories. I have always just been [gender neutral name] and not very feminine and a not masculine. I don't feel the need to transition to a male so I figured I am nonbinary or genderqueer. I am soon to be married and my future wife and I are also adopting a new-born. I don't feel like wife or mom are fitting terms. Does anyone have any suggestions?

This individual's gender expression (guy's clothes; neither feminine nor masculine), as well as their lack of desire to transition medically to male, were presented as one of the main intensities that allowed them to determine that they identified as non-binary. Yet, when it came to pronouns and gendered language (especially that which related to family relationships), they were still unsure how this linguistic becoming would fit into their life. This was particularly the case in relation to parenting and marriage (their inner social circle, closer in proximity). One active forum user replied to their question:

If you're seeking for a proper way to call yourself, then you can call yourself whatever you like, and that would perfectly be fine. This can be changing over time, but nevertheless you are who you are. If you are looking for the way your child could name/refer to you, you could follow the exact name approach, where you would be referred by your preferred name. Actually our child is referring to his grands by there names, and that's totally fine. [...] If on the other hand you are worried about external acceptance from the outside world, that depends on the exact surroundings, and also on how you want to appear to anyone beyond your world.

Once again, forum users' replies conveyed the ways in which "trajectories, connections, and future relations remain unpredictable" (Grosz, 1994, p. 174) in that there is no right or wrong way to become non-binary and convey this becoming linguistically. However, these linguistic becomings could be different depending on the context or situation. The contextual and situational nature of gender and

linguistic becomings were therefore acknowledged in these interactions, as forum users provided tips on how to negotiate with different levels of social proximity and conceptuality. A different forum user replied with a more specific direction, thus territorialising some forms of non-binary linguistic becomings while simultaneously offering some conditions of possibility:

I think they/them is the easiest one for other people to accept and start actually using since the singular “they” exists outside of queer theory and it’s also probably the most common nonbinarypronoun (followed by xir and then hir). Just because you’re genderqueer doesn’t mean you need to adopt new pronouns though. My roommate is genderqueer and butch, verging on transmasculine, but she/her pronouns don’t really bother her so she chooses to use them out of convenience. “Spouse” and “parent” are totally viable words to substitute for “wife” or “mom”. They’re also innocuous enough that people probably won’t ask questions if you use those terms to identify yourself.

Whether the original poster decided to embrace they/them pronouns or any other type of gender-neutral terminology was unclear, as there was no follow-up on this specific thread. However, this example is just one of many instances in which individuals actively used the forum as a source of information pertaining to linguistic becomings. These interactions helped territorialise prominent versions of non-binary linguistic becomings such as the use of they/them as the most popular pronoun as well as overall linguistic gender-neutrality (e.g., parent rather than father/mother). It also reassured forum users about the contextual and situational elements of gender-neutral language, making them aware that gender-neutrality might not always be possible. Nevertheless, these interactions within the forum helped to produce more authentic versions of non-binary genders which extended beyond the online realm.

Non-binary people within the forum understood their gender in ways that were not only linguistic but also material, contextual, temporary, and situational. As such, gender identity labels were understood by some forum users as fluid and playful rather than static and serious categorisations of reality. Linguistic becomings are therefore not static; rather, they fluctuate and transcend parameters. Forum users recognised this fluidity and understood language as a mechanism of authenticity rather than a fixed reality. Ontologically, this was an important recognition of gender fluidity which extended to the linguistic and material realms, as I will continue to demonstrate later in this chapter.

Adopting Gender-Neutral Language

Many forum users embraced what has been territorialised as gender-neutral language, even if only in certain (online) contexts. These forum users supported these linguistic becomings by providing anecdotes about their discomfort with (binary)

gendered language from an early age, consistent with the previous findings on *trans-emotionality* (Moon, 2019). As such, discomfort – as an affective intensity – allowed or motivated people to embrace non-binary language. One forum user narrated their story:

I'm so happy to have found a forum for nonbinary people! I'm [name] and I'm an AFAB androgyne who's out at my boarding high school, but not at home. I first discovered my **gender identity** during my freshman year at my boarding school, where I realized that gender isn't limited to just boxes. Although the idea of **more than two genders** was a bit strange to me (I just came from a catholic school), it resonated with me. I participated in many gender conforming activities when I was very little, but as I got older, I began to drift away from being a girl. However, because my parents are socially conservative, their beliefs discouraged me from exploring my **gender identity** for a long time. I have a dream of becoming a neuroscientist, but because of my **gender identity**, at times I question whether I'll ever be successful in life, but most of the time I try to hold my head high and actually study for once. I'm looking forward to getting to know all of you!

The discovery that gender could be understood (and linguistically expressed) as “something other than man or woman” was always discussed in a positive light. This realisation or epiphany challenged the dominant binary gender system, thus allowing for the condition of possibility from which a non-binary subjectivity emerged within the forum. On the other hand, binary language was framed as *limiting* (as in “two boxes”) and thus negative. This linguistic re-conceptualisation of the gender binary was therefore an affective force which allowed to produce multiple gender configurations within the forum. The limitation then became a potential to deterritorialise and become. The forum was therefore a place where linguistic becomings were territorialised through story-telling and through the awareness that multiple gender subjectivities were possible. Another forum user shared their journey of rejecting/embracing gendered language:

In the beginning I knew that I didn't like female pronouns (she/her). Then I thought about what pronouns I should use. I struggled with this for a couple of days, because I couldn't find things online about how I was feeling. So luckily I knew someone that had a lot of experience dealing with the **transgender community**. When I talked to them they let me know I could use what ever pronouns made me comfortable, so I started using my name. After I month I realized that the words like girl, mam, and sister bothered me when I was referred to as that. I wanted people to use person, say “you have a good day” leaving off mam. I now know that I am **gender neutral**. In the beginning of this I would have called myself gender fluid. But each day I evolve and hope some day we can get along in the world

without everyone having to be labelled with what their sexual or **gender identity** are. But that might be just wishful thinking. We do love our labels.

Linguistic becomings were continually negotiated within the forum. For instance, in this forum user's case, their journey (going from female, to gender fluid, to gender-neutral) showed how (dis)comfort (as an affective intensity) was an important factor. Their discomfort with the gendered language led them to seek out information online about the most appropriate linguistic options to describe their feelings around gender. While their affective discomfort with language might sound like an individualised experience, their discomfort challenged a dominant social system of gender categorisation. In that sense, linguistic becomings (such as shifting pronouns) required a social interaction in which, in order to be recognised as authentic, individuals must disclose such desires to others. As such, the discomfort is not intrinsic to the individual; rather, the discomfort is dependent upon the utterances of others. Linguistic becomings are, therefore, an inherently social act since "selves are both singular and plural" (Davies, 2010).

The common thread among these narratives was the rejection of binary language. But these rejections had to be negotiated in a variety of contexts. And these negotiations were also mediated by a variety of factors, such as personal experience with the gender binary, expression, and embodiment. All these elements contributed to the assemblages of non-binary gender identities within the forum, which were contained not within the individuals themselves, but in their relational experiences with other bodies (Bennett, 2010). Furthermore, learning about the existence of non-binary genders and linguistic choices opened myriad possibilities among forum users. For some of these forum users, learning about these possibilities resulted in an immediate "epiphany" moment, allowing them to identify as non-binary almost without hesitation. These linguistic becomings were not as immediately obvious for other forum users, however. Some expressed being unsure about using gender-neutral pronouns. One forum user commented about pronouns:

Sometimes I try to convince myself that I'm truly just my **assigned gender at birth**. I don't mind the gendered pronouns that come along with it when talking to people in public. Online I hate gendering myself. I just roll with whatever pronoun people assume me to be. I learned "they/their/them" is a thing but I'm not sure how to ask people to use it without calling attention to my gender which I'm still unsure of. I can't bring myself to say things like "I'm a **woman**" or "I'm a **man**" because both feel wrong. I feel like I lost my way and am suddenly finding my original path again.

Linguistic becomings are by no means consistent or static across different contexts. Some forum users expressed feeling more comfortable using gender-neutral language (or "not gendering themselves") online than offline, showing the contextual and situational nature of linguistic becomings. For this forum user, using they/

them pronouns offline was challenging because they were not comfortable navigating these negotiations (“calling attention to my gender”) – that is, requesting others to use this type of language. While they were uncomfortable calling themselves a man or a woman, they did not mind binary language during interactions with strangers. This is a consistent finding across the interview participants and the forum users. As such, context is one of the most important factors in the linguistic becoming of non-binary people – that is, the level of social proximity was crucial in terms of disclosure and authenticity

(Re)defining Linguistic Parameters; Territorialising Meanings

Linguistic becomings, as theorised in this research, also related to the (re)configuration of linguistic parameters – that is, the semantics of commonly used terminology within non-binary discourse. I will now explore the ways in which language (as it related to gender identities) is (re)configured on an ongoing basis, thus territorialising certain meanings and usages over others. The reconfiguration of gender-related language occurred during interactions between forum users. During these interactions, forum users expressed their personal relationships with their gender as well as gender-related language. These interactions, in turn, produced a variety of linguistic parameters by defining concepts and subsequently employing this language, thus expanding the semantic landscape of gender identities, expressions, and embodiment.

Among this language, terms such as gender, sex, and sexuality were actively discussed and (re)defined by forum users. These (re)definitions often occurred within sections such as “What is gender? What does it mean to you?” and “There’s your sex, there’s your gender, there’s your sexuality,” wherein forum users provided definitions of these concepts. These discussions were identified in concordances such as *sex and/or gender* (n = 82), *gender and sex are not the same thing* (n = 13), *sex and/or sexuality* (n = 42), and *sexuality and identity* (n = 23), among others. Forum users’ definitions were coupled with their personal narratives of gender, sex, and sexuality – which contributed to the territorialisation of their overall meanings within the forum. As such, these definitions were framed as highly personal and differing from person to person. Yet, some parameters were indeed suggested and reinforced, thus territorialising certain meanings over others. In other words, while forum users’ descriptions of their gender experiences were seemingly unique on the surface, their narrative contained some common threads – namely, a reconfiguration and *queering* of gender, sex, and sexuality: from binary to non-binary. For instance, one forum user commented on the rejection of these binaries:

The language we use is primarily based around that binary finite description of the world. It’s been used so much and taken as not the simplistic view and description, that it has indeed become a description of fact for many. It’s a way of thinking without very much logic. Simplicity without room for an expanded definition. The logic used that defines **gender and sex as the**

same thing doesn't allow for any other explanations. Whenever anything else is introduced to that thinking, it's viewed as an attack on the logic. But there is much hope, sexuality that isn't male attracted to female and vice versa has changed quite a bit in the last few years. So simply taking the idea of your sex and keeping it as separate from your gender isn't that much of a stretch. [...] It's a nice benefit of being trans, and I think as nonbinary, that the world isn't defined in finite terms, but rather infinite variations are always possible.

This forum user employed the concept of sexuality to (re)define the possibility of gender plurality. Sexual diversity (the idea that there are multiple ways of experiencing sexual attraction outside of heterosexuality) has gained a significant amount of mainstream attention and, as such, has made it possible for gay and lesbian identities to become possible in people's imaginations – to *assemble* as a sexual possibility. However, gender diversity requires another layer of comprehension – that is, gender and sex are typically understood to be “the same thing.” This extract alludes to the culture-wide “sexuality-assemblages” which sets parameters on the types of sexual desires, behaviours, codes, categories, etc. that are possible within this sexuality assemblage (Linstead & Pullen, 2006).

The premise of gender plurality, which disconnects sex from gender so that these categories can exist independently of each other, is not yet widely understood in mainstream society, as the culture-wide gender-binary-assemblage also sets parameters around roles, expressions, etc. Sexuality (as an assemblage which has been deterritorialised) was therefore used as a tool to allow other forum users make sense of gender and sex as separate in the same way that sexuality and gender have been separated in some common understandings. Yet, gender, sex, and sexuality cannot be defined in finite terms, but rather infinite variations which are always possible and emerging.

Forum users understood the possibility of movement and reconfiguration of gender, sex, and sexuality. These gender-binary-assemblages were, therefore, deterritorialised and converted into non-binary configurations. This was in and of itself a linguistic becoming, as these concepts were (re)defined beyond their “typical” (read: widely understood) binary classification. Another user commented:

You're supposed to 'act' like what your sex is, and that is what your gender is as well. This is where the system breaks down, falls apart, doesn't hold up to cultural norms. Because gender is based on your sex, and that belief is so tightly held that babies are 'fixed' if they don't meet the criteria of that belief. Nobody teaches you that there is a difference, the tightly held cultural belief is that your **sex and your gender are one and the same**. It's interchangeable, the definitions for each are closely matched, I think it's only biologists and some psychologists who actually realize there is a

difference. For **trans people**, most understand it, but even within the community, there are some who don't get it.

While the gender and sex binaries can be considered dominant systems of power, they are not entirely restrictive and can indeed be productive. In other words, they were challenged, redefined, and negotiated on an ongoing basis. These structures were, in fact, deterritorialised within the forum. For instance, the mutual understanding that sex and gender were not “the same” was the common thread that symbolically united forum users and allowed them to territorialise a non-binary subjectivity. This emergence (the separation between sex and gender) did not originate in this forum, but it was intensified in this online space. It was used as a tool.

Most forum users called this commonality “non-binary,” as this term was seen as encompassing all individuals whose sex did not entirely correspond with their gender(s). However, the keyword *non-binary* was not as intense within the network as other terms such as *transgender* and *trans*, which were used as umbrella terms to define similar gender movements. In fact, *gender is non-binary* (n = 95) was the only intense concordance that was included in the final analysis. As such, some forum users embraced terms such as *transgender* and *trans* as well as *non-binary* while (re)configuring their meanings. Of course, *trans* has historically been redefined a variety of times (e.g., transsexual, in some trans circles, is rarely used nowadays), and its definition and configuration are still ongoing (e.g., *trans** was briefly used as an umbrella term). It was therefore not surprising that the linguistic parameters of *transness* were openly discussed within the forum within concordances such as *trans(gender) people* (n = 1214), *identify with gender* (n = 20), *binary trans* (n = 66), and *binary and/or non-binary* (n = 53), among others. For instance, while some non-binary people embraced *trans(gender)* as part of their identity due to its definition, some positioned transsexual, transgender, and binary trans (women and men) as different from non-binary, particularly in terms of their transitioning pathways. One forum user commented on this division:

Within this narrative, **trans people** always seek to transition permanently from one gender to another through medical interventions like hormone therapy and gender-affirming surgery. “De-transitioning” is seen as a betrayal of one's authentic trans life. Presenting 24/7 as one's authentic gender is considered the highest form of bravery. Being either a woman or a man — the binary poles of gender — become endpoints in a prototypical trans journey.

In a reductive way, one of the main differences between binary and non-binary trans identification was language. In this sense, the only requirement to become non-binary was to gain the understanding that gender and sex can exist independently from one another, to adopt this language, and to communicate this linguistic becoming to others (even if only in selected contexts) – regardless of

their relationship with their bodies. Of course, there is a universe of affective intensities (including material forces) that contribute to this non-binary emergence, but language was found to be a particularly strong affective intensity within this assemblage.

Indeed, some forum users blurred the line between binary and non-binary by (re)defining the semantic hierarchy of these concepts. One forum user suggested that “binary trans” should be placed under the non-binary umbrella rather than the opposite. For instance:

If anyone has been born into any binarygender, then with even a short experience of that gender and the socialisation that necessarily follows, how can anyone describe themselves as **binary trans**. Surely you carry your experience with you even if you choose to reframe and assert a new (non birth) **gender identity**. If this hypothesis has merit then aren't all trans folk, by definition, therefore nonbinary?

This perspective was shared by other forum members who also defined the concept of non-binary as including anyone who deviates from or transcends the sex they were assigned at birth, thus placing trans(gender) under the non-binary umbrella. One forum user commented on this perspective:

What is nonbinary? Personally I believe that nonbinary is anyone that don't fit their **birth gender**. I brought this up in the “other world” but it was dismissed. But I would say binarygender is **identifying with the gender** you are born with, nonbinary can be a mismatch feeling or MTF or FTM. If we were binary, why would we be MTFs or FTMs. No offence to anyone but MTF and FTM are nonbinary by default. Male to Female or Female to Male show a disconnect and Nonbinary. The other sight it seems like a lot of people were fooling themselves as binaryMTFs and FTMs. Binary to be is either **male or female**. I really hope this didn't offend anyone. But seriously even no matter how much female I display and MTF how can I be a binaryfemale? By default, I could never be. SO really, what am I?

Semantically, this is an interesting concept that relates to the idea of authenticity within trans discourse. In a sense, these users are essentialising meanings of womanhood or manhood based on assigned sex. This strategic essentialising (Spivak, 1990), in turn, territorialises the meaning of non-binary and places it in an essentialised semantic category as well, inferring that anyone who does not “fit their birth gender” is, fundamentally, non-binary. As a result, the category of non-binary becomes real and authentic, as much as a cis woman is real and authentic. This type of classification did not go unnoticed, however, and was questioned by other forum users. For instance, another forum user explained that these labels (binary and non-binary) are contextual and fluid rather than static and fixed:

I think in a way what's being discussed here deals partly with realities and partly with semantics. If I say that I'm "transgenderfemale", basically I'm saying that I really wish I'd been born cisgender female. I'd have been much happier that way. It's in that sense that I'll call myself "binary". I firmly **identify with one gender**. But if I'm claiming to be female, even of the transgender sort, what do I mean by that? I'm not completely sure. To what extent would I be like other females? I have no way of knowing, given that I can't begin to describe an experience I've never had myself. So I personally don't insist on any particular label. I'll use what's handiest in a given situation--which might vary from "transgender" to "a transgender person" to "a transwoman". Cispeople's definition of a woman is a cisgender woman, and the people of my town have known me for far too many years to believe that I'm anything like a woman in their sense of the word. They don't understand our concepts of gender. So why make my life more difficult than it has to be? Why insist on a label, woman or whatever, if it's only going to cause confusion, especially since I myself am not even sure what sort of description I want to lay claim to? I just go about my life in the belief that whatever I am will become clearer to me as time goes on. I've noted, too, that other **people's perception** of me can evolve as time goes on. E.g., there are two men that I've known for years who now appear to be completely at ease referring to me as a lady. They're probably not clear at all in their own minds exactly what I am, but man no longer seems appropriate to them. So I might be binary, depending on how you want to look at it, or I might be nonbinary, depending on how you want to look at it. Perhaps the best descriptor would be "interesting". I rather like that one.

Context was an important factor in the linguistic becomings of forum users. For example, the label that this individual employed for themselves depended upon what was "handiest in a given situation." In these contexts, people's perceptions were understood to be the deciding factors. These issues will be further explored in the following section on material elements, as this factor was found to intensify desires to adopt a given identity – whether binary or non-binary. It is clear, however, that their body and the ways in which it was interpreted by others had was an affective intensity that (de/re)territorialised their linguistic becomings contextually.

Labels and their various meanings were discussed at length within the forum. As such, declaring a gender identity label was encouraged, if not expected. The explosion of labels to describe gender diversity created a space where specific experiences gained linguistic legitimacy. While finding the most appropriate label (albeit temporarily) was an important element in the gender becomings of some forum users, other material factors such as gender expression and embodied experience were also integral to their gender identity exploration. Furthermore, language did not comprise the entirety of the non-binary-assemblage within the forum.

Material Elements of Gender

This section explores the material and affective elements of non-binary genders within the forum. These material and effective elements represent a significant intensity that, together with the linguistic elements outlined in the previous section, territorialised non-binary gender identities within the forum. Among these material elements, gender expression, embodiment, and the medical language of dysphoria were the most significant intensities. These elements were typically found within the forum in threads where forum users described their gender expression, their embodied experience, and their *feelings* (an affective element) about gender. These threads had names such as “nonbinary presentation” and “how does your gender feel today?”, but these discussions were found throughout the corpus. Some of the collocations related to these *intensities* included: *present as a guy* (n = 16), *dress as a woman* (n = 19), *gender expression* (n = 165), *gender neutral* (n = 18), *male body* (n = 103), *male and/or female* (n = 581), *gender dysphoria* (246), *body dysphoria* (n = 161), *sense of identity* (n = 20), as well as the use of the keywords *feel* (n = 8,011) and *feeling* (n = 1,487) used throughout the corpus. As described in the previous section, material elements are not in isolation from discursive ones – they are connected, as they affect and are affected by one another.

This section explores several affective embodiments: fluidity, neutrality, and (body) dysphoria. These material intensities are said to contribute to the overall assemblage of non-binary gender identities within the forum, albeit homogeneously. As I will demonstrate below, there is no unifying non-binary embodiment, but a multitude of material forces that produce a variety of non-binary modalities.

Affective embodiment, in the context of this research, refers an experience of intensity (Massumi, 2002) which envelops the body in the form of feelings, desires, and emotions. These do not necessarily have to be expressed linguistically, as these material elements can exist outside of discourse. However, some of these *intensities* and desires were indeed communicated in the forum in the form of *feeling* (as this keyword was used significantly; n = 1,485) and the collocation *sense of identity* (n = 20), to name two examples. Specifically, the affective intensities that were discussed in the forum referred to the embodied fluidity/neutrality of gender. These were also discussed in terms of desires (or lack of desire) to embody a non-binary identity through gender-affirming services such as hormones, surgeries, and speech therapy. As such, affective fluidity, and affective neutrality (the materiality of these intensities) will be explored in this section. The last part of this section will discuss the language of dysphoria and the ways in which this medical diagnosis was employed within the forum as a tool to speak about embodiment and affective desires. The language of dysphoria has been territorialised through psycho-medical discourses. However, dysphoria is understood here as a linguistic tool used by forum users to describe their discomfort with the gender binary, their identities, as well as the materiality of their bodies. As such, dysphoria is theorised as an affective

intensity rather than a specific condition. This term was used inconsistently and in multiple ways throughout the NBC: as a tool used to describe their identities, their general discomfort with the gender binary, and their embodiments.

Affective Fluidity

Gender is never stable; it is always in a constant process of becoming, “a constant journey which must start and end in the middle” (Linstead & Pullen, 2006, p. 1306) – that is, it is always in movement, but it has no final destination. Consistent with this description of gender, forum users showed the fluidity and mobility of their genders in their narratives. Some described gender as a mobile object which appeared and disappeared in different places, shapes, and forms, often in unexpected ways. As such, gender fluidity was conceptualised as an affective intensity which had material properties. One forum user provided a rich description of their gender fluidity:

When I first came to the realisation I did not fit the binarymale model as perfectly as I previously thought and began exploring my nonbinary identity, I would experience moments where my **sense of my gender identity** would completely disappear. I would panic and be like, ‘No, come back, my **gender identity!** Now that I understand myself more, the fluidity is making more sense to me, my identity being fluid is quite accurate in that it rarely stays the same - it evolves as I mature and go through different experiences. The best way I can describe being genderfluid, it is like sand running through my fingers. In different situations, my gender fluctuates or disappears entirely. For example, when I am studying graphic design on campus, my **gender identity** disappears and I go completely into artistic drive, it makes sense because gender rarely comes into my art unless I make transgender-centric work. When I am walking in the shopping centre and see any sort of clothing that catches my eye, my femalender comes alive, the sparkle dances in my eyes as my chest gets all giddy with excitement. When I am keeping an eye on the forum and speak logically, my male side is speaking. In both situations, the opposite gender fades from view but there is never any panic on my end, not like there was in the beginning of my exploration because, like you, I realise they are in the background and will come back. :) There are times where my gender blends into one, the male, female and a mix of both/neither all become my **gender identity** that make up who I am. I have noticed lately that sometimes I mistake the **gender identity** blending together as disappearing from sight.

Some participants drew from gendered tropes, tools, stereotypes, and ready-to-hand images in the surrounding culture concerning what masculinity and femininity look like and feel like to describe their gender fluidity. For instance: “my femalender comes alive, the sparkle dances in my eyes as my chest gets all giddy

with excitement. When I am keeping an eye on the forum and speak logically, my male side is speaking.” Such binarised descriptions, in some ways, reterritorialised the gender binary; however, the possibility that an individual can easily draw from “both genders” is a deterritorialisation of the rigidity of gender, whereby new gender possibilities can emerge.

While language was used as a tool to describe the affective embodiments of gender, the material elements of gender – the way these are felt – cannot be entirely captured linguistically. For instance, this forum user employed a variety of metaphorical devices to describe their gender fluidity. Notably, “sand running through my fingers,” “blending,” “mixing,” and “disappearing.” These metaphors allude to the materiality of gender as an affective force which can be transformed and behaves differently under different conditions. Yet, metaphors do not entirely capture the embodied experience of fluidity as an affective intensity since these nuances (in the form of feelings and desires) can exist outside of discourse.

Gender fluidity, nonetheless, was the closest linguistic approximation to describe these types of affective embodiments. Other individuals used the language of “modality” to speak about their affective embodiment as non-binary. For instance, one forum user shared their experience switching between *guy mode* and *girl mode* to describe their gender fluidity:

[When I’m] in full out guy mode, well, I am conscious that I am not a guy. But I am so used to being me and being stealth or semistealth that I don’t care about it. In full out girl mode, I am conscious that I am not a girl. But I know I pass fairly well or they don’t care so I just be me. My body language changes, my voice naturally goes higher and more whispery, my perception of self becomes feminine. As a guy, the voice is relaxed, and I just deal head on with stuff.

For this forum user, gender fluidity, as an affective embodiment, was enacted differently depending on context. Context, therefore, allowed certain gender possibilities but not others. In the context of this forum, unique forms of non-binary gender identities were possible, as people within this forum typically understood the nuances of gender fluidity. Yet, these modalities can be materially enacted (and performed) through individual’s body language and their voice, which are not entirely linguistic. As such, their embodied gender fluidity does not require language to be enacted.

Affective Neutrality

Similarly, for those forum users who identified as gender-neutral, affective embodiments of gender-neutrality were also enacted in material ways. These enactments were paired with linguistic becomings but were not dependent upon them. Gender neutrality could be expressed through androgyny, as previously outlined in the section on gender expression. But in an embodied form,

materiality could take on different forms. For one forum user, for example, embodied gender-neutrality involved undergoing gender-affirming surgery:

When I came out to my psychiatrist as nonbinary, my psychiatrist made it sound like if I experimented with changing my **gender expression**, like my hair or clothes, etc... that I would be able to be comfortable and not require any surgeries (for example, bottom surgery) If I didn't explicitly **identify as male** or masculine, why would I need bottom surgery to make my body more masculine? His idea of a **gender neutral** body is getting top surgery and leaving the bottom alone. No, that is NOT **gender neutral**, it isn't for me at least. Being **gender neutral** would be sexless - in my circumstances [it] would be removing my genitalia down there entirely. [... M]y physical sex has to be effeminate male in terms of appearance.

For some forum users, embodied gender-neutrality entailed transforming their body to align with their desire to appear androgynous. This forum user, for instance, desired an “effeminate male” embodiment, which entailed mixing a variety of gender signifiers such as being “effeminate” while having a “male body.” Their ideal body aligned with their internal sense of self – that is, a “sexless” non-binary person whose body, gender expression, and *linguistic becomings* were all be in “neutral” synchrony. These *affective intensities* guided – and *territorialised* – their desires to undergo gender-affirming surgery. These narratives were found throughout the corpus, as body modifications were widely discussed and debated within the forum.

While not all non-binary people transition medically, many forum users narrated their desires to undergo body modifications. These modifications were seen as a mechanism to fully embody their gender identities beyond (or in addition to) their linguistic becomings. One forum user commented on their desires to have a *male body* (n = 103):

I identify my sex to be male. I am AFAB but my brain feels AMAB, I feel like my mind is male, in other ways, non-gendered. Much like [name] says, I want a **male body** but not particularly a maleidentity to go with it. Even though technically speaking, my biological sex is female, I perceive it to be male. Every bone in my body will feel like it's pulling in every possible direction if I perceive otherwise. It's just so my idea of being male, happens to involve a flat chest and male genitalia. This does not hold true for others and that is OK. People like to say male genitalia does not make a man a man. That's okay, I am not a man though, far from it, I am male and require a male genitalia to feel wholly comfortable in my body that is overrun with male-nerve endings.

Other forum users shared their lack of desire to undergo any type of body modification. These forum users considered the relationship between their bodies

and their linguistic becomings as non-binary and shared these narratives within the forum.

In real life I still go by my birth name because honestly I really like it, and I don't exactly feel like I need to change my name. Like I'm just as nonbinary even with a very masculine name! But I had to come to that realization! When I first came to my **gender identity** I jumped too fast into everything, and I had to take a step back and realize some things about myself, and for a while because I wasn't planning on hormones or transitioning I think I was very much just try to learn to feel comfortable with the body I had, and I came to realize my gender is just as valid regardless my presentation.

These narratives exemplify the variety of material experiences of gender. While these individuals did not desire any type of body modifications to enact their gender, the fact that they had to speak about this in the first place is an example of the myriad ways in which forum users challenged dominant narratives around transness such as the discourses of being “trapped in the wrong body” (Carter, 2013).

In this study, there was no such thing as an essential non-binary body/aesthetic. Therefore, material authenticity as a non-binary person was not obtained by passing, transitioning, or mixing and matching gendered signifiers. Instead, embodiment was an affective force which produced context-specific desires which were enacted in context-specific times and spaces. As such, there is no single narrative of non-binary embodiment, as non-binary people come in all shapes and forms and express a myriad of desires about their bodies. Of course, these are some common threads, as displayed by the intense words of interest and concordance lines outlined in the quantitative analysis presented in this chapter. These intensities do indeed assemble the narratives and territorialise meanings; however, these intensities do not imply that an essential non-binary materiality exists.

Dysphoria

The DMS-5 defines gender dysphoria as the “distress that may accompany the incongruence between one’s experienced or expressed gender and one’s assigned gender.” (American Psychiatric Association, 2013, p. 451). While the DSM-5’s diagnosis of gender dysphoria does not *require* an inherent rejection of one’s primary or secondary sexual characteristics, it does frame gender dysphoria as engendering a “strong desire” to undergo body modifications. As such, those who “suffer” from gender dysphoria are not required to undergo gender-affirming surgeries; however, to access gender-affirming services, people are *required* to be diagnosed with gender dysphoria. The fact that individuals need to be diagnosed, therefore, is still pathologising. As demonstrated by Davy and Toze (2018), the concept of gender dysphoria is inconsistently used in the psychological literature, “sometimes referred to as a specific diagnosis; sometimes as a phenomenological experience of distress; and sometimes as a personal characteristic within

individuals” (p. 196). It was not surprising, then, that forum users also employed the language of gender dysphoria in a variety of ways, which were not always consistent. These various usages will be explored below.

The keyword *dysphoria* (n = 1,771) was significantly used throughout the NBC. This term was frequently used as a gender descriptor akin to gender identity labels. For instance, many used the expressions “I am dysphoric” or “my [gender/body] dysphoria” alongside their gender identity labels. As such, the adoption of this label was also considered a linguistic becoming. Although not all forum users embraced the language of dysphoria as a label, most forum users understood when other forum users made these declarations, typically offering sympathy and support to those who declared *dealing with gender dysphoria* (n = 20).

In the context of this research, I will conceptualise dysphoria as an affective intensity rather than a psychological or medical condition. I argue that the language of gender dysphoria is both a linguistic becoming and an affective embodiment which was used in productive ways. For instance, the language of dysphoria allowed forum users to speak about their bodily desires in “authentic” ways, as this language was validated by psycho-medical institutions that controlled their access to gender-affirming services. Dysphoria, as an affective embodiment, allowed forum users to verbalise their bodily desires using a territorialised language of “incongruent” gender identities. The language of dysphoria, therefore, was part of the non-binary-assemblage for many forum users; it permitted them to create novel conceptions of subjectivity, identity, and agency by combining material and discursive elements in certain social contexts (Duff, 2014).

Due to its various usages, some forum users took it upon themselves to define the concept. One forum user, for instance, equated dysphoria to transness, thus inferring that one must experience dysphoria to be trans(gender):

In my opinion, “trans” means that what is on the inside doesn’t match what is on the outside. This means that a person with any **gender dysphoria**, no matter how small, is transgender. I use the label for myself, because I feel almost completely feminine on the inside, but see a man every time I look in the mirror. I wish I had female curves and sizable breasts, and wish I didn’t have any body hair, but I don’t want bottom surgery. *I still think I’m trans because of my dysphoria*, but in a **nonbinary** way. (Emphasis theirs.)

Many forum users understood their gender identity in terms of gender dysphoria, as shown in this excerpt. The fact that the use of “gender dysphoria” was so prevalent in the forum demonstrates how the dominant medical discourses around transgenderism are still prevalent among trans and non-binary people – and that such concepts are sometimes unquestioned by transgender people (Davy, 2011). This forum user did not offer a critique of the medical model, for instance. They instead suggested that particular bodies and feelings do not necessarily have to go together – which they called “gender dysphoria.” This was not a universal view within the forum, however. Other forum members also understood gender

dysphoria as an affective embodiment, but they did not correlate this feeling with transness. In other words, gender dysphoria was not a requirement to become non-binary:

It is entirely possible to be cisgender and experience dysphoria. It is also possible to be nonbinary and medically transition due to dysphoria (I just so happen to be more comfortable being a male-bodied nonbinary person than a female-bodied one.) It is possible to be nonbinary and experience no dysphoria and no desire for surgery, its possible to be trans, have no dysphoria or desire for surgical intervention.

Gender dysphoria was therefore questioned by some forum users, as they understood the inconsistencies of this diagnosis. This did not prevent them, however, from embracing the term. The language of gender dysphoria allowed them to verbalise their affective embodiment in ways that other forum users also understood. For instance, this forum user described being “more comfortable being a male-bodied nonbinary person than a female-bodied one.” As such, gender dysphoria, as a linguistic becoming, allowed them to communicate their affective embodiment in terms of (dis)comfort (with the gender binary), which, as I have outlined in the previous section, was a common thread in setting the linguistic parameters of gender identities.

The adoption of this label, nonetheless, validated some forum users’ feelings about their bodies as well as their desires to undergo transition. While the linguistic parameters around gender dysphoria have been defined by medical and psychological institutions, embracing dysphoria as a descriptor can serve a strategic purpose – that is, to acquire gender-affirming services. However, gender dysphoria was not universally embraced by all forum users. Some, in fact, rejected the label while still commenting on the ways in which their *affective embodiments* were not aligned with their assigned gender:

I’m going with nonbinary, but I think Neutrois might fight a little better? I don’t suffer from **gender dysphoria** but I’ve always been more aligned to masculine traits and things even before I really understood that stuff. As a kid/teenager I got pigeon-holed as a tom boy and I think for a while that hid the truth. For me, the ideal would to just be neutral - kind of neither? I’ve also been considering drag and have begun coming up with a King persona. I’m hoping this forum can really help me get to grips with it all.

Body Dysphoria

The language of *body dysphoria* (n = 161) was common within the corpus. In these narratives, forum users located the source of their distress (an *affective intensity*) to a specific body part. As such, their linguistic becomings as non-binary were linked

to their affective desires to transition medically. Naming the source of their (body) dysphoria offered a productive condition of possibility which would allow them to feel differently about their bodies. One forum user offered a description of their distress as located, specifically, on their chest:

How does your gender feel today? Lots of dysphoria lately. Feeling nonbinary, as usual, but hating it. As in, hating being in between. I've caught myself wanting to go back to pretending to be cis but also kind of wanting to transition to male. And I know it's because there is no space in society for nonbinary people. EVERYTHING is binary. How can I not be? Where do nonbinary people belong, exactly? I want it to be simpler. I want to be one or the other. But that's not me. My chest dysphoria has been very high, too, and is making these feelings worse. So is the little bit of fat I have, because it's very womanly fat and I feel I look more butch than androgynous. Not that there's anything wrong with being butch, of course. There's not. But that's not what I'm going for. Butch is still woman. Having a very womanly body sucks. When I got my hair cut it made me feel better for a few days, but now I feel worse. But my **gender is still nonbinary**. I just hate it right now.

These desires to alleviate body dysphoria were also paired with social elements such as people's perceptions of their genders. When people perceive someone's gender as ambiguous (not fitting the dominant, binary codes), unsafe situations could emerge. As such, safety became a very crucial element, altering the ways in which forum users presented themselves to the world. For instance, a forum user discussed the link between their body dysphoria and the distress that people's perceptions of their body can produce:

It seems **body dysphoria** and my **assigned gender at birth** is what gives me most discomfort. I also have fears of being outed in **men's restroom**, that may tie into social stuff and other's perception of my gender.

The affective intensity of distress (in the form of dysphoria) is not an inherent experience among gender-diverse people – that is, the “strong desires” to become another gender do not necessarily cause distress, as suggested by the DSM-5. Instead, distress emerged due to the stigma and discrimination (in the forms of violence, harassment, and microaggressions) that gender-diverse people experience. As shown in Chapter 5, the level of distress that these social interactions can produce is context-dependent; it intensifies depending on the level of social proximity. As such, minority stress (Meyer, 2003) and marginalisation stress (Bouman et al., 2010) are linked to the concept of dysphoria since the source of distress is not entirely placed on the individual (and their body), but instead placed in people's perceptions and (negative) reactions to it.

Dysphoria can be understood in a myriad of ways – from an identity label akin gender identity to a desire to embody a specific gender, to the negative effects that occur when one’s gender is misunderstood. Furthermore, the language of dysphoria was not always consistently employed within the corpus, resembling the ways in which the language of dysphoria is also inconsistently used within the psychological literature (Davy & Toze, 2018). Overall, the language of dysphoria was invoked by some forum users as it provided them an extra level authenticity about their embodiment within a psycho-medical model of identity. This term was adopted by this online community to communicate these embodied and affective desires, as well as the distress they experienced due to people’s perceptions of their bodies.

Gender non-conforming people have been found to expect rejection and stigma based on people’s perceptions of their genders (Rood et al., 2016, p. 160). Consistent with “proximal stress experience” (Rood et al., 2016) and the minority stress model (Meyer, 2003), the distress that forum users experienced was due to interactions in which people’s perceptions of their gender were made salient. Distress, as shown in Chapter 5 (language-related distress) also originates in context-dependent situations which are mediated by social proximities and intentions. Gender dysphoria is, therefore, neither an internal nor an essential element in becoming non-binary.

Concluding Remarks

This chapter presented both the quantitative and the qualitative findings of the NBC. The quantitative findings guided the qualitative interpretations presented in this chapter.

In the quantitative section, the top fifty frequency words and keywords were identified using *Sketch Engine*. A list of collocations (words that co-occur) was yielded for each of these fifty keywords. To narrow down the words of interest, keywords and collocations that only occurred once were removed from the final list, which resulted in a list of 85 interrelated words: 44 keywords and 41 collocations. These words were then uploaded into *Gephi*, and a collocational network was created, allowing for the visualisation of the NBC as well as qualitative inferences about language usage. This network, therefore, exemplifies the non-linear and complex nature of identity, showing that non-binary gender identities and the discourses surrounding these identities are composed of multiple material and discursive elements that come together to form a *non-binary-assembly*. Lastly, concordance lines emerging from fifteen words of interest (a result of the ten most salient keywords and the ten more intense keywords) – and their interrelated collocations – were systematically downloaded from the NBC. Three concordances (in the form of short paragraphs) were downloaded for each of the 173 collocation pairs, thus forming a subsample of the language used within the NBC. This subsample was therefore more manageable and, after following this rigorous process, I argue that it closely represents the emerging discourses and affective intensities within the NBC. As such, these concordance lines were analysed

qualitatively, considering their non-hierarchical nature and the ways in which they relate to one another, affectively producing and reflecting non-binary gender and linguistic becomings.

In the qualitative section, the linguistic and material elements of non-binary gender identities were explored, demonstrating their relationship as well as their complexity, multiplicity, and mobility. It was concluded that there is no unifying linguistic or material narrative of non-binary. Instead, this analysis showed how gender and linguistic becomings are negotiated and (de/re)territorialised in an ongoing way. The linguistic and the material parameters of non-binary gender identities within the forum were continuously and contextually (re)assessed.

In terms of the linguistic *affective intensities* that were identified in the NBC, seeking authenticity, identifying as non-binary, exploring and adopting gender-neutral language, and re-defining linguistic parameters were found to be the most significant. Relatedly, affective embodiments (affective fluidity/neutrality and (body) dysphoria) were found to be the most intense material affects within the NBC.

The various narratives found within the forum demonstrate the possibilities of gender, which were achieved by the (de/re)territorialisation of dominant systems of power such as language, gender expressions, and embodiments. In the process of deterritorialisation, a reterritorialisation of certain tropes, stereotypes, and images of masculinity and femininity was sometimes enacted. Some forum users, for instance, drew from these (binary) discourses to assemble their gender and linguistic becomings. Nevertheless, the internet, as a source of information, authenticity, and validity, served as a place where conditions of gender possibility could be explored, reassessed, redefined, and negotiated. The internet also served as a space where language, material bodies, and affective desires assembled to create different forms of non-binary identities, thus allowing them to become.

Non-binary gender identity assemblages are made up of flows of affective intensities, linking human and nonhuman things (such as the internet). Gender identities are therefore not inherent characteristic of a body or an individual. Instead, they are fluid and rhizomatic. Yet, a repertoire of linguistic parameters as well as the material and affective intensities were identified, demonstrating the different affects that make up the non-binary gender identity assemblage without essentialising it. For instance, several unitary narratives were identified within the forum, such as the rejection of the idea that gender and sex were the same thing, and a discomfort with the gender/sex they were assigned at birth. These unitary narratives were consistent with the findings among interview participants.

7

NON-BINARY ASSEMBLAGE: BECOMING SOMETHING ELSE

This research explored the experiences non-binary people face in relation to language, as well as the ways in which they negotiate their identities, authenticity, and embodied experiences. Gender was theorised here as something one *becomes* rather than something one *is* (Linstead & Pullen, 2006) – a relational process (a constant journey with no final destination). Gender becomings are constantly (de/re)territorialised through affective intensities which move through the body, society, language, and other material and abstract elements. Importantly, the concept of linguistic becomings was developed in this project, suggesting that language was an important affective intensity among non-binary-identified participants, allowing for their identities to become. Material affects were also found to be important to this non-binary-assemblage, thus forming multiple iterations of non-binary becomings. In that sense, a variety of affective embodiments were also identified, contributing, and extending the theory of gender and linguistic becomings.

In their book *Trans Power*, writer Juno Roche (2019) states,

I'm ecstatic about the words that work for me: 'trans' and 'queer'. Neither of them fall down on the side of femininity or masculinity, and neither of them have to adopt an oppositional position, an anti-position. I wish I could simply say 'I'm nonbinary' but I'm tired of being in direct opposition to something I don't even believe in. If I am walking away from the binary, then I walk away from both sides towards my trans centre. It is a positive space, not oppositional. I'm no longer even sure if there is any purchase in my describing myself as 'trans-femme' or 'nonbinary femme', as it confuses me. Why would femme be any more pertinent than masculine if I am trying to reject such constructs as flimsy and judgemental? (p. 18)

Their narrative of their process of gender becoming, in many ways, exemplifies the complex relationship between the linguistic (e.g., adopting a label, pronoun, etc.) and

the material (e.g., affective embodiment through gender-affirming modifications, expression, etc.) affective intensities outlined in this research – that is, the multiple ways in which these affective intensities relate to one another, emerge, shift, and are socially (re)configured and (re)negotiated in an ongoing basis. Roche’s process of gender and linguistic becomings was exhibited by their recent adoption of the identity label “trans” as well as they/them pronouns, leaving behind the category “woman” or “trans woman” and the pronouns she/her, which they had embraced for many years. Although Roche does not identify as non-binary, they also do not identify as binary. As such, their relationship to language has shifted over time – it was affected by a variety of factors, including their embodied experience, historical identity labels such as “trans woman,” and the recent availability of linguistic resources such as gender-neutral language.

This research explored some of these complexities, suggesting that a variety of linguistically and materially expressed affective intensities affect – and are affected by – the gender and linguistic becomings of individuals. These included memories, proximities, realisations, intentions, people’s perceptions, embodied desires, etc., and were negotiated in a variety of contexts which differed between and within people. As such, non-binary people’s processes of emergence and subjectification were found to be extremely heterogeneous, suggesting that there is no such thing as a unified non-binary narrative. However, there are common threads, which are expressed in the form of affective intensities.

Summary of Findings

This research examined the gender becomings of non-binary people both offline and online. A sample of 22 non-binary-identified people living in the UK were interviewed for this project using a semi-structured interview schedule, which included questions about their identities, language, challenges, and social negotiations. The same participants were also asked to provide a short writing sample, which was included in the analysis. Lastly, a corpus of non-binary language was created for this project. The non-binary corpus (NBC) was built from an online forum where non-binary people wrote about their identities, asked for advice, and shared information pertaining to their genders. These data were then analysed using a materialist approach to research and using assemblage theory (DeLanda, 2006), which was inspired by Deleuze and Guattari (1987). As such, the experiences of non-binary were understood in terms not only of language, but also of society, the body, and other material factors – all contributing to the assemblages of non-binary gender identities.

Using this framework, the interviews and short writings were analysed in Chapter 4. I argued that the most relevant affective intensities relating to the assemblages of non-binary gender identities were: experiencing discomfort with assigned gender at birth, learning about gender diversity and discovering the language that best describes the relationship with gender, adopting that language (a linguistic becoming), and embodiment. Although these affective intensities were

common among most participants, they were not homogenously experienced by participants, as there is no such thing as a single non-binary narrative. Moreover, I found that both linguistic and material intensities were crucial to the gender becomings of non-binary people in this study. These affective intensities were found to be in constant development, reconfiguration, and evolution, as they were (de/re)territorialised in multiple ways and at different levels of social interaction.

In this chapter, the concept of linguistic becomings was developed. Linguistic becomings refers to the discovery, adoption, (re)assessment, and ongoing social negotiation of gender-related language. This affective intensity contributed to the gender becomings of non-binary people in the present research in a significant way. However, these linguistic becomings were also shown to be in flux at all levels: individual, social, and societal. As such, I argued that linguistic becomings are an inherently social act.

Given the importance placed upon language, Chapter 5 explored the effects of misgendering on participants. As such, this chapter explored the ways in which non-binary people in the present study navigated the world using non-binary language, the distress that originated from social interactions in which their language was not affirmed, and the various ways in which non-binary people managed these situations. These interactions were mapped out, showing a topography of social interactions among participants. I found that misgendering from those in close social proximities (such as close friends, partners, members of the LGBTQ+ community, and close family members) often resulted in more intense distress due to their high levels of emotionality; however, the intentions (whether intentional or unintentional) behind such utterances, as interpreted by participants, modulated these effects. For instance, when misgendering was interpreted to be intentional, distress was more intense. Yet, in emotionally distant interactions such as extended family, acquaintances, or strangers, the distress caused by misgendering was found to be less intense because misgendering was mostly unintentional. This distress was found to accumulate over time, however. Although this model is not perfect, it is a close approximation to the different intensities that non-binary people experience in different contexts.

The NBC was then analysed both quantitatively and qualitatively in Chapter 6. Analyses were conducted using corpus linguistic tools, including frequency, keyness, and collocations. This corpus-based approach was found to be exceedingly useful in analysing the NBC in a systematic way. These findings helped narrow down this large dataset (2.9 million words) into a more manageable subsample. As such, 85 interrelated words (44 keywords and 41 collocations) were used to create a network of non-binary language, which was used to visualise the NBC and find the most intense words of interest. Lastly, three concordance lines for each of the top 15 words of interest were downloaded, thus creating a subsample of non-binary language.

This robust, systematic approach led to the qualitative analysis of the NBC. In this analysis, linguistic becomings were found to be significant to the ways in which non-binary people sought authenticity online, consistent with previous findings.

This chapter described the various processes of linguistic emergence: discovering, adopting, and (re)negotiating language. The linguistic parameters of non-binary identities were also found to be constantly reassessed, redefined, and renegotiated. Lastly, the material elements of gender were found to be equally important as the linguistic elements. A variety of material, affective embodiments, as they were formulated in language in the form of feelings, desires, and emotions – and their relationship to language – were identified, including affective fluidity, affective neutrality, and (body) dysphoria. This section concluded that there is no single non-binary embodiment, but multiple iterations reflecting the numerous possibilities of the body. The language of dysphoria, which was prevalent in the corpus, was inconsistently used by forum users. Dysphoria was therefore conceptualised as a linguistic tool used by forum users to describe their discomfort with the gender binary, their identities, as well as the materiality of their bodies. As such, dysphoria was understood here as an affective intensity rather than a psychological or medical condition. Overall, and similar to the interview and short writing findings outlined in previous chapters, the analysis uncovered some of the linguistic and material affective intensities which allowed non-binary identities to become, albeit in an online context.

Combined, the interviews, short writings, and the NBC make a significant contribution to the knowledge base on non-binary gender identities, their emergence, linguistic assemblage, and ongoing negotiation.

Gender and Linguistic Becomings and the Rhizome

In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari (1987) described the rhizome as a metaphor for the multiple ways in which assemblages are (de/re)territorialised. In this book, they also laid out several principles describing the shape and form of the rhizome. These principles included: interconnectedness, heterogeneity, multiplicity, rupture, and mapping. Below I outline these principles to sketch out (metaphorically) the shape and form of the non-binary-assemblage as a rhizome – based on my research findings. Moreover, I draw upon these principles to extend the theoretical contribution of linguistic becomings.

In terms of interconnectedness and heterogeneity, Deleuze and Guattari (1987) suggested that “any point of a rhizome can [and must] be connected to anything other [...] A rhizome ceaselessly establishes connections ... ” (p. 7). As such, rhizomes have no real centre. Instead, they are made up of a wide range of distinct assemblages (i.e., psychological, sociological, biological, linguistic, etc.) which are all interconnected by threads. These threads “go off” into unexpected destinations, moving at different rates, intensities, and speeds. Individuals are part of multiple assemblages which are, in turn, inherently connected to one another.

Rhizomes are, therefore, always forming new connections, always shifting, and always becoming something else. While the present research demonstrated that not all non-binary people experienced, expressed, or interpreted their genders in the same way (linguistically or materially), individuals who identified in the same

way (as genderqueer, for instance) were indeed "interconnected" by the territorialisation of some "common threads" (i.e., some of the affective intensities I identified in Chapter 4). When participants in this study conceptualised their gender in similar ways, these articulations affected – and were affected by – factors such as historical shifts, activism, social media, representation, the self as a project, etc. Therefore, shifts in the understanding – and agreement – that gender did not have to be binary, as well as the possibility of linguistic and material alterations were "common threads" that connected participants. Other factors such as drawing upon gender stereotypes and tropes and/or the employment of psycho-medical discourses of gender to describe their experiences were also part of these "common threads." These commonalities were, therefore, part of the non-binary-assemblage and acted as affective intensities which connected – and gave mobility to – the rhizome.

When discussing multiplicity, Deleuze and Guattari (1987) suggested that there is no singularity (i.e., one single way of becoming). Instead, there are multiple re-iterations of becoming: "[a rhizome] has neither subject nor object, only determinations, magnitudes, and dimensions that cannot increase in number without the multiplicity changing in nature (the laws of combination therefore increase in number as the multiplicity grows)" (Deleuze and Guattari (1987, p. 8). Multiplicity was identified in the various, and often contradictory, ways in which non-binary people in this project experienced and interpreted their gender and linguistic becomings. For instance, the different ways in which participants discussed and experienced the fluidity and/or neutrality of gender, as well as the ways in which they described and experienced their genders as "both/neither/between/either male and female." Materially, these were also discussed in terms of desires (or lack of desire) to embody a non-binary identity through gender-affirming services such as hormones, surgeries, and speech therapy. Overall, multiplicity was present in a variety of forms. Some were observable, some were not. Some possessed a lexicon, others did not. And, of course, some ways of becoming have not yet been assembled or configured into the rhizome.

Rupture was discussed in the context of broken rhizomes, "shattered at a given spot, but it will start up again on one of its old lines, or on new lines." (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 9). Furthermore,

each [...] becoming brings about the deterritorialization of one term and the reterritorialization of the other; the two becomings interlink and form relays in a circulation of intensities pushing the deterritorialization ever further. There is neither imitation nor resemblance, only an exploding of two heterogeneous series on the line of flight composed by a common rhizome that can no longer be attributed to or subjugated by anything signifying.

(Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 10)

Non-binary people in this study were found to re-appropriate and re-configure ready-to-hand assemblages relating to stereotypical masculinity and femininity.

These gender-binary-assemblages were deterritorialised and converted into non-binary configurations. This was in and of itself a linguistic becoming, as these concepts were (re)defined beyond their typical (read: widely understood) binary classification. Rupture, therefore, implies that destroying a part of the rhizome does not entail that it will cease to exist. The rhizome will instead rebuild itself from where it was cutoff, thus re-emerging with new purposes and properties – new possibilities. It can become something else.

Lastly, Deleuze and Guattari (1987) discussed mapping as rhizomes being

not amenable to any structural or generative model. It is a stranger to any idea of genetic axis or deep structure. [... A map] is entirely oriented toward an experimentation in contact with the real. It is itself a part of the rhizome. The map is open and connectable in all of its dimensions; it is detachable, reversible, susceptible to constant modification. It can be torn, reversed, adapted to any kind of mounting, reworked by an individual, group, or social formation. (p. 12)

As there is no real or deep structure, visualising a rhizome is impossible. However, one can “experiment.” This research itself is a form of mapping, as it employs people’s narrations, stories, and interpretations to assemble a new (somewhat different) interpretation through a variety of (research) tools, skills, resources, etc. As such, this research explored and attempted to visualise the non-binary rhizome. This mapping, interpreting, and nuanced understanding of the rhizome was, therefore, a part of the gender (research-)assemblage, thus shaping and forming a particular version of it. In turn, this research assembles a new possibility, a new “reality,” and a new becoming.

Concluding Remarks

This research identified a gap in research into the ways in which non-binary people negotiated language. This research was indeed needed, as previous research had suggested that non-binary people have been shown to feel linguistically invalidated (Saltzburg & Davis, 2010), perhaps due to the prevailing cisgenderist ideology which invalidates gender-diverse people’s identities (Ansara & Hegarty, 2014). However, no research had examined whether the use of gender-affirming language had any benefits or negative consequences among non-binary people. This research fills this gap in the literature and begins to understand the complexity of gender and linguistic negotiations among non-binary people. Therefore, one of the main aims of this research was to shed light on the linguistic and material elements that come together to assemble non-binary identities. This analysis shed light on the assemblages of non-binary gender identities, reflecting the dynamic realities of linguistic becomings and subjectivities while simultaneously highlighting the materiality of the body as a part of this assemblage. Language negotiations, therefore, were considered a part of this assemblage.

This analysis maintained a commitment to the materialist epistemology and ontology, suggesting that a theory that went beyond essentialist and social constructionist understandings of gender was necessary to capture the nuances of gender. Assemblage theory (DeLanda, 2006) was employed in this research as a tool to understand the different affects that contribute to the assemblages and processes of becoming non-binary both online and offline. This research, therefore, makes a theoretical contribution with the addition of gender and linguistic becomings to the understandings of gender. This theory breaks away from the structuralisms and the social constructionist commitments to knowledge production which understand gender (as well as sexuality, sex, race, etc.) either as purely biological (an essential characteristic of the self) or as purely linguistic, respectively. Instead, this epistemological perspective understands gender (and other assemblages such as sexuality, sex, etc.) as a becoming – a constant process of emergence, shifting, (re)assessment, and (re)configuration. Within this framework, gender is reframed as neither essential nor solely socially constructed, but as *assembling* and *producing* multiple *intensities* in an ongoing movement of *affects* – which are both material and linguistic. Gender was understood as unpredictable, messy, and always becoming (Grosz, 1994). For example, although non-binary-identified people in this project claimed membership to a linguistic territory (a linguistic becoming) which, in many cases, provided them with a sense of authenticity, many participants saw this linguistic emergence as context-dependent, fluid, and able to shift over time. Gender and linguistic becomings, therefore, were not static or fixed – they had mobility (Linstead & Pullen, 2006). This book analysed the embodied and linguistic desires of non-binary selfhood (Crawford, 2008) by exploring the ways in which particular materialities are activated, formulated, and deployed to produce particular kinds of social business (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2010) – and the multiple ways in which these materialities both affect and are affected by discursive forces. For instance, this book discussed material affects such as fluidity, neutrality, and (body) dysphoria. These material intensities were said to contribute to the overall assemblage of non-binary gender identities, albeit homogenously, producing numerous non-binary modalities.

This project also contributes to the field of psychology in terms of methodologies. In line with the materialist ontology employed in this project, a materialist approach to methodology (Fox & Alldred, 2014) was implemented. This approach understands research as an assemblage of events, researchers, research tools, ideas, etc. which are used to produce knowledge. As such, a combination of research methods was employed. Interviews, short writings, and the NBC were all part of the research-assemblage. And a materialist approach to analysis (a non-hierarchical, relational analysis) as well as the use of corpus linguistic tools to analyse the corpus, were part of the research tools in this research-assemblage. The combination of these methods was productive, as it offered a variety of ways to generate knowledge, and to shed some light on the gender and linguistic becomings of non-binary people.

Overall, this research found that utilising a distinct type of language – a linguistic becoming – not only served as a tool to differentiate their gender and territorialise their identity, but also as a marker of social identity and group membership. Such a linguistic marker allowed their identity to be recognised and more widely validated, at least in their close social circles. These linguistic negotiations were not easy, as participants expressed feeling a great deal of societal rejection which rendered their identities and linguistic becomings unintelligible. These findings reflected the cis-normative (Bauer et al., 2009) and cisgenderist (Ansara & Hegarty, 2014) ideologies which prevail in society. These ideologies were found within the data, as they disallowed gender-diverse people from fully expressing their identities.

These ideologies (in the form of gender stereotypes, tropes, and ready-to-hand assemblages) were also drawn upon and re-purposed to assemble a non-binary becoming. In other words, by using the familiar (material and linguistic) resources emerging from the gender binary (i.e., masculinity and femininity), participants (both online and offline) (de/re)territorialised new gender becomings. In a somewhat paradoxical sense, non-binary people in this study employed these resources to create the space in which non-binary becomings were possible. Therefore, non-binary territories were produced by reterritorialising pre-existing, pre-existing images of masculinity and femininity such as gender roles, medical discourses, and psychiatry, as well as ascribing significance to gender expressions and embodiments. As such, becoming non-binary had the emancipatory capacity to offer new (linguistic and material) spaces into which the self (as a project of becoming) could unfold. Furthermore, as these gender and linguistic becomings emerged through affective intensities, parameters and constraints concerning non-binary genders also began to emerge. However, I found that non-binary people in this study also rejected some of these territorialisations and actively fought against them.

Many participants and forum users faced a great deal of discrimination and misgendering, based on their gender expressions, embodiment, and linguistic becomings, affecting their well-being and overall quality of life. Some individuals were more affected by misgendering than others, which was modulated by their emotional proximity as well as their intention. Nevertheless, non-binary gender identities were shown to be (de/re)territorialised in an ongoing way – that is, identities (and the language surrounding them) were not fixed in time and space but were in a constant process of becoming.

Recommendations for Future Research

This research does not intend to be a generalised representation of non-binary people. Instead, this research examined the experiences of 22 non-binary-identified people in the UK as well as the language that anonymised forum users at a specific moment and time (when data were collected). Therefore, the interpretations in this study simply represent (and helped produce a version of) the gender identities of the participants in this study. Because language and identities are constantly evolving, this research cannot affirm, concretely, that non-binary

people experience language and embodiment in the same way – as this would be ontologically inconsistent. Therefore, this research argues that the participants of this study may or may not experience their genders differently by the time this research was completed, as a variety of affects can influence their embodied and linguistic experiences over time.

The interview and short writing participants were mostly AFAB individuals who were, for the most part, white and held advanced degrees. However, this was not measured directly and was found during the data collection. This could be interpreted as a limitation to the study, as the experiences of AMAB individuals, people of colour, and people with lower educational attainment were largely unrepresented.

The gender expressions of the three AMAB individuals in this study were largely on the transfeminine spectrum. As such, these participants were likely to experience discrimination based on their gender expression because of the societal prevalence of trans-misogyny (Serano, 2007). Similarly, only one participant identified as black and two identified as mixed-race. The only black person in the study also described themselves as poor, a survivor of domestic violence, and felt as though they were not represented in non-binary communities in the UK. Future research, therefore, should ensure that samples represent a wide range of non-binary perspectives that extend beyond AFAB, white, and educated individuals. Future research should also examine how (and whether) social divisions are maintained or disrupted within these communities.

This research only focused on the experiences of non-binary people as they navigated their identity in the English language. However, three participants spoke about negotiating their identities and attempting to use gender-neutral language in other languages. Many of them expressed feeling more comfortable indexing their identities in English, as the linguistic resources were available to them in this language. Future research should investigate the experiences of bicultural and/or bilingual individuals in terms of their linguistic negotiations in other languages, and/or in comparison to English.

Historically, the field of psychology has examined gender diversity from a pathologising perspective, thus furthering the stigmatisation of trans and non-binary people in society. Employing a trans-affirming stance to research enabled me to examine gender diversity and plurality in its multiple forms and iterations – and to examine the lived experiences of non-binary identities using a compassionate, affirming, and empathetic lens, while also being methodological, analytical, and critical. The present research adds to the representation of non-binary gender identities within the social sciences, and demonstrates that, to capture the nuances of gender diversity, identity, and language, the field of psychology ought to adopt a trans-affirming stance to research.

Applications and Implications

This research has produced several novel findings about non-binary people's lived experiences that are useful for practitioners and policymakers. Informed by action

research, which aims to improve people's lives by developing empirically informed actions, I will offer some practical applications and recommendations for practitioners and policymakers. I will also offer some ways in which the present research can benefit the non-binary community in the UK and internationally by demonstrating the need to understand gender as becoming rather than gender as being. Lastly, I will briefly outline a dissemination strategy aimed at ensuring that the present research' findings are spread widely among various audiences.

Practitioners

This research found that language was indeed a significant element to non-binary people's identities and sense of authenticity and well-being. Although I found that these linguistic becomings were mobile and not fixed, it is important to recognise the importance of respecting people's autonomy in naming non-binary people's gender experiences. This is particularly important as neglecting non-binary issues and language can lead to significant levels of distress among non-binary-identified people. The research has shown that social interactions in which non-binary people were misgendered – either intentionally or unintentionally – generated increased levels of emotional distress. Some participants described this pain as “a thousand paper cuts,” alluding to the ways in which these microaggressions build up over time. It is therefore imperative to challenge and adapt the inherently cisgenderist systems embedded in language use that undermine gender diversity. For example, when it comes to indexing gender in medical, educational, legal, and work environments, there are typically only two gender options (man/male and woman/female) in formal introductions, forms, etc. It is recommended that an array of gender, pronoun, and title options (including open response) should be included. Additionally, these linguistic adoptions should be updated on an ongoing basis, allowing clients to change their preferences periodically. Adding these options would ensure that those who do not identify solely as men or women are acknowledged and that they then feel comfortable accessing vital services such as medical treatment, social services, housing, and employment. The research findings also made clear that service providers and practitioners are in need of inclusion and diversity training that includes gender diversity and language use. Such training should be informed by this research, as it demonstrated the varying effects of misgendering on trans and non-binary people (particularly in the workplace). These trainings should be updated frequently to account for new linguistic becomings.

Policymakers

This research evidenced the negative repercussions that non-binary people experience due to their (lack of) legal status in the UK. Non-binary people are currently unable to legally declare their non-binary gender and are therefore not protected under the Equality Act 2010. This means that public and private entities are not legally required to recognise non-binary genders nor their linguistic

markers. The present study added to the growing body of research demonstrating that non-binary people are disproportionately affected by discrimination and marginalisation – which affects their overall physical and psychological health. For instance, this research showed that not being legally recognised affects non-binary people's access to necessary services (medical, legal, and financial). Many non-binary people avoid these services due to the fear of being misgendered, experiencing harassment, and/or violence. These factors contribute to their minority stress – their high rates of anxiety, depression, self-harm, and suicidality.

This research therefore recommends systematically working towards changes to the legal framework that allows for recognition of non-binary people and protects them from exclusion, violence, and harassment under the Equality Act. Additionally, it is crucial that non-binary people are affirmed, validated, and properly accounted for in data collection, as this will help further their visibility and social intelligibility, thereby diminishing their emotional distress.

Non-Binary Community

I believe that the present research can also be useful for the non-binary community at large, as well as those who are currently questioning their gender identities, in a variety of ways. This research showed that identities are produced by a multitude of affective intensities which are in constant motion, and not by linear factors or narratives. As such, the idea that gender identities can be de/re/territorialised by these intensities can help non-binary people to – metaphorically – visualise these complex processes of emergence and to make sense of them.

The present research also indicates that non-binary people may benefit from understanding genders – and the language surrounding them – as flexible, mobile, and volatile (not fixed or stable). The central message of becoming rather than being can be comforting (easing some anxieties) for many non-binary-identified or questioning people as they navigate their social identities. For instance, learning that gendered language and embodiments are not a reflection of their inherent, true self, but a way of describing the varied, complex, and multidimensional ways of becoming, can provide significant psychological relief for some people. In that sense, there is no right or wrong way of being non-binary. Becoming is ongoing; it has no final destination and, thus, has emancipatory power.

Becoming Something Else

The present research, which had a clear problem-oriented objective, made important theoretical and methodological contributions to LGBTQ+ psychology, gender studies, and sociolinguistics by applying techniques from these fields of study to non-binary populations, thus making it a truly interdisciplinary study. As such, this research offered an original contribution to knowledge by furthering and developing theory (gender and linguistic becomings), by employing innovative methodologies (corpus-based research and network visualisation), and by yielding

original data. Although the narratives (both offline and online) of participants in this study merely represented a snapshot of their process of gender and linguistic becomings at a specific time and place, I argue that the theoretical and methodological contributions that this research offered can (and should) be further extended and applied to a variety of research domains, topics, and praxis.

My hope is that this research will serve as a springboard for those seeking to employ, develop, and extend these theoretical and methodological contributions, including by employing the NBC in further research. I hope this research will also contribute to the visibility of non-binary people in the social sciences. This is especially important as non-binary people continue to fight for recognition, validation, and equity in a highly heteronormative, cisnormative society, particularly in the current political environment.

REFERENCES

- Airton, L. (2018). The de/politicization of pronouns: Implications of the 'no big deal campaign' for gender-expansive educational policy and practice. *Gender and Education*, 30(6), 790–810.
- All About Trans. (2016). *Gender identity: Non-binary*. Retrieved from <http://www.allabouttrans.org.uk/category/non-binary>
- Allred, P. & Fox, N. (2015). From 'lesbian and gay psychology' to a critical psychology of sexualities. In I. Parker (Ed.), *Handbook of critical psychology* (pp. 200–209). London: Routledge.
- Alvesson, M. & Sköldbberg, K. (2000). *Reflexive methodology: New vistas for qualitative research*. London: Sage.
- Alvesson, M. & Sköldbberg, K. (2010). *Reflexive methodology: New vistas for qualitative research* (2nd ed.). London: Sage.
- American Dialect Society. (2016). *2015 word of the year is singular "they"*. Retrieved from <https://www.americandialect.org/2015-word-of-the-year-is-singular-they>
- American Psychiatric Association. (1980). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* (3rd ed.). Washington, DC: APA.
- American Psychiatric Association. (2013). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* (5th ed.). Washington, DC: APA.
- Anderson, B., Kearnes, M., McFarlane, C., & Swanton, D. (2012). On assemblages and geography. *Dialogues in Human Geography*, 2(2), 171–189.
- Ansara, Y. (2015). Challenging cisgenderism in the ageing and aged care sector: Meeting the needs of older people of trans and/or non-binary experience. *Australasian Journal on Ageing*, 34(S2), 14–18.
- Ansara, Y. & Hegarty, P. (2012). Cisgenderism in psychology: Pathologising and misgendering children from 1999 to 2008. *Psychology & Sexuality*, 3(2), 137–160.
- Ansara, Y. & Hegarty, P. (2014). Methodologies of misgendering: Recommendations for reducing cisgenderism in psychological research. *Feminism & Psychology*, 24(2), 259–270.
- Antaki, C., & Widdicombe, S. (1998). Identity as an achievement and as a tool. In C. Antaki and S. Widdicombe (Eds.), *Identities in talk* (pp. 1–14). London: Sage.

- Aranda, F. (2015). Prevalence of transsexualism: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *European Psychiatry*, 30(6), 807–815.
- Arcelus, J., & Bouman, W. (2016). Current and future direction of gender dysphoria and gender incongruence research. *Journal of Sexual Medicine*, 12(12), 2226–2228.
- Arcelus, J., Bouman, W., Van den Noortgate, W., Claes, L., Witcomb, G., & Fernandez-Aranda, F. (2015). Systematic review and meta-analysis of prevalence studies in transsexualism. *European Psychiatry*, 30(6), 807–815.
- Arora, P. (2018, June 20). *Poet Alok Vaid-Menon: 'I am part of something greater than myself.'* Huffington Post. Retrieved from https://www.huffpost.com/entry/alok-void-menon_n_5b27dae4e4b0783ae12bd140
- Aultman, B. (2014). Cisgender. *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly*, 1(1–2), 61–62.
- Baker, P. (2006). *Using corpora in discourse analysis*. London: Continuum.
- Baker, P. (2008). *Sexed texts: Language, gender and sexuality*. London: Equinox.
- Baker, P. (2010). *Sociolinguistics and corpus linguistics*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Baker, P. (2014). *Using corpora to analyze gender*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Baldwin, A., Dodge, B., Schick, V., Light, B., Schnarrs, P., Herbenick, D. & Fortenberry, J. (2018). Transgender and genderqueer individuals' experiences with health care providers: What's working, what's not, and where do we go from here? *Journal of Health Care for the Poor and Underserved*, 29(4), 1300–1318.
- Barad, K. (2007). *Meeting the universe half way – Quantum physics and the entanglement of matter and meaning*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Barker, M. (2013). *Rewriting the rules: An integrative guide to love, sex and relationships*. London: Routledge.
- Barker, M. & Richards, C. (2015). Further genders. In C. Richards & M. Barker (Eds.), *Handbook of the psychology of sexuality and gender* (pp. 166–182). Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Baron, D. (2020). *What's your pronoun?: Beyond he and she*. New York: Liveright.
- Bastian, M., Heymann, S. & Jacomy, M. (2009). Gephi: An open source software for exploring and manipulating networks. *International AAAI Conference on Weblogs and Social Media*, 8, 361–362.
- Bauer, G., Hammond, R., Travers, R., Kaay, M., Hohenadel, K. & Boyce, M. (2009). "I don't think this is theoretical; this is our lives": How erasure impacts health care for transgender people. *Journal of the Association of Nurses in AIDS Care*, 20(5), 348–361.
- Beemyn, B. (2005). *Genderqueer*. Retrieved from http://www.glbqtarchive.com/ssh/genderqueer_S.pdf
- Beemyn, G. (2014). Transgender history in the United States. In L. Erickson-Schroth (Ed.), *Trans bodies, trans selves: A resource for the transgender community* (pp. 1–49). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Bem, S. (1974). The measurement of psychological androgyny. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 42, 155–162.
- Bem, S. (1981). Gender schema theory: A cognitive account of sex typing. *Psychological Review*, 88(4), 354.
- Bem, S. (1995). Dismantling gender polarization and compulsory heterosexuality: Should we turn the volume down or up? *Journal of Sex Research*, 32(4), 329–334.
- Bem, S. & Lenney, E. (1976). Sex typing and the avoidance of cross-sex behavior. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 33(1), 48.
- Benjamin, H. (1953). Transvestism and transsexualism. *International Journal of Sexology*, 7, 12–14.
- Bennett, J. (2010). *Vibrant matter: A political ecology of things*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

- Bennet, J. (2016, January 30). *She? ze? they? what's in a gender pronoun?* The New York Times. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/31/fashion/pronoun-confusion-sexual-fluidity.html>
- Bergman, S. & Barker, M. (2017) Non-binary activism. In C. Richards, W. Bouman, & M. Barker (Eds.), *Genderqueer and non-binary genders, critical and applied approaches in sexuality, gender and identity* (pp. 31–52). London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Bockting, W.O., Brenner, A., & Coleman, E. (2009). Gay and bisexual identity development among female-to-male transsexuals in North America: Emergence of a transgender sexuality. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 38, 688–701.
- Boldly go (2012, April 10). *The pursuit of androgyny*. Retrieved from <http://boldlygo.co/>
- Bonta, M. & Protevi, J. (2004). *Deleuze and geophilosophy: A guide and glossary*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Bornstein, K. (1994). *Gender outlaw: On men, women, and the rest of us*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Bornstein, K. (1998). *My gender workbook: How to become a real man, a real woman, the real you, or something else entirely*. New York and London: Routledge.
- Bostock, W. (2002). Atrocity, mundanity and mental state. *Journal of Mundane Behaviour*, 3(3), 351–365.
- Bouman, W., Bauer, G., Richards, C., & Coleman, E. (2010). WPATH consensus statement on considerations on the role of distress (criterion D) in the DSM diagnosis of gender identity disorder. *International Journal of Transgenderism*, 12(2), 100–106.
- Bowcott, O. (2019, December 3). *UK refusal to issue gender-neutral passports unlawful, appeal court told*. The Guardian. Retrieved from: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/dec/03/home-office-taken-to-court-of-appeal-over-refusal-of-gender-neutral-passports>
- Boyne, J. (2019, April 13). *Why I support trans rights but reject the word 'cis'*. The Irish Times. Retrieved from <https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/books/john-boyne-why-i-support-trans-rights-but-reject-the-word-cis-1.3843005>
- Bragg, S., Renold, E., Ringrose, J., & Jackson, C. (2018). “More than boy, girl, male, female”: Exploring young people’s views on gender diversity within and beyond school contexts. *Sex Education*, 18(4), 420–434.
- Braidotti, R. (2002). *Metamorphosis: Towards and materialist theory of becoming*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Braidotti, R. (2006). *Transpositions: On nomadic ethics*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- British Psychological Society. (2017). *Ethics guidelines for internet-mediated research*. INF206/04.2017. Leicester. Retrieved from: www.bps.org.uk/publications/policy-and-guidelines/research-guidelines-policy-documents/researchguidelines-poli
- Brown, S. (2010). Between the planes: Deleuze and social science. In C. Jensen & K. Röddje (Eds.), *Deleuzian intersections: Science, technology and anthropology* (pp. 101–120). Oxford, UK: Berghahn Books.
- Brown, S., & Stenner, P. (2009). *Psychology without foundations: History, philosophy and psychosocial theory*. London, UK: Sage.
- Budge, S., Rossman, H., & Howard, K. (2014). Coping and psychological distress among genderqueer individuals: The moderating effect of social support. *Journal of LGBT Issues in Counseling*, 8, 95–117.
- Burgwal, A., Gvianishvili, N., Hård, V., Kata, J., García Nieto, I., Orre, C. & Motmans, J. (2019). Health disparities between binary and non binary trans people: A community-driven survey. *International Journal of Transgenderism*, 20(2–3), 218–229.
- Burr, V. (1995). *An introduction to social constructionism*. New York: Taylor & Frances/Routledge.

- Burr, V. (2003). *Social constructionism* (3rd ed.). London: Routledge.
- Butler, J. (1990). *Gender trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Butler, J. (1993). *Bodies that matter: On the discursive limits of sex*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Butler, J. (1999). *Gender trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity* (2nd ed.). New York: Routledge.
- Butler, J. (2004). *Undoing gender*. New York: Routledge.
- Cabral, M. (2011). *Dilemas de la despatologización*. Retrieved from <http://www.clam.org.br/publicque/cgi/cgilua.exe/sys/start.htm?infoid=7957&sid=25>
- Carter, J. (2013). Embracing transition, or dancing in the folds of time. In S. Stryker, & A. Aizura, (Eds.), *The transgender studies reader 2* (pp. 130–143). New York: Routledge.
- Chakrapani, V., Babu, P., & Ebenezer, T. (2004). Hijras in sex work face discrimination in the Indian health-care system. *Research for Sex Work*, 7, 12–14.
- Clark, B., Veale, J., Townsend, M., Frohard-Dourlent, H., & Saewyc, E. (2018). Non-binary youth: Access to gender-affirming primary health care. *International Journal of Transgenderism*, 19(2), 158–169.
- Clements-Nolle, K., Marx, R., & Katz, M. (2006). Attempted suicide among transgender persons: The influence of gender-based discrimination and victimization. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 51(3), 53–69.
- Cole, M., O’Boyle, M., Emory, L., & Meyer III, W. (1997). Comorbidity of gender dysphoria and other major psychiatric diagnoses. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 26(1), 13–26.
- Coleman, E., Bockting, W.O., Botzer, M., Cohen-Kettenis, P., DeCuypere, G., Feldman, J., ... Zucker, K. (2012). Standards of care for the health of transsexual, transgender, and gender-nonconforming people, version 7. *International Journal of Transgenderism*, 13, 165–232.
- Cook, E. (2019). Masculinity studies in Japan. In J. Coates, M. Pendleton & L. Fraser (Eds.), *Routledge companion to gender and Japanese culture* (pp. 50–59). London: Routledge.
- Coole, D., & Frost, S. (2010). Introducing the new materialisms. In D. Coole & S. Frost (Eds.), *New materialisms: Ontology, agency, and politics* (pp. 1–43). Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Corcione, A. (2018, August 27). *The gender-neutral words you need to know for back to school*. Teen Vogue. Retrieved from <https://www.teenvogue.com/story/how-to-use-gender-neutral-words>
- Cordoba, S. (2020). Non-binary sexualities: The language of desire, practice, and embodiment. In Z. Davy, C. Bertone, A.C. Santos, R. Thoresen & S. Wieringa (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of global sexualities* (pp. 877–896). London: SAGE.
- Coyle, A. (2010). Qualitative research and anomalous experience: A call for interpretative pluralism. *Qualitative research in psychology*, 7(1), 79–83.
- Coyle, A. (2021) Discourse analysis. In L. Evanthia & C. Adrian (Eds.), *Analysing qualitative data in psychology* (3rd ed.). London, UK: Sage.
- Crawford, L. (2008). Transgender without organs? Mobilizing a geo-affective theory of gender modification. *Women’s Studies Quarterly*, 36(3–4), 127–143.
- Crenshaw, K. (1989). *Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A black feminist critique of anti-discrimination doctrine, feminist theory, and antiracist politics* (pp. 139–167). Chicago: University of Chicago Legal Forum.
- Currah, P. (2006). Gender pluralisms under the transgender umbrella. In P. Currah, R. Juang, & S. Prince Minter. (Eds.), *Transgender rights* (pp. 3–31). Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press.
- Curran, J. (2004). *From distributional to semantic similarity*. Unpublished PhD thesis, Edinburgh University.

- Currier, D. (2003). Feminist technological futures: Deleuze and body/technology assemblages. *Feminist Theory*, 4(3), 321–338.
- Darwin, C. (1871). *The descent of man: And selection in relation to sex*. London: J. Murray.
- Davies, B. (2010). The implications for qualitative research methodology of the struggle between the individualized subject of phenomenology and the emergent multiplicities of the poststructuralist subject: The problem of agency. *Reconceptualising Educational Research Methodology*, 1(1), 54–68.
- Davy, Z. (2011). *Recognizing transsexuals: Personal, political and medicolegal embodiment*. Surrey: Ashgate.
- Davy, Z. (2015). The DSM 5 and the politics of diagnosing transpeople. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 44(5), 1165–1176.
- Davy, Z. (2019). Genderqueer(ing): ‘On this side of the world against which it protests’. *Sexualities, Special Edition: Trans Genealogies*. 22(1–2), 80–96.
- Davy, Z., & Toze, M. (2018). What is gender dysphoria? A critical systematic narrative review. *Transgender Health*, 3(1), 159–169.
- DeLanda, M. (2006). *A new philosophy of society*. London: Continuum.
- Deleuze, G. (1988). *Spinoza: Practical philosophy*. San Francisco, CA: City Lights.
- Deleuze, G. (1994). *Difference and repetition* (P. Patton, Trans.). New York: Columbia University Press.
- Deleuze, G. & Guattari, F. (1987). *A thousand plateaus: Capitalism and schizophrenia* (B. Massumi, Trans.). London: Continuum.
- Deleuze, G. & Guattari, F. (1988). *A thousand plateaus*. London: Athlone.
- Deleuze, G. (2007). Eight years later: 1980 interview. In A. Hodges & M. Taormina (Eds.), *Two regimes of madness: Texts and interviews 1975–1995, revised edition* (pp. 175–180). Paris: Semiotext(e).
- Denzin, N. (1989). *Interpretive interactionism. Applied research method series, 16*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Denzin, N. (2010). *Studies in symbolic interaction: Vol. 34*. Bingley, UK: Emerald.
- Dodge, B., & Sandfort, T. (2007). A review of mental health research on bisexual individuals when compared to homosexual and heterosexual individuals. In B.A. Firestein (Ed.), *Becoming visible: Counseling bisexuals across the lifespan* (pp. 28–51). New York: Columbia University Press.
- Drescher, J. (2010). Queer diagnoses: Parallels and contrasts in the history of homosexuality, gender variance, and the diagnostic and statistical manual. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 39, 427–460.
- Duff, C. (2014). *Assemblages of health: Deleuze’s empiricism and the ethology of life*. Amsterdam, The Netherlands: Springer International.
- Edwards, D. (1997). *Discourse and cognition*. London: Sage.
- Ekins, R. (2005). Science, politics and clinical intervention: Harry Benjamin, transsexualism and the problem of heteronormativity. *Sexuality*, 8(3), 311.
- Ekins, R., & King, D. (1996). *Blending genders: Social aspects of cross-dressing and sex-changing*. London: Routledge.
- Ekins, R. & King, D. (2010). The emergence of new transgendering identities in the age of the internet. In S. Hines & T. Sanger (Eds.), *Transgender identities: Towards a social analysis of gender diversity* (pp. 25–42). London: Routledge.
- Elan-Cane, C. (2014). *HM passport office*. Retrieved from <http://elancane.livejournal.com/24816.html>
- Elliot, P. (2009). Engaging trans debates on gender variance: A feminist analysis. *Sexualities*, 12(1), 5–32.

- Ellis, H. (1938). *The dance of life*. New York: Grosset and Dunlap.
- Engel, G. (1977). The need for a new medical model: A challenge for biomedicine. *Science*, 196(4286), 129–136.
- Enke, A. (2013). The education of little cis: Cisgender and the discipline of opposing bodies. In S. Stryker & A. Aizura (Eds.), *The transgender studies reader 2* (pp. 234–247). New York: Routledge.
- Fausto-Sterling, A. (2000). *Sexing the body: Gender politics and the construction of sexuality*. New York, NY: Basic Books.
- Fausto-Sterling, A. (2012). *Sex/gender: Biology in a social world*. New York: Routledge.
- Feinberg, L. (1992). *Transgender liberation: A movement whose time has come*. New York: World View Forum.
- Fine, C. (2010). *Delusions of gender: The real science behind sex differences*. London: Icon.
- Finn, M. & Dell, P. (1999). Practices of body management: Transgenderism and embodiment. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology*, 9(6), 463–476.
- Firth, J. (1957). A synopsis of linguistic theory 1930–1955. In J. Firth (Ed.), *Studies in linguistic analysis* (pp. 1–32). Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Fisher, A. (1750). *A new grammar: Being the most easy guide to speaking and writing the English language properly and correctly* (2nd ed.). Newcastle upon Tyne: printed for I. Thompson & Co. by J. Gooding.
- Foucault, M. (1972). *Archaeology of knowledge*. Routledge.
- Foucault, M. (1978). *The history of sexuality Vol. 1: The will to knowledge*. London: Penguin Books.
- Fox, N. & Alldred, P. (2013). The sexuality-assemblage: Desire, affect, anti-humanism. *The Sociological Review*, 61(4), 769–789.
- Fox, N. & Alldred, P. (2014). New materialist social inquiry: Designs, methods and the research-assemblage. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 18(4), 399–414.
- Fox, N., & Alldred, P. (2015). Inside the research-assemblage: New materialism and the micropolitics of social inquiry. *Sociological Research Online*, 20(2), 1–19.
- Fox, N. & Alldred, P. (2017). *Sociology and the new materialism: Theory, research, action*. London: Sage.
- Freud, S. (1905). *Three essays on sexuality*. London: Vintage.
- Friedman, E. (2014). Cisgenderism in gender attributions: The ways in which social, cognitive, and individual factors predict misgendering. *CUNY Academic Works*. Retrieved from http://academicworks.cuny.edu/gc_etds/212
- Gamson, J. (1995). Must identity movements self-destruct? A queer dilemma. *Social Problems*, 42, 390–407.
- Garrison, S. (2018). On the limits of “trans enough”: Authenticating trans identity narratives. *Gender & Society*, 32(5), 613–637.
- Gender Recognition Act. (2004). Retrieved from: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/7/contents>
- Goldblum, P., Testa, R., Pflum, S., Hendricks, M., Bradford, J., & Bongar, B. (2012). The relationship between gender-based victimization and suicide attempts in transgender people. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, 43(5), 468–475.
- Government Equalities Office. (2018). *National LGBT survey: Research report*. Retrieved from https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/721704/LGBT-survey-research-report.pdf
- Green, R., & Money, J. (Eds.). (1969). *Transsexualism and sex reassignment*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press.

- Grémaux, R. (1993). Woman becomes man in the Balkans. In G. Herdt (Ed.), *Third sex, third gender: Beyond sexual dimorphism in culture and history* (pp. 241–281). New York: Zone Books.
- Grosz, E. (1994). *Volatile bodies: Towards a corporeal feminism*. Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.
- Guyan, K. (2022). *Queer data: Using gender, sex and sexuality data for action*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Haas, A., Philip Rodgers, P. & Herman, J. (2014). *Suicide attempts among transgender and gender non-conforming adults*. Retrieved from <https://queeramnesty.ch/docs/AFSP-Williams-Suicide-Report-Final.pdf>
- Halberstam, J. (2005). *In a queer time and place: Transgender bodies, subcultural lives*. New York: NYU Press.
- Hale, C. (1997). Suggested rules for non-transsexuals writing about transsexuals, transsexuality, transsexualism, or trans. Retrieved from <http://sandystone.com/hale.rules.html>
- Haraway, D. (1991). A cyborg manifesto: Science, technology, and socialist-feminism in the late twentieth century. In D. Haraway (Ed.), *Simians, cyborgs and women: The re-invention of nature* (pp. 149–181). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Harding, S. (1989). Women as creators of knowledge: New environments. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 32(6), 700–707.
- Harrison, J., Grant, J., & Herman, J. (2012). *A gender not listed here: Genderqueers, gender rebels, and otherwise in the national transgender discrimination survey*. Los Angeles: eScholarship, University of California.
- Harvey, K., Brown, B., Crawford, P., Macfarlane, A., & McPherson, A. (2007). “Am I normal?” Teenagers, sexual health and the internet. *Social Science & Medicine*, 65(4), 771–781.
- Hayfield, N. (2020). *Bisexual and pansexual identities: Exploring and challenging invisibility and invalidation*. London: Routledge.
- Haynes, F., & McKenna, T. (Eds.). (2001). *Unseen genders: Beyond the binaries*. Bern, Switzerland: Peter Lang Publishing.
- Hendricks, M.L., & Testa, R.J. (2012). A conceptual framework for clinical work with transgender and gender nonconforming clients: An adaptation of the minority stress model. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, 43(5), 460–467.
- Herdt, G. (1996). *Third sex, third gender*. New York, NY: Zone Books.
- Hill, D. (2005). Sexuality and gender in Hirschfeld’s *Die Transvestiten*: A case of the “Elusive Evidence of the Ordinary”. *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 14(3), 316–332. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3704656>
- Hines, S. (2007). *TransForming gender: Transgender practices of identity, intimacy, and care*. Bristol, UK: Policy Press.
- Hines, S. (2010). Introduction. In S. Hines & T. Sanger (Eds.), *Transgender identities: Towards a social analysis of gender diversity* (pp. 25–42). London: Routledge.
- Hines, S. (2012). Stirring it up – again –: A politics of difference in the new millennium. In Hines, S. & Taylor Y. (Eds.), *Sexualities: Past reflections, future directions: Genders and sexualities in the social sciences* (pp. 25–42). Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Hird, M. (2000). Gender’s nature intersexuality, transsexualism and the ‘sex’/’gender’ binary. *Feminist theory*, 1(3), 347–364.
- Hird, M. (2002). For a sociology of transsexualism. *Sociology*, 36(3), 577–595.
- Hirschfeld, M. (1910). *Die transvestiten*. Berlin: Pulvermacher.

- Hirschfeld, M. (1919). Das angebliche dritte geschlecht des menschen. Eine erwidernung. *Zeitschrift für Sexualwissenschaft*, 6, 22–27.
- Hookway, N. (2008). Entering the blogosphere: Some strategies for using blogs in social research. *Qualitative Research*, 8(1), 91–113.
- Hord, L. (2016). Bucking the linguistic binary: Gender neutral language in English, Swedish, French, and German. *Western Papers in Linguistics*, 3(1), Article 4.
- Hoshiai, M., Matsumoto, Y., Sato, T., Ohnishi, M., Okabe, N., Kishimoto, Y., Terada, S., & Kuroda, S. (2010). Psychiatric comorbidity among patients with gender identity disorder. *Psychiatry and Clinical Neurosciences*, 64, 514–519.
- House of Commons: Women and Equalities Committee (2016). *Transgender equality report*. Retrieved from: <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201516/cmsselect/cmwomeq/390/390.pdf>
- Hunston, S. (2002). *Corpora in applied linguistics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hyde, J. (2005). The gender similarities hypothesis. *American Psychologist*, 60(6), 581–592.
- Hyde, J., Bigler, R., Joel, D., Tate, C., & Anders, S. (2018). The future of sex and gender in psychology: Five challenges to the gender binary. *American Psychologist*, 74(2), 171–193.
- Intersex Society of North America. (2018). Intersex society of North America: A world free of shame, secrecy, and unwanted genital surgery. *ISNA*. Retrieved from www.isna.org
- Irvine, J. (1990). From difference to sameness: Gender ideology in sexual science. *The Journal of Sex Research*, 27(1), 7–24.
- Israel, G. (2005). Translove: Transgender persons and their families. *Journal of GLBT Family Studies*, 1(1), 53–67.
- Jagose, A. (1996). *Queer theory*. New York: New York University Press.
- James, S., Herman, J., Rankin, S., Keisling, M., Mottet, L., & Anafi, M. (2016). *The report of the 2015 U.S. transgender survey*. Washington, DC: National Center for Transgender Equality.
- Joel, D., Tarrasch, R., Berman, Z., Mukamel, M., & Ziv, E. (2013). Queering gender: Studying gender identity in ‘normative’ individuals. *Psychology & Sexuality*, 5, 291–321.
- Juulskjaer, M. (2013). Gendered subjectivities of spacetime. *Gender and Education*, 25, 754–768.
- Kaminer, D., & Dixon, J. (1995). The reproduction of masculinity: A discourse analysis of men’s drinking talk. *South African Journal of Psychology*, 25(3), 168–174.
- Kennedy, N. (2013). Cultural cisgenderism: Consequences of the imperceptible. *Psychology of Women Section Review*, 15(2), 3–11.
- Kessler, S.J., & McKenna, W. (1978). *Gender: An ethnomethodological approach*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Khan, S., Hussain, M., Parveen, S., Bhuiyan, M., Gourab, G., Sarker, G. & Sikder, J. (2009). Living on the extreme margin: Social exclusion of the transgender population (hijra) in Bangladesh. *Journal of Health, Population, and Nutrition*, 27(4), 441–451.
- Kilgarriff, A. (2009). Simple maths for keywords. In M. Mahlberg, V. González-Díaz & C. Smith (Eds.), *Proceedings of corpus linguistics conference CL2009* (pp. 1–5). University of Liverpool, UK, July 2009.
- Kilgarriff, A., Baisa, V., Bušta, J., Jakubíček, M., Kovář, V., Michelfeit, J., Rychlý, P., Suchomel, V. (2014). The sketch engine: Ten years on. *Lexicography*, 1(1), 7–36.
- Kilgarriff, A., Rychlý, P., Smrz, P., & Tugwell, D. (2004). ITRI-04-08 the sketch engine. *Information Technology*, 105. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/260387608_ITRI-04-08_the_sketch_engine

- Kipnis, K. & Diamond, M. (1998). Pediatric ethics and the surgical assignment of sex. *Journal of Clinical Ethics*, 9(4), 398–410.
- Kitzinger, C. (2005). Heteronormativity in action: Reproducing the heterosexual nuclear family in after-hours medical calls. *Social Problems*, 52(4), 477–498.
- Kitzinger, C. (2008). Conversation analysis: Technical matters for gender research. In K. Harrington, L. Litosseliti, H. Sauntson & J. Sunderland (Eds.), *Gender and language research methodologies* (pp. 119–138). Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Koehler, A., Eyssel, J., & Nieder, T. (2018). Genders and individual treatment progress in (non-)binary trans individuals. *The Journal of Sexual Medicine*, 15(1), 102–113.
- Koester, A. (2010). Building small specialised corpora. In A. O’Keeffe & M. McCarthy (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of corpus linguistics* (pp. 53–65). London and New York: Routledge.
- Krafft-Ebing, R. (1886). *Psychopathia sexualis*. New York: Arcade Publishing.
- Kulick, D. (2005). Four hundred thousand Swedish perverts. *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 11, 205–235.
- Kuper, L.E., Nussbaum, R., & Mustanski, B. (2012). Exploring the diversity of gender and sexual orientation identities in an online sample of transgender individuals. *The Journal of Sex Research*, 49(2–3), 244–254.
- Kuyper, L., & Wijzen, C. (2014). Gender identities and gender dysphoria in the Netherlands. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 43(2), 377–385.
- Langer, S. (2011). Gender (dis)agreement: A dialogue on the clinical implications of gendered language. *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Mental Health*, 15(3), 300–307.
- Largier, C. (2002). Aspekte der Debatte in argumentationsorientierten Internet-Foren: Die Abtreibungsdebatte in Frankreich und Deutschland. *Deutsche Sprache*, 30, 287–306.
- Lee, C. (2019). *Welcome, singular “they”*. Retrieved from: <https://apastyle.apa.org/blog/singular-they>
- Lev, A. (2004). *Transgender emergence: Therapeutic guidelines for working with gender-variant people and their families*. Binghamton, NY: The Haworth Press.
- Lev, A. (2013). Gender dysphoria: Two steps forward, one step back. *Clinical Social Work Journal*, 41(3), 288–296.
- Levitt, H., & Ippolito, M. (2014). Being transgender: The experience of transgender identity development. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 61(12), 1727–1758.
- Lick, D.J., Durso, L.E., & Johnson, K.L. (2013). Minority stress and physical health among sexual minorities. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 8(5), 521–548.
- Linstead, S., & Pullen, A. (2006). Gender as multiplicity: Desire, displacement, difference and dispersion. *Human Relations*, 59(9), 1287–1310.
- Lucal, B. (1999). What it means to be gendered me: Life on the boundaries of a dichotomous gender system. *Gender and Society*, 13, 781–797.
- Mahlberg, M. & McIntyre, D. (2011). A case for corpus stylistics: Analysing Ian Fleming’s *Casino Royale*. *English Text Construction*, 4(2), 204–227.
- Marciano, A. (2014). Living the virtureal: Negotiating transgender identity in cyberspace. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 19(4), 824–838.
- Massumi, B. (2002). *Parables for the virtual: Movement, affect, sensation*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Matsuno, E., & Budge, S. (2017). Non-binary/genderqueer identities: A critical review of the literature. *Current Sexual Health Reports*, 9(3), 116–120.
- Matzner, A. (2001). The complexities of ‘acceptance’: Thai student attitudes towards Kathoey. *Crossroads: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 15(2), 71–93.

- McEnery, T. & Wilson, A. (1996). *Corpus linguistics*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- McEnery, A. & Wilson, A. (2001). *Corpus linguistics: An introduction* (2nd ed.). Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- McGeeney, E., & Harvey, L. (2015). Cisgender – Living in the gender assigned at birth. In C. Richards & M. Barker (Eds.), *The Palgrave handbook of the psychology of sexuality and gender* (pp. 149–165). Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.
- McGuire, J.K., Doty, J.L., Catalpa, J.M., & Ola, C. (2016). Body image in transgender young people: Findings from a qualitative, community based study. *Body Image*, 18, 96–107.
- McKenna, W. & Kessler, S. (2006). Transgendering: blurring the boundaries of gender. In K. Davis, M. Evans & J. Lorber (Eds.), *Handbook of gender and women's studies* (pp. 342–355). London: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- McNeil, J., Bailey, L., Ellis, S., Morton, J., & Regan, M. (2012). *Trans mental health and emotional wellbeing study*. Edinburgh, UK: Scottish Transgender Alliance.
- McQuillen, A.D., Licht, M.H., & Licht, B.G. (2001). Identity structure and life satisfaction in later life. *Basic and Applied Social Psychology*, 23, 65–72.
- Merriam-Webster (2019). *A note on the nonbinary 'they'*. Retrieved from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/words-at-play/nonbinary-they-is-in-the-dictionary>
- Meyer, I. (2003). Prejudice, social stress, and mental health in lesbian, gay, and bisexual populations: Conceptual issues and research evidence. *Psychological Bulletin*, 129(5), 674–697.
- Meyerowitz, J. (2002). *How sex changed: A history of transsexuality in the United States*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Milton, J. (2019). Piers Morgan claims he supports those who transition. Here's 11 times he was the exact opposite of an ally to trans people. *Pink News*. Retrieved from <https://www.pinknews.co.uk/2019/10/14/piers-morgan-anti-trans-good-morning-britain-sam-smith-non-binary-snowpeople/>
- Money, J., Hampson, J.G., & Hampson, J.L. (1957). Imprinting and the establishment of gender role. *Archives of Neurology and Psychiatry*, 77, 333–336.
- Monforte, J. (2018). What is new in new materialism for a newcomer?. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*, 10(3), 378–390.
- Monro, S. (2000). Theorizing transgender diversity: Towards a social model of health. *Sexual and Relationship Therapy*, 15(1), 33–45.
- Monro, S. (2003). Transgender politics in the UK. *Critical Social Policy*, 23(4), 433–452.
- Monro, S. (2005). Beyond male and female: Poststructuralism and the spectrum of gender. *International Journal of Transgenderism*, 8(1), 3–22.
- Monro, S. (2019). Non-binary and genderqueer: An overview of the field. *International Journal of Transgenderism*, 20(2–3), 1–6.
- Moon, I. (2019). 'Boying' the boy and 'girling' the girl: From affective interpellation to trans-emotionality. *Sexualities*, 22(1–2), 65–79.
- Motschenbacher, H., & Stegu, M. (2013). Queer linguistic approaches to discourse. *Discourse & Society*, 24(5), 519–535.
- Murjan S., & Bouman W. (2017). Psychiatry. In C. Richards, W. Bouman & M.J. Barker (Eds.), *Genderqueer and non-binary genders: Critical and applied approaches in sexuality, gender and identity* (pp. 125–140). London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Murray, L. (1795). *English grammar, adapted to the different classes of learners*. York: Wilson, Spence & Mawman.

- Mustanski, B., Garofalo, R., & Emerson, E. (2010). Mental health disorders, psychological distress, and suicidality in a diverse sample of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youths. *American Journal of Public Health*, 100(12), 2426–2432.
- Nadal, K., Skolnik, A., & Wong, Y. (2012). Interpersonal and systemic microaggressions toward transgender people: Implications for counseling. *Journal of LGBT Issues in Counseling*, 6(1), 55–82.
- Namaste, K. (1996). Theory's erasure of transgender subjectivity. In M. Eliason & B. Beemyn (Eds.), *Queer studies: A lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender anthology* (pp. 183–203). New York: New York University Press.
- Namaste, V. (2000). *Invisible lives: The erasure of transsexual and transgendered people*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Nanda, S. (2000). *Gender diversity: Crosscultural variations*. Prospect Heights, Illinois: Waveland Press.
- Nanda, S. (2014). Are there gender differences in empathy? *Undergraduate Journal of Psychology at Berkeley*, 7, 22–42.
- National Geographic (2017, January 1). *Gender revolution*. National Geographic Magazine. Retrieved from: <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/magazine/issue/january-2017>
- Nestle, J., Howell, C., & Wilchins, R. (Eds.). (2002). *Genderqueer: Voices beyond the sexual binary*. Los Angeles: Alyson Books.
- Newman, H.J.H. & Peel, E. (2022). 'An impossible dream'? Non-binary people's perceptions of legal gender status and reform in the UK. *Psychology & Sexuality*. 1–15. DOI: 10.1080/19419899.2022.2039753
- Nicolazzo, Z. (2016). "It's a hard line to walk": Black non-binary trans collegians' perspectives on passing, realness, and trans-normativity. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 29(9), 1173–1188.
- Nicolazzo, Z. (2017). Compulsory heterogenderism: A collective case study. *NASPA Journal About Women in Higher Education*, 10(3), 245–261.
- Nic Rider, G., Vencill, J.A., Berg, D.R., Becker-Warner, R., Candelario-Pérez, L., & Spencer, K.G. (2019). The gender affirmative lifespan approach (GALA): A framework for competent clinical care with nonbinary clients. *International Journal of Transgenderism*, 20(2–3), 1–14.
- Nunberg, G. (2016). Everyone uses singular 'they,' whether they realize it or not. *National Public Radio*. Retrieved from: <https://www.npr.org/2016/01/13/462906419/everyone-uses-singular-they-whether-they-realize-it-or-not>
- Nunn, G. (2015). Is it time we agreed on a gender-neutral singular pronoun? *The Guardian*. Retrieved from: <https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2015/jan/30/is-it-time-we-agreed-on-a-gender-neutral-singular-pronoun>
- O'Conner, P.T., & Kellerman, S. (2010). *Origins of the specious: Myths and misconceptions of the English language*. New York: Random House Publishing Group.
- Oosterhuis, H. (2000). *Krafft-Ebing, psychiatry, and the making of sexual identity*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- O'Toole, M. (2015). 6 Reasons why the UK's gender laws are failing transgender people. *PinkNews*. Retrieved from <http://www.pinknews.co.uk/2015/10/15/6-reasons-why-the-uks-gender-laws-are-failing-transgender-people/>
- Page, R. (2013). *Stories and social media: Identities and interaction*. London: Routledge.
- Parsons, V. (2019). All the places with better rights for non-binary people than the UK. *Pink News*. Retrieved from <https://www.pinknews.co.uk/2019/07/14/non-binary-rights-countries-better-than-uk/>

- Peel, E., & Newman, H.J.H. (2020). Gender's wider stakes: Lay attitudes to legal gender reform. *Feminists@Law*, 10(2), 1–65.
- Peel, E. & Newman, H.J.H.(under review). "I don't think that's something I've ever thought about really before": Lay participants' 'before', 'with', and 'against' legal gender discourse.
- Potter, J. (1996). *Representing reality discourse, rhetoric and social construction*. London: Sage.
- Potter, J., & Wetherell, M. (1987). *Discourse and social psychology: Beyond attitudes and behaviour*. London: Sage.
- Price-Robertson, R., & Duff, C. (2016). Realism, materialism, and the assemblage: Thinking psychologically with Manuel DeLanda. *Theory & Psychology*, 26(1), 58–76.
- Prosser, J. (1998). *Second skins: The body narratives of transsexuality*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Pulice-Farrow, L., Cusack, C.E., & Galupo, M.P. (2019). "Certain parts of my body don't belong to me": Trans individuals' descriptions of body-specific gender dysphoria. *Sexuality Research and Social Policy*, 17, 654–667.
- Pullella, P. (2016). Pope says gender theory part of 'global war' on marriage, family. *Reuters*. Retrieved from <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-pope-georgia-gender-idUSKCN1213KH>
- Queen, C., & Schimel, L. (Eds.). (1997). *PoMoSexuals*. San Francisco: Cleis Press.
- Raj, R. (2002). Towards a transpositive therapeutic model: Developing clinical sensitivity and cultural competence in the effective support of transsexual and transgendered clients. *International Journal of Transgenderism*, 6(2), 4d.
- Rankin, S., & Beemyn, G. (2012). Beyond a binary: The lives of gender-nonconforming youth. *About Campus*, 17(4), 2–10.
- Raun, T. (2016) The "Caspian case" and its aftermath: Transgender people's use of Facebook to engage discriminatory mainstream news coverage in Denmark. In J. Björklund & U. Lindqvist (Eds.), *New dimensions of diversity in Nordic culture and society* (pp. 79–101). Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Raymond, J. (1979). *The transsexual empire: The making of the she-male*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Richards, C. & Barker, M. (2013). *Sexuality and gender for mental health professionals: A practical guide*. London: Sage.
- Richards, C. & Barker, M. (2015). *The Palgrave handbook of the psychology of sexuality and gender*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Richards, C., Arcelus, J., Barrett, J., Bouman, W., Lenihan, P., Lorimer, S. & Seal, L. (2015). Trans is not a disorder – But should still receive funding. *Sexual and Relationship Therapy*, 30(3), 309–313.
- Richards, C., Bouman, W. & Barker, M. (2017). *Genderqueer and non-binary genders*. London: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Richards, C., Bouman, W., Seal, L., Barker, M., Nieder, T., & T'Sjoen, G. (2016). Non-binary or genderqueer genders. *International Review of Psychiatry*, 28(1), 95–102.
- Roche, J. (2019). *Trans power*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Rochon, E., Saffran, E.M., Berndt, R.S. & Schwartz, M.F. (2000). Quantitative analysis of aphasic sentence production: Further development and new data. *Brain and Language*, 72, 193–218.
- Roen, K. (2002). "Either/or" and "both/neither": Discursive tensions in transgender politics. *Signs*, 27(2), 501–522.
- Rood, B., Reisner, S., Surace, F., Puckett, J., Maroney, M. & Pantalone, D. (2016). Expecting rejection: Understanding the minority stress experiences of transgender and gender-nonconforming individuals. *Transgender Health*, 1(1), 151–164.

- Rowling, J. (2020). *J.K. Rowling writes about her reasons for speaking out on sex and gender issues*. Retrieved from: <https://www.jkrowling.com/opinions/j-k-rowling-writes-about-her-reasons-for-speaking-out-on-sex-and-gender-issues>
- Rychlý, P. (2008). A lexicographer-friendly association score. *RASLAN*, 6–9.
- Saltzburg, S. & Davis, T. (2010). Co-authoring gender-queer youth identities: Discursive tellings and retellings. *Journal of Ethnic & Cultural Diversity in Social Work*, 19(2), 87–108.
- Schweizer, K., Brunner, F., Handford, C. & Richter-Appelt, H. (2013). Gender experience and satisfaction with gender allocation in adults with diverse intersex conditions (divergences of sex development, DSD). *Psychology & Sexuality*, 5(1), 56–82.
- ScottishTrans.org. (2016). *UK non-binary survey*. Retrieved from <http://www.scottishtrans.org/our-work/research/uk-non-binary-survey>
- Seidler, V. (2006). *Young men and masculinities: Global cultures and intimate lives*. London: Zed Books.
- Semetsky, I. & Delpech-Ramey, J. (2012). Jung's psychology and Deleuze's philosophy: The unconscious in learning. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 44(1), 69–81.
- Serano, J. (2007). *Whipping girl: A transsexual woman on sexism and scapegoating*. Emeryville, CA: Seal Press.
- Shapiro, E. (2015). *Gender circuits: Bodies and identities in a technological age*. London: Routledge.
- Simon, L., Zsolt, U., Fogd, D. & Czobor, P. (2011). Dysfunctional core beliefs, perceived parenting behaviour and psychopathology in gender identity disorder: A comparison of male-to-female, female-to-male transsexual and nontranssexual control subjects. *Journal of Behavior Therapy and Experimental Psychiatry*, 42(1), 38–45.
- Sinclair-Palm, J. (2017). "It's non-existent": Haunting in trans youth narratives about naming. *Occasional Paper Series*, 2017(37). Retrieved from <https://educate.bankstreet.edu/occasional-paper-series/vol2017/iss37/7>
- Singer, T. (2006). From the medical gaze to sublime mutations: The ethics of (re) viewing non-normative body images. In S. Stryker & S. Whittle (Eds.), *The transgender studies reader* (pp. 601–620). London, New York: Routledge.
- Speer, S. (2005). The interactional organization of the gender attribution process. *Sociology*, 39, 67–87.
- Spencer, S.J., Steele, C. & Quinn, D. (1999). Stereotype threat and women's math performance. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 35(1), 4–28.
- Spivak, G. (1985). Three women's texts and a critique of imperialism. *Critical inquiry*, 12(1), 43–261.
- Spivak, G. (1990). *The post-colonial critic: Interviews, strategies, dialogues*. London: Routledge.
- Still, B. (2008). *Online intersex communities: Virtual neighborhoods of support and activism*. Amherst, NY: Cambria Press.
- Stokoe, E. (2018). *Talk: The science of conversation*. London: Robinson Publishing.
- Stoller, R. (1968). *Sex and gender: On the development of masculinity and femininity*. New York: Science House.
- Stone, S. (1991). The empire strikes back: A posttranssexual manifesto. *Camera Obscura: Feminism, Culture, and Media Studies*, 10(229), 150–176.
- Stone, S. (2006). The empire strikes back: A posttranssexual manifesto. In S. Stryker & S. Whittle (Eds.), *The transgender studies reader* (pp. 221–235). London, New York: Routledge.
- Stonewall. (2019). 2018: Gender recognition act consultation begins reform journey toward full trans equality. *Stonewall*. Retrieved from <https://www.stonewall.org.uk/our-work/campaigns/2018-gender-recognition-act-consultation-begins-reform-journey-toward-full-trans>

- Stonewall. (2017). Gender recognition act. *Stonewall*. Retrieved from <http://www.stonewall.org.uk/gender-recognition-act>
- Stryker, S. (2008). *Transgender history*. Berkeley: Seal Press.
- Stubbs, M. (1996). *Text and corpus analysis: Computer-assisted studies of language and culture*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Suess, A., Espineira, K. & Walters, P. (2014). Depathologization. *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly*, 1(1–2), 73–77.
- Sunderland, J. (2004). *Gendered discourses*. London: Palgrave.
- Taylor, J., Zalewska, A., Gates, J.J. & Millon, G. (2018). An exploration of the lived experiences of non-binary individuals who have presented at a gender identity clinic in the United Kingdom. *International Journal of Transgenderism*, 20(2–3), 195–204.
- Tee, N. & Hegarty, P. (2006). Predicting opposition to the civil rights of trans persons in the United Kingdom. *Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology*, 16, 70–80.
- The Trevor Project (2021). *Diversity of Nonbinary Youth*. [TheTrevorProject.org](https://www.thetrevorproject.org). Retrieved from: https://www.thetrevorproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Diversity-of-Nonbinary-Youth_July-Research-Brief.pdf
- Thomas, J. (2015). *Discovering English with the sketch engine*. Brno: Versatile.
- Titman, N. (2014). *How many people in the United Kingdom are nonbinary?* Retrieved from <http://www.practicalandrogyny.com/2014/12/16/how-many-people-in-the-uk-are-nonbinary>
- Tompkins, K.W. (2015). Intersections of race, gender, and sexuality: Queer of color critique. In S. Herring (Ed.), *Cambridge companion to gay and lesbian literature* (pp. 173–189). New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Trans Media Watch. (2010). *How transgender people experience the media survey: Conclusions from research November 2009–February 2010*. Retrieved from <http://www.transmediawatch.org/Documents/How%20Transgender%20People%20Experience%20the%20Media.pdf>
- Twist, J. & de Graaf, N. (2019). Gender diversity and non-binary presentations in young people attending the United Kingdom's national gender identity development service. *Clinical Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 24(2), 277–290.
- Valentine, V. (2016). Specific detriment: A survey into non-binary people's experiences in the UK. [Unpublished conference paper] Presented at *Beyond the Binaries of Sex and Gender: Non-Binary Identities, Bodies, and Discourses*, Leeds, UK, March 2016.
- Van Caenegem, E., Wierckx, K., Elaut, E., Buysse, A., Dewaele, A., Van Nieuwerburgh, F., De Cuyper, G. & Guy, T. (2015). Prevalence of gender nonconformity in Flanders, Belgium. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 44(5), 1281–1287.
- van Dijk, T.A. (2008). *Discourse & power*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Vincent, B. (2018). Studying trans: Recommendations for ethical recruitment and collaboration with transgender participants in academic research. *Psychology & Sexuality*, 9(2), 102–116.
- Vincent, B. (2018). *Transgender health: A practitioner's guide to binary and non-binary trans patient care*. London, UK: Jessica Kingsley.
- Vincent, B. (2020). *Non-Binary genders: Navigating communities, identities, and healthcare*. Bristol: Bristol University Press.
- Vincent, B., Erikainen, S. & Pearce, R. (2020). *TERF Wars: Feminism and the fight for transgender futures*. London: SAGE.
- Weatherall, A. (2005). *Gender, language and discourse*. London: Routledge.
- West, C. & Zimmerman, D. (1987). Doing gender. *Gender & Society*, 1(2), 125–151.

- Whittle, S. (1996). Gender fucking or fucking gender? Current cultural contributions to theories of gender blending. In R. Ekins & D. King (Eds.), *Blending genders: Social aspects of cross dressing and sex changing* (pp. 196–214). London: Routledge.
- Whittle, S. (2006). Foreword. In S. Stryker & S. Whittle (Eds.), *The transgender studies reader* (pp. xi–xvi). London, New York: Routledge.
- Widdowson, H. (2000). On the limitations of linguistics applied. *Applied Linguistics*, 21(1), 3–25.
- Wilchins, R. (1995). A note from your editrix. In *Your Face: Political Activism Against Gender Oppression*, 1(1), 4.
- Wilchins, R. (2002). A continuous nonverbal communication. In J. Nestle, C. Howell & R. Wilchins (Eds.), *Genderqueer: Voices from beyond the sexual binary* (pp. 11–17). Los Angeles, CA: Alyson Books.
- Wilkinson, S. & Kitzinger, C. (2013). Representing our own experience: Issues in “insider” research. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 37, 251–255.
- Williams, J. (2005). *Encounters and influences: The transversal thought of Gilles Deleuze*. Durham: Clinamen Press.
- Winter, S. (2002). *Why are there so many Kathoey in Thailand?* Accessed from http://www.transgenderasia.org/paper_why_are_there_so_many_kathoey.htm
- Winter, S. (2017). Gender trouble: The world health organization, the international statistical classification of diseases and related health problems (ICD)-11 and the trans kids. *Sexual Health*, 14(5), 423–430.
- World Health Organization. (1978). *International classification of diseases (ICD-9)*. Geneva: WHO.
- World Health Organization. (2018). International classification of diseases for mortality and morbidity statistics (*11th Revision*). Retrieved from <https://icd.who.int/browse11/l-m/en>
- Worthen, M. (2016). Hetero-cis-normativity and the gendering of transphobia. *International Journal of Transgenderism*, 17(1), 31–57.
- Yeadon-Lee, T. (2016). What’s the story? Exploring online narratives of non-binary gender identities. *The International Journal of Interdisciplinary Social and Community Studies*, 11(2), 19–34.
- Zimman, L. (2017). Transgender language reform: Some challenges and strategies for promoting trans-affirming, gender-inclusive language. *Journal of Language and Discrimination*, 1(1), 84–105.
- Zimman, L. (2018). Pronouns and possibilities: Transgender language activism and reform. In N. Avineri, R. Conley, L. Graham, E. Johnson & J. Rosa (Eds.), *Language and social justice: Case studies on communication & the creation of just societies* (pp. 176–183). New York: Routledge.
- Zimmer, B. (2015, April 10). *Can we take ‘they’ as a singular pronoun?* Wall Street Journal. Retrieved from: <https://www.wsj.com/articles/can-they-be-accepted-as-a-singular-pronoun-1428686651>

APPENDICES

Appendix A (Semi-Structured Interview Schedule)

1. I would like to begin by getting you to think and talk about your sense of self-identity. I think the best way for us to explore this is for you to answer the question “who am I?” in as many ways as possible.
 - What makes you *you*?
 - What are some of the most important aspects of your identity?
2. How do you generally define gender? With that in mind, please describe your gender(s) (if any)
 - What is your gender identity?
 - Is it different from your gender expression?
 - Is it different from how people perceive your gender?
 - Why?
 - How important is gender to you?
3. In relation to understanding your gender (*your identity as ...*), what was one of the most defining moments?
 - Did you have a eureka moment?
 - How important was this moment to you?
4. How important is it for you to disclose your gender to others? Why?
5. Are you “out”? If so, to whom have you disclosed your gender (identity as)?
 - Family
 - Friends
 - Partner(s)

172 Appendices

- Work
 - University
 - Health practitioner
6. What were some of their reactions? Were they positive, negative, or neutral? How did this make you feel?
 7. Are there spaces where you feel comfortable talking about your gender? For example, workspaces, social spaces, health environments, family, etc.
 - Are there spaces where you feel uncomfortable talking about your gender?
 8. Are you part of any non-binary groups either online or in real life?
 - How do you feel in these spaces?
 - What level of support do you think you have received? Is this important to you?
 9. Have you faced any challenges because of your gender? If so, where, and when?
 - Are there any other challenges that you have experienced because of your gender?
 10. How important is the language that people use to refer to you? For example, using the correct pronouns, titles, and neutral language such as sibling, children, parent, etc.
 - Does it differ depending on the situation?
 - i. Family
 - ii. Friends
 - iii. Partner(s)
 - iv. Work
 - v. University
 - vi. Health professionals
 - How does it make you feel when they use the *correct* language?
 - How does it make you feel when they use *incorrect* language?
 11. Have you experienced misgendering? If so, please describe an instance when you were misgendered.
 - If any, how did it make you feel? How did you manage or cope with the situation?
 12. Have you faced any challenges regarding language use? If so, where, and when?
 - How do you feel when your gender is not listed on a form?
 - How do you feel when your gender is not included in conversation/

writing? For example, “boys and girls,” “ladies and gentlemen,” “Mr. and Ms.,” etc.

- Are there any other challenges that you have experienced? How did it make you feel?
13. Have you experienced any prejudice or discrimination because of your gender/identity? If so, would you mind sharing about your experience?
 14. How confident do you feel about the social status of non-binary people? Do you feel that you are supported institutionally? i.e., health care, education, in the media, etc.
 15. How do you feel about the future? Do you think the use of language for non-binary people will change in the near future or long-term? How?
 16. This brings us to the last question. This is your opportunity to elaborate on any point that we have not yet discussed. For example, what would you like others to know about your gender(s) and language use?
 17. Do you have any questions for me?
 18. This brings us to the last question. This is your opportunity to elaborate on any point that we have not yet discussed. For example, what would you like others to know about your gender(s) and language use?

Appendix B (Frequency, Keyness, Collocation, Network Creation, and Concordance Lines)

Frequency

Simply stated, in corpus linguistics research, measures of frequency reveal the number of times a single word appears in a corpus. A frequency list typically contains the words featured in the corpus in terms of the number of times they occurred. For the purposes of this research, a frequency list was generated in the form of an empirical, descriptive result. However, this frequency list was not analysed, given that a keyword list (defined below) offered a more comprehensive and relevant list of words.

The frequency list in this study is organised in a descending order, with the most frequent words in the corpus placed on top of the list. This technique is one of the most central elements of corpus linguistic analysis, as it provides a well-grounded starting point for the more complex methods that will be employed in the analysis, i.e., keyness and collocation. Frequency lists often contain high proportions of function words such as articles, prepositions, pronouns, and conjunctions – words that might not be particularly informative about the actual discourses present in the corpus. It is therefore worth investigating the low-frequency words as well, as these words have the potential to reveal useful information about the corpus. This issue will be resolved by means of keyness and collocation analyses outlined in the following sections.

Keyness

Using computer software, two corpora (often a reference corpus versus the corpus of interest) can be compared statistically to determine how different they are from one another. This is called a keyness analysis, which is used to not only find the most frequent words in a corpus but also the most salient words. A reference corpus serves as a benchmark of the standard measure of “normal language” against which one can draw comparisons – and determine whether a word is in fact salient. The enTenTen13, a reference corpus containing 19 billion words, was used for the keyness analysis. The NBC was therefore statistically compared to the enTenTen13 corpus to generate a list of keywords.

In the present research, the list of keywords was generated using the Sketch Engine (Kilgarriff et al., 2004) software. This tool allowed me to uncover keywords (words that were statistically higher and lower in frequency than the reference corpus) using a statistical measure called simple maths (Kilgarriff, 2009). According to this measure, higher (or positive) keywords are those that occur more frequently than in the reference corpus, whereas lower (or negative) keywords occur less frequently compared to the reference corpus. Words that appear more frequently (relative to the reference corpus) will have a higher simple maths score than words that do not appear that often. However, words that appear significantly less often than in the reference corpus will also have a higher score, showing that these words are “unique” to the corpus. For the purposes of simplicity, only the first 50 keywords were included in the analysis.

Collocation

Once this list was generated, a collocation analysis was conducted – that is, a list of the words that co-occurred with these 50 keywords was generated. Collocation refers to the “statically significant co-occurrence of two words” (Baker, 2010, p. 107–108). Collocational theory posits that a word’s meanings are determined with respect to the words that surround it (Stubbs, 1996) and that a great deal of information can be learned about a word once we understand its company (Firth, 1957). Therefore, collocation is a method of understanding the context in which a word is written. For instance, it might be that, at first sight, a word such as “kill” could be interpreted in a negative way, but upon further inspection, it is actually used in a comedic way, as in when something is funny (e.g., “You’re killing me!”). In this case, the word kill loses its literal meaning and thus becomes a metaphor for laughing euphorically. The words surrounding these keywords can help the researcher understand the ways in which these linguistic patterns emerge and the ways in which words can affect and be affected by one another. Psychologically, collocation is an interesting concept, given that it can reveal how “meaning is acquired through repeated uses of language” (Baker, 2014, p. 310). In other words, the use of two or more words together has the capacity to reinforce – or

territorialise – their usage. This analysis will therefore contextualise the keywords and will illuminate some of the discourses surrounding them.

This study employed a technique called Word Sketch (Thomas, 2015) using the Sketch Engine software. A Word Sketch is an automated summary of a word's most salient collocations as well as its grammatical relationship with these collocates (Baker, 2014). Word sketches are extremely informative not only about the words that co-occur (the collocations) but also about the grammatical and contextual environments in which these keywords exist. Therefore, for each of these keywords, a list of their corresponding collocations (words that are present together) was produced. The list for each word was extrapolated using the Sketch Engine software. Word Sketch uses the logDice statistic to calculate collocation. LogDice is a measure of salience based on the relative frequency of the co-occurrence of the words, and, according to Curran (2004)'s extensive research, logDice is the best statistical measure of collocation. Based on the scope of this research, only those collocations that had a logDice score of ten or more and a frequency of ten or more (number of times these words co-occurred) were included in the final analysis.

This process yielded a long list of collocates for each of the 50 keywords. This is of course a very long list of words which would be tedious and time-consuming to explore and that goes beyond the scope of this research. It is for this reason that I only explored the collocations that were not only of high saliency (as measured by the cut-off points outlined above) but also the collocates (and keywords) that were related to one another. This process allowed me to gather enough linguistic data to map out the rhizomatic relationship between words and thus create a network of non-binary language. The creation of this network will be outlined in the following section.

Network Creation

Using the software Gephi (Bastian et al., 2009), a visual representation of these words (keywords and their interconnected collocates) was generated, demonstrating some of the most intense patterns within the corpus and their relationships to one another. Gephi organises the words in terms of degrees – in this case, the number of times a word collocates with another word. As such, the network visually represents the most intense words within the network. Once these intense words were identified, ten of these words were used in the subsequent analysis along with ten of the most salient keywords.

Concordance

To supplement and contextualise the top ten keywords and the top ten most intense words (as demonstrated by the network), a concordance analysis was conducted. Concordances are simply longer lines of text in which either a keyword or a collocation can be expanded and explored. This method allows for a

more contextualised and qualitative analysis of the results. Baker (2010) argues that collocations can be supplemented with concordances to better understand the linguistic environments in which the discourses appear. It is often necessary to read several concordance lines to decipher the patterns – the discourses – that emerge from the keywords and the collocations.

Three concordance lines (quotations) were downloaded for each collocation pair, thus building a smaller dataset of intense discourses. This smaller dataset was then coded and analysed using NVivo 11, following the same materialist analysis outlined in previous sections. This corpus linguistic method allowed me to narrow down the NBC and analyse the most intense discourses within it.

INDEX

- acquaintances 84, 85, 100–101, 103, 146
affective embodiments 23, 105, 118, 134,
136, 139, 140, 143–145, 147
affective intensities 57–80
Airton, L. 23
Alldred, P. 40, 44, 50, 56
analytical process 49–51
Androgen Insensitivity Syndrome 6
Ansara, Y. 22
anthology 18, 19, 63
assemblage theory 25, 28, 40–43, 53, 54,
81, 145, 150
assigned female at birth (AFAB) 4, 13, 29,
59–61, 63, 64, 69–71, 73, 74, 78, 86,
88–90, 92–95, 152
assigned gender 24, 31, 57, 58, 61, 62, 78,
79, 138, 140, 141, 145
assigned male at birth (AMAB) 4, 9, 10, 13,
29, 49, 63, 67, 68, 77, 102, 152
- Baker, P. 20, 25, 34, 53–55
Baldwin, A. 22
Barker, M. 5, 12, 21–22, 91
Bem, S. 33, 34
Benjamin, H. 30, 31, 45
Binary gender 132
binary trans 6, 131, 132
body dysphoria 117, 134, 140, 141
Bornstein, K. 11, 12
Bragg, S. 65
Brown, S. 38, 41
Budge, S. 17, 21
Burr, V. 36
- Butler, J. 11, 36, 37
- cis (cisgender) 7–8, 13, 21, 32, 33, 42, 46,
78, 95, 140; positivist perspective 32–35;
and psychology 32–35
cisgenderism 7, 8
cisnormativity 7, 82
Clements–Nolle, K. 16
close proximity 82–84, 87, 88
collocations 25, 53, 56, 105, 109, 112,
117–119, 142, 146, 173–176
Congenital Adrenal Hyperplasia 6
Cook, E. 8
corpus 25, 45, 51–55, 112, 117, 118, 134,
146, 150, 173, 174
corpus-based analysis 53, 54
corpus-based research 56, 154
corpus linguistics 51, 53, 54, 56
Currier, D. 39
- Darwin, C. 33
Davis, T. 22, 88
Davy, Z. 12, 138
dead language 66, 68, 70, 75, 83, 91
DeLanda, M. 39, 43
Deleuze, G. 25, 39–40, 145, 147–149
Denzin, N. 62
discourse analysis 35–38, 40, 42, 54
distress 17, 31, 81, 82, 85, 90, 96, 97, 99,
100, 103, 138, 141, 142, 146
Duff, C. 34
dysphoria 97, 105, 134, 138–143, 147, 150;
language of 134, 139, 142, 147

- education 73, 103
 Ekins, R. 51
 emotional distress 82, 153, 154
The Empire Strikes Back: A Posttranssexual Manifesto 11
 Enke, A. 8
 ethical considerations 46–51
- Fausto-Sterling, A. 3, 6
 Foucault, M. 11, 29, 35, 36
 Fox, N. 40, 44, 50, 56
 Friedman, E. 22
 function words 107, 173
- Garrison, S. 60
 gender 2–5, 10, 11, 14, 19, 33–41, 58, 59, 64, 129–131, 150; clinics 30, 96; differences 32–34, 37; dysphoria 16, 28–32, 97, 98, 134, 138–140, 142; embodiments 75, 76, 78; expressions 4–7, 18, 58, 60, 61, 76–79, 134, 137, 151, 152; and sex/sexuality 3, 7, 18, 33, 37, 54, 117, 129–131, 143
 gender-affirming language 19, 24, 46, 149
 gender-affirming services 9, 15, 16, 31, 96, 97, 134, 138–140, 148
 gender-affirming surgery 131, 137, 138
 gender diversity 8–10, 19, 21, 24, 28–32, 62, 65, 96, 130, 152, 153; and language 62–65
 gendered language 19, 21, 22, 65, 119, 125, 127, 128, 154
 genderfluid 70, 77, 78, 88–90, 92–94, 97, 104
 gender identities 3, 4, 7, 14, 35, 37, 39, 42, 47, 49, 59, 67, 68, 78, 119, 124, 127, 129, 135, 154; disorder 31, 32; labels 4, 126, 133, 139
 gender-neutral language 18–23, 46, 67, 68, 71, 72, 75, 83, 124, 126
 gender-neutral pronouns 1, 24, 87, 128
 gender non-conformity 60
Gender Outlaw: On Men, Women and the Rest of Us 11
 gender plurality 12, 46, 64, 130
 genderqueer 5, 12–14, 18, 19, 49, 63, 71–74, 102, 109, 126
GenderQueer: Voices Beyond the Sexual Binary 18
 Gender Recognition Act 16, 98
 gender-related language 65, 129, 146
 “Gender Revolution” issue 14–16
 gonadal dysgenesis 6
- Guattari, F. 25, 39, 40, 145, 147–149
 Guyan, K. 13
- Harrison, J. 17, 91
 Haynes, F. 19
 Hegarty, P. 22, 83
 heteronormativity 7
 Hines, S. 31
 Hirschfeld, M. 10
 Howard, K. 17
 Howell, C. 18
 Hyde, J. 33
- identities 1–27
 identity labels 18, 19, 48, 49, 58, 122, 123, 142, 145
 intentional misgendering 83, 85, 87, 88, 91, 93
 intentions 83–84
 intersex 2, 4, 6–7, 9, 26
 interviews 44–52, 55–57, 59, 61, 63, 64, 67, 69, 74, 76, 89, 94
- Kennedy, N. 76
 Kessler, S.J. 3, 19
 King, D. 51
 Kitzinger, C. 36
 Klinefelter Syndrome 6
 Kuper, L.E. 14
- language 1–27, 35, 36, 39, 53, 68, 71, 74, 75, 81, 86, 129, 145, 151, 152; data 53, 54; and gender diversity 62–65; gender-neutral language 20–21; linguistic emergence 18–20; use 47, 71, 88, 153
 language-based discrimination 82, 89
 language-related distress 81–95; proximities and intentions 81–104
 Lenney, E. 34
 linguistic becomings 38–41, 65–78; embodiment 75–78; macro-level 71–75; meso-level 68–70; micro-level 66–68
 linguistic negotiations 21–23
- material elements 35, 105, 133, 134, 143, 149
 materialist methods 44–56
 materiality 35, 38, 39, 42, 43, 122, 123, 134, 137, 147, 149, 150
 Matsuno, E. 21
 McKenna, T. 19
 McKenna, W. 3, 19
 mental disorders 24, 31, 32

- mental health 16–17
 misgendering 21, 81–85, 87, 90, 93–96,
 100, 102–103, 146, 151
 Monro, S. 4, 12, 38
 Moon, I. 23, 58
 multiple genders 5, 9, 19
- Nanda, S. 8
 Nestle, J. 18
 new materialism 38–41
 non-binary 5–6; history and research 8–12;
 prevalence of 13–14
 non-binary assemblage 144–155;
 applications and implications 152–153;
 non-binary community 154;
 policymakers 153–154; practitioners 153;
 recommendations, future research
 151–152
 non-binary corpus (NBC) 25, 26, 51–56,
 105–107, 109, 112, 117, 118, 142, 143,
 146; adopting gender-neutral language
 126–129; affective fluidity 135–136;
 affective neutrality 136–138; body
 dysphoria 140–142; collocational analysis
 109–112; concordance lines 112–118;
 corpus-based techniques and analysis
 53–55; dysphoria 138–140; frequency
 analysis 106–107; gender-neutral
 language, exploring 124–126; identifying
 as non-binary 122–123; keyword analysis
 107–109; linguistic and material
 intensities network 105–143; linguistic
 becomings 119; linguistic parameters and
 territorialising meanings 129–133;
 material elements, gender 134–135; non-
 binary language network 112; qualitative
 analysis of 118–142; quantitative analysis
 of 105–118; sampling 52; seeking
 authenticity 119–122; word sketches
 109–112
 non-binary forum 45
 non-binary language 18, 25, 45, 56, 62, 65,
 81, 87, 112, 118, 145, 146
 non-binary thinking, emergence 10–12
- pangender 5
 participant demographics 48–49
*PoMoSexuals: Challenging Assumptions About
 Gender and Sexuality* 18
 positionality 45–46
 Potter, J. 36
 psychological research 3, 35, 39, 54, 91
 psychology 24–28, 32–36, 40–42, 54, 152
- Raymond, J. 11
 recruitment 46–51
 reference corpus 52, 53, 174
 research-assemblage 44–56, 150
 research participants 10, 45, 46, 64, 65, 79,
 81, 82
 research tools 44, 45, 150
 rhizome 39, 147–149; gender and linguistic
 becomings 147–149
 Richards, C. 5, 12, 21, 22, 91
 Roche, J. 144
 Roen, K. 12
 Rossman, H. 17
- Saltzburg, S. 22, 88
 semi-structured interviews 25, 44, 45
 Serano, J. 7, 10, 21, 102
 sex 2–4; and gender 3, 4, 26, 30, 31,
 33, 131
 sexology 28–32
 sexuality 18, 26, 28–30, 35–37, 48, 49, 54,
 66, 129, 130, 150
 short writings 49–51
 Sinclair-Palm, J. 66
 social awareness: lack of 14–16
 social constructionism 35–38
 social proximities 82–85, 96, 103, 104, 126,
 129, 141, 142
 social topography: acquaintances 100–101;
 close family members 90–93; extended
 family 98–99; LGBTQ+ (queer)
 community 88–90; proximity and
 intentions 84–103; societal interactions
 96–98; strangers 101–103; work and
 university 93–96
 societal cisnormativity 104
 Spivak, G. 73
 Stenner, P. 38, 41
 Stoller, R. 3
 Stone, S. 6, 11
 Stryker, S. 19
 Suess, A. 31
 suicide 16, 17, 91
- Tee, N. 83
 third gender 5, 9, 10, 73
 Toze, M. 138
 trans (transgender) 4–5, 9, 12, 76, 89, 91,
 92, 107, 112, 131, 133, 139
 trans identities 5, 32, 60, 63
 transphobia 10, 17, 74, 87, 102
*The Transsexual Empire: The Making of the
 She-Male* 11

- transsexualism 11, 31
- transsexuality 30, 31
- Turner Syndrome 6

- unintentional misgendering 83, 85, 86,
91–93, 99, 104

- Van Caenegem, E. 13
- Vincent, B. 6, 15, 27, 45
- violence 17, 77, 85, 100, 101, 141, 154

- Weatherall, A. 22
- West, C. 8
- Whittle, S. 65
- Wilchins, R. 18
- words of interest 109, 112, 142, 146
- writing samples 45, 46–51

- Zimman, L. 23, 45
- Zimmerman, D. 8