



Transmedicalism

A critical discourse analysis on transnormativity in online discussion websites and publishing platforms

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En kritisk diskursanalys om transnormativitet i nätanslutna diskussion webbplatser och publicerings plattformar

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Introduction

A partition has in recent decades been steadily increasing within trans social media contexts regarding definitions of trans. The discourse simplistically consists of two perspectives. One viewpoint maintains that gender is a social construct and that 'trans' accordingly is an umbrella term that incorporates nonbinary and third gender people. This outlook holds that gender perceptions and expressions are more theoretical and cognitive matters than hereditary biological concerns. In other words, diversified gender roles throughout every generation have unfolded through social interactions and are not biologically determined or inherited. The materializations of gender roles have primarily transpired through verbal and nonverbal language within their given social environments and cultural contexts. Gender, namely masculine and feminine nuances, are consequently more of an inner experience than objective and observable facts. Gender is, according to this outlook, not a fixed principle of behavior but a constantly transforming notion of self-determination that is deconstructed and reinvented continually.

The other viewpoint asserts that trans specifically should be more narrow and defined through gender dysphoria¹. This viewpoint considers the 'gender as a social construct' perspective as too intricate for cisgender² people to comprehend. Cisgender people need, according to this outlook, effortlessly approachable knowledge of trans lived experiences. If cisgender people do not have this approachability, it might otherwise undermine trans endeavor for bodily autonomy. This viewpoint consciously advocates for more strict definitions of trans and is often associated with the term transmedicalism. It is an outlook often critiqued for applying archaic notions of trans jargon such as "transsexual" to simplify trans lived experiences for cisgender people. The critique against transmedicalism also entails its appropriation of biological interpretations of trans that completely disregards any notions of gender self-determination. However, these two perspectives are not clear-cut since they also intersect in some regards. Some trans people do not explicitly or consciously position themselves as members of transmedicalism. Still, their opinions occasionally link to these notions and partially reinforce ideas inherent to transmedicalism.

This thesis implements an online critical discourse analysis of the primary principles and materialization of a concept known as transmedicalism. It examines contentions relevant to transmedicalism within variegated online publishing platforms, news websites, discussion websites, executive orders, press releases, and opinion pieces. It primarily investigates how trans and

1 The distress or discomfort trans people may or may not experience regarding their perceived or expressed gender, which sometimes engenders their possible wish to alter their gender expressions or experiences in small or large capacities.

2 A cisgender person is an individual whose gender identity corresponds with the gender identity granted to them at birth. To situate cisgender in a very simplistic definition, one could describe cisgender as the 'obverse' of transgender.

cisgender people who advocate or used to subscribe to transmedicalism define, shape, and employ the concept. This thesis reviews assorted narratives concerning trans continuation and life produced by trans and cisgender people who explicitly and inexplicitly subscribe to transmedicalism. The analysis endeavors to provide better insight regarding how contemporary power structures engender trans people to subscribe to transmedicalism. This thesis implements a critical discourse analysis on four socio-political discourses that markedly influence trans autonomy and transgender well-being. Transmedicalism is currently a relatively uncharted topic within academia as of writing this thesis. This circumstance has consequently limited this study to borrow definitions of the concept from news articles and crowdsourced online dictionaries. This study was restricted to a deadline of approximately five months and realized between early November 2020 and late March 2021. A consistent amalgamation between APA¹ 6th edition and 7th edition is the writing style and format of this thesis.

Transmedicalism and relevant terminologies.

My understanding of transmedicalism aligns with definitions provided by YouTuber Jessie Earl (2019) in a news article that involves an incident relevant to transmedicalism. Earl (2019) asserts that “Transmedicalism is a belief that one needs to experience . . . gender dysphoria in order to be considered truly transgender. Gender dysphoria is the experience of distress caused by the mismatch between [individual] biological sex and gender identity” (para. 14). They continue to outline some of the fundamental viewpoints of transmedicalism in the following quote:

Transmedicalists believe that being transgender is contingent upon suffering [and] medical treatment. This ideology completely [negates] . . . nonbinary identities, as well as binary-identified transgender people who may experience . . . joy at having their gender affirmed. Transmedicalists, who [frequently] . . . face varying levels of suffering, . . . often see those within the transgender community who do not experience a similar level of [torment] . . . have not “earned” being a part of the community. Transmedicalists view [efforts] to help promote the well-being of nonbinary identities . . . to be [a disdain] of their . . . suffering. (Earl, 2019, para. 15)

In other words, transmedicalism is a political ideology that prioritizes a hierarchy of suffering, namely gender dysphoria, as the sole asset towards trans autonomy. This foundation in gender dysphoria is an endeavor to simplify the concept of trans and diminish the 'evaluation process' for a considerable amount of trans people. Contemporary medico-legal institutions that allow gender transitioning require a psychiatric evaluation process before trans people gain admission to specific health benefits relevant to transitioning. These health benefits entail legal and medical adjustments such as hormone replacement therapy, assorted surgery, and legal recognition

¹ American Psychological Association (not to be confused with the American Psychiatric Association).

of their self-determined gender. However, as Earl (2019) mentions, this undertaking by transmedicalism entails significant detrimental health consequences for many trans people. Situating gender dysphoria as an essential trait of trans lived experiences would forsake plenty of trans people who do not experience gender dysphoria.

Additionally, contemporary trans activism advocates that any notion of suffering should not be interchangeable with every single trans lived experience. Situating pain and misery as inherent with trans lives would further reinforce the prejudice that trans people are subjects of an ailment, which would only diminish our autonomy. When representatives of transmedicalism establish their outlook in opposition to trans activism, they additionally situate transmedicalism as a political movement. An entry on the crowdsourced online dictionary Urban Dictionary similarly describes the term “transmedicalist” as “Someone who believes that *gender dysphoria is necessary* [emphasis added] to be transgender” (Urban Dictionary, 2015). The entry adds that “[They] may or may not be trans themselves. [It is] an alternative term for truscum” (Urban Dictionary, 2015). While this thesis will not employ the term “truscum,” it is decisive that I outline the jargon applied in the discourse of transmedicalism.

Urban Dictionary correspondingly describes “truscum” as an “individual that holds the belief that you *require gender dysphoria* [emphasis added] to identify as transgender” (Urban Dictionary, 2020). Additionally, Urban Dictionary details “transmed” as “Short for transmedicalist. Someone who [holds that] you require some form of gender dysphoria to be transgender” (Urban Dictionary, 2019b). This thesis will consequently apply terms such as transmedicalism, transmedicalist, and transmed interchangeably when necessary. Finally, Urban Dictionary describes “tucute” as “Someone who believes that gender dysphoria is not necessary to be transgender. The slang . . . stands for: 'too cute to be cis’” (Urban Dictionary, 2019a). People ascribed as “tucutes” embody, in other words, the antithetical ideological standpoint opposite to transmedicalism. The definitions of transmedicalism acknowledged so far repeatedly emphasize the significance of gender dysphoria within this outlook. Gender dysphoria is primarily employed as a diagnostic label by some of the world's largest psychiatric and public health organizations. It is consequently imperative to outline how some of the most recognized institutions define gender dysphoria.

Official diagnostic definitions.

The diagnostic publication titled “Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders” issued by the American Psychiatric Association provides contemporary psychiatric definitions of gender dysphoria. An entry on Wikipedia describes the APA¹ as “the main professional organization

¹ American Psychiatric Association.

of psychiatrists and trainee psychiatrists in the United States, and the largest psychiatric organization in the world” (“American Psychiatric Association,” 2020, para. 1). Recognizing that diagnostic publications such as DSM-5¹ are subject to criticism, it still is imperative for this thesis to clarify the current general psychiatric judgments regarding trans subject matters. The APA (2013) declares that “‘Gender dysphoria’ refers to the distress that may accompany the incongruence between [the individual’s] experienced or expressed gender and [their] assigned gender” (Gender Dysphoria section). The APA (2013) adds, “Individuals with gender dysphoria have a marked incongruence between the gender they have [become] assigned to . . . and their [individual] experienced/expressed gender. This discrepancy is the core component of the diagnosis” (Gender Dysphoria section). The APA (2013) concludes, “Gender dysphoria should . . . [differentiate] from simple nonconformity to [commonplace] gender role behavior by the strong desire to be of another gender” (Gender Dysphoria section).

The health care classification system titled “The International Classification of Diseases,” sanctioned by the World Health Organization, submits a similar diagnostic label known as gender incongruence. To simplify this matter, one could consider gender incongruence and gender dysphoria as generally interchangeable. An entry on Wikipedia that summarizes details of ICD-11² observes that “gender dysphoria [is] called Gender incongruence in the ICD-11” (“ICD-11,” 2021, Gender incongruence section). However, there are meticulous but significant connotations within these definitions that differentiate them. A Wikipedia entry describes the WHO³ as a “specialized agency of the United Nations responsible for international public health” (“World Health Organization,” 2021, para. 1). Another Wikipedia entry clarifies that the UN⁴ is “an intergovernmental organization that aims to maintain international peace and security, . . . [and] achieve international cooperation” (“United Nations,” 2021, para. 1). The entry adds that the UN “is the largest, most familiar, most internationally represented and most powerful intergovernmental organization in the world” (“United Nations,” 2021, para. 1).

While ICD-11 will not come into effect earlier than January 1, 2022, its definitions are still publicly available for review and consequently carry significance within trans discourse. The ICD-11 claims that gender incongruence “is [characterized] by a marked and persistent incongruence between an individual’s experienced gender and the assigned sex, which often leads to a desire to [transition,] in order to live and [become] accepted as a person of the experienced gender” (World Health Organization, 2019). It adds, “The diagnosis cannot [become] assigned prior [to] the onset of

1 Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition.

2 The International Classification of Diseases, 11th edition.

3 World Health Organization.

4 United Nations.

puberty. Gender variant [behavior] and preferences alone are not a basis for assigning the diagnosis” (World Health Organization, 2019). However, this definition in ICD-11, often acknowledged by its diagnostic code “HA60,” is projected in 2022 to replace the “F64.0” code in ICD-10¹. The diagnostic code F64.0, in this case, refers to transsexualism, which ICD-10 lists as a gender identity disorder. The ICD-10 defines transsexualism as “A desire to live and be accepted as a member of the opposite sex, usually accompanied by a sense of discomfort with, or inappropriateness of, one's *anatomic sex* [emphasis added], and a wish to have surgery and hormonal treatment” (World Health Organization, 2016).

While ICD-11 is subject to criticism due to its disregard for 'gender-variant behavior,' which grants assorted clinicians an outlet for medical gatekeeping², it still is a meaningful improvement to ICD-10. There is a subtle but imperative distinctness between 'assigned sex' detailed in ICD-11 and 'anatomic sex' outlined in ICD-10. Assigned sex implies that sex is a characteristic mainly bestowed to an individual through normative social and cultural understandings of sex. The point is that there is a moderate open-ended aspect to this idea. Anatomic sex, on the other hand, indicates that sex is more of an organically essential notion. In other words, it is unmoveable and fixed until a structural adjustment through surgery has occurred.

Transsexualism consequently emphasizes an antagonism between trans people and their assigned sex organs as essential to trans experiences. This notion regarding trans people and our allegedly uniform opposing attitudes towards our sex organs granted at birth is an outlook that transmedicalism still adheres to. An entry on Wikipedia observes that ICD-10 “became endorsed by the Forty-third World Health Assembly in 1990, and was first used by member states in 1994” (“ICD-10,” 2020, para. 1). Transsexualism has accordingly concocted within trans discourse for a bit more than 30 years. It is no wonder then that the notion of transsexualism has engendered severe consequences within trans discourse during these last three decades. The outcome entails that some more conservative trans people, namely trans people who subscribe to transmedicalism, situate themselves in opposition to the new definitions found in ICD-11. They embrace this ideological position because ICD-11 will principally discard their primary asset, namely transsexualism and its corresponding essentializing narrative regarding sex organs among trans people.

Trans terminologies.

My recognition of trans aligns with an article authored by Susan Stryker et al. (2008) in *Women's Studies Quarterly*. This article outlines the elementary aspects of trans, namely its open-ended and continuously recreating character. Stryker et al. (2008) describe transitioning as follows:

1 The International Classification of Diseases, 10th edition.

2 The circumstance where a clinician consciously withholds medical treatment from their assigned client.

[Neither] “-gender” nor any of the other suffixes of “trans-” can be understood in isolation . . . the lines implied by the very concept of “trans-” are moving targets, simultaneously composed of multiple determinants. [Transitioning,] . . . is a practice that takes place within, as well as across or between, gendered spaces. It is a practice that assembles gender into contingent structures of association with other attributes of [physical] being, . . . that allows for their reassembly. [Transitioning] can function as a disciplinary tool when the stigma associated with the lack or loss of gender status threatens . . . [physical] extermination. (Stryker et al., 2008, p. 13)

Being trans and experiencing nuances of transition entails a gender corrective conduct, which can be either a continuous or momentarily accomplishment depending on their individual trans experience. Aspects of trans lived experiences such as gender dysphoria and gender euphoria engender whether a trans person experiences their transition as continuous or momentarily. This gender corrective conduct applies to numerous amounts of people who exist independently from traditional binary gender notions of man and woman. A chapter by Jordy Jones (2006) in an edited volume titled “The Transgender Studies Reader” clarifies what gender binarism entails. Jones (2006) claims that “In queer and transgender theories . . . the construction that is commonly called 'the gender binary' has come under attack. Critics fault it for failing to [clarify] . . . the full range of lived [gender experiences]” (p. 449). He adds that “In place of a black-and-white binarism, a sort of 'rainbow flag' of gender is [occasionally] proposed. Gender, according to this new trope, is not a binary, but rather a spectrum” (Jones, 2006, p. 449).

Transmedicalism appropriates gender dysphoria and gender binarism by situating gender dysphoria as a blueprint to classify trans people into binary categories. This binary structure of gender dysphoria subsequently separates certain trans people from other trans people who are “considered truly transgender” (Earl, 2019, para. 14). The discourse around transmedicalism entails mainly trans people who embrace gender binarism and trans people who reject the gender binary. To simplify these ideological positions, one generally consists of binary trans people, and the other involves spectrum trans people, respectively. In this case, the 'spectrum' signifies the inclusive “rainbow flag' of gender” as submitted by Jones (2006, p. 449). However, it is imperative to consider that even cisgender people, namely people who identify with the gender assigned to them at birth, can also embody transmedicalism. It is equally decisive to acknowledge that not all binary trans people subscribe to transmedicalism and its 'transnormative' principle.

Austin H. Johnson (2016) in “Sociological Inquiry” describes transnormativity as “an empowering and constraining ideology that deems some trans people's identifications, characteristics, and behaviors as legitimate and [adhering to a medical model]” (p. 466). He adds, “For individuals who do not adhere to a medical model of transgender identity, characterized by the rejection of binary gender embodiments . . . transnormativity marginalizes and at times eclipses

their experiences” (Johnson, 2016, p. 467). This thesis will consequently embrace 'transnormativity' and 'transnormative' interchangeably as illustrative designations of the numerous constraining connotations of transmedicalism.

These last two paragraphs briefly outline the overall structure of this thesis. The Motivation section details a personal history with transmedicalism. The subsequent section discloses what the aim and research questions of this thesis entail. The Material section summarizes which discussion websites and online publishing platforms I have examined throughout this study. The Method section clarifies why an online critical discourse analysis is this study's elected methodological approach and what this method entails. The consecutive section outlines previous literature works within queer and cultural studies, sexology and biology, feminist philosophy, transfeminism, transgender studies, and lesbian and gay studies. These academic disciplines are relevant to deconstruct and analyze the contentious dilemma of transmedicalism, including the discourses surrounding transmedicalism. Their subject matters consist of homonationalism's negative influence within gay discourse, the expunction of intersex people and their physical representation, and the construction of trans bodies as 'rape-able' due to our genitals. They also involve gatekeeping of trans-specific health care inflicted against trans people, transsexualism's eviction of diversified trans representation, transgender suffering as an intellectual foundation for trans people, and the transphobic principles of transgender exclusionary feminism.

The Ethical Considerations section clarifies the moral deliberations I have integrated into this study regarding user consent and privacy on diversified closed and open social media website platforms. The introduction will close with a summary of the foundational backgrounds of trans studies, transfeminism, and queer theory, which will be the theoretical frameworks throughout this study. Finally, the analysis is initiated, which involves an online critical discourse analysis of transmedicalism reproduced within variegated online publishing platforms, news websites, discussion websites, executive orders, press releases, and opinion pieces consistent with the theoretical frameworks.

Motivation

I encountered the concept of transmedicalism during the spring of 2019 while writing the analysis section of my bachelor thesis. As expressed in that section, the amount of previous research on transmedicalism seems to be limited. The bachelor thesis involved a qualitative study on trans women in a private online support community dedicated to binary and nonbinary trans people. The server's founder suggested that some binary trans people can become emotionally disconnected from other trans people. As they progress in their gender transition, they can also become detached

from trans people located early in their transition process. This process entails medical benefits such as access to hormone replacement therapy and sexual reassignment surgery.

As a trans woman, I, including personal friends of mine, have been subject to exclusionary language from other trans people. This language often entails signified skepticism regarding our status as trans due to visual traits such as our clothing choices and the size of our various body parts, namely body parts such as foreheads and feet. Transmedicalism subsequently misappropriates transitioning aspects as 'passports' of transgender identity and situate transitioning as a hierarchical structure. This hierarchy is maintained by policing specific gender expressions, which situates some trans people at the bottom of this arrangement. Examining who these trans people are and what consequences might generate by excluding them from trans spaces might be worthwhile.

Previous literature works within gender studies have outlined how members of gay, queer, and trans communities become regulated through assorted exclusionary ideas. These notions often stem from principles sanctioned through legislative influences. These mandates consequently become internalized by some members of trans, gay, or queer communities. This thesis will further detail what these preceding literature works entail in this thesis's literature review section. The limited amount of previous literature on transmedicalism was a revelation; it was perplexing, disappointing, and anticipated all at the same time. This thesis consequently aims to contribute a scholarly study on transmedicalism.

Aim and Research Questions

This thesis aims to present an elementary outline of the prevailing principles, ramifications, and rhetorics of the concept known as transmedicalism. That involves what the foundations of transmedicalism exemplify, what consequences transmedicalism has within trans discourse, and how transmedicalism materializes among trans people. This study has consequently determined three research questions to lead the analysis in outlining transmedicalism. These research questions are: What are the primary principles of transmedicalism? What are the potential ramifications of transmedicalism? How do discourses outside of transmedicalism engender transmedicalist ideas?

Material

The leading material is an American online publishing platform titled Medium, currently retained by a media company known as A Medium Corporation. An entry on Wikipedia claims that the publications on Medium consist of “a hybrid collection of amateur and professional people and publications, . . . and is regularly regarded as a blog host” (“Medium,” 2020, para. 1). Alexis Madrigal (2013) of the American magazine “The Atlantic” asserts that the game plan of Medium

involves “[Creating] a beautiful, simple blogging platform, which Medium most certainly is” (para. 10). He concludes that “Medium is . . . arrhythmically produced by a combination of top-notch editors, paid writers, [and] PR flacks” (Madrigal, 2013, para. 23). Harry McCracken (2014) of the news magazine “Time” claims that “Medium is attractive if you only have the yen to say something every so often” (para. 12). He adds that “Medium does have some paid contributors, but [there is] no way for a random person who signs up for an account . . . to make money” (McCracken, 2014, para. 14).

The complementary material is an American discussion website titled Reddit, currently retained by the mass media company known as Advance Publications Incorporated. An entry on Wikipedia describes Reddit as “an American social news aggregation, web content rating, and discussion website” (“Reddit,” 2021, para. 1). Jesus Diaz (2019) of the tech news website “Tom's Guide” describes Reddit as a “group of forums in which registered users can talk about . . . anything you can imagine” (para. 3). He adds that “specialized forums are . . . referred to as *r/'topic'* [emphasis added]. . . . You can read and participate in all of them freely except private subreddits” (Diaz, 2019, para. 4).

Registered users on Reddit can join and create numerous titular 'subreddits' dedicated to various subject matters. Interactive features on Reddit allow the users to express their judgments of assorted forum posts through upvotes or downvotes. Each forum post displays an upvote rating represented by a percentage rate. The higher the percentage rate, the more esteemed the forum post was among its given subreddit community. Jake Widman (2020) of the tech news website “Digital Trends” clarifies that “moderators . . . dictate what types of content are allowed in the [subreddits]” (para. 6). He adds that Reddit is “governed by the admins, employees . . . who have vast powers across the site, including the ability to strip moderators of their privileges” (Widman, 2020, para. 6). Another feature available on each subreddit is the accessibility to catalog assorted forum posts in correspondence to several categories. One of these features involves arranging which forum posts have attained the most upvotes, from highest to lowest amount of upvotes. These features facilitate identifying which forum posts on the respective subreddits were the most popular and appreciated by their respective communities. In writing this thesis, Reddit currently has over 430 million active users across 130,000 communities (Dive Into Anything, n.d.).

The material of this thesis primarily consists of diversified opinions, comments, and interpretations of transmedicalism. These statements involve considerations provided by people who explicitly subscribe to transmedicalist ideas or have done so in the past. The material incorporates three blog posts from the blog host website known as Medium. A trans woman named Dana Pham (2019a; 2019b) has written two of these blog posts, and another trans woman named

Gemma Stone (2019) has written the third one. In this context, the reader must notice that Stone (2019) is an exception since she used to subscribe to transmedicalist ideas but does not do so anymore. The material also includes six forum posts authored by five different users from two separate subreddits dedicated to transmedicalism. The usernames of these individuals on Reddit are testthrowaeay0302, mippidymoppidymoo, thetransgurl, Archer_Python, and 420conradical69. Among these Reddit accounts, Archer_Python is the user who has written two of the forum posts included in the analysis. However, these usernames' eccentric qualities interfere with the digital writing assistance tool applied for this thesis. This thesis consequently refrains from mentioning their usernames whenever it is possible. To better follow each quote by respective Reddit users, this thesis recommends that the reader scans details provided within each in-text citation's parentheses.

The blog posts by Pham (2019a; 2019b) involve transmedicalist notions regarding how a genetic perspective could clarify trans lived experiences for cisgender people. The blog post by Stone (2019) describes how binary trans people may become tempted to subscribe to transmedicalism and how Stone (2019) managed to liberate herself from transmedicalist interpretations of trans. The forum posts consist of two prefaces that explain some of the foundations of transmedicalism and whom their respective communities endeavor to build a community. The other four forum posts involve distinct observations on contemporary events in trans discourse and encourage corresponding discussions on their respective subreddits. Due to the relatively recent conception of the term “transmedicalism,” this study has faced a significant obstacle regarding gathering relevant material. Transmedicalism is a considerably controversial subject matter within trans discourse. Individuals who subscribe to this outlook may not casually raise transmedicalist opinions in open online spaces due to the contentious nuance of transmedicalism. This circumstance has consequently limited the quantity and accessibility of diversified online material relevant to transmedicalism.

There is also an ongoing worldwide epidemic as of writing this thesis concerning a virus known as COVID-19. As of November 4, 2020, the ailment has induced approximately 1.22 million global deaths (Coronavirus live updates, 2020). The situation engendered by COVID-19 has consequently limited this study, namely the course supervisions, seminars, and the thesis writing process itself, entirely to online communication. However, from a slightly more positive note, this circumstance has also granted assorted students a moment to improve their online navigation, online communication, and online information gathering.

Method

Because transmedicalism is a concept primarily discussed within online spaces, this study's

elected methodology is online critical discourse analysis. This thesis has consequently applied an article by Teun Adrianus van Dijk (1993) in “Discourse & Society” as a primary template of CDA¹. Teun A. van Dijk (1993) describes CDA as “a study of the relations between discourse, power, dominance, social inequality and the position of the discourse analyst in such social relationships” (p. 249). He adds that “to relate discourse and society, and hence discourse and the reproduction of dominance and inequality, we need to examine in detail the role of social representations in the minds of social actors” (van Dijk, 1993, p. 251). To realize this, I, namely the discourse analyst of this thesis, must pinpoint specific language applied within diversified online discourse spaces dedicated to transmedicalism. From there, it is imperative to identify how representatives of transmedicalism both explicitly and inexplicitly produce a discourse. Namely, a dialectical exchange that has severe consequences for the well-being and protection of all trans people.

A chapter by Ruth Wodak (2001) in an edited volume titled “Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis” provides a similar definition of CDA. Wodak (2001) asserts that CDA is “fundamentally concerned with [analyzing] opaque as well as transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control as manifested in language” (p. 3). She adds that “language indexes power, expresses power, is involved where there is contention over and a challenge to power. Power does not derive from language, but language can be [applied] to challenge power, to subvert it, to alter distributions of power” (Wodak, 2001, p. 8).

Since language organizes power and dominance, the specific vocabularies administered in transmedicalism are consequently crucial to examine. To outline how transmedicalism appropriates power, the discourse analyst must review what language this outlook employs. It is also imperative to moderately deliberate on some notions of transmedicalism to materialize a number of its more opaque ideas. Teun A. van Dijk (1993) outlines the political work of critical discourse analysts in the following quote:

[Critical] discourse analysts . . . take an explicit sociopolitical stance: they spell out their point of view, perspective, [principles,] and aims, both within their discipline and within society at large. Although not in each stage of theory formation and analysis, their work is admittedly and ultimately political. Their hope, if occasionally illusory, is [to bring about] change through critical understanding. Their perspective, if possible, that of those who suffer most from dominance and inequality. Their [analytical] targets are the power elites that enact, sustain, legitimate, condone or ignore social inequality and injustice. (van Dijk, 1993, p. 252)

He determines that “In this sense, critical discourse scholars should also be social and political scientists, as well as social critics and activists” (van Dijk, 1993, p. 253). Accordingly, this thesis must outline its ideological orientation within trans studies, transfeminism, and queer theory

1 Critical Discourse Analysis.

before initiating the analysis.

A book by Norman Fairclough (2010) titled “Critical discourse analysis: The critical study of language” outlines some of the political activism involved in CDA. Fairclough (2010) describes CDA as “critical research which seeks to understand how contemporary capitalism . . . prevents or limits human well-being and flourishing, . . . to [overcome] or [mitigate] these obstacles and limits” (p. 11). He adds that “[Capitalism] has involved a 'restructuring' of relations between the economic, political, and social domains, including . . . education, and focusing the role of the state and government on strengthening markets and competitiveness” (Fairclough, 2010, p. 11). The competitive nature of capitalism is multifold, but a commonplace example of this issue could be a sense of competitiveness between workplace colleagues during an economic crisis and times of high unemployment risks.

Fairclough (2010) argues that “Crises lead to a proliferation of strategies which may be in competitive [relationships] as well as in complementary relationships, leading to processes of strategic struggle” (p. 18). Discourses and dialectical strategies mainly emerge during socio-political crises. This thesis must consequently extend its review of transmedicalism beyond the rhetorical methods applied by this ideology. This continuation involves an examination of the socio-political 'crisis' that seemingly engendered the discourse regarding transmedicalism. Fairclough (2010) concludes that “Critical analysis seeks to provide explanations of the causes and development of the crisis, . . . and to transform capitalism in less crisis-prone, . . . and more socially just directions” (p. 18). However, unless an extensive event such as a global economic crash or epidemic is involved, a certain amount of power is required to exhibit a socio-political event as a crisis. The capacity to shape a particular narrative within a distinct discourse as a 'critical situation' exemplifies substantial power. To examine how 'an emergency' may have materialized within a dialogue, I must consider which socio-political structures may occupy ample dominance to shape specific narratives as crises.

Teun A. van Dijk (1993) additionally compiles the characteristics and resources of social authority and dominance within discourse contexts. He asserts that “Power and dominance [usually are] organized and *institutionalized* [emphasis added]. The social [domination] of groups is thus not merely enacted, individually, by its group members, as is the case in many forms of everyday racism or sexual harassment” (van Dijk, 1993, p. 255). He adds that “It may also be . . . sanctioned by the courts, legitimated [through] laws, enforced by the police, and ideologically sustained and reproduced by the media or textbooks” (van Dijk, 1993, p. 255). While this thesis examines diversified commentaries on transmedicalism within online discourse spaces, it also considers any underlying conditions of this concept. These conditions entail institutionalized authorities that might

engender trans people to police certain gender expressions within their community.

Literature Review

As previously stated, transmedicalism is currently a relatively uncharted topic within academic establishments. This section consequently reviews assorted previous literature works that cover topics that engender similar issues as transmedicalism. These literature pieces consist of one book situated in queer and cultural studies and one book settled in sexology and biology. They additionally include one journal article and one book established in feminist philosophy and transfeminism, respectively. Two essays located in transgender studies, and lesbian and gay studies, have also bolstered this section. The final literature work is a journal article also situated in transgender studies.

Their subject matters intersect regarding how trans, gay, lesbian, intersex, and queer communities become divided due to conglomerate discriminatory discourses that attempt to 'normalize' or regulate these communities. These literature works primarily criticize how legislative interests often sanction these harmful dialogues through bureaucratic lawmaking. Namely, regulations that encompass decisive authority regarding how the heteronormative public judge gay, intersex, and gender non-conforming bodies in addition to trans genitals. This section also specifies the notions of medical gatekeeping, transsexualism, and transgender suffering as a lived experience of expertise and a foundation of intellectual autonomy for trans people. Finally, this section concludes with a summary of trans-exclusionary feminism, namely its conception and continuing legacy within trans discourse.

A book by Jasbir Puar (2007) titled “Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times” outlines the reformation of sexual, national, and ethnic characteristics by present-day United States legislation to conform with U.S. nationalism. Gay and queer discourse in the U.S. underwent a significant transformation after the September 11 terrorist attacks of 2001. Puar (2007) claims that “Through this binary-reinforcing . . . *normativizing apparatus* [emphasis added], the war on terror has rehabilitated some . . . lesbian, gays, and queers to U.S. national citizenship” (p. 38). She adds, “positive attributes were attached to . . . butch, masculine, rugby player, white, American, hero, gay patriot, . . . while negative connotations of homosexuality . . . racialize and sexualize Osama bin Laden: feminized, stateless, dark, perverse, pedophilic” (Puar, 2007, p. 46). The essentializing language applied by this rhetoric consequently reinforces specific gay and queer bodies as ideal. In contrast, other gay and queer bodies become situated as erroneous and depraved creatures unworthy of humane consideration.

Puar (2007) asserts that “homonormativity is both disciplined by the nation and its

heteronormative underpinnings and also . . . surveils and disciplines those sexually perverse bodies that fall outside its purview” (p. 50). She concludes, “it fosters nationalist homosexual positionalities indebted to liberalism . . . which then *police* [emphasis added] . . . non-nationalist nonnormative sexualities” (Puar, 2007, p. 51). Homonationalism is a case where a government, dominated primarily by white, heterosexual, cisgender people, nominates a limited selection of gay individuals as 'exemplary' subjects. Meanwhile, other gay individuals remain neglected due to not submitting themselves to the normalizing discipline of homonationalism and its heteronormative foundation. Puar (2007) disclosed how heteronormative legislative language sanctioned through narratives of nationalism engender segregation and disharmony within the gay community. However, this thesis examines analogous legislative language production and its discriminate effect within trans discourse. In other words, how this language disciplines which trans bodies as ideal and which trans bodies as erroneous.

Puar (2007) detailed how legislative language and actions can engender a group of LGBTQIA people to disregard other representatives of their specific LGBTQIA community. Lawmaking authorities emphasize substantial and trivial differences between assorted members within given minority groups to achieve this segregation. These differences range from ideological contrasts to bodily and biological variations. The American Psychiatric Association and The World Health Organization, and their respective prescribed definitions of gender dysphoria and gender incongruence, are just additional examples of such segregation sanctioned through legislative language. In this case, it is an arrangement of elected cisgender people dictating whom the 'exemplary subjects' are among trans people. As will be detailed further in the Analysis section of this thesis, transmedicalism involves trans people who explicitly embrace the definitions of 'gender dysphoria' and 'transsexualism' disclosed in DSM-5 and ICD-10, respectively. Transmedicalism may subsequently embody analogous legislative language, sanctioned by a limited selection of cisgender people, that engender segregation and disharmony among trans people.

A book by Anne Fausto-Sterling (2000) titled “Sexing the Body: Gender Politics and the Construction of Sexuality” details how contemporary European and U.S. medicinal science has a long history of policing and subsequently concealing intersex people in addition to related sex ambiguity characteristics. Above all, she is critical of the notion that assorted sex characteristics should govern our understandings of sexuality and gender. These characteristics entail physical traits such as sex chromosomes, physical proportions of internal and external sex organs, breast size, and reproductive capabilities. Fausto-Sterling (2000) clarifies that “[feminist theorists] understand that all scholarship adds threads to a web that positions racialized bodies, sexes, genders, and preferences in [relation] to one another. New or differently spun threads change our

relationships, change how we are in the world” (p. 6). She explains in the following quote how neoliberalism engendered assorted science specialists to 'optimize' society through presuming the body's 'natural state,' which to this day influence multifold assumptions of sex and gender:

[Imposing] a gender norm is [social,] not scientifically, driven. . . . From the viewpoint of medical practitioners, progress in the handling of intersexuality involves *maintaining the normal* [emphasis added]. Accordingly, there 'ought' to be only two boxes: male and female. The knowledge developed by the medical disciples empowers doctors to maintain [the] mythology of the normal by changing the intersexual body to fit, as nearly as possible, into one or the other cubbyhole. One [individual's] medical progress, . . . can be another's discipline and control. (Fausto-Sterling, 2000, p. 8)

In other words, a fixed perspective on human sexuality does not convey the intricate complexities regarding the political and social recreation of human sexuality throughout history in general. Additionally, this static model on human sexuality also dramatically undermines foundations to establish, for example, gay, lesbian, trans, and intersex sexualities as 'normal' categories.

Fausto-Sterling (2000) maintains that “As we grow and develop, we literally, not just 'discursively' . . . construct our bodies, incorporating experience into our very flesh. To understand this claim, we must erode the distinctions between the physical and the social body” (p. 20). She concludes that “[If] sex and sexuality are . . . embedded in our philosophical concepts of how matter forms into bodies, the matter of bodies cannot form a neutral, pre-existing ground from which to understand the origins of sexual difference” (Fausto-Sterling, 2000, p. 22). Consequently, the dialectical struggle between nature vs. nurture regarding sex characteristics and sexuality holds significant political ramifications for everyone, particularly for assorted LGBTQIA+ representatives. It is also imperative to consider how these archaic understandings of sex, sexuality, and intersex bodies have governed variegated scientific insights throughout the last century. Namely allegedly 'objective' judgments regarding 'gendered' chemistry such as sex hormones and their supposedly respective 'male' contra 'female' brain development in general.

Fausto-Sterling (2000) outlined how archaic understandings of intersex bodies and the consequential erasure of intersex bodies have sanctioned an expunction of gay, lesbian, intersex, and trans autonomy. However, some trans people may find intersex bodies, in addition to gender ambiguity, to be detrimental in the endeavor for trans liberation. Namely that cisgender people need a more explicit representation of trans to comprehend our lived experiences altogether. This thesis consequently examines if similar antagonism towards sex and gender ambiguities, emanating from outmoded scientific judgments regarding intersex bodies, remains within trans discourse.

Talia Mae Bettcher (2012) in “Hypatia” criticizes a markedly transphobic 'U.S./European

centered' cultural arrangement that comprises the moral confines of 'modesty' and 'privacy' regarding genital representation through gender presentation. Bettcher (2012) employs a subversive framework situated in nudity to deconstruct this essentializing notion that signifying one's bestowed genitals through 'suitable' gender presentation would be morally sensible. She writes, “‘naked’ is defined relative to ‘clothed.’ Without the concept of being clothed, there could be no concept of nakedness. Similarly, without the social possibility of being clothed, there could be no corresponding social possibility of being naked” (Bettcher, 2012, p. 322). She adds, “In [Euro-centered] culture, nakedness plays a significant role in the culture's particular system of intimacy. Insofar as nakedness primarily concerns vision as a modality of bounded access, [it presupposes] sighted individuals” (Bettcher, 2012, p. 325).

The moral boundaries of 'proper' genital representation through gender presentation are, akin to nudity, a fluctuating social construct unevenly distributed across diversified bodies. It is no surprise then that this arrangement is employed to persecute physical embodiments such as feminine, transgender, and gender-nonconforming bodies. Bettcher (2012) asserts that “because [genitals] are systematically and [indirectly] communicated . . . [it is] no surprise trans people are frequently subject to forced genital verification to determine 'real' sex” (p. 330). She adds, “the [uniformity] of sex and the essentiality of genitalia are [a result of the secured] ad hoc stipulation that sex is determined by 'birth genitalia' and by the representation of [trans genitals] as 'artificial'” (p. 332).

Bettcher (2012) outlined how the uneven social allocation of 'moral' genital representation through ceremonial gender presentation sanctions which bodies are systematically 'rape-able' contra 'un-rape-able,' an essentializing arrangement of socially constructed interpersonal genital confessions significantly challenged by diversified trans presentations and representations. However, genitals have increasingly become a tense subject matter within contemporary trans discourse, namely if 'female penises' and 'male vaginas' even are legitimate ideas. Some trans people may consequently embrace the essentializing notion of 'moral' representation of genitals to entertain those who otherwise wish us harm due to our genitals. This thesis examines if a similar harmful perception regarding genitals in a 'mandatory concert' with gender presentation has become internalized within the trans community.

A book by Julia Serano (2009) titled “Whipping Girl: A Transsexual Woman on Sexism and the Scapegoating of Femininity” outlines how trans people become ensnared between traditional sexism and oppositional sexism. Serano (2009) asserts that the guidelines determined by the HBGDA¹, namely their authority over medical procedures for trans people, are clear examples of

1 Harry Benjamin International Gender Dysphoria Association.

transmisogyny. She claims that “Because these medical procedures are prerequisites for obtaining legal [transition] . . . the psychiatric community . . . has become positioned as 'gatekeepers' of medical and legal sex reassignment” (Serano, 2009, p. 116). Serano (2009) clarifies that these gatekeepers regulated “the availability of hormones and sex reassignment only to those trans people who would . . . blend into society as 'normal' women and men” (pp. 118-119). Gatekeeping is a circumstance where gender expressions among trans people are policed by other individuals and regulate trans people to conform with cisnormative ideas of gender. Serano (2009) clarified that gatekeeping was fabricated primarily by the U.S. health care system, which identifies how gatekeeping originated from neoliberal legislation against trans people. Gatekeeping consequently corresponds with homonationalism due to the nuances of bureaucratic legislation of conformity within both of these concepts.

However, while Serano (2009) detailed gatekeeping tendencies within the U.S. health care system, this thesis examines how gatekeeping interpretations become internalized among some trans people. This internalization engenders trans people to police gender expressions among their community, which excludes trans people who embrace gender ambiguities. Gatekeeping originated from the homogenizing nucleus of U.S. neoliberal lawmaking. However, the trans people who act like gatekeepers among their mutual trans representatives do not seem to be engendered by ideas such as nationalism. Patriotism does not seem to answer why some trans people continuously police their community on behalf of their respective realms of heteronormative public domains.

Sandy Stone (2006), in her essay titled “The Empire Strikes Back: A Posttranssexual Manifesto,” criticizes the shortcoming of trans representation among academic and clinical studies of trans people. The dissertation, initially written by Stone (2006) in 1987, is almost 35 years old as I am writing this thesis. However, the edited volume “The Transgender Studies Reader” reintroduced the essay in 2006. Stone (2006) argues that trans people become systematically engendered to remain invisible from the public eye in addition to the dialectical struggle for trans autonomy. Trans people's channels into trans discourse, including our means of liberation, have consequently been taken from us. The essay also outlines members of radical feminist groups who seek to exclude trans people from their movement. Stone (2006) examines multiple accounts, diaries, and medical biographies on transsexualism in her essay. She asserts that “All these authors replicate the stereotypical male account of the constitution of woman: Dress, makeup, and delicate fainting at the sight of blood. Each of these adventurers passes directly from one pole of sexual experience to the other” (Stone, 2006, p. 227).

Transsexualism is consequently a beleaguerment of transgender presentations by a definite male and cisgender understanding of gender. It seemingly engenders trans people, especially trans

women, to embrace exaggerated gender expressions and avoid gender ambiguities. The consequences of these exaggerations entail that gender expressions, which fall under the category of gender ambiguity, are systematically phased out. Stone (2006) details some of the problematic connotations of transsexualism in the following quote:

[A] counterdiscourse is critical. [However,] it is [hard] to generate a counterdiscourse if one is programmed to disappear. The highest purpose of the 'transsexual' [emphasis added] is to erase him/herself, to fade into the “normal” population as soon as possible. Part of this process is known as 'constructing a plausible history' – learning to lie effectively about one's past. What is [acquired] is acceptability in society. What is lost is the ability to [genuinely] represent the complexities and ambiguities of lived experience, and thereby . . . the power of continual transformation which is the heart of engaged life. (Stone, 2006, p. 230)

Transsexualism is seemingly a faithfulness to established norms of gender to gain social and civil approval for trans people. The legislative powers who gatekeep this approval are the same institutions that gatekeep medical care for trans people. However, while the essay by Stone (2006) summarizes the archaic and binary ideas of transsexualism, it naturally does not address how transsexualism has changed these last three decades. There may be trans people today who are dissatisfied with contemporary trans discourse and look back at the days of transsexualism as an ideal era for trans people. This thesis aims to examine if the binary and cisnormative ideas of transsexualism have subsisted through transmedicalism and what consequences this could carry within trans discourse.

An article by Susan Stryker (2006) initially published in 1994 in “GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies” clarifies how the reprimand of trans bodies can raise political agency for trans people. Stryker (2006) develops a critical metaphor emerging from the 1818 novel Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. This analogy involves how trans bodies, as monstrous medical science subjects, can embrace this inferior position as an area of expertise. The article is, as of writing this thesis, approximately 30 years old. However, the edited volume “The Transgender Studies Reader” reestablished the article in 2006. A preface in *The Transgender Studies Reader* declares that Stryker's (2006) article “was the first published academic work to link [embodied transgender experience] . . . to queer critical theory” (p. 244). Above all, it was also a constructive response to Stone's (2006) *The Empire Strikes Back: A Posttranssexual Manifesto*.

Stryker (2006) asserts that “my exclusion from human community fuels a deep and abiding rage in me that I, like the monster, direct against the conditions in which I must struggle to exist” (p. 245). She adds, “Just as the words 'dyke,' 'fag,' 'queer,' 'slut,' and 'whore' have [become] reclaimed, . . . by lesbians and gay men, . . . words like 'creature,' '[a] monster,' and 'unnatural' need to be reclaimed by [trans people]” (p. 246). In other words, by embracing the performance as

fantastical monsters, trans people may establish a foundation of subjectivity that protects us from future harm and legislative regulation. Like monsters, trans people effectively become prophets of the unprecedented, which grants us a channel into a trans discourse otherwise monopolized by medico-legal institutions and their indifferent jargon.

Stryker (2006) clarifies that “a monster with a life and will of its own is a principal source of horror for Frankenstein. The scientist has taken up his project with . . . the intent to subject nature completely to his power” (p. 247). She adds, “As we rise . . . from the operating tables of our rebirth, we transsexuals are something more, . . . than the creatures our makers intended us to be” (Stryker, 2006, p. 248). She concludes, “by using the dark, watery images of Romanticism and [occasionally lapsing] into its brooding cadences and grandiose postures, I employ the same literary techniques Mary Shelley used to elicit sympathy for her scientist's creation” (Stryker, 2006, p. 254). Being a monster often entails a lived experience of social exclusion, loneliness, and suffering, and trans people may consequently employ this experience as a field of transgender expertise. However, while Stryker (2006) voices good intentions for trans people, this narrative of trans people as monsters may have mutated throughout these last three decades.

The narrative of what constitutes 'authentic' trans lived experience has increasingly become a more tense and contentious subject matter within trans discourse. This dialogue usually situates its focal point on proportional suffering between smaller and larger groups of the same reprimanded LGBTQIA+ splinter group. Consequently, the volatile subject matter of suffering transforms into an approximate fiscal resource of social science within the conglomerate trans discourse. In the character of capitalism, suffering engenders a competitive dialectical exchange that continuously and aimlessly silences and raises haphazard trans voices. Transmedicalism, for example, employs traditional notions of gender dysphoria and their allegedly licensed suffering engendered by gender dysphoria as their primary fiscal resource within the social science of 'authentic' trans lived experience. Accordingly, this thesis aims to explore the exertion, appropriation, and repossession of suffering within the extensive dimension of trans discourse.

Stryker and Bettcher (2016) in “Transgender Studies Quarterly” provide an elementary introduction to several foundations across the range of prominent feminist movements. This assortment of feminist nuances includes black feminism, lesbian feminism, queer theory, and transfeminism. However, radical feminist movements that oppose the inclusion of trans people within feminist organizations are also momentarily detailed. Stryker and Bettcher (2016) assert that principles of trans exclusionary feminism observe transgender identity as “an ideological smokescreen that masks the persistence of male supremacy and oppression of women by men” (p. 6). This masked oppression entails that trans people “serve only as tools or victims of a patriarchal

conspiracy to destroy feminism and harm girls and women” (Stryker & Bettcher, 2016, p. 7).

This category of feminism adopts an understanding of gender rooted in biological essentialism and rejects any notion of trans identity. Trans exclusionary feminism embodies a binary comprehension of gender that reinforces 'woman' and 'man' as fixed and static concepts. Due to this perception of gender being changeless and passive, trans people subsequently become demonized as harmful conspirators. Trans women become observed as men in women disguises who interfere with feminist structures, and trans men become recognized as women who have abandoned the feminist movement.

However, while Stryker and Bettcher (2016) detailed feminists who diminish trans people as intruders and turncoats, this thesis examines if there are trans people who embrace a similar ideology. Any remarks of trans people who exclude other trans people based on a related narrative of assorted representatives wearing disguises for harmful purposes are absent in this introduction to feminism. Some trans people might adopt a similar notion of biological essentialism, namely an arrangement which separates the 'real' trans people from the 'fake' trans people. This arrangement would then be determinant on physical characteristics similar to how trans exclusionary feminists reject trans people because of their transitioning bodies.

Ethical Considerations

Moreno et al. (2013), in an article incorporated in “Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking,” detail several elementary ethical concerns and common risks involved in online examinations conducted through social media websites. This thesis concentrates on their section dedicated to observational research. Moreno et al. (2013) assert that “A key issue in considering observational research using social media is whether the proposed project meets the criteria as human subjects research” (p. 709). Moreno et al. (2013) continue to specify research conditions that do not legislate human subjects research. These conditions entail “access to the SMW¹ is public; information is identifiable, but not private; . . . information gathering requires no interaction with the person who posted it online” (Moreno et al., 2013, p. 709). If the research worker satisfies these conditions in their study, “then presumably the proposed project does not constitute the human subjects research” (Moreno et al., 2013, p. 709).

Some social media entries might require the user to gain explicit authorization from the original social media entry author to access. The material of this thesis consists of social media entries that do not require explicit permission to access. Neither do they necessitate any user or moderator invitation or any paid or free user registration to view, display, or analyze. In other

1 Social media website.

words, the discourse analyst of this thesis has not been in contact with the original social media entry authors. Namely, the authors of the social media content submitted and reviewed in this thesis's analysis section. Neither would any communication with them been necessary to gather the material for this thesis to analyze. The material of this thesis has been readily accessible for review analogous to assorted chargeless online news articles.

Regarding privacy rules, Moreno et al. (2013) claim that “A reasonable expectation of privacy for an SMW user . . . [consists] of a combination of *the intent of the Website* [emphasis added] as well as the Website's explicit statement of privacy rules” (p. 710). The official Medium 'About' page declares the intention and purpose of their online publishing website. It claims, “[We are] an open platform where 170 million readers come to find insightful and dynamic thinking” (Every idea needs a Medium, n.d., para. 1). It adds, “Our purpose is to spread these ideas and deepen understanding of the world” (Every idea needs a Medium, n.d., para. 1). Their official 'Privacy Policy' correspondingly declares that their establishment “have operations and service providers in the United States and other countries” (Medium Privacy Policy, 2020, para. 44). It adds, “[Medium] and our service providers may transfer your personal information to, or store or access it in, [diversified] jurisdictions” (Medium Privacy Policy, 2020, para. 44). These might include “jurisdictions that may not provide levels of data protection that are equivalent to those of your home jurisdiction” (Medium Privacy Policy, 2020, para. 44).

The official 'Reddit User Agreement' declares that “When Your Content is . . . submitted to the Services, you grant us a worldwide, . . . sublicensable license” (Reddit User Agreement, 2020, para. 20). This license includes “to use, copy, . . . prepare derivative works of, . . . and display Your Content and any name, username, . . . provided in connection with Your Content” (Reddit User Agreement, 2020, para. 20). Their official 'Privacy Policy' correspondingly claims that “Much of the information on the Services is public and accessible to everyone, *even without an account* [emphasis added]. By using the Services, [the clients] are directing us to share this information publicly and freely” (Reddit Privacy Policy, 2020, para. 34). In other words, both Reddit and Medium have explicitly stated in their respective privacy policies that social media posts submitted on their separate social media platforms are subject to be reviewed by everyone inside and outside the United States.

Theoretical Frameworks

This section introduces three academic foundations applied as the theoretical frameworks for this thesis. These groundworks will administer the chosen methodology, the critical discourse analysis, throughout the study. The theoretical frameworks for this thesis consist of trans studies,

transfeminism, and queer theory.

Trans studies.

Trans studies encompass a field within gender studies that embody the academic disciplinary study regarding sex and gender intersections. It involves the continuous undertaking of undoing gender binarism through analyzing the situating of trans bodies within abundant cultural contexts and lived experiences. The field of trans studies additionally criticizes rhetorics sanctioned by archaic misinterpretations of trans bodies that threaten to remove assorted human rights for everyone. This framework is imperative to this thesis due to the essentializing connotations of transmedicalism and its consolidation of gender binarism. Transmedicalism also appropriates psychiatric and medical rhetorics that restrain rather than liberate diversified representations of trans bodies. This prohibiting outlook towards trans bodies consequently locates transmedicalism in opposition to trans studies, further emphasizing the significance of trans studies for this thesis.

The introduction article by Susan Stryker and Paisley Currah (2014) in “Transgender Studies Quarterly” provides an elementary introduction to trans studies. Stryker and Currah (2014) claim that “Transgender studies, . . . is to the medico-judicial and psychotherapeutic management of transgender phenomena what performance studies [are] to performance” (p. 4). They add that “it draws upon the powerful contestations of normative knowledge that emerged over . . . the twentieth century . . . and identity-based critiques of dominant cultural practices emanating from feminism” (Stryker & Currah, 2014, p. 4). In other words, trans studies aim to provide mediations of both historical and contemporary knowledge productions regarding trans lived experiences. They assert that “As historically new possibilities for gender self-perception and expression emerge, . . . transgender studies appears an increasingly vital way of [understanding] . . . the world we live in” (Stryker & Currah, 2014, p. 5).

An article by Talia Bettcher and Ann Garry (2009) in “Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy” clarifies some of the interactions and contrasts between established feminism and trans studies. Bettcher and Garry (2009) assert that “trans studies aims to open up a way of theorizing 'trans' . . . that ideally resists, rather than reinforces, mechanisms of transphobia” (p. 1). They add that “trans oppression may be [made clear] in terms of the gender binary and the notion that the categories 'man' and 'woman' are both socially constructed and oppressive” (Bettcher & Garry, 2009, p. 3). Established feminism and trans studies consequently intersect in their criticisms of the gender binary, which is a social construct often employed to uphold sexist and transphobic perceptions.

Bettcher and Garry (2009) claim that trans studies and established feminist critique of

sexism intersect in two primary approaches. The first one entails that “trans women are well acquainted with the mechanisms of sexism and sexual violence . . . precisely because trans women are recognized 'as women'” (Bettcher & Garry, 2009, p. 4). The second intersection involves that “Many [trans men] have experienced sexist oppression and violence both before the transition and also after [transition]” (Bettcher & Garry, 2009, p. 5). However, due to these intersections, there is a possibility that established feminism and trans studies could obscure one another. Bettcher and Garry (2009) claim that “the fraught history between feminist and trans studies/politics suggests the value in viewing the two as distinct” (p. 5). They add that “both trans studies and feminism inevitably place some priority on gender, . . . such endeavors may inherently marginalize other forms of oppression” (Bettcher & Garry, 2009, p. 5).

Stone (2006), in her essay “The Empire Strikes Back: A Posttranssexual Manifesto,” criticizes traditional notions of gender. As disclosed in the Literature Review section of this thesis, Stone (2006) completed her essay in 1987. However, contemporary academic journals such as “Transgender Studies Quarterly” by Stryker and Bettcher (2016) have since then credited the essay by Stone (2006) for establishing some of the foundations of trans studies. Stryker and Bettcher (2016) assert that “Stone's manifesto integrated many . . . strands of feminist, queer, and trans analysis into a . . . conceptual tool kit that remains vital for the field today” (p. 10). This circumstance affirms its continued relevance for trans studies. Stone (2006) upholds that transsexualism and notions such as trans people being born in the 'wrong body' are outdated narratives. She asserts that “transsexuals commonly blur the distinction [between sex and gender] by confusing the performative character of gender with the physical 'fact' of sex, referring to . . . their situation as being in the 'wrong body'” (Stone, 2006, p. 222). She argues that academic reviews of trans lived experiences need new approaches that extend trans people from the narrow chronology of transsexualism. Stone (2006) outlines this process in the following quote:

To foreground the practices of inscription and reading which are part of this deliberate invocation of dissonance, I suggest constituting 'transsexuals' [emphasis added] not as a class or problematic “third gender,” but . . . as a 'genre' – a set of embodied texts whose potential for 'productive' disruption of structured sexualities and spectra of desire has yet to be explored. . . . [To] effect this, the genre of visible 'transsexuals' [emphasis added] must grow by recruiting members from the class of invisible ones, from those who have disappeared into their “plausible histories.” (Stone, 2006, p. 231)

Trans studies aspire to liberate trans people from simplified narratives such as 'wrong body' and diversify the available trans lived experiences within scholarly studies. Stone (2006) determines that “white male medical practice, the rage of radical feminist theories and the chaos of lived gendered experience [meet] on the battlefield of the transsexual body: a hotly contested site of

cultural [inscriptions]” (p. 230). Trans studies aim to navigate this battlefield and ensure that trans people remain autonomous from any double binds between these epistemologies.

Transfeminism.

Transfeminism is primarily a movement for individuality and self-definition for cross-gender identities without the dismay of physical or social retaliation engendered by rigid gender hierarchies. This endeavor for individual autonomy involves body positivity by celebrating body diversity and freedom of gender expression. Transfeminism is consequently critical of any notions of bodily ideals and their orderly eviction of 'nonconforming' bodies and gender expressions. Transmedicalism primarily maintains a gender hierarchy by upholding binary bodily ideals, including binary ideals of gender expressions, which establishes transfeminism as a crucial framework for this thesis. These comprehensive qualities of transfeminism situate this framework as a complementary foundation to trans studies.

Stryker and Bettcher (2016) in “Transgender Studies Quarterly” outlines how transfeminism is imperative to maintain the safety of trans lives in the face of contemporary antitrans discourse. Stryker and Bettcher (2016) declare that “Simply put, we understand there to be a relationship between antitransgender scholarship and the concrete manifestation of [antitrans] politics” (p. 6). Analogous to trans studies, transfeminism is an educational movement that responds to assorted literacies and their real-life political ramifications that subdue trans people. Stryker and Bettcher (2016) argue that “Rather than fighting a battle on the same terrain . . . we should [review] the battle lines within a far richer and more complicated world history of trans/feminist engagement” (p. 7). They add that “intersectional feminism raised the question of whether 'woman' itself was a sufficient analytical category capable of accounting for the various forms of oppression that women can experience” (Stryker & Bettcher, 2016, p. 8). Established feminism consequently has a history of criticizing the traditional cultural assumptions of women. This criticism is the intersection between these theories where transfeminism can strengthen numerous contentions of established feminism.

An essay authored by Emi Koyama (2020) titled “The Transfeminist Manifesto” summarizes the elementary foundations of transfeminism. The essay, initially written in 2001, is approximately 20 years old as of writing this thesis. However, it still laid the cornerstones of transfeminism. Contemporary academic journals such as “Transgender Studies Quarterly” by Stryker and Bettcher (2016) credits Koyama (2020) for coining the term 'transfeminism' with The Transfeminist Manifesto. The edited volume titled “Feminist Theory Reader: Local and Global Perspectives” by McCann et al. (2020) has since then reintroduced “The Transfeminist Manifesto”

in 2020. These acknowledgments emphasize the transfeminist significance of Koyama's (2020) essay for this framework. Koyama (2020) claims that “‘Transfeminism' is primarily a movement by and for trans women who view their liberation . . . [as] intrinsically linked to the [freedom] of all women” (Introduction section, para. 4). She adds that “‘Transfeminism' is not about taking over existing feminist institutions. Instead, it extends and advances feminism as a whole” (Koyama, 2020, Introduction section, para. 5). Transfeminism is consequently not a transformation of established feminism but a continuation of feminist groundwork. This continuation entails the bodily autonomy of all women that could develop through narratives of trans lived experiences.

Koyama (2020) asserts that “nobody shall [become] coerced into or out of personal decisions regarding . . . gender identity or expression to be a 'real' woman or a 'real' man” (Primary Principles section, para. 3). She adds that “‘transfeminism' confronts social and political institutions that inhibit or narrow our individual choices” (Koyama, 2020, Primary Principles section, para. 5). The autonomy that transfeminism aims for entails freedom of gender identity and expressions for trans and cisgender individuals. Narratives that reinforce notions of 'authentic' masculine or feminine presentations are consequently obstacles to transfeminism. However, the infrastructures that uphold these narratives are often jurisdictional, which situates transfeminism as a political movement. Koyama (2020) concludes that “it is futile to debate [intelligently] who is . . . included in the category 'women': we must act, now, and build alliances” (Call for Action section, para. 1).

Leslie Feinberg (2006), in a chapter of the edited volume “The Transgender Studies Reader,” outlines how trans people have become systematically oppressed throughout history due to segregating language. The segment originates from her book “Transgender Liberation” written in 1992, and The Transgender Studies Reader reintroduced this chapter in 2006. Stryker (2006) credits Feinberg (2006) for establishing the contemporary connotations of the term 'transgender' with Transgender Liberation. She adds, “[the book] has gradually won new civil and human rights for transgender people, and has influenced the tenor of public debate on transgender issues for more than a decade” (Stryker, 2006, p. 4).

Feinberg (2006) asserts that “[Transgender] roles are . . . seen – most frequently as 'comedy' – on television and in film, theater, literature, dance, and music” (p. 218). She adds, “But the social penalties for [transgender] people who try to live and work in dignity and respect are still cruel and frequently violent” (Feinberg, 2006, p. 218). Feinberg (2006) calls for “Genuine bonds of solidarity . . . between people *who respect each other's differences* [emphasis added] and are willing to fight their enemy together. We are the class that does the work of the [public] and can revolutionize it” (p. 220). This statement underlines that diverse gender expressions and identities are advantageous for trans liberation. Any narrative that seeks to appropriate specific differences

between trans people and weaponize that against them are adversaries to their autonomy.

Queer theory.

Queer theory is a field of thoughtful evaluation of gender and sexuality categories within society and culture. It pointedly confronts the essentialization of heterosexuality and deconstructs its coercive power structure as a 'natural' category of sexuality. Queer theory upholds that any notions of essential gender expression and 'normal' sexuality are comprehensively socially constructed. Transmedicalism, on the other hand, embodies essentializing ideas through maintaining gender binarism in addition to upholding ideals concerning transgender physical bodies. In this regard, queer theory is complementary to trans studies, transfeminism, and this thesis's chosen methodology. The theoretical framework of queer theory will be decisive for this thesis to undermine and deconstruct the essentializing narratives of transmedicalism.

Annamarie Jagose (1996), in a book titled “Queer Theory: An Introduction,” provides an elementary preface to queer theory. Jagose (1996) asserts that “queer describes . . . gestures or analytical models which [dramatize variations] in the allegedly stable relations between chromosomal sex, [gender,] and sexual desire” (p. 3). She adds that “queer [theory] locates and exploits the [diversity] in . . . terms which [stabilize] heterosexuality. Demonstrating the impossibility of any 'natural' sexuality, it calls into question even such . . . terms as 'man' and 'woman'” (Jagose, 1996, p. 3). In other words, queer theory is an analytical subversion of traditional understandings of gender and assorted sex characteristics, including but not limited to heterosexuality and binary assumptions of gender and sexuality. Queer theory additionally involves comprehensive deconstructions concerning any notions of 'natural' sex and gender characteristics. This dissection of essentializing rhetoric primarily entails a critical review of the situating of multifold bodies. Namely, which bodies become sanctioned as 'natural' and which remaining bodies accordingly become stigmatized as artificial, perverse, and abnormal.

An article by Michael Warner (1991) in “Social Text” outlines the political activism involved with queer theory and how prior social theory has failed to augment diversified marginalized voices. Warner (1991) maintains that “Social theory . . . for the past century has returned continually to the question of sexuality, . . . and with an endless capacity to marginalize queer sexuality in its descriptions of the social world” (p. 4). In this regard, queer theory can provide critical understandings of the social construction of diversified bodies and sexualities that traditional social theory often overlooks.

Warner (1991) clarifies that “queer self-understanding knows . . . that her [reprimand] is [tangled] with gender, . . . the state, . . . reproductive politics, . . . and deep cultural norms about the

bearings of the body” (p. 6). He adds, “Because the logic of the sexual order is so deeply embedded by . . . an indescribably wide range of social institutions, . . . queer struggles aim . . . at challenging those institutions and accounts” (Warner, 1991, p. 6). He concludes that “heterosexual privilege lies in heterosexual culture's exclusive ability to interpret itself as society” (Warner, 1991, p. 8). The appropriation of heterosexuality as a legislative foundation to obscure any gender difference outside of heterosexuality is what queer theory seeks to deconstruct. To establish heterosexuality as synonymous to society and civilization is analogous to situating heterosexuality as identical to civility and mental well-being. However, prejudices arise when gender differences outside of heterosexuality remain abandoned from partaking in this privilege.

Judith Butler (1988) in “Theatre Journal” details how a theatrical framework of gender can illuminate how public sanctions regarding gender presentations perpetuates gender essentialism. Butler (1988) claims that “gender is . . . rehearsed, much as a script survives the particular actors . . . but which requires individual actors . . . to be actualized and reproduced as reality once again” (p. 526). She adds, “just as the play requires both [script] and interpretation, so the gendered body acts its part in a culturally restricted corporeal space” (Butler, 1988, p. 526). While rigid body ideals beleaguer the publically sanctioned 'scripts' granted to us, it still is within our power to reinterpret these scripts and seize the production of gender expression.

Butler (1988) maintains that “although theatrical performances can meet with political censorship and . . . criticism, gender performances in non-theatrical contexts [become] governed by . . . [disciplinary] social conventions” (p. 527). She adds, “Indeed, the sight of a transvestite onstage can compel pleasure and applause while the sight of the same transvestite on the . . . bus can compel fear, rage, even violence” (Butler, 1988, p. 527). The regulation regarding the representation of diversified bodies entails limiting these bodies to specific stages or social platforms. Gender expressions consequently come into play in the scene of physical representation; it becomes a dialectical performance between bodies that 'blend in' and bodies that renounce the status quo of conforming.

Butler (1988) claims that “certain kinds of acts are [generally] interpreted as expressive of a gender core or identity, and . . . these acts either conform to an expected gender identity or contest that expectation in some way” (Butler, 1988, p. 527). She concludes, “that culture so readily punishes . . . those who fail to perform the illusion of gender essentialism should be a sign . . . that the truth or falsity of gender is only socially compelled” (Butler, 1988, p. 528). Our given cultural doctrines are what sanctions whichever gendered scripts are accessible, and queer theory aims to expand the number of available scripts for everyone. To realize this, 'queer theory' seeks to liberate vilified bodies from alienation and dismantle the essentializing perception of specific bodies as

natural.

Analysis

The following analysis incorporates four sections that review four distinct and intertwined discourses that often materialize in dialectical exchanges with transmedicalism. These discourses consist of genetic principles, sex organs, nonbinary trans people, and gender dysphoria. They intersect regarding how transmedicalism continuously appropriates contemporary and archaic medico-legal interpretations of trans as subjects of analysis. These prescribed notions of trans bodies and their respective trans lived experiences consequently engender significant 'ripples' across assorted trans subject matters. Each section initiates with a deconstruction of designated transmedicalist notions and concludes with a CDA of the dialectical backdrop that possibly engenders respective transmedicalist interpretations of trans. The first discourse entails that trans characteristics allegedly are hereditary and that genetics could legislate trans identities. The second one involves sex organs, namely that our given positive or negative dispositions towards our sex organs would be the principle that determines a trans person. The third one concerns that nonbinary trans people supposedly invalidate binary trans people and that excluding the former from trans spaces would bolster the movement for trans autonomy. The final discourse entails gender dysphoria and whether or not an official medico-legal diagnosis of gender dysphoria is required to distinguish 'real' transgender individuals.

Trans as a genetic paradigm.

A blog post by Dana Pham (2019b) on Medium titled “Why I'm a transmedicalist, a truscum” provides an initial viewpoint on transmedicalism. The blog post summarizes how medicinal interpretations of trans have guided Pham (2019b) throughout her youth. She correspondingly advocates a more peaceful trans movement through this transnormative notion. Pham (2019a; 2019b) is a roman catholic Vietnamese-Australian lesbian trans woman who has a background in bioethics and has regularly published articles on Medium since April 7, 2019. The topics she covers entail subject matters such as religious freedom, environmental issues in Australia, moralities of pregnancy abortions, nonbinary trans people and pronouns, gender detransitioning, and genetic factors of transsexuality.

Pham (2019b) asserts that “[I have] been a transmedicalist since I figured out that [I am] transsexual MtF¹ in circa 2002, as a 14-year-old” (para. 2). Pham (2019b) clarifies, “And why not? It was the only logical way for me to make sense of my gender identity during those times” (para.

1 Male-to-Female.

2). Pham (2019b) adds that “the science of being transgender, including . . . the medicine of gender dysphoria, provides the most compelling case to society for why transgender people are genuine and valid” (para. 3). She concludes that “I genuinely want to understand why society . . . should accept gender self-identification as a compelling case, with or without the science and medicine” (Pham, 2019b, para. 4). To clarify what she means by 'the science of being transgender,' Pham (2019b) refers to another blog post written by her titled “Gender Wars? What Gender Wars?”. In this blog post, Pham (2019a) notably details a biological perspective regarding alleged transgender prerequisites. More specifically, this perspective embraces a distinct outlook situated in genetics. Pham (2019a) outlines her biological viewpoint of trans in the following quote:

There is also a piece of *preliminary genetic research* [emphasis added] recently which [indicates] that “certain 'versions' of 12 different genes were [substantially] overrepresented in transgender women”. One study [issued] a few years ago . . . found that when one twin is transgender 40% of the time, the other twin is too, which is genetically significant. There are even case reports of twins raised apart and both coming out as trans. As such, the following should not come as a surprise: 1. *The David Reimer case* [emphasis added]. 2. Gender is not a social construct. (Pham, 2019a, paras. 16-18)

Gender and being transgender is, according to this perception, an inherent trait granted at birth that is also measurable through relative probability theory. This essentializing notion situates trans as a 'fixed' and 'static' concept sanctioned as a hereditary biological concern rather than a cognitive matter. In other words, the notions presented by Pham (2019a) have already established how transmedicalist interpretation of trans clashes with this thesis's recognition of trans. As outlined in the Introduction section, this thesis embraces a similar understanding of trans as Stryker et al. (2008) have detailed the umbrella term. They assert that “neither '-gender' nor any of the other suffixes of 'trans-' can be understood in isolation . . . the lines implied by the very concept of 'trans-' are moving targets, simultaneously composed of multiple determinants” (Stryker et al., 2008, p. 13). Pham's (2019a; 2019b) rigid and stagnant perception of trans ultimately clashes with the more flexible and boundless idea of trans suggested by Stryker et al. (2008). The latter advocates that trans is a continually transforming notion that is continuously deconstructed and reinvented by numerous social and cultural elements and not fixed by a singular doctrinaire essence.

However, it is unclear how the tragic case of David Reimer explicitly relates to what Pham (2019a) previously has contended. This analysis will briefly summarize what the Reimer case entails to outline a better understanding of Pham's (2019a) claims. Elaine Woo (2004) of Los Angeles Times writes, “At [eight] months of age, Reimer became the unwitting subject of 'sex reassignment', . . . after [the ruin of] his penis . . . during a botched circumcision” (para. 2). Woo (2004) adds that “The American doctor whose advice [his parents] sought recommended that their

son be castrated, given hormone treatments and raised as a girl” (para. 2). David Reimer consequently endured a difficult life since he was subject to a non-consensual sex reassignment surgery. An eight-month-old child, who certainly can not even read or speak, can not consent to such life-changing medical procedures. However, sexual reassignment surgery among trans children is an incredibly contentious subject matter worthy of an entirely independent thesis in itself, and further contemplation on this topic will not occur in this thesis. In any case, David continually questioned his gender identity, namely his nomination as a girl, throughout his youth. His parents did not inform him that he was born with a penis until he turned 14. Even though David tried to correct this error through hormone replacement therapy with testosterone, his troubled life eventually engendered him to take his own life at age 38.

Pham (2019a) seems to ignore the circumstance that the Reimer case occurred during the 1970s, namely long before the formation of trans studies or literature works of Judith Butler (1988). It is apparent that the parents of David and the doctors who examined him still were embroiled in essentialist notions such as 'sex organs amount to gender identity.' They seemingly believed that a surgical procedure on his sex organs would completely rewrite his mind. This warped perception of gender identity is what trans studies and transfeminism seek to deconstruct and abolish.

The concept of trans was also still relatively unusual and exotic within health care environments during the 1970s. It is possible that the doctors, who supervised the enforced transition of David, were so preoccupied with whether or not they could that they did not stop to think if they should. Being the 'first' doctor to provide substantial testimony of gender socialization would certainly accumulate notable prestige during the 1970s. Woo (2004) writes, “The physician, Dr. John Money, supervised the case for several years and eventually wrote a paper declaring the success of the gender conversion” (para. 2). Woo (2004) adds that “Money touted his success with [David's] gender conversion in a speech to the American Assn. for the Advancement of Science in Washington, D.C.” (para. 17). She reveals that “The scientists in attendance recognized the significance of the case as readily as Money had years earlier” (Woo, 2004, para. 17).

While the David Reimer case is problematic in many regards, it also highlighted how the transnormative health care environments during the 1970s perceived trans people as mere research subjects. The case accentuates how trans people become exploited for personal gain and how these transphobic notions also affect cisgender people. Without a doubt, if a similar case were to occur in a contemporary setting, it would cause an even more heated dialectical commotion than the Reimer case ever did.

Pham (2019a) seems to argue that the notion of 'gender is a social construct' induced the David Reimer case and that a biological approach situated within genetics might have prevented

this tragedy. Pham (2019a) continues to write, “the next time you hear the argument that '60-90% of children will naturally grow out of it', [it is] because that 60-90% [were not] trans to begin with” (para. 22). She adds that “In fact, many of these 60-90% [children] are [LGBQIA] in some way, . . . just not T” (Pham, 2019a, para. 22). She concludes that “The 10-40% [do not] deserve to be forgotten – they deserve gender identity presentation alignment as appropriate, not [a] denial of transition treatment” (Pham, 2019a, para. 23).

While Pham (2019a) voices good intentions for trans people, this rigid and transnormative system to separate the 'true' trans people from the 'disoriented others' is quite alarming. These 'others' would allegedly consist of confused gay, bisexual, queer, intersex, and asexual people who seemingly became 'mixed up' as trans. As already detailed in the Literature Review section of this thesis, trans people have a significant history as subjects of having their gender identities policed and gatekept. It is then a touch outlandish that trans people should subscribe to a system primarily constructed by cisgender people that have continuously failed trans people.

How do we then clarify and organize the countless trans people of the past who were subject to treatment rejection? Were the medical practitioners at the time justified in rejecting medical care for trans people due to the lack of equipment to examine their genetics? Or are these genetics easily identifiable through the naked eye since they embody distinct visual characteristics? Do we recognize a trans person through the measurement of their skull, nose, and lips? If that is the case, we might be treading dangerously close to a transphobic rendition of archaic scientific racism. If these genetics are not easily identifiable through the naked eye, then being trans certainly must already be removed from genetics. If so, then being trans is subsequently not anchored to specific visual presentations. If transgender images are not attached to certain aesthetical doctrines, does it not open the opportunity to reevaluate gender? If transgender representation can subvert traditional notions of gender, then gender certainly must be a social construct.

However, to effectively subvert gender, we must encourage diversified images of trans people to come into the social light rather than engender them to remain underground. Determining who is 'truly' trans based on a framework situated within genetics would most likely achieve the opposite of expanding trans representation. Genetics can be frightening since they can sometimes outline alarming consequences for one's future health. According to the American Cancer Society, “The most common cause of hereditary breast cancer is an inherited mutation in the 'BRCA1' or 'BRCA2' gene” (Breast Cancer, 2019, para. 10). The ACS¹ is, according to an entry on Wikipedia, “a nationwide voluntary health organization dedicated to eliminating cancer” (“American Cancer Society,” 2021, para. 1). It adds, “Established in 1913, the society . . . [embodies] six geographical

1 American Cancer Society.

regions of both medical and lay volunteers operating in more than 250 Regional offices throughout the United States” (“American Cancer Society,” 2021, para. 1).

Being transgender is, of course, not a disease and not comparable with ailments such as cancer. However, it could still be disheartening for anyone to hear whether their body is 'destined' to transition or not. These notions could engender the impression that individual bodily choice is trivial compared to genetics granted at birth, which could frighten both cisgender and trans people alike. Assorted transphobic enthusiasts might also weaponize this narrative against trans people and argue it is a testimony of transgender being a disease that only plagues cisgender people. Namely that trans people supposedly do not exist and that 'trans' would be merely a mental illness that infrequently beleaguers a handful of confused cisgender people. The trans dialogue has once again submerged into the essentializing minefield of whether or not transgender is a disease and consequently has backpedaled several decades. This minefield is the same predicament trans studies and transfeminism are still trying to navigate even today.

Pham (2019b) continues to ask, “But how do we as trans people build a bridge with society at large?” (para. 9). She adds that “What bothers me is trans activists taking little to no interest in building a bridge, and not respecting freedom of speech” (Pham, 2019b, para. 9). She concludes that “Pronoun policing . . . burns bridges, and I [do not] want to live in a society where bridges burn” (Pham, 2019b, para. 9). It is unclear whom Pham (2019b) expects trans people to build bridges with, namely bridges that would seemingly improve our living conditions. However, since trans activism has a significant history regarding critique against medical gatekeeping, this thesis will presume it is the medical care sphere she is referring to. What is clear is that Pham (2019b) considers trans activists as disruptive in building bridges with cisgender people. These viewpoints, similarly embraced by trans-exclusionary feminists, claim that trans activists allegedly cause more harm than good for everyone involved.

How do we then ensure that this bridge does not lead to even more pitfalls for trans people? Is it worthwhile to build a bridge that leads directly into the mouth of a volcano? Who will become the gatekeeper of this bridge, and which trans people are allowed to cross it? Who will ultimately have the strength to cross this bridge, and what shall we do with the trans people who do not have the tenacity anymore? If simple pronoun correcting antagonizes the people on the other side, is it worthwhile to build bridges with them? What about the people who put no effort into building bridges with us, should trans people continue to carry their burden? If so, what tools are granted to us if we attempt to assemble this bridge, and will the blame fall on us if the bridge becomes inadequate? Freedom of speech is yet another minefield since it generally functions like a double-edged sword within trans discourse. Opponents of trans liberation regularly utilize freedom of

speech as a shield to justify misgendering trans people. When criticized for doing so, they accordingly claim that identity politics is antithetical to freedom of speech. Meanwhile, almost no one considers the freedom of speech for trans people to self-identify, namely their freedom to embrace the gender identity they find harmonious.

On January 20, 2021, the United States president, Joe Biden (2021), signed an executive order to prevent prejudice towards assorted gender identities and sexual orientations. The executive order affirms that “Children should be able to learn without worrying about whether they will [become] denied access to the restroom, the locker room, or school sports” (Biden, 2021, para. 2). It adds, “All persons should receive equal treatment under the law, no matter their gender identity or sexual orientation” (Biden, 2021, para. 2). On January 21, 2021, the very next day, Greg Steube, a Republican United States representative for Florida's 17th congressional district, reintroduced the “Protection of Women and Girls in Sports Act” house bill (2021). Steube asserts, in a press release regarding this bill, that “By forcing biological female athletes to compete against biological male athletes in competitive sports, we are taking away women's opportunities on and off the field” (Greg Steube Florida's 17th district, 2021, para. 2).

On February 2, 2021, the American newspaper “The Wall Street Journal” published an opinion series incorporating variegated responses to Biden's (2021) executive order. These responses consist of assorted comments from university students across the United States. Torin Christensen, a psychology student at Southern Virginia University, claims that “Nobody can seriously argue that [the matter of] biological males playing in girls' sports is remotely fair” (Joe Biden's New Trans Policy, 2021, para. 3). Sarah Weaver, a political philosophy student at Hillsdale College, had a similar response in the same opinion series. Weaver asserts that “As for high-school sports, allowing biological males to compete with girls will make a mockery of fair play and equal opportunity” (Joe Biden's New Trans Policy, 2021, para. 8).

The very next day, on February 3, 2021, Republican United States Senator Rand Paul, during a confirmation hearing at HELP¹, denounced transgender equality in high school sports. Paul contends that “Are we all gonna be OK with hulking six-foot-four guys, you know, wrestling against girls doing- You know, it just makes no sense whatsoever and . . . you seem to be afraid to answer the question” (Bollinger, 2021b, para. 15). On February 11, 2021, the American news website “CNSNews” published an opinion piece written by Tony Perkins (2021), a United States Republican appointed as a commissioner on the USCIRF². Perkins (2021) criticized Biden's (2021) executive order and contends that “at the end of the day, this isn't just about track meets and tennis

1 United States Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions.

2 United States Commission on International Religious Freedom.

matches. It's about fighting back against an effort to deconstruct human sexuality, morality -- and with it, Western civilization” (Perkins, 2021, para. 18).

On February 25, 2021, the British newspaper “Daily Mail” published an article where Alanna Smith, a Connecticut high school track athlete, expressed her discontent with Biden's (2021) decision. Smith asserts that “We train for so many days a week, so many hours to be the best in our state and the best in our [region,] and these biological males are just taking it away [from] us” (Schrader, 2021, para. 7). On February 28, 2021, the former Republican president of the United States, Donald Trump, denounced the executive order during a CPAC¹ speech in Orlando, Florida. Trump claims that “Young girls and women are incensed that they are now . . . forced to compete against those who are biological males” (Vlomis, 2021, para. 5). Trump adds, “I think it's crazy. I think it's crazy what's happening. We must protect the integrity of women's sports. It's so important. We have to” (Bollinger, 2021c, para. 11).

On March 2, 2021, the American cable news television channel “Fox News” published an opinion piece written by Roger Marshall (2021), a Republican United States senator, who rebuked Biden's (2021) decision. Marshall (2021) asserts that “I find it unfair and quite frankly un-American that this new administration is allowing biological boys to compete against biological girls in sports” (para. 8). On March 4, 2021, the American magazine “People” reported that “A bill banning transgender athletes from competing on girls' and women's high school and college sports teams has passed in the Mississippi state Senate and House” (Mississippi State House, 2021, para. 1). Tate Reeves, the governor of Mississippi, correspondingly declared that he is “so disappointed over President Biden's actions to force young girls like them to compete with biological males for access to athletics” (Mississippi State House, 2021, para. 10).

It is imperative to notice at this moment that Biden's (2021) executive order barely even mentions trans people. The only time it acknowledges trans people is within the fourth paragraph. It states, “For example, transgender Black Americans face unconscionably high levels of workplace discrimination, homelessness, and violence, including fatal violence” (Biden 2021, para. 4). In other words, the executive order highlights black transgender Americans specifically as an example of how discrimination based on gender identity and race categories can have intersecting consequences. Biden's (2021) executive order is consequently not exclusively predetermined for trans women, trans men, or non-binary people across the United States. The design of the order is to protect cisgender women and cisgender men as well. The intention is to protect everyone, regardless of their racial, sexual, or gender background, from discrimination based on gender identity and sexual orientation. However, this did not prevent Republican representatives across the United

1 Conservative Political Action Conference.

States to immediately and collectively single out 'biological males' as the forefront concern of Biden's (2021) executive order.

There is a recontextualization conducted here by assorted U.S. conservative politicians and media. Instead of this relatively tranquil and safeguarding endeavor of the Biden administration, U.S. republicans strive to situate the executive order as an “un-American” encroachment upon women's spaces that allegedly “forces” women to a circumstance without their consent. In some assessments, they even entirely omitted the term “women” and recontextualized women as “girls” in juxtaposition with “biological males” as if the executive order would allow adult trans women to coexist with minor girls within nonpublic women's spaces. Biden's (2021) decision would allegedly create a social setting where the public welcomes “hulking six-foot-four guys” to girls' environments “doing- You know.”

According to U.S. republican representatives, Biden's (2021) decision is also so crushing and uncompromising that it positions republican jurisdiction as entirely helpless in the confrontation of this executive order. Consequently, an undisclosed “we” must unitedly collaborate to guard and preserve women's spaces and “Western civilization” along with it. There are two distinct reasons as to why 'biological males' suddenly became U.S. republicans rallying cry. Obviously, 'biological males' sounds more intimidating than, for example, 'boys' or 'young men,' and this is a scare tactic meant to provoke and invite stronger reactions among the public.

However, more importantly, it also connects to the transphobic essentialization of trans people. Their narrative of 'biological males' is their approach to recontextualize trans women, namely to 'make sense' of trans women for both themselves and other assorted opponents of trans autonomy. To acknowledge trans women as 'trans women' would be analogous to validate trans women as 'women,' which is an act U.S. republicans obviously would find antithetical to their principles. It would also be inconclusive to call trans women 'males' or even 'men' in this context since it could give the impression that U.S. republicans are addressing trans men and consequently validating trans men as men. The latter example additionally exemplifies the possibility of limited confusion unless specific terminology is applied. In other words, it demonstrates how gender ultimately is socially constructed primarily through language in addition to how the public recognizes language, which is something U.S. republicans certainly wish to avoid, and that is why they employ 'biological' as an adnoun in this context. This rhetoric of situating trans women as 'biological males' is consequently their approach, along with other assorted opponents of trans autonomy, to fix and constrain specific trans subject matters within a discourse where the foundation generally amounts to a no-win situation for trans people.

Transmedicalism and its inclination to deliberate on assorted trans subject matters within a

biological framework is ultimately an effort by trans people to assemble trans autonomy within a limited discourse administered to us by variegated conservative media and politicians. It is an endeavor to entertain these archaic notions of gender and consequently gratify those who embody the power to recontextualize trans people. However, this discourse does not benefit trans people in any regard. It is veritably an asset for assorted opponents to distinguish the 'proper' trans people who are manageable from the 'unsuitable' trans people who stray from conformity. In other words, trans people who interpret trans within a genetic paradigm and trans people who acknowledge gender as constructed through diversified social interactions, respectively.

The police of sex organs.

To examine if these contentions presented by Pham (2019a; 2019b) correlate with other observations on transmedicalism, I will now review a selection of discussion websites dedicated to this concept. A subreddit known as “r/Transmedical” provides a preface post titled “r/Transmedicalist Information” that details what their outlook on trans identities entails. The subreddit has, as of December 10, 2020, over 2200 members. The preface post correspondingly has 45 upvotes and a total upvote percentage rating of 93%. The author of this post is a trans woman who is also a moderator of r/Transmedical. She has previously been active on subreddits such as r/asktransgender, r/trans, and r/Transgender_Surgeries since August 2018. However, the account has been inactive since July 2019. The post catalogs the main principles of the server and repeatedly emphasize gender dysphoria and sex organs. The first one entails “[Physical] Gender dysphoria . . . is necessary . . . to be trans; people without it are, by definition, [cisgender]” (testthrowaeay0302, 2019, para. 3). The second holds that “there are no female penises, and there are no male vaginas . . . a trans person should have somewhat of bottom dysphoria” (testthrowaeay0302, 2019, para. 7). The remaining significant details of the preface post continues in the following quote:

“Trans” is not in and of itself a gender identity; it is a condition of being. Trans is an adjective describing a biological reality; [it is] not a gender identity by itself. You [might] be . . . an AMAB¹ trans woman or an AFAB² trans man, but trans is merely an adjective describing the disconnect between your birth sex and your gender identity. Blanchard's theory on [transsexuality] is moronic and does not hold up logically. Trans women are not “Suuper gay [men,]” and sexuality has no [restraint] on your gender. Trans people can have any sexual orientation, [if] . . . they have gender dysphoria they are valid. (testthrowaeay0302, 2019, paras. 8-12)

The narrative produced here entails an intricate relationship between gender as a biological aspect and gender as a mental conception. However, due to the substantial emphasis on physical and bottom dysphoria, the organic notion presumably takes priority over the mental one. Similar to the

1 Assigned Male At Birth.

2 Assigned Female At Birth.

transnormative contentions disclosed by Pham (2019a; 2019b), an ambiguous principle seemingly situated within biological science measures a trans person according to transmedicalism. Aspects of gender dysphoria involve differing nuances of dissatisfaction with one's physical body, and transmedicalism emphasizes bottom dysphoria. This category of dysphoria pointedly entails an individual's discontent with the sex organs granted to them at birth. Trans people who find harmony with the sex organs assigned to them at birth are consequently 'not trans enough' according to transmedicalism. They may instead belong to that 60-90% who are not 'genetically' trans, namely the confused “LGBQIA” people who only believe that they are trans, as suggested by Pham (2019a).

This contention is almost analogous to the criticisms trans-exclusionary feminism direct at trans people. Trans-exclusionary feminists argue, for example, that trans women can never become 'real' women primarily due to the sex organs assigned to them at birth. Transmedicalism correspondingly encourages this disgust trans people might already feel towards their genitals on account of criticisms received from trans-exclusionary feminism. Meanwhile, commonplace transphobia claims that being transgender is a disease because all trans people wish to carve their genitals, which allegedly is akin to hurting oneself. This dialectical battlefield is precisely the type of combat zone trans studies attempts to navigate for all trans people.

It is disheartening to see fellow trans people embrace this essentializing fixation and policing regarding supposedly 'legitimate genitals' among assorted trans people. It completely disregards our painful history of having our bodies and hopes gatekept due to our genitals. Not to mention it is precisely this kind of outlook that caused severe harm to David Reimer. The doctors and parents of David undoubtedly believed that he could not become a girl unless they removed his penis. While the choice to put him under hormone replacement therapy is still subject to questioning, a less transmedicalist perspective would have at least retained his genitals. Maybe, in the long run, it is more beneficial for the mental health of trans people to establish that women penises and men vaginas are authentic notions. However, transmedicalism seems to prefer the more comfortable path of appealing to established stigmatizations against trans people.

Transmedicalism might find the image of trans to be straightforward and uncomplicated. However, if I may, just this once, speak for all trans people who came before us, our lives have never been effortless or uncomplicated. Why should we pretend like anything else? To make transgender lives a more straightforward idea for cisgender people and trans-exclusionary feminists is akin to appeal to the people who wish us harm. For we must ask ourselves, where do we stop making transgender lives less intricate for cisgender people and begin to reinforce established transnormative prejudice instead? Are we truly meeting our critics and judges halfway, or are we

merely carrying their burden only to continue punishing ourselves?

Some trans people who do not subscribe to transmedicalism may agree that the notion of gendered sex organs is a touch absurd. To them, the attribute 'male penises' makes about as much sense as 'female belly buttons.' It is yet another obsession of categorizing physical characteristics, including inanimate objects, into binary notions of man and woman. This fixation on the gender binary is what transfeminism seeks to abolish since it continuously becomes appropriated to regulate trans people. However, while transmedicalism rejects notions such as female penises and male vaginas, they still do not outline what their perspective is on, for example, female vaginas. This structure is a common rhetorical stratagem within transmedicalism and exclusionist ideas in general. Exclusionist viewpoints often claim that B, D, and F are imperative and ideal but simultaneously leave A, C, and E completely unexplained. What happens is that representatives of A, C, and E have to pick up the pieces and try to puzzle together what these exclusionist ideas convey. This procedure grants the opportunity for people who embrace exclusionist ideas to dismiss any criticism as unproven guesswork and an attack on their freedom of speech.

The preface post also claims that “the radical [extension] of . . . 'transgender' has rendered it . . . meaningless, and is . . . setting up a great deal of confusion . . . for transitioned people and [cisgender] people alike” (testthrowaeay0302, 2019, para. 1). Again, similar to what Pham (2019a; 2019b) suggested, it is seemingly trans activism that has undermined the term 'transgender' by being too inclusive. Another forum post on r/truscum titled “I thought I was [gender critical,] but I think [I am] just anti-tucute” reiterates a similar notion of distrust. More specifically, an apprehension towards contemporary trans activism due to alleged 'proper' contra 'inappropriate' genitals among trans people. This forum post has, as of February 25, 2021, 200 upvotes. It additionally has a total upvote approval rating of 96%. Not much is known about this post's author since this is the only forum post tied to this account. The author has not commented on any other posts except this one. They have also refrained from revealing any details of their background. However, this account's registration on Reddit occurred on January 15, 2020. In other words, just one day before the transmission of the forum post on r/truscum. This account was likely a nominal 'burner account' and meant to be completely anonymous.

The author of the forum post claims that “Tucute [beliefs] is also why, [in my opinion], the LGB Alliance has formed” (mippidymoppidymoo, 2020, para. 6). They add, “The whole 'woman's penis' and 'man's vagina' thing has led to [reprimand towards] gays and lesbians . . . of having a 'genital [fetish,]' so many are feeling isolated from their . . . community” (mippidymoppidymoo, 2020, para. 6). They conclude, “[There are] also intersex people. Their conditions have been [appropriated] to justify this whole 'sex and gender is fluid . . . [and] you [do not] need gender

dysphoria” (mippidymoppidymoo, 2020, para. 8). An entry on Wikipedia clarifies that “The LGB Alliance is a lobby group founded in the United Kingdom in 2019 in opposition to LGBT rights charity Stonewall's policies on transgender issues” (“LGB Alliance,” 2021, para. 1). It adds, “They describe their mission as 'asserting the right of lesbians, bisexuals and gay men to define themselves as same-sex [attracted,]' and state this right is threatened by 'attempts to introduce confusion between biological sex and the notion of gender’” (“LGB Alliance,” 2021, para. 1).

In other words, it is allegedly trans activism and its endeavor for bodily autonomy, including genital self-determination, that is at fault for disharmony within gay, lesbian, and trans discourse. The dialogue surrounding genital preference is currently a very contentious subject matter and probably worthy of a separate thesis in itself. The stigma towards gay and lesbian people for allegedly having 'genital fetishes' is, of course, disheartening. However, this stigma is likely an additional reprimand by a heteronormative social structure to discipline gay, lesbian, and diversified ambiguous sexualities. Cisgender and heterosexual representatives are indeed just as much, if not more, 'blameworthy' for 'genital fetishes' than gay, lesbian, and trans people. We often do not recognize genital preference within heterosexuality due to the influential idealism of heterosexuality as 'normal' sexuality. This ignorance is regretful since a more critical dialogue on heterosexual genital predilection could demonstrate how dishonestly rigged this stigma is against gay, lesbian, and trans people.

Reasons for incorporating genital preferences into one's predispositions are also multifold. For example, it is hard to reprimand an individual for rejecting a specific sex organ if they have experienced previous trauma involving the specified sex organ. Genital preferences consequently could implicate transphobic connotations, but this notion is not entirely assured. Suppose an individual rejects the idea of themselves participating in sexual acts with a specific sex organ. In that case, it does not discern if they also renounce 'women's penis' and 'man's vagina' as legitimate conceptions. Consequently, the discourse surrounding genital preferences is inherently flawed since it does not undoubtedly ascertain any nucleus of transphobia.

As detailed in the Literature Review section of this thesis, heterosexuality has a long and substantial history of obsessive policing regarding genitals. Namely, an essentializing fixation so intensified that genitals allegedly constitute our entire identity and maybe even our humanity as well. The target of this obsession was primarily trans people's genitalia, and it has resurfaced again due to the widespread acknowledgment of nonbinary trans people. While notions of 'woman's penis' and 'man's vagina' have slightly emancipated binary trans people from this stigma, it regrettably does not support nonbinary trans people, at least not equitably. Nonbinary people do not, generally speaking, occupy the privilege to categorize their genitals into binary notions of woman and man

without jeopardizing their autonomy to some degree. Many nonbinary people consequently do not incorporate gendered designations of genitalia for themselves. This adamant positioning is, of course, entirely understandable since due to the heteronormative obsession surrounding genitals, this would be akin to surrender oneself to the doctrine of gender binarism.

Again we find ourselves in a discourse where nonbinary people allegedly engender disruption within the trans movement. In other words, a dialectical exchange where some binary trans people might feel an inclination to exclude nonbinary people altogether to bolster the endeavor for trans autonomy. The contentions examined so far entail that trans activism supposedly has invited a group of people that individuals who subscribe to transmedicalism find unsuitable underneath the trans umbrella term. To include them is to, presumably, burn bridges with the status quo. It is, of course, not disclosed in the forum posts reviewed so far who these 'unfavorable' people are. However, the implications continue to indicate nonbinary trans people.

On March 2, 2020, Vic Parsons (2020a) of the British online newspaper “PinkNews” posted an article regarding House Bill 1251 (2020)¹, a proposed legislature introduced and signed by eleven U.S. Republican representatives in December 2019. Parsons (2020a) clarifies that “The bill would mean that any female athlete . . . called into question would need to 'prove' their sex via an analysis of their chromosomes, medical testing of their testosterone levels, and an examination of their external genitalia” (para. 3). Roughly at the same time, transgender athlete Chris Mosier spoke out against House Bill 500 (2020), another legislative proposal initially introduced by a Republican member of the Idaho House of Representatives, Barbara Ehardt, on February 13, 2020. The bill authorizes “people to challenge an athlete's gender if they are competing in girls' sports and . . . even require medical exams – including examinations of genitalia and blood – to confirm whether a student should be able to compete” (Sprayregen, 2020, para. 2). Brad Little, the Republican governor of Idaho, signed House Bill 500 (2020) on March 30, 2020 (Bollinger, 2020a).

Almost two weeks later, on April 10, 2020, Bil Browning (2020) of LGBTQ Nation published an article that details a case regarding a strip search of a 16-year-old trans girl, Jamii Erway, that almost occurred at the International Airport in North Carolina. Erway's mother later filed a complaint due to the incident. The complaint affirms, “for reasons still unknown to plaintiffs, [the supervisor] advised Jamii that she would need to accompany her to a private room, expose herself, and allow [the supervisor] to 'feel up in there' i.e., touch her genitals” (Browning, 2020, para. 5). About five months later, on September 22, 2020, former U.S. Republican senator Kelly

¹ A disclaimer regarding references to house and senate bills: This thesis could not find reliable sources on how to write accurate in-text quotations of assorted house and senate bills in agreement with APA 6th edition or APA 7th edition writing styles and formats. This thesis consequently refrains from direct citations of those legislations and instead relies on secondary sources. However, appropriate references to each respective house and senate bills are, of course, still provided in the Reference List section at the closing of this thesis.

Loeffler introduced the Protection of Women and Girls in Sports Act (2020) house bill. Loeffler's proposed legislation holds that “sex shall be recognized based solely on a person's reproductive biology and genetics at birth” (Bollinger, 2020b, para. 5).

About three months later, on December 10, 2020, former democratic U.S. representative for Hawaii's 2nd congressional district, Tulsi Gabbard, introduced the Protect Women's Sports Act (2020) house bill. The proposed legislation would “make it illegal for sports programs 'to permit a person whose biological sex is male to participate in an athletic program or activity . . . designated for women or girls’” (Bollinger, 2020c, para. 2). However, “Gabbard's bill does not define 'biological sex' or say how it will be determined, whether by DNA tests, genital exams, or other possible measures” (Bollinger, 2020c, para. 4). On January 21, 2021, as already detailed in the CDA of the previous section of this thesis, republican representative Greg Steube introduced the Protection of Women and Girls in Sports Act (2021) house bill. Steube's proposed legislation “just vaguely [states] that 'sex shall be recognized based solely on a person's reproductive biology and genetics at birth’” (Bollinger, 2021a, para. 4).

Roughly one month later, on February 9, 2021, Rick Jasperse, a Republican member of the Georgia House of Representatives, introduced House Bill 372 (2021). The legislation “allows for students to 'petition' for the right to participate in sports. The petitions, however, 'shall include, at a minimum, information regarding the student's gender based on the student's reproductive organs, genetic makeup, and other relevant factors’” (Holmes, 2021, para. 10). It adds, “no physician acting in a voluntary capacity shall be liable for civil damages or subject to disciplinary action under professional licensing regulations as a result of the activities authorized or required by this Code section” (Holmes, 2021, para. 11).

Two days later, Senate Bill 2536 (2021), originally introduced on January 18, 2021, by a Republican member of the Mississippi House of Representatives, Becky Currie, passed in the Mississippi House of Representatives. The bill calls for “sports teams [to] be designated as male, female, or coed, with female teams 'not open to students of the male sex,' as established by the student's 'internal and reproductive anatomy,' 'normal endogenously produced levels of testosterone,' and 'genetic makeup’” (Ring, 2021b, para. 7). Tate Reeves, the current Republican governor of Mississippi, signed Senate Bill 2536 (2021) on March 11, 2021 (Avery, 2020). Almost concurrently, on February 24, 2021, the “Promote continued fairness in women's sports” (2021) house bill passed in the South Dakota House of Representatives. The house bill claims that “participation on female teams . . . must be based on an athlete's 'biological sex, as ascertained at or before birth in accordance with the student's genetics and reproductive biology’” (Ring, 2021a, para. 3).

Some readers of this thesis may have noticed how the discourse surrounding trans people's

genitals in many regards intersects with the essentializing and biological subject matters detailed in the previous section. The intersection with, for example, Greg Steube's legislative actions and press release illustrates how this dialectical exchange moderately operates as a preface or background to the previous discourse. Analogous to Dr. John Money and David Reimer's parents, assorted republican representatives in the United States, including some U.S. democrats, incorporate the notion that sex organs amount to gender identity. However, while the discourse regarding trans people's genitals does not speak so much in words, it speaks louder in its actions, specifically the legislative activities conducted to persecute trans people due to our genitals.

While assorted opponents of trans autonomy publicly and vocally condemn “biological males” in women's sports, something else is happening in the background. Covertly, behind the scenery, the legislative reprimands towards trans people are considerably less attentive towards 'biological males' and instead concentrate on “reproductive biology” and genital exams. The language in public scenes emanating from assorted opponents of trans autonomy is unceasingly gendered, but the language behind the scenery is repeatedly gender-neutral. In other words, these measures would affect everyone, namely both trans and cisgender people, including adults and minors.

As demonstrated in the Jamii Erway case, the discourse surrounding trans genitals also instigates personnel with no proficiency as medical practitioners to perform genital exams on children (Browning, 2020). Even if a medical practitioner violates boundaries during a genital exam, measures such as House Bill 372 (2021) explicitly state that these medical practitioners will not be held responsible. These circumstances illustrate how the U.S. conservative narrative of 'biological males' in women's sports as a supposedly hazardous development undoubtedly is a plain intimidation tactic and consequently a recontextualization of their actual intentions. They are less concerned about women and children's safety and more excited about maintaining essentializing heteronormative gender binarism at the expense of everyone's safety. Consequently, even slightly gender-nonconforming people as to gender presentations or gender expressions are subject to genital exams, which situates this whole matter as an attempt to phase out gender ambiguity.

Transmedicalism is consequently an outlook that internalizes this predisposition and policing against trans genitals, namely bottom dysphoria as the prerequisite of being 'legitimately' trans. It is an effort to attain trans autonomy through entertaining outmoded notions of gender perpetuated by bureaucratic representatives who embody considerable power. Allegedly, if we personify enough hatred and disgust towards our very own genitals, then maybe we could demonstrate to assorted opponents of trans autonomy that binary trans people detest gender ambiguity just as much as they do. However, as detailed earlier in this section, nonbinary trans

people do not equivalently occupy the privilege to either performatively or through surgery categorize their genitals into binary notions of woman and man. Consequently, to realize this outcome where trans people police and gatekeep genitals among mutual trans representatives, exclusion of a specific assortment of trans people who could disrupt this arrangement would be mandatory.

Nonbinary people as external threats.

Another forum post on r/Transmedical titled “I don't believe [nonbinary] genders exist and harm the trans cause” might establish which assortment of trans people transmedicalists find 'unsuitable' underneath the trans umbrella term. The title of the entry might be a touch ambiguous for some readers. However, it will soon become clear that the author believes nonbinary genders impair the trans movement. This forum post has, as of December 31, 2020, 115 upvotes. It additionally has a total upvote approval rating of 95%. The author of this post is a trans woman who has been active in assorted subreddits since September 2020. These communities involve subreddits such as r/actuallesbians, r/AskTeenGirls, and r/honesttransgender.

The forum post consists of two parts, and these parts notably discuss the topic of nonbinary genders. The first section details why nonbinary genders do not exist, while the second outlines how they supposedly impair the trans movement. The forum post initiates with “[I am] a transwoman and I [can not] find any scientific evidence supporting the existence of [nonbinary] genders existing” (thetransgurl, 2020, para. 1). She adds, “[nonbinary] people lack gender dysphoria, . . . found in transmen and transwomen. This is caused by the transgender brain registering that something is [erroneous]” (thetransgurl, 2020, para. 4). She concludes that “3rd genders in . . . past civilizations are due to strict gender norms and lack of information about [gender dysphoria] not because it occurs naturally” (thetransgurl, 2020, para. 7).

A general issue with the term 'gender dysphoria' entails that it might be a touch too transnormative and hyperbolic for some trans people. Dysphoria is synonymous with words like unhappiness and depression, which has been serviceable for trans people who struggle to convince their surroundings that they are trans. However, as the term 'trans' develops as a recognized concept, do all trans people need to continue with this hyperbolic method? Since we are already extensively discussing biology in this thesis, it would be fair to apply a Darwinian perspective and claim that all organic life involves adaptation. Everyone who has ever lived has, in some regard, participated in the organic experience to survive, namely to endure assorted hardships through adapting themselves. These hardships entail obstacles such as moving on from losing a loved one, learning to live with a chronic disease, or moving to another city to escape from a toxic environment.

The point is that maybe some trans people have learned to confront their gender dysphoria in a manner that reduces the painful aspects of gender dysphoria for themselves. In other words, they have learned to adapt themselves in a confrontation of an unyielding hardship. However, this adaptation could undoubtedly be either a temporary or a permanent resolution for a trans person depending on their respective trans lived experiences. How a trans person might experience this adaptation depends on whether one is a nonbinary or a binary trans person.

In any case, if these trans people have developed a positive insight towards their gender dysphoria, then maybe their gender dysphoria has transformed as well. Perhaps what they experience is more akin to 'gender melancholia' or 'gender fatigue' than gender dysphoria. This idea is, of course, not meant to mitigate or invalidate their status as trans. Neither is it meant to diminish or invalidate any of their requests for assorted health care such as hormone replacement therapy or surgery. The purpose is to illuminate that the term 'gender dysphoria' can be somewhat restrictive for some trans people and that a more inclusive extension of gender dysphoria is possible. The more conservative and essentialist interpretation of gender dysphoria, which transmedicalism embraces, could be termed 'clinical gender dysphoria' or 'traditional gender dysphoria.'

From a certain point of view, trans people who have learned to adapt to their gender dysphoria have, in some regard, mastered their gender dysphoria. They do not experience severe or crushing gender dysphoria because they have partially or entirely overcome their gender dysphoria. So who are the 'real' trans people? Is it those who experience gender dysphoria? Or those who have mastered their gender dysphoria? I entirely reject such discussions, obviously, but the point here is to highlight how utterly pointless such dialectical exchanges are.

The second part of the post claims that “the lack of evidence of [nonbinary] carries over to transmen and transwomen. This leads to the false belief that [gender dysphoria] doesn't exist” (thetransgurl, 2020, para. 10). She continues to outline how the presence of nonbinary trans people within trans spaces perpetuates gender dysphoria among binary trans people in the following quote:

[Establishing] new labels and gender norms . . . [implies] that if [trans people] . . . do not fit male or female 100% they cannot [sincerely] be male or female. This [idea] can lead to [delay] of accepting that they have [gender dysphoria] and the feeling that they aren't masculine or feminine [enough,] which leads to increased dysphoria. Hearing so many transmen and other transwomen claim that they delayed accepting that [themselves] were trans because of having to determine that they had [gender dysphoria] and weren't [nonbinary,] and that they [do not] feel masculine or feminine enough is . . . sad. (thetransgurl, 2020, para. 16)

These contentions demonstrate a significant interest in clear-cut guidelines regarding pronouns and gender identities. Trans people seemingly need a strict and decisive measurement regarding whether or not someone is 'legitimately trans' to achieve autonomy for themselves. Any

gender ambiguity that could undermine this doctrine would allegedly undercut the endeavor for trans liberation. However, the only medico-legal principle currently available for trans people to employ as a doctrine of trans individuality is the definition of gender dysphoria detailed in DSM-5. To remind how DSM-5 characterizes gender dysphoria, the APA (2013) asserts that “Gender dysphoria should . . . [differentiate] from simple nonconformity . . . by the strong desire to be of another gender” (Gender Dysphoria section). This diagnostic publication installs greater emphasis on severe gender dysphoria as a benchmark of trans identities.

As indicated in the Literature Review section of this thesis, the characterizations provided in DSM-5 originates from an arrangement of elected cisgender people dictating who the 'exemplary subjects' are among trans people. It is an accessible definition constructed by cisgender people primarily for cisgender people that does not undermine their already established confirmation bias of trans. It is yet another legislative articulation that keeps trans people docile, quiet, and obedient. The path to emancipation for trans people is consequently not situated in submitting oneself to a transnormative system that sustains itself by suppressing trans people. Neither is it located in excluding nonbinary people from the trans movement.

Transmedicalism seems to prescribe that the presence of nonbinary people within trans spaces subverts traditional notions of gender dysphoria, in addition to the definition of gender dysphoria provided in DSM-5. However, even if this claim is truthful, then nonbinary trans people are invaluable allies to the trans movement. There are a few but significant reasons why so many trans people cling to the definition of gender dysphoria outlined in DSM-5. Medico-legal institutions primarily embody the capacity to establish their decrees as more imperative than what they genuinely are. All scholarly mandates encompass some degree of vainglorious language attached to them to heighten their perceived prominence. Even I, in this very thesis, am guilty of this aesthetic crime. The substance of this kind of language abides in whether or not it confines or liberates different groups of people.

Not to mention how North American and European medicine, in general, has established itself through defining assorted subjects by fabricating contrasted 'Others' to the appointed subjects. In this case, it is trans people who are 'the other' to cisgender people. Trans people situated as complete opposites of cisgender people is a significant part of the dehumanization process aimed towards trans people. Contemporary binary models continue to establish trans people as inverted homunculus caricatures of cisgender people. Everything about us, including our pain, is supposedly inverted compared to cisgender people. Even our reasons to use our suitable bathrooms are allegedly upturned, distorted, and perverted (McNamara, 2020). To dehumanize a specific group, one must fabricate a theoretical but explicit elementary discrepancy between the established norm

and the other. Namely, a strict threshold that typecasts people into one of two categories. To institute this discrepancy is analogous to engender separation. To enact this separation is akin to detach the other from the traditional model. Without warning, there are no overlapping characteristics between the established norm and the other anymore. When no overlapping aspects remain, what we have is a binary model.

Traditional gender dysphoria is consequently another essentializing armament that phases out any overlapping characteristics between trans people and the sanctioned model of being cisgender. It dramatically neutralizes trans people and one of our primary means of liberation. Namely that trans people often could participate as analytical mirrors of the assorted heteronormative notions of any 'natural' sex and gender characteristics. Trans people are, of course, not sentient caricatures of cisgender people in any regard. We sincerely carry the capacity to chronicle some of the gaps and incongruities of cisgender and heterosexuality as 'natural' characteristics. If nonbinary people genuinely subvert traditional gender dysphoria, they could additionally subvert the binary model of cisgender/transgender. This process would subsequently undermine a substantial part of the dehumanization process aimed towards trans people. Nonbinary trans people are consequently imperative allies to the trans movement.

A forum post on r/truscum, partly titled “This is for tucute's and radicals coming in here asking us why [we are] so 'mean,’” might reveal some of the possible origins regarding the prejudice towards nonbinary trans people. This forum post has, as of February 23, 2021, 158 upvotes. It additionally has a total upvote approval rating of 96%. The author of this post is a gay trans man who has been active on various subreddits such as r/AskGayMen, r/FTMMen, and r/trans since September 2018. He asserts that “You cannot be a 'Non-Binary lesbian or a 'Non-Binary gay man.' You cannot be a He/Him or They/Them lesbian. You cannot be She/Her or They/Them gay man. . . . [Nonbinary] is the absence of Gender” (Archer_Python, 2020b, para. 4). He adds, “Xenogenders are stupid and made-up nonsense some [14-year-old] girl on Tumblr¹ made up because [she] read a book on how indigenous people were Two-[Spirit]/3rd Gender” (Archer_Python, 2020b, para. 6). He determines that “All that 3rd gender stuff is 'specifically' from that particular culture. It has no right and space to be involved with our culture and language” (Archer_Python, 2020b, para. 6).

One could certainly argue it would be racist to appropriate terminologies and gender identities from other cultures than one's own. However, it was also incredibly racist and inhumane of white colonialists to completely erase these identities from history. Additionally, to casually assume that indigenous culture would have been inherently incompatible with our culture is both

¹ An American microblogging website that is generally considered a social platform primarily inhabited by progressive and radical cisgender feminists, including trans people and trans activists.

racist and xenophobic. It could be worth contemplating how contemporary trans discourse would look today if colonialism had not afflicted multifold indigenous people. Two-Spirit and third gender identities could have been common gender identities here and now if colonialism had not erased these identities. Gender ambiguity, in addition to nonbinary genders, might have been slightly less contentious subject matters today. Increased widespread understanding and acceptance of trans people, in general, might have been possible.

If anything, the painful history of colonialism and its expunction of gender identities outside the gender binary demonstrate that gender binarism is, above all, one of the many chronic legacies of white supremacy. Prejudice towards gender ambiguity has always been a serious issue that has extinguished countless lives, both cisgender and transgender. To claim that nonbinary lesbians and nonbinary gay men are invalid categories is just another example of colonial policing and erasure of gender ambiguity. It is another neoliberal attempt to 'optimize' bodies by categorizing them into binary notions of sexuality and gender. To superficially embody archaic interpretations of gender outlined in DSM-5 and ICD-11 is akin to indulge in the residual moonshine of white supremacy and its systematic expunction of gender ambiguity. It is analogous to entertain the transnormative status quo, namely, precisely what explicit and casual representatives of transphobia and racism find appealing and comfortable.

People who explicitly or inexplicitly subscribe to transmedicalism are, of course, not necessarily white supremacists themselves. However, they still carelessly maintain the 'white binary cisgender bias' that emerged from violent conducts sanctioned by jurisdictions undeniably personified by white supremacy. Trans people consequently embody responsibility for more than just our autonomy because our endeavor has intersecting consequences for black people, indigenous people, and people of color. That includes black, indigenous, trans people of color as well. If gratifying the status quo by excluding nonbinary trans people genuinely bolstered the trans movement, then we would not be allowed to exclude them. Assorted opponents against trans autonomy would not rejoice in the thought of persecution against nonbinary people if such action honestly engendered trans liberation. When a transphobic socio-political structure pats us on the back and says 'good job,' that is when we cease to undermine prejudice towards trans people.

A blog post by Gemma Stone (2019) on Medium titled "I used to be a TransMed" outlines some of the more appealing notions of transmedicalism for binary trans people. The blog post summarizes how Stone (2019) became captivated by transmedicalist interpretations of trans and how she eventually managed to liberate herself from these constraining notions. Stone's (2019) background is relatively unknown, except that she is a trans woman and has regularly published articles on Medium since December 30, 2017. The topics she covers entail subject matters such as

trans activism and trans rights within the United Kingdom, the 'LGB Alliance' continued transphobia and enlargement, recent controversies surrounding Harry Potter author J. K. Rowling, the multifold discourse regarding trans-exclusionary feminism, her personal experiences of being harassed by right-wing extremists across disparate social media platforms, and the timeless conundrum of freedom of speech.

Stone (2019) asserts that transmedicalism “places arbitrary restrictions on trans people to perform trans-ness in a certain way in order not to be mistreated. Not only by people within our . . . community but by people outside of it too” (para. 3). She adds, “It actively excludes many trans people from being trans all while pushing the trans people they do include as trans into assimilating with cis society, often with disastrous results” (Stone, 2019, para. 5). She concludes, “much of my . . . anxiety issues stemmed from my transmed beliefs and the need to assimilate rather than just . . . [ensure] people [are not] dicks to trans people for no reason” (Stone, 2019, para. 5). She clarifies how transmedicalist notions eventually engendered her to reject nonbinary trans people in the following quote:

So when transphobes came [along,] and I managed to explain to them about binary cis conforming trans people and how we should [have autonomy] . . . and they agreed, it was great. Up until they would say something like “[you are] okay, but those non-binary types? [They are] pushing it too far”. My lack of [a] frame of reference for non-binary and *my need to be accepted and assimilated into cis society* [emphasis added] meant it was all too easy to . . . be like “yeah no [you are] right.” A classic “welp, I got [mine, you are] on your own now” style tactic. (Stone, 2019, para. 12)

One may have noticed that this section's heading, “Nonbinary people as external threats,” sounds analogous to traditional prejudice often applied towards migrants. This heading is intentional since the enmity towards gender ambiguity often parallels contemporary xenophobia traditionally aimed towards migrants. Their essentializing narratives regarding a body of 'unknown invaders' intersect as follows: They are ambiguous, and they encroach upon our community. Their way of life is incompatible with ours, and they do not belong here. Accepting them would upset the current order, and disaster will follow if we include them. Their needs infringe upon ours, and their concerns undermine our progress. They embezzle our resources; their suffering does not equal ours, and so on.

In other words, akin to almost all forms of prejudice, transphobia towards nonbinary people stem from traditional insecurities and unreasonable fear of the unknown. This irrational fear is why transmedicalism maintains outmoded notions of gender dysphoria as a reference point of everything trans. It is a determined arrangement to 'make sense' of identities and bodies that trail outside the gender binary. However, to situate nonbinary trans people as something that 'needs' to be 'made

sense' is a dehumanizing process in itself. It is a practice that locates nonbinary people as mere examination subjects, which almost entirely removes their agency to self-determine as nonbinary. The subject matter of gender dysphoria is often the fundamental element within the discourse regarding nonbinary trans people as 'legitimate' notions, including whether nonbinary people should be considered 'authentic' representatives of trans people. It is consequently imperative to examine how transmedicalism employs the concept of gender dysphoria as a means to exclude nonbinary trans people.

On September 23, 2019, American lifestyle magazine “Out” reported that “The Brit Awards are considering restructuring their categories and no longer rewarding artists based on their gender, but rather their talent” (Dommu, 2019, para. 1). This change allegedly developed due to English singer Sam Smith's recent announcement “as nonbinary and genderfluid earlier this year” (Dommu, 2019, para. 3). However, English journalist and television personality Piers Morgan commented on the subject matter that “The idea that you have [to] change entire award categories because one [person] decides one day to wake up and say I'm nonbinary, it's nonsense” (Dommu, 2019, para. 6).

Almost one year later, on July 24, 2020, Vic Parsons (2020b) of PinkNews reported that the Italian luxury fashion enterprise Gucci had launched Gucci MX, namely “a new 'gender-fluid' section on the Italian house's website which aims to make shopping the luxury brand more inclusive” (para. 1). The official Gucci Instagram account advertises Gucci MX as “Resized in mini, small and medium versions, worn by both men and women in diverse looks: tailoring, [grunge,] and clothes with shrunken proportions” (Gucci Official, 2020b). The account adds that “The new handbag design flies above traditional accessory classifications with its non-binary attitude” (Gucci Official, 2020a). On November 16, 2020, Josh Milton (2020) of PinkNews reported that “In [first-person shooter video game] 'Call of Duty: Black Ops Cold War,' players now have the option to . . . choose their gender, which includes a non-binary option” (para. 2). However, “Trump supporter and journalist Ian Miles Cheong amplified the anger, tweeting:¹ 'I don't think there were 'non-binary' people in the 1980s, Call of Duty” (Milton, 2020 para. 11).

Almost six weeks later, on December 28, 2020, the American magazine “Metro Weekly” reported that “Fox News host Tucker Carlson used his show to attack [Jo Walker, a nonbinary] epidemiologist at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention as a 'left-wing activist’” (Riley, 2020, para. 1). Additionally, “[Carlson] added that Walker 'appears to be American’” and concluded his segment with “Man of science or political activist? We'll let you answer the question” (Riley, 2020, paras. 13, 15). Roughly two months later, on February 15, 2021, U.S. legislators held a

¹ The jargon and verbifications such as 'has tweeted' and 'are tweeting' commonly refer to the microblogging activity performed on the American social networking service known as Twitter. User entries on Twitter are also generally referred to as 'tweets' or 'a tweet,' in which the former is the plural counterpart to the latter singular form.

hearing for House Bill 2725 (2021). Namely, a proposed measure that “would ban the use of gender-neutral 'X' markers, . . . often employed in other states as an option for gender-nonbinary individuals” (Riley, 2021, para. 2). John Fillmore, a U.S. republican member of the Arizona House of Representatives, denounced nonbinary trans people during the hearing. Fillmore claimed that “we as a society should [not] have all of the different binaries identified; what's going to happen when [an individual] someday wakes up and they want to go to a far extreme and identify as a chicken or something” (Riley, 2021, para. 7).

Almost two weeks later, on February 25, 2021, Ej Dickson (2021) of the American magazine “Rolling Stone” reported that the American conglomerate Hasbro, Inc. recently “announced it would be rebranding the iconic Mr. Potato Head . . . and his female counterpart as gender-neutral 'Potato Heads’” (para. 2). The decision received contentious responses from assorted conservative political commentators. Among them, Mark Dice, a right-wing YouTuber, tweeted that “It's time for Republican states to secede” (Dickson, 2021, para. 4).

Additionally, representatives of the U.S. Republican party criticized the new Potato Head toys during the Conservative Political Action Conference in late February of 2021. Matt Gaetz, a Republican representative for Florida's 1st congressional district, denounced the new toys during the conference by asserting that “American business should be worried about business, not wokeism” (Quinlan, 2021, para. 15). An entry on the crowdsourced online dictionary Urban Dictionary defines the term “woke” as “The act of being very pretentious about how much you care about a social issue” (Urban Dictionary, 2018). On March 4, 2021, the conservative American newspaper “The Washington Times” published an unsigned editorial that specifies nominal 'cancel culture' as the sole reason behind the new Potato Head toys. The editorial claims that “The grievance-mongers and umbrage-takers of the cancel culture will leave no statue or stone unturned in their ceaseless search-and-destroy culture wars” (Cancel culture, 2021, para. 1).

The recontextualizations currently taking place surrounding the discourse of nonbinary trans people congregate on the notion that nonbinary is not an 'authentic' identity but more of a lifestyle. Namely, a fashionable aesthetic that recently materialized and an inherent political ideology that binary people merely incorporate to cause upheaval within multifold discourses. Gucci marketed their new shopping section, Gucci MX, as having a “nonbinary attitude.” Words such as 'attitude' in this marketing context situate nonbinary as a clothing style commensurate to punk, glam, and edgy. Intentional or not, it still is a recontextualization of nonbinary that impairs the soul and legitimacy of nonbinary existence as a gendered selfhood and personage. Promotional images for Gucci MX provided in the American online publication “Teen Vogue” additionally suggest that this “nonbinary attitude” is interchangeable with thin and conventionally attractive people (Russo, 2020). Gucci MX

consequently is an expunction of nonbinary people who do not fall underneath the categories of 'thin' and 'conventionally attractive,' which further emphasizes Gucci's recontextualization of nonbinary selfhood as an aesthetic lifestyle.

The comment made by journalist Ian Miles Cheong relates to subject matters previously discussed in this section. The remark “I don't think there were 'non-binary' people in the 1980s” is an expunction of nonbinary history analogous to those who deny the existence of indigenous 3rd gender and nonbinary people. Namely, the same past events and group of people that colonialism and its binary doctrines reprimanded and phased out. Cheong and Gucci consequently seem to believe that nonbinary is a fashion style that suddenly 'caught on' at some undisclosed point in time after the 1980s. Piers Morgan's remark that the BRIT¹ Awards altered “entire award categories because one [person] decides one day to wake up and say I'm nonbinary” is a similar expunction of nonbinary existence and history. The section “one person” practically implies that Sam Smith would be the only nonbinary individual in our world. To suggest that would completely disregard the countless nonbinary individuals that live, used to live, and are yet to live. It is yet another recontextualization of nonbinary as an extraordinary anomaly that recently emerged.

The most alarming recontextualizations transpiring here, are political commentators such as Tucker Carlson labeling nonbinary people like Jo Walker as a “left-wing activist” simply due to Walker's status as nonbinary. Carlson also expressed that Walker “appears to be American” and later asked his audience if Walker is a “Man of science or political activist?” which pushes their nationality and humanitarian motives at the CDC² for interrogation. In other words, according to Carlson, Walker can not be a 'reasonable' scientist unless they submit themselves to a binary gender category. Allegedly, if Walker does not identify as a man, then they are less of a scientist and more of a political activist, which drives Walker's intentions and purposes within the CDC into questioning. Carlson consequently recontextualizes Walker's gender identity as nonbinary as a seemingly radical ideology that could be hazardous if they remain within the CDC. Considering the COVID-19 epidemic and the contemporary and sensitive worldwide political climate it has established, Carlson's statements certainly are intimidation tactics (Cabral, 2021). They are remarks meant to recontextualize nonbinary identity as an 'un-American' ideology and engender national prejudice towards nonbinary trans people.

While John Fillmore's statement that compares nonbinary people to chickens is dehumanizing, there is a connotation there that is analogous to the troublesome assertions made by Tucker Carlson. Fillmore prefixes his remark with “we as a society” and consequently draws a line

1 The British Phonographic Industry's annual popular music awards.

2 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

between a “we” and an undisclosed 'them.' In other words, there is a “we” who, unlike 'those others,' belongs to a society. Subsequently, “society” carries the connotations of nation, civilization, order, culture, and humanity. Accordingly, those who are not “we” are not part of our nation, they are not civilized, and they have no order, culture, or humanity. They might be nothing but chickens. When Fillmore compares nonbinary trans people to chickens, he does not only dehumanize nonbinary people but also, just like Carlson, recontextualizes them as 'un-American.' Fillmore's other remark that nonbinary people “someday [wake] up and . . . want to go to a far extreme and identify as a chicken” correlates with Gucci's and Cheong's recontextualizations of nonbinary people. It suggests that nonbinary gender is not a progress of gradual self-discovery, but yet again a fashionable aesthetic that binary people merely appropriate to engender political vexation.

The case surrounding the new Potato Head toys further emphasizes how variegated U.S. right-wing voices attempt to recontextualize nonbinary as an ideology that needs to be opposed. When Mark Dice claimed that “It's time for Republican states to secede,” he fundamentally implies that nonbinary potatoes, namely plastic ones, are so outrageous that the risk of a second American civil war is warranted. The editorial published by The Washington Times additionally described the new Potato Head toys as “ceaseless search-and-destroy culture wars,” suggesting that nonbinary plastic potatoes somehow are infringements upon everything that is not nonbinary. Matt Gaetz's remark that “American business should be worried about business, not wokeism” implies that pink capitalism is not a genuine concept. An entry on Wikipedia describes pink capitalism as “the incorporation of the LGBT movement and sexual diversity to capitalism and the market economy, viewed especially in a critical lens as this incorporation pertains to the LGBT, Western, white, and affluent, upper [middle-class] communities and market” (“Pink capitalism,” 2020, para. 1). According to Gaetz, the new Potato Head toys distributed by Hasbro, Inc. are more of a political maneuver than a corporate attempt to capitalize on LGBTQIA+ people. Gaetz also added an “-ism” to the term “woke” to solidify the recontextualization of nonbinary plastic potatoes as an ideology.

Variegated conservative political personalities consequently attempt to recontextualize nonbinary people as members of an ideology. Allegedly, nonbinary gender and selfdom itself is inherently a political movement that is potentially threatening and recently emerged at some point during these last two or three decades. This ideology supposedly engenders binary people to employ specific performative external aesthetics. Namely, aesthetics that allow them to appropriate personal benefits through circumventing the current order and its sovereignty. Accordingly, nonbinary gender is supposedly a smokescreen for something more dishonest and dangerous. The fact that even potatoes, plastic ones at that, need to be categorized into binary gender classifications demonstrates the chronic characterization of gender binarism within Northern American and European contexts.

This dominant obsession with gender binarism by influential mouthpieces accordingly prompts some binary trans people to conform to the essentializing perpetuation of gender binarism. That is why transmedicalism employs gender dysphoria as an essentializing measure of any small or large characterizations considered relevant to assorted trans subject matters. Gender dysphoria becomes the reference point to categorize people into binaries of either 'true binary trans' or 'cisgender.'

Gender dysphoria as a benchmark of willpower.

To further detail how transmedicalism appropriates outmoded definitions of gender dysphoria, this analysis will now proceed to review a preface post on the subreddit *r/truscum*. This subreddit has, as of December 13, 2020, over 7800 members. The preface post titled “Welcome to *r/truscum!*” has 102 upvotes and a total upvote percentage rating of 100%. The author of this post is a trans man who has been active on assorted trans subreddits such as *r/transpassing*, *r/ftm*, and *r/asktransgender* since June 2018. He is also a moderator of *r/truscum* and similar transmedicalist subreddits such as *r/trumen*, *r/trufem*, and *r/truNB*. The post claims that “Truscum, or almost synonymically transmedicalist, is any person who believes that gender dysphoria is a prerequisite for being transgender” (420conradical69, 2019, para. 17). Akin to *r/Transmedical*, the preface post on *r/truscum* outlines six prerequisites that determine a trans person; however, three of them are noticeably distinct from the rest. The first one is “A marked incongruence between [their] experienced/expressed gender and primary [or] secondary sex characteristics” (420conradical69, 2019, para. 19). The second entails, “A strong desire to be [free] of [their] primary [or] secondary sex characteristics” (420conradical69, 2019, para. 20). The last one is “A strong desire for the primary [or] secondary sex characteristics of the other gender” (420conradical69, 2019, para. 21).

Analogous to *r/Transmedical*, the community statement on *r/truscum* places substantial emphasis on physical dysphoria and a sense of 'strong desire' to transition. However, unlike the previous outlooks reviewed so far, the community preamble on *r/truscum* includes secondary sex characteristics among its prerequisites to determine who is 'real' trans. Secondary sex characteristics involve bodily traits usually granted to us during puberty that are not necessarily associated with our reproductive system. Primary sex characteristics are generally associated with our sex chromosomes, including our internal and external genitalia. The preface post provided by *testthrowaeay0302* (2019) was mainly attentive to primary sex characteristics. The preface post concludes that “the individual must experience 'clinically significant distress', . . . a vaguely defined medical term . . . commonly used . . . [similarly] to 'clinically observable symptoms’” (420conradical69, 2019, para. 25). They add that “More simply: if you are distressed enough to transition, it is clinically significant/observable” (420conradical69, 2019, para. 25).

It is disheartening to see fellow trans people repeat this emphasis on a 'strong desire' in addition to a 'significant distress' that is 'observable' as a prerequisite to transition. How one could measure which trans people embody these traits is still somewhat ambiguous. How do we, for example, decipher trans people who were 'late' in their transition? Were they obstructed from transitioning due to socio-political structures, or did they merely lack a strong desire to transition? Is it the personal determination to undergo a bodily transition that measures a trans person, or are contemporary socio-political structures too regulatory and prejudiced against trans people? Should we then build a bridge with these transnormative structures, as Pham (2019b) suggested, or should they remain untouched since they occupy the tools required to verify a trans person? This bridge, which Pham (2019b) discussed, does not seem to be as harmonious as she may have suggested.

The preface post on r/truscum suggests that trans characteristics are observable, but it does not detail precisely how they are discernable. If they are discernable through the naked eye or by some medicinal equipment holds decisive connotations. The former suggests that specific looks, clothing, and behavior contain the ideals that distinguish trans people. The latter conveys what Pham (2019a; 2019b) maintained, that genetics are the measures to determine the 'real' trans people. The primary detail the community preface on r/truscum contributes is this repeated transnormative appreciation of a 'strong desire' to transition. However, 'desire' is a questionable choice of words since it is still somewhat inconclusive. A desire to transition could entail either a sense of substantial passion or a matter of personal determination. This passion would involve the prejudice that trans is merely a sexual fetish adopted by some cisgender people since they are sexually aroused by 'becoming' their opposite gender. Since the option centered on personal determination would be less problematic, this thesis will assume that 'desire' in the preface post on r/truscum implies a matter of discipline and willpower.

Pham (2019a; 2019b) and the preface on r/truscum have suggested that trans characteristics are somehow observable. However, there is simultaneously an apparent paradox here concerning genetics and willpower. If genetics outline the dominant benchmarks to transition, then discipline must be insignificant. Contrarily, if a measure of personal determination is the prevailing criteria, genetics becomes irrelevant. If not, do genetics perhaps enhance willpower? Is the discipline to overcome one's genetic and biological limitations the principle that measures a trans person? Can anyone genuinely be 'genetically trans' if resisting your given genetics is the principle that constitutes a trans person? This dialectical nightmare is precisely the type of essentialist double-bind that casual transphobia employs to ensnare trans people. As briefly detailed earlier in this analysis, casual transphobia often embraces the notion that gender transitioning is equivalent to self-harm. Casual transphobia could be defined as closely linked to 'oppositional sexism' described by

Serano (2009). She asserts that “While often different in practice, cissexism, transphobia, and homophobia are all rooted in 'oppositional sexism'” (Serano, 2009, p. 13). She adds that oppositional sexism “is the belief that female and male are rigid, mutually exclusive categories, each possessing a unique and [non-overlapping] set of attributes” (Serano, 2009, p. 13).

According to this prejudice, trans people reject the gender assigned to them at birth and attempt to change something unmodifiable. Female and male categories are allegedly non-overlapping, and any aspects of transitioning between these genders are consequently entirely futile. Trans people are supposedly fighting against something that is unmoveable and deeply entrenched within them, namely their primordial nature. Casual transphobia discerns this endeavor to attain something unreachable will only result in trans people hurting themselves. Trans people are allegedly at fault for harming themselves, and being transgender is subsequently a mental illness, per this outlook. Casual transphobia dictates that only an insane person would continue to attempt to change something unchangeable. The transmedicalist narrative that trans people are demonstrating willpower by rejecting an inherent essence fixed within them would only reinforce this essentialist and transphobic notion.

Another forum post on r/truscum partly titled “I smell some tucutes/gender radicals invalidating this sub and trying to change the narrative” resurfaces the David Reimer case. This forum post has, as of January 3, 2021, 565 upvotes. It additionally has a total upvote approval rating of 96%. The author expresses how circumventing biological differences between human men and women discredits trans people who experience severe dysphoria in the following quote:

Gender IS NOT a social construct [emphasis added]. Absolutely 'NO' part of [gender] in terms of neurological, emotional, mental . . . is “*Made up by a misogynistic/misandry society*” [emphasis added]. [There are] biological differences in male and female brains that make an individual aware of what/who they are. Look at the Dr. John Money and David Reimer case. Saying [it is] a “social construct” is a big slap to him . . . and all the other trans people . . . who harmed themselves or even 'committed suicide' because of their dysphoria. So please, shut the fuck up about that nonsense. [It is] disrespectful as hell. (Archer_Python, 2020a, para. 4)

There is an element that is a prevailing principle in the transmedicalist rhetorics reviewed so far. This principle entails that contemporary to somewhat archaic socio-political structures within the North American and European health care systems should determine the 'real' trans people from the 'fraudulent' ones. These outmoded interpretations of trans seemingly originate from a concoction of the definitions provided in DSM-5, ICD-10, and ICD-11. Trans people should consequently 'build bridges' with these arrangements to improve the lives of 'real' trans people. This thesis will determine it is expressly a symbolic and allegedly 'harmonious bridge' with the health care systems within North American and European contexts transmedicalism is advocating. Namely, socio-

political structures primarily shaped by the American Psychiatric Association and World Health Organization, respectively.

The issue for numerous trans people entails that these are structures primarily designed by binary cisgender people to reassure the status quo and consequently the satisfaction of binary cisgender people. The continuous expunction of any gender ambiguities accentuates these structures' conforming design, namely a design that engenders trans people to disappear and 'blend in' as binary-presenting cisgender individuals. Not to mention, as previously discussed, the lengthy history of colonialism and white supremacy's systematic expunction of any gender ambiguities among indigenous people. It is an alarming matter that illuminates the chronic legacy of white supremacy within decisive socio-political structures that determine numerous lives' well-being and safety. This legacy continues to uphold white binary cisgender people's nepotism while reprimanding everyone else not situated underneath that specific category. These notions, namely the moldy leftovers of white supremacy within transmedicalism, are consequently antithetical to substantial trans liberation.

If these assessments are not accurate, and trans people indeed have substantial agency within the development of these medico-legal structures, then these arrangements would operate profoundly differently. Medical gatekeeping against trans people would be markedly less prevalent, and medical care distribution such as hormone replacement therapy for trans people would be considerably more lenient and progressive. Tragic matters such as trans people experiencing medical gatekeeping for several years due to 'not presenting as legitimate trans' would be markedly less commonplace, which is currently not the case. To justify these arrangements that continually reprimand trans people is equivalent to remove the limited autonomy trans people still retain. However, this does not come across as a surprise, considering the secondary element of transmedicalism entails underlying disapproval against trans activism.

On February 21, 2021, Amazon, an American multinational technology company, removed the book "When Harry Became Sally: Responding to the Transgender Moment," originally published by Encounter Books in 2018, from its online marketplace. Roughly one month later, Ryan Anderson (2021), an American political philosopher and author of "When Harry Became Sally," addressed the situation with Amazon in an opinion piece for the American newspaper USA Today. Anderson (2021) claims that his book "acknowledges what everyone agrees on: that gender dysphoria is a serious condition that can cause great suffering. The only disagreement is how best to treat patients who experience gender dysphoria. That's the debate Amazon is shutting down" (para. 20). On March 18, 2021, Jo Bartosch (2021) of the right-wing British online magazine "Spiked" published an article commenting on the current conversion therapy discourse in the United

Kingdom. An entry on Wikipedia describes conversion therapy as “the pseudoscientific practice of trying to change an individual's sexual orientation . . . using psychological, physical, or spiritual interventions” (“Conversion therapy,” 2021, para. 1). Bartosch (2021) writes, “Gender dysphoria, the condition whereby an individual feels distressed in their sexed body, is rare but real” (para. 14). Bartosch (2021) adds, “In essence, being trans is about as valid a belief as an anorexic person's conviction that they are fat – the belief is genuinely held but demonstrably untrue” (para. 14).

On the same day, Chad Greene (2021) of the American conservative online magazine “The Federalist” published an article commenting on Canadian actor Elliot Page's recent coming out as a trans man. Greene (2021) writes, “An adolescent or teenage girl struggling with gender dysphoria or simply not conforming to typical feminine stereotypes will look to Page” and accordingly “believe she only needs to announce to the world her new identity and in a [moment] . . . all of her anxieties, insecurities, and problems will vanish” (para. 4). He adds, “the current legal battles over medical intervention for gender dysphoria in children and minors and protecting girls' sports have nothing to do with bigotry towards transgender people,” and “concerns about the rapid change from Ellen to Elliot is not an attack on . . . Page as an individual at all” (Greene, 2021, para. 7).

The next day, on March 19, 2021, the American magazine “New York” reported that Abigail Shrier, a writer for WSJ¹ and author of the 2020 book “Irreversible Damage: The Transgender Craze Seducing Our Daughters,” had testified in the U.S. Senate against Biden's (2021) executive order (Jones, 2021). The article reveals that Shrier, in her book “Irreversible Damage,” claimed that “Today's diagnostic craze isn't demon possession, it's 'gender dysphoria,’” and “its cure is not exorcism, laxatives, or purging. It's 'top surgery’” (Jones, 2021, para. 8). On the same day, the American newspaper “The Tennessean” reported that John Ragan, a republican member of the Tennessee House of Representatives, “called gender dysphoria a 'mental illness’” (Yu, 2021, para. 1). Ragan made this statement during a hearing for House Bill 578 (2021) that “would ban gender-affirming medical care for transgender children before puberty and raise the bar for them to access the care after they've entered puberty” (Yu, 2021, para. 3). When met with disapproving concerns during the hearing, Ragan responded that “The idea is that this [broadly categorized] condition is . . . something called 'body dysphoria disorder,’” and “Are you suggesting with your question that we should treat mental illness with surgery?” (Yu, 2021, para. 19).

Three days later, on March 22, 2021, Jared Eckert (2021) of conservative international affairs magazine “The National Interest” wrote an article commenting on Biden's (2021) executive order. Eckert (2021) writes, “By confusing and conflating disagreement on gender dysphoria with 'discrimination' . . . [based on] gender identity, the Equality Act would politicize the treatment of

1 The Wall Street Journal.

gender dysphoria by punishing all those who dissent from the left's gender ideology” (para. 15).

Assorted opponents of trans autonomy consequently attempt to recontextualize gender dysphoria as an inherently negative experience despite establishments such as the American Psychological Association and the World Health Organization no longer recognize gender dysphoria as, for example, a mental illness (Lewis, 2019; Padgett, 2021). This endeavor to diminish diversified trans voices is an effort to establish a dialectical channel for variegated trans opponents into the multifold discourses relevant to trans subject matters. As discussed in the previous section, to situate a group of people as subjects of a medical condition that needs to be 'made sense' predominantly removes their autonomy within discourses pertinent to themselves. However, and perhaps more significant, it additionally allows opponents of trans liberation to obscure their flagrant transphobia.

Individuals such as Jo Bartosch, Abigail Shrier, and John Ragan actively situate gender dysphoria as analogous to anorexia, “demon possession,” and “mental illness,” respectively. These recontextualizations of gender dysphoria subsequently allow people such as Ryan Anderson, Jared Eckert, and Chad Greene to raise their prejudiced comments on trans lived experiences as “debate,” “disagreement,” and “concerns,” respectively. In other words, the stigmatization surrounding gender dysphoria allows assorted transphobic mouthpieces to recontextualize their discriminatory rhetoric as mere concerns and disagreements within an extensive debate. The previous discourses analyzed in this thesis demonstrated this when variegated opponents of trans autonomy expressed 'concerns' about 'biological males' in women's sports, 'disagreements' regarding reproductive biology, and 'doubts' over nonbinary existence before the 1980s. This supposed debate is conclusively a discussion that actively reprimands trans representation and participation. Consequently, the recontextualizing of gender dysphoria as a subject matter of argumentation ultimately benefits opponents of trans autonomy considerably more than it does for trans people.

The essentialization of gender dysphoria by transmedicalism as the imperative dogma of trans lived experiences consequently perpetuates the prejudiced discourse of gender dysphoria. However, this discourse is advantageous to their viewpoints since it allows assorted transmedicalists to raise analogous 'mere concerns' and 'simple disagreements' regarding trans people who allegedly are not 'trans enough.'

Conclusion

The primary principles of transmedicalism originate from a fixation on gender dysphoria as a prerequisite to transition. Trans people are supposedly fighting against something within them that is unmoveable, namely their primordial nature. In other words, 'true' trans characteristics are

observable in trans people in their demonstrative willpower to transition. Transmedicalism accordingly advocates a rigid system of willpower, regularly exemplified by 'severe bottom dysphoria' and the will to conform to gender binarism. This system would distinguish the 'true transgender' from the 'disoriented others' who undermine their endeavor for trans autonomy. These 'others' allegedly consist of 'gender-confused' gay, bisexual, queer, intersex, and asexual people. Transmedicalism also seeks to 'build bridges' with archaic and contemporary medico-legal paradigms centered on gender binarism and consequently considers trans activism as disruptive in this process. According to transmedicalism, to include nonbinary trans people is analogous to burn bridges with the status quo of gender binarism. Gender ambiguities undermine their doctrine of gender dysphoria and allegedly undercut their endeavor for trans liberation. That is why the exclusion of nonbinary people would supposedly bolster the struggle for trans autonomy.

Some of the potential ramifications of transmedicalism include its perception of transgender as an inherent essence granted at birth. Namely, a trait that is also measurable through relative probability theory, which treads dangerously close to a transphobic rendition of scientific racism. Assorted transphobic enthusiasts might weaponize this narrative against trans people and argue it is a testimony of transgender being a disease. Namely, an ailment that merely beleaguers cisgender people, which potentially situates trans people as research subjects. Transmedicalism advocates that trans people should subscribe to a system primarily constructed by cisgender people to determine who is 'truly' trans, which would achieve the opposite of expanding trans representation. It is an outlook that carries little regard for trans people's freedom to self-identify. Transmedicalism continuously suggests that trans people who find harmony with the sex organs assigned to them at birth are 'not trans enough.' Analogous to trans-exclusionary feminism, transmedicalism encourages a specific notion of disgust that trans people might already feel towards their genitals. The fixation on trans people's genitals is an endeavor to make transgender lives a more straightforward idea for assorted opponents of trans autonomy. Transmedicalism consequently holds little concern for where we might stop making transgender a less perplexing insight for cisgender people and begin to reinforce established prejudice instead. Many nonbinary trans people, for example, do not occupy the privilege to categorize their genitals into binary notions of woman and man.

Transmedicalism embraces a more conservative and essentialist interpretation of gender dysphoria that demonstrates an interest in clear-cut guidelines regarding gender identities. Any gender ambiguity or gender nonconformity that could undermine this doctrine would allegedly undercut their endeavor for trans liberation. Consequently, traditional gender dysphoria is another essentializing armament that phases out any overlapping characteristics between trans people and the sanctioned model of cisgender. However, the gender binary and its expunctions of gender

ambiguity illustrate how transmedicalism maintains the 'white binary cisgender bias' that emerged from archaic jurisdictions personified by white supremacy. Its enmity towards gender ambiguity also parallels contemporary xenophobia often aimed towards migrants. Transmedicalism ultimately engenders some binary trans people to feel an inclination to exclude nonbinary people altogether. Transmedicalist interpretation of gender dysphoria reinforces the essentialist narrative that trans people demonstrate willpower by rejecting an inherent essence fixed within themselves. It maintains the prejudice that gender transitioning is equivalent to change something within oneself that is unchangeable. Trans people should consequently incorporate this outmoded arrangement to distinguish the 'real' trans people. However, the continuous expunction of gender ambiguities accentuates a design that engenders trans people to conform as binary-presenting cisgender individuals. To justify these arrangements that continually reprimand trans people is equivalent to remove the limited autonomy trans people still retain within trans activism.

Discourses outside of transmedicalism engender transmedicalist ideas due to assorted influential opponents of trans liberty constant recontextualizations of varied trans subject matters. They recontextualize trans women as 'biological males' to constrain them to a discourse where the foundation generally amounts to a no-win situation for trans people. Transmedicalism and its inclination to deliberate on trans subject matters within a biological framework is ultimately an effort to entertain these archaic notions of gender. It is an endeavor to gratify those who embody the power to recontextualize trans people. However, the language emanating from assorted transphobic mouthpieces from behind the scenery is repeatedly gender-neutral. It displays how their concerns regarding 'biological males' shroud and recontextualize their intentions to erase gender ambiguity. Transmedicalism maintains that if we personify enough hatred towards our genitals, it may demonstrate that binary trans people equally detest gender ambiguity. It accordingly engenders a sense of necessary exclusion of a specific assortment of trans people who disrupt this arrangement.

Recontextualizations of nonbinary people suggest that their identities are not progress of gradual self-discovery but a dishonest ideology that recently emerged to engender political vexation. This obsession with gender binarism engenders some binary trans people to conform to the essentializing continuation of gender binarism. Transmedicalism consequently employs gender dysphoria as an essentializing measure to categorize people into binaries of 'true trans' or tucutes. The reprimand of gender dysphoria as an inherently negative experience is an effort to recontextualize prejudiced rhetoric as mere 'concerns' and 'disagreements' in an extensive debate. Transmedicalism's essentialization of gender dysphoria as the decisive dogma of trans experiences consequently allows assorted transmedicalists voices to raise analogous 'mere concerns.' Namely, 'simple disagreements' regarding trans people who allegedly are not 'trans enough.'

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