

THE QUEER CRITICAL RESEARCH AND VIDEO EDITING PRACTICES OF  
*THE GENDER PROJECT*: CONSENT, COLLABORATION, AND MULTIMODALITY

By

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## ABSTRACT

### THE QUEER CRITICAL RESEARCH AND VIDEO EDITING PRACTICES OF *THE GENDER PROJECT*: CONSENT, COLLABORATION, AND MULTIMODALITY

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*The Gender Project* is a collection of four short documentaries about gender, gender identity, and sexuality. As a collection, the documentaries offer broad representations of queer identities as they intersect with race, class, education, geography, sex, and more. Each documentary was made in collaboration with participants, meaning their ideas, feedback, and time were required for completion. The purpose of working collaboratively is to bring more balance in the research relationship, with participants having agency over their involvement and representations. The methodological framework for theorizing the critical making of this project includes critical praxis, queer techne, a lesbian collective aesthetic, and researching from friendship, which structure a set of queer critical research and editing practices – consent, collaboration, and multimodality. These practices are a response to a fundamental understanding of research as inequitable, that participants bear more risk than researchers, and are left out of their own authoring. Practiced together, the contextualized and situated queer critical research practices of *The Gender Project* work toward a critical theory of making with implications in how we do research, specifically how researchers position participants, and what more robust participation can contribute to research projects.

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*"Understanding each other will compel us as honest, caring people to fight each other's oppression as though it was our own." - Leslie Feinberg*

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## INTRODUCTION TRAILER

# The Gender Project

LINK: <https://vimeo.com/161300297>

## **“Femme: Doing it Wrong”**



SYNOPSIS: More than a coming out story, “Femme: Doing it Wrong” winds the audience through Katie’s queer communities, from the local lesbian feminist bookstore to youth drag culture at a LGBT community center. These stories are mingled with playful vignettes from her life offering an intimate portrait of Katie coming to and claiming queer identity.

Runtime 14 min.

LINK: <https://vimeo.com/57497982>

## **“Trans People Do Trans Things”**



SYNOPSIS: In “Trans People Do Trans Things,” Erich invites the audience into his home for a barbecue, hosted by him in his light-up purple tutu. These scenes organize rich conversations about negotiating identities, specifically the intersections of genderqueer, transgender, working class, and whiteness. Runtime 15 min.

LINK: <https://vimeo.com/160920315>

PASSWORD: caseymilesphd

## **“Shine Bright Butch Dyke”**

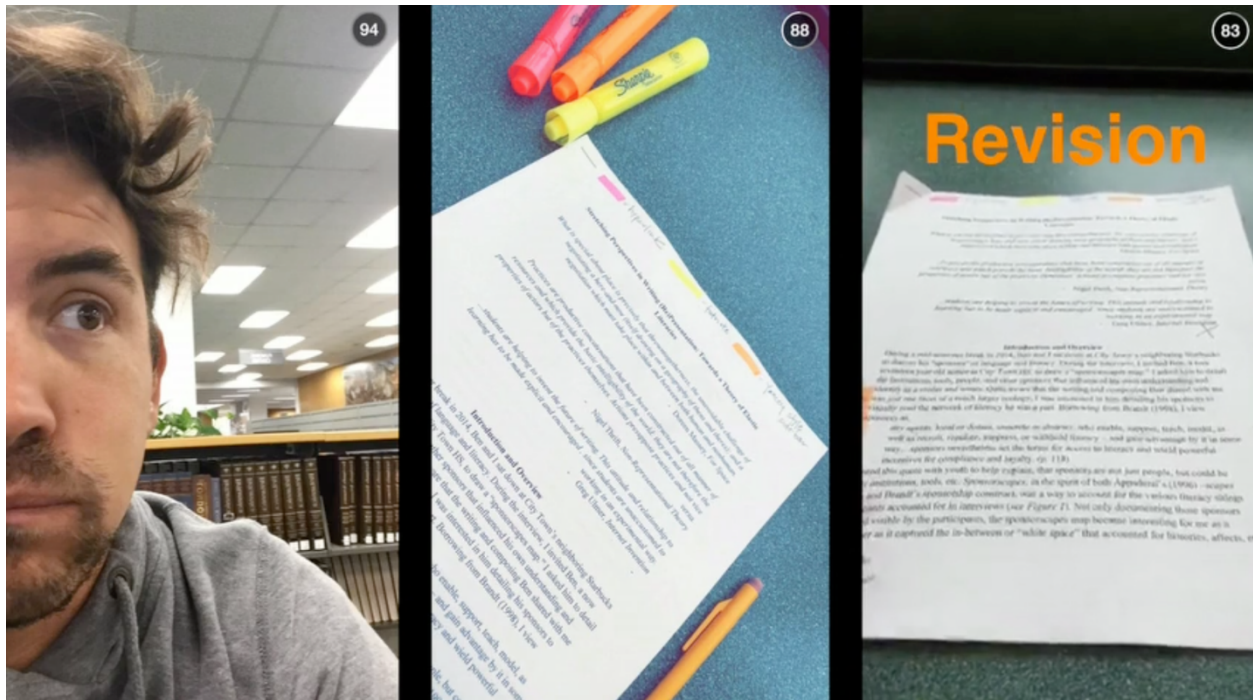


SYNOPSIS: “Shine Bright Butch Dyke” introduces Quinn, a butch dyke currently living in Albuquerque, NM. In this documentary, she speaks to coming to her masculinity through a feminist consciousness that touches every aspect of her life, from relationships to work. We follow her to the gym and play with the confusion the queer butch body elicits in heteronormative spaces. Runtime 12 min.

LINK: <https://vimeo.com/157935688>

PASSWORD: caseymilesphd

## “The Skin I’m In”



SYNOPSIS: In “The Skin I’m In,” Jon tells his story of negotiating his gender, sexuality, racial identities, and socioeconomic background in academia, online dating, and the local gay bar. We follow Jon to Esquire, a gay bar in a scene connecting his multiple identities. Jon also invites the audience along for “a day in the life” through a 24 hour snapstory curated specifically for *The Gender Project*. Runtime 14:30 min.

LINK: <https://vimeo.com/157530830>

PASSWORD: caseymilesphd

## THE QUEER CRITICAL RESEARCH AND VIDEO EDITING PRACTICES OF *THE GENDER PROJECT*: CONSENT, COLLABORATION, AND MULTIMODALITY

*The Gender Project* is a series of short documentaries about gender and sexuality made in collaboration with the subject of each documentary. Collectively, the documentaries offer broad representations of queer identities as they intersect with race, class, education, geography, sex, and more. Started in 2008, my work on *The Gender Project* has led to a critical theory of making conceptualized through critical praxis, queer techne, a lesbian collective aesthetic, and researching from friendship. From this methodology comes queer critical research practices – consent, collaboration, and multimodality – that attempt to bring more balance to the relationship between participant and researcher, arguing that while this balance cannot be equitable, it can be transparent; and through transparency, more robust representations of queer representations are made.

The guiding research questions of *The Gender Project* sought to study the relationship between multimodality and the making of identity. These questions are:

- How might multimodality provide richer ways of composing the queer, of composing queerly?
- What do queer videomaking practices lend the field's understandings of multimodal composition?
- In what ways is *The Gender Project* a model of research as a type of making?

From these questions my intention in making the documentaries of this project was to further understand the multimodality of queer making. Thus what I analyze in the scope of this essay are queer critical research practices that bring forth the multimodality of queer being as collaborators and I make video representations of queerness, in content and in practice. The practice of consent, collaboration, and multimodality, when applied together,

offer a critical theory of making that takes up identity making as multimodal composition in order to show the multimodal practices in which we are already engaged. A critical theory of making, in this way, helps us to think critically about contributions participants make in the research projects of our field, the composing students do in our classrooms, and the intellectual work we make as writing scholars.

In *Opening Spaces: Writing Technologies and Critical Research Practices*, Patricia Sullivan and James Porter advocate for methodology as “critical praxis,” a set of situated and emergent practices “that acknowledge the rhetorical situatedness of participants, writing technologies, and technology design and that recognize research as a form of political and ethical action” (15). Critical praxis is an approach to research as “an ethical doing rather than an observing of something” (108), and an understanding of methodology as rhetorical, “an explicit or implicit theory of human relations which guides the operation of methods” (11). In *The Gender Project* this means a close examination of risk and power as it shifts in the relationships between participant and researcher. In order to do this, critical praxis also requires recognizing the positions I inhabit in this project, with “praxis” understood as “a type of conduct that negotiates between positions rather than grounding itself in any particular position” (46). In my relationships with participants, I am a videomaker, friend, partner, colleague, researcher, and PhD student, all of which situate and inform my actions in particular ways. As a videomaker, I am the sole editor of the documentaries of this project, so while my work with participants is collaborative, the collaboration does not extend into the editing, though does include a multiple draft process seeking participant feedback and permission to proceed. As a friend, partner, and colleague, my relationships with participants started before, and extends beyond, this

project. This is a place to start negotiating the already existing power dynamics of our relationship in the context of this project. As a researcher and PhD student, this is my dissertation, the project I'm doing to get my degree, graduate, and get an academic job, meaning my investment in this project is separate from my participants' investment.

To further contextualize my stances in this project, I inhabit these positions as a white, masculine, queer, cisgender woman, which situates me with certain privileges and certain risks. As white, masculine, and cisgender, I am sanctioned with a level of power over specific groups of people (namely people of color, people who are feminine, and people who are transgender), which I both acknowledge and attempt to work against in *The Gender Project*. Critical praxis seeks to name these positions to bring awareness to my already situated power and privilege in the research relationship. I also bring to this project an understanding of risk from living in a queer body, from having come out and risked my relationships with family, from knowing the stories of friends who've come out and been abandoned by their families, from the risk of violence I take on entering the women's restroom, from a history of violence to queer bodies. While I understand risk from my experiences as queer, this does not mean I understand wholly the risks my participants negotiate in agreeing to participate. Sullivan and Porter write, "Research methodologies must recognize and account for the roles that participants are assigned (and play) in the course of a particular research study, just as they should account for researchers' positionings and even technologies. We further recognize that identities of participants and researchers are paradigmatically complex, interrelated, and temporal" (31). In this project, participants were recruited because of their queer identity, but the ways in which they negotiate, inhabit, and compose queerness is situated in the context of their own lives,

often profoundly intersecting with race, class, geography, family, and more. While I don't explore intersectionality in this essay, it's important to note as a theory of identity that situates my understanding of the ways power and privilege function in my relationships with participants. Thus, in *The Gender Project*, every queer story requires a different telling, a different approach to making that takes up the intersections and instability of queer experiences, participants and my own, in theorizing a critical theory of making.

A critical praxis methodology brings to the surface the function of uniquely situated and intersectional identities in sites of making, including the queer making of the relationships, meanings, and video compositions in *The Gender Project*. Queer making in this project starts with an understanding of queer lives and bodies as already multimodal, what Jonathan Alexander and Jacqueline Rhodes call "queer rhetorical practices": "a set of textual, visual, and auditory tools through which bodies and psyches are shaped and cast in particular identity formations and through which such bodies and psyches might potentially be recast and reformed" ("Queer Pleasure"). In other words, the multimodality of queer lives is in strategically taking up of various modalities in acts of survival as queer people make and remake "livable lives," what Alexander and Rhodes call "techne." In their most recent book, *Techne: Queer Meditations on Writing the Self*, Alexander and Rhodes write, "*Techne* offers an enacted and embodied exploration of the emotional impact on becoming literate in multimediated environments. Even more important, it queers those enactments and embodiments to create new genealogical and rhizomatic possibilities—looking both backwards and forwards simultaneously—as models for being differently" (Parade8). *The Gender Project* enacts techne through queer videomaking, a multimodal writing technology drawing on image, text, and sound in the making of queer

representations of the everyday lived and embodied experiences of gender and sexuality.

The videomaking of *The Gender Project* deserves careful consideration as mediated practice, particularly acknowledging the bulk of this dissertation is videos. In “Lost in Translation: Emplacement, Disruption and Digital Videography,” a video publication for *Computers and Composition Online*, Zach Warzecka argues that the field’s use of video falls back on print-based academic performances, that “through the very process of our seeking out a new revealing—a new mode of performance – conventional performance continues to emplace our range of possibilities – drawing us to remain within a normalized pattern.” In *The Gender Project*, I heed Warzecka’s argument in its resistance to print-based conventions in the performative moment of this dissertation. He further argues that we should, as teachers and makers, cultivate “a willingness to undergo the disruptive transformative-potentiality of technology” to “make space for alternative forms of videographic expression to be revealed.” I complicate this argument in my consideration of the already cultivated disruptive technologies of queer filmmaking. I position the videomaking in this project in a robust history of queer feminist filmmaking, like Barbara Hammer’s experimental lesbian feminist documentaries and Cheryl Dunye’s genre-blurring “Dunyementaries”. In *On Multimodality: New Media in Composition Studies*, Alexander and Rhodes push us toward a “historicized and poeticized understanding of new media” as they “call attention to the many ways in which our fascination with the ‘new and unexpected’ overlooks the variety of powerful rhetorical affordances from past revolutions, from older ways of doing things with (and to) words, images, and sound” (68-69). While the full analysis of the rhetorical practices of queer videomaking requires a larger piece than this essay, in my study of queer film and video I have found that queer videomaking practices

are deeply rhetorical, packed with representations *of* queer bodies *by* queer bodies *for* queer bodies, for our own pleasure and our own survival. As queer film scholar B. Ruby Rich writes of queer filmmakers, “A generation poured its heart and soul, shock and anger into modes of representation capable of spinning new styles out of old and new genres out of those that had worn out” (13).

Queer filmmaking offers a model of *historicized and poeticized* techne, drawing from the queer experiences and bodies of its makers. Alexander and Rhodes write that techne is “the enactment of theory through the very act of creating the representation” (Introduction). As the video editor of *The Gender Project*, I enact my own queer techne, my own critical practices, situated in the affordances and limitations of my experiences as a white, masculine, queer, cisgender woman. Editing video is often an immersive experience, described by Jody Shipka in relation to the production of written text as “more time-intensive and involves much more trial and error as I seek out and perfect new techniques for recording audio, editing still images and video, and deciding when and how I will incorporate speech, text, image, movement, and sound into the piece” (252). This description gets to some of the unique decisions that come with editing video. As a queer filmmaker, however, I edit in the tension between telling comprehensible stories and resisting that same comprehensibility. I want these stories to be seen, shared, remembered, and believed as representations of queer possibility, in terms of making, being, and *surviving*. But at the same time I want to draw out and work from the already subversive and disruptive bodies and lives of participants. With an understanding of the imbalance of power and risk in relationships with participants, I negotiate this tension in collaboration, while I am the sole editor of these videos, I am not the sole decision-maker. Editing is a

multimodal practice of taking participants' stories and bodies into my own hands, bringing forth a tremendous amount of vulnerability and trust in my relationships with participants. These relationships became the site of collaborative making in this project, an intentional and sustained connection between me and each participant, often existing before our work together on this project, with the goal of telling their queer story using video.

The model of collaboration I turn to in this project is a "lesbian collective aesthetic" as articulated by Alexandra Juhasz, queer feminist film and media scholar. Lesbian collectives come out of radical lesbian feminist communities of the 1970s that sought to fight oppression by sharing skills, knowledge, and resources in a non-hierarchical organizing structure. "Collective" was not just a group descriptor, but a philosophy to understand the practices and politics of the collective. In 1977, the Combahee River Collective, a Black feminist and lesbian collective, wrote "The Combahee River Collective Statement," describing how the concept of the collective defines and informs their purpose. They write, "We believe in collective process and a nonhierarchical distribution of power within our own group and in our vision of a revolutionary society. We are committed to a continual examination of our politics as they develop through criticism and self-criticism as an essential aspect of our practice" (218). Juhasz has taken this idea of lesbian collectives and conceptualized it as an aesthetic, which she describes as "...the extra-textual feminist processes of collectively making (by first discussing and leaving room for multiple interpretations) lesbian cinema and identity and then critically and communally teaching (and then conversing again) about the practices of making cinema (and identity)" ("A Lesbian Collective"). In *The Gender Project*, the lesbian collective aesthetic lends to a critical theory of making a model for collaborating from the identifying and positioning work of

critical praxis and the valuing of queer experiential knowledge and habit of techne. In practice, a lesbian collective aesthetic creates space for power dynamics to become more transparent, through ongoing dialogue and knowledge sharing, in the relationships between me and each participant.

In order to theorize collaboration as a philosophy of ethical action, I need to speak to my relationships with participants in *The Gender Project*, which are quite different from each other, from my lover and partner of 11 years to a new relationship formed through collaborating on this project. The differences in these relationships meant that the collaboration functioned differently in each project. Katie, my lover and partner, is the most intimate of these relationships. Quinn is my best friend, sharing a queer feminist orientation to the world based in our butch identities. Becca and Jon are my close friends and colleagues, having collaborated on various projects in the last few years. Erich was a personal and professional acquaintance at the beginning of our collaboration. And Kris, whose video is not included in the dissertation because the newness of our relationship required that we move slower as we got to know one another. My intention in choosing participants was to gather a wide range of identities and experiences, particularly to work against the construction of a white cisgender narrative. In seeking queer-identified participants I turned to my own queer relations, my friends. All but one of my participants is a friend in some way, someone I know on a personal level outside this project or academia in general. As I worked with participants, I noticed the function of my relationships with each participant varied depending on the dynamics of our friendship. In “Friendship as Method,” Lisa Tillmann-Healy, culture and media scholar, writes, “With friendship as method, a project's issues emerge organically, in the ebb and flow of everyday

life: leisurely walks, household projects, activist campaigns, separations, reconciliations, losses, recoveries. The unfolding path of the relationships become the path of the project” (735). Tillmann-Healy writes from the perspective of a straight friend to queer participants, but queer friendship in *The Gender Project* is situated in kinships based in shared experiences and understandings of queer self-identity. In “Queer Belongings: Kinship Theory and Queer Theory,” Elizabeth Freeman writes, “For as a practice, kinship is resolutely corporeal. Its meanings and functions draw from a repertoire of understandings about the body, from a set of strategies oriented around the body's limitations and possibilities” (298). In *The Gender Project*, collaboration occurs through the intimacy and pace of queer friendships formed out of shared understandings of our queer bodies, desires, and politics, and in turn these shared understandings of difference become the site for critical making.

However, working from friendship is not without tension. While friendships come with established levels of trust, they also come with dimensions of vulnerability and intimacy that can lead a participant to reveal too much in the context of the research, especially considering the queer stories of rejection, abandonment, and shame revealed in *The Gender Project*. In “The Intimate Insider: Negotiating Ethics of Friendship When Doing Insider Research,” Jodie Taylor writes about her experiences working as a “researcher who identifies and participates socially within queer culture” (17). Taylor offers two specific research practices that address the vulnerability of queer friendship. First, in the same way that critical praxis calls for naming participant and researcher positions, and queer techne calls for valuing queer bodies and experiences as knowledge, so too does Taylor’s “intimate insider” positionality, understanding her “social actions, interactions and performances as

part of the phenomena under investigation and not as someone distinct from it" (16). The second research practice Taylor identifies in researching from friendship is collaborative and collective. She writes, "The most constant form of effective ethical management that I have used has been to offer my informants the opportunity to review their transcripts, allowing them to add or to revoke anything that has been said in the interview context, and to view my written work in which they are cited and interpreted prior to submission for publication" (16). In this research practice, Taylor understands the risk of oversharing in working with friends as research participants. In providing participants the opportunity to add or revoke, Taylor also acknowledges participants right to their own story, and the right to the telling of their own story. In *The Gender Project*, my friendships gave me a place to start; they are also leveraged in ways that necessitated the implementation of a set of research practices designed to offer more protection to participants. In the rest of this essay, I describe the queer critical research practices of consent, collaboration, and multimodality as they arose in the collaboration with each participant.

The methodological concepts of *The Gender Project* – critical praxis, queer techne, a lesbian collective theory of collaboration, and the "intimate insider" positionality – are fundamentally about ethical actions that address the imbalance of power and risk in the research relationship. Sullivan and Porter write, "Ethics is the practical art not of avoiding the exercise of power (which is unavoidable), but of making careful decisions about how power relations are to be exercised in order to avoid domination of the other" (119). Thus the queer critical research practices of *The Gender Project* are intentional interventions that contextualize and situate power between researcher and participant. In the beginning of the research relationship, I lay out three specific protections to participants. First, they can

withdraw at any point in the process, from initial pre-filming conversations to distribution and beyond. Second, they are collaborators, meaning their ideas and decisions are valued and actionable. And third, they own, with me, the rights to all media and videos produced. I implement these protections in an attempt to redistribute assumed power, which means that I, as the researcher, take on more risk, and that I ask participants to take on more agency in the authoring. These protections establish my ethos as a researcher early in our collaboration, and are the first implementation of the queer critical research practices of consent, collaboration, and multimodality in *The Gender Project*.

The theory of consent I practice in *The Gender Project* comes from Kathleen Livingston, who writes in *The Queer Art & Rhetoric of Consent: Theories, Practices, and Pedagogies* that consent is a “queer community-based rhetoric,” which provides a more situated and contextualized framework for doing research. She writes, “...the problem with traditional understandings of consent in research (as a brief negotiation over documents) is: flattening out the bodies (people) who practice consent by limiting consent to a brief presentation of the benefits and risks limits a robust set of theoretical and practical elements in unnecessary, and potentially risky ways” (10). Rather, she writes, “Consent also has to do with boundaries and limits, power, desire, vulnerability, disclosure, risk, access, shame, histories” (5). In *The Gender Project*, this practice of consent is ongoing, from the first conversation with participants, to a multiple-draft process that asks participants permission to proceed. Practicing consent in this way means that decision-making happens in negotiation, thus not only can participants withdraw at any time, their consent is also required to for the project to proceed. In the following section, I describe the practices of consent in each collaboration, then focus on the longevity of ongoing consent with Katie in

“Femme: Doing it Wrong” before providing a specific example of the practice of consent from “The Skin I’m In” with Jon.

Consent takes different forms in each video, often negotiated with the participant based on our friendship, as well as the context of their public lives. In the past, *The Gender Project* has been public with videos uploaded to a channel on Vimeo, as well as screenings at conferences. As I wrote earlier, I define consent in this project through the work of Kathleen Livingston (who is also *Gender Project* participant in “Femme: Doing it Wrong”). She writes,

“...practicing queer community-based understandings of consent might mean asking questions like: How would that feel? How is power moving? What are the pleasures and the risks? Where is my investment? Who am I accountable to? Asking these questions early, openly, and often (persistently across the time span of a project and within the rhythms of relationships) and listening to the answers, are consistent both with practices of community-based research in the discipline and with how queer and pro-sex / self-positive feminist communities practice consent” (Livingston 21-22).

Broadly, the practice of consent in *The Gender Project* comes via lots of dialogue between me and each participant, like pre-filming and off-camera conversations that establish expectations and boundaries, and a multiple draft editing process in which participants view, provide feedback, offer suggestions and often encouragement, as I edit the videos. However, not every participant in *The Gender Project* went on to collaborate on a documentary with me. One participant, Becca, initiated her interest in being a participant after a screening and presentation of “Femme: Doing it Wrong” at CCCC 2013. Becca and I are close friends and colleagues, so I was both surprised and excited by her interest. In 2015, as I started working on the dissertation, I asked if she was still interested, and she was. We met for a pre-filming conversation to talk about the project and her experiences with, and ideas about, gender and sexuality. The stories Becca told me were deeply

personal, stories I knew from our friendship, but had not heard with specificity. We met again a week later to continue talking, this time discussing ideas for b-roll and ending with scheduling her first on-camera interview. But before we filmed, Becca decided to withdraw from the project. As her friend, I know this decision was not easy for her to tell me. But practicing consent makes the possibility of withdrawal accessible and actionable. Even though our collaboration did not result in a video, it did, however, result in a collaborative relationship in which she could, and did, say no.

Quinn established consent with the following text message a few days before I arrived in Albuquerque for filming. She wrote, “Basically consider everything a yes unless I specify a no.” She has also been a big supporter of *The Gender Project* for years, and when I asked her to be a participant she was thrilled. However, Quinn was nervous to begin filming. My response to her worry was to take up her defining of consent and bring out the video camera and film us hanging out and see what transpired. Even though she set a fairly open level of consent, I also read her nervousness with caution. This led me to frequently ask “Is this ok?” on that first day of filming. The practice of consent comes up again in the drafting process as I edited and sent drafts for Quinn to view and respond to. The third draft included the scenes in which Quinn contemplates claiming “queer” as an identity, specifically in relation to how this often marks her as transgender. This is an experience I connect with because as a masculine person I am often, like Quinn, assumed to be transgender by other queer folks. This experience motivated my decision to include this scene, and because Quinn navigates this comparison by not focusing her frustration on trans\* people, but to assert her right to claim “woman.” In her feedback to me about this section, she wrote, “I’m hesitant about including the parts where I talk about trans stuff,

but I think I'm ok because it's a legit part of my experience." I responded to Quinn's concern, writing, "In this scene I'm really connected to that experience too so I knew I needed to be both careful and authentic about it. And what you're saying isn't critical of transmen, but critical of "normals" and queer folk who insist you BE something you're not. So yeah, I tried to be really careful there but to also let it be a tension, because it is." I then asked explicitly for consent to show to my committee chair, to which she responded, "You definitely can show it to whoever you want!!!" Practicing consent from Quinn's open definition of consent, and her concern before we started filming, meant checking in early and asking "is this ok", and later, in the editing, situating my decision-making in our shared experiences with butch womanhood.

In my collaboration with Erich on "Trans People Do Trans Things," practicing consent established trust and communication in our collaboration. My instinct at the beginning of our collaboration, when we were still in conversation about this project, was to consistently remind him that he could withdraw at any time, and that any video we made together would be seen by him first, and no one else until he gave permission. I could not rely on our friendship to establish trust because at the beginning of our work together we were acquaintances, not knowing one another personally. This meant that conversations around consent happened early and often in order to establish a baseline for collaboration. In the drafting process, I sent Erich three versions; the first was short, about 3 minutes, and was intended for him to get a sense of my editing style, and for me to gauge his response to my representation of his story. His response to this draft was enthusiasm, which I carried into the next draft, which was about 14 minutes long and pretty close to done. His response to this draft was, again, enthusiasm, particularly for subtle queer gestures like when he

says “Queer sex is good,” and then places a finger on his lips. He also gave direct feedback about the scenes in which he discusses his whiteness, asking if I could add additional footage of him speaking of his whiteness in the present tense and talking about white supremacy. I responded by acknowledging his acute analysis and reiterating his feedback in terms of the actions I would take, which was to review the cut footage for a more robust development of his understanding of his own whiteness. I also asked for consent to share a draft with my committee chair, specifically if I could share this draft, a version of this draft without the scene about race, or wait to share a revised third draft. He consented to sharing the second draft with my committee chair while I made the revisions he suggested.

Practicing consent with Erich entailed reminding him early in our collaboration of his agency in the project, and then acting on his taking up of this agency as he provided critical feedback on my editorial decisions.

The practices of consent with Katie is unique because of the longevity of our collaboration. I should say here, again, that Katie is the scholar whose theory of consent I use in this project. She is also my partner of 11 years. Katie was an early participant, one of the very first in 2008, thus our collaboration offers the most to draw from in terms of the practices of consent, spanning 2008 to the present. In this time, as she’s been researching and theorizing consent, I’ve been making videos for *The Gender Project*. These collaborations with Katie provide an example of what practicing consent as ongoing looks like in *The Gender Project*. Below I’ve listed explicit moments of when I’ve sought consent since 2008.

*First Gender Project video*

- Consent to be video and audio recorded - 2008
- Consent to share video with Multimedia Writing class - 2008
- Does not consent to share on social media - 2008

- Consent to show at WPA (Minneapolis) - 2009
- Consent to show at FemRhet - 2009
- Consent to host on Vimeo channel - 2010
- Withdrew consent to have first video hosted on Vimeo - 2012

“Femme: Doing it Wrong”

- Agrees to participate on an updated video - 2012
- Informed consent form before filming - 2012
- Consent to proceed after first draft viewing - 2012
- Consent to proceed after second draft viewing - 2012
- Consent to show to Queer Rhetorics class - 2012
- Boundary set to not post on social media - 2012
- Consent to show at CCCC 2013
- Consent to show at FemRhet 2013
- Does not consent to show at CCCC 2015
- Consent to submit to college publication award - 2015
- Consent to analysis in essay for publication - 2015
- Consent to submit to *Itineration* - 2015
- Consent to use still-shots in award application - 2015
- Consent to written synopsis for grant application - 2015
- Consent to use in job materials 2015
- Does not consent to show at CCCC 2016

What’s important to note about this list is that consent is renegotiated for each new use of the video. Because I can’t predict all the ways I’ll use the video, or the ways in which a participant’s identities and ideas may change, ongoing consent offers a level of protection that keeps me in conversation with participants beyond the completion of the video. For example, Katie’s first video, made in 2008, came to no longer represent her in ways she was comfortable, so she asked me to take it down in 2012, which I did. Another example of the boundary setting that the ongoing practice of consent creates space for is an early boundary Katie set in 2008, which was that I could not share the video on social media, specifically my public Twitter and Facebook accounts. This boundary still exists to this day. The longevity of my relationship and collaboration with Katie provide an example of the practice of consent over 8 years, with Katie studying consent along the way. As a queer critical research practice, consent keeps me in dialogue with participants, requiring that I

stay in conversation about use. Practicing consent in this way takes up the instability of the unknown, the not-yet-possible, like the ways in which identities and technologies evolve and contradict over time.

The last examples of practicing consent in *The Gender Project* I identify are in the making of “The Skin I’m In” with Jon. In between filming the first and second interview, Jon and I met to catch up. My purpose for this meeting was check in, schedule the next interview, and generating ideas for more b-roll. In this meeting Jon also set new boundaries and permissions for his participation:

- Don’t host his video on my personal website
- It’s ok for me to use his video in job talks or conference presentations
- Don’t use his full name in any searchable way - video description, alt text, etc.

This was a critical moment in our collaboration, a moment when Jon was renegotiating the terms of his consent to participate. These boundaries are an attempt to predict and control use, like Katie’s boundary to not share her video on social media. But Jon’s prediction needs to be contextualized in his life at the time, when he was preparing for the academic job market and assuming a higher than normal likelihood of a Google search of his name. While Jon is queer-identified, in *The Gender Project* he has the right to determine his connections,

I next want to dwell in the practices of consent that came in me and Jon’s negotiations around including stories about his relationship with his dad. At the beginning of our first pre-filming conversation, Jon said he did not want to talk about his dad. This boundary comes up quite a bit in our collaboration as an element of consent that gets renegotiated throughout the project. In the first interview Jon talked a lot about his family, especially his dad. After the first interview we met to discuss the emerging themes, where I mentioned to Jon the boundary he set, but also noting that he talked quite a bit about his dad in the first

interview. This was a check-in moment on the boundary he set early in our collaboration. His response was to acknowledge it, and I didn't press for a change in the boundary, rather to note that it's in place and something I'm aware of. In the second interview, Jon further discussed his relationship with his dad, particularly speaking to its volatility around his coming out. I made the decision to follow Jon's lead in the violation of the boundary he set to not talk about his dad, knowing that he could withdraw from the project or choose to omit any reference to his dad. At this point, the instability of the protections I use to protect participants is evident. While my ethos is established with these protections, it is maintained in their continued practice. When I sent Jon the link to the third draft, which included the scene about his dad, I wrote, "I've included scenes where you talk about your dad in this version. I definitely want your response to this because I remember in our first meeting you said you didn't want to talk about your dad but then he came up quite a bit. So have a look and let me know what you think. No one has seen this version but me, and no one will without your permission." It was important for me to remind Jon of the boundary he set, and to offer a renegotiation of consent in consideration of that boundary. Here consent is a practice, not a stable entity or limit. Jon set a boundary early in the project, but then pushes this boundary in both filmed interviews by talking about his dad. Jon's response to the third draft, and my renegotiation of consent, was, "There is something that you do with video, that I only hope I can one day do with words. thank you for caring about me. thank you for sharing your work. and thank you for letting me be a part of what I am sure will be a fantastic grouping of stories!" The unfolding of Jon's relationships with his dad is one of the most compelling moments of "The Skin I'm In" because it sits so closely next to his sexuality, racial identity, and class status. He shares a pivotal moment in his life -

being caught coming out, the subsequent violent confrontation with his dad, and the fallout this moment had in his family. As a queer person who has also "come out" to family I understand this part of his story, but my coming out was on my own terms and not violent or detrimental to the structure of my family. As a white, middle-class person, I was editing the narrative of a gay Latino man who grew up working class, as such I needed to practice consent in a way that risked Jon's withdrawal from the project.

In this section, I have looked across the collaborations with participants to illustrate the practice of consent in *The Gender Project*. I argue that the queer critical research practice of consent is a significant shift in the power dynamic between researcher and participant as participants are invited into the decision-making process by recognizing and honoring their authority, their authoring, of their own lives. Power is then more balanced as the researcher takes on more risk, and the participant takes on more responsibility, in the progress and completion of the project. The practice of consent is a rhetorical stance on the agency of participants in research, becoming a foundation for collaboration, which is the next queer critical research practice I describe from *The Gender Project*.

The practice of collaboration sits alongside the practice of consent in this project, both requiring ongoing dialogue in which ideas, boundaries, and feedback guide our work together. In the first IRB application I submitted for this project, reviewers debated whether or not participants should be able to withdraw from the project at any time, which sparked the idea to incorporate collaborative decision-making with participants. They wrote,

"Given the fact that you have told them they can withdraw at any time or not answer any questions when interviewed, I see no need to give them the opportunity to withdraw after reading what you have concluded. In fact, I suggest you do not share the final document with them before you are going to release it. You have treated

them equitably in my opinion. If you do give them the chance to change and edit, you set yourself up for having each subject debate with you what he or she really said. This can lengthen a great deal your ability to complete the study and offers no guarantee that you will get closer to ‘truth’” (Reviewer #16).

This comment led me think of collaboration as an ethical action, that giving participants “the chance to change and edit” is exactly what this project needed in its effort to create broad representations of queer lives. Participants should be allowed to “debate” with me regarding what they “really” said because the video is first and foremost their story.

As I wrote earlier, a lesbian collective aesthetic is the theory of collaboration I practice in *The Gender Project*. One of the queer and feminist filmmakers I turn to most often for inspiration is Cheryl Dunye, who, in the “Director’s Intro” to a collection of her early works, explains why and how she started making films, stating, “I was fed up with the lack of black lesbian imagery in the world, so I decided to do something about it. I used myself as a landscape mixing the facts, fictions, and questions about storytelling. They became affectionately named Dunnymentaries – a mix of film, video, friends and a lot of heart-art.” This has been the philosophy Dunye has continued in her career, particularly in making films with representations left out of LGBT cinema and collaborating with friends (see *The Watermelon Woman*, *The OWLs*, and *Black is Blue*). In fact, Dunye and crew formed The Parliament Film Collective, a 60+ member filmmaking collective that “re-explores the possibility for enjoying the collective/lesbian creative processes and queer community, and making art together outside the mainstream” (Owls Parliament). The collective’s purpose was to collectively act on the “frustration with the limitations of both corporate and contemporary (mainstream) queer filmmaking” (Juhasz). Dunye and The Parliament Film Collective inspire my collaborations with participants in *The Gender Project*, especially in working from friendship and thinking about decision-making as collective and consensual

practice. Next I look at the practice of collaboration across *The Gender Project*, then describing more in-depth the practices of collaboration with Quinn on “Shine Bright Butch Dyke.”

In “Femme: Doing it Wrong,” Katie and I collaborated on decisions about interview locations, b-roll, and in the drafting process. In our pre-filming conversations, we talked about locations - where should the interviews take place? Where did she want to film b-roll? What did she want to be doing in the b-roll? And in what ways will the b-roll represent her queerness and femmeness? The intimacy of our relationship allowed me to make lots of suggestions about interview locations and b-roll, more so than with other participants. From the questions I asked emerged the idea of filming b-roll of Katie “getting ready,” doing her hair and putting on make-up, as well as working in her garden, as a way to play with the idea of “femme.” She also decided that home was the most comfortable place for the interviews, the first being a bit more formal in front of her bookshelves, and the second being more relaxed on the couch with a cup of coffee. The practice of collaboration here is in the ongoing dialogue which generated ideas for the filming that got at the tension in Katie’s queer femme identity. In the drafting process, the practice of collaboration is evident in the feedback Katie gave me after viewing a first draft. She noted that I had cut a reference to being from Downriver, a mostly white, working class area of metro Detroit (literally down the river from Detroit). This facet of her identity was important to her story, to the public representation of her identities, and through the practice of collaboration Katie was able to assert her vision of her queerness.

The practice of collaboration with Jon on “The Skin I’m In” is contextualized by our shared scholarly interest in studying and producing queer multimodal composition. Jon

understands the multimodal practices this project because he also works with video and multimedia in academic contexts. Having collaborated with Jon on other multimodal projects, I am familiar with his work on queer mobile media writing, which led me to suggest the idea of including Jon's own mobile media writing in "The Skin I'm In." We decided to include a "day in the life" series in which Jon shot a Snapstory on Snapchat for the explicit purpose of inclusion in *The Gender Project*. This put the camera in Jon's hands to author himself for this project. In the coming section in this essay about practicing multimodality as a queer critical research practice, I focus in depth on the footage Jon filmed for *The Gender Project*. From this example, though too, is a collaborative moment in which Jon pushed me to do more queering - more layering, more play, more incomprehensibility. As with Katie, practicing collaboration with Jon meant valuing critical feedback as actionable in guiding the practice of multimodality.

In "Trans People Do Trans Things," collaboration is evident in choosing interview locations and b-roll shots, as well as in the structure of the video, and the draft process. Erich and I were professional and personal acquaintances at the start of our collaboration; we knew of each other but had not spent much time together. Erich's choices of interview locations were both in his home, which I took as an invitation to a more private realm than had existed in our relationships before. The first interview was in his home office in front of tidy bookshelves, and the second interview was a bit more relaxed, with Erich wearing a t-shirt with "FAGGOT" across his chest, sipping from a mug that says "Transmen Make Better Lovers" at his kitchen table. Erich's decisions here are rhetorical, intentional in the materiality of these scenes as they work together in the authoring of his representation for this video. The idea to grill in a tutu was Erich's (and I was thrilled!), which to me meant he

was open and on board with the queer multimodality of this project. What I appreciate most about his idea is that it comes from Erich's own queer techne, the crafting of self in which a purple light-up tutu is a queer possibility. I write more specifically in the next section about the multimodal practices in this scene. The organization and structure of "Trans People Do Trans Things" also came to be through practicing collaboration, particularly the tutu barbecuing scenes and Erich's process of keeping track of his answers to the interview questions and topics. I interpreted the barbecuing footage as an invitation, quite literally an invitation to me and my partner for dinner, but also an invitation to queer friendship. I took up this invitation in the editing by using the barbecuing scenes to structure the entirety of the video, which opens with Erich preparing the grill and ends with him serving the food. It was clear to me in our collaboration that Erich had put time into thinking about his responses, later reflecting to me his efforts to be a "good participant" and "good collaborator". This led to frequent moments throughout his interviews where he's making sure he answered the question or said enough, often looking up to an imagined checklist. I kept these moments in the video as a way to show our collaboration, starting with me writing the interview questions, then Erich preparing robust answers to these questions as a show of being a "good collaborator." I wanted to show Erich's preparedness for the interview, so I included scenes in which he's making sure he's answered the question. I described my intention here to Erich when I sent him the first draft. His response to this idea was to ironically overlay the question he is "supposed" to be answering, which I did. After suggesting this idea, he wrote, "This process did feel very collaborative to me and we shared in the power dynamic, which I also liked" Here, Erich perfectly sums up my intentions for working collaboratively with participants.

Before moving to a specific example of collaboration with Quinn, I first want to describe the collaboration more generally in the making of “Shine Bright Butch Dyke.” Quinn and I connect on an intimate identity level as feminist, Taurus, queer butches. We have a witty and doting rapport that we both wanted to bring forward in the video. Quinn is the only participant who does not live in my area, which limited our time to film. But because of our close friendship, we were able to do all filming – interviews and b-roll – over a five-day trip to Albuquerque. Our plan started to develop a few days before the trip, with Quinn identifying locations for interviews and b-roll. For one interview, she specifically chose to be positioned in front of the “wall of dicks” at Self Serve Sexuality Resource Center, a sex toy and information shop owned by Quinn's partner, Matie. The wall of dicks is a selection of dildos of various shapes, sizes, and colors. Like Erich's purple tutu, Quinn's choice to film in front of a wall of dildos is her own queer techne, a crafting of her own image in the representational moment of “Shine Bright Butch Dyke.” In this example, the practice of collaboration is in taking up Quinn's idea. When I framed this shot, I positioned the camera a bit lower than Quinn's eye level to get as many dildos in the background as possible. Quinn's choice to film b-roll at her gym is also queer techne. In pre-filming conversations, Quinn came up with the idea to film during her regular workout to play with the confusion the queer butch body elicits in heteronormative spaces. At this suggestion, I responded with an idea to film from a voyeuristic gaze – long shots, high and low camera angles, and hidden camera positions – to mimic the feeling of surveillance and visibility that comes with being butch. While Quinn was on the cable and pulley machine and ab extension equipment, I was seated on the floor doing stretches. When Quinn was using the free weights I moved around to different machines, pretending to lift or stretch. My worry

about being caught by gym staff and patrons worked to create the camera angles and movement that make the surveillance gaze more prevalent.

Practicing collaboration continued in the drafting process of this. In the first draft, I opened with the abrasive high-pitched squawk of the recorder, much louder than it is in the finished documentary, because it's difficult to tolerate, like the butch body. In the shots of Quinn playing the recorder and singing she is playing to the camera, so I use these shots throughout this scene as Quinn's direct address to "the normals" that cannot, or refuse, to read the butch body as woman. She sings,

"Is that a woman? Yes it is.  
Your brain is confused  
Gender gender! I don't understand!  
I am a butch, I am a butch!  
What does it mean, what does it mean?  
That is my brain, that is your brain,  
Not understanding that I am a woman  
I am a woman. I am a woman.  
Not a man. None of that crap, none of that man crap.  
None of that man crap.  
I'm a woman, I'm a woman.  
Butch.  
I am just a wo- wo- woman  
I am just a woman  
Is that a man?! Is that a man?!  
No,  
It's not."

I sent Quinn a first draft of this scene describing the music choices, specifically the use of the abrasive recorder as the sound of queer confusion, and the inclusion of her laughter. Her feedback commented on the high-pitched recorder sounds as too abrasive, writing, "I think starting that way might be too intense and could potentially distract from what you are showing." This made a lot of sense to me, especially because we are showing what it's like to be watched, to persuade the audience that this experience is real and common to

butch and masculine women. I took this feedback and eased off the abrasive sound by lowering the volume on those specific sounds, and easing into the scene rather than starting with the overly abrasive noise. The practice of collaboration with Quinn is situated in the comfortable banter of our friendship and our shared understanding of butch womanhood. Our dialogue throughout the collaboration felt natural, or rather not outside the bounds of potential topics we've discussed. Thus our queer friendship brought an ease to the practices of collaboration in "Shine Bright Butch Dyke."

The queer critical research practice of collaboration of *The Gender Project* created richer, more authentic representations of queer possibility as participants became authors/authorities of their own representation. In practice, collaboration brought more balance to the research relationship. As the researcher, my responsibility shifted towards the collaborative relationship, and away from my responsibility to the institution. And as a storyteller, I hoped to tell stories that participants loved, that embraced queerness as it intersected with their unique identities, experiences, and bodies. I don't seek to define an essential and knowable "truth" in *The Gender Project*, rather multiple truths, multiple stories, multiple queer possibilities. In the final section of this essay I describe the queer critical research practice of multimodality, specifically the ways in which participants are already practicing and engaging their queer lives multimodally.

I define multimodality through the work of Jody Shipka, who in *Toward a Composition Made Whole*, in homage to Kathleen Blake Yancey's pivotal 2004 CCCC Chair's Address, defines composition as "a thing with parts – with visual-verbal or multimodal aspects – the expression of relationships and, perhaps most importantly, the result of complex, ongoing processes that are shaped by, and provide shape for, living" (17). In *The Gender Project*,

consent and collaboration are the intentionally queer “complex, ongoing processes” that ground multimodal composing in this project. My goal is to use the multimodality of videomaking to demonstrate the multimodality of queer being. Shipka further argues that “all communicative practices” are multimodal (13), which I take to mean that queer being is a set of queer communicative practices in the making of “livable lives,” lives that subvert and resist normalizations of desires and bodies. Videomaking, in particular, draws on the same multimodal tools Alexander and Rhodes identify in their understanding of queer rhetorical practices – textual, visual, and auditory (“Queer Pleasure”). Anne Frances Wysocki further describes the rhetorical decision-making practices of videomaking, writing, “When you analyze video, keep in mind the range of choices a videographer has: framing, lighting, color or black and white, visual transition between sequences, use of type or titles, if there are actors and whether those actors address the camera or not, and so on. Each frame and sequence contributes to the overall effect of a video, and so require choice” (“The Multiple,” 11). Thus in this project, I argue that queer videomaking practices are choices that “cast” and “recast,” mimicking, or perhaps constituting, the repetitive practices of identity making. In *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, Judith Butler writes, “it is only within the practices of repetitive signifying that a subversion of identity becomes possible” (198-199). *The Gender Project* turns to the already multimodal and repetitive acts of representation in its critical making of videos and identities. In “Queerness, Multimodality, and the Possibilities of Re/Orientation,” Alexander and Rhodes argue “that exploring queerness through multimodality – that is, taking advantage of increasingly rich ways of figuring and composing – may help us develop productive insights into the experiences of the queer, the possibilities of multimodal composing, and the

possibilities (and limits) of figuring the queer” (188). In *The Gender Project*, queer critical research practices of consent and collaboration, when practiced repetitively, allow collaborators and I to draw from and visualize participants’ everyday subversive gender performances. In the following section, I identify the queer practices of multimodality in *The Gender Project*, first looking broadly across the collection then focusing on the music of the gym scene in “Shine Bright Butch Dyke” and the mobile media content in “The Skin I’m In.”

In “Femme: Doing it Wrong,” practicing multimodality can be seen in Katie’s negotiation and performance of her queer femme identity and in the editing that draws this out. Across the video are scenes of Katie’s play with femininity. In one scene we see her putting on lipstick, in another she’s getting her hands dirty in the garden, in another her “stompy” boots, and yet another we see her hands wrapped around yarn and knitting needles. These scenes demonstrate Katie’s multimodal practices of queer, which together destabilize traditional notions of femme as weak or dainty that tend to uphold binary understandings of gender, showing Katie’s sense of “doing it wrong.” As Katie says in the video, “For me I feel like I’ve always been femme no matter what I’ve done.” As the editor I drew out the subversion of Katie’s queer femme identity by moving between the shots described above, by placing them in tension just as they are in Katie’s life. Another example of practicing multimodality in “Femme: Doing it Wrong” is the femme/butch dynamic in our collaboration, which I argue the queer gaze in which we see one another is a practice of multimodality. Our interaction can be seen in two scenes. First, when Katie names wearing lipstick as a flirtation with me as a butch I zoomed in on the flirtatious look she gives me behind the camera; and second, the lingering shots of Katie carefully outlining and filling in

her lips with lipstick. In these scenes our femme and butch gazes become visible, revealing a small piece of the intimacy of our relationship. Applying multimodality as a queer research practice in “Femme: Doing it Wrong,” entailed using our already multimodal practices of making identity.

The practice of multimodality is evident in “Trans People Do Trans Things” in Erich’s “reading” and barbecuing scenes. After the first interview, I identified a list of themes for him to discuss in the second interview. One of those themes was “reading” and “being read,” which led me to introduce the idea of playing with “reading” in some way in the b-roll. Erich took up this idea, choosing to be filmed in his underwear and flaming reading glasses while reading Julia Serano’s *The Whipping Girl: A Transsexual Woman on Sexism and the Scapegoating of Femininity* and Dean Spade’s *Normal Life: Administrative Violence, Critical Trans Politics and the Limits of Law*. Erich’s choices here are not incidental, but rhetorical the practice of multimodality through materiality. When I was filming this scene, the camera lingered on his body, producing the slow top-down shot of that scene. This gaze mimics and subverts the normative gaze that befalls the genderqueer and transgender body, which was our intention in playing with “reading.” And in the barbecuing scenes, gender becomes an object of multimodal play as the tutu is seen out its traditional gendered space, and a sunny barbecue in an apartment complex courtyard becomes a stage.

In “Shine Bright Butch Dyke,” the music Quinn makes and her choices in physical location for filming, specifically the gym and Self Serve Sexuality Resource Center, come from her queer practices of multimodality situated in her own queerness. Working from Quinn’s relatively open defining of consent, I let the camera roll in the casual moments

between us while I was in Albuquerque. Our first evening together she brought out her collection of hand instruments - harmonica, kazoo, recorder, conch shell, and others - and started making up songs. Quinn is a trained trumpet player, so she has musical skills combined with a desire to perform. Turning on the camera and letting it roll ended up capturing a collection of spontaneous songs, which I was able to use throughout the video. In fact, all of the music in "Shine Bright Butch Dyke" is by Quinn. These songs range from harmonica ditties to poetic musings on butch womanhood. In the gym scene that uses Quinn's song on the recorder, I wanted the audience to see her singing to the camera "I am just a woman," and letting her own and claim that identity. Quinn's song resonates with my own claim to "woman," and as the editor I draw on my own understanding of butch identity, my own claim of "woman." The practice of multimodality in this scene comes from both me and Quinn's butch identities. From this identity I also played with pink and blue color in this scene to poke at the cultural representations of these colors just as butch identity teases these assumptions. I then added a fragmented layer to these shots - tiling, mirroring, blurring - to push at the fragmentation and incompleteness of identity and being that queer people already understand. Quinn's location choices are also evidence of the multimodality as research practice. The gym scene, which I analyzed earlier in terms of practices of collaboration, plays with the surveillance of butch bodies, especially in the hyper-gendered location of a gym. The voyeur camera angles combined with Quinn's song on the experience of butch womanhood in which she often erupts with laughter, demonstrates the multimodal experience butch. Quinn also chose to film a sit-down interview in front of a wall of dicks at Self Serve. This wall of dicks is a variety of dildos arranged in a circular candle holder hanging on the wall. Positioning Quinn, a butch dyke,

in front of this wall of dildos of various shapes, sizes, and colors, is a multimodal subversion that mocks a notion of masculinity as the property of men by removing the penis from the male body.

Jon took an especially active role in producing multimodal content for *The Gender Project*, specifically his Snaps and Tweets. The first draft I sent to Jon included a static, middle-frame of the Snapstory from Jon's "day in the life" footage. This draft established a practice of multimodality with Jon, and his feedback was to do more layering with the content, suggesting adding his Tweets and other mobile media writing. A few days later we met for lunch where he gave me the directive to "Queer it up!" Inspired by this, I continued to play with mobile media writing by bringing in our text message and email conversations about the project. The ways in which we communicate are evidence of the practice of multimodality from our relationship, and including them in the video shows our collaborative relationship and friendship in these informal exchanges.

A pivotal moment in "The Skin I'm In" is Jon's story of coming out by being caught by his dad. Earlier I wrote about the practices of consent around this scene, and now I speak to the practices of multimodality. As editor and researcher, I approached telling this story with caution, knowing the boundary Jon set and his apprehension about having this story made public. I navigated this scene by not taking on the role of expert on Jon's queer experiences, rather I used my expertise with video editing to compose a story that he determines to be authentic. The practice of multimodality of this scene is in editing from friendship and understanding that while Jon and I are both queer-identified, we've come to this identity differently. Editing this scene was emotional for me as Jon's friend, and I wanted to draw out the empathy I felt here. I did this by using jump cuts to move the frame

closer and closer to Jon as he's telling this story, then cutting to his own understanding of his relationship to his Latino identity and his dad as rooted in the trauma of that violence. This is the moment when the intersections of Jon's identities emerge and we see the relations between his sexuality, gender, race, and class are fraught with tension. I wanted to bring forth these intersections, making them legible enough to be powerful while maintaining their messiness.

The practices of queer multimodality of *The Gender Project* are demonstrated in the videomaking - moving images, sound, and text - and in participants' choices of b-roll footage and play with materiality. In this sense, then, *The Gender Project* practices multimodality the the multimodal practices in which queer bodies are already engaged. As a research practice, queer multimodality emerges in the researcher/participant positionality required by a critical praxis methodology, and is enacted in the techne of queer survival. Further, the practices of multimodality in *The Gender Project* are not just my own, but are situated in our own experiences with queer identity. But in positioning the research relationship as collaborative, our queer multimodal practices of identity-making are allowed to emerge, blend, contradict as we work together to tell queer stories. In this way, *The Gender Project* destabilizes the researcher/participant relationship by acknowledging the power dynamics of the relationship and defining participants as collaborators and authors. Thus, the queer critical research practices of *The Gender Project* – consent, collaboration, and multimodality – are a response to a fundamental understanding of research as inequitable, that participants bear more risk than researchers, and are left out of authoring their own representations. Together, the contextualized and situated queer critical research practices of *The Gender Project* work

toward a critical theory of making. In *On Multimodality*, Alexander and Rhodes argue that multimodality "offers us some powerful (though not exclusive) strategies to invite people to experience an orientation (and perhaps even a bit of productive disorientation)..." (203). *The Gender Project* is this invitation, not just to experiencing the queer representations of Katie, Erich, Quinn, and Jon's orientations, but an invitation to an engagement with a critical theory of making from dis/orientation.

As I've been working on *The Gender Project* this past year, I've come to a few specific questions to pursue in future scholarship. First, what is the function of time in this project? More specifically, how does time structure the collaborative relationships? And in what ways does the practice of consent disrupt or resist time in the research process? During filming I noted that each collaboration had its own pace that seemed to correlate with the intimacy of the relationship. For example, the videos with Katie and Quinn moved much faster than with Erich and Kris, the participants I knew the least at the beginning of this project. With Kris' documentary falling out of the timeline of the dissertation. Tillmann-Healy writes on friendship and research, "The length of time needed may vary depending on whether the researcher and participants begin the study as strangers, acquaintances, friends, or close friends" (735). I found this to be true in this project; that the practice of collaboration felt "faster" with participants in relation to the intimacy of our relationship. And practicing consent meant conversations with participants that often spanned days or weeks via email, text message, and in-person meetings. This slowed the process down, but in ways that were necessary for the success of the collaboration and the project. I am interested in exploring this through Elizabeth Freeman's notion of "chrononormativity," which she describes in *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories* as "the use of time

to organize individual human bodies through maximum productivity” (3). What might it mean to resist this construction? What are the risks and penalties? In what ways does time intersect with power in the research relationship?

Another question I’ve come away with is on video editing as a research practice of multimodality. I started to touch on this using Butler’s “practices of repetitive signifying,” but I have questions about the “multi” of multimodality, particularly the layering of sound, image, and text within a rectangular frame. In what ways does the frame limit representation and subversion? I could see pursuing this question through a more in-depth study of Barbara Hammer’s experimental filmmaking, who continually seeks to play with the conventions of videomaking in filming, editing, and projection. For example, Hammer has been known to project her films onto three dimensional objects, like cubes, spheres, and even bodies. She writes, “Film projection, for me, has always been rewarding when I take control and move the projection off the static screen” (“Projection Pleasures”). In thinking about the frame as an interface or template, this question joins conversations in technical communication and digital rhetoric around “the politics of the interface” and “the rise of the template” (Selfe & Selfe 1994 and Arola 2010, respectively). What might a queer and experimental orientation to the video frame as interface, as template, bring forward in terms of composing and teaching composition? A place to turn to explore this question is queer experimental filmmaking, a move Alexander and Rhodes would call a “historical sensitivity” to new media. They write, “By expanding our sense of the history and context of mediated images, we gain a greater capacity to “read” those images in culturally and even politically significant ways” (*On Multimodality* 89). In what ways does queer experimental

filmmaking align with ideas of experimental writing in the field? And how is “experimentalism” taken up in multimodal composition?

Lastly, I turn to pedagogy and ask what might we learn from a pedagogy that practices consent, collaboration, and multimodality? Over the last two semesters I have experimented with this through collaborative decision-making with students, from having students grade each other to deciding the requirements for projects. My intention is to give students a sense of ownership and authority over their learning experience, but I’ve found that students often respond to this with frustration. In fact, in my teaching evaluations one of the biggest complaints students have is that I don’t provide enough direction. In *Toward a Composition Made Whole*, Jody Shipka lays out a “mediated activity-based multimodal framework” for teaching with and from multimodality that “requires students to assume responsibility for determining the purposes, potentials, and contexts of their work” (88). In the same way the critical theory of making of *The Gender Project* positions participants as authorities of their own lives, Shipka’s framework situates student learning in the context of their own experiences. She writes, “By refusing to hand students a list of nonnegotiable steps that must be accomplished in order to satisfy a specific course objective, the framework described here asks students to consider how communicative objectives might be accomplished in any number of ways, depending on how they decide to contextualize, frame, or situate their response to those objectives” (101). What’s missing from Shipka’s framework is an understanding of power and authority, that while she’s attempting to position students as authors of their own experiences, she is not disrupting the ways in which students are already authored by the institution. From this I ask how might incorporating a practice of consent and collaboration disrupt student’s assumptions of

power and authority? What this might look like in the classroom is frequent conversations with students about decision-making regarding coursework in relation to course goals, curriculum design, or institutional politics, to name a few. Given these questions on time, video editing, and pedagogy, it's clear to me that there is more scholarship to come from my work on *The Gender Project*.

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