GENERATIVITY AMONG LGBT OLDER ADULTS

by

KYLE L. BOWER

(Under the Direction of Denise C. Lewis)

ABSTRACT

This research project answers a call to understand more about how societal structures influence the lives of LGBT older adults and addresses the need for recognizing the individuality that exists within this broad LGBT older population. In order to understand who LGBT individuals are in old age, we must first understand the cohort they belong to, as one's past, present, and future are all components of identity—i.e. who we were, who we are, and who we hope to be. In addition, past experiences provide important contexts for present decisions and future generativity. To explain social influences, I am exploring the meaning of generativity within the context of historical, individual, familial, and relational culture. By addressing the cultural context of social influences I was able to discern the individuality that constitutes the LGBT population.

INDEX WORDS: cultural generativity; gerontology; identity formation; LGBT older adults; positive marginality

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this project to the many individuals who lost their lives during the AIDS epidemic in the United States during the end of the 20th Century. Many young men died without being able to share their stories, but their contribution to Love was not forgotten. Their memory lives on within the minds and hearts of their surviving partners, lovers, friends, and family—some of whom are depicted in this dissertation.

To the individuals who contributed to the present research. Without your willingness to share so vulnerably your stories, this dissertation would cease to exist. I hope this work honors all you have done to create a legacy that is brave, fierce, and True.

And finally, to Finn. My future. I crafted this work with you in my mind's eye every step of the way. You, my son, are where my heart lies. I dedicate this to you in hopes you may find it one day and read the stories of strength and resilience. And, that whenever you are faced with adversity, whether it is directed toward you or towards others, you are inspired to enact the virtues of those who have come before you.

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My committee deserves special thanks. You each found unique ways to show your support. You shared your books, time, resources, experience, and even baked goods. Dr. Singh, you have shown me what it is to do the work of a social justice advocate through your instruction and by your own example. Dr. Bermudez, you always encouraged me to be true to the process of writing and take the time to channel everything I feel and know into my work. And finally, Dr. Lewis, I have worked with you for five years and I have learned invaluable lessons that go beyond this dissertation. Your mentorship has been an example of kindness, collaboration, intense work ethic, and spirited fun. To you all, I intend to pay forward all you have given me as I embark on my own academic career.

And, to all those I consider my family. Thank you for sharing in this journey with me. It was an adventure that was worthwhile every step of the way and it would not have been as meaningful if I didn't have wonderful people around to love and support me. To my parents for being nervous for me so I didn't have to. To my sister for knowing me better than I know myself at times. And to Lee and Finn for your unconditional love and adding much needed dimension to my life and purpose for my soul.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Background of Study

This dissertation builds upon data collected for a pilot study, “Older LGBT Individuals and Their Caregivers' Access to and Utilization of End-of-Life Supports and Services.” Interviewed for this study were five older gay men who shared their experiences with end-of-life care. Although this pilot was designed to identify possible barriers to accessing end-of-life care, a significant theme concerning the development of one's identity emerged. Integrated into the interviews were discussions of how certain historical events, such as the HIV/AIDS crisis, impacted their lives as well as their future outlook. This commonality brought to the forefront questions concerning identity development in old age. While collecting data, I also had the opportunity to informally talk to others in the LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) community about their understanding of "LGBT community." My acquaintances described different types of connection to the community through the use of words such as community, tribe, coalition, and population. The variety of terminology inspired further questioning: how can we, as researchers, care providers, and health professionals, provide adequate services to LGBT older adults if we do not understand how they view themselves within society? Also, how have their identities over time contributed to this unique coalition we frequently refer to as the LGBT community? And how will the association with this change in the future?

Significance of Study

This research project addresses a need to understand more about how societal structures influence the lives of LGBT older adults and draws awareness to the individuality that exists within this broad population. To understand who LGBT individuals are in later life, we must first understand the generational cohort to which they belong, as the past, present, and future are all components of one's identity-i.e. who we were, who we are, and who we hope to be (Heidegger, 2010). In addition, past experiences provide essential context for present decisions (Elk, 2015) and future generativity.

This dissertation touches on ways in which LGBT older adults have reconciled past transgressions to build a foundation for future generations through their exploration of self-acceptance. I explored the meaning of generativity within the context of historical, individual, familial, and relational cultures (Rubinstein, Girling, de Medeiros, Brazda, & Hannum, 2015). Furthermore, the concept of generativity guided more in-depth exploration into older adults' understandings of identity (Alexander, Rubinstein, Goodman, and Luborsky, 1991; Erikson, 1963; Kotre, 1984; Rubinstein et al., 2015). By exploring generativity and identity separately, I was able to reintegrate the narratives that weave together past experiences, present identities, and future expectations to form a collective generative identity.

Literature Review

To understand the individuality that exists among LGBT individuals in old age, we must first understand the cohort to which they belong. One's generational cohort shapes cultural attitudes and collectively shares experiences. I begin by highlighting the significant impact the Baby Boom Generation has had on American demography, paying close attention to the heterogeneity of today's older adult population. Although there is considerable diversity among

older adults, academic literature scarcely recognizes the sub-population of LGBT elders. The marginalization of this population is due to life-long oppressions also outlined in this section. I conclude this section by introducing the concept of generativity and how it assists in conceptualizing the fluidity of identity and contributes to the futurity of a population.

Aging of the United States Population

The return of men from the armed forces after World War II ignited a baby boom that changed the demography of our country forever. Between 1946 and 1964, birth rates in the United States (U.S.) increased substantially and, although an elevated birth rate after a major world war is not uncommon, the duration of this increase was unprecedented (Colby & Ortman, 2014). The birth rate remained elevated for eighteen years, peaking in 1957 at 4.3 million births (Colby & Ortman, 2014). Due to the significant expansion of society, those born during this period have earned a distinct catchphrase and are commonly referred to as Baby Boomers or Boomers by mass media outlets. With this expansion of the U.S. population came many other changes. Infrastructure had to forever change in order support these children into adulthood. Over time, the children born within this eighteen-year span grew into young adults who were fervent activists for equality and acted as a healthy voting body (MetLife, 2010). Their diverse experiences contributed to the changing social, political, and economic climate in which they lived. Currently, this group of people is entering older adulthood, and another popular media term, "silver tsunami," has been created to track the impact this unique cohort has and will continue to have on our country.

In 2011, Boomers began turning 65, which, in the U.S. is the common age associated with retirement and age-based entitlements such as Social Security and Medicare. In 2010, people between the ages of 65 and 84 made up 11% of the population; however, the percentage

of individuals in this age group is projected to increase substantially, topping out around 18% of the population in 2030 (Colby & Ortman, 2014). With larger percentages expected, it is reasonable to assume that this age cohort will be more diverse than ever before. The continuity theory maintains that identities follow people throughout their life (Atchley, 1989) and, considering the historical context of America during the aging of this cohort, we understand Boomers are more open with their chosen identities and more outspoken about their human rights/privileges.

The Baby Boomer generation grew up in a pivotal time. Being born after World War II, they lived in a time of high prosperity and began questioning the social conformities promoted by their parents. The Boomers, as social advocates, collectively began facilitating social change through demonstrations such as the Civil Rights movement led by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and reigniting the feminist movement that started at the turn of the 20th century. In addition, this generation was responsible for advancing the gay rights movement and changing the way society viewed homosexuality (MetLife, 2010).

LGBT aging population. Fredriksen-Goldsen (2016) refers to sub-population of LGBT Baby Boomers as the Pride Generation. Compared to prior generations, this cohort is more visible within U.S. culture, reporting lower levels of identity concealment and, historically, are more outspoken about human rights (Fredriksen-Goldsen, 2016). The Pride Generation has been more socially visible and for that reason has not experienced the same level of internalized stigma as the two preceding cohorts, the Invisible Generation and the Silent Generation (Fredrikson-Golden, 2016).

It is estimated there are 2.7 million older adults who self-identify as LGBT and this number is expected to double by 2030 (Fredrikson-Goldsen, 2011; Fredrikson-Golden, 2016).

However, Gates (2011) ascertains there are many components to consider when determining the demography of the aging LGBT population. As a demographer explaining the importance of proper operationalization, Gates uses three primary constructs to estimate a population number: (1) identity, (2) type of attraction, and (3) the engagement of sexual relationships. He goes on to explain that to account for individuals in the LGBT population accurately; one must consider that the group consists of people with identities and behaviors.

LGBT Older Adults' Identities and Behaviors

The Pride Generation came of age when being identified as homosexual or transgender was not only socially unacceptable; it was against the law (Knauer, 2016), which significantly impacted the timing and ways in which individuals came out to themselves, their friends, and their families of origin. In a study of racially and ethnically diverse women and men who identify as gay, lesbian, or bisexual (N=2,733), researchers found significant differences between generational cohorts regarding the coming out process (Grov, Bimbi, Nanín, & Parsons, 2006). The oldest cohorts (55+) came out much later than those in the youngest age group, 18-24. Among women, those 55+ came out ten years later than the youngest cohort, and among men, the gap between disclosure was approximately seven years. To explain the emerging heterogeneity of the coming out process, researchers reference changing societal attitudes becoming more accepting of queer identities (Fish & Harvey, 2005; Grov et al., 2010). Furthermore, transgender/gender non-conforming (TGNC) older adults are less likely than cisgender (individuals whose gender expression is congruent with their biological sex) sexual minorities to disclose their identity (Fredriksen-Goldsen et al., 2014).

The cumulative experiences throughout their life course and living in a homophobic culture, as well as the trauma of being rejected by their families of origin and the

disenfranchisement by society, has impacted their identities in later life. Many are at an increased risk for mental health issues such as depression (de Vries & Herdt, 2012) and Fredriksen-Goldsen and colleagues (2011) found 82% of LGBT older adults (50+) reported being victimized at least once based on their sexual orientation and gender identity. In addition, 64% have been victims of discrimination three or more times. In a survey from MetLife (2010) regarding the influence of LGBT identity on preparation for aging, the majority of respondents replied that their personal and interpersonal strength, as well as their ability to overcome adversity, helped them prepare for older adulthood. Society has marred their identities, but despite the trials and tribulations these individuals have faced, they have gained considerable resilience and strength (Emlet et al., 2010; Fredriksen-Goldsen et al., 2011; Meyer et al., 2011). As they approach later adulthood, LGBT older adults are once again reforming their identities and defining how they want to be remembered.

Generativity

Erikson's Psychosocial Theory (Erikson, 1963) has provided a lasting framework to understand human development. Erikson (Erikson, 1963) envisioned human development as a life-long process that evolves as a result of various biological, social, and psychological changes (Whitbourne & Whitbourne, 2016). Although the eight stages of development are universal, the way in which individuals negotiate developmental turning points or conflicts differs substantially. Adapted from Erikson (1963), Figure 1.1 depicts each stage defined by a particular age-related ambivalence.

Stage	Conflict	Age	Culmination in Old Age
1	Trust vs. mistrust	Infancy	Appreciation of interdependence and relatedness
2	Autonomy vs. shame and doubt	1-3 years	Acceptance of the cycle of life, from integration to disintegration
3	Initiative vs. guilt	3-6 years	Humor; empathy; resilience
4	Industry vs. inferiority	6-12 years	Humility; acceptance of the course of one's life and unfulfilled hopes
5	Identity vs. identity confusion	12-19 years	Sense of complexity of life; merging of sensory, logical and aesthetic perception
6	Intimacy vs. isolation	20-25 years	Sense of complexity of relationships; value of tenderness and loving freely
7	Generativity vs. stagnation	26-64 years	Caritas, caring for others, and agape, empathy and concern
8	Integrity vs. despair	65-death	Existential identity; a sense of integrity strong enough to withstand physical disintegration

Figure 1.1 Erikson's Psychosocial Stages of Development

Over time conflicts are resolved through positive or negative outcomes, which, in turn, contribute to the acquisition of maturity later in life (Villar & Serrat, 2014). It is during the later stages of adulthood when individuals are most aware of their position within a broader context and understand the finitude of their existence (Hunter & Rowles, 2005). Generativity is the concern older adults have for the future well-being of younger generations (Erikson, 1963). Since Erikson, others have contributed to the interpretation of generativity in late life to encapsulate the broad experiences of diverse people.

Cultural generativity. Kotre (1984) considered generativity as forming within a cultural context and expanded the concept of generativity to include the entire life course. He argued that generativity should not be limited to a specific developmental stage as Erikson purposed, but rather a process of meaning-making that develops throughout the life course (Kotre, 2004). Alexander and colleagues (1991) added to the cultural component of generativity. In their study

of older American women, they pointed out the historical context as well as the Western culture influencing these women. Although the women in their research referenced childbearing and motherhood as being the focus of their generative actions, the authors challenged an American cultural concept of generativity and the emphasis placed on the biological underpinnings of the model. The authors suggested culture should be taken into consideration when exploring the notion of generativity as the definition is likely to change based on one's cultural-historical environment.

In addition to cultural-historical factors, Cohler and colleagues (1998) suggested our understanding of generativity should evolve in such a way as to account for a person's individuality as socially constructed over time. To frame the individuality of generative experiences among black, older male WWII veterans, Black and Rubinstein (2009) situated generativity within the context of survival theology that is central to African spirituality. From a social constructionist perspective, they explored the impact suffering had on generative desire among their participants. Rubinstein and colleagues (2015) further contributed to the complexity of cultural generativity by developing a framework that considers the multiple conduits (i.e. historical, individual, familial, and relational) that shape generative desire throughout life. Over the life course, these conduits impact the various ways in which individuals act generatively during older adulthood. This framework offers a broader understanding of generative contributions and allows more space for individuals to form a generative connection to society. As generativity evolves in meaning, the intergenerational impact acknowledges the potential to build human capital in later life. Fried (2017) believes generative action is an essential asset to an aging demographic. She explains the Third Demographic Dividend as harnessing multigenerational skills and knowledge that inevitably contribute to a stronger network of human

potential. In another era, these Boomers might be facing the edge of a socially constructed cliff. However, we are now in a position to understand the lasting impact of their accrued knowledge, experience, and willingness to foster enduring intergenerational connection.

Conceptual Framework

Philosophical Perspective

Philosophically, I am aligned with Heidegger's (2010) approach to phenomenology, or *hermeneutic phenomenology*, as I believe our ways of knowing our self and others is an intricately interwoven tapestry between our own truths and the truths of others and this way of knowing changes over the course of time. A cornerstone of phenomenology is the concept of *intentionality* (Vagle, 2014). According to Vagle (2014), intentionality refers to the various ways in which we are meaningfully connecting to our world. However, my philosophical interpretation of hermeneutic phenomenology is slightly postmodern, to allow for more disruption within the concept of intentionality (Ahmed, 2006; Vagle, 2014). For instance, Ahmed (2006) uses queer as a verb, by *queering* phenomenology, she says, "is to offer a different 'slant' to the concept of orientation itself" (p. 4). She proposes that we bring orientation, or the way in which we inhabit space, to the front and re-conceptualize the "spatiality of sexual desire" (p. 1). Vagle (2014) reminds us that by bringing a concept, in this instance the concept of sexuality, to the forefront we can examine it in a more intentional manner. Furthermore, we are able to deconstruct, or *queer*, the heteronormative society in which we live and explore the intentional relations that impact our perceptions. Ahmed guides our understanding of sexuality and gender though a phenomenological lens, making space for the concept to be more than a mere category, but rather, as a way of *being* in the world (Vagle, 2014; Ahmed, 2006).

In addition, I believe we are always connecting throughout our lives, reorganizing our thoughts and meanings, and then reconnecting once again. Heidegger (2010) heavily draws on the temporality of time and views past, present, and future as interconnected. However, his conceptualization of time diverges from traditional Western understanding because he does not view time as necessarily chronological, as Heidegger believes our past experiences and future expectations become a part of our present narrative and, alternatively, the present influences how we remember our past and plan for our future. To think of these time periods as only being linear would restrict their potential to influence each other. For example, take the word "normal." What someone considers normal is not only influenced by their past experiences but is also influenced by the life they live presently and how they perceive future normalcy. One's definition of the word "normal" is defined through time, and may not be confined to a particular moment.

Theoretical Perspective

Generativity theory. Although there are several interpretations of cultural generativity, this project is guided by a theoretical framework of generativity developed by Rubinstein et al. (2015) (Figure 1). Rubinstein and colleagues (2015) continue to expand on the idea of cultural generativity, adding what they term as, "dividuality" (p. 548), or the bi-directional connectedness between self and others. They maintain that the inner desire to act generatively is influenced by *others*, with others referring to individuals or the social environments in which older adults developed their identity. In their framework, they identify four cultural spheres (historical, familial, individual, and relational) that represent the context in which generative desire is formed throughout the life course. The four cultural spheres, or conduits, then influence the four foci of generativity (people, groups, things, and activities). These foci are the broad categories of generative acts expressed by older adults.

Rubinstein and colleagues (2015) define each sphere, recognizing the unique contribution each has on the individual to act generatively in later life. The historical sphere refers to the awareness of past historical events that shape one's life.[1] The familial sphere relates to familial obligations and feelings of connectedness and the individual sphere is closely connected with one's individual life course. Lastly, the relational sphere represents dyadic concerns (e.g., marital or domestic partnerships, sibling groups, or individuals sharing a household) (Rubinstein et al., 2015). According to Rubinstein and colleagues (2015), the spheres influence our understanding of how individuals act generatively in older adulthood. For example, if an individual experiences isolation from family members and society based on their sexual identity, their feelings of isolation may, in turn, shape their generative contribution to certain people or groups. They may choose to volunteer or mentor young adults who are experiencing the same isolation from family members, thus using their own experiences to connect and contribute to the positive well-being of younger generations.

Although there is particular structure to this framework, the broad nature of the spheres and foci, as well as the bi-directional pathways of influence, create space for variability. Generativity is growing to become a more inclusive concept, however, an opportunity still exists to expand our theoretical understanding of generativity. I next draw on feminist perspective to further cultivate my understanding of generativity and the meaning it holds in the lives of sexual and gender minority older adults.

[1] However, Rubinstein and colleagues (2015) also mention the historical sphere may also refer to a feeling of responsibility to pass along one's historical culture to younger generations.

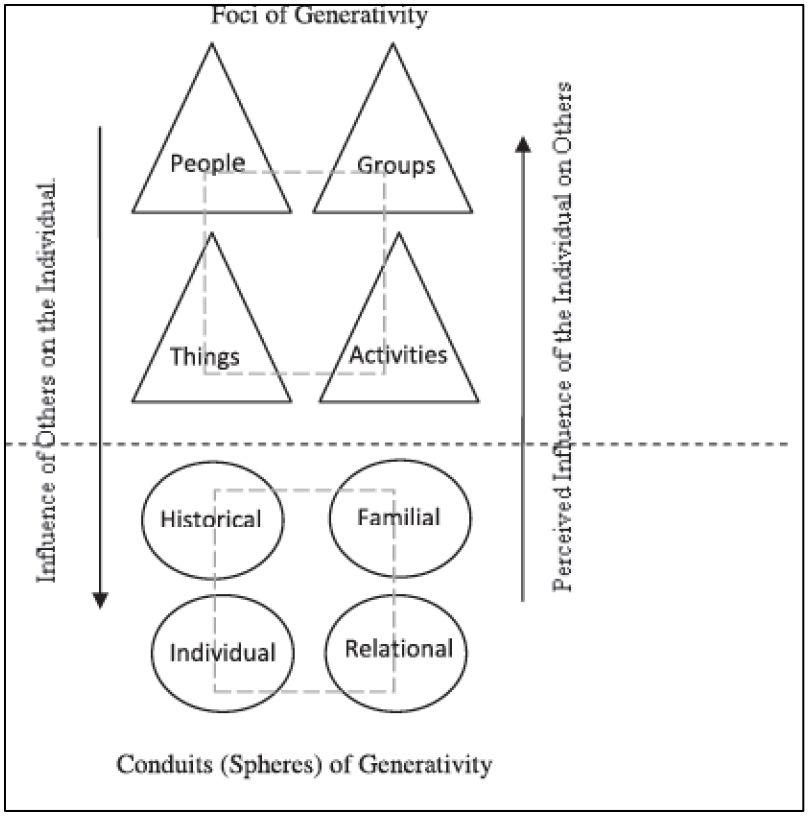

Figure 1.2. Rubinstein et al. (2015) Aspects of Generativity

Feminist Perspective. Feminist gerontology (Calasanti, 2004) as well as a sexuality/gender-oriented (post-modern) feminist perspective (Butler, 2007) guide my feminist understanding. Together, the two feminist viewpoints provide an inclusive lens to explore how LGBT older adults draw on their multiple identities across the lifespan to create generative meaning. As previously explained, generativity acknowledges the cultural significance of past, present, and future experiences. Both of these perspectives emphasize that, in order to understand the multiple identities existing among individuals, it is imperative to remember the labels used to describe specific populations are socially constructed.

Feminist gerontology. Calasanti (2004) comments that feminist gerontology is commonly misunderstood to be a theoretical avenue used only to examine people with certain minority status. However, a feminist lens allows researchers to go beyond the demographic

description and conceptualize the intersectionality and complexity of multiple identities (Allen et al., 2009). The inclusiveness of a gerontological feminist perspective focuses on the diversity found in our aging population and attempts to credit those who experience double or triple jeopardy (Dressel et al., 1997), such as the underrepresented older population of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender individuals. This theoretical perspective also aids in discovering the changing roles of women and men in our society across time and contributes to the understanding that gender roles change and are dynamically interwoven (Calasanti, 2004). However, with that said, it is incomplete to use feminism, or in this case feminist gerontology, only to label individuals and place them in a neat box for examination. Allen and colleagues (2009) powerfully explained, "Gender is not a noun-a 'being'-but a 'doing'" (Allen et al., 2009, p. 8). Meaning, we can only prescribe to labels such as heterosexual, homosexual, man, woman, or transgender/gender non-conforming because of our relations with others.

Postmodern feminism. Sexuality and gender are experiences shared and created between individuals Calasanti (2004). However, this relational component of feminist gerontology, although often goes overlooked (Calasanti, 2004). For this reason, I believe it is necessary to supplement feminist gerontology with another feminism that positions gender and sexuality in the forefront. Consistent with my epistemological conceptualization of knowledge, Dressel et al., (1997) also draw on hermeneutic phenomenology to conceptualize gender and sexual identity. She describes our understanding of sexuality and gender as simultaneously constructed through our personal experiences as well as through the normativity forced upon us by our society. In addition, Butler (2007) stresses that various identities regarding sexuality and gender exist and work through one another to create deeper meanings of self. Although the process of constructing our identity through our interpretation of our world is essential, it is not necessarily

our ultimate purpose (Butler, 1988). Instead, Butler (1988) suggests that the choices we, as individuals, make regarding our identity are our legacy. We represent a historical, cultural, and even physiological embodied self, constructed by our understanding of society. In essence, it is possible that our embodied self (i.e., who we present ourselves as) is our generative act.

Queer Theory. Halperin (2003) warns of the normalization of queer theory and the misuse of applying the perspective to all research that explores the lives of sexual or gender minority persons. To simply expand upon an existing theory, or include LGBT individuals in recruitment, as I have done, is not to queer a concept. In fact, Halperin (2003) states in doing so, dilutes queer theory and minimizes the radical foundation rooted in critical discourse and purposed for resistance and social justice (Halperin, 2003).

Although queer theory was not used in the overarching framework, I did apply it to my analysis of identity formation in Chapter Three. Through the lens of queer theory, I addressed dominant and counter narratives of identity formation throughout the life course. However, the terms "dominant" and "counter" are troublesome as they appear to be words positioned in power (i.e., a dominant narrative being interpreted as more influential than a counter narrative). Although dominant narratives are essential, Plummer (2009) ascertains that it is from the *counter stories* that we gain richness and insight into sexual identity. Furthermore, queer theory disrupts this hierarchical assumption and acknowledges the multiple pathways that contribute to the embodiment of one's sexual identity in later life. Queer theory focuses on dismantling heteronormative assumptions and aims to decentralize socially constructed ideas of *normal* (Gamson, 2000). Therefore, human sexuality, as well as the absence of, is understood to subjectively lie within the agency of human experience (Oswald, Kuvalanka, Blume, and Berkowitz, 2009).

Research Questions

This dissertation was guided by the following research questions. Each question was carefully constructed to consider the philosophical and theoretical perspectives described within. Together, the three questions address the complexity and variability regarding generative desire among LGBT older adults.

1. How have ideas of the past, present, and future experiences influenced one's understanding of generativity?
2. Within the context of feminist perspective, how does the construction of one's identity influence one's understanding of generativity?
3. How are acts of generativity influenced by the four cultural spheres proposed by Rubinstein and colleagues (2015)?
    a. Historical?
    b. Familial?
    c. Individual?
    d. Relational?

Methodology

Research Design

A qualitative research design complimented the integrated conceptual framework and allowed me to address sociocultural factors that shape identity, ideas, and experiences within the context of human agency and individuality over time. The methods below welcomed the exploration of generative meaning and the formation of identity (collective and individual) that is integral to this field of research, as meanings are continuously evolving in order to make space for those who choose to queer or resist the norms (Ahmed, 2006).

Narrative inquiry. This mode of inquiry emphasizes interpretation and context and aims to understand the perception of experiences, or the lived experience (Patton, 2002). Drawing on elements from phenomenology and heuristic inquiry, narrative inquiry builds on these two modes of inquiry, taking into consideration the temporality of one's narrative, or story (Patton, 2002). Consistent with Heidegger's (2010) view of time being non-linear, this method compliments research focused on the life course as it allows for stories to be told in a non-progressive manner (Bamberg, 2012; McAdams, 2005). Also, it allows for the narrator to emphasize their importance on certain life events, identity formations, or feelings about generativity, which may or may not prescribe to societal norms (McAdams, 2005). Although social influences are unavoidably ingrained in the story being told, narrators are afforded the freedom to tell one's personal story, however, they choose to share it. Within the scope of this method, researchers engage in a critical discourse with the narrative by examining the story being told as well as the context in which it is being shared (Bamberg, 2012; Zeilig, 2011).

Sampling Strategy

Participatory criteria. Recruitment targeted older adults who identify as a sexual or gender minority. The term sexual minority refers to any person who defines their sexual attraction, behavior, or identity as non-heterosexual (i.e., gay, lesbian, bisexual). Gender minority individuals are those who either identify or present themselves beyond the binary, male-female genders; this includes individuals who identify as transgender, transsexual, intersex, gender-queer, or gender non-conforming.

In addition to identifying as a sexual or gender minority, participants had to be 45 years old or older. In determining the age qualification for this study, I considered the subjectivity of age. Our Western society considers anyone 65 or over to be an older adult. However, gerontologists continually question chronological age as being a determining factor of older adulthood solely based on eligibility for certain state and federal entitlement programs in the United States. The age at which someone becomes, or considers themselves to be, an older adult is a socially constructed idea and is subjective. However, for ethical reasons cited by the University of Georgia Institutional Review Board (IRB), an age-based criterion for recruitment was required. When creating the standard, I took into consideration two factors: one was my generativity framework (i.e., at what age would I not be able to discuss generative desires with potential participants?) and my intended population (i.e., among LGBT individuals, what is considered older adulthood?). Based on the literature (presented in the literature review) I determined 45 was an appropriate age to establish a cutoff. At the age of 45, it is reasonable to expect individuals to have generative thoughts and considering the shortened life expectancy of my population, it is also reasonable to expect individuals to view themselves older at this age.

Although I expected the average age of my sample to be much older than 45, I did not want to discount the compelling experiences of younger adults based on a numerical factor.

Recruitment. I recruited participants through several regional offices of Services & Advocacy for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Elders (SAGE). I contacted the following SAGE chapters via email or phone: New York (four offices within the state: Long Island, Hudson Valley, Rochester, and Syracuse), Illinois (two offices within the state: Chicago and Forest Park), Colorado (one office in Denver), and Georgia (one office in Atlanta). The email I sent used a script approved by IRB (APPENDIX A) in addition to a study description, flyer for distribution, and the interview protocol (APPENDICES B-D). I received one response from a SAGE chapter in the Southeast region of the United States. Connecting with this division yielded six interviews (three gay cisgender men and three lesbian cisgender women).

In addition to contacting SAGE chapters, I also shared the invitation for participation through various electronic listservs. I had direct access to one listserv and received responses; however, only one participant (gay, transgender male) was recruited using this outreach tool. The second listserv, which I did not have direct access to and relied on a professional colleague to share the information on my behalf, yielded three interviews (one queer female, one gay cisgender man, one transgender female). More notable was the snowball effect that took place regarding this recruitment strategy. After receiving information about my study, an individual contacted me asking if they could share this with a gay male social group. They forwarded the study description to a group via private email and Facebook networks. From this endeavor, I recruited nine more participants to the study (a total of 16 men contacted me).

***Saturation*.** Recruitment concluded primarily due to the limited time I had to complete this project. Given the time I had, I met saturation among gay cisgender men. Their responses,

though unique to their own life experiences, began to show repetitive patterns, and after 12 interviews, did not contribute considerable nuance to the codebook (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). Although I met saturation among this subpopulation of LGBT older adults, I had difficulty recruiting lesbian, cis-women, and those who identified as a gender minority. The obstacles I faced seem to be common among qualitative research. Guest and colleagues (2006) address the lack of time and exorbitant cost it requires to run a methodologically rigorous qualitative study with their data set of 60 African women who were at an elevated risk for contracting HIV. Although they had a sufficient data set based on N alone, Guest et al. (2006) determined through an analysis of internal consistency of code frequencies that their sample reached saturation after conducting 12 interviews. Their findings contribute to the ambiguous definition of theoretical saturation in qualitative research, which they cite as being insufficient and methodologically variant. Mason (2010) also questioned saturation standards and analyzed sample sizes among qualitative research publications, clustering by methodological approach. His analysis noted the variability of sample sizes, ranging from 95 to 1 (M=31). Interestingly, a frequency distribution showed sample sizes clustered around groups of 10 (the highest prevalence occurring with 20 and 30 participants, followed by 40 and 10). Mason (2010) points out there is no methodological reason for this, and if saturation was the determining criteria of concluding data collection among researchers then the distribution should be equal across all values. His findings are consistent with existing literature that the operationalization of saturation is arbitrary and requires further exploration.

Guest and colleagues (2010) caution that although they found saturation at 12 interviews, readers should create their criteria based on the scope of the study, the question(s) or aims the research intends to answer, and the level of homogeny of the sample. In the present study,

recruitment of lesbian cis-female participants, as well as TGNC participants, is ongoing as I do not have enough interviews to constitute a homogenous sample of either group. As I continue to gather data, I will reflexively address the issue of saturation, relying on existing literature and the overall data set to determine when recruitment should end.

Data collection. Interviews were conducted in-person and via videoconferencing, lasting 55 minutes to 130 minutes. Of the interviews conducted in person, all took place in the Southeastern region of the U.S. Interviewees were encouraged to select an interview location that was most convenient for them and offered a comfortable atmosphere where they would feel secure disclosing private information. Many chose their personal homes, a private space within a public establishment such as a café or library, or preferred to come to my office. The person who was interviewed via teleconferences was in their home while I was in my office.

Interviews began by giving two consent forms to each participant, one to be signed and returned to the interviewer and another they could keep for their reference. The consent procedure, approved by the IRB, required participants to read the form entirely, ask additional questions if necessary, and sign if consented. As part of consent, participants were welcomed to share an item(s) or artifact(s) they felt enriched their narrative, however, very few did. In addition, the consent procedure informed participants they would receive a $20 gift card in return for volunteering up to 2 hours of their time and $10 if a second, shorter interview was required to clarify or gather more information. Interviews did not require a formal follow up. However, there were instances in which participants emailed me to share additional historical facts, insights, or gratitude for the opportunity. These emails were saved as secondary data, but participants were not given an incentive in these instances.

Interview guide. The interview protocol (Appendix D) is a modified version of the original format implemented by Rubinstein and colleagues (2015). The researchers used their interview guide to build a framework of generativity theory. They explored generative acts among 200 older American women with and without children. Consistent with the original, the interview protocol used in this study was broken down into three subsections: past, present, and future. However, the interview protocol created by Rubinstein and colleagues (2015) used language assuming heteronormative standards and was unsuitably long for the design of this study. Narrative inquiry is characterized as having few questions, as to allow for the participant to self-select their life histories (Holstien & Gubrium, 2012; McAdams, 2005). I amended the language to be more universal and chose select questions that specifically prompted generative reflection, such as, "Suppose you were asked to make a contribution to a time capsule, one that would not be opened for 100 years. What would you put in it?" or "Suppose, further, they asked you-as an older person-to write down some advice on how to live that you thought would be as good 100 years from now as it is today. What would you write down?"

Interviews began by asking the participants to describe their past, frequently the interviewer prompted, "... Past can mean anything from what you had for lunch yesterday to where you grew up as a child...." Consistent with life review/narrative inquiry, interviews were conversational and allowed each participant to tell their life story as they conceptualized it. Generally, the interviews took a linear pattern, beginning with past, moving to present, and concluding with future thoughts on life and legacy. Although the interviews were overall linear, some participants were prone to move between past, present, and future in a non-linear fashion.

Reflection and reflexivity. I engaged in both reflexive and reflective practice throughout the data collection and analysis processes. Reflexivity, or the process by which researchers also

examine themselves as well as their participants (Preissle & deMarrais, 2015) coincided with data collection and analysis. Reflexivity is punctuated by the flexibility of the researcher to change and adapt to the research as information emerges. Preissle & deMarrais (2015) underline the multiple roles of a researcher that contribute to our learning, as we typically conclude a research project by learning as much about ourselves as we do the people who we are studying. To record my development as well as how my viewpoints had shifted and changed over the course of this project, I kept a reflective journal. Reflective notes were stored in ATLAS.ti for Mac, a qualitative data management software, in the form of notes and memos. I explain the memoing technique I used while analyzing data in ATLAS.ti in more detail under Analysis.

Data storage. Raw data (i.e., audio recordings and hand-written interview notes) were stored in a locked cabinet located in the LIFE Lab, a research lab within the Department of Human Development and Family Science at the University of Georgia. LIFE Lab is under the direction of Dr. Denise C. Lewis and explores life course, intergenerational interactions, family networks, and human engagement among underserved and underrepresented populations. All audio recordings used in this study were fully transcribed and stored on external hardware as well as a virtual platform that was deemed secure by the University of Georgia. During the transcription process, the data were cleaned of all identifying information and interviews were labeled with a pseudonym structure, sexuality+gender+age_interview order, approved by IRB. I also transcribed the notes I took by hand during the interviews, as I relied on these for reference during the data organization phase. I destroyed the notebook once transcribed, and all data were confirmed and verified. Only de-identified transcriptions will be retained for any future analysis that may occur.

Analysis

The first step of the analysis process began with transcribing interviews in their entirety by members of LIFE Lab. Each transcriber followed a transcription protocol (Appendix E) to ensure a uniform transcription process. Two undergraduate research assistants transcribed the majority of the interviews. However, other members of LIFE Lab contributed to this time-intensive process. At this time, and per the protocol, all transcriber removed identifying information and assigned pseudonyms to each transcription file. After transcription and content checked for inaccuracies, data were uploaded to ATLAS.ti for Mac, a software program used to assist with data storage, coding, and retrieval.

Coding. Narrative inquiry allows researchers the ability to; 1) examine the structure of the story being told, 2) address the temporality of narratives which are suspended in time and situated within a developmental life process, and 3) acknowledge the presence of meaning-making between the story teller and the listener (Zeilig, 2011). Narrative methodologists suggest integrating multiple perspectives into the analysis to address these foundational aspects of narrative inquiry (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998; Holstein & Gubrium, 2012; McAdams, 2005; Patton, 2002). Holstein and Gubrium (2012) stress the importance of relating narratives to theory in order to establish empirical significance, without theoretical grounding the narratives lack cultural and social relevance and delegitimize narrative analysis. To avoid this potential pitfall, my coding process was guided by the generativity theory (Rubinstein et al., 2015) and the critical framework I introduced earlier in this chapter.

Codes were first operationalized using the commenting feature provided by ATLAS.ti. This is an essential step while engaging an iterative data analysis (Friese, 2014). Each code began with a definition grounded in literature; however, as the analysis evolved so did my

definition of specific codes. ATLAS.ti allows space for researchers to question their coding structure and contribute additional insights gained from the data. Table 1.1 shows two preliminary code groups which were grounded in generativity theory (Rubinstein et al., 2015). Although the code names originated from the literature, the code comments were informed by the data.

Table 1.1. *Generativity Coding Structure*

Code Groups	**Code Comment**
Foci of Generativity	
people	Relationships with younger persons or caring for parents. May also include mentoring younger students, family members, or acquaintances.
groups	Affiliation with organizations through work, hobby, or advocacy.
things	Objects that are personally significant. For example, photos, art, collections, memorabilia, journals and diaries, family heirlooms to which individuals may feel attached. These things may not necessarily be tangible, but also include teachings, experience, or advice.
activities	Activities that bring pleasure both the participant as well as to others. For example, volunteerism, advocacy, or political.
Spheres of Generativity	
historical	Awareness of historical events and traditions that have been impactful throughout their life. For example, AIDS/HIV, civil rights, or political leaders.
familial	Anyone the participant considered a family relation. Is not confined by biological connection. Also included pets.
individual	Attributes that are descriptive of the individual and who they have become in later life. Includes the intersection of various identities beyond gender and sexuality.
relational	Relationships that go beyond family and have impacted the participant in a significant way. Speaks to the type of relationship, the meaning, the evolution, or the disillusionment of the connection the participant had with another being (human or animal).

Note. Four identity codes are displayed within a code group, which is an organizational tool to help users analyze and conceptualize the data in a meaningful way.

Furthermore, commenting on codes throughout the analytical process helped me determine when codes no longer fit the complexity of the narratives. An example is seen in Table 1.2. I identified an emerging theme of identity and I created a code, *identity formation,* which I defined as the process of forming ones' sexual or gender identity throughout life. However, as I continued to analyze the data I realized there were different aspects of identity formation emerging and my original code was too vague. Writing code comments helped me differentiate between affirmation of identity, awareness of identity, disclosure of identity, and embodiment of identity, which later constituted the identity code group.

Table 1.2. *Identity Code Group*

Codes	**Code Comment**
identity, affirmation of	Experiences that affirm one's sexual identity. Can be approval from others, permission to self, or an experience or intimate connection that affirms sexual or gender identity
identity, awareness of	The inner understanding of one's sexual or gender identity
identity, disclosure of	The act of disclosing gender or sexual identity publicly or talking about the experience of a disclosure moment (either wanted or not)
identity, embodiment of	The shifting of one's personal and social identity. Represents their current connection or relationship to their identity

Note. Four identity codes are displayed within a code group, which is an organizational tool to help users analyze and conceptualize the data in a meaningful way.

Memoing. While I was coding, I was simultaneously journaling my thoughts and interactions with the data. My reflective, conceptual, analytical notes all became a part of my reflexive process. I recorded contemplative notes by hand during and after each interview. These were stored in a small notebook and were later transcribed and uploaded to ATLAS.ti for Mac. These notes helped me remember pertinent information while the interview was going on. These

notes were in bullet form and helped me after the interview to remember particular pieces of information I felt stood out in the interview. After the interview, I expanded upon specific bulleted points and used this time to ask questions that might link the interview to existing research.

The next type of memo I recorded were conceptual notes. I continued to read literature while collecting data and if something stuck out in my mind as being relevant, I would record my thoughts, questions, and ideas for later. Engaging in this process also provided an audit-trail so-to-speak. I was able to reference when and how ideas developed, which in turn informed my analysis. The notes acted as reminders for future reflection, which occurred after each interview and throughout the analysis process.

Data Visualization. During analysis, I wanted to highlight the uniqueness of each individual and demonstrate the different pathways they took to establish their identity in later adulthood. Chapter 2 presents a visual representation of the data in the form of handprints which were intentionally chosen to represent the individuality of participants. To create the images provided in the following chapter, I wrote narrative summaries for each participant and then uploaded the summaries into software that organized the words into a symbolic image. It is important to note that the visualization of data was not used for analysis, rather, as a more impactful way for data to be displayed alongside the narrative thematic analysis and demonstrate the fluidity of identity.

Chapter Sequence

The following chapters are consistent with an embedded manuscript style dissertation. Chapter Two highlights an essential step of my methodological rigor, which was to describe each participant in rich detail in order to provide important context for the subsequent narrative

analysis. Written depictions are paired with a visual representation, which is presented in the form of a handprint that symbolizes the uniqueness and individuality that exists within this project. This chapter also contains my subjective views, opinions, and observations that have become part of the data I present in the following chapters.

Chapter Three discusses identity formation among gay men who were all born between 1946 and 1964. This birth cohort was the largest sub-group within the entire sample (N=18), and they shared similar demographic characteristics. However, their individual social, personal, and narrative identities diverge to represent distinctive embodied selves. Guided by queer theory and feminist gerontology, findings are organized into dominant and counter-narratives that represent the subjective experiences contributing to identity formation throughout life. I then conclude with a discussion of how our recognition of sexual individually in later life can inform more inclusive practices from which future cohorts may benefit.

The fourth chapter explores the meaning of generativity within the context of stigma that is experienced throughout the life course. Generativity has been found to result in positive well-being during later life (de Vries, 2015; Emlet et al., 2010), which is important to those who have been recipients of lifelong enacted and felt stigma. By addressing the social influences that impact generativity I have been able to identify ways in which stigma has acted on the lives of the participants to inform their understanding of generativity and their ability to leave a legacy for future generations to discover. Three themes emerged from this work: HIV/AIDS, the absence of role models, and religious stigma. The paper concludes with a discussion of resilience and positive marginality that highlights the positive outcomes of these individuals.

Chapter Five concludes with a discussion of a collective generative identity. Shaping Identities, Building Legacies, Providing Foundations, and Teaching Self-acceptance provides

structure to the individual narratives presented in earlier chapters and contributes to our understanding of the formation of generative desire among LGBT older adults. Through generative action, these older adults have found greater meaning in their battle for survival, and their positive marginality (Unger, 2000) now frames their legacy of engaging others in their work towards a kinder and more inclusive society. Although each paper is capable of standing on its own, together they contribute to a multidimensional view of identity, generativity, and legacy in a modern era.

CHAPTER TWO

SUBJECTIVITYAND DATA VISUALIZATION

Introduction

I originally explored the idea of depicting narratives visually while preparing for a presentation using this data. I was allotted approximately 10 minutes to present, and I knew I could not display all the intricacies of multiple identities in that time, and I felt I needed a visual to convey the richness of these life stories. Although these men were similar in their sexual identity, their pathways to establishing their sexual identity were varied and as unique to them as a thumbprint, for example. Along with this thought, I found an image: descriptive words creating the swirling lines of a finger, also known as a Wordle. As the concept continued to evolve, I further questioned the thumbprint and the symbolism attached. A thumbprint, although unique, is fixed; and remains constant from the time we are born to old age. However, identities are not fixed; instead, they change throughout our lives and are impacted in numerous ways and by many factors, much like the lines on our hands. Giles, Lenard, and Flynn (2005) explain palmistry, or palm reading is the art of interpreting a moving map, "The map of your hand is a map of a moment-this moment. As your life story progresses and changes, its map, your hand, adjusts to reflect those changes" (p. 5).

A handprint allows for the complexities of identity to change and shift over time. Also, palm readers comprehend the contextual element of a reading. For example, the meaning of a long lifeline could be interpreted optimistically by a young mother, but to an older man who lost a loved one, it could be a lonely discovery. The narratives I collected from these individuals in

2016 have likely changed slightly, if not in more impactful ways. The handprints presented here are representative of their lives, their identities, at the specific time of the interview and during a distinct moment in their life. Although palmistry and scientific research do not typically have much in common, I appreciate the hand as a symbol of individuality, emotions, talents, health, strength, relationships, behaviors, and fears (Giles & Lenard, 1999), and I am eager to explore this art through a scientific lens.

Methods

Data Visualization

More common forms of data visualization, such as bar/line graphs, tables, and pie charts, have been accepted accessories to research for centuries (Diatz, 2016). However, these visualizations routinely rely on numbers to portray the data while narrative methods use verbal and visual components of everyday life to create and interpret meaning (Riessman, 2008). Common to narrative inquiry, metaphors depict life stories (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007), such as a road traveled, flowing with ocean tides, or chapters in an open book. However, Pinnegar and Daynes (2007) caution against using metaphors as the imagery can further limit data to a specific meaning. To account for this possibility, I chose the image of a handprint to represent the fluidity of identity as it embraces the multiple layers, contexts, and meanings given to ones' individuality over time.

Instrument. I selected a word visualization tool, WordArt.com (https://wordart.com), which allowed for the most flexibility in creating the images. ATLAS.ti offers a similar analytical instrument, a tag cloud, however, it does not permit as much design flexibility as other visualization resources. WordArt.com allows users to reposition words, choose the layout of the

words (i.e., horizontal, vertical, random, or a combination) and offers several different text fonts, sizes, and colors.

I uploaded narrative summaries to WordArt.com. WordArt.com conducted a frequency analysis of the text; the more recurrent the word, the larger and more prominent it was displayed in the image. In comparison to a tag cloud, WordArt.com was also more efficient in generating word images as it automatically deleted parts of speech such as articles and conjunctions that do not hold inherent meaning to the overall narrative, thus streamlining the process. I then went through the word list and deleted words that were not significant to the narrative (e.g., very, really, too). I could have worked around some of the limitations of tag clouds in ATLAS.ti, however, the flexibility of WordArt.com gave me the ability to co-construct the images and was critical to establishing reliability and validity of the output.

Validity and reliability. It is important to note that these word clouds were not used for analysis. I had already conducted the thematic analysis, and the methods I describe here created a way for data to be displayed alongside the written summaries. Additional measures were taken to strengthen the validity of the visualization tool. A common concern regarding visualization tools, such as WordArt.com, is that these programs do not understand context and consider each word as an individual piece of data (McNaught & Lam, 2010). To overcome this challenge, I amended the image to more accurately display words and phrases. For instance, there were times when words were randomly generated too close together, and visually it looked as if the words were related, such as "died" and "himself." The person had experienced death, but obviously not their own. When this happened, I would readjust the angle of the word, move it to another part of the handprint, or delete the word from the list (in the case it was not significant to the summary).

The final step of this process was to contact one of the participants and ask him if he would provide feedback on his handprint. He responded, "This is fascinating... I wouldn't suggest any changes. If this is the way the program interpreted the summary, then for consistency with all the other summaries, I don't think it's a good idea for anyone to tamper with them." I took his comment as affirmation of the analytical process.

Findings

In this section I present nineteen stories of identity. I created the first eighteen stories from the narrative interviews that comprise this project. I organized individuals based on the order in which I interviewed them. Several couples participated in this study, and I portray their individual and linked lives within the narrative summaries. A visual representation of the data joins each story. The final narrative and paired visual I include is my own. I have chosen to include myself in this section as I feel I have become a participant in my research; as I was continuously learning and evolving along-side the project. It seemed only fitting to include myself in this vulnerable process of depicting the subjectivity and temporality of identity. I conclude this chapter with my current perceptions, views, and thoughts for further exploration that I hope will be addressed as this project continues to grow and include more voices.

Soni (57)

Soni lives with his wife in a remote town in the Western region of the United States. Soni identifies as male and presents as a man in his day-to-day life, however, during his interview he recognized his transgender identity and spoke candidly about his transition. His wife also experienced a gender transition, however, does not acknowledge a transgender identity only her female identity. The two met online through a support chat group and have been married for close to ten years.

Soni begins his life story by describing his family of origin, their continued support, and his awareness of gender as a child, saying "I was always very much a tomboy and wanted to play football with my brother and didn't care a hoot about playing with my dolls with my sister or anything like that." Soni says puberty was a difficult time for him as he felt he was being "betrayed" by his body, which further complicated his understanding of his physical appearance. It was during high school when his parents sought out a mental health professional to help him with his depression, which Soni says was:

> ...a total waste of time because the psychiatrist was an idiot and he was a very Freudian guy and everything was about sex for him. I wasn't going to go there with him, so we spent most our time staring at each other, not doing anything useful.

Soni spent his early years trying to find clinical help, but he says many never brought up issues of gender, only sexuality. In his early 20's he was hospitalized after he attempted suicide. He recalls he knew he was "a guy in the wrong body," but did not know what he could do about it:

> I had heard of transsexuals probably once or twice in my life. And always a male to female, I had never heard of female to male people being treated or even existing. The only thing I had heard about male to females was not good stuff. It was a scandal and so the image that I would have in my head at that point in my life would probably be more consistent with a transvestite hooker than an actual transsexual.

His understanding of his own gender identity evolved through the relationships he formed with trusted mental health providers as well as gaining access to the World Wide Web. With the advent of the Internet, Soni explains he was able to access a much larger network of information and connect with others who were going through similar experiences. He was also able to find doctors who were willing to prescribe hormones and perform gender-affirming surgeries. Once

he started down the path of transitioning from female to male, Soni describes feeling his physical-self become more cohesive with his spiritual and mental-self. Today, he is able to laugh and talk openly about his past, which he says he would not have been able to do prior to his transition.

As an older adult, Soni admits to having difficulty linking together his two gendered lives:

> I've now been on hormones for seventeen years and living as a man for seventeen years. And, the first forty years of my life, I mean, I can pull it up and talk about it, but to me it's a bad dream, it's an all wrong nightmare that I can't believe I survived, that I barely survived.

He is adamant he would never go back and refers to his transition from female to male his proudest accomplishment. He wants younger adults who are questioning their identity to know, "You're never going to get free of it, it's not ever going to go away, you can't cure it. But, you will be much happier if you can become who you're supposed to be." Soni may not have been able to achieve perfection, but through his spirituality he has found peace and a positive sense of well-being.

Figure 2.1. Soni's Handprint.

Sam (69)

Although Sam recalls understanding something was different, he lived a very heteronormative existence, going to an all-male college, marrying soon after graduation, finding a stable job, and becoming a father of two. He was on the path to a "happy" life, however, Sam explains he was anything but happy. He knew internally something was different and felt a sense of isolation, as if no one else in the world was gay. Feeling alone in his thoughts and interpreting his attraction to other men as a symptom of youthful angst, rather than part of his male identity; Sam closeted himself until later in life.

Sam shares the pressure he felt to maintain his heteronormative lifestyle and he turned to alcohol as a way to self-medicate. After his second child was born he came out to his wife. They agreed they would stay married so they could raise their children together. Sam vividly recalls the moment, years later, when he knew he could no longer stay married to his wife:

> We came home and my wife said, 'I don't understand why we can't stay together because you've already told me what's going on in your life and I just think we should stay together.' And I said, 'We just went to the movies tonight and we both lusted after the same person in the movie, but I can't talk about it.' And I remember that really clearly. That was the time I had to leave, I just could not do it anymore. Because even though I was out to her, I could not talk to her about it, or live my life the way I felt I should.

His children reacted differently to the news their dad was gay. Sam says his son was very accepting, or as accepting as any ten year old can be. His son enjoyed spending time with him and formed a close relationship with Sam's new partner. He says his daughter had more difficulty with the transition; however, over time she became more affirming of her father. Sam shares a special memory of her wedding day, "At her wedding she picked out the father daughter

dance and I didn't know what it was until I went to dance with her and it was Billy Joel 'I Love You Just the Way You Are.'" Although Sam has experienced considerable change in his life, being a father was always important:

> And I'm very fortunate to have children, and I realize that there's a lot of gay men and lesbians who would probably like to be parents and just don't have children. I never say I'm sorry I got married because if I said that then it's almost saying like I'm rejecting my kids and I love my kids, I love being a dad.

Sam recalls his first relationship after his marriage ended. He met a man while in recovery from alcohol abuse. Unfortunately, the relationship ended after thirteen years because his partner could not continue his sobriety and ultimately died from health complications related to his alcoholism. Although Sam has loved and lost throughout his life, his greatest love and loss was that of his dog. He sentimentally describes the close bond he had with the animal, even closer than most of his human relationships.

In his later life, Sam has come to terms with the ways in which others have dealt with his identity as a gay man. He has healthy relationships with both his children, found peace with his parents before they passed, and, although he no longer communicates with his ex-wife, he acknowledges she needs to travel her own journey to reconciliation. He advocates for honest living and says:

> It's good to say there are bumps. I mean I can't deny that. It's how you live your life now that makes it good. You know what, if somebody doesn't like me because of who I am, bye! I'm too old to put up with that shit. I don't need it.

His experiences have shaped his life and he embraces all aspects, the good with the bad. Sam is proud to be the gay man he has become and has always known himself to be.

Figure 2.2. Sam's Handprint.

Joe (49)

Growing up a tomboy, Joe says she found an early love for sports, "That was my outlet because that's where I got all my energy out and I could be this tomboy and it was fine." She recalls her earliest memories of knowing she was attracted to girls were in high school. It was during adolescence when she first had an intimate connection with another girl and from then on identified as a lesbian. After a difficult breakup, Joe says she came out to her mother who remained the only one who knew Joe was a lesbian for many years.

As a young adult, Joe says she had many failed relationships and shares she is a recovering alcoholic. She explains that in her early twenties she grew tired of always needing a drink and began attending Alcoholic Anonymous meetings and group therapy. It was through these groups where she says she eventually met her current partner. Their relationship began as a friendship and grew into a life-long love. Joe and her partner have been together for just over 20 years and in 1999 they invited friends and family to witness their commitment ceremony.

The commitment ceremony marked an important time in Joe's life for many reasons. She and her partner wanted to create a unique experience that was representative of their relationship. She recounts, "We planned it for like a year. We wrote our vows, we wrote everything everybody was saying and it took forever. It was very stressful on us, but it was important that we had our real selves in it." Also stressful, she says was disclosing her sexual orientation for the first time to her family members:

> When we were getting ready for this ceremony it was a big deal to see who would be supportive and who wouldn't. Who do we really not want to be there? Give them a chance to say yes or no, it was this big ordeal. That therapist was very important at that time, cause that was very scary for both of us.

Joe says her most difficult conversation was telling her father, who ultimately decided he could not attend her wedding. Although Joe's father and sister decided not to attend, she shares the feeling of being overwhelmed by love and support, "It was really something. It went well, it went beautifully." Since their commitment ceremony, Joe and her partner have discussed getting married lawfully, but have decided to wait for financial reasons. However, Joe explains, "We already really are married. We wear rings and all that, we have a house and our finances are shared, and all that. So, we're married in the practice of it, but we aren't by law." Joes also shares that she and her partner have extensively discussed the possibility of having children. However, at this time, they both agree their lives are full and having a child is not a priority.

Joe conveys a strong gratitude for her sobriety, saying, "I don't think I would have been able to pay attention to my heart and all these signs of what the next right thing is in my life had that not happened." She is also expressed gratitude for her education and is mindful of the many opportunities her Ph.D. has afforded her over the years. She hopes to build upon the relationships she has formed through her professional background and her LGBT advocacy in order to promote sustainable intergenerational connections among individuals who identify as a sexual or gender minority.

Figure 2.3. Joe's Handprint.

Andy (68)

Andy lives with his partner, Lee, who also participated for this study. The two men have been together for 24 years, meeting in California during the height of the AIDS crisis. Recently, they moved to the Southeast region of the United States, but the progressive liberal identity Andy formed while on the West Coast still resonates through his advocacy efforts in his small, conservative town. He says he has "become a sexual warrior" in his later life.

Although born in New England, Andy's father was in the Air Force and the family moved frequently. Andy says he was prepared to follow in his father's footsteps and join the Air Force during college, however, the Vietnam War changed his opinion on the military. Andy explains he vehemently opposed the war, and opted to hitchhike to California after his college graduation. Andy says he thrived on the West Coast where people shared his views and perspectives. He describes the environment as simultaneously chaotic and marvelous and explains the significance of living within an emerging culture:

> I think more pivotal and meaningful to my sexuality was seeing an actual movement begin to grow. Not only the anti-war movement or the women's movement, but a sexual freedom movement, specifically gay liberation, as it was called in those days.

Andy spent the next forty-two years living on the West Coast, ultimately leaving because he and Lee could not sustain the higher cost of living as they aged into retirement.

In 1980, almost ten years after he arrived in California, Andy was diagnosed with HIV. He says, "HIV is the most impactful aspect of my life, of my entire life." He goes on the explain how the vibrant life he knew was changed forever:

> Not only for the fact of being HIV positive, but primarily for being in [Blinded city] at the time of its emergence, and seeing so many dear and close friends succumb to

> horrendous, painful, excruciating deaths. It made me feel very much like surviving a war and being exposed to death and dying much, much earlier than you would 'of expected to be. So, in helping those people pass away and being with them at the time of their deaths in the hospitals or in their homes during. While they were suffering, and surviving, and not knowing if the other shoe was going to drop at any moment. It took over my life.

Andy says he coped the best way he knew how. After losing his partner of eleven years to the disease, Andy learned how to change his outlook on futurity and appreciate his personal goals. He says, "It came to be if I could live to see the turn of the millennium I would be happy that I had made it that long, that far. That was my goal." Andy also rationalizes his own survival through his understanding of, "being in the right place at the right time," which connected him to cutting-edge medical treatment and aggressive doctors. He goes on to say that, over time, his grief has become easier to deal with, "If I were to succumb, I would be in extremely good company. To go with those people, I would be proud."

As an older gay man, who has survived HIV for nearly thirty years, Andy finds fulfillment in a younger generation of revolutionaries. However, that does not mean that this sexual warrior is hanging up his boots. Andy is still very aware of societal stigmas and discriminations that require his attention. He is happily surprised by the course his life has taken, "I never realized that, at this point, kind of later in my life, I'd be making an impact. It's nice. I try to do it responsibly." And although Andy has found a civic purpose, he says his greatest accomplishment is being worthy of love and loving others throughout his entire life.

Figure 2.4. Andy's Handprint.

Lee (56).

Raised in a military family, Lee has lived all over the world. He does not have many memories of childhood or friendships because he said he never stayed in once place long enough to form relationships. His mother and father were both alcoholics, which further destabilized his family structure and continues to impact his relationships with his two siblings.

Lee, the first person in his family to attend college, says he found college to be a welcomed refuge. He recalls the friendships he had with other gay men and feeling free to explore and learn more about what he terms, "gay life." When he graduated college, he explains how his world once again began to change:

> I was stepping out of college right when HIV/AIDS just taking hold. So, you step out of college, you have your first job, you're trying to start your young life. You're a little bit on your own, but yet you have all these great friendships. And suddenly people are dying. You're reading stuff about how gay people are dying mysteriously...and you're like, 'this is not normal, most people don't have this much death and dying around them.'

Just as he faced losing friendships during childhood, Lee says he once again lost friendships, but this time in a way he never before could have imagined. To cope, he says he did the only thing he knew, he moved:

> When your friends start dying around you, you suddenly look in the mirror and you're like 'I can't live in [Blinded city] right now, I've lost all of my friends.' So at a certain point I moved to [Blinded city]. Well when you move, you have to change your jobs. When your next set of friends start to go, you're in [Blinded city] going. 'okay all my friends are gone now here.' You've come into another five-year cycle or six-year cycle,

you lose, you leave that town, you leave that job behind. Suddenly, you're 35 years old, you didn't have the career that you had planned on.

Lee ended up moving to California and lived there with his partner, Andy, for twenty-five years. During this time Lee was diagnosed with HIV, but since he did not show any signs he says he avoided treatment for many years, what he calls "treatment naïve." He adds the early treatment options were very aggressive, "I knew I was positive and I was taking care of myself. But I wasn't taking the medicines that everybody else was taking because in 1985, 86, 87. Those pills were crazy." Lee currently receives treatment after connecting with competent medical care in the nearest city.

Lee and Andy recently moved back to the East Coast to be closer to their parents. Lee shares a close relationship with his father, who is now sober, as well as his brother and his family. Despite being closer to family, Lee says moving back to the East Coast was worrisome at first because he did not know how others would react to him being HIV positive. Lee explains his entire life has been impacted by HIV and AIDS, not only by medical challenges, but also the financial and social aspects of being diagnosed with the disease. Although he continues to work fulltime, he also dedicates many hours to activism and advocacy. Lee shares that does not want another generation to go through the heartbreak he experienced and face what he had to at such a young age:

> If HIV hadn't happened, I can't even imagine how awesome my community would be. Just, it would be so—Oh my god! Artists and actors and lawyers and doctors and…we would just…I just think the country, whether it realizes it, or not, suffered unbelievably. Just an unbelievable catastrophe. And I don't want to see it again in my lifetime for any population.

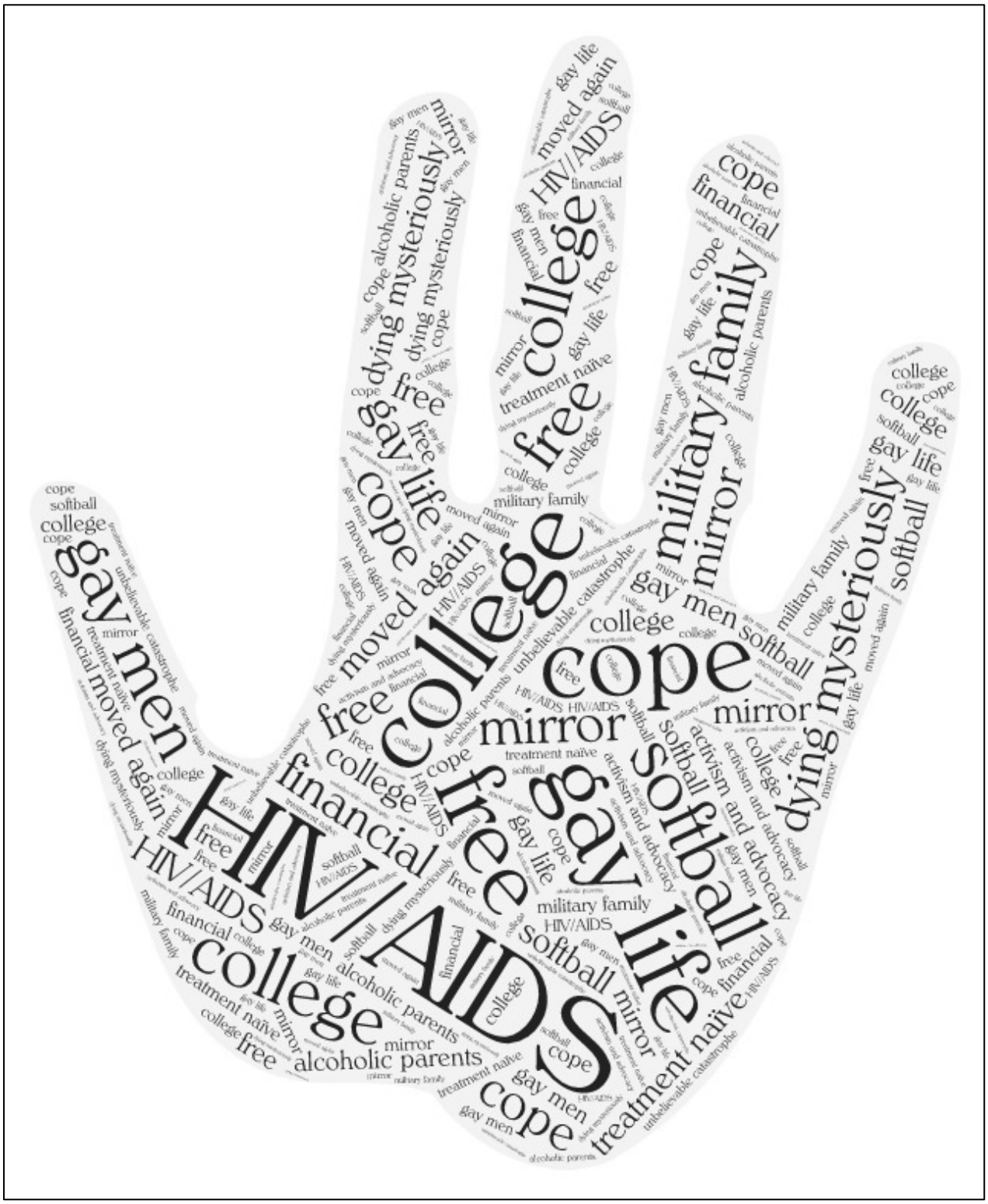

Figure 2.5. Lee's Handprint.

Dani (54)

Dani is very close to all of her family members. She says she grew up in a family that was dedicated to their faith and, as a daughter to a Methodist minister, she too found a deep connection to her faith. Dani recalls moving frequently when her father was called to serve another congregation and says moving taught her the importance of family and adaptability, "I know how to go somewhere new and I know how to be the new person and meet new people." She believes these characteristics were essential as she navigated the unfamiliar waters of coming out as lesbian.

Dani is the second youngest of four children. She has two older brothers and one younger sister, who also identifies as a lesbian. She says she and her sister leaned on each other as they traversed their life journeys. Although she and her sister were close, she first came out to her brother, who was closest to her in age:

> And I'll never forget, he pulled me close to him and he hugged me and he said, 'I'm happy for you,' and he said, 'and I'm going to stick with you.' And I didn't really understand at the moment, he knew things that I didn't know, he knew that shit was going to hit the fan, which it eventually did.

Her brother did stay by her side and, although Dani says her family went through "a significant transition," they are stronger having been through it together. Dani says her mother probably had the most difficult time, as neither of her daughters share her interests:

> I kind of get it, both of her daughters are gay and neither one of us wants to go to Talbots with her, and she's a Talbots girl.... And so, there's been no daughter thing for her, she has had to reinvent her whole daughter thing.

Dani says she and her mother are now similar in many ways. Additionally, both her parents are supportive of her marriage to wife, Kerri, who also participated in this study. Dani feels her father has not only come to accept her as a lesbian, but has also formed a deep respect for Dani and all she has withstood over the years. Dani says she does not take her family's commitment for granted, "I recognize that I have this privilege of being well loved and that I was courageous enough to step out from that say, 'Hey, this is who I am!'"

Dani recalls she was first introduced to her own privilege while growing up in the South during the Civil Rights movement. Being aware of her own social privileges as well as certain societal injustices has inspired her to push through socially constructed barriers and she now identifies proudly as a feminist. Dani speaks about several events that have influenced her life; she attended divinity school as an openly gay woman, supported gay men who were afraid for their lives during the HIV/AIDS epidemic, married the love of her life, and helped dozens of young individuals find their righteous path to expressing their own sexual identity. A few years ago, Dani received treatment after being diagnosed with an aggressive cancer. Now in remission, she is focusing on regaining her physical health in the context of her advancing age. Engaging in certain physical activities has made her more aware of her inhibited strength. But what Dani has lost in physical strength, she has gained in spiritual and emotional strength. Her experiences throughout life have built a resilience within her and she has made it part of her life's work to instill that self-worth in others. She says about her own legacy:

> There is a part of me that wants to be remembered as a person who sort of stepped out onto the front line. I do feel like that. I don't think I'll be remembered in history books for that, I don't think I became famous in that way. But I think in the world in which I lived, I'd like to be remember as being courageous.

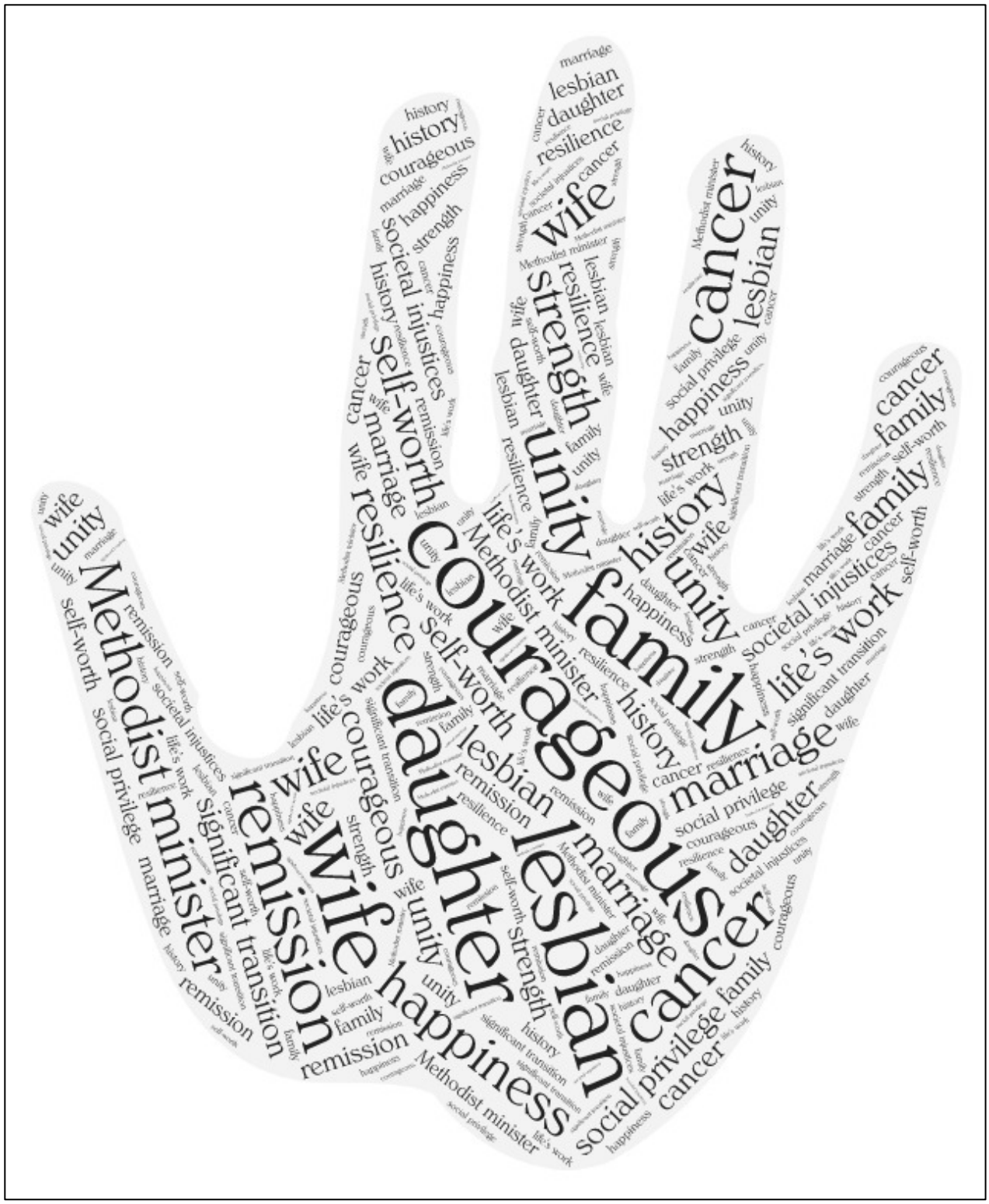

Figure 2.6. Dani's Handprint.

Kerri (48)

Kerri recalls always being aware of issues of diversity to some extent. From an interfaith family, she and her younger siblings were accustomed to varying perspectives and deviances from "the norm." As she came into her own identity, she says she found comfort in being surrounded by people unlike herself and this comfort has followed her throughout her life. As an accomplished academic, Kerri believes her early understanding of social justice has shaped her life in many ways and now frames her research and outreach.

Kerri explains how she came to understand her whiteness at an early age. She notes the diversity in her hometown made her aware of her white privilege and feels fortunate to have various cultures represented throughout her education, "Black History Month I had as a kid, almost nobody else my age had that as a child. I had Black teachers, my first principal was a Black man. So, it just changed my perspective." Although she grew up in a rather diverse environment, she recalls noticing the racial lines, even in her own home, "My parents did not want us interracially dating, my father particularly, but they got over it. I mean they liked Black people, just not to date them. Maybe not wanting any Black grandchildren." Life has always been a complicated set of social constructs for Kerri and during college her life became even more complex as she realized she might be a lesbian.

Kerri says her recognition of her sexual orientation was not a light switch moment. She says it took years for her to understand her physical and emotional attraction to women and men. She dated men for many years, but in retrospect she perceives those relationships void of emotional connection. Although she says she was physically attracted to men, and may still be, she never shared the same deep understanding that she now shares with Dani:

The thing I like about my partner now is that she gets it from the female perspective,

> what it's like to be a woman in the world, from a lesbian perspective, and then she also gets race in a way that not a lot of white people do. And so I sort of feel like I found a good person, who really gets the same things I get. We're on the same wavelength.

In 1999 they got married for the first time in front of a small audience of family and friends. Ten years later they had another ceremony that legalized their union. Kerri candidly shares the "weird" feeling of getting married the second time since she and Dani had already pledged their commitment to each other. She also recalls her intentionality of naming Dani her partner rather than her wife, "I'm a feminist, I don't really want to call her my wife, I don't want to be a wife, we're not wives. I mean blahh." Kerri and Dani have been partners in every sense of the word. Kerri speaks openly about the challenges they have faced over the twenty-five years they have been together.

In addition of being proud of her relationship, Kerri is also very proud of her professional accomplishments. She says neither of her parents earned a bachelor's degree and never thought earning a Ph.D. would have been possible. According to Kerri, the road has been arduous as a feminist informed lesbian scholar. Kerri once saw her reflection in the glass ceiling, but instead of giving up, she allows lessons from her own life to inform her mentorship of future scholars.

Kerri conveys a message rooted in social justice. The world is not fair, and it never has been, and that is what drives Kerri to be better and to do better. She is humbled by the work she feels privileged to do and hopes it will make a small contribution:

> I don't know if anyone will remember the stuff that I wrote, except it will have change the conversation, which makes a difference. But I don't know that anyone will attribute it to me, or that I was part of it. So, that doesn't matter to me as much as helping the conversation go forward.

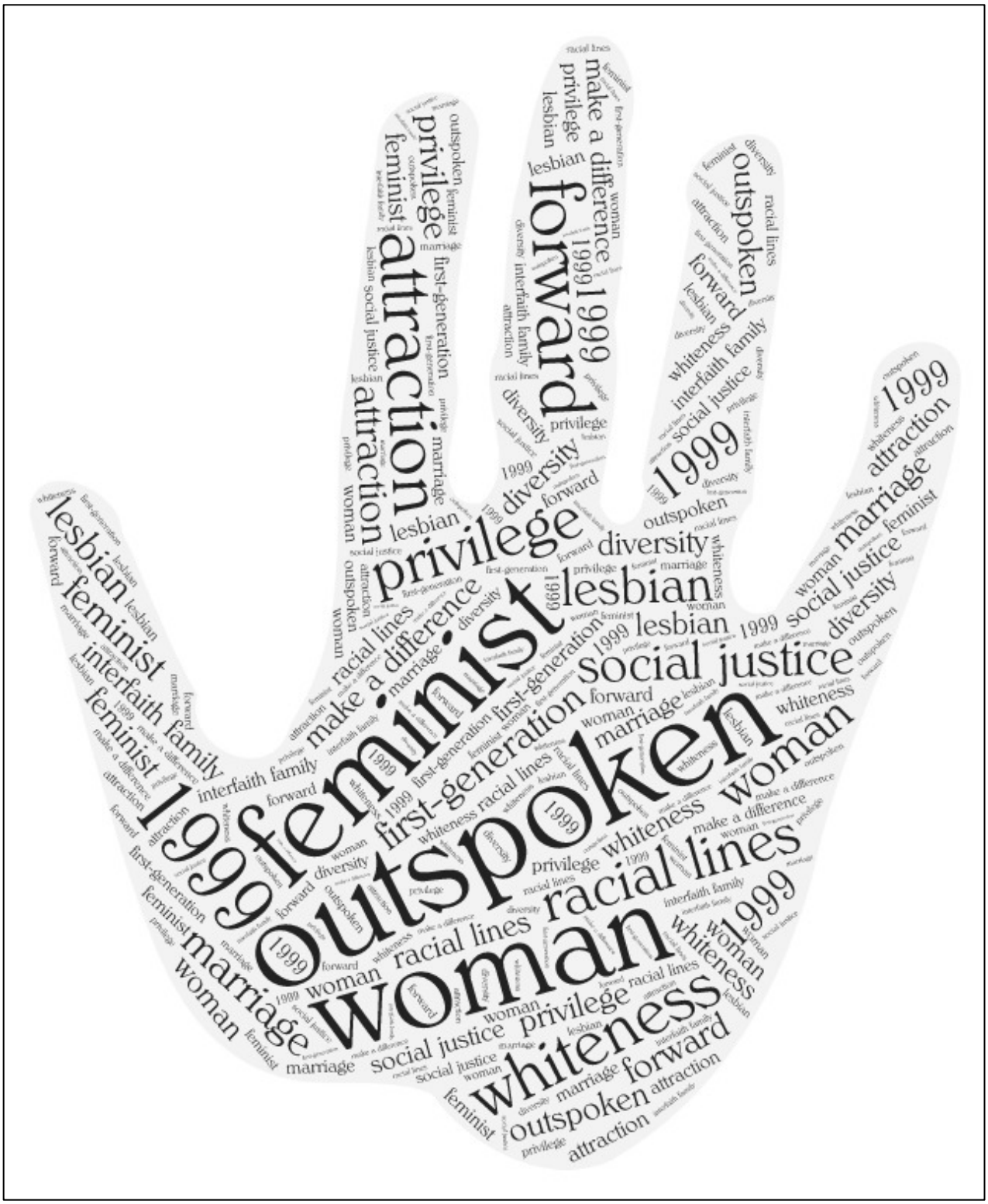

Figure 2.7. Keri's Handprint.

Jesse (63)

Jesse lived as a man until, one day in her fifties, she looked into a mirror and her life came into focus. She vividly recalls the day began the rest of her life:

> I finally understood that day. One morning I woke up and looked in the mirror and went, 'Ah! I'm female.' It was like that, honestly. And I realized it that morning. And I wondered how am I gonna do this?"

Jesse says she spent the next four years forming a network of social and emotional support. She explains the process of reaching out to mental health providers and seeking group therapy to help her unravel what she had inherently known since she was three or four years old. She says she began her process of transitioning from male to female while living with her wife and three children. She describes her marriage as unhappy and grew increasingly distant from her wife; they eventually decided to file for divorce. Although difficult, she views the end of her marriage as the opening she needed to a newer and happier life.

Although Jesse conveys contentment with her current life, she admits to the many ups and downs during her transition. She explains her divorce was not amicable, her children had difficulty adjusting to a new version of their dad, and her extended family was not readily affirming. Once the initial shock dissipated, she says her family members learned what it meant to have a transgender individual in the family and grew more affirming. After attending a support group, Jesse's mother said to her, "I never knew the pain you felt." Jesse says both her parents struggle with proper pronouns, but she knows they are trying to adapt the best they can. Her children are also learning to see their dad differently. Jesse recalls an instance when her daughter called her "dad" in public, which at first made her cringe, but during her private reflection of the situation she now understands, "Being their dad is the most important thing I've ever been or

done." Jesse makes a point not to regret her past and makes a consorted effort to reconcile her life as a man— many times turning to her faith for answers.

Jesse shares her Conservative Jewish background which she continues In her own adult life. She believes God came to her twice to help her through some difficult times. In both instances, she says God sent her the message, "Everything will be alright." She explains how she used those words to build her inner strength to face an unknown future. In fact, while attending a workshop, Jesse recalls being prompted to write her life story in six words; she chose, "Happy that everything will be alright." Jesse admits she still battles anxiety and depression, but she deeply understands the weight of that message and seeks to pass along the advice to others.

As an older adult, Jesse has found love once again with her boyfriend who has reminded her of the importance of being loved. Jesse says she spent the first five decades of her life trying to figure out how to love herself. She acknowledges that life would have been easier if she transitioned earlier on, but she would have missed out on experiences that make her who she is today. In her search for peace, she shares her meaning of life, "The meaning of life is love. You must learn to accept yourself unconditionally so you can prepare to accept others unconditionally. Then you can love yourself unconditionally and then you can love others unconditionally. That's the meaning of life." By accepting love, Jesse says she has learned to appreciate who she has come to be in the present. She is a woman, a parent, a friend, a daughter, a scientist, a musician, a singer, a songwriter, and even a talented magician. To Jesse, being transgender is not necessarily a part of her identity, but rather, "It's a fact of life."

Figure 2.8. Jesse's Handprint.

Casey (50)

Casey says he spent most of his childhood living with his single mother and his maternal grandparents. He goes on to explain his mother struggled with anxiety when he was young and his grandparents stepped in to care for him through much of his early life. Casey states was he never able to form a relationship with his biological father. During his adolescence, Casey's recalls when his mother remarried and from that marriage, he gained two step-siblings who he still keeps in touch with in addition to his mother. However, Casey describes his relationship with his stepfather as strained throughout much of his life.

During his teenage years, Casey says he struggled with knowing he was gay and subsequent depression. Although his depression became less severe over time, he recalls struggling with self-esteem issues in early adulthood, "Feeling like I was good enough to hang out with people...I always felt like if I didn't have the best car to drive or the best clothes I wasn't, that nobody would like me." To cope with his inner feelings of self-doubt, he led a fairly introverted life in college, which he believes contributed to his success as a college student. In college, Casey remembers witnessing unjust treatment toward gay men and how that colored his understanding of sexuality:

> I remember I was with some other people at Dairy Queen and this guy drove by in the car and people were making the funny gestures at him and I think, 'Okay, this is not good.' So that was my, kind of gay experience.

He says he did not know how to deal with his sexuality and seeing others openly ridiculed reinforced his decision to remain in the closet. Also notable during this time was the emergence of HIV/AIDS. Casey recalls the media coverage, "All I heard in the eighties was AIDS... you know, all the gay men getting AIDS and dying it was just like all over the news. The Ebola crisis

of three years ago times a hundred." In hindsight, Casey believes his introversion saved his life as he was not sexually active until his thirties. Although he discloses he is now HIV positive, he says he was not diagnosed until much later and has benefitted from excellent medical care.

Despite earning a master's degree, Casey now lives on disability due to complications with HIV. Over the past fifteen years he states he has been able to manage most of his symptoms with medication, but complications have destabilized his health enough to make holding a job difficult. He says it is a challenge to live on such a limited income and he has made several concessions regarding his standard of living. Casey adds his mother periodically offers financial assistance and he is thankful for Medicaid, which helps with his prescriptions and regular doctor visits. In addition to his medical health, Casey says being HIV positive makes dating and forming long-term relationships difficult. Furthermore, he perceives his advancing age as further compounding the issue of intimacy, "You know there's so much ageism out there now. Like someone's who's twenty, they don't want to deal with someone my age. I just don't know where, the time's gone."

At 50, Casey says there several things he would redo if could, namely with his career. However, he also expresses contentment with his life as it is. He has a group of friends he regularly meets for dinner and attends a support group at the local AIDS organization. His health has defined much of his adult life and he has seen how HIV has shifted from a disease that plagued mostly gay men to women, men, and children from diverse backgrounds. In some ways it is difficult for him to relate to those newly diagnosed, but Casey says he does what he can to share information about his health status so maybe someone will learn from his experiences and make better decisions about their health.

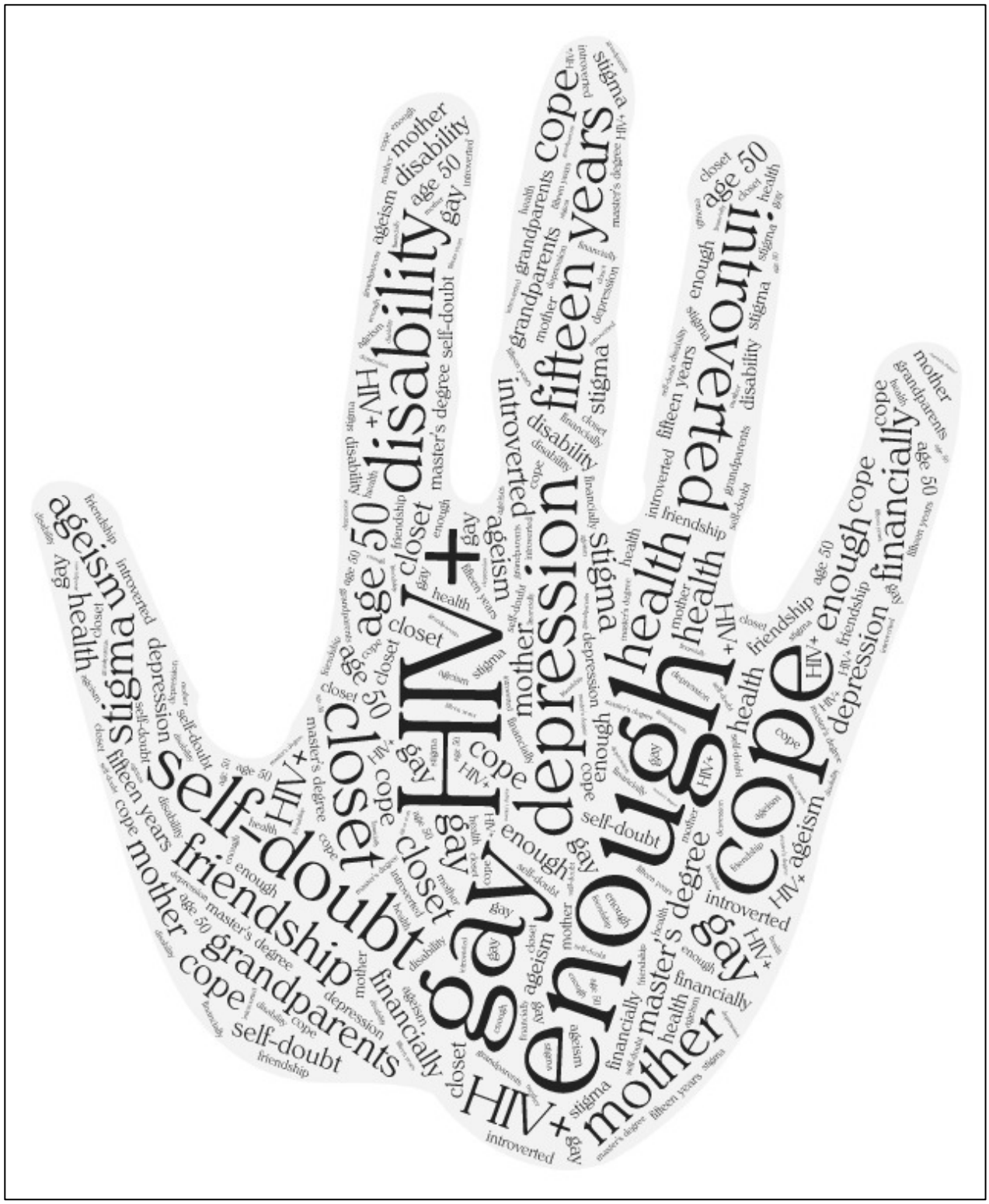

Figure 2.9. Casey's Handprint.

Reese (69)

Reese, a true artist, has spent his entire life either on or near a theatrical stage. He explains acting has given him a way to form channels of communications with others, whether it be with his fellow thespians, mentees, family members, or his partner of 45 years, Jean (also a participant). Reese understands the unwavering commitment it takes to achieve open and honest communication with yourself and with those you love. As a child, he discloses he was a victim of sexual assault and lived much of his early life blanketed by secrecy. To Reese, authentic communication is necessary to form long-lasting and impactful human connections which is a gift he does not take for granted.

Reese shares his vulnerability, recalling the times he and his sister were both sexually abused by a babysitter. He says this trauma resulted in a deep fear of adults and took decades of therapy to overcome. In addition, Reese says he was sexually coerced by an uncle who then "passed" him along to other family members. Although his parents helped to stop the abuse from continuing, they were alcoholics and drug addicts and Reese says he did not trust their ability to protect him. Reese details the therapy he underwent to address the post-traumatic stress and other mental health issues that resulted from these experiences.

Away from his family, Reese says he redefined himself during his early adult years. However, his past was ever-present. In college, he says, "I left home to go to college and of course went wild. It was like if I didn't have sex like four or five times a day I was like not a good person. Isn't that ridiculous?" This is also where he met a group of gay performers and found his niche. Reese says he thrived in the theater community on campus as one of the few openly gay men, "I constantly got cast by people in the theatre because I was the most open one about being gay and it sort of gave a lead into other people I knew were gay but were still in the

closet." However, he explains his early introduction to sex left him feeling as an outsider, "I was always sorta on the outskirts because everybody else was still trying to hide their homosexuality from everybody at that point I didn't really give a fuck." He left college to explore a less traditional path that included sex, drugs, and alcohol.

Reese says meeting Jean has changed life in many ways. He credits Jean for pushing him to finally graduate college and says, "He's the most amazing man I've ever met—he really is." Reese and Jean have lived all over the country, but Reese says it was moving to a multicultural city that allowed him to feel part of a gay community:

> That was when I really started enjoying the being around gay people. It didn't matter if they were effeminate or if they were drag queens or whatever they were. It didn't matter to me—they were people and they liked me. Genuinely, liked me.

It was also in this city where they began their advocacy for HIV and AIDS. Reese still has trouble describing what he witnessed:

> Beautiful, healthy men, my age, were just turned into these skeletons with huge spots all over them and then dying. And there were people I knew, that I liked, and I just that's why I wanted to get out of [blinded city]. And we finally did and I just couldn't take it anymore.

As a child of sexual assault, Reese might have begun his life cowering from the truth, but, as an older adult, he conveys the warmth and protection he always desired. If he could communicate anything to future generations, he says it would be in the form of a love letter saying, "Love all people no matter who we are. Rich, poor, people living on the streets, we are all people. We all have feelings, we all have emotions. It's taken me years to understand this."

Figure 2.10. Reese's Handprint.

Jean (67)

Jean grew up in the Midwest and perceives his childhood and young adulthood as very positive. He was the oldest of three children, and his parents remained married until his father's death in the mid-1980s. He says, "I really appreciate what a safe time that was to grow up in the 1950s and the safe childhood I had in my parent's home. And, I think other than the typical adolescent kind of rebellion things, I don't think I ever doubted that my parents loved me or vice versa." Jean shares stories of how his parents always found ways to express their understanding of his gay identity. When his father was dying, Jean recalls a special moment:

> It was just the two of us when he was at home and he said to me, 'How's [Reese] doing?' And I knew. He had embraced me or accepted my sexual orientation, but just acknowledging the value of that relationship to me, was what was so important.

Jean says he did not come out to his parents until he was thirty, but he became aware of his sexuality in college after having his first sexual experience with a man. Prior to that he says he was vaguely attuned to ways in which he was different from other boys, "I was leading this kind of, it's hard for me to call it closeted, 'cause it really didn't feel like closeted. I guess I didn't feel ready." Always loving theater and participating in the arts, Jean says he did not readily attribute this to his sexuality, but more to enjoying the company of others who shared similar interests. In college Jean says he appreciated being able to socialize with different types of people:

> That became a real important part of my life, so I had this real kind of dichotomy in college 'cause I was with this kind of hippiefied, radicalized newspaper group of friends who were probably smoking pot, I wasn't at the time, but you know that was the kind of people I hung out with. And then at the same time I had this very kind of traditional fraternity.

He recalls meeting a girl through his fraternity whom he had a serious relationship with. However, Jean says he realized his attraction to men was more than innocent flirtation and ended his relationship with her. Jean candidly claims she was the first person he came out to and is still in contact with her.

After ending his college relationship, Jean says he only dated men since. He remembers meeting his current partner, Reese, at a party nearly forty years ago. Jean says of his relationship, "I'm very proud about my relationship with [Reese] and it's longevity. But that wouldn't of happened without him. So, you know, I'm glad that [laughs] that's a partnership." Jean and Reese have lived all over the country. Jean shares his experiences of working as a clinical social worker during the height of the AIDS epidemic. His professional experiences fuel his volunteer efforts. Jean says he currently works with hospice to support patients during their end of life. He also expresses theater as a life-long ambition. In his free time, Jean writes plays and acts with a local theater group. He says the theater group has also offered him the opportunity to mentor young gay men. He says, "You know, it's gonna get better. Okay, it may not be easy, but you can survive. And you know, there is a network of people out here and me being one of them that will help you." Jean says he feels fortunate to be surrounded by so many loving people and he is proud of what he has accomplished thus far:

> I would say I am proud of how I lived. How I have lived my life, as a responsible, generous, good man. I'm proud that I have long, enduring friendships. I am proud of my career as a social worker, which started in 1976 until I retired in 2012. And I feel I did a lot of good work, professionally. Including mentoring about two dozen social work students, getting their master's degrees during that time, and that's real important to me.

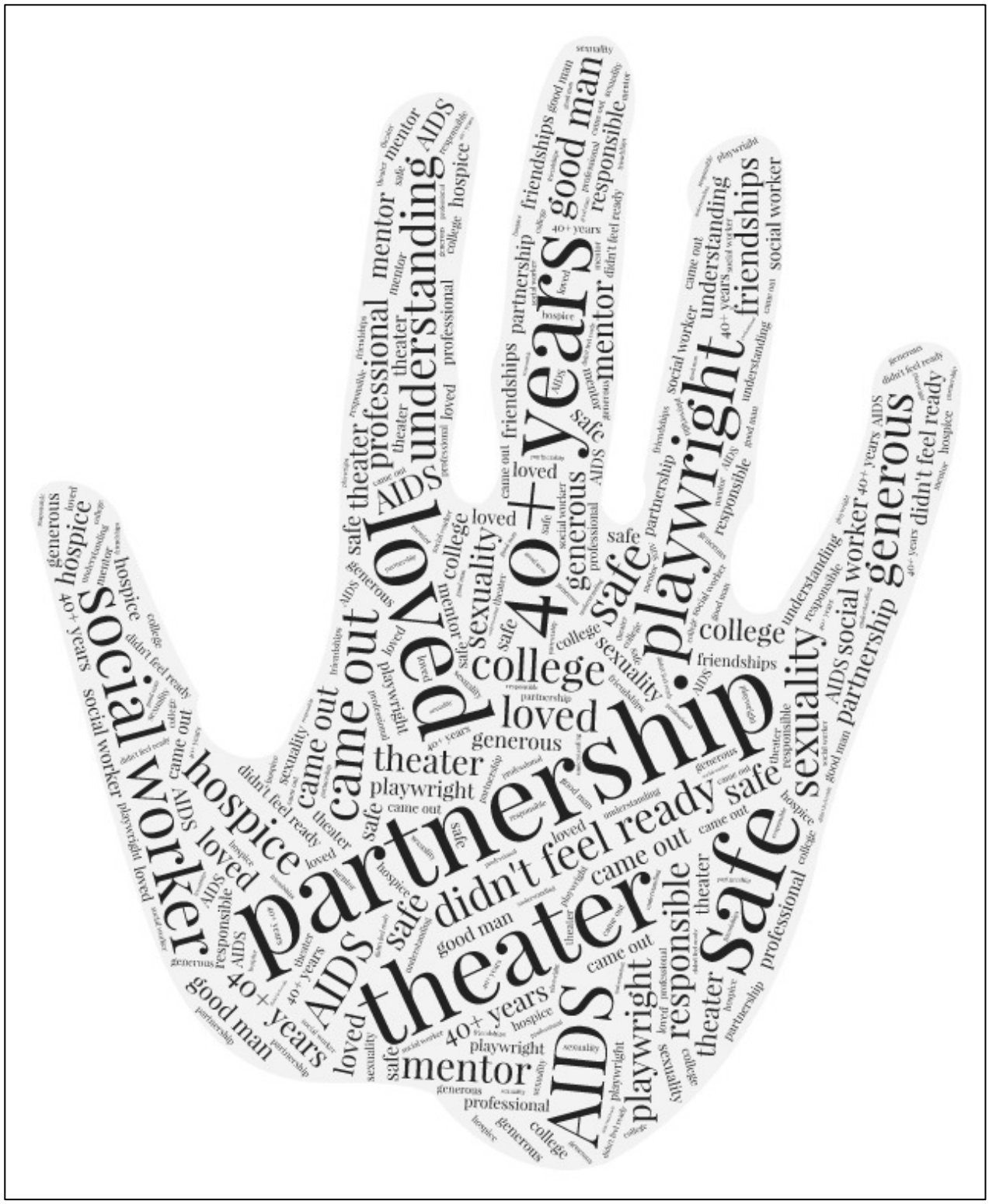

Figure 2.11. Jean's Handprint.

Alex (62)

From early age Alex says he knew he was gay and was identified as different among family members:

> I kind of knew at the age of nine that I was gay and that fell on me like a ton of bricks. And at first I thought, I mean it felt like this warm special secret I had, like uh, and then, and then the name-calling started and I realized that I was mistaken, I'm the pariah.

However, he expresses the special relationship he shared with his mother, "I was the one my mother selected when it was time to go paint water colors on the patio. And so, you know, to me it just felt right, but only within my own world." Unfortunately she passed away when Alex was in his mid-twenties. Alex shares that he recently came in possession of his mother's old journals and has been able to reconnect to her through her writing.

Alex explains his relationship with his father was always strained and after his mother's passing, he became distant with his family. Rather than returning home after college, Alex recalls his world traveling adventures prior to settling on a career and eventually getting married. Alex expresses his sensitivity to the stigma associated with being a man over a certain age who was not married and he shares the fears had which were rooted in culture and politics.

> I look back now, this is hindsight, when people ask, 'What was that all about? Getting married?' I shrug and say, 'Well, it was the Reagan administration.' But at that point I simply say, 'You know when you grow up you put aside childish things and I was clumping my sexuality in with that.'

Retrospectively, Alex is attuned to the pressure he felt to conform as well as the cultural expectations to uphold hyper-masculine responsibility.

In the early 1990s Alex divorced from his wife saying he could no longer live as a closeted gay man. Alex describes the difficult process of coming out as "explosive" and entered into a depressive state lasting several months. Alex remembers meeting other openly gay men and finally understanding how his life could progress. He says, after that point, he was able to accept his gay identity, but only in limited settings. Alex remained closeted at work fearing discrimination, which he claims was inevitably substantiated, "Cause I had gotten divorced in the early 90's, I might as well have had a rainbow flag tattooed on my forehead at that point and as far they were concerned, so they fired me." Alex goes on to say he eventually found another position, but admits to still feeling bitter. He describes the complexity of his sexual identity:

> Frankly, I have to battle myself a little bit to be okay with being gay. It's not something I'm proud of... it's isolating....You participate in life very differently, from straight people. And people treat differently, no matter what. You become kind of a mascot.

However, Alex also states coming out was, politically, the most important thing he has done in his life. Although he is proud of his decision to come out, he discloses his struggles to relate to his gay peers and questions the authenticity of his friendships with heterosexual peers.

With retirement on the horizon, Alex is taking stock of his life. He is eager to start a new career much different from his first and is reflecting on various relationships. Although Alex is content with not having children, he does say he feels a void by not being a parent. To fill that void, Alex describes a father-figure relationship he shares with a young man. Alex explains he supports the young man financially and plans to continue to encourage his educational aspirations. In addition to this relationship and continued contact with his siblings and few long-term friends, Alex also considers his aged cat one of his most treasured family members and says caring for her into her old age has been an extraordinarily meaningful part of his life.

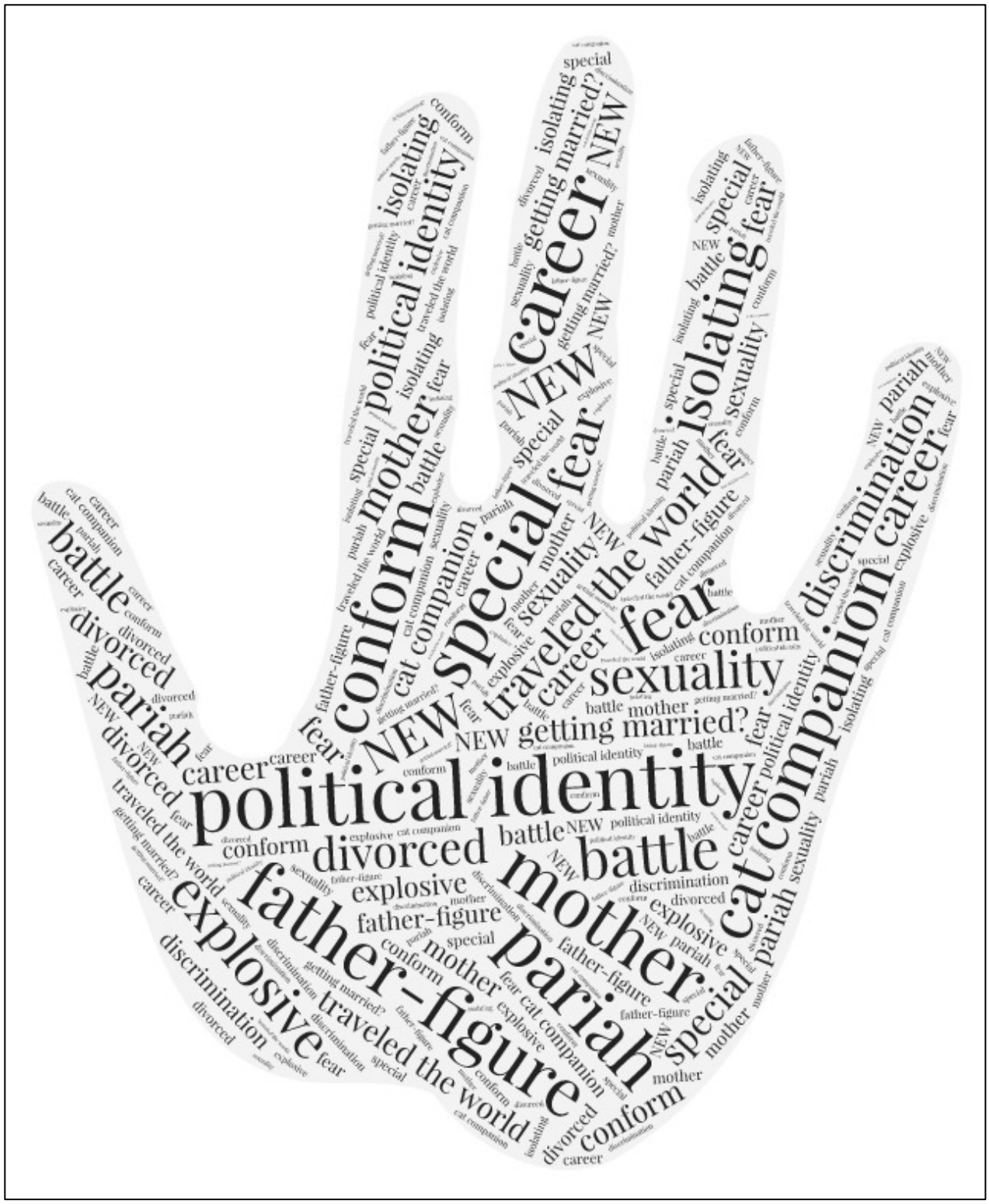

Figure 2.12 Alex's Handprint.

Morgan (46)

Morgan describes his family life growing up as very normal. His parents are still married and were always engaged in his and his siblings' lives. With his father being a minister, Morgan explains his family moved around so his father could fulfill his calling to the church. Morgan describes the impact of his father's ministry on his emerging gay identity, "He wasn't like the fire and brim stone type (laughs). But of course I grew up thinking or being told that being gay, of course, was not right or acceptable." Morgan says, although his father preached tolerance, he was nervous telling his parents he was gay when he was older.

Through television shows, Morgan recalls he was acutely aware of his sexual orientation as an adolescent. Although some ideas were forming, he says he did not come out until he was 22. Morgan considers this "late" to come out, but explains he needed confirmation for himself before he could tell other people. After his first sexual encounter with a man, Morgan remembers a distinct feeling:

> It was the first time in my mind thinking, yeah you're gay. Now you know, you don't have to question it anymore, that's who you are and that's ok. And it's weird how fast even that I embraced that and accepted it. I never felt really guilty about it.

Morgan expresses the relief he felt soon after he came out to his closest friends:

> They didn't care and that was so important at the time and awesome because I thought, these are my friends because they did not care. They loved me and it did not bother them and they were happy that I had said something finally to 'em.

Morgan says he did not disclose to his parents until a few years later and, although they never turned him away, he still feels awkward bringing up his partner or their seven-year relationship.

After Morgan came out to his straight friends, he remembers feeling disconnected to other gay people. He shares a moment when an old friend, who was also out, invited him to a gay bar. Morgan describes the experience as supremely influential:

> I didn't realize how awesome I was going to feel when I got there cause, like, you're in a room full of people who feel the exact same way that you do, and don't give a shit and don't care. And I had never experienced that before. That feeling of just being included, and, by everybody that was there.

When he moved to a larger city, Morgan says his definition of being gay changed once again:

> You realize there are so many types of gay people out there too. So it seemed more real to me. Of course you run into lots of stereotypes from time to time but it made me realize that there wasn't necessarily a stereotype. That there were almost as many types of gay people as there were straight people. That was very eye-opening to me.

He spent his young adult years exploring his sexuality and had several relationships during this time that he says taught him valuable lessons. Morgan is now in a long-term relationship and, although committed to his partner, does not foresee marriage in his future.

Morgan confides his regret with not finishing school when he was younger. He admits to being more interested in his social life and making money than planning for the future. He feels the time has passed to complete his degree and due to his bipolar disorder he struggles to negotiate stressful situations. Morgan says he is also growing accustomed to the physical changes that come with age. He comments, "People tell you about it as you are getting older and growing up. But then when you actually start noticing stuff... you're still surprised." Despite the changes, much has remained the same in Morgan's life. His friendships are life-long, his love for his family is unconditional, and his understanding of culture and diversity is ever-growing.

Figure 2.13. Morgan's Handprint.

Chris (69)

Chris begins by explaining he was raised in the Church of God in a rural community in the Southeast. As a young adult, he attended college and served in the Vietnam War. When he returned to the United States, he got married, found work as a high school teacher, and fathered two children. He stayed in the closet until he was 40 years old.

Raised with a strong Christian faith Chris says he kept his gay identity a secret, although, he knew he was gay as young as elementary school age. Chris explains, "Of course growing up in the 50s and 60s, this was a sure ticket to hell. So, I spend 40 years of my life denying it and trying not to be." He adds his service in the Vietnam War contributed to his reluctance to disclose his sexuality:

> Back then you got dishonorable discharge if you were found out, you were court marshalled. And plus they would make you name everybody you've had sex with, which means a whole bunch of other people got in trouble. So, there wasn't much you know I could do, I was kind of tied.

Coming home did not make being openly gay any easier for Chris. He explains he suffers from PTSD, and, once he became a family man, he felt he needed to keep his job to financially support his children and spouse, "That's one reason I had to keep quiet and be careful about it... I would be thrown out on my heels if [school administrators] found out I was a gay." In mid-life, Chris says he realized he could no longer hide and found the peace he had been searching for:

> At 40 I had a revelation I guess you'd call it. 'Cause I knew I'm a good person, I'm an honest person, I treat people fairly. And I just can't imagine the fact that I would rather be with a man than a woman would send me to hell. I'd been raised in the church all my

life and I don't believe in a judgmental condemning God, I believe in a kind, loving kind. Jesus says love everybody. Well you know, I'm a part of everybody.

However, Chris says he lost relationships after he came out. His now ex-wife chooses not to speak to him and one of his three children no longer stays in touch with him. Although finding his truth has come at a cost, some relationships have sustained over the years. Surprisingly, Chris says his father, who ran the very conservative household, found subtle ways to show his support:

> On Christmas or Thanksgiving, birthdays he would send a check to the children and their spouses. Well after about a year or two years, my partner started getting a check. So, that told me even though we never talked about, that he recognized him as my partner.

Chris says he has been able to find love. His partner lives across the country and they call and write love letters back and forth. They plan to marry in the future and Chris hopes his marriage contributes to normalization of same-sex marriage. He hopes one day younger generations will look back and be astonished that it was ever unlawful for gay couples to marry. It is also his hope that future generations will recognize the struggle Chris and peers have gone through to secure civil rights for themselves and those who come after:

> We're the ones that got beat up, we're the ones that rioted, we're the ones that you know, Stonewall, and we're the ones that have been fighting all these years so they can have what they have now.

As an older man, Chris continues to advocate for himself and others. He acts as a lay minister, "Dispelling the notion that gay and Christian are oxymorons," and he believes, "Knowledge is power. The more you know about something, the more you understand it and the less you fear it. You know, fear comes from ignorance. People fear things they don't know, and fear leads to hate."

Figure 2.14. Chris's Handprint.

Toby (58)

Toby comes from a large Southern family. He describes a unique connection with his mother, as they both were regarded as black sheep in the family. When he came out at the age of twenty-one, Toby says his mother accepted him "with no problem." After his mother passed away his father remarried and Toby says his step-brother is also gay. Although his step-mother is also supportive, Toby describes his father as "the most anti-gay" person in his family. Toby explains, while his father does not deny him as his son, he has never accepted Toby's husband as his son-in-law.

Fortunately, with Toby's large family, there are many people who support him and his marriage. Toby describes their 20th anniversary celebration of their partnership:

> We had a really big to do for our 20th anniversary, which was the second year after we were legally married, but 20 years after we met and it included a renewal of vows at the chapel, which is really, really nice. So, we had a renewal of vows in front of like 150 people. And so, it was members of my family I had like, I had one sister and her family there and [husband] had two sisters and niece there, and I had a niece and a nephew.
>
> Anyway, there was a bunch of family and mostly friends, but it was really, really special.

Toby met his husband through an online chat group for caregivers for people with AIDS. Toby explains he was providing care to his former partner contracted AIDS. Toby communicates the pride he feels in being able to help his partner achieve his dreams before he passed away:

> I was able to give to someone else in a way that I feel real proud of. The time that we were together, he actually went to the doctor #1, which was good because he got on drug treatments which helped a lot I think. He went back to school, he got to study in Europe for a year. He graduated college and he got a job teaching high school, which is

> something he always wanted to do. So he got to do a lot of things that he really, really wanted to do in his life before he died.

His partner died in 1996 at the age of 24. Toby says all he has left are books of poems the young man wrote and a potted plant that contains his ashes. He admits that he and his husband think about death differently having gone through this particular life experience:

> I actually look at death differently from a lot of people because I've been through it and a lot of people who have been through it look at it differently as well.... A big part of what I've experienced helps me to better see that being gay isn't all that big a deal. I've lived a lot of things that a lot of other people haven't lived, you know? And yes, my partner that died was a same-sex partner, but I still had a partner that died. And it's a similar experience that anybody would have if they have a partner that dies.

Toby works full-time and says he enjoys the company of his husband and their dog. He adds they recently connected to a local church, which he did not anticipate to be a part of his life after he was ostracized by his previous congregation for coming out. However, he says he appreciates the ability to worship in a more accepting community and has become more active with the administration. Toby says he also volunteers extensively with a local HIV advocacy organization and shares his personal connection to AIDS when he feels it is appropriate. Reflecting on his life and the many relationships he has nurtured, he says:

> I would hope to be remembered by some as someone who was caring and giving and someone who gave more than he took. I guess is a good way of saying it. My day to day goal is to be one who serves, who gives.

Figure 2.15. Toby's Handprint.

Pat (76)

The only person to complete high school, college, and then seminary, Pat describes himself as slightly different from his family members. He explains through his seminary background he became privy to the various improprieties of his family members. When he came out as gay in his mid-life, Pat says his family members reveled in his failure, "And then 'my brother the preacher,' who was like Mary Poppins in the family, turns out the be gay. And that was like a cherry on top of a very messy cake."

Pat was married for 13 years and he and his wife has 3 daughters. He came out to his wife while still married. Pat says they sought counseling and he suggested they could stay married and he could have relationships on the side. His wife disagreed with that arrangement and so they divorced. Pat recalls the divorce being amicable until the preacher, who had succeeded him in the Baptist Church, became involved. Pat recalls:

> Suddenly an anti-gay campaign was in my living room. And my wife talked to, ex-wife by then, talked to the preacher, who talked to my children, who were 12, 11, and 9 and told them your father is a homosexual and he's going to hell. And if you refuse to see him, he'll change.

Pat says had gone close to 40 years without seeing or hearing from one of his daughters. Another daughter reached out to him 5 years ago and he was given the privilege of presiding over her wedding. Pat adds a granddaughter recently reached out to him via Facebook and he was able to visit some of his kin, "I met my great-grandson. And, discovered I had a family again. Which was a very, very emotional experience. I now also have a great-granddaughter, who was just born a month ago." He acknowledges that his wounds have begun to heal, but admits the road to this point was painful and at times unbearable.

In his time away from his family, Pat says he continued to fulfill his calling to serve the church, however, he was no longer able to serve in his former capacity, "I escaped from the Southern Baptists one step in front of the lynch mob once they found out that I was gay." He reconnected to his faith and associated with Metropolitan Community Churches (MCC). Pat recalls his time serving as a religious leader in England during the mid-1980s. During this time, Pat says he was losing congregants routinely to AIDS. He also tells a poignant story of returning to the United States for an annual conference and facing the toll the disease had taken on his community:

> I would come back every year for a church conference. And dozens of my friends died that day, that's when I learned that they had died in the previous year. It was awful, absolutely terrible. You could imagine that if you went home and 20 friends, that for you, was the day that it happened, you know? And I've never quite…that will bring me to tears faster than anything.

Pat says he retired from ministry at 70 and enjoys traveling the world with his partner of 23 years. He expresses deep appreciation for his exposure to diverse cultures, beliefs, and traditions. Pat shares a realization, "The older I get, the less I know about any of it." Although he questions the religious teachings he once held close, he is proud of his contribution to his faith:

> In spite of the stumbling blocks and personal problems I have kept the faith and I have ministered in a positive way to a great many people. And it is like the old adage you drop a pebble in the pool and the ripples go out and out and out.

Pat has made an impact on many lives, including his own. He sought an education for himself despite being raised by a family who did not value knowledge, persevered through heartache, and continues to listen for the word of God to help him achieve his greatest dreams.

Figure 2.16. Pat's Handprint.

Drew (58)

Drew says he grew up in the Southern region of the United States with his sister and father. His mother passed away when he was 10 years old, which colored his life in many ways, particularly the way in which he perceives his familial relationships. Drew noted a shift in his family structure after his mother passed away from cancer, "My mother died at an important age, and we were much more a family of single people than we were a family of heterosexuals." Drew says he always did his own thing, describing himself as, "The sensitive child, the artistic child, the person who cried." In addition, Drew found him himself as an outsider in a fairly conservative, religious town. He says although he attended church activities, he never considered himself religious.

In high school, Drew says he became acutely aware of social movements; supporting the women's liberation movement and the early gay liberation movement. He also recalls discovering creative outlets to express himself, "I got into drama in high school and became connected with a whole lot of people who were much more like me than were different than me." Drew confesses being attracted to diverse people and "being on the edge of stuff" became a recurring theme throughout his life. Drew says attending college in the '70s exposed him to a more abstract way of thinking about sexuality:

> It was more about free love and bisexuality and sexual freedom so no one really called it gay as much as they just called it 'openness' and um 'experimentation,' and the more that I found out about myself and others, the more that I realized that all of these other people were discovering the same things that I was discovering college.

He explains his understanding of his own sexuality has evolved throughout his life, and today Drew says he never felt the urge to come out like so many others did, "I never felt like I was in

the closet. I never felt like there was a closet to come out of." He explains his gay identity is so integral to who he has always been and who he always will be.

Drew explains his life has also been directly impacted by illness and death, first with his mother's passing when he was young and then with his father's many years later. Drew shares he was diagnosed with cancer and underwent a dramatic procedure to save his life in his mid 50s. He discloses his expectation of dying just as his parents and other relatives had from cancer. The fact that he lived, Drew says has been life-altering. He proudly states he has been in remission ever since and continues to help others who are newly diagnosed with his form of cancer.

Drew conveys his awareness of life's vulnerability. He once again contextualizes his understanding of death by saying, "During the AIDS era you were very much like a guy going to war. You could come back a hero, you could come back dead, but either way, it was a war you were fighting." He goes on to explain that in later life, death is no longer a valiant war to fight, it becomes a part of life. Drew acknowledges his shift in understanding and how it influences his perception of the time he has left. Drew admits to being less concerned about gay issues and more interested in cultivating inclusion, "I'm not as strident about living a gay identity or expressing a gay identity, I think I do without even knowing. I'm very much focused on expressing a liberal or a position of fairness and inclusion." He believes one way to do this is through art. Throughout his life, Drew has collected numerous pieces that reflect modern history. His collection fulfills his ultimate desire of creating a cultural tapestry that represents those who never had a voice and provides a future vision to those who may need it.

Figure 2.17. Drew's Handprint.

Bobby (49)

Bobby shares she was raised in a single-parent household. Although her mother had been married three times, Bobby expresses a sentiment that she and her mother constituted her core family. She explains her biological father left when she was very young and, although she has made contact, she does not share much of a connection with him and his family. Booby goes on to say she was adopted by her first step-father when she was young and also stays in touch with him and his family, but infrequently.

As a young adult, she recalls keeping to herself mostly out of the desire to remain invisible. When she went through puberty, she admits to feeling that her body no longer aligned with the mental picture she had of herself:

> Puberty was like the universe betrayed me because given a choice, I would not of chosen to be female, like we don't get the, that would not of been my choice. So, when puberty imposed itself on me I was just mortally offended by it and it took me years to recover [laughs], and figure out within that sort of you know, this is the vessel that I've been given, what do I do with it?

When it was time to leave home for college, Bobby remembers how significant it was for her to move out of the house, "It was a big deal to go away from home. I was close to my mother and so it was a big deal for both of us to move away." However, Bobby says leaving for college allowed her to confront the issues that arose during puberty, come out as a lesbian, and where she was able to address her long-term issues with men.

Bobby says while growing up, she never experienced healthy relationships with men and that impacted her in powerful ways. She shares her intentional decision to attend a co-ed college so she could grow accustomed to working with men professionally and experiencing healthy

friendships. Bobby says she also found her "niche" in the Women's Studies program, which supported her exploration in her own gender identity. During her 20s and 30s, Bobby says she began dressing in a more androgynous way. Bobby explains her decision to only wear clothes made for men:

> It's easy for women to wear men's clothes in this culture, and I was doing that in my 20s because I was just never happy in women's clothes. They don't fit right, the sleeves are too short, the shirt's too short, the pants don't fit, not enough pockets.

Making this transition from women's clothing to men's clothing was also important for her professional life. She does not describe herself confrontational and wanted to find a way she could be comfortable in her own identity, while also being accessible to others. Over time Bobby says she has adopted a certain outlook on life:

> I constantly get called 'Sir.' I care less. It embarrasses other people, I could care less. Or you know, my mechanic calls me, 'Ms. [Bobby].' Okay, that's fine! Like, that's my relationship with him. So, I guess I don't think about it as much as maybe others do. It's not as prevalent, it's not as immediate for me. I know how I appear to people.

Bobby says her mother's support has always been important to her and integrates her words of encouragement, "'I just want you to be happy, whatever you do,'" into her everyday life. Bobby says she strives to do things that make her purely happy. She is currently pursuing a Ph.D. and takes time each day to walk her dogs. She also says she keeps a promise she made to herself while in college, "Two things I learned in college that I felt are important for all women are financial independence and being physically able to take care of yourself and defend yourself. So, I've tried to pursue those for myself." Bobby values kindness, and seeks to make those around her feel comfortable and at ease.

Figure 2.18. Bobby's Handprint.

Kyle (31)

This topic is personal, vulnerable, and difficult to address. In order to recognize the value of the following dissertation, I feel my readers must understand me, my perspective, and the subjectivity I have relied on to mold myself as a researcher. Taking a more hermeneutic approach and remaining aware of my own subjectivities, I believe, will positively influence my interconnectedness with this project (Finlay, 2009). Finlay (2009) states, "Researchers' subjectivity should, therefore, be placed in the foreground so as to begin the process of separating out what belongs to the researcher rather than the researched" (p. 12).

I stumbled upon research with LGBT older adults haphazardly, however, I believe this area of research has been part of my destiny. My story begins with my name, KYLE LEE, which has been a name of inner controversy. It is a seemingly androgynous name, however, in the southern region of the United States, KYLE LEE, is a "boy's name." Children become aware of gender norms at a young age, and when we are young we just want to be accepted, we want to be recognized for who we feel we are. I felt very much a girl, yet my name, by others, was not perceived that way, and to me these "others" questioned my identity. At a young age I had to defend my name to bullies who wanted to call me a "boy."

I had the privilege of a supportive mother who encouraged owning a feminist power. She told me my name was rooted in the gender discrimination she had experienced as a young woman. KYLE LEE was a name that could not be judged on paper; in her mind KYLE LEE would not be denied opportunities as an adult because her name did not reveal her sex. With her story, my mom gave me power over my own name; she opened doors that I did not know would be shut just because of my gender. Her love, support, and foresight instilled in me a passion for equality.

I am also fortunate that I wanted to be a girl and that I looked and acted like a girl, so eventually "the name thing" became less and less of a problem. I do, however, remember one time when getting my car fixed around age sixteen, the man at the auto repair shop looked at me (jokingly) and said, "Well, I guess the sex change didn't take." I laughed out of a feeling of uncomfortableness and walked away. It was not until later that I realized the weight of his words.

Others, I have come to realize, are not as lucky as me. Their identities are not just questioned; they are hated and feared. My story, although benign in comparison, ignited my flame for advocacy. I cannot say that I know what it is like to identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender/gender-nonconforming (TGNC), as I am a recipient of heteronormative privilege, whether I want it or not. What I can say though, is that I understand what it is like to be placed in a box and struggle to defend myself in order to escape oppressive societal structure.

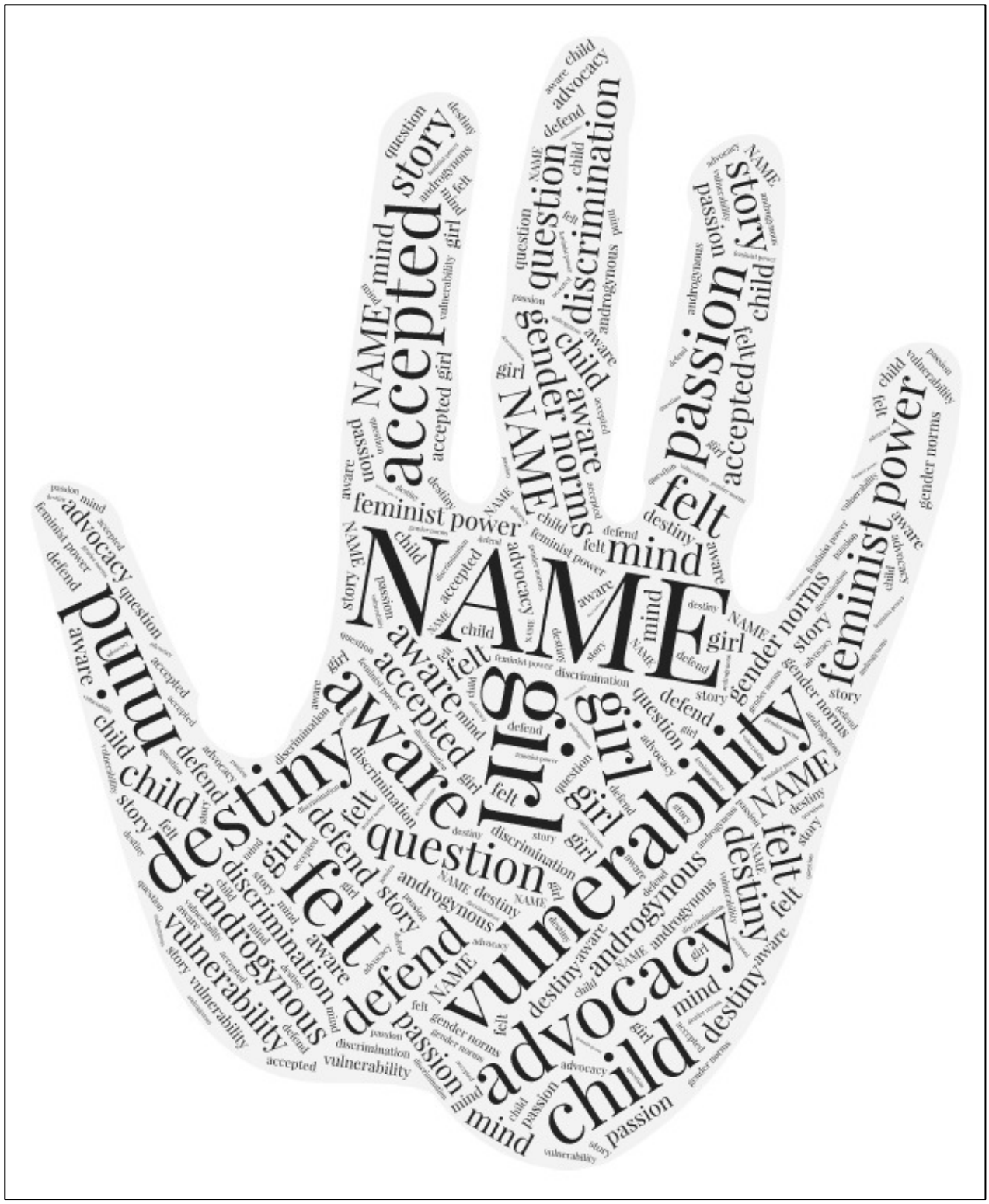

Figure 2.19. Kyle's Handprint.

Conclusion

Although this dissertation represents my scholarship and professional commitment to social science, it only exists because certain individuals trusted me with their life stories. This is delicate data, and without exploring my own vulnerabilities, I could not have understood the greater potential of this work. Throughout the various stages of development, I recorded my thoughts, questions, and realizations to remain cognizant of my privilege and resulting subjectivity. Another part of this reflective process was to acknowledge my limitations. I am sensitive to the lack of diversity within this sample. Represented within this body of work are narratives of White individuals who are recipients of institutionalized racial privilege. Issues of race or ethnicity were scantily discussed, which draws attention to the more significant issue of racial and ethnic disparity in the U.S. For instance, few participants address educational attainment, opportunities for career development, or access to quality medical care as a result of the shade of their skin or cultural upbringing. When mentioned, comments on race are historical in nature as several participants witnessed and contributed to national conversations centered on racial injustice during the Civil Rights Movement. However, the richness of experiencing the struggles and resiliencies as a racial or ethnic minority at the intersection of sexuality and gender identity are missing from this work. It is not my intention to minimize the social injustices these individuals did experience or the distract from the meaning of the heartfelt stories they shared. Instead, I believe this work emphasizes the need for deeper understanding of how various identities intersect in later life.

Although I struggle with ways in which I could have overcome this limitation, I encounter a more significant issue when I look to other bodies of work for guidance. Topics of racial and ethnic diversity are missing from gerontological literature and are frequently relegated

to the limitations and future directions sections of empirical work. As an advocate, I feel strongly this needs to be addressed in a more proactive way. I do not have data representing racial and ethnic minority persons; however, I have cited literature throughout this work as a way to contribute to a broadened understanding of identity and generativity. In addition, the second phase of this project will directly address this limitation and recruit a diverse sample that is inclusive of multiple racial and ethnic backgrounds. I intentionally created space for this project to evolve so I may eventually address multiple intersectionalities that influence one's narrative identity and cultural generativity.

To remain connected to the research, I allowed myself to evolve along with this project. I grew as an academic and as a social justice advocate. Rather than "othering" those who were different from me, I questioned my own experiences, searching for ways to connect through empathy. I am reminded of a conversation with one participant— I expressed my gratitude towards the people who shared such personal aspects of their lives. To which he responded, "That is nice for you to say that, but it's very nice to know there's going to be a purpose to it. You're fulfilling a part of this too. That's important too" (Toby, gay male, 58). The individuals I met through this project taught me more than what is shared in this dissertation. The many stories I heard of heartbreak, uncertainty, vulnerability, and courage, affirmed my belief in the diversity that exists among our older adult population. Always searching for inspiration in art, literature, and science, I am reminded of a passage from Madeleine L'Engle (n.d.), who's writing permeates my understanding of time, "The great thing about getting older is that you don't lose all the other ages you've been." Frequently we sideline older voices, labeling them as dated or uninformed, but they are rich with experience that spans the past, present, and even future.

CHAPTER THREE

QUESTIONING DOMINANT GAY NARRATIVES:

STORIES THAT FRAME OLDER MEN'S SEXUAL IDENTITY[2]

[2] Bower, K.L., Lewis, D.C, Bermudez, J.M., Singh, A.A. To be submitted to *Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity*.

Abstract

Taken from a sample of eighteen, we explore identity formation among gay men who were all born between 1946 and 1964. This is the largest homogenous sub-group within a larger sample (N=18). Although participants share similar demographic characteristics, their individual social, personal, and narrative identities diverge to represent distinctive embodied selves. Guided by queer theory and feminist gerontology, a qualitative analysis identified dominant and counter narratives that demonstrate the complexity of identity as it evolves over time. This research contributes to an ongoing discussion concerning the individuality found among lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) individuals in later life. Furthermore, when individuals are given the opportunity to dictate their own life story, they gain a sense of agency that contributes to establishing a more confident self. As the LGBTQ+ population becomes more visible, there will be a growing need to understand the individualism that exists within this coalition and affirm their diversifying sexual and gender identities.

Introduction

To understand the complex and varied pathways of identity among lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) older cohorts, we must understand the socio-historical context in which they aged. Otis and Harley (2016) suggest sexual identities are socially constructed, fluid, and continuously evolving through social interaction and meaning-making. Contributing to the complexity are various forms of discrimination ranging from overt macroaggressions to subtle microaggressions, which over time lead to hierarchical social constructs that provide particular demographic groups more power than others (Calassanti & Slevin, 2006; Goodman, 2001). Understanding the intersections of personal sexual identity is difficult due to the underdeveloped body of research dedicated to exploring the diverse views, experiences, and attitudes of LGBT

older adults (Otis & Harley, 2016). However, a narrative approach expands existing narratives to include diverse backgrounds, roles, and experiences that inform one's embodiment of sexual identity in later life.

Social Identity

Although every human being experiences some degree of awareness regarding their sexual orientation (which in this context, defines the emotional and physical connection to another person; see Fish & Harvey, 2005), some generations have been able to express this more freely than others. The *Gayby Boomers* (Ramirez-Valles, 2016) are defined by a generation that shares similar cultural attitudes and experiences (Plummer, 2010). This subpopulation of Baby Boomers was the first gay cohort to embrace their gay identity, to actively engage in the gay liberation movement, and to age with HIV (Ramirez-Valles, 2016). However, the intersectionality of one's social identity and the oppression and privilege experienced are complicated and make researching minority populations challenging (McCall, 2005). For example, Fredriksen-Goldsen (2016) finds that, in comparison to prior generations, LGBT Baby Boomers report lower levels of internalized stigma and identity concealment, but higher levels of discrimination, victimization, loneliness, and social isolation. These findings further legitimize the necessity of exploring generational effects on sexual identity over time as the social, physical and mental health outcomes are as fragile as the process of identity formation itself.

Personal Identity and Sexual Orientation

Identities and behaviors are not mutually exclusive as they intersect in numerous ways and one's behavior may or may not be consistent with how one outwardly presents one's self (Biggs, 2004). Fish and Harvey (2005) explain that sexual identity is the outward expression of sexual preference while sexual orientation is the inner desires one has which one may or may not

claim publically. Gates (2011), a demographer, asserts that is imperative to understand the intersection of personal identities *and* behaviors that exist in order to accurately account for individuals in the LGBT population.

Researchers and clinical practitioners have begun to deconstruct personal identity by noting the discrepancy between when individuals come out to themselves and when they come out to others. For instance, D'Augelli and Hershberger (1998) report adolescents understand their own sexual identity by the age of 10; however, they do not outwardly label themselves until 14 and may wait even longer to come out to their peers and family. Although research has established normative developmental benchmarks for queer youth, Savin-Willams (2001) brings attention to the individuality that exists among various age cohorts and calls for more comprehensive theories of sexual minority development that incorporate cultural and environmental factors. More recently, Grov, Bimbi, Nanín, and Parsons (2010) examine how generational cohorts differ in age of disclosure. Their data indicate older gay men (55+) came out to themselves five years later than those 18-24, and only 55% of the older age group reported ever coming out to their parents. Also notable is the age at which the oldest group of men came out to others (M=24.11) and the age at which they reported to have their first same-gender sexual debut (M=18.95), both of which occurred later than the mean age of youngest cohort, M=16.94 and M=16.08 respectively. Younger adults have closed the gap between disclosure to self and others as many feel they have more significant community support and experience an overall increase in cultural acceptance (Fish & Harvey, 2005; Grov et al., 2010). However, there remains a need to examine the trajectories of identity formation among older adults as they are disproportionately socially isolated due to lifelong experiences with stigma, discrimination, ageism, and homophobia (Fredriksen-Goldsen, 2016; Teaster et al., 2016).

Narrative Identity

Narrative identity is understood to be the reflexive storytelling process individuals engage in to express themselves to others (McAdams & McLean, 2013). Singer (2004) identifies common principles shared by narrative identity researchers from multiple disciplinary backgrounds. According to Singer, one core principle is to resist reducing identity formation to a single contributing factor. Instead, multiple social and individual influences are explored to develop a more holistic understanding of narrative identity formation. The second guiding principle is to address the complexity of human identity as it changes through time, rather than relying on one dominant narrative to define one's self (Singer, 2004). When we share our life stories, our past experiences and future expectations become part of our present narrative and alternatively the present influences what we remember of our past and how we plan for our future (McAdams & McLean, 2013; Plummer, 2009). A heuristic relationship forms between social constructs and self-awareness and contributes to the way individuals develop their life story or narrative identity (McAdams & McLean, 2013; Singer, 2004). Also, narrative identity researchers attempt to balance individuals' agency with social demands (Singer, 2004). Plummer (2009) refers to the shifting of one's personal and social identity as the embodiment of one's life narrative. He explains the stories people tell are more profound than words they communicate as they are connected emotionally and physically. In the following section, I introduce a critical theoretical framework to intentionally explore the connection between individual agency and socially constructed heteronormativity.

Conceptual Framework

A Critical Perspective

Emerging from the postmodernist movement in the 1990s, queer theory challenges researchers to consider, not only the construction of identity among LGBT individuals, but also the ways in which binary understanding of sexuality (i.e., heterosexual/homosexual) and gender (i.e., male/female) identity permeate all aspects of modern society (Gamson, 2000). Furthermore, Oswald, Kuvalanka, Blume, and Berkowitz (2009) explain that not only does queer theory challenge the binaries of gender and sexuality, it also provides individuals the agency to define their subjective attractions, behaviors, and expressions. Combined with a narrative approach, queer theory allows space for individuals to depict their lives beyond heteronormative expectations and even the stereotypical storylines that have come to define gay identity.

However, queer theorists have received criticism for dismantling socially constructed sexual and gender identity (Green, 2002), as the creation of one's identity does not occur in a vacuum. Without understanding the socially constructed limitations on identity over time, it is difficult to understand how individuals choose to demonstrate personal agency that informs their own narrative identity. Although it is vital to question conventional ways of thinking, it is equally important to acknowledge how socially constructed definitions of sexual identity have impacted adults in later life. Feminist scholars recognize sexuality and gender as *linked experiences*, meaning individuals can only prescribe to labels such as heterosexual, homosexual, man, woman, or transgender or gender non-conforming (TGNC) because of their relations with the others (Allen et al., 2009; Calasanti, 2004). Furthermore, a feminist lens allows researchers to go beyond the demographic description and addresses the complexity of identity formation over time (Allen et al., 2009; Butler, 2007). Together, these critical perspectives create a framework

that addresses the multiplicity of identity formation in later life as well as the systematic impact of heteronormativity on the lives of gay men in later life.

Taken from a larger sample of eighteen LGBT older adults, the following paper presents narratives from a sub-sample of nine gay men born within the same generational cohort. This research intends to contribute to the understanding of how societal structures impact the formation of identity, while also addressing the need for recognizing the individuality that exists within the broader LGBT older adult population (IOM, 2011).

Methods

Design

To understand who LGBT individuals are in old age, we must first understand the generational cohort to which they belong as the past, present, and future are all components of one's identity—i.e. who we were, who we are, and who we hope to be (Heideggar, 2010). Life story narrative allows for the expression of individuality while maintaining the importance of broader cultures in which one's story is given meaning (Atkinson, 2007; McAdams, 2005). McAdams (2005) eloquently explains:

> Stories live in culture. They are born, they grow, they proliferate, and they eventually die according to the norms, rules, and traditions that prevail in a given society, according to the society's implicit understandings of what counts as a tellable story, a tellable life. (p. 250)

The past, present, and future have the potential to influence a life story, for example, take the word "normal." What someone considers normal is not only influenced by their past experiences, but also influenced by the life they live presently, and how they perceive future normalcy. Therefore, the meaning of the word "normal" is not confined to a particular moment, rather, defined through time.

In addition, this method acknowledges the natural non-linear pattern of story-telling and allows one narrative story to consist of multiple dimensions (Holstien & Gubrium, 2012; Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007). Furthermore, the personal aspect of story-telling facilitates the co-construction of knowledge between self (i.e., editing one's thoughts) and between the story-teller and the story-listener (i.e., the process of meaning-making) (Atkinson, 2007; Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007). Within the scope of this method, researchers can engage in a critical discourse with the narrative by examining the structure of the shared story as well as the context in which it is told (Zeilig, 2011).

Procedures

Procedures for this project were approved by the University of Georgia Institutional Review Board (IRB). I recruited participants via emails sent to a local chapter of Services & Advocacy for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Elders (SAGE) as well as to an electronic listserv. In the latter case, a snowball effect occurred, and a member of a social group for older gay men shared the information on a private Facebook page. The original email I sent included an invitation to participate included a study description, flyer for distribution, and the interview protocol.

I conducted nine interviews in a location that was both convenient and comfortable for the participant. In-person conversations took place in personal homes, private office spaces, or in a secluded room within a public setting, such as a library. Interviews lasted no more than 2 hours, ranging from 55 minutes to 90 minutes and began by gaining informed consent. I gave participants a $20 gift card as an incentive. I took a conversational approach to allow participants to tell their life stories as they conceptualized them. Narratives were told using a linear in structure, beginning with past, moving to present, and concluding with future thoughts on life

and legacy. However, some participants were prone to moving between past, present, and future in a non-linear fashion.

Research team. The research team was composed of myself as the lead investigator, three LIFE Lab research assistants, and my dissertation committee members. Three undergraduate students helped with transcription as well as some basic narrative summarizing. During the transcription process, myself and the student research team discussed data, relying on our personal and professional experiences. Due to the topic of identity, it is important to note the subjective experiences of gender and sexuality that became a part of this project. One team member identifies as transgender female, while the three other individuals, including myself, identify as straight, cis-gender females. These discussions became part of the reflexive memoing process that informed the preliminary coding structure and thematic organization.

Analysis

Once interviews were transcribed and checked for correctness, I uploaded the documents to ATLAS.ti for Mac to begin the iterative coding process. I moved between transcripts, academic literature, and analytical memos to strengthen the reflexivity of my qualitative research and add depth to my analysis (Friese, 2014). As coding evolved and I identified a theme of *sexual identity formation*, I expanded upon the existing coding structure to address three emerging components of sexual identity formation; *awareness of social identity*, *affirmation of personal identity*, and *embodiment of narrative identity*. I then organized the three components according to dominant and counter-narratives. The full thematic structure is available in Figure 4.1.

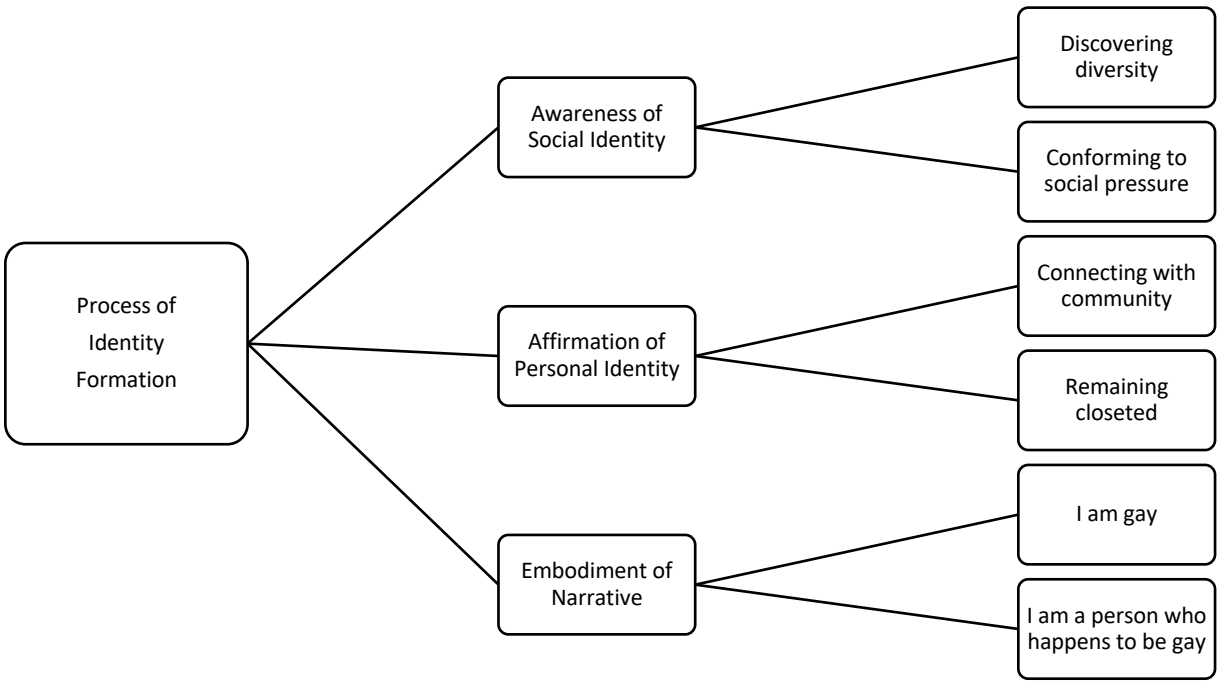

Figure 3.1. Identity Thematic Structure.

Sequencing of the narratives. Like many narratives, not all the participants linearly told stories. Many revealed segments of their stories as they recalled significant events of their life. Since these narratives were co-constructed between each participant and myself, I used my skills of interpretation as well as the subjectivity I have gained throughout this project to reorganize the narratives to provide a clear account of the life narratives. Determining when these stories begin and end is intricate work, as they frequently blend into other life facts (Reisssman, 2008). Thus, I systematically organized the narratives within a linear framework that tracks identity throughout the life course and introduce the information to the reader in meaningful and connective way.

Study Participants

From the original sample of 18, I used nine men in this analysis based on their birth year; as all were born within the years of the Baby Boom cohort (1946-1964). This cohort embodies a unique cultural-historical perspective that enhances the particular culturally grounded identity formation. The three men whose birth years fell outside this range— two were born after 1964

and one was born before 1946— were excluded from this analysis. I eliminated one man who self-identified as gay and fell within the birth years because he transitioned from female to male later in life and did not share the same socio-historical perspectives. Additionally, I did not want to further marginalize the transgender participant by comparing his experiences to cisgender gay men who benefit from different social privileges. Recent literature has been hesitant to group transgender individuals in research reporting on sexuality as the experiences of transgender and gender non-conforming (TGNC) individuals and those who identify as a sexual minority are vastly different and warrant specific attention (Porter, Brennan-Ing, Chang, dickey, Singh, Bower, Whitten, 2016). Additional demographic information is in Table 4.2.

Table 3.1. *Participant Demographics*

Variable	N=9
Age	55-69
Regional birthplace	
Northeast	3
Southeast	6
Midwest	3
Relational status	
Single	4
Partnered	6
Married	2
Divorced (from heterosexual marriages)	4
Parental Status	
Children	2
No children	7
Occupation	
Employed	6
Retired	6
Disability	2
HIV positive (disclosed)	
Yes	3
No	6

Findings

All nine men report being aware of their gay identity as children, however, like many socially constructed labels, their outward identity was more complex and difficult to understand. The findings represent how the men negotiated their sexual identities through decades of social change. As young men, they were emerging into a world that was dramatically changing all around them. Politically, Baby Boomers were protesting the Vietnam War on campuses around the United States, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was leading a march on the National Monument, the women's liberation was gaining momentum, and for the first time, gay men were creating space to express their sexual identity openly. However, just as these men were feeling a sense of belonging, AIDS began to destroy their social networks and caused them to question their identity once more. As a generational cohort, they faced these historical life events together, but their unique experiences shaped their individual identities. Furthermore, the findings consider the narrative identities as representative of the amalgamation between both social and personal aspects of identity formation throughout the life course.

Awareness of Social Identity

The men considered attending college a turning point. It marked a time when they were away from their families of origin and had the freedom to express themselves. The dominant narrative, *discovering diversity*, was revealed by Andy, Reese, Jean, Drew, Toby, and Lee as they recalled their college years as a time for sexual exploration and discovered a more diverse social environment among their peers. Their experiences in college inspired their decision to be openly gay for the remainder of their lives. A counter narrative, *conforming to social pressure*, emerged among three participants, Chris, Alex, and Sam. These men said they experimented

sexually with other men during college, but felt they needed to leave behind their impulsive behaviors for a more adult life that included a wife, steady job, and possibly children.

Discovering diversity. In addition to defining themselves by their sexual experiences with other men, Andy, Drew, Jean, Lee, Reese, and Toby explored their identity through their interaction with social networks. Attending college introduced these men to a new way of living they scarcely knew had existed. Lee described his college experience as a "refuge" from his family. It was during college when he connected with a community of other gay men and found the "gay life" which he had been searching. Jean, also felt college gave him the opportunity to escape the confines of home. While and undergraduate, he joined a fraternity and the campus newspaper. He described the combination of social networks as a highly a highly important part of his life:

> I had this dichotomy in college. 'Cause I was with this kind of hippiefied, radicalized newspaper group of friends, who were probably smoking pot, I wasn't at the time, but that was the kind of people I hung out with. And then at the same time I had this very kind of traditional fraternity….

Additionally, Drew realized during his college years that being gay looked differently than just one stereotype. He recalled a trip he took during a semester break when he observed gay men as diverse individuals:

> At that time I realized there are people who don't look and don't talk like me, who are also gay... It was my first time to see all of that. What a gay ghetto is and how being gay 24/7 appears.

It was in that moment he said he chose to follow the examples of other men who were living openly gay lives and recognized his own desire to live among people who were similar, yet also different from himself.

Issues of diversity did not only surround sexuality, there were also important socio-political discussions of race, gender, and social class. Jean described the politically active collegiate environment, "All the traditional things happened where, you know, the students took over the offices of the President and there were Vietnam protests." The civil rights movement was also a strong force in their daily lives. For instance, Reese said he was confronted with the complex relationship between socially marginalized identities when he dated a black man. Within his circle of friends sexual freedom was accepted, but racist attitudes permeated what was deemed acceptable and represents the complexity of this time period. Reese shared an experience that highlights the intersectionality of identity embedded within the socio-historical context of racial segregation.

For those who were openly gay during this time, a community built around the newfound sexual freedom. Drew noted how sexuality was explored by everyone, not only those who identified as a sexual minority:

> It was more about free love and bisexuality and sexual freedom so no one really called it gay as much as they just called it 'openness' and 'experimentation.' The more that I found out about myself and others, the more that I realized that all of these other people were discovering the same things that I was discovering.

Andy also described the impact sexual freedom had on his life:

> I think more pivotal and meaningful to my sexuality was seeing an actual movement begin to grow. Not only the anti-war movement or the women's movement, but sexual freedom movement. Specifically, gay liberation as it was called in those days.

He went on to describe the electric feeling of being part of a social movement, "There was a society beginning, I kind of felt like it was new in those days. At least expressing ourselves as okay to be who you are was a new behavior." Lee and Reese shared similar sentiments. Lee shared a memory going to his first gay pride parade where drag queens were marching down the street in the middle of the day. Reese described the various communities he lived in that catered specifically to a gay clientele. When asked why his community needed a gay bank he remarked, "It was making a statement," meaning they were on the frontier of gay living and if there was a statement to be made, they were going to make it.

Conforming to social pressure. Although Alex, Chris, and Sam said they were aware of their gay sexual identity as young men, they internalized the social stigma associated with being gay and kept their sexuality a secret for many years. Sam recalled the collegial atmosphere, "There were 2,000 students and I felt like I was the only person in that entire school, which was all male, that was attracted to other men. I just, there was no connection with anybody!" The isolation he felt was affirmed by heteronormative life events such as the expectation of marriage and children. He further explained:

> I really thought that if I got married, I would change. And I was hoping I would. So I got married and on my honeymoon we went to Italy, and my wife was sleeping in the sleeper car and I was out in the hallway just looking at the countryside and there was a man also out there, who I suddenly realized I was extremely attracted to. And my thought was,

> ‘what have I done?’ You know? And I was aware that getting married was not the answer.

Sam’s story represents the internalized stigma of being gay during the mid-60s. Although this was a time of progressive ideas, he could not break from the constraints of a heteronormative society and because he did not have a community to come out and receive support, he followed the expected life path.

Chris and Alex shared similar sentiments regarding socially acceptable behavior. Chris said, “It was the normal thing to do at the time, in 1970 when I graduated. I got married because that’s what you did.” After he served in the military he taught in a high school where he knew he could not disclose his sexuality without losing this job. Alex disclosed he was sexually active with both men and women during his college years, but said he “squashed” his sexuality until the early 1990s. He explained the stigma connected to unmarried men of a certain age, “The story always was, I’m not sure if this, this exists now, but you know if you’re 30 and you’re unmarried, you’re gay.” He went on to say:

> I look back now, this is hindsight, when people ask like, “What was that all about? Getting married?” I shrug and say, “Well, it was the Reagan administration.” But at that point I’m simply saying, when you grow up you put aside childish things and I was clumping my sexuality in with that.

Alex reaffirmed the influence societal expectations had on men of his age.

Affirmation of Personal Identity

Disclosure was important to many of these men, as the act of coming out was a way for their sexual orientation and social expression of sexuality to coexist. Affirming one’s gay identity took two different forms. The first, and more dominant narrative, was *connecting with a*

community. Andy, Drew, Jean, Lee, Reese, and Toby came out earlier in life and that transition was easier due to the availability of support. Even though some family members did not offer their support until years later, all the men included stories of finding a community to which they felt connected. The less dominant narratives were from those who remained closeted until later in life. Alex described coming out in the early 1990s as a time when he, "exploded out of the closet." They had jobs, wives, and children to consider and their matured roles as middle-aged men made it more challenging to disclose their sexual orientation.

Connecting with community. Andy, Drew, Jean, Lee, Reese, and Toby all described their coming out as rather uneventful. While they did experience some hesitation from their parents ranging from Jean's parents' reaction, "'What did we do wrong? Why did you turn out this way? Can we get you to a psychiatrist? How can we help you? That's an awful lifestyle, you'll never be happy,'" to other parents such as Toby's mom, who he said always conveyed her support. Despite their parents' reactions, these men sought community with their peers. As previously discussed, they found connection in college, but even after college, their social networks worked in a way to reaffirm their gay identity. For example, Reese described the atmosphere after he moved with Jean (his partner) to a city that had an eclectic gay community:

> It was amazing because then it would bring all of these people close together again and that was when I really started enjoying the being around gay people. It didn't matter if they were effeminate or if they were drag queens or whatever they were. It didn't matter to me—they were people and they liked me. Genuinely, liked me.

Jean also enjoyed the various gay communities they came in contact with over the years. Where ever they moved they became involved in theater life so they could express their artistic talents; Jean, a playwright and Reese has many years of acting experience. Through the arts they found a

place where individuals can freely express themselves despite sexual orientation, race, class, age, or gender. Jean has enjoyed the opportunity to expand his intergenerational connectedness and Reese said, "At the theater there are a lot of gay people and a lot of straight people. And they all work together. And they marry together as a solid group. That's something I have never seen."

Drew also found ways to be a part of a diverse community. His sexuality was never a topic of discussion in his family home. He explained, after his mother's death he, his father, and sister lived together as individuals, rather than a family unit, so whatever they did in their private time was their business. That experience strongly shaped Drew's understanding of his sexuality, and although he identifies as gay, he finds community and companionship among all types of people.

AIDS was also a unifying factor for many of the men who came out earlier in life. Lee and Andy are both HIV+ and have managed their illness for over 30 years. Both suggested their diagnosis gave them an opportunity to connect in a unique way to their gay community. Andy candidly said, "HIV is the most impactful aspect of my life, of my entire life." He went on to explain that hiding from public view was not the way he intended to live out his life, "I resolved to be out, not only about being gay, but being HIV positive while here. And maybe in some respects it's actually dangerous thing to do. So be it." Lee shared similar sentiments and highlighted how the loss he experienced impacted all aspects of his life:

> For all intents and purposes I was going to have a pretty good lifestyle. When your friends start dying around you, and you, you suddenly look in the mirror and you're like I can't live in Washington right now, any longer, I've lost all of my friends, so at a certain point I moved to [Blinded]. Well when you move to [Blinded] you have to change your jobs. When your next set of friends, start to go, you're in [Blinded] going okay all my

> friends are gone now here. You've come into another five-year cycle or six-year cycle, you lose, you leave that town, you leave that job behind, suddenly, you're 35 years old, you didn't have the career that you had planned on.

Lee's HIV+ identity impacted his career trajectory, his desires to have children, and the ways he has connected with people around him. Similar to Andy and Lee, Toby met his husband through his connection to AIDS. Although not HIV+, Toby's partner of six years died at the age of 24. Soon after his former partner's passing, Toby met his current husband, who had also experienced personal loss, and together they helped each other process their grief. They have been together for over 20 years and in 2013 decided to legally marry. Toby is now a husband, which he said was not something he ever thought possible, especially after losing his partner to AIDS, but said it feels "right."

Remaining closeted. Alex, Chris, and Sam expressed more difficulty coming out, although they were peripherally aware of their sexual orientation, they did not feel they had access to affirming language. Sam explained, "In high school and college, as a gay person, and I didn't even know what gay was back then, I knew I was attracted to males. I think more difficult than what it is today." It was not until he got married did he realize his mistake and he said he turned to alcohol to cope with the stress. After his second child was born he could not deal with the inner stress and came out to his wife. They agreed he would remain closeted until their children got older. Years later, Sam still remembers the day he finally had to make a change in his life:

> We saw Pretty Woman. And we came home and my wife said, 'I don't understand why we can't stay together because you've already told me what's going on in your life and I just think we should stay together.' And I said, 'We just went to the movies tonight and

> we both lusted after the same person in the movie, but I can't talk about it.' And I remember that really clearly. That was the time I had to leave. I just could not do it anymore. Because even though I was out to her, I could not talk to her about it, or live my life the way I felt I should.

Chris also stayed in his marriage for years because of his children. After coming home from Vietnam he became a teacher. He described the intense responsibility he felt to provide for his family and knew if even a hint of his gay identity became public, he would lose his job:

> As was the normal thing to do at the time in 1970 when I graduated, I got married because that's what you did. Again, homosexuality was still illegal, it was a straight ticket to hell. I think at that time my family would have totally disowned me and uh, I would have probably lost most of my friends.

Chris also felt a need to resolve his relationship with God and sought answers from his faith:

> Finally, at 40, I had a revelation I guess you'd call it. Cause I knew I'm a good person, I'm an honest person, I treat people fairly, and I just can't imagine the fact that I would rather be with a man than a woman would send me to hell. I'd been raised in the church all my life and I don't believe in a judgmental condemning God, I believe in a kind, a loving kind, you know, Jesus says love everybody. Well you know, I'm a part of everybody.

After coming out Chris and Sam both lost touch with their immediate family members, but over time some of the relationships have been reestablished. Sam poignantly described the moment he knew his daughter no longer harbored ill feelings:

My daughter came around. And at her wedding she picked out the father daughter dance and I didn't know what it was until I went to dance with her and it was Billy Joel 'I Love You Just The Way You Are.' And I cried.

Alex had a similar trajectory of substance abuse and depression, despite not having children. However, Alex described coming out as a much more explosive time in his life, marked by contemplating suicide. It was not until months later, when his depression lifted was he able to meet and observe other gay men living their lives openly. At that juncture he began to envision how his life could go on and ever since has been open about being gay. Meeting others and forming a network of support has been essential for these men, and fortunately, they were able to connect in later life. Although unique to them, Alex, Chris, and Sam realize they are part of a unique cohort of men who did live closeted lives because of social and political constraints on their identity.

Embodiment of Narrative Identity

The relationship participants developed with their sexuality is complicated for several reasons. Over the course of their lives, the men shifted from closeted to openly gay, from married to divorced, from career-centered to health-centered, or from fatherhood to disillusionment. These trajectories impact the way they currently embody their sexuality as older men. For most, being gay defined their life and still does in many ways. Their sexual orientation represents their pride, their struggle, their challenges, and their perseverance. They rely on past experiences to inspire their activism, fuel their desires to legally marry, and kindle their mentorship. The second narrative is of those who's sexuality is described as a part of who they are, not their entire being or purpose. Although they acknowledge their gay identity as impacting certain aspects of their life, their sexuality is not in the forefront, it is just another fact of life.

I am a Gay Man. For seven of the nine men, being gay identity is integral to how they live their lives. For instance, Andy referred to himself as a "sexual warrior," implying he is on the frontlines, advocating for more inclusive laws and policies that support LGBT older adults as well as those living with HIV. He remarked his own HIV diagnosis and survival acts as a driving force behind his activism:

> Even today, it's very much about why I do what I do and, you know my activism is a lot of it's predicated around having survived that era and uh, having seen society's reactions and knowing where it is I should put my volunteer efforts, my activism, my advocacy, etc.

Lee also described the role advocacy plays in his life. He expressed strong opinions and described how he stays current with legislation being passed. For example, he said the Affordable Care Act was monumental in his life:

> When the Affordable Care Act happened, you could now have pre-existing conditions, myself and everybody like me got to celebrate. Because now we could actually lose a job, and the fear of getting insurance back when we re-found a job or having to go off-insurance for a little while was lifted off my shoulders.

With the passing of this legislation, Lee felt the challenges of living with HIV were finally recognized. He said he no longer needed to live in fear of losing his job because there was alternative health care available to him and to the many others who are managing HIV daily.

Sam also spoke about the role current politics have in his life. At the time of the interview, Barack Obama was the President of the United States and Sam explained how the administration impacted his gay identity:

> I honestly believe that if weren't for Obama, we wouldn't be where we are today. And it wasn't necessarily that he passed laws, but it was his leadership and his evolution, and the evolution within the Democratic party. Even if they weren't super supportive, they were not blocking things the way republicans have. And I'm telling you, don't ask don't tell, I mean that was a specific movement under Obama, and I never thought I would see that. And then to have equality with marriage, it's mind-blowing. It's definitely helped me feel... I wasn't aware I was still feeling shame, maybe I'm feeling more pride, or just feeling like I am totally who I am.

For Chris and Toby, their gay identity is embodied in the love they have for their partners who are also men. Toby was legally married in 2013 and Chris said he plans to eventually marry his partner. By expressing their right to marry they hope to change the national conversation concerning marriage. During the interview with Chris I shared that I have a son. When he began to explain what same-sex marriage means to him, Chris used my son as an example of how the evolving idea of marriage may impact future generations, "I think... like, your son, when he's grown or in college he will have the same reaction to gays not being married as I did in college about the fact that two different races couldn't marry." Chris related societal perceptions of his past to issues we, as a society, face today. It was not lost on him the historical significance of marriage equality, and he expressed his desire to be a part of this turning point.

I am a Person, who Happens to be Gay. Alex and Drew did not describe their lives as centered around being gay. Being gay was a strong theme throughout their narrative, as both described the fluidity of their identities by way of sexual exploration. However, as men in later life, neither felt he related to a dominant gay narrative or stereotype. For instance, Alex was candid about his gay identity not being a choice, but a part of himself he could no longer ignore.

When he realized his sexuality was beyond his control and fighting his identity made life more difficult than conforming, Alex resolved to come out. In later life, he said he resents when people describe him as "the gay friend" and introduce him using his sexuality as an adjective. Being gay has influenced Alex's life, but it has not defined it.

Drew acknowledged the cultural significance of the "coming out story" and explained, "I never felt like there was a closet to come out of." He went on to explain:

> I've never compelled I had to tell someone I was gay.... There was no other time that I've ever sat someone down and said, 'I'm gay.' I've just never felt a need. It's bizarre because there is, so much of gay identity that is in literature and art is the coming out story and I just didn't have that.

Drew said he supports the social and legislative progress centered around gay rights, but he went on to explain that he has become more focused on inclusion for everyone:

> I'm not as strident about living a gay identity or expressing a gay identity, I think I do without even knowing. I'm very much focused on expressing a liberal, or a position of fairness and inclusion, than I am you must include homosexual men.

Drew's narrative identity may represent a shift in the way we think about sexuality in the future. Drew and Alex both embody the normalizing of gay sexuality as being a part of human existence, not a descriptive attribute.

Discussion

As a society, we are at a unique juncture in that individuals, emerging into older adulthood, are expected to live longer and with better health outcomes than ever before (Administration on Aging [AOA], 2014). Fried (2017) refers to the emergence of this modern cohort of older adults as the *Third Demographic Dividend*, meaning, collectively the wealth of

knowledge found among these individuals should be considered a valuable resource to the futurity of humanity. In the United States, there are an estimated 2.7 million older adults who self-identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) and this number is expected to more than double by 2060 (Fredriksen-Goldsen Kim, Shiu, Goldsen, & Emlet, 2017). We have a distinctive advantage to capitalize on this growing demographic by collecting personal narratives to begin forming a mosaic of queer history that has been invisible up until this point (de Vries & Herdt, 2012). At the same time, we must be careful not to reduce queer history or queer culture to one stereotype as this may perpetuate marginalization of this population (Jones & Pugh, 2005). Plummer (2009) ascertains that it is from the *counter stories* that we gain richness and insight into sexual identity.

Dominant and counter-narratives were intentionally presented to demonstrate the complexity of identity. Queer theory suggests there is not just one way express sexuality (Fish & Harvey, 2005). As illustrated within each subset of identity (i.e., social, personal, and narrative), some participants found themselves pioneering a broader social movement, while others described the experience of being relegated to silence and invisibility for most of their lives. Furthermore, social interaction framed their trajectories which were internalized over time and informed their narrative identity as older men.

Social Identity. College years acted as a time for participants to explore their inner sexual desires in relation to a broader social environment. Similar to Otis and Harley (2016), the findings represent how sexual identity is socially constructed and continuously evolving. Some found college to be a place where they could take risks without experiencing social consequences. For example, Drew contextualized his emerging sexuality within the 1970s era of sexual freedom. Drew said he did not feel ostracized because his peers were also questioning and

expressing themselves in new and different ways. College also enabled participants to socialize with others and label the feelings they had harbored during their childhood and adolescence. Although they grew up in towns and cities where "queer" was an ugly word and being gay was not acceptable, establishing diverse support networks gave them hope. Feelings of camaraderie are not isolated to this sample, as other researchers have nicknamed this cohort the *Gayby Boomers* (Ramirez-Valles, 2016) or the *Pride Generation* (Fredriksen-Goldsen, 2016) to account for its uniqueness. These individuals make up the first gay cohort to embrace their gay identity and actively engage in a gay liberation movement (Fredriksen-Goldsen, 2016; Ramirez-Valles, 2016).

Although there was significant social progress during this time, there were also those who did not connect and remained hidden. For Alex, Chris, and Sam college was not a time for social growth. Sam said he felt even further isolated while attending an all-male college and upon graduation, Alex and Chris believed they had to put aside youthful foolishness and fulfill obligations established by society. Feelings of loneliness and social isolation are documented in gerontological literature of LGBT populations (de Vries and Herdt, 2012; Fredricksen-Goldsen et al., 2015), as the stigmas, discriminations, and prejudices these older adults faced had life-long impacts. For instance, Chris knew he would be court marshalled and given dishonorable discharge if he had come out as young man and later struggled with substance abuse and depression.

The men were born within the same cohort; however, their relationship to the broader social and political environment differed significantly. As feminist gerontologists explain, sexual and gender identities are not only linked together but also connected to social structures (Allen et al., 2009; Calasanti, 2004). Alex, Chris, and Sam spoke directly of the social pressures they felt

to become male providers and hid their true sexual orientation for years. To understand personal identity, we need to understand how social structures, such as a heteronormative society, impact lives of sexual minorities over time (Allen et al., 2009; Butler, 2007). Although these men shared the same birth cohort, their social identities influenced how they would emerge into adulthood; some as openly gay and others only in private.

Personal Identity. During college, many of the men gained an understanding of who they were in relation to larger society. As young adults, they found ways to confirm their personal identity, namely by identifying others with whom they could share a "gay life" (participant, Lee). For instance, Reese recalled moving to a town that was home to a diverse population where he finally felt connected to a gay community, and that experience reaffirmed his gay identity. Drew, Andy, and Lee also described instances where connecting with others strengthened and revalidated their personal identity. No longer was their sexuality hated or feared, they had discovered places where they could live a life they never thought possible.

Even those who came out later in life eventually identified a community to which they could come out. Although they knew internally they were gay, family members and peers did not affirm their personal identities, and it became difficult for them to live with themselves. Chris said he spent decades hating himself and Sam and Alex mirrored his sentiments. To be honest with others, they needed to be honest with themselves. Sam recalled a conversation with his ex-wife where he explained he could not go on keeping secrets about being gay. He said it was so much work covering his footsteps as not to get caught by a friend or colleague. Although a difficult transition, marred by substance abuse and issues with mental health, Alex, Chris, and Sam eventually found the support they needed to become who they always knew they were.

The discrepancy between the time of disclosing to one's self and disclosing to others is consistent with other research (Grov et al., 2010). According to existing research, older men waited until their mid-twenties to come out because they did not have a community of support to come out to (Fish & Harvey, 2005, Grov et al., 2010). Furthermore, identity affirmation has been found to be important in mitigating adverse health outcomes and establishing positive wellbeing in later life (Fredriksen-Goldsen et al., 2017). As social awareness of sexuality has become more inclusive, younger adults have identified support networks and are closing the gap between inner and outward disclosure (Fish & Harvey, 2005, Grov et al., 2010). The men in this study were pleased young adults are now coming out earlier than they had and encouraged them to be open about their sexuality; even though they admitted it is tough at first.

Narrative Identity. Narrative identities emerged from social and personal narratives. The experiences, or stories, of their life, came together to form how each participant thinks of himself as an older man. While many spoke of their gay sexuality as being a driving factor, others expressed ways in which being gay has become a fact of life, similar to one's race or chronological age. For those who conveyed their gay identity as a descriptor (i.e., I am a gay man), they embody the perceived advantages of being gay. Chris is proud to be gay and finds ways to make social statements that emphasize his coming out later in life. Andy and Lee also proudly describe themselves as gay men who are HIV positive. They think of their older adulthood as a privilege and openly discuss their health status as a way to weaken the oppressive social order that continues to disenfranchise their fight for survival. Jean and Reese, who also lived through the AIDS epidemic, witnessed how the disease impacted gay communities across the United States. They found a way to be together through it all and their partnership has spanned decades. Their love and appreciation for one another, as gay men, is embodied within

their narrative identities. Additionally, Toby has been with his partner for over 20 years, and when marriage was finally legal for same-sex couples, he married the love of his adult life. His commitment to his husband not only enriches his narrative identity; it also brings awareness to the importance of normalizing love beyond the confines of heteronormativity.

Whether out of the closet at 21 or "family man" until the age of 40, smaller stories occurring throughout life contributed to narrative identity. McAdam's (2005) explains narrative identity represents the process of making sense of one's life by applying meaning to it. While some made sense of their sexuality by placing it at the forefront of their lives, others found meaning in the subtleties of being gay. Alex and Drew did not feel a need to describe themselves as *gay men,* but rather as people, who happen to be gay. However, this distinction should not be conflated with them not being proud of who they are. Alex and Drew recognized their own sexuality as nothing more than a human condition; to love and to be loved. According to them, there is no need to label themselves as openly gay men, just as there is no need to label straight individuals openly heterosexual. Whether intentional or not, Alex and Drew are actively challenging heteronormativity and enacting agency over their own narrative identity. Similarly, queer theory draws attention to heteronormative assumptions and aims to decentralize socially constructed ideas of normal (Gamson, 2000). Human sexuality, as well as the absence of, *is* normal and subjectively lies within human experience (Oswald et al., 2009).

Implications

When we share our life stories, our past experiences and future expectations become a part of our present narrative and alternatively the present influences what we remember of our past and how we plan for our future. When individuals are allowed to dictate their own life story, they gain a sense of agency that contributes to establishing a more confident self (McAdams &

McLean, 2013). Adler, Lodi-Smith, Philippe, and Houle (2016) ascertain that narrative identity is necessary for establishing positive well-being. By forming one's narrative identity, individuals benefit from self-selecting meaning-making events that have defined their lives. Some occurrences may be positive, while others negative, but all essential to how they define themselves.

Narrative exploration of identity also allows consideration of social factors and the degree of impact on individual lives. Although much has been done to deconstruct personal identity, it remains difficult to analyze because it is representative of a social identity, which is persuaded by individual or societal beliefs, attitudes, and experiences (Bamberg, 2012; Plummer, 2009). Also, the cumulative experiences of living in a heteronormative culture, as well as the trauma of being rejected by their families of origin and the disenfranchisement by society, has impacted their identities in later life. We are in an exceptional time when younger generations are questioning their sexual and gender identity with more ferocity. As younger generations embrace life's subjective meanings and network with diverse peers through social media platforms, we will no longer be able to box, check, or assign them to a socially constructed identity. As demonstrated here, identity is fluid. It is not only internally rooted; it is externally influenced by politics, relationships, and social positioning.

Limitations and Future Directions

This project contributes to the diversifying discourse of older adult LGBTQ+ narratives. Although there is conceptual strength in analyzing a homogenous sample, a limitation exists in the transferability of these findings to others who identify under the LGBTQ+ umbrella. It is beyond the scope of this particular study to comment on the privileged social status of the nine men in comparison to others who experience multiple targeted identities. In a recent publication,

Fredriksen-Goldsen and Kim (2017) comment on the lack of information available on racial and ethnic minority persons. Although disparities in health status and well-being among racially and ethnically diverse LGBT populations have been documented (Kim & Fredriksen-Goldsen, 2017; Fredriksen-Goldsen & Kim, 2017), we do not yet know much about their personal lives as they age into later adulthood and how those disparities may impact their process of forming their sexual identity. Future research should build upon the diverse identities presented here, as we know there is more diversity to be discovered as researchers continue to document and analyze life story narratives (Hall & Fine, 2005).

Scholars should not only explore the intersections of race and ethnicity, but also intersections of social class, as one's social class is considerably temporal throughout life. There is much to be explored concerning the identities of older adults and understanding how social structures impact individuals differently. For example, college was one environment these men said helped them understand their identity. Generally, college campuses are more culturally diverse, and the participants found they flourished by making their own life choices. However, college is not an opportunity afforded to everyone. Future studies should consider the experiences of those who did not attend college and address supportive social networks that form in various different settings.

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CHAPTER FOUR

CULTRUAL GENERATIVITY AMONG SEXUAL AND GENDER MINORITIES: BUILDING FOUNDATIONS OF SELF-ACCEPTANCE[3]

[3] Bower, K.L., Lewis, D.C, Bermudez, J.M., Singh, A.A. Submitted to *The Gerontologist, 3/22/18*.

Abstract

Generativity results in positive well-being during later life, which is important to lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) older adults who have been recipients of lifelong enacted and felt stigma. We have identified stigmatizing social influences which both negatively and positively acted to inform understandings of generativity and the ability to leave a legacy for future generations. Using a narrative analysis methodology, we identified three overarching redemptive narratives from study participants: (a) experiences during the HIV/AIDS pandemic, (b) absence of positive role models, and (c) religious conviction. We conclude with a discussion of positive marginality that highlights the positive outcomes experienced by these individuals.

Key words: generativity, sexual minority, gender minority, older adult, identity

Introduction

Generativity is the concern older adults direct toward continued wellbeing of future generations. Mentoring, parenting, teaching, and gifting are some actions that support their desire for futurity (de St. Aubin, McAdams, Kim, 2004). More nuanced definitions include diverse ethnic populations and changing roles of women, as well as those who identify as a sexual or gender minority (Black & Rubinstein, 2009; Cohler, Hostetler, & Boxer, 1998; Rubinstein, Girling, de Medeiros, Brazda, & Hannum, 2015). However, significant conceptual and methodological issues remain that warrant further scholarly attention. For instance, there is a need to critique the patriarchal and heteronormative structure of generativity (Miller-McLemore, 2004), however, few scholars have challenged the concept of generativity regarding sexuality and gender non-conforming identities. Researchers have noted impacts of ongoing stressors, stigmas, marginalization, and discrimination on lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT)

adults (Fredriksen-Goldsen, Kim, Bryan, Shiu, & Emlet, 2017; Meyer & Ouellette, 2011), yet less is known about the *hardiness*, *resilience*, and *generativity* experienced by this population (de Vries, 2015).

Using narrative analysis, the current study addresses gaps in literature by examining generative contributions resulting from of stigma experienced by sexual and gender minority older adults. Additionally, we discuss how these experiences create social change from within and support a generational legacy of resilience. In this article we alternate between the acronym LGBTQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer), sexual and gender minorities, and queer and trans to denote the wide range of identities encompassed in this older adult community.

Multiple Stigmas: LGBTQ+ and Aging

Social identities influence understandings and experiences of generativity (McAdams & McLean, 2013). For LGBTQ+ older adults, stress from life-long stigmatization is a unifying factor as many are vulnerable to inequalities in health care, de-legitimizing political ideologies, or dishonorable religious convictions (de Vries, 2015). Furthermore, discrimination against gender and sexual minorities ranges from overt macroaggressions (e.g., hate crimes and violence) to subtle, and sometimes unintentional, microaggressions (e.g., misgendering trans people and heteronormative assumptions). Contributing to the complexity of these experiences for LGBTQ+ adults are the hierarchical societal structures that advantage certain demographic groups over others (Calasanti & Slevin, 2006; Meyer et al., 2011). The pervasiveness of anti-LGBTQ+ stigma creates social barriers to physical and mental wellbeing (Williamson, 2000). We describe three different types of stigmas— enacted, felt, and internalized— that frame experiences of physical and mental well-being for LGBTQ+ older adults.

Enacted stigma. Enacted stigma is experienced through blatant actions of discrimination toward minority populations (de Vries, 2015). Homophobia is the hostility and overt discrimination by society at-large toward someone who identifies as a sexual minority, (Herek & McLemore, 2013) and transphobia is the disdain and disgust toward individuals who do not conform to socially constructed gender norms (Robinson-Wood & Weber, 2016). However, language has shifted to also include homoprejudice and transprejudice, which recongizes that the discrimination enacted is not rooted in fear, but rather in prejudicial attitudes toward gay and trans people (Logan, 1996). Such victimization is well documented among today's LGBT older adult population. For example, Fredriksen-Goldsen et al. (2011) found 82% of their sample had been victimized because of their sexual orientation or gender identity, and two-thirds reported being victims of discrimination three or more times throughout their life. The cumulative experiences of disenfranchisement by society and the trauma of being rejected by families of origin has led to increased mental health risks (de Vries & Herdt, 2012).

Felt stigma. Felt stigma is unjustly brought upon sexual and gender minorities to make them feel inferior (Herek & McLemore, 2013; Robinson-Wood & Weber, 2016). For example, the United States (U.S.) government has a long history of heterosexism through its anti-sodomy laws, anti-gay marriage laws, lack of support for trans civil and human rights, absence of LGTBQ+ employee protections, and its inaction while HIV/AIDS was initially and rapidly spreading through the LGBTQ+ community (Knauer, 2011). Those who feel stigma may eventually modify their outward appearance or behavior (e.g., living "in the closet"), guarding against external stigmas, and further legitimizing prominent cultural stigma (de Vries, 2015).

Internalized stigma. Because of enacted stigma and felt stigma, LGBTQ+ persons can internalize societal stigmas by directing their negative feelings inward. Long-term consequences

can result in elevated disease rates, poorer life opportunities, and negatively impact one's overall quality of life (Otis & Harley, 2016). Furthermore, Fredriksen-Goldsen and colleagues (2017) found these discriminatory behaviors to predict higher levels of internalized stigma and shame during later adulthood. Despite the detrimental effects, stigma may also create opportunities to build resilience (Meyer et al., 2011; Porter, Brennan-Ing, Chang, dickey, Singh, Bower, Whitten, 2016) by expressing one's self through generative acts (de Vries, 2015).

Cultural Generativity

Generativity as a psychosocial stage of development prepares adults for understanding themselves, their contributions to the world around them, and the legacy they leave to their communities after they die (Erikson, 1963). However, Kotre (1984) explored generativity as forming within cultural context and expanded the concept of generativity to include the entire life course. He argued that generativity should not be limited to a specific developmental stage as Erikson purposed, but rather a process of meaning-making that develops throughout the life course (Kotre, 2004). Generativity is becoming a more inclusive concept by acknowledging cultural diversity, however, some researchers still assume a heteronormative perspective. For instance, Rubinstein and colleagues (2015) sought to understand how childlessness impacted generative actions of U.S. women, some of whom never had children. This study assumes procreation as a normal life event and relies on the assumption that generativity includes a biological component. For LGBT individuals this, and other heteronormative assumptions, can distort the reality lived by this unique cohort of older adults.

Oswald and Masciadrelli (2008) address the importance of cultural context in their research on generativity among gay cisgender men and lesbian cisgender women. They argue that societal stigma and discrimination against sexual (and gender) minority persons and the

sociohistorical events that directly impacted LGBT individuals warrant further consideration as these cohort effects ultimately shape the identity of these individuals and their inner desire to be (or not to be) generative later in life. Additionally, researchers have found stigma has acted as a catalyst for social and political change (de Vries, 2015) as well as a source for resilience and strength (Emlet Tozay, & Raveis. 2010; Meyer et al., 2011). Generativity is one way to understand positive outcomes emerging with this cohort as individuals find meaning in their attempts to overcome life-long adversity (de Vries, 2015; Emlet et al., 2010).

Methods

Conceptual Framework

Considering the lack of understanding and nascent research with LGBTQ+ people and generativity, this study sought to further contribute to and develop this body of knowledge. We used a non-heteronormative lens to provide a foundation to explore the complexity of cultural generativity for LGBTQ+ older adults. A gerontological feminist perspective (Calasanti, 2004) was used to highlight the multiple social identities found among aging individuals and bring awareness to those who identify with underrepresented populations, such as LGBTQ+ older adults.

The inclusiveness of a feminist lens allowed us to move beyond demographic descriptions of social identities and conceptualize changes over time while considering the intersectionality and complexity of multiple and interlocking identities (Allen et al., 2009). Additionally, we were able to engage in critical discourse using narrative inquiry by examining the context of participants stories (Zeilig, 2011). Although social influences are ingrained in the story being told, the narrator had freedom to tell their own personal story in whatever way they chose. Participants shared feelings about generativity that may or may not prescribe to societal

norms (McAdams, 2005), emphasizing certain life events, and describing their unique pathways to identity formations.

Data Collection

Upon receiving approval from the Institutional Review Board, an electronic invitation including a study description and flyer for distribution was sent through several listservs and through personal and professional connections. Oftentimes, the information was forwarded to social networking groups and specific individuals who were connected to the target population.

Data were collected through face-to-face interviews with 18 individuals from July to October 2016. One interview was conducted via videoconferencing. The remaining interviews were conducted in-person in multiple states in the Southeast region of the U.S. Interviews were guided by a set of open-ended questions and lasted no more than two hours. Our interview guide followed a similar format as Rubinstein and colleagues (2015) who to developed a questionnaire to build a framework of cultural generativity theory. Additionally, we selected questions from their guide to probe specifically for generative understanding and generative action. The full interview protocol is available in APPENDIX D. In addition to the narrative interview process, participants were encouraged to share artifacts they felt enriched their narrative and some wove sentimental items into their stories. Interviews were audio recorded and notes were made during and after each interview. A few participants followed up with the first author to share personal thoughts, pass along additional historical facts, or express their gratitude.

Data Analysis

Each interview was transcribed in its entirety and was cleaned of all identifying information. The de-identified transcripts were then uploaded to a computer assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS), ATLAS.ti Mac. Analysis followed an iterative process that is

common with narrative inquiry (McAdams, 2005). The primary investigator created digital memos and commented on individual quotations within ATLAS.ti. Moving between data analysis and strategic commenting allowed for the opportunity to ask questions of the data and bring together multiple concepts. In particular, memoing encouraged continuous reflection throughout the analytical process and aided in the organizing of conceptual thoughts as they applied to central research questions (Friese, 2014).

Participants

In the U.S., older adulthood is aligned with certain governmental age-based entitlement programs that begin at 65, however, it is important to consider the subjectivity of older adulthood among LGBTQ+ older individuals and how individuals themselves define entry into older adulthood. An expanded age of entry into older adulthood also acknowledges that generativity is not fixed to a specific life stage, rather it is formed through various social constructs that interact with an individual over time. The ages of individuals in this sample range from 46 to 76 and the variance accounts for the subjectivity of life experiences, health, and culture found in older adulthood.

Gender and sexuality also vary among participants. Twelve participants identify as gay cis-male, four cis-females identify as lesbians, and two individuals identify as transgender (N=18). Of the two transgender participants, one identifies himself as gay and the other identifies herself as heterosexual. All the participants are white and native to the U.S. Although interviewed in the Southeast region of the U.S., participants represent perspectives from states across the country.

Findings

The initial coding structure led to eight codes organized into two groups: generative conduits (*individual, relational, familial, historical*) and generative foci (*things, activities, people*, and *group*). While coding for generative narratives, a recurrent theme of *stigma* emerged across multiple interviews. Participants described several types of stigma, specifically: *enacted*, *felt*, and *internalized*. At this point, reflective memos helped determine the relationship between data and more deeply understand the link between stigma and generativity. Enacted, felt, and internalized stigmas were then operationalized, relying on empirical support, and then organized into two groups, external and internal stigmas, to provide further structure to the codebook.

Experiences During the HIV/AIDS Pandemic

The most prevalent life event to incite generative action in late adulthood was experiencing the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Participants over 50 who identified as a sexual minority shared experiences of dealing with HIV/AIDS. Neither transgender participant reflected on this historical health crisis, most likely because they had not transitioned until later adulthood and were not affiliated with the LGBT community during this time period. Interaction with HIV/AIDS spanned decades starting with an early understanding of death and survival. Andy (gay, 68) recalls:

> HIV is the most impactful aspect of my life, of my entire life. Not only for the fact of being HIV positive, but, primarily for being in [name of city] at the time of its earliest emergence, and seeing so many dear and close friends succumb to horrendous, painful, excruciating deaths. It made me feel very much like surviving a war and being exposed to death and dying much earlier than you would have expected to be. So in helping those people pass away and being with them at the time, you know, at their deaths in their

> hospitals, in their homes during, while they were suffering, and surviving. But not knowing if the other shoe was going to drop at any moment, it took over my life.

Andy and others are now pioneering a generation of survivors who faced innumerable accounts of stigma. They have found ways to memorialize the lives of those they lost through generative tributes and are continuing the activism and advocacy necessary to raise awareness among a younger population of queer individuals.

Stigma. An enacted stigma, attached to being gay with HIV/AIDS, was interwoven throughout their narratives. Participants remembered this time as frustrating and chaotic with no answers as to why this was happening. Reese (gay, 69) shared his experience of helping close friends diagnosed with HIV and the detached treatment provided by doctors and other medical staff:

> They [medical staff] put scrubs on and they tied it in the back. That was awful. I refused to do that. Because these were my buddies. It's intimidating, it's awful, and we know that it's not airborne. So, what is the problem? And it took them [medical staff] a while to make a change, but I think that probably happened because we kept refusing to 'gown up' and go in. And, so I watched a lot of people pass away and that was like... (begins to cry) I'm sorry. (deep breath) It was hard.

Chris (gay, 69) and Pat (gay, 76) experienced enacted stigma less directly, but vividly recalled frustration with the U.S. government that mounted during this time period. Openly gay men were not the only ones impacted by HIV/AIDS and the resulting stigma. Dani (lesbian, 54) remembered the enacted stigma she felt, "In some ways it [HIV/AIDS] just made hostility around homosexuality worse...." Participants described the union that formed between the two groups of sexually marginalized people from the shared experience of felt stigma, Andy

remarked, “So many of the lesbians that were our friends and remained healthy were horrified at what they were seeing happen to their gay brothers that they stepped up and became caregivers, often physicians themselves.”

Those in the closet during this time also felt rising hostility and, although they knew internally they were gay, they chose to stay in the closet because it was “safer.” Casey (gay, 50) knew very little about what he called, “gay life.” He recalls receiving stigmatized messages about gay people while he was still closeted, “There was so much backlash with all the gay men getting AIDS and dying. It was all over the news. The Ebola crisis of three years ago times a hundred.” Chris, Alex (gay, 62), and Sam (gay, 69), all of whom also came out later in adulthood, remember intimidating messages that were spread about homosexuality and HIV/AIDS and Alex comments that his decision to remain in the closet likely saved his life.

Surviving the pandemic health crisis led to internalized stigma rooted in guilt, leading many participants to ask, “why me?” Godfrey (2016) suggests that the non-normative death experienced by many young individuals due to the AIDS virus made a lasting impact on how survivors contemplate the meaning of life and death. For instance, Drew (gay, 58) knew many who died from the disease and admits to questioning his own survival:

> You think that you deserve it, you think that it is being done to you, you think that it is unavoidable, you think that it is because you were careless. You think all of those things, you know, full range questioning, ‘Why is this happening?’ And at that time we really didn’t know, so all of those questions were valid.

Godfrey explains that the epidemic led to a multitude of enduring feelings, ranging from shock and guilt to gratitude, and greatly impact how individuals construct the meaning of life as well as their generativity.

Building legacies. Stories of being diagnosed with HIV, caring for those who became sick, and fulfilling an urge to help through volunteering with clinics and on helplines permeated narratives. Almost everyone had a personal story of loss. Some participants contribute to cultural generativity by sharing the legacies of those who succumbed to the disease, while others have chosen to act generatively through activism, advocacy, and volunteerism.

Memorializing. Memorializing includes the desire to contribute to the legacy of others who died from AIDS. Toby (gay, 58) lost his partner to AIDS in 1996. He says contributing to his partner's happiness was one of his proudest accomplishments, "I supported [his] life. I was there, I was a part of that. I don't claim ownership of that, but I was a part of that and so that definitely is something that I feel proud of." Toby shared a book of poems written by his partner before he died at the age of 24. He hopes to publish the collection one day so he can continue the legacy his partner left behind so early in life. Part of Toby's generative contribution is sustaining the legacy of his partner so it lives on to inform future generations.

Beyond the loss of individual friends, loved ones, and colleagues, participants reflected on the collective loss to society. Andy says, "So many people had died and I felt like they were so much more talented than myself in many ways… It was a tragic loss of a really huge pool of talent, a loss to humanity." Lee (gay, 55) says, that although he has forgotten individual names, he looks through personal photobooks to remember friends lost and the undiscovered talents that were lost with them. Participants' generative desires are remembrances of autobiographies that can no longer be shared. Participants understand they are the keepers of these stories and they demonstrate the willingness to uphold legacies of those whose lives ended too soon.

Activism, advocacy, and volunteerism. While some talked about the disease and the impact it had on their community in past tense, others spoke of the disease as present in their

daily lives. Lee, Andy, and Casey disclosed they were HIV positive and their diagnosis has strongly informed their generative contributions. The men are concerned that younger individuals unnecessarily put themselves at risk without understanding health issues caused by HIV and financial burdens of healthcare. Because they believe awareness begins in individual communities, they have joined local organizations to address the stigma and discrimination that is still prevalent with HIV/AIDS. Andy remarks:

> Even today, it's very much about why I do what I do. My activism is predicated around having survived that era and having seen society's reactions and knowing where it is I should put my volunteer efforts, my activism, my advocacy.

Several other participants described volunteer efforts with their local HIV/AIDS organizations, ranging from acting as a board member to administering blood tests. These older men and women do not want another generation to experience the loss they suffered and are continuing their activism, advocacy, and volunteerism in later life.

Absence of Positive Role Models

To have a history is to have certain social privilege. The lives of LGBTQ+ individuals have not been well documented as earlier generations were extremely marginalized, having been termed the *Invisible Generation* and the *Silent Generation* (Fredrikson-Goldsen, 2017). Not only were the lives of earlier generational cohorts not formally recorded, many individuals did not have personal contacts to ask questions or form networks. The oldest participant, Pat (gay, 76) says:

> There were no books, or counselors, or literature, or anyone to talk to. And I think those of us who grew up in that period felt like, I'm the only one! You know, it was a very painful, hidden kind of existence.

Younger participants shared similar sentiments of not knowing where to find support. Joe (lesbian, 49) recalls:

> There was no one I knew, parent-age wise that was gay. I never even heard of anybody talking about being lesbian, gay, bisexual, surely not transgender. Never was even a word uttered about any of that.

To compensate for the lack of examples they had while growing up, these individuals found a way to contribute to a more visible existence and establish their own legacy: their own history.

Stigma. Before many understood the meaning of identifying as a sexual or gender minority, they were introduced to derogatory messages from their family, peers, and society. For some, the enacted and felt stigma became internalized. Alex (gay, 62) remembers when he became aware of his sexuality and experiencing a mixture of feelings associated with being different:

> I kind of knew at the age of nine that I was gay. At first it felt like this warm special secret I had. And then the name-calling started and I realized that I was mistaken, that I'm the pariah.

Alex remained in the closet for decades, finally coming out when he could no longer suppress feelings he had since he was nine years old. Others told similar stories of suppressing their sexuality and gender identity until later in life. Soni (transgender male, 57) recalled:

> I had heard of transsexuals probably once or twice in my life. I had never heard of female to male people, being treated for it in that way, or even existing... and the only thing I had heard about male to females was not good stuff. The image that I would have in my head at that point in my life with a transsexual would probably be more consistent with a transvestite hooker [laughing] than an actual transsexual.

Even when language was available, it was not positive or affirming. Drew (gay, 58) explains:

> All of the terms used to describe gay men at the time were real horrible in many ways. Pansy, girly, queer was the big one that was bad. You didn't want to be queer. But gay was never used, and homosexual was never used, it was always some other term.

Others also referenced the lack of language they had available to describe the feelings they had inside, which made it difficult to find appropriate support.

Providing foundations. Having pushed the boundaries of society, these individuals want to make sure the history they have created does not go unnoticed or is inadvertently discounted as they age. "I wish we could capture the world I've known between 1979 and now. I think sometimes it's hard to remember how really scary it was in 1983 to be openly gay" (Dani, lesbian, 54). Their desire for their history to be remembered and archived is a driving factor of their generativity.

In addition to their history, many also want to share lessons of acceptance and inclusion with younger generations. Jesse (transgender female, 63) advises, "Accept yourself unconditionally, accept others unconditionally. You can't do it until you accept yourself. If you can't accept yourself unconditionally there is no way you can accept others unconditionally." Reese (gay, 69) and Jean (gay, 67) also provide mentorship to younger gay individuals through their involvement with a theater group. Dani has helped queer youth talk about their sexuality within a conservative religious space. In addition, several participants found academia as a way to mentor younger queer adults and guide them to discovering their own potential. As a stigmatized population, this cohort understood the importance of being one's self and their generative statements reflect that.

Religious Conviction

Religious involvement emerged as a source of stigma felt by participants, however, the relationship individuals had with their faith varied considerably. Kelsy (lesbian, 48) and Jesse (transfemale, 63) are the only two participants from a Jewish upbringing. Kelsy is not currently practicing Judaism, however, Jesse spoke of her conservative Jewish background and is involved with her Jewish community. The remaining participants are from Christian background. Dani (lesbian, 54) and Morgan (gay, 46) both have fathers who were clergy and were subsequently raised with a strong Christian faith. Dani attended divinity school, but due to a tumultuous relationship with her religious community, she no longer participates in formal religious services. Pat (gay, 76) and Chris (gay, 69) also have formal ministry training and both are still engaged in their religious communities. While some participants are more directly involved with religious congregations, others describe their faith as a part of their upbringing and in later life they have developed a different relationship with their faith or sense of spirituality.

Stigma. Messages of being condemned by a higher power and prospects of "going to hell" stigmatized homosexuality as sinful and deterred some participants from disclosing their identity until middle adulthood. Within the context of Christianity, Chris reflects on his once hidden identity and his complicated relationship with religion:

> Of course the same church that told me I was going to hell for being gay also told me I was going to hell if I committed suicide. So it got to be a toss-up of which way do I want to get there. [laughter].

Although his statement is said with humor, it reflects an important issue of belonging that resonated within other narratives.

Some participants felt isolated from their religious communities when they revealed their sexuality. Pat recalls how a preacher influenced his relationship with his children after he divorced his wife, "Suddenly the anti-gay campaign was in my living room. My ex-wife talked to the preacher, who talked to my children, who were 12, 11, and 9, and told them your father is a homosexual and he's going to hell." This preacher's religious counsel weighed heavily on Pat's life and impacted the quality of his relationships with his family for years to come. Morgan and Toby (gay, 58) also felt ostracized by their church communities after receiving similar defaming messages from religious leaders. Morgan still does not attend religious services and Toby, after being absent from the pew for close to thirty years, recently found a faith community that is welcoming and accepting of himself and his husband.

Finding one's place amidst the stigma that is present within the conservative structure of religion can be challenging. As a minister's daughter, Dani always wanted to be a minister herself, but because of her gender she was never encouraged to pursue a career in the ministry. However, in her late 30's as an out lesbian woman, she attended divinity school. She fondly recalls her time in divinity school, however, church politics ultimately dissuaded her from becoming formally ordained. Dani has a difficult time finding her place within her faith and feels the most peaceful keeping her relationship with "the divine" personal. As a stigmatized population, LGBTQ+ older adults have found alternative ways to define themselves as religious or spiritual people while still protecting themselves from the vitriol that is present within some forms of organized religion.

Teaching self-acceptance. The relationship participants have with religion is complicated. As an adult, Andy (gay, 68) found a spiritual connection to mysticism and ancient

archeology which he sought to pass down to his nephew through meaningful texts. Jesse also expresses the desire to pass along spiritually inspired message:

> I know God exists. I've spoken with God, I've been embraced by God. And if it's not God, it's the greater universe, power, that is not human. It's definitely more than us. Accept yourself, accept others. And it's unconditional acceptance.

She goes on to say it took her 55 years to learn this important lesson and hopes others can benefit from it.

Other participants spoke of connecting spiritually to younger generations through service-oriented engagement. Pat continued his ministry despite isolation from his family and religious community. He states that his service as an openly gay minister has been one of his greatest accomplishments:

> I am aware that through all of these years of ministry in a broken community I have touched the lives of many hundreds of people in a positive way. I guess that is what I'm most proud of. In spite of the stumbling blocks and personal problems, I have kept the faith and I have ministered in a positive way to a great many people. And it is like the old adage, you drop a pebble in the pool and the ripples go out and out and out.

A generative desire, rooted in faith, is also apparent in Chris' narrative as he remarks his proudest accomplishment is his spiritual work.

Participants describe several spiritual transformations throughout their lives. However, all resonate with a similar sentiment: their faith is a journey in search of worldly perspective. Pat says:

> When I was 20, I thought I figured this out perfectly. When I was 30, I still thought I had this figured out. By 40, it began to dawn on me that wasn't true. And the older I get, the less I understand about any of it.

Pat and the other participants expressed an understanding of multiple shifting perspectives and, although others' perspectives may conflict with their own, that does not end the conversation; it provides a beginning.

Discussion

Society's unfavorable perception toward participants' generational cohort had lasting consequences that shaped their generative desires and dictated their generative actions in older adulthood. Despite a lifetime of adversity, participants shared positive stories. McAdams and McLean (2013) refer to turning negative life events into something positive as a *redemptive narrative sequence*. As young adults, participants lost friends, colleagues, lovers, and peers to a disease that ravaged their communities of talent, love, and capability. They made their way out of closets hidden in plain sight, and, at the risk of isolation, they came together to raise a rainbow flag that represented an identity, an awareness, and a cause. From their marginalized positions in society and through means of generative action these individuals created change from within.

Positive Marginality

Several participants say they would not have been able to deal with certain life challenges had they not faced stigmatization and discrimination earlier in life, which is consistent with other literature (Myer, Ouellette, Haile, & McFarlane, 2011; Singh, Hays, &Watson, 2011). The overarching redemptive themes— (a) experiences during the HIV/AIDS pandemic, (b) absence of positive role models, and (c) religious conviction— allude to the process of building resilience in response to adversity and forming coping mechanisms to persevere (Walsh, 1998). However,

these individuals are moving beyond resilience by creating meaning from the adversity in light of their marginalized social positions (Frost, 2011; Hall & Fine, 2005). Furthermore, we interpret their generative actions as a method of expressing *positive marginality*. Unger (2000) describes this *positive marginality* as perceiving one's own stigmatized identity as an opportunity to express social power by relying on personal experiences to advocate for social justice on behalf of themselves and their peers. Positive marginality complements a feminist perspective as it fulfills the concern for social change that is emphasized by critical scholars (Frost, 2011). A foundational feminist scholar, Butler (2007) suggests the choices we, as individuals, make regarding our identity *is* our legacy. We represent a historical, cultural, and physiological embodied self, which is constructed by our interaction with society. In essence, it is possible that our embodied self (e.g., who we present ourselves as) is our generative act.

Experiences During the HIV/AIDS Pandemic

Many of the generative desires described here illustrate an appeal toward educating younger generations about the world they once knew in hopes to further encourage prevention of HIV/AIDS and promote future research. Emlet et al. (2010) asked older adults (50+) who were living with HIV/AIDS about ageism and stigma related to the disease. They discovered several factors contributing to resilience among their participants, one of which was generativity. Furthermore, participants felt they could pass on their legacy by sharing histories and educating those who can further reduce stigma and prejudice associated with HIV/AIDS. Similarly, our findings show that in surviving the terminal diagnosis that HIV/AIDS once was, these older adults thought of their survival as a way they could contribute to something larger than themselves. Some expressed the desire to carry with them messages from those who are no longer living. Much like the AIDS Memorial Quilt that was created in the early 1990's to show

support, remembrance, and spread awareness of the loss caused by HIV/AIDS (Krouse, 1999), these participants are now using their past experiences to become advocates for survivors and engage in activist efforts to honor those who have died. As a part of their generative contribution, these older adults are searching for meaning from their past experiences with AIDS so they may guide younger generations to a safer era of treatment and prevention.

Absence of Positive Role Models

Transferable knowledge, whether concerning HIV/AIDS or another facet of life, is important to this group of older adults. Hostetler (2009) addresses a frequent narrative that gay older adults only age into despair. However, among the gay men in his sample he found they did not want to fuel the negative rhetoric that surrounds aging in the gay community; rather, they wanted to revise the conversation to include survival. Singh, Hays, and Watson (2011) also found transgender adults reframed past traumatic experiences to build resilience and cultivate hope for the future. They cultivated their human capital to engage in social activism and act as positive roles models for younger adults. The narratives presented here resemble these sentiments. In the absence of role models, these individuals are seizing opportunities to connect with younger individuals and share their life lessons. As a part of their generative contribution, these older adults are searching for meaning from their marginalized pasts so they may influence future efforts that continue their work of advocating for social equality and human justice.

Religious Conviction

The journey of self-acceptance resonated throughout the narratives. While some chose to distance themselves from organized religion, others re-conceptualized their relationship with their faith. This is consistent with other research (Meyer et al., 2011; Singh et al., 2011) that addresses the resiliency that comes from reframing of one's spiritual connection. In a related

study, Black and Rubinstein (2009) situated generativity within the context of survival theology that is central to African spirituality, and, from that lens, explored the impact suffering had on generative desire among their participants. They found spirituality helped veterans identify the meaning of their suffering and connect to the suffering of others. Similarly, the older adults represented here have found greater meaning in their battle for survival and shared messages of hope and self-acceptance through generative action. Their positive marginality frames their legacy of engaging others towards a kinder and more inclusive society.

Limitations and Future Directions

Generativity is known to vary considerably by culture and it is important for future researchers to consider the intersectionality of race and ethnicity with sexual and gender identity. The present findings, although diverse regarding gender identity and sexual orientation, lack racial and ethnic diversity. Today, LGBT young adults are more likely to be victims of discriminatory behaviors, however, the majority are optimistic about their future because they have witnessed potential positive outcomes (Human Rights Campaign, 2017). The older adults represented here continue to challenge ways society views homosexuality, bisexuality, and gender non-conformity and advocate for even more inclusive social structures. They realize the youth of today are different from themselves, but at one point in time they were different too. They understand the uncertainty, the vulnerability, and the courage it takes to be yourself in a world that wants you to be something different. However, without sufficient representation from all backgrounds and cultures, it will be difficult to address the complex issues of intersectionality our youth are facing. Further exploring the concept of generativity will provide a broad platform for intergenerational connectedness and cultivate an awareness of human potential that can live on in future generations (de St. Aubin, McAdams, & Kim, 2004).

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CHAPTER FIVE

A COLLECTIVE GENERATIVE LEGACY

Several theories contribute to the overarching understanding of a collective generative legacy, which is depicted in Figure 5.1. Generativity theory explains that in order to understand one's generative contribution, we must first understand who they were and who they have become (Kotre, 1984; McAdams & Logan, 2004). A feminist gerontological perspective contributes to how identity evolved throughout the life course and in relationship to broader social order (Calasanti & Slevin, 2006). Furthermore, the addition of queer theory allows for the questioning of socially defined roles and identities (Gamson, 2000). From their marginalized positions in society, I have gained insight into the ways individuals are continually shaping their own identities, providing foundations, building legacies, and teaching self-acceptance to promote the betterment of future queer generations.

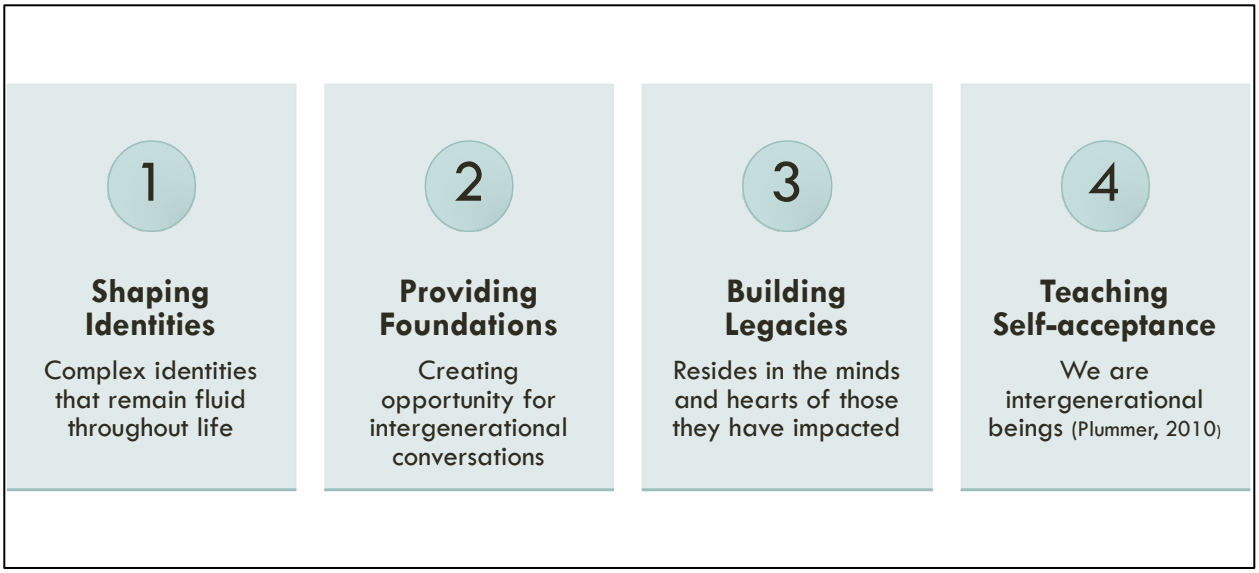

Figure 5.1. A Collective Generative Legacy

Shaping Identities

As I began this project I explored the issue of invisibility among lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) older adults. Current research proves this population does exist and is projected to grow in the coming years (Fredriksen-Goldsen & Kim, 2017; Gates, 2011), despite their identities being smudged from the history books and ostracized over decades. However, #timesup[4]. Older LGBT adults are making their voices heard in much the same way they did after the Stonewall Riots and then again during the AIDS crisis in the Unites States. The question is no longer, "do these individuals exist?" rather it is, "how do these individuals exist?"

Within this dissertation, I have begun to address this philosophical question by exploring how sexual and gender minority persons have formed their unique identities in later life. In Chapter Three, I examined the formation of sexual identity among a sub-sample of gay men and focused on the complexity of embodied sexuality in later life. Always fluid; I found their social, personal, and narrative identities to intersect at multiple junctions throughout their life course and informed their embodied sexuality in later life. However, there is still much to be gleaned from this diverse cohort of older adults. I was unable to fully explore how one's socially constructed understanding of race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic positioning intersect with marginalized sexual and gender identities. As researchers, advocates, and co-conspirators, we need to unpack the many complicated issues of social injustice as experienced by sexual and gender minority persons in later life. In the next section, I call to action my peers, mentors, and

[4] The Time's Up movement was established in 2018 to bring awareness to sexual harassment in the workplace. Although, the movement is specific to sexual harassment experienced by women, it has also brought awareness to the issue of harassment and discrimination experienced by all minority persons. It is in this context I use the hashtag to represent, "No more silence. No more waiting. No more tolerance for discrimination, harassment or abuse" (Timesupnow.com, 2018).

collaborators to be the mortar that further strengthens the foundation upon which future generations may build their distinct identities.

Providing Foundations

The older adults who contributed to this project expressed a desire to be a part of providing a foundation that can withstand the test of time and the ever-changing meaning of gender and sexuality. However, when rapid social and cultural change occurs, *generativity mismatches* may result (McAdams & Logan, 2004). McAdams and Logan (2004) explain this phenomenon develops from older generations wanting to leave behind values and wisdom they relied on throughout their life that younger generations do not connect with, value, or appreciate. As researchers, it is important we ask ourselves if these mismatches exist today. If so, it is my opinion that we have a responsibility to forge conversations through our research and evoke social justice in a way that inspires change across generations and socio-cultural backgrounds.

I believe we can address possible generative mismatches by confronting the issues of disproportionate representation of race and ethnicity within the current body of literature. Although there is considerable diversity among LGBT older adults, researchers scarcely recognize sub-populations of LGBT elders in academic research (DeBlarer, Brewster, Sarkees, & Moradi, 2010). Enacted prejudices and discriminations towards one's race or ethnicity are interwoven with one's sexual or gender minority status; however, research does not adequately reflect these intersections of identity. Fredriksen-Goldsen and colleagues (2011) found LGBT older adults who are also of racial and ethnic minorities and are within a low-income status (200% below the federal poverty level or have education level at or below high school) experience heightened and cumulative risks of aging and health disparities. We have the distinct privilege of facilitating conversations through our accrued knowledge of research methodology

(DeBlarer et al., 2010), access to grant funding (Fredriksen-Goldsen, 2016), and availability of brilliant minds addressing existing barriers to health care (Porter et al., 2017). But, our work will remain on the bookshelves if we do not learn how to apply it in a way that is meaningful to multiple generations. We share the responsibility, along with our participants, of forming lasting foundations that support an ever-diversifying community of queer individuals. Going forward it is necessary to comprehensively explore our subjectivities that inform issues of diversity, so we may forge intentional and lasting connections across generations.

Building Legacies

Although identity development is thought to occur throughout life, it is at the end of life when individuals think of their lives in a more abstract way and begin to look toward a future world without them (Erikson et al., 1986). Thinking about life retrospectively is appropriate during old age (Erikson et al., 1986; Moore, Metcalf, & Schow, 2000), as proximity to death is believed to strongly influence one's perception of self. It is during final life stages of life when people are more likely to interpret their age as representative of a life almost complete, rather than one that is "yet to be lived" (Erikson et al., 1986, p. 56).

The individuals who boldly shared their life stories are investing in the future. They have begun to realize the time for inspiring their own social movements may no longer reside solely with them. Through generativity they are addressing a new purpose in their lives, one that encourages younger individuals to share their ideas and to continue to challenge socially constructed ways of thinking. I believe, their legacy may not be the changes they established in their youth, rather it may be yet to come. Their legacy may very well reside in the minds and hearts of those they have touched through mentorship, activism, and human connection. In later life, they have the privilege and the purpose to offer insight formed from the past, dictated by the

present, and molded by the future. And, together, generations can create a more holistic picture of inclusivity and acceptance.

Teaching Self-acceptance

The findings presented here represent voices of everyday people. Their message is not one of heroes, it is brought to us through their survival and hope contained in the bodies of our brothers, sisters, colleagues, lovers, partners, and friends. From their marginalized positions in society, these men and women created change from within through means of generative action. They have learned to love themselves and from that love, desire to love one another. They have expressed greater meaning in their battle for survival, and their positive marginality (Unger, 2000) now frames their legacy of engaging others in their work towards a kinder and more inclusive society. A society that intersects race, culture and creed as well as sexual and gender identity.

As Plummer (2010) so insightfully suggests we are intergenerational beings. We carry with us our past selves and the legacies of our ancestors. We have lived through generations of individual, social, and political change. From this project, I have learned that our acknowledgment of our intergenerational selves is the embodiment of self-acceptance. Our connection to an ambivalent past, marked by success and failure, is to accept the present and form the outlines that shape a better future. This dissertation has touched on how these older adults are reconciling their past selves, and in later life, they are calling on their experiences, perspectives, and positions to inspire greatness in younger generations. Instead of leading the charge, they are now leading by example.

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APPENDIX A

Email Script

Hello,

My name is Kyle Bower. I am currently obtaining my doctoral degree at The University of Georgia, in the Human Development and Family Science department. You are receiving this email because you are associated with LGBT older adults through a personal connection, research, or advocacy.

I am writing to request your help for recruitment for my graduate dissertation research, ***Generativity Among LGBT Older Adults.*** I am looking for participants who self-identify as a sexual or gender minority. In addition, I am seeking participants who are age 45 years or older and consider themselves to be an older adult.

Participants will receive a $20 VISA gift card for the initial 2-hour interview. If a follow-up 1-hour interview is needed, participants will be given a $10 VISA gift card. More detailed information regarding the interview process, the purpose of this research, and any potential risks, is available in the "Invitation to Participate," which is attached. A flyer is also attached to this email.

This research and recruitment has been approved by the University of Georgia Institutional Review Board, Proposal ID: STUDY00003560.

Please email any questions to Kyle Bower or Denise Lewis. If you know of anyone who might fit these criteria, please share these materials at your own discretion.

Your help is greatly appreciated!

Kyle Bower
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APPENDIX B

Study Description

THE UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

TITLE: Generativity Among LGBT Older Adults

Principal Investigator: Dr. Denise Lewis
Student Principal Investigator: Kyle Bower

We are inviting you to take part in a research study exploring the transmission of legacy among older adults who identify as a gender or sexual minority. The purpose of this study is to understand more about how societal structures influence the lives of LGBT older adults and addresses the need for recognizing the individuality that exists within this broad LGBT older population. To explain the social influences, we are exploring the meaning of generativity within the context of historical, individual, familial, and relational culture. By addressing the cultural context of social influences we anticipate being able to discern the individuality that constitutes the LGBT population. The findings will help us learn more about how cultural factors impact the connection between generations. Kyle Bower will conduct the interviews under Dr. Denise Lewis' advisement.

I recognize this is a unique population and "old age" is subjective. Individuals are eligible for this research study if they are 45 or over and self-identify as an older adult.

If you agree to be in this research study, the researcher will interview you at a time and place of your choice. The interview will be like a conversation. There will be questions about your identity development, your family life, and feelings about death. It will last no more than 2 hours and will be audio recorded. You are allowed to bring pictures or other physical items if this will help you tell your story. You will receive a $20 VISA gift card for your initial participation. If a follow-up interview (up to 1 hour) is needed, you will be given a $10 VISA gift card.

Although specific measures are in place to ensure confidentiality, there is a slight risk privacy could be breached. In addition, there may be some chance of emotional upset. You may skip questions or stop the interview at any time. You may also ask for the voice recording to be shut off for any part of the interview.

You are receiving this invitation because you are associated with LGBT older adults through a personal connection, research, or advocacy. Please feel free to pass along this description to anyone you think might be interested in participating in this study. For additional information please use the contact information provided below.

Kyle Bower, PhD candidate, The University of Georgia
kbower@uga.edu

Denise Lewis, Associate Professor, The University of Georgia
denise.lewis@uga.edu

APPENDIX C

Flyer for Distribution

If you have thought about any of these questions, we would like to talk to you. You may be eligible to participate in a research study, ***Generativity Among LGBT Older Adults***

Are you 45+ and consider yourself an older adult?
Have you ever thought of your identity?
How do you want to be remembered?
What does death mean to you?
What's your Legacy?
What does being LGBT have to do with it?

For more information about this IRB approved research study conducted through

The purpose of this study is to explore the transmission of legacy among older adults who identify as a gender or sexual minority and understand more about how societal structures influence the individual lives of LGBT older adults. There is a slight risk of emotional upset and/or a breach of privacy.

If you are 45 or over and consider yourself to be an older adult, you are eligible for this research study. If you agree to participate, the researcher will interview you for up to 2 hours at a time and place of your choice. You will receive a $20 VISA gift card for your initial participation. If a follow-up interview (up to 1 hour) is needed, you will be given a $10 VISA gift card.

UGA contact:
Kyle Bower, kbower@uga.edu, 706-542-4939 or
Denise Lewis denise.lewis@uga.edu, 706-542-0254

APPENDIX D

Interview Protocol

I. Explain the project. Answer any questions.

II. Obtain signed consent. Give one copy to participant, keep one copy for files.

III. **Life history Interview.** *Questions are based on the interview guide outlined by Rubinstein and colleagues (2015).*

a. Past *(possible probes)*
   i. Could you tell me a little bit about your life? Whatever comes to your mind about what happened along the way? You may start wherever you like and take as much time as you need.
   ii. If necessary, review what participant shared, making sure you understand their narrative. For example:
      1. Childhood; family of origin
      2. Education and teenage years
      3. College (if attended); early career trajectory
      4. Retirement and other late life changes
      5. Bereavement and other losses

b. Present *(possible probes)*
   i. Who do you consider family? What do you think are the most important beliefs, ideas, or values you got from them?
   ii. What do you consider some of your most important accomplishments in life?
   iii. What would you tell younger generations if they came to you for advice? This can be directed towards LGBT youth or not. You may make this as specific or as general as you would like.

c. Future *(possible probes)*
   i. If you had a time capsule, that would be opened in 100 years, what would you put in it? It's an impermeable time capsule, so you are not limited to size or object. It can be a value, concept ,or moment that you feel is impactful?
   ii. What are some words that describe you? How do you want to be remembered

IV. **Demographics checklist *(some information may have already been discussed during interview)***

a. Age
b. Birthplace
c. self-identification of gender
d. self-identification of sexuality
e. Relationship status
f. Race/ethnicity
g. Level of education
h. Occupation (or former occupation if retired)
i. Household income

APPENDIX E:

Transcription Protocol

LIFE Lab
QUALITATIVE DATA PREPARATION AND TRANSCRIPTION PROTOCOL

1. INTRODUCTION

Qualitative data often comes from direct interviews between the research team and participants. This can be in the form of one on one interviews to multi-person focus groups. Interviews are generally audio or video recorded, and once recorded, they need to be transcribed before analysis begins. There are multiple ways to go about transcription, and the following is a guidebook on how the specifics of the CRTR lab's transcription process. Transcription might seem tedious, but it is an extremely important process for accurate analysis.

2. PLANNING

Transcribing your own data takes a long time and it is estimated that for each hour of an interview, the transcription will take 4-7 hours.

Extra time might be needed if the recordings involve more than one participant, if the sound quality is poor, participants have unfamiliar accents, or if you type slowly. As the interviews you will be transcribing have all been conducted in Cambodia, in public places you should expect to spend at least 6 hours per interview. Please plan accordingly and don't wait until the last minute.

3. STEPS

Step 1: Listen to at least one recording, all the way through to familiarize yourself with the subject matter, accents, and process.
Step 2: Make a rough transcription. Ignore spelling, punctuation, and fine details.
Step 3: Replay and reread your transcript. Create a full and accurate transcription during this phase. Pausing as needed to correct, or to put in content (such as coughs, pauses, etc).

4. SAVING TRANSCRIPTS

5. TEXT FORMATTING

General Instructions
Transcribe all interviews using the following formatting:
1. Arial 10-point face-font
2. One-inch top, bottom, right, and left margins
3. All text begins at the left-hand margin (no indents)
4. Entire document is left justified

Labeling Transcripts
Each transcript will include the following labeling information at the top of the document:

Interview Name (i.e., Interview Transcript 2)
Date of Interview:
Time Interview Began:
Time Interview Ended:

Participant's Pseudonym/ID*:
Sexual Orientation+gender identity+age_interview number

FOR EXAMPLE:
Gay, cis-gender man who is 65 and was interviewed 6th
GM65_6

Straight, transgender female who is 58 and was interviewed 2nd
SMTF58_2

Documenting Speakers

- **Interviewer** should be labeled with by typing **I:** at the left margin and then indenting the question or comment. All comments/questions from interviewer should be in **bold**.
- **Participants** should be labeled with **P:** at the left margin with the response indented. If multiple participants, label each with a number (i.e., P1, P2).
    - *Example*

      I: OK, before we begin the interview itself, I'd like to confirm that you have read and signed the informed consent form, that you understand that your participation in this study is entirely voluntary, that you may refuse to answer any questions, and that you may withdraw from the study at anytime.

      P1: Yes, I had read it and understand this.

      P2: I also understand it, thank you.

      I: Do you have questions before we proceed?

End of Interview

- Indicate when the interview session has reached completion by typing **END OF INTERVIEW** in uppercase letters on the last line of the transcript.

6. CONTENT

Recordings are transcribed verbatim (i.e., recorded word for word, exactly as said), including any nonverbal or background sounds (e.g., laughter, sighs, coughs, claps, snaps fingers, pen clicking, and car horn).

- Nonverbal sounds are typed in parentheses, for example, (short sharp laugh), (group laughter), (police siren in background).
- If interviewers or interviewees mispronounce words, these words are transcribed as the individual said them. The transcript should not be "cleaned up" by removing foul language, slang, grammatical errors, or misuse of words or concepts.

- Filler words such as *hm*, *huh*, *mm*, *mhm*, *uh huh*, *um*, *mkay*, *yeah*, *yuhuh*, *nah huh*, *ugh*, *whoa*, *uh oh*, *ah*, and *ahah* is transcribed.
- Transcribe word or phrase repetitions. If a word is cut off or truncated use a hyphen at the end of the last letter or audible sound.
    - Example:

        P: he wen- he went and did what I told him
- If an incorrect or unexpected pronunciation makes it difficult to comprehend, type the correct word in square brackets. Place a forward slash immediately behind the open square bracket and another in front of the closed square bracket.
    - *Example*:

      P: I thought that was pretty pacific [/specific/], but they disagreed.

Inaudible Information

- Identify portions of the recording that are inaudible or difficult to decipher. If a relatively small segment of the tape (a word or short sentence) is partially unintelligible, type the phrase "inaudible segment." Place this information in square brackets.
    - *Example***:**

      P: The process of identifying missing words in an audiotaped interview of poor quality is [inaudible segment].

- If a long segment of the tape is inaudible, unintelligible, or is "dead air" where no one is speaking, record this information in square brackets. In addition, provide a time estimate for information that could not be transcribed.
    - *Example*: [Inaudible: 2 minutes of interview missing]

Overlapping Speech

- If individuals are speaking at the same time (i.e., overlapping speech) and it is not possible to distinguish what each person is saying, place the phrase "cross talk" in square brackets immediately after the last identifiable speaker's text and pick up with the next audible speaker.
    - *Example*:

      P: Turn taking may not always occur. People may simultaneously contribute to the conversation; hence, making it difficult to differentiate between one person's statement [cross talk]. This results in loss of some information.

Pauses

- If an individual pauses briefly between statements or trails off at the end of a statement, use three ellipses. A brief pause is defined as a two- to five second break in speech.
    - *Example*:

      P: Sometimes, a participant briefly loses . . . a train of thought or . . . pauses after making a poignant remark. Other times, they end their statements with a clause such as but then . . . .

- If a substantial speech delay occurs at either beginning or the continuing a statement occurs (more than two or three seconds), write "long pause" in parentheses.
    - *Example*:

      P: Sometimes the individual may require additional time to construct a response. (Long pause) other times, he or she is waiting for additional instructions or probes.

Questionable Text

- If the transcriber is unsure of the accuracy of a statement made by a speaker, place this statement inside parentheses and a question mark is placed in front of the open parenthesis and behind the close parenthesis.
    - *Example*:
      P: I wanted to switch to ?(Kibuli Hospital)? if they have a job available for me because I think the conditions would be better.

Sensitive Information

- If an individual uses his or her own name during the discussion, replace this information with the appropriate interviewee identification label/naming.
    - *Example*:
      P: My supervisor said to me, "P1, think about things before you open your mouth."

- If an individual provides others' names, locations, organizations, and so on, enter an equal sign immediately before and after the named information. Analysts will use this labeling information to easily identify sensitive information that may require substitution.
    - *Example*:
      P: My colleague =John Doe = was very unhappy in his job so he started talking to the hospital administrator at = Kagadi Hospital = about a different job.

7. CHECK FOR ACCURACY

Read the final transcription while listening to the recording and revise the transcript file accordingly.

All transcripts shall be audited for accuracy by the interviewer who conducted the interview.