

# NON-BINARY IDENTITY IN FEMINIST ZINES:

*Media Third Spaces and Oppositional Consciousness*

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**ABSTRACT**

Despite numerous academic critiques of the normative identity dichotomies of gender (masculine vs. feminine), sex (male vs. female), sexuality (heterosexual vs. non-heterosexual), and race (white vs. non-white), many mainstream media practices fail to disrupt such binaries, often reinforcing stereotypes and underrepresenting (or misrepresenting) particular “othered” identities. This proposed research will take a turn at analyzing zines – small-scale, self-published, do-it-yourself booklets – in hopes of revealing specific rhetorical and discursive strategies used within the medium to articulate identities within or without a two-part identity binary, offering a “third space.” Qualitative content analysis will assign particular attention to examples of specific theoretical concepts founded in key academic literature on oppositional consciousness. Through such research, it may be possible to showcase zines as a potential media form that moves beyond binary systems of identification, having implications for future, more-inclusive mainstream media practices.

**KEYWORDS**

Zines, Identity, Gender, Race, Sexuality, Sex, Binary, Dichotomy, Feminism, Third Space, Borderlands, Margins, Media, Rhetoric, Representation

**PROJECT TYPE**

PhD Proposal



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**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

ABSTRACT .....	2
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	4
INTRODUCTION .....	8
LITERATURE REVIEW.....	10
Critiques of Identity Binaries .....	10
Gender and Sex (Masculine vs. Feminine and Male vs. Female).....	11
Sexuality (Heterosexual vs. Non-Heterosexual) .....	13
Race (White vs. Non-White).....	16
Media and Identity (Binaries) .....	21
Mainstream Media and Alternative Media.....	24
Zines.....	28
Zines as Alternative Media.....	28
Zines and Identity (Binaries) .....	32
Third Spaces and Oppositional Consciousness.....	38
Methodologies of the Oppressed.....	40
Forms of Oppositional Consciousness.....	41
Rhetorical and Discursive Tactics (of Oppositional Consciousness) .....	43
Methodologies of the Oppressed in Zines .....	47
DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY .....	50
Overall Approach .....	50
Population Selection and Sampling Strategies .....	52
Data Collection Methods .....	53
Data Analysis.....	54
LIMITATIONS.....	55
SCHEDULE.....	58
REFERENCES.....	59
APPENDICES.....	68
Appendix A – Potential Zine Sample.....	68
Appendix B – Draft Protocol .....	70





## INTRODUCTION

Identity binary systems are socially constructed and reductive categorical tools that divide human identity into a neat two-part arrangement. Individuals who maintain identities that exist either between (within) or beyond (without) the ends of these dichotomies are often made invisible in many Western cultures through social, political, and legal restrictions and hegemonies. This proposed research suggests that zines, or small-scale, self-published, do-it-yourself booklets and pamphlets, may provide a unique location for these “other” identities to exist.

As the media hold significant stakes in the practice of identity representation, centering a study on the representation of non-binary identities in media and communication studies is a worthwhile endeavor. That being said, it is clear from a great trove of academic work that identity binaries are both incapable of realizing the breadth of human experience, and are often reproduced in many mainstream media, including newspapers, magazines, and films. It is then a major goal of this study to ask if zines, decidedly a form of alternative media, may help bridge this gap between academic knowledge and media practice.

Through a qualitative content analysis of numerous zine texts, this proposed research will attempt to reveal specific rhetorical and discursive strategies used within the medium to represent identities within or without a given binary. For this study, I am specifically interested in the identity binaries of gender (masculine vs. feminine), sex (male vs. female), sexuality (heterosexual vs. non-heterosexual), and race (white vs. non-white). However, the rhetorical and discursive tools I will search for come from a large body of literature on oppositional consciousness, therefore the methods and findings of this research will be useful in addressing any number of other identity binary systems (e.g. class, citizenship, ability, etc.).

While this proposed study is intentionally interdisciplinary, bridging gender and feminist studies, race studies, cultural studies, writing and rhetoric studies, and media and communication studies, at its very core lies the work of a handful of scholars who explored oppositional consciousness, that is perception, awareness, and, ultimately, action that moves contrarily to dominant ideologies. These scholars have thus developed theoretical tools used by marginalized individuals to subvert oppressive hegemonies. These tactics, further discussed in the literature review, are semiotics, deconstruction, meta-ideologizing, democratics, differential movement (Sandoval, 2000), embedded meta-textual narratives (Hays, 2017), e-motion, reverso (Licon 2012), disidentification, copresence (Muñoz, 1999; Wallace, 2009), and intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989;

Wallace, 2009). Further, Sandoval (2000) also developed five different “forms” of oppositional consciousness: equal rights, revolutionary, supremacist, separatist, and differential. Although these theories are based largely on academic writing, I aim to apply these concepts to zines in order to both reveal how zines utilize such academic critiques of dominant ideologies and identity binaries (unlike mainstream media), and showcase zines as a valid area of academic inquiry. Therefore, the research questions that will guide this study are:

1. How do non-binary zine authors engage with the rhetorical and discursive tactics of semiotics, deconstruction, meta-ideologizing, democratics, differential movement, embedded-metatextual narratives, emotion, reverso, disidentification, copresence, and intersectionality? Are there patterns in form, text, language, or presentation when these various tactics are used?
2. When and where in the zine text do these rhetorical and discursive tactics emerge?
3. Why does it appear these zine authors are utilizing these various tactics?
4. Do the zine texts resemble any of the forms of oppositional consciousness named by Sandoval (2000), and are there any patterns in the deployment of these forms?
5. What alternatives to binary identities are given in the zine texts?
6. How might we begin to think about applying any findings on non-binary representation to larger, mainstream media practices?

In the following literature review I will explore the inherent issues with identity binary systems as categorical tools for human experience. Then I will discuss how mainstream media often reinforces identity binaries and erases non-binary identities through inadequate representational practices. I argue that alternative media, which is typically non-corporate and small-scale, may provide more exemplary practices for equitable representation. Following this train of thought, I situate zines within alternative media and consider empirical and theoretical research relating zines, subversive identity representation, and non-binary identities. Finally, I further discuss the literature on oppositional consciousness and the “third space” as a potential location outside a two-part identity dichotomy, thus bringing us to the center of this proposed research.

I am honored to have the opportunity to pursue this proposed study in the communication doctoral program at Universitat Pompeu Fabra. The Critical Communication research group will provide a welcomed home for this work, allowing me to extend the interdisciplinary bridges I hope to cross, and keeping me critical in my reading of the zine texts.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

This project is chiefly concerned with the overarching categories of *identity* and *media*. I am specifically interested in the rhetorical and discursive tactics utilized within zines, a form of alternative media, and whether such tactics allow for identity representation that moves beyond normative identity dichotomies. Before addressing the minutiae of such research, however, a helpful entrance into this topic may be found in first focusing on academic critiques of identity binary systems and media's inherent practices of identity representation and construction. Through this starting point, we may begin to see a gap between the criticisms and the practices – a gap potentially bridged by zines.

### 1. Critiques of Identity Binaries

Feminist and gender studies, critical race studies, whiteness studies, queer and sexuality studies, psychology, and critical cultural studies, among other academic disciplines, have all taken on identity construction, representation, and indoctrination as a crucial focus. In this section, I explore foundational theories that critique identity binary systems and consider subsequent and recent research that affirms the limitations and ineffectiveness of dichotomous identity categories while also advocating for more expansive conceptions of identity and self.

I am predominantly interested in gender (masculine vs. feminine), sex (male vs. female), sexuality (heterosexual vs. non-heterosexual), and race (white vs. non-white) binaries for this research. While this is not an extensive list of all identity dichotomies, they provide a helpful starting point. Utilizing intersectional frameworks (Crenshaw, 1989; Collins, 2000) will also allow for nuanced readings of these four binaries. That being said, these binaries are largely analyzed from a United States perspective. This is the case both because I speak from my own experiential knowledge, and because my sample texts will all be created within the United States (see “Design and Methodology”).

Addressing the critiques of identity binary systems is not only significant for this study, but also for any attempt to move towards more liberated, postcolonial research. While some might comfortably identify to one side of a given normative identity dichotomy, exposing how such binaries are constructed, arbitrary, malleable, and fallible reveals that there is no justifiable reason for the oppression of those who either exist at the typically subordinated end of the binary (the Black, homosexual, female, woman), or those who exist outside the binary altogether (the queer, pansexual, asexual, transsexual, intersexual, non-binary, gender non-conforming, Asian, biracial, multiracial, etc.). This research is not a call to end binary categories, but to refuse essentialist thinking that limits humans to only these categories.

### *1.1. Gender and Sex (Masculine vs. Feminine and Male vs. Female)*

In 1987, West and Zimmerman proposed the concept of “doing gender,” the process by which “differences between...women and men...that are not natural, essential, or biological...[are] constructed...[and] are used to reinforce the ‘essentialness’ of gender” (p. 137). Their work highlighted how this practice of “doing,” or performing, gender (in normative ways) establishes an arbitrary identity binary between women and men and contributes to the ideology of male supremacy. Realizing the performativity of gender, though, has also allowed for queered gender expressions to become recognized in consequent research. Butler (1990), Bornstein (1994), and Mackenzie (1994) all engaged with gender as a social construction and revealed gender identities and expressions that do not adhere to the norms and stereotypes of a rigid gender binary.

In a similar vein, Hood-Williams (1996) worked from the originally feminist assertion that sex and gender are distinct and separable identity categories (e.g. Oakley, 1972) – sex referring to biological differences that produce “male” and “female” bodies, and gender referring to cultural differences that produce “masculine” and “feminine” bodies – and focused specifically on sex. He traced the history of our current (mis)understanding of sex as binary, demonstrating the idea to be culturally created rather than factually given, and showcased chromosomal evidence that clearly indicated sex to be much more complex and multifaceted. Not only did he reveal an arbitrary dichotomy between “the cultural and the biological” (Hood-Williams, 1996, p. 3), but he also dismantled the commonly held perception “that the biological realm [of human beings] features clear sexual dimorphism” (p. 6). This exposure of the socially constructed sex binary of male and female is further echoed in Fausto-Sterling’s work (1993; 2000).

Hird (2000) provided more discussion on the dismantling of sex and gender binaries through a focus on intersexual and transsexual individuals. She insisted that these subjects are vital for studies on contemporary (western) culture’s dependence on sex and gender binaries because “intersexuals and transsexuals who attempt to ‘fit’ into a sexually divided world reveal the regulatory mechanisms through which sexual difference is enforced...[and] intersexuals and transsexuals who refuse an either/or ‘sexed’ identity disturb the infallibility of the binary” (Hird, 2000, p. 359). They both expose how we can be forced, or how we can construct ourselves willingly, into either end of the binary, and also imagine identities outside of the binary altogether. Such a perspective therefore reveals gender and sex binaries to be either malleable or simply unsuitable categories for human identity.

As with Hird (2000), much research that urges for movements beyond gender and sex binaries focuses rather specifically on gender and sex minorities (i.e. intersexual, transsexual, transgender, and non-binary people) (e.g. Riggle, Rostosky, McCants, & Pascale-Hague, 2011; Rankin & Beemyn, 2012; Richards et al., 2016). These populations prove helpful as their lives and experiences, rather overtly, “[confront] the typical dichotomous classifications” (Riggle et al., 2011, p. 154) of gender and sex. Further, however, this research is also vital for these subjects. As cultural awareness of and openness to queered gender/sex expressions rises, “it is highly likely that an increasing amount of non-binary people will present to clinical services seeking treatment” (Richards et al., 2016, p. 100). The fields of psychology and psychiatry, among others, must then be prepared to aid these individuals who still “live in a society that largely adheres to a strict gender binary” (Ranking & Beemyn, 2012, p. 8) that doesn’t suit them.

In addition to this research on gender and sex “others,” Joel, Tarrasch, Berman, Mukamel, and Ziv (2014) provided a fascinating study on “normative” individuals, “with the ‘normative’ categories [comprising participants who identified as] Male & Man and Female & Woman” (p. 293). Through the use of a “gender identity questionnaire,” Joel et al. (2014) found, perhaps surprisingly, “that a large proportion of ‘normative’ subjects experience themselves in ways that transcend the either-or logic of the gender binary system” (p. 311). Their findings are lengthy and range from measuring participants’ comfort with their assigned sex, to their understanding of gender as performative. These results again suggest that, even in “normative” individuals, gender and sex binaries are not accurate categories for human identity, simply serving to diminish difference and easily subordinate any outsider.

To address this body of work as a whole, it is now clear that gender is a culturally performed identity (e.g. West & Zimmerman, 1987; Butler, 1990; Bornstein, 1994; Mackenzie, 1994). For this reason, any notion of a gender binary must also be culturally and socially constructed, and therefore malleable enough for the inclusion of non-binary identities. Further, though sex is often seen as biologically immutable (e.g. Oakley, 1972), research has shown both the sex binary to be another culturally constructed dichotomy, and the numerous possibilities outside the strict definitions of male and female (e.g. Fausto-Sterling, 1993; Hood-Williams, 1996; Fausto-Sterling, 2000). Much research has also gone into exploring the experiences, oppressions, and possibilities of non-binary gender and sex identities (e.g. Hird, 2000; Riggle, Rostosky, McCants, & Pascale-Hague, 2011; Rankin & Beemyn, 2012; Richards et al., 2016), revealing their expansiveness and complexity. Finally, research has explored the inability for gender and sex dichotomies to apply to “normative” individuals (e.g. Joel et al., 2014), further suggesting the need for alternatives to the binary.

### 1.2. *Sexuality (Heterosexual vs. Non-Heterosexual)*

Sexuality, an identity often intertwined with sex and gender (e.g. Diamond & Butterworth, 2008; Renold, 2008; Galupo, Davis, Gryniewicz, & Mitchell, 2014; Joel et al., 2014; van Anders, 2015), has been proposed as something more than a binary for quite some time. Kinsey, Pomeroy, and Martin (1948) developed the now-famous “Kinsey Scale,” allowing participants to mark their sexual experiences along a seven-point scale from “0” (exclusively heterosexual) to “6” (exclusively homosexual). They noted that this scale permits categories outside the binary of heterosexual and homosexual, “showing the many gradations that actually exist” (Kinsey et al., 1948, p. 656) between the two identities. However, this schema is still quite limited by binary thinking, merely depicting possibilities that are different parts homosexual and heterosexual, rather than theorizing new locations. Moreover, it does not take into account non-binary gender and sex expressions.

Interestingly, Kinsey et al. (1948) also included an “X” option on their scale for participants who did not feel any sexual attraction or engage in sexual experiences (pp. 640–656). While this category is revealed to be only a small percentage of their population and goes largely unanalyzed, the inklings of asexuality as a potential identity category begin to become apparent. Bogaert (2004; 2006; 2012a; 2012b) expands thoroughly on this concept.

Asexuality, “defined as the *absence* of a traditional sexual orientation, in which an individual would exhibit little or no sexual attraction to males or females” (Bogaert, 2004, p. 279), questions the very structure of the sexuality binary. That is, if we acknowledge the presence of asexual individuals – approximately 1% of Bogaert’s (2004) sample, “similar to the prevalence of same-sex attraction” (Bogaert, 2006, p. 242) in the study – then the binary no longer becomes situated between heterosexual and homosexual, but rather between individuals who exhibit sexual attraction and those who do not. While I am in no way advocating for the implementation of such an identity dichotomy, it is helpful to see how easily a binary may suddenly becoming three-sided, thus revealing its shortcomings.

As asexuality provides a helpful kink in the sexuality binary, arguments for and analyses of other “non-normative” sexualities can further disrupt the simplicity of the hetero/homo dichotomy. In Roseneil’s (2002) discussion on the formation and transformation of the heterosexual and homosexual binary, she acknowledged how queer theory, “in common with other post-structuralist understandings of the exclusionary and regulatory nature of binary identity categories...rejects the idea of a unified homosexual identity” (p. 29) Through arguing for an amorphous “queer” subject, rather than a strictly “homosexual”

one, queer theory helps to pluralize this end of the binary, causing it to branch in numerous directions. Further, through queer theoretical frameworks, “heterosexuality is also problematized and is rendered as much less monolithic” (Roseneil, 2002, p. 29), thus expanding the dichotomy to have multiple end points.

In exploring some of these potential “other” categories, Callis (2014) focused her ethnographic study on self-identified queer, bisexual, and pansexual individuals. In her account of bisexuality’s rise in academic research, she touches on the common assumption that bisexuality is merely “a ‘transitional’ phase between straight and gay” (Callis, 2014, p. 68). This notion not only erases bisexual identities, but also exemplifies binary thinking as it views bisexuality as an intermediate between heterosexuality and homosexuality, rather than a third, equally secure option. Galupo et al. (2014) also comments on this, demonstrating how sexual orientation scales, like the Kinsey Scale, “[conceptualize] plurisexual identities [(e.g. bisexual, pansexual, and queer)] as somehow a hybrid between two monosexual ends of a continuum” (p.451), rather than off the continuum altogether. Callis’s (2014) interviews go on to both emphasize this point, and reflect pansexuality (sexual attraction that is not oriented to any particular gender) and queerness (an umbrella term often used for “non-normative” sexualities) as other possible locations for sexual identity.

Callis (2014) understood bisexuality, pansexuality, and queerness to inhabit a “sexual borderland...an in-between space” (p. 64) separate from, yet intimately related with the binary. She concludes her paper rather profoundly, noting:

Though the sexual borderlands can be viewed as containing only non-binary sexualities such as bisexual and queer, in reality they touch on every sexual identity. Individuals of all sexualities react to the sexual borderlands, by crossing them, inhabiting them, fortifying against them, or denying them. In these actions the sexual borderland becomes an integral way of defining the sexual binary. (Callis, 2014, p. 77)

Here, Callis (2014) revealed the hetero/homo sexual binary to be socially constructed around such non-binary sexualities as bisexuality, queerness, and pansexuality. As she states, it is often resistance to such “borderland” sexualities (or any “borderland” identity) that produces the strict rules and regulations of an identity dichotomy. Unfortunately, in this resistance, such a dichotomy becomes blind to the “borderland” that exists in between its two ends.

Galupo et al. (2014) also reflected on the production of sexuality binaries. Their study on how sexual minority individuals “discussed identity in the

context of critiquing two sexual orientation scales" (Galupo et al., 2014, p. 433) intentionally aimed to distance itself from "problematic...research that groups all sexual minority individuals (lesbian, gay, bisexual, pansexual, queer, etc.) together." This is an important practice for empirical research on sexual minorities because grouping non-binary identities (bisexual, pansexual and queer) with binary identities (gay and lesbian) into one uniform category results in the reinforcement of a dichotomy, pitting "sexual minority" against "sexual majority," or heterosexuality.

The observations of Galupo et al. (2014) are also worth attention as their participants made visible the often-unseen connections of sexuality with gender and sex. Their "transgender participants as well as those with plurisexual sexual identities" (Galupo et al., 2014, p. 452), like bisexual, pansexual, and queer, regarded the sexuality scales they were discussing as "[assuming] a fixed identity across time, and stable sex and gender binaries" (p. 452). For example, the scales often only apply to those who identify as a cisgender man or woman, and usually have participants select their levels of attraction to the "same" or "opposite" sex, reinforcing dichotomous logic. This research highlighted how the sexuality binary, and cultural conceptions of sexuality at large, "establish genderism and cisgenderism as normative" (Galupo et al., p. 452), thus demonstrating that any new conception we may garner about the expansiveness of sexuality beyond the binary must also include similar movements in regards to gender and sex.

In aligning the research of Bogaert (2004; 2006; 2012a; 2012b), Callis (2014), and Galupo (2014), as well as the plethora of other queer-centered studies (e.g. Barker, 2005; Klesse, 2006; Diamond & Butterworth, 2008; Deluzio Chasen, 2011; Tweedy, 2011), it has become obvious that any conception we maintain of sexuality must not only account for a binary between homosexual and heterosexual identities, but also for binaries between sexual and asexual, between monosexual (only attracted to one gender or sex) and plurisexual (attracted to more than one gender or sex), between monogamous (maintaining a single sexual or romantic partner) and polyamorous (maintaining more than one sexual or romantic partner), and between cisgender and transgender identities. All of these binaries are interrelated and interconnected, forming a complex web of identity; attempting to view and assess them all individually is impossible, and trying to fit them all within a single binary would cause it to buckle under its own weight. It is for this reason, then, that we must forge new understandings of sexuality, gender, and sex that can accommodate such a plurality of possibilities.

Van Anders (2015) provided a rather ambitious theoretical exploration into this new territory. Sexual Configurations Theory (SCT) is developed



throughout the paper “as a way to address the complexities of actual people’s sexualities” (van Anders, 2015, p. 1178). As recounted in the previous paragraph, van Anders (2015) argued that individuals have “a sexual configuration that is composed of locations in multiple sexual dimensions” (p. 1178). While the paper focuses on gender, sex, and partner number as possible “dimensions,” van Anders (2015) also recognizes that there are a multitude of other dimensions still to be explored with SCT. Viewing sexuality through SCT is, in many ways, a liberating act that extends far beyond the hetero/homo binary and “[allows] identities related to partner number sexuality, gender/sex sexuality, and individual sexuality to be mapped in ways that reflect sexual diversity” (van Anders, 2015, p. 1202).

Further, van Anders (2015) employed a “sexual diversity lens” (p. 1185) that “attends to the particularities of each sexuality and its relations to other sexualities, acknowledging that sexualities can be grouped in various ways” (p. 1187). This is a vital tool for SCT, and the “diversity lens,” sexual or not, has huge potential for other fields tasked with critiquing identity classification systems and categorizations. Its power lies in realizing, for example, that homosexuals and heterosexuals (often depicted as opposites on the binary) are actually quite similar in their preference for a single gender or sex expression, particularly when compared to bisexuals or pansexuals, who have preferences for multiple gender and sex expressions. These connections are endless through the sexual diversity perspective, and once again reveal an oppositional dichotomy to be inadequate at being able to locate actual sex, gender, and sexuality identities.

### **1.3. Race (White vs. Non-White)**

Much research on gender, sex, and sexuality also focuses on how these identities are affected and related to our other identities (e.g. Bogaert, 2004; Diamond & Butterworth, 2008; Renold, 2008; Callis, 2014; Galupo, 2014; van Anders, 2015). In van Anders’ (2015) Sexual Configuration Theory, “intersectional factors” are depicted as a key component of an individual’s specific configuration, as each location “may be experienced very differently depending on factors like race/ethnicity, age, etc.” (pp. 1188–1189). Similarly, the concept of “sexual borderlands” deployed by Callis (2014) comes from a long line of theoretical work that realized how “race is always sexualized, and sexualities are constructed through the lens of race” (pp. 70–71). However, although such attempts have been made to account these other identities, namely race, not all of this research works to critique and move beyond these other identity binaries. For example, Bogaert (2004) included race as a demographic consideration, and while “interviewers assess race-ethnicity (1 = White, 2 = Black, 3 = Asian, or 4 = Other)[,] race-ethnicity was recoded so that 0 = White and 1 =

non-white" (p. 282), thus grouping all people of color in opposition to whiteness and reinforcing the racial binary.

Perea (1997) provided an early critical analysis of this common practice of aligning various racial and ethnic groups into a homogenized mass. He documented the formation of the "Black/White binary paradigm of race," particularly in the United States, and specifically analyzed "the role of books and texts on race in structuring our racial discourse" (p. 1214). He argued that the organization of a simply "nonwhite" category, particularly in a culture where the Black and white binary is already in place, "marginalizes all people of color by grouping them, without particularity, as somehow analogous to Blacks," thus causing many "to ignore the experiences of other Americans who also are subject to racism in profound ways" (Perea, 1997, pp. 1257–1258). Perea (1997) advocated for critical engagement with the racial binary between Blackness and whiteness because he saw white racism against other racial and ethnic groups as not necessarily equivalent to white racism against Black people. From this perspective, any new framework for understanding, categorizing, and interacting with race would need to be much more complex than a simple binary between white and nonwhite, or white and Black.

Lorrin (2009) furthered this need for a new framework in his retelling of the history of the Harlem riot of 1935, in New York City. He recalled that in 1930, "the United States Census dropped its 'mulatto' category...leaving only 'white' and 'Negro'" (Lorrin, 2009, p. 7), thus legally enforcing binary racial logic. He then centered his research on Puerto Rican migrants – their misplacement due to this binary regime and their role in the riot – and on "the extent to which historical narratives are distorted and flattened by the crude structure of racial ideology in the United States" (Lorrin, 2009, p. 7). Not only did this research clearly reveal the legalized binary to be both artificially created and incapable of accounting for the actual population of the United States, but it also uncovered "the power of the racial binary to silence those historical actors who don't fit into its categories" (Lorrin, 2009, 27). The ability for binary logic to manipulate historical accounts is a significant argument against identity dichotomies, revealing they harm in ways beyond limiting how we may identify.

Along with Lorrin (2009), there is much research on how immigrant populations interact with the black-white racial binary in the United States. Marrow (2009) focused specifically on Hispanic migrants from Central and South America in the southern United States, a place where "the racial 'binary' remains strongest" (p. 1037). The conducted interviews presented "preliminary support to a black/nonblack colour line model" (Marrow, 2009, p. 1052). That is, rather than a black-white binary, or a nonwhite-white binary, these interviews revealed that "many Hispanics [perceived] the social distance separating themselves from

whites as more permeable than that separating themselves from blacks, and [engaged] in distancing strategies that [might have reinforced] this distinction" Marrow, 2009, p. 1053). While Perea (1997) discussed the homogenization of all people of color into a "nonwhite" category, Marrow (2009) complicated this view, presenting evidence that some racial and ethnic groups may be able to align themselves towards the white side of the binary, thus contributing to further racism against black people. However, this in no way seeks to assume that nonblack, nonwhite people (like Latino/a or Asian populations) are not harmed by racism and white supremacy, but rather serves to expose how binary logic, and cultural and legal implementation of such logic, both diminishes difference and clearly demarcates "good" and "bad" people and identities.

In slight juxtaposition, Junn and Masuoka (2008) concentrated their research on Asian American populations in the United States. They indicated early on that, although seeming to represent a "triangulated position in relation to the black-white binary" (Junn & Masuoka, 2008, p. 729), the idea of a monolithic "Asian American" identity obscures how "this population is diverse in terms of national origin and language" (p. 730). This act of broadly grouping racial and ethnic identities is a key tenet of binary thinking and white supremacy. Further, Junn and Masuoka (2008) argued that, due to economic and educational privileges, Asian Americans "are more likely than blacks and Latinos to be economically integrated with whites," and thus socially integrated as well. That said, they also "pointed to the role of U.S. immigration policy and the selection bias it created by producing an Asian American population with high levels of formal education and social standing" (Junn & Masuoka, 2008, p. 736). Because of this, it is possible to see how structural and institutional factors result in a constructed notion of race, stereotypes of particular racial and ethnic groups, and a reinforcement of white supremacy by creating a "model minority" that can be used to justify racism against other racial and ethnic groups like Black and Latino/a people.

Smith (2006), on the other hand, believed that a simple move "beyond the binary" does not adequately solve problems of racism in the United States. That is, "simply saying we need to move beyond the black/white binary...in US racism obfuscates the racializing logic of slavery, and prevents us from seeing that this binary constitutes Blackness as the bottom of a color hierarchy" (Smith, 2006, p. 70). While she argued that attempting to ignore or deconstruct the racial binary between Black and white obstructs the particular racism that Black people face, she also suggested that:

This is not the *only* binary that fundamentally constitutes white supremacy. There is also an indigenous/settler binary, where Native

genocide is central to the logic of white supremacy and other non-indigenous people of color also form 'a subsidiary' role. We also face another Orientalist logic that fundamentally constitutes Asians, Arabs, and Latino/as as foreign threats, requiring the United States to be at permanent war with these peoples. In this construction, Black and Native peoples play subsidiary roles. (Smith, 2006, pp. 70–71)

While, in some ways, Smith (2006) argued *for* the use of racial binaries, this complex understanding of how white supremacy acts upon unique binaries differently reveals that a concept of race as a dichotomy of white and nonwhite (or black and nonblack) does not adequately confront the different oppressions faced by different people of color, and the ways that particular racial and ethnic groups may be implicated in the oppression of others.

Greenberg (2002) utilized the logics similar to Perea (1997) and Smith (2006) to better align conversations surrounding sex, gender, and race binaries. As "sex and gender classification systems...have [recently] started to become the subject of litigation" (Greenberg, 2002, p. 918), the article speculated "whether the more developed theoretical critiques of race classification systems and their effect on multiracials can be used to help illuminate...the theoretical practical problems that may arise as legal institutions struggle with how to classify transgendered people" (p. 919). More than deploying race theory to critically address sex and gender issues, however, Greenberg (2002) is also a noteworthy paper in its direct focus on multiracial individuals.

Multiracial identity reveals a hiccup in binary race classification systems. Greenberg (2002) provided a discussion on how multiracial individuals were classified throughout history, revealing that they were (and are) haphazardly thrown to one side or the other, indicating the binary to be artificial (pp. 923–927). The ability for (some) multiracial people to oscillate between the white and nonwhite sides of the constructed race dichotomy calls into question the use of the binary's end terms, and suggest the potential for a third option that is neither/nor or both/and. In thinking of Smith's (2006) reflections on the variety of racial binaries, multiracial individuals remain unaccounted for and wandering somewhere within (or without) the end points.

Gonzalez-Sobrinio and Goss (2018) gave meaning behind this wandering of the multiracial individual, and others displaced by a Black/white binary logic, in their explanation of racialization, a theory that focuses on "how race is defined, what meanings are attached to it, and how it is used to create and reproduce racism" (p. 2). They argued that "racialization has a particular usefulness to study race in international and transnational contexts...[and helps] scholars understand how, for example, national groups become understood as

racial groups through immigration or how racial meanings shift over time and space" (p. 4). The differences in Perea's (1997) interpretation of a white-nonwhite binary and Marrow's (2009) interpretation of a black-nonblack binary revealed the latter point. Husain (2017) emphasized the first point in a study that explored how "Muslims are racialized as foreign and brown...[and] how Muslimness is produced through the black-white binary" (p. 14), despite it being a religious identity.

In thinking back to the research on sex, gender, and sexuality that also focuses on racial identity as a key factor in identification (e.g. Bogaert, 2004; Diamond & Butterworth, 2008; Renold, 2008; Callis, 2014; Galupo, 2014; van Anders, 2015), we can now turn to Crenshaw's (1989) theory of intersectionality, one possible method for complicating race binaries, as well as gender, sex, and sexuality binaries. This concept of realizing that the "intersectional experience" of being both Black and a woman, for example, "is greater than the sum of racism and sexism" (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 140) provided a meeting ground for feminist theory and antiracist discourses and opened doors for future work to emphasize the complexities of identities and oppressions that exist at intersections of race, gender, sex, and sexuality (as well as class, ability, nationality, etc.) (e.g. Collins, 2000; Sandoval, 2000; McCall, 2005). Through an intersectional lens, it is now clear that an individual's position within (or without) a single identity binary (i.e. gender) is multiply affected by their positions in regards to other binaries (i.e. race and sexuality). For this reason, scholars and activists, like Davis (1983), have argued time and time again that even in well-meaning feminist movements trying to disrupt sex and gender binary hegemonies, racism is still ever-present. Likewise, in many antiracist movements, sexism still exists. An intersectional lens realizes these phenomena and allows us to address how intersecting identities can compound oppression in serious ways. This linkage of binaries, like that presented in the previous section on sexuality, forms something more closely resembling an identity matrix, thus calling into question the effectiveness of identity dichotomies as categorical tools.

In summary, it is clear that a racial binary between Black and white (or white and non-white, or Black and non-Black) does not account for the number of possible racial and ethnic identities (e.g. Perea, 1997). Further, in addressing racism and white supremacy, we must understand that the oppressions facing Black people are very different than those facing Latino/a, Asian, or Indigenous people (e.g. Smith, 2006). Moreover, multiracial individuals do not easily map onto binary systems (e.g. Greenberg, 2002), and binary race logic is even utilized to racialize national and religious groups (e.g. Husain, 2017; Gonzalez-Sobrino & Goss, 2018), thus revealing its shortcomings and illogical applications. Lastly, as

seen by the crossroads of gender, sex, and sexuality, individual experiences of race (or any other identity) will vary given any number of intersectional factors (e.g. Davis, 1984; Crenshaw, 1989; Collins, 2000; McCall, 2005).

## 2. Media and Identity (Binaries)

Along with these more general critiques of binary logic, movements within media and communication studies specifically have adopted these feminist, intersectional, queer, and critical race theoretical frameworks to analyze and critique identity representation in media (e.g. Gauntlett, 2002; Jansen, 2002; Markovitz, 2011; Alsultany, 2012). Stuart Hall, a leading theorist in communication and cultural studies, pioneered much of the current thinking in regards to media's role in identity creation and representation. Hall (1990) remarked that scholars dealing with identity and media must:

Theorise identity as constituted, not outside but within representation; and hence of cinema [and other media forms], not as a second-order mirror held up to reflect what already exists, but as that form of representation which is able to constitute us as new kinds of subjects, and thereby enable us to discover places from which to speak. (pp. 236–237)

These new “places from which to speak” are exactly what this study hopes to uncover in zines. Unfortunately, this awareness of media representation as a key to unlocking “new kinds of subjects” is an optimistic hope for media that is more often achieved by the alternative media I discuss in the following section, than by mainstream media.

Hall (2011) even critically discussed, through a number of examples, how media can inform and shape ideologies, like racism and sexism, especially as “media are...the dominant means of *ideological* production” (p. 82). Similarly, Lull (2011), addressed how:

Owners and managers of media industries can produce and reproduce the content, inflections, and tones of ideas favorable to them far more easily than other social groups because they manage key socializing institutions, thereby guaranteeing that their points of view are constantly and attractively cast into the public arena. (p. 34)

Lull (2011) also saw that these “mass-mediated ideologies” (p. 34) are further reified by similar hegemonic dialogues and messages coming from “schools, businesses, political organizations, trade unions, religious groups, [and] the military” (p. 34). As an example of this, Alsultany (2012) remarked on her

original surprise as she witnessed positive representations of Arabs and Muslims in United States media after the terrorist attacks of 9/11, only to realize through her analysis that “the production and circulation of ‘positive’ representations of the ‘enemy’ has become essential to projecting the United States as benevolent, especially in its declaration of war and passage of racist policies” (p. 7). In this way, mainstream media plays a powerful role in reinforcing racist, sexist, homophobic, and other oppressive hegemonies and ideologies.

Moreover, and of greater interest for this proposed research, media are culpable of creating and reinforcing “binary perceptions and categorizations” of identity that are “weighted by hierarchical assumptions that implicitly attach primacy to the first term in the system” (Jansen, 2002, p. 195), whether that be the male, the masculine, the white, or the heterosexual subject. Though in recent years we have seen more inclusion and better representation of the “second term” identities (female, feminine, Black, and/or homosexual) (Gauntlett, 2002), much mainstream media misrepresent or underrepresent identities within or without the binary ends.

Brooks and Hébert (2006), analyzing various media genres, revealed how “the media construct monolithic notions of race and gender,” which encourage “essentialist thinking” (p. 312) in regards to the roles of particular gender, racial, and ethnic groups. Taking on an intersectional lens, not only did they acknowledge the binaries of race, gender, sex, and sexuality, but also the dichotomies that arise from their connections. For example, Brooks and Hébert (2006) argued that “the global other...is always paired with the West as its binary companion...the West is portrayed in the media as active and masculine while the east as passive and feminine” (p. 302). This idea has serious implications for how Asian women and Latinas, for example, are portrayed, often resulting in trivialized, over-sexualized and exoticized depictions.

Additionally, Brooks and Hébert (2006) also commented on the common practice within media of casting roles based on skin color alone, rather than actual race or ethnicity. Similar to the comments of Junn and Masuoka (2008), they noted how “lumping together races and ethnicities into one homogenized group [(e.g. Asian or Hispanic)] ignores the cultural diversity that characterizes human difference” (Brooks and Hébert, 2006, p. 310). Finally, Brooks and Hébert (2006) also acknowledged that, simply, “media constructions of race...exemplify the black-white binary of racial discourse” (p. 307). That is, the dearth of Asian, Latino/a, or indigenous representations is, in part, due to the perpetuation of the racial binary, particularly in the United States.

In thinking more specifically of sexuality, it can easily be seen that media representation of gay and lesbian people has increased greatly since the turn of the century (e.g. Gauntlett, 2002; Gomillion & Giuliano, 2011). In this regard,

much academic work has begun to focus on the lack of adequate representation surrounding non-binary sexualities. In this vein, Diamond (2005) focused her research on examples of heteroflexibility, depictions of “heterosexual” characters or figures engaging in or hinting at same-sex sexual experiences, in films, television shows, and celebrity news coverage. She argued that the portrayals of heteroflexibility are performances for the heterosexual male consumer and reaffirm sexuality dichotomies through marking plurisexual (e.g. bisexual and pansexual) attraction as mere experimentation (Diamond, 2005, pp. 105–107), reaffirming the points made by Callis (2014). Barker and Langdrige (2008), and Johnson (2016) maintained similar points of view and noted that the erasure of bisexuality in mainstream media is both a symptom and cause of its silencing in “lesbian and gay communities, sexology, and psychology and psychotherapy” (Barker and Langdrige, 2008, p. 389) as well.

Meyer (2010) offered a handful of examples that indicated recent television portrayals of bisexuality “follow a typical narrative pattern: women are more frequently represented as bisexual than men; they are generally non-White, and their sexuality is often located outside traditional coming-out narrative disclosure more commonly associated with gay and lesbian representations” (p. 372). While Meyer (2010) argued for some positive aspects in the representations, she remained wary of how they still contribute to hegemonic narratives. The fact that the majority of bisexual characters are women lies in a desire to appeal to both heterosexual and queer audiences, as these women can successfully “pass as straight” (Meyer, 2010, p. 381) and, as stated above, appeal to a heterosexual male gaze. Further, their lack of coming out narratives suggests bisexual identities to be less stable or defined (Meyer, 2010, pp. 379–380). Finally, the casting of non-white characters both markets to a globalized audience and racializes queer sexuality, further emphasizing the racial “other” as a sexual “other” (Meyer, 2010, p. 381).

Capuzza (2016), on the other hand, analyzed transgender representation in newspapers, a medium perhaps more similar to zines. She faults “the [low] amount of coverage, the emphasis on soft news, style guidelines that support the gender binary and gender stability..., inadequate stylebook advice about language use and violations of existing stylebook guidelines” (Capuzza, 2016, p. 92) as the primary reasons contemporary newspaper coverage fails the transgender community and reinforces society’s understanding of gender as binary. Further, Capuzza and Spencer (2017) found that “even in [United States television] programs that are celebrated for being about and featuring transgender characters...transgender people get an average of 7% of the screen time” (p. 224). The few examples that do exist of transgender representation in media are almost exclusively of trans women, “thus silencing trans men and



non-binary subjectivities” (Capuzza & Spencer, 2017, p. 224); trans characters also “reinforced the gender binary and gender stability, identifying consistently with either masculinity or femininity” (p. 225). These studies suggest that mainstream media is not yet equipped to handle identities that are liberated from binary logic.

Harrison, Thomas, and Cross (2017) provided a critical discourse analysis and interviews on magazine advertisements featuring multiracial individuals and argued that, despite rises in representation, mixed-race individuals are either portrayed “as a new beauty standard [or]...as representing a racial bridge” (p. 14) between the racial divides. While their presence as the so-called “racial bridge” may seem appealing, this imagery suggests that there are two binary end-points to bridge across in the first place, and also reflects racist ideology, implying that differences between white and Black, Asian, Latino/a, or Indigenous people are somehow unresolvable on their own. Moreover, the portrayal of mixed-race bodies as a “new beauty standard” further exoticizes them and also asserts lighter skin tones, a “dominant multiracial taxonomy” (Harrison et al., 2017, p. 5), as better.

To conclude, incredible progress within academia has: (1) acknowledged the inability for identity binaries to adequately hold the complexity of human differences; (2) exposed the propensity for such binaries to distill these differences into two categories in order to justify sexism, racism, cisgenderism, and queerphobia; and (3) critiqued media’s propagation of faulty dichotomous ideologies and revealed the underrepresentation and misrepresentation of non-binary identities. Despite all this work, however, much mainstream media has failed to actively attempt subverting such oppressive habits, as seen in the aforementioned studies. This gap between the critical knowledge in academia and the uninformed practices in the media is one I hope can be filled by the zines in this proposed research.

### **3. Mainstream Media and Alternative Media**

Now, perhaps, it is helpful to attempt defining the differences between mainstream and alternative media, and to understand how zines act as alternative media. Though a relatively new area of inquiry for media and communication studies, alternative media has recently gained a significant backbone in the literature (e.g. Downing, 2001; Atton, 2002; Halleck, 2002; Couldry & Curran, 2003; Kenix, 2011). While I do not wish, particularly in light of the non-binary focus of this study, to portray mainstream and alternative media as two dichotomous ends, I do believe there are key differences in form, production, distribution, and audience reception that partly separate the two terms. However, the relatively new digital age has ushered in forms of media

that lie ambiguously between the two categories, making any hard and fast definition of “mainstream” or “alternative” questionable. Still, as I am most specifically interested in the printed zine form as a product, addressing the general distinctions of alternative media may help better contextualize this proposed research, and the significance of analyzing zines.

In *Alternative Media*, Atton (2002) has provided a thorough discussion on the subject, relating various definitions in the research, pinpointing their flaws, and producing a new “typology” (p. 27). His primary concern was “not simply the differences in content and medium/carrier” between alternative and mainstream media, “but how communication as a social (rather than simply an informational) process is construed” differently within the two categories (Atton, 2002, p. 24). That is, any form of alternative media is not only a form that takes on a new shape with new content, but also one that engages with communication and its audience alternatively. Atton (2002) suggested that this engagement “typically [goes] beyond simply providing a platform for radical or alternative points of view: [it] emphasizes the organization of media to enable a wider social participation in their creation, production and dissemination than is possible in the mass media” (p. 25). In a simpler sense, alternative media is made by the people, for the people; it is “deprofessionalized, decapitalized, and deinstitutionalized” (Atton, 2002, p. 25).

Bailey, Cammaerts, and Carpentier (2007) argued for a slightly broader definition of alternative media and placed well-deserved critique on the common perception of alternative media as the binary opposite of mainstream media, particularly in research. While not as strict in how anti-hegemonic media must be to be labeled alternative, they concurred with Atton (2002) in believing that the categorization of “‘alternative’ media should...include a...spectrum of media generally working to democratize information/communication” (Bailey et al., 2007, p. xi). Fuchs (2010), similarly yet differently, vied for a Marxist theoretical approach to the concept of alternative media, suggesting that it “should not only be understood as alternative media practices, but also as critical media that question dominative society” (p. 174). Although there is contestation over exactly what qualifies as alternative media, most generally agree that such media maintain a critical eye to (some) hegemonies, and largely advocate for more democratic communication practices and societies.

In this vein, Coyer, Dowmunt, and Fountain (2007) emphasized that alternative media “offer examples of alternative modes of production that are more democratic and participatory, organized horizontally rather than hierarchically” (pp. 3–4). Similarly, Kenix (2011) discussed how “media have traditionally existed within two organization frameworks: participatory and hierarchical. Mainstream media have historically operated almost exclusively

within the latter category” (p. 98), while alternative media have run under more democratic structures. In thinking of dissemination along with production, Halleck (2002) reflected on her previous activism with fellow artists and researchers. She argued that the “welfare of humanity is increasingly tied to the structure for production and distribution of information,” noting how “most communication today is one-way, from the centers of power to passive audiences of consumers” (Halleck, 2002, p. 94). The goal for alternative media, then, is for information to be produced by and distributed to these “passive audiences” through lateral organizational structures. This body of research, though varying slightly in exact definitions, argues that alternative media not only maintain alternative content, but also alternative means of production and distribution, resulting in more equitable, just, and representative media practices.

Many scholars have also written on the ability for alternative media practices to open up spaces for more evenhanded and just representation. Bacon-Smith (1992), for example, wrote extensively on the presence of women with feminist ideologies in fandom cultures and media. Aligning closely with the nature of the proposed study, Kenix (2011) compared the representational potential of both mainstream and alternative media. She recounted how “counter-hegemonic ideology...has historically percolated from within alternative media” (Kenix, 2011, p. 60). Further, she argued that the primary way for “counter-hegemonic ideologies...to penetrate mainstream thinking, [is having the] alternate version of reality...articulated through the same institutions of control that have dictated the modern capitalist structure: mainly media, university, books and churches” (Kenix, 2011, p. 60). This highlights the significance of alternative media in vying for social change. While mainstream media may adopt some “counter-hegemonic ideologies” over time, Kenix (2011) also reiterated that as “alternative media have traditionally offered an independent...platform for groups and individuals that have been marginalized by the mainstream media...mainstream media have...traditionally...[relied] on content that would appeal to the most number of readers,” thus leading to “content that is often binary and reductive” (p. 10).

Tukachinsky (2015) also spoke to this point in her summary of key research on the representation of particular racial and ethnic groups. She addressed “the systematic under-representation as well as the abundance of stereotypical representations” (Tukachinsky, 2015, p. 187) of these individuals in mainstream media. She noted that because of these issues, “it is not surprising that members of these groups seek alternative media outlets to manage their identity needs” (Tukachinsky, 2015, p. 187). This is a significant observation in thinking of my proposed research and the individuals who utilize the zine format. On a gloomier note, though, Tukachinsky (2015) suggested that this

“migration to alternative media only reduces the incentive to improve... representation in mainstream media that contributes to the majority group’s racial attitudes” (p. 193). It is for this reason, however, that my research seeks to analyze the representational practices of zines, ideally outlining better practices that mainstream media may follow.

Cissel (2012) focused her research on news coverage of the Occupy Wall Street movement. Her content analysis found that, “the mainstream media portrayed Occupy as...directionless and confused...[whereas] alternative media focused on how the police, corporations, government and mass media prevent [the Occupy movement] from having a voice by prohibiting their free speech” (Cissel, 2012, p. 75). She further suggested that this “could be due to the financial backing behind different media sources...while mainstream media want to protect their fiscal security, independent media aren’t pressured by big business” (Cissel, 2012, p. 75), freeing them from corporate pressure to lean one way or another. In accordance, Fuchs (2010) reflected on how “alternative media are frequently connected to protest movements that make use of these media for information, communication, co-ordination, and co-operation processes” (p. 184). Not only do alternative media present anti-hegemonic views and organize themselves horizontally, rather than hierarchically, but they also maintain deep ties to movements for social change.

Finally, nearly all the literature on alternative media comments on the various modes of production and aesthetic forms that arise from the practice. While some alternative media stays true to the shapes of mainstream media (e.g. newspapers, magazines, and television), the category may also include “blogs and other websites; pamphlets and posters; fanzines and zines; graffiti and street theatre” (Atton, 2007, p. 18); as well as various forms of independently produced books and music. This list may, and can, go on. Downing (2003) even stated that exploring “the variety of communication technologies, genres and formats in alternative [media]” (p. 627) should remain a research priority. Often, the link holding this multiplicity of form together is an independent, anti-corporate, and/or self-organized mentality behind the production processes (e.g. Atton, 2002; Couldry & Curran, 2003; Kenix, 2011). It goes without saying, then, that the production (and reproduction) of alternative media material adopts alternative methods to those seen in mainstream media. Coyer et al. (2007) devoted an entire section of their book to “doing it yourself,” exploring these various tactics in a number of mediums (pp. 257–320).

To return to Atton (2002), this discussion on alternative media research has aimed to highlight the distinctive characteristics that Atton (2002) identifies in his “typology of alternative and radical media” (p. 27). These characteristics are: (1) anti-hegemonic and politically driven content; (2) alternative forms and

aesthetics; (3) unconventional reproduction methods; (4) new sites and models of distribution; (5) nonhierarchical organizational structures; and (6) democratic communication processes (Atton, 2002, pp. 24–29). Although definitions of alternative media vary throughout the literature, these core ideas are present in nearly the entire body of research. It is for this reason that I will argue in the following section for the applicability of zines to these alternative media criteria, thus establishing them as a valid form of media and highlighting the specifics that make zines a unique and worthwhile media to study.

## 4. Zines

### 4.1. *Zines as Alternative Media*

The “typology” of alternative media from Atton (2002) contained six notable characteristics, three related to “products” and three related to “processes” (p. 27). In this section, I will align these characteristics with the zine genre by utilizing key texts and research. Not only will this clearly indicate the place for zines within alternative media (and thus in media and communication studies), but it will also shine a light on notable specifics of the zine medium, revealing their utility for this research.

To begin, Atton (2002) claimed that the “content” of alternative media should be “politically radical, [or] socially/culturally radical” (p. 27). While Stephen Duncombe (1997), a primary zine scholar, has tended to focus on a narrow set of zine authors who are “culturally if not financially middle-class...white and raised in a relatively privileged position within the dominant culture,” he has still found that their zines maintain a “politics resolutely outside the status quo” (p. 12). Adela Licona (2012), who has focused specifically on “radical, of-color, queer, and coalitional or third-space zines” (p. 21), has suggested that the authors utilize a “radical democracies...a participatory and emancipatory politics” (p. 28). A quick search through any zine archive or library will easily garner titles on anarchism, queer and feminist politics, and antiracist discourses, aligning the genre nicely with this alternative media standard. Though not all zines are politically motivated, the body of research (e.g. Duncombe, 1997; Atton, 2002; Schilt, 2003; Guzzetti & Gamboa, 2004; Licona, 2012; Hays, 2017) focuses on the politics of zines, as will this proposed study.

Second in Atton’s (2002) typology is “form,” specifically the use of “graphics [and] visual language,” “varieties of presentation and binding,” and a focus on “aesthetics” (p. 27). Observing any pile of zines will make their relationship with this criteria clear; they come in several sizes, may be bound with string, thread, staples, or any number of adhesives, and while a few zines remain text-only, the vast majority rely on images, cut-and-paste collages, and handwriting as communication tools. Anne Hays (2017) has provided an

interesting reading of the zine form, arguing that a number of creative moves, from “changing typography...[to] adding handwritten notes...interjecting images...[and] incorporating graphically illustrated boxes,” allows for the “possibility of embedded metatextual narratives...that both [contribute] to and [obstruct] the main narrative” (p. 87). This suggests that zines not only take on an alternative form, but also utilize the form to communicate alternatively with their audiences.

Next, Atton (2002) claimed that alternative media is reproduced using “reprographic innovations/adaptions,” as, for example, the “use of mimeographs, IBM typesetting, offset litho, [or] photocopiers” (p. 27). Zines are most often print publications that are reproduced using a photocopier and printer. They embrace “the ethic of DIY, do-it-yourself” (Duncombe, 1997, p. 7) production, and “are often put together in a raw cut-and-paste style” (Licona, 2012, p. 2). While the Internet has recently made self-publishing material all the more easier, many scholars and zine authors reject – or are at least cautious – of the notion of “e-zines.” Hays (2017) stated her opinion bluntly: “zines are explicitly print publications” (p. 87); others, however, engage further with the idea. Atton (2002) himself wrote that while “the Internet might well be a useful distribution mechanism...it is ill-suited as a reading mechanism for discursive texts” (p. 68). He went on to realize that “the e-zine appears less distinct, its culture more amorphous” (Atton, 2002, p. 75); in short, they are harder to define and constrain. It is for this reason that this research will focus solely on originally printed zines.

For the fourth element of classification, Atton (2002) cited an idea he coined in 1999, “distributive use,” or, in other words, “alternative sites for distribution, clandestine/invisible distribution networks, [and/or] anti-copyright” (p. 27) ethos. Nearly every zine scholar has commented on the unique distribution of zines. Schilt (2003) discussed how “zine makers leave zines anonymously at book and record stores, or trade them with people” (p. 79). Likewise, Hays stated that zines are “[handed] out or [sold] through the mail” (2017, p. 87). Atton (2002), Duncombe (1997), and Licona (2012) all analyzed at some length the unique trade-based distribution of zines and its role in realizing a united zine culture, the zine acting as “a physical token, an exchange mechanism for a social relationship” (Atton, 2002, p. 68). Many zines also explicitly state that they are “anti-copyright,” allowing readers to freely reproduce their pages.

The fifth criteria of alternative media for Atton (2002) is that they “[transform] social relations, roles and responsibilities,” particularly through the “reader-writer” relationship, “collective organization, [and the] deprofessionalization of...journalism, printing, and publishing” (p. 27). Zines

accomplish this in a number of ways. Atton (2002) said, “in the case of a zine, writer and publisher is typically the same person, as well as being its designer, printer and distributor” (p. 27), thus confusing the typical hierarchy of positions. On the other hand, Licona (2012) focused her work specifically on “feminist of-color zines that are co-authored and co-produced” (p. 1); these collaborative efforts are also a common practice among zines, reinforcing coalition. Hays (2017) touched on the last point of deprofessionalization, noting that “zines tend to be self-edited or overseen by friends, but intentionally (and sometimes vehemently) do not adhere to standards of editorial professionalism found in mainstream media” (p. 87).

Finally, Atton’s (2002) typology requires alternative media to “[transform] communication processes” through “horizontal linkages [and] networks” (p. 27). As stated above, trade-based zine distribution not only creates community among zine authors, but “[encourages] readers to become editors themselves” (Atton, 2002, p. 23), thus creating “horizontal” communication in lieu of a top-down approach. The importance of “networks” is also prevalent in zine creation. Hays (2017) discussed how “zines are created with a specific readership and community in mind” (p. 87). While zines are not aiming to be wide-read media, they do rely on a networked, communal audience with whom to communicate *discursively* rather than informatively. In her discussion on zines as a form of empowerment for young girls, Schilt (2003) further highlighted how zines may “transform communication processes.” She wrote:

Although a girl-power movement has [recently] sprung up...much of these empowerment strategies have been consumer based. Thus, girls are supposed to be empowered through buying girl-power products...with girl-positive slogans. Although these consumer slogans may be empowering for some, they do not encourage girls’ own creativity or input into empowerment strategies. Zines, on the other hand, are a do-it-yourself project that teaches girls how to be cultural producers...rather than consumers of empty girl-power products. By making a zine, girls learn that if they do not like the cultural products offered to them, they can produce their own. (Schilt, 2003, p. 79)

This means that, through zines, young girls are able to communicate to each other through media and to discourse about their own empowerment, creating lateral linkages of communication among individuals who are often misrepresented, underrepresented, and labeled solely as a consumer (rather than producer) in mainstream media.

In this application of the zine medium to Atton's typology of alternative media, it is possible to discern zines as an alternative media genre, and as a valid area of inquiry for media and communication studies. Housing zines within alternative media situates them alongside other media that engage with "counter-hegemonic ideologies" (Kenix, 2011, p. 60), an important characteristic for this study. In relation to some of the above characteristics, I find zines to be a particularly useful and necessary medium to analyze for this proposed investigation because: (1) being self-published and produced in relatively small numbers, zines escape mainstream media restrictions on content and form; (2) they are often sold for very little, if anything at all, and thus, zine makers feel no incentive to adjust their content towards market trends in order to maximize profits; (3) they are relatively cheap and easy to produce, making their creation an accessible practice for people of lower economic status and people typically shunned from opportunities in mainstream media; and (4) they simultaneously exist outside the realms of academia and mainstream media, and are therefore able to utilize non-normative (or often restricted) discursive and rhetorical practices.

Further, and perhaps most vital for this study on identity representation, zines offer readers intimate encounters with the authors, the zinesters. Atton (2002) suggested:

Those who produce zines...turn to themselves, to their own lives, their own experiences, and turn these into the subjects of their writing. At the heart of zine culture is not the study of the 'other'...but the study of self, of personal expression, sociality and the building of community. (pp. 54–55)

Similarly, Duncombe (1997) noted:

Zines act as a kind of falsehood, a lie; they promise a dream of non-alienation they can't deliver outside of their own subcultural confines... zinesters are searching for something they can never find...but without this futile struggle they would give in to something far worse – the tyranny of the here and now.

Zines and the underground culture from which they come are a lie that gives direction and sustenance, solidarity and a sense of accomplishment; they keep you moving forward, against a world dragging you back. Zines, with all their limitations and contradictions, offer up something very important to the people who create and enjoy them: a place to walk to. (p. 204)



Zines, in summary, are not simply another form of alternative media. They are an easily accessible media form from which zine authors may focus the content on themselves, on their own representation. Further, the personal, intimate zine creates a space where zine authors may hope towards a better future, a more equitable, democratic, representational tomorrow. It is for these reasons, along with the number of characteristics described in this section, that zines are vital for research on identity representation, particularly on non-binary identities that are all too often underrepresented, misrepresented, or excluded from mainstream media.

#### 4.2. *Zines and Identity (Binaries)*

I will now explore the significant research conducted on zines thus far. Although the medium itself has only recently garnered academic attention, the past two decades have seen a number of fascinating and noteworthy works on the subject. In this discussion with the literature, I hope to highlight both intriguing findings that indicate a place for zines in this proposed research, as well as a lacuna in the current body of literature that this study seeks to fill. While I will focus, for the sake of this proposal, primarily on academic work that draws connections between zines and identity, it is a revealing note that this criterion is applicable to nearly all zine research.

Duncombe (1997) provided one of, if not the, initial text on zines, *Notes From the Underground: Zines and the Politics of Alternative Culture*. While the book is equal parts history as it is analysis, Duncombe (1997) gave a lengthy discussion on numerous aspects of the zine form and zine culture. Focusing a chapter specifically on identity, he labeled zine authors as “losers,” though in an encompassing rather than derogatory way, later going on to describe them as “marginalized people with little power over their status in the world” (Duncombe, 1997, p. 24). The “loser” label comes from an understanding that “the winners [of society] are celebrated with power, wealth and media representation [whereas] the losers...are invisible” (Duncombe, 1997, p. 25). Duncombe (1997) argued that zine authors are “losers not because they are awkward and shy, but simply because they are denied or reject the wealth, power, and prestige of those few who are winners” (p. 25). The zine, then, allows these “losers” to center themselves, the underdog and the underrepresented.

Duncombe (1997) also wrote about both the intimate and the political nature of many zines. He found that “emphasis on the personal...is a central ethic of all zines” (Duncombe, 1997, p. 31), and that “zines...are often explicitly political...although...politics, like all other topics, is primarily a personal discourse” (p. 33). The housing of the personal in the political, and the political in the personal, is an idea and practice often utilized within feminist theory and

praxis (e.g. Hanisch, 1970; Ryan, 2007). This intimately political nature of zines will hopefully result in the kinds of rhetorical and discursive tactics I am interested in, specifically those that move personal representation beyond identity dichotomies.

Atton (2002) also reflects on a number of aspects of the zine format. Notably, he argued that through “embodying one’s own history, experience and opinions within a [zine] publication...one is ‘authorizing’ oneself to speak” (p. 67). He then suggested that this foundation contributes to the formation of what Castells (2006) might call a “resistance-based identity” (p. 63), or an “identity constructed by social actors who find themselves marginalized, devalued or stigmatized by dominant forces in society and culture” (Atton, 2002, p. 68) and who “react by constructing an identity that allows them to resist assimilation by the system that subordinates them” (Castells, 2006, p. 63). This indicates that zines offer a space from which marginalized and underrepresented identities, like those focused on in this study, may resist the reductive nature of mainstream media and identity binary categories through the creation of media that focus on their personal experiences.

Along these lines, much academic research on zines has explored their potential for resistance. Much in line with Atton (2002), Chidgey (2006) found zines authors to be “‘resisting subjects’ writing against the mainstream, using a fringe method of publication, and documenting lives which are often under-represented in the public record” (p. 4). Creasap (2014) advocated for the use of zines in classrooms, holding that “zine-making employs three principles of feminist pedagogy: participatory learning, validation of personal experience, and the development of critical thinking skills” (p. 156). More specifically than an anonymous “resisting subject,” however, quite a bulk of work focuses particularly on adolescent girls and their employment of feminism through the zine medium (e.g. Ferris, 2001; Schilt, 2003; Guzzmatti & Gamboa, 2004; Piepmeier, 2009; Goulding, 2015; Radway, 2016; Hays, 2017). This line of research is largely born out of the riot grrrl movement of the 1990s (predominantly in the United States). Radway (2016) provided an encompassing and critical view and history of the riot grrrl movement, its roots in punk music and culture, and its relationship with zine production.

Schilt (2003) centered her study on zines made by teenage girls and suggested that these authors “are able to resist losing their voice in adolescence by receiving validation for their experiences and being encouraged to speak up from their zine support networks” (p. 73). Her textual analysis of zines, along with interviews of zine authors, revealed the format to be fertile ground for those typically excluded from or oppressed by mainstream society and its power structures. Schilt (2003) also pointed to a key reason studying zines is a vital

practice for research on these subjugated identities: not only do zines “deal with many of the same topics as academic research” on identity politics and representation, but they also “[provide] a unique opportunity to hear girls [(or any other marginalized group)] speaking about their experiences outside of a clinical or research setting” (p. 73). In other words, “examining...zines is an unobtrusive method that captures how [particular ‘othered’ identities] choose to represent their lives” (Schilt, 2003, p. 73). The zine, being a particularly personal media form, allows for up-close encounters with the authors outside of sterilized research settings where findings may be affected by researcher-participant power dynamics, among other factors.

Schilt (2003) ultimately found that the political resistance exhibited by the analyzed zines and their authors is simultaneously “covert” and “overt;” that is, “a sort of c/overt resistance that allows girls to overtly express their anger, confusion, and frustration publicly to like-minded peers but still remain covert and anonymous to authority figures” (p. 81). It is quite possible that this conclusion is a primary reason marginalized people utilize zines to reflect on identity and personal emotions and struggles. Further, relating to the “personal is political” motif, Schilt (2003) found that “sharing experiences through zines can lead girls to begin to realize that much of what they had previously thought of as personal problems are actually social problems shared by many other girls,” and that this “practice articulating their thoughts and feelings aids in the creation of political action” (p. 93). This move from “personal problems” to “political action” is a principal reason I believe zines to be a useful medium in which to find non-binary representational strategies. Any reflection on a “personal” non-binary identity must also be aware of the “political” binary that it is working against.

Guzzetti and Gamboa (2004) also fixated their study on zine making practices of adolescent girls. They noted both that the “use of alternative structures and styles in their writings [(i.e. in their zines)] was consistent with and representative of their membership in the alternative cultures of protesters, activists, and feminists,” and that their zine community “helped them each as individuals to form and represent their own identities, but also allowed them to assist one another in identity formation and expression” (Guzzetti and Gamboa, 2004, p. 432). While this proposed study does not aim to analyze the networks that surround zine making, it is worthwhile to acknowledge that these communities work to support one another in creating resistant, representative media. Moreover, the mirroring of alternative media forms with alternative cultures and identities suggests that a wealth of information may be gathered on the non-binary identities I am concerned with through zines.

Outside of girl-centered work, Lovata (2008) wrote generally about studying zines in a qualitative research environment and noted how the practice of zine making “allows for ownership in the face of a seemingly monolithic media environment” (p. 324) and “[focuses] on producing alternatives to the passive consumption of mass media” (p. 326). This ability to become producer and creator of personal media has empowered many groups to speak out and represent themselves in unique ways. Speaking specifically of youth, Lovata (2008) commented: “when the young are in charge, as opposed to being catered to by adults, they produce tangibly different works than expected” (p. 329). This observation is exactly why analyzing zine texts created by people with non-binary identities, and not just good representations of such identities in mainstream media, is vital for understanding the rhetorical and discursive strategies for representing these locations. Perhaps it is not simply that corporately funded mainstream media is riddled with supremacist ideologies that perpetuate stereotyping and underrepresentation, but that those in mainstream media tasked with creating the representations lack the tools and knowledge with which to create accurate portrayals. This proposed study seeks, in part, to remedy this issue.

In thinking of these tools, Stockburger (2011) conducted a dissertation with similar traits to what I am proposing here. While I am specifically interested in the identity construction and representation of identities within and without race, gender, sex, and/or sexuality identity binaries, Stockburger (2011) was more concerned with how zine authors utilize a “wide array of...discursive resources...to construct and project their identities as zine-makers” (p. 206). Although I do not wish to be as focused on how the authors of my study fit within the zine community, Stockburger’s (2011) interviews and textual analyses did reveal that particular rhetorical and discursive tactics, such as “discovery narratives,” in which the zine author writes about their introduction to zines, or simply the “cut-and-paste layouts and messy writing” (pp. 206–208), are used throughout zine publications to construct the identity of “zinester.” These findings provide me with hope that zine authors with non-binary identities utilize shared tactics to discourse on those identities. This hope is further backed by the nature of the zine community where, as stated above, the horizontal linkages and communication strategies allow for producers to be consumers and consumers to be producers (e.g. Duncombe, 1997; Atton, 2002; Licona 2012), resulting in shared and common practices that are inspired by one another.

Hays (2017) honed in specifically on what she called “embedded metatextual narratives” (p. 87), a concept that will be directly useful for my proposed research. Through a textual analysis similar to what I plan to undergo in this study, Hays (2017) argued that these narratives are created “in a variety of

ways: by changing typography...by adding handwritten notes...by crossing out chunks of text (but leaving them in so that they're readable), by inviting readers to 'have a conversation'...by interjecting images...or by incorporating graphically illustrated boxes" (p. 87). The deprofessionalized nature of zines allows for this freedom in content and form, and thus reveals "an intentional rhetorical move that both contributes to and obstructs the main narrative" (p. 87). Hays (2017) ultimately found that these "embedded metatextual narratives" are used by zine authors to have much more nuanced discussions about the complexity of their identities, experiences, and emotions than typically available in other media forms and narratives. While Hays (2017) also focuses primarily on feminist zines made by adolescent girls and women, it is my hope that embedded metatextual narratives may be identified as a rhetorical tool used in the zines of this study.

All of this fascinating work on zines and zinesters helps to confirm that exploring the medium is a worthwhile endeavor in answering questions of identity representation. Zine authors are typically those who are shunned from mainstream media practices, as well as other aspects of dominant society; they are the invisible, the underrepresented, the marginalized and the oppressed (e.g. Duncombe 1997). My previous discussion on mainstream and alternative media highlights the fact that the subjects I am interested in for this study belong to this group. Further, many zines are inherently political, and discourse heavily on the politics of the self. This characteristic allows zine authors to be resistant toward dominant society and mainstream media (e.g. Duncombe, 1996; Atton, 2002; Chidgey, 2006). Because of this, it is likely that the zines I analyze will also bridge the personal and the political, and will utilize similar critiques of identity binaries as those discussed above to aid in the representation of their non-binary identities. Finally, it has been shown on numerous accounts that zines are used by particular marginalized groups, with a large focus on young girls, to empower and represent their identities in markedly different ways, and with markedly different methods, than observed in mainstream media (e.g. Chu, 1997; Ferris, 2001; Schilt, 2003; Guzzmatti & Gamboa, 2004; Piepmeier, 2009; Creasap, 2014; Radway, 2016; Hays, 2017), suggesting that rhetorical and discursive tactics for discussing non-binary identities may be found through the proposed analysis.

Nevertheless, it might now be obvious that there is a glaring hole in this research on zines. For all of its focus on resistance and underrepresented groups, much work on zines concentrates rather narrowly on white, middle-class, young people (e.g. Duncombe, 1997). While there is substantial (and important) research on adolescent girls and women (e.g. Ferris, 2001; Schilt, 2003; Guzzmatti & Gamboa, 2004; Piepmeier, 2009; Radway, 2016; Hays, 2017), identities that

confront race, gender, sex, and sexuality dichotomies are nearly absent. Along with a few key studies that delve into this domain, this proposed research aims to broaden our understanding of how zines are used by the marginalized, the outsiders, the “other.”

Goulding (2015) analyzed the familiar topic of riot grrrl culture, but zeroed in on the “sub-genre” of zines made “by Asian American riot grrrls” (p. 163). She began with acknowledging that “Asian American grrrls and other women of color have a lengthy and rich history of zine-making; however, their contributions have been less emphasized in...scholarly literature” (Goulding, 2015, p. 163). Goulding (2015) noted the myriad of ways in which zines “[offer] these young women a venue for writing outside and in resistance to traditional media” (p.162). For example, “the zine format supported expressions of aggression and verve, one that counters the...tropes of Asian Americans as ‘foreigners’ or ‘overachievers’” (Goulding, 2015, p. 183). Goulding (2015) concluded that “zines play a role in reconfiguring [Asian Pacific Islander American] women and girls’ position within enfossilized and static racial hierarchies, in histories of immigration and exclusion, in their familial relationships, and, ultimately, in their relationship to themselves” (p. 183). These findings clearly indicate that zines offer fertile ground for those who are not white, middle-class, or from the United States to contest typical media tropes and stereotypes and to carve out space for their identities in the media landscape.

Lastly, the work that has inspired the bulk of this proposed research comes from Licona (2005a; 2005b; 2012). Her studies explored “(b)orderlands’ rhetorics” that, “unlike dualistic language structures...move beyond binary borders to a named third space of ambiguity and even contradiction” (Licona, 2005a, p. 105). She identified, in both academic and zine texts, how “(b)orderlands’ rhetorics are deployed...to move beyond gender binaries, re-imagine histories, reverse the gaze, build community, and speak (e)motion and desire through rearticulating the body to ways of knowing, being, and becoming in the world” (Licona, 2005a, p. 124). I have found this work to be both groundbreaking and inspirational, focusing specifically on the non-binary identities that I am interested in. Because of this, I have included some of the rhetorical tactics acknowledged in Licona’s (2005a; 2005b; 2012) work (e.g. e-motion and reverso) in my drafted protocol (see “Data Collection Methods”).

The difference between my proposed research and Licona’s (2005a; 2005b; 2012) studies may now be an appropriate question. In many ways, I am furthering the work of identifying rhetorical and discursive tools to build this “third space” outside of normative identity dichotomies. While Licona (2005a; 2005b; 2012) focused on “radical, of-color, queer, and coalitional...zines” (2012, p. 21), allowing for an intersectional perspective, her original concern lies in the

disruption of the gender binary. I hope to consider race, sex, sexuality, and gender binaries in my study, addressing how the tactics used to confront each interrelate and influence one another. Further, I will bring a unique perspective to this body of work through media and communication studies. Although all of this research is deeply interdisciplinary, Licona (2005a) noted how her work enlivens “new possibilities for feminist activism and coalition building” (p. 125). She also focused on establishing zines as worthwhile texts with academic merit, comparing the rhetorics with those of scholarly literature. I, on the other hand, am more interested in how we might begin to think about zines as media, and question why the representational practices in zines are significantly different than those of newspapers or magazines, for example. Finally, my approach to analyzing the zine texts is quite different than Licona’s (2005a; 2005b; 2012) methodology. I will specifically take on a qualitative content analysis approach based in media and communication studies, and I will utilize a number of established theoretical texts on oppositional consciousness and “third space” ideology to aid in the data collection and analysis process. These specifics of my proposed study will hopefully garner unique findings that exhibit zines to be an irreplaceable bridge between the aforementioned theories and representational media practices.

### **5. Third Spaces and Oppositional Consciousness**

To conclude this review of the literature, I will now bring us to the acme of this proposed study: third spaces and oppositional consciousness. The theories and ideologies from leading scholars on these topics inspired Licona’s (2005a; 2005b; 2012) work and have, in turn, been laid as the foundation for my research. I will begin this section with a short history of these ideas, and then conclude with a closer examination of the exact texts I am using in my zine analysis. Through this focus, I aim to reveal the potential for these theories to answer my research questions relating to the specific rhetorical and discursive strategies utilized in zines to represent non-binary identities.

Beginning in the 1980s, numerous academics began theorizing on third world and women of color feminisms both within and without the context of the United States (e.g. Anzaldúa, 1987; Spivak 1988; Minh-ha, 1989; Bhabha, 1994). These texts explored notions of “otherness;” they spoke of colonization, postcolonial contexts, and decolonization; they confronted the “Western world” and the racist, sexist, xenophobic and heteropatriarchal ideologies that come with it. In their deeply intersectional work, these scholars offered new locations and sites of identity commonly devalued, ignored, erased and forbidden. Through an oppositional consciousness, these works shine a light on the *third*

*space*, the postcolonial space where “we may elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of our selves” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 56).

Anzaldúa (1987) might be a helpful starting place in thinking about third spaces. Her work is positioned in the in-between and outside locations of society – the places where cultures and ideologies and sexualities and races and genders meet – the borderlands within and without the various binaries of our lives. Rosaldo (1989) and Vila (2000) have also built their substantial texts on this borderlands theory, though I will remain focused on Anzaldúa (1987), as her text is applied more often in the related literature. Although positioned in the very physical borderland between Mexico and the United States, her theory on the “consciousness of the Borderlands” (Anzaldúa, 1987, p. 77) revealed how we may begin to question the validity of all identity binary systems (and their inherent oppression) if we begin to see these borderlands as not only in between two ends of a dichotomy, but also as fertile ground from which new identities, “*mestiza*” (p. 22) identities, may grow. Anzaldúa (1987) wrote, “the work of *mestiza* consciousness is to break down the subject-object duality that keeps her prisoner and to show in the flesh and through the images in her work how duality is transcended” (p. 80). It is my hope, then, that the non-binary zine authors whose work I intend to study have taken on this claim and have utilized the zine format to envision their transcendence of dichotomous thinking.

As previously and briefly mentioned, Callis (2014) helped us understand how the borderlands concept may be applied directly to the identity dichotomies I am interested in for this study (i.e. race, sex, sexuality, and gender). Her study on non-binary sexualities, like bisexuality and pansexuality, utilized borderlands theory because “it points to the creation and maintenance of identities that fall outside of cultural norms, asking how borderlands simultaneously develop their own cultures while challenging hegemonic ideology” (Callis, 2014, p. 68). She went on to note how “the queer, the pansexual, and the individual who refuses to label her sexuality stand in opposition to the sexual binary” (Callis, 2014, p. 71), thus inhabiting the borderland within and without the dichotomy. Callis (2014) also provided interviews that not only showcased the conceptual sexuality borderland, but also “moments, places, and events...that can be understood as physical and temporal manifestations of the sexual borderlands” (p. 72). I believe zines may offer one of these physical manifestations, allowing the borderlands between and outside race, sex, sexuality, and gender binaries to come alive within their pages. Exactly how they do this is the main focus of the proposed study.

Minh-ha (1989), Spivak (1988), and Bhabha (1994), among other scholars and texts, also conceptualized similar “borderlands” spaces. Minh-ha (1989) provided theoretical analyses of various writings by women of color, including



her own, remarking how the mere act of storytelling as a woman of color is “a practice located at the intersection of subject and history” (p. 19), a constant negotiation between the identities of woman, of color, and writer (or authority). She ultimately argued that the various tactics, tools, and natures of such writings allow the author to “(re-)tell the story as she thinks it should be told; in other words, maintain the difference that allows (her) truth to live on” (Minh-ha, 1989, p. 271). Spivak (1988) also discussed this difference, maintained by writing, speaking, and discoursing, suggesting that feminist and Marxist theories should not only be used in writing, but also in understanding, critiquing, and theorizing about writing. Bhabha (1994) identified further tools for understanding how “othered” identities create space and even new hybrid cultures, within and outside writing practices, and engaged in a critical discussion of the relationship between language and culture. He names the “third space” as a place “which constitutes the discursive conditions of enunciation that ensure that the meaning of symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized, and read anew” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 37). These primary texts, from Anzaldúa (1987) to Bhabha (1994), remark on the potential for writing and language to open up possibilities of something other than what is already scripted in dominant society.

Sandoval (2000) seamlessly sewed these theories and ideas together in *Methodology of the Oppressed*, where she wrote of “a theory and method of oppositional consciousness” that aims to be “effective within first world neocolonizing global conditions during the twenty-first century” (p. 2). She cited the texts discussed in this section (as well as many others) and distilled them down to their common components, creating a “methodology of the oppressed” that consists of semiotics, deconstruction, meta-ideologizing, democratics, and differential movement (Sandoval, 2000). As her text proves to be a unique, digestible, and fairly concise synthesis of numerous complex theories and ideas, I hope to utilize her concepts as a base for my zine analysis. I also find her work applicable to this proposed study as she herself recognized the power of “cultural and human forms that do not easily slip into either side of a dominant binary opposition...to upset the binary order of same and different” (p. 151), thus upending the terms of binary subordination. In the next section I will further explore her “methodology of the oppressed,” as well as a handful of other methodologies I am interested in for this study, to reveal their potential application to my zine texts.

### ***5.1. Methodologies of the Oppressed***

Sandoval (2000) developed both five different forms of oppositional consciousness – “the modes that the subordinated of the United States (of any

sex, gender, race, or class constituency) have claimed as the positions that resist domination” (p. 55) – as well as five different methodological tools used to create this resistance. She argued that her “methodology of the oppressed is a set of processes, procedures, and technologies for decolonizing the imagination” (p. 69). It is therefore an aim of this study to assess whether or not these modes, tools, and tactics that Sandoval (2000) has extracted from the literature of an incredible number of scholars are also used by zine authors to decolonize their own imaginations from reductive and dominant binary ideologies, creating their third space within the text itself. To begin this section, then, I will discuss the five forms of oppositional consciousness.

#### *5.1.1. Forms of Oppositional Consciousness*

The “equal-rights” form of consciousness, one of the first steps in resisting oppression, occurs when “members of the subordinated group argue that the differences for which they have been assigned inferior status lay in appearance only, not in ‘reality’” (Sandoval, 2000, p. 56). That is, although differences in gender, race, sexuality, sex, and any other identity are real in a physical sense, there is no difference in the humanity between these various identities. Those who fight from an equal-rights platform “argue for civil rights based on the philosophy that all humans are created equally,” and “demand that their humanity be legitimated, recognized as the same under the law, and assimilated into the most favored form of the human-in-power” (Sandoval, 2000, p. 56). This mode of consciousness argues that despite physical difference, we should all be ethically, legally, and politically the same.

On the other hand, the “revolutionary” form of oppositional consciousness “identifies, legitimizes, claims, and intensifies [the] differences” (Sandoval, 2000, p. 56) between the subordinated groups and the dominant groups, and suggests that assimilation into the legal, political, economic, and ethical systems of the dominant groups is not possible. Rather, practitioners of this revolutionary resistance argue for “the categories by which the dominant is ordered [to be] fundamentally restructured” and push for a society that “[functions] beyond all domination/subordination power axes” (Sandoval, 2000, pp. 56–57). Whereas the equal rights ideology asks for equal treatment to the most privileged figure in society, the revolutionary ideology advocates for the destruction of hierarchies that allow a “most privileged figure” in the first place.

Next, in the “supremacist” mode of consciousness, “the oppressed not only *claim* their differences, but they also assert that their differences have provided them access to a higher evolutionary level than that attained by those who hold social power” (Sandoval, 2000, p. 57). Radical groups of various kinds have utilized these tactics aiming “to provide the social order a higher ethical

and moral vision, and consequently more effective leadership” (Sandoval, 2000, p. 57). The supremacist form takes on the claim that not only are there differences between different races, genders, sexualities and sexes (among other identities), but also that the differences of the subordinated in each category mark them as more ethically and morally sound than those of the dominant.

The “separatist” ideology of resistance, then, recognizes that the subordinated “are branded as inferior with respect to the category of the most human,” and thus “is organized...to protect and nurture the differences that define it practitioners [(the subordinated)] through their complete separation from the dominant social order” (Sandoval, 2000, p. 57). So rather than fight for equal inclusion into the dominant system through the equal-rights platform, restructure the dominant system through the revolutionary platform, or take control of the dominant system through the supremacist platform, the separatist platform opts for the removal of the subordinated from the dominant system altogether. Sandoval (2000) notes that concepts like Aztlán, the ancestral home of the Aztec people, and attempts to envision a similar future utopia are examples of the separatist form of oppositional consciousness (p. 57).

Finally, Sandoval (2000) named “the differential form of consciousness and social movement” (p. 58) as the final mode of oppositional consciousness for the resisting subject. This differential mode “enables movement ‘between and among’ ideological positionings (the equal-rights, revolutionary, supremacist, and separatist modes of oppositional consciousness) considered as variables, in order to disclose the distinctions among them” (Sandoval, 2000, p. 58). She compares this mode to a “clutch of an automobile, the mechanism that permits the driver to select, engage, and disengage gears in a system for the transmission of power” (Sandoval, 2000, p. 58). In other words, the differential mode allows the resistor the ability to constantly move and shift between the previous four modes of oppositional consciousness, depending on the most useful mode given a particular context (Sandoval, 2000, p. 60). With this the differential form, any hierarchy amongst the four previous forms becomes obliterated, making them all equally useful tools in struggles to end subordination.

These five forms of oppositional consciousness are named by Sandoval (2000), yet are born out of the work of numerous scholars, particularly women of color. The third spaces mentioned above are created when subjects engage with one, or more, of these ideologies and, through it, produce new visions, imaginations, creations, and locations for a future in which they can exist. It is for this reason that these five forms of oppositional consciousness make up part of my data collecting and analysis protocol (see “Data Collection Methods”). It is my aim to reveal how various zine texts may be situated within each of these ideologies, and to ask when, why and how they choose to engage with them. In

the next section, I will detail various rhetorical and discursive tactics (from Sandoval (2000) as well as a handful of related works) that may be used within the zine texts to take on these forms of oppositional consciousness and to create media third spaces outside rigid identity binaries.

### 5.1.2. *Rhetorical and Discursive Tactics (of Oppositional Consciousness)*

Sandoval (2000) argued that in order to enact the differential oppositional movement (and thus enact the other forms of oppositional consciousness as well), a set of methods, or “technologies” (p. 82), must be employed. Again, the tactics she names are a concentration of the work of many other scholars, a handful of “characteristics that theorists over the [past] fifty years across disciplines have sought to explain and decode” (Sandoval, 2000, p. 82). In the following discussion I will explore these different “technologies,” as well as a few from other authors who have either used Sandoval’s (2000) work specifically in their own, or who have theorized further on the tools used to create third spaces in writing. While Sandoval (2000) didn’t explicitly state that the tactics she discussed are specifically rhetorical or discursive, she analyzed academic writings throughout her work, suggesting that they hold up in the textual realm.

The first methodology of the oppressed is “semiotics,” an idea Sandoval (2000) found in the work of Roland Barthes. Semiotics is a “mode of perception and decipherment” that is based on the premise that “ideology can be perceived, identified, distinguished, and reproduced when necessary” (Sandoval, 2000, p. 91). Ideology, like that of binary thinking, is produced by the repetition of various signs, which can then be read and interpreted through semiotics. Sandoval (2000) suggested that semiotics, or “what Anzaldúa calls ‘*la facultad*,’ or Henry Louis Gates Jr. calls ‘signifin’” (p. 82), allows the practitioner “to identify the culturally produced meaning system that is providing a space for what is a circumscribed and particular subjectivity...to emerge” (p. 96). Once semiotics is practiced and a dominant ideology is seen and interpreted, the second technology, deconstruction, may be employed.

Deconstruction falls right in line with semiotics, and the two may almost happen instantaneously. Whereas semiotics is the reading of signs to name an ideology, deconstruction is a “de-ideologizing and emancipatory form of perception” that “shatters any dominant ideology into [its] constituent parts” (Sandoval, 2000, p. 102). Deconstruction challenges dominant ideologies by exposing it as nothing more than appropriated signs. Sandoval (2000) wrote of semiotics and deconstruction as the “mode of analysis” in which “one willingly perceives [an] image, but then, removing oneself from its system of life, its composition is revealed as a structured appropriation of previous meanings and forms: the life of dominant ideology is thus undone” (p. 104). She also noted,

“social life under subjugation requires the development of this very process of semiotic perception and deconstruction” (Sandoval, 2000, p. 104), as these processes allow the subordinated to at least make sense of their subordination. With these two tactics, and the resulting deconstructed ideology, it is possible to engage with the third technology: “meta-ideologizing.”

Sandoval (2000) defined meta-ideologizing as “the operation of appropriating dominant ideological forms, and using them whole in order to transform them” (p. 83). She noted that this is a crucial tool because it brings outward fruition to the inner processes of semiotics and deconstruction. Sandoval (2000) coined the term meta-ideologizing to reflect how the process undergoes “the *ideologization of ideology* itself” (p. 109). She went on to argue that this practice “serves to either display the original dominant ideology as naive – and no longer natural – or to reveal, transform, or disempower its signification in some other way” (Sandoval, 2000, pp. 109–110). For example, if we think back to West and Zimmerman’s (1987) concept of “doing gender,” it is easy to imagine how we might read particular images and signs (e.g. advertisements) through semiotics and interpret them as reinforcing a gender binary based on rigid gender stereotypes. Then, we might deconstruct the ideology of the gender binary (and masculine supremacy) through various examples (e.g. scientific research, history, and other forms of analysis) that expose its fallacies. Finally, we might meta-ideologize, using the concept of “doing gender” to reveal gender to be performative. Such an example can be seen in drag performances where the drag queens and kings intentionally perform as the “opposite” gender to reveal the fallibility of the binary.

A fourth technology of the oppressed, according to Sandoval (2000), carries the same name as the fifth form of oppositional consciousness: “differential movement.” Whereas the differential form of consciousness allows individuals to move between and through the other forms, the differential movement technology allows its practitioners to not only utilize semiotics, deconstruction, and meta-ideologizing interchangeably, but also makes the movements “in, through, then outside of dominant ideology” (Sandoval, 2000, p. 111) required in meta-ideologizing possible. Differential movement allows the oppressed and subordinated to skirt around dominant ideologies, enter into them when necessary, and come out the other side, hopefully having made a ripple of change on their way through. Sandoval (2000) described differential movement as “a polyform on which the previous technologies depend for their own operation,” noting how “only through differential movement can they be transferred toward their [destination]...[of] centering...identity in the interest of egalitarian social justice” (Sandoval, 2000, p. 83). With differential movement, we

may enact the previous three technologies of the oppressed, guided by the fifth technology: “democratic.”

The final tactic for Sandoval (2000) is “an *ethical* ideological code that is committed to social justice according to egalitarian redistributions of power across such differences coded as race, gender, sex, nation, culture, or class distinctions” (p. 112), or what she calls “democratic.” This tool is straightforward, demanding that the above tools be used in ways to push towards a more just and equitable future. She noted that democratic “permits, drives, and organizes the methodology of the oppressed,” centering its use “with the aim of equalizing power between humans” (Sandoval, 2000, p. 114).

Through her analysis of a handful of texts, Sandoval (2000) distilled this methodology of the oppressed, complete with the fifth tool of democratic. While these five technologies are part of my data collection and analysis protocol (see “Data Collection Methods”), I have also decided to include some other tools from research that either engages in a similar textual analysis to that of Sandoval (2000), or directly cites her work as an influence. The “embedded metatextual narratives” conceptualized by Hays (2017) (see “Zines and Identity (Binaries)”) is an example of an additional tool I wish to add to Sandoval’s (2000) list. While zine authors may certainly use one of the previously named tactics within their embedded narratives, I feel as if the narratives themselves are a worthwhile tool to consider when thinking about how zines reflect a product of oppositional consciousness.

I am also including two tactics developed in Licona’s (2005a; 2005b; 2012) work: “e-motion” and “reverso.” E-motion represents both the literal emotion that zinesters “integrate...into their knowledge claims and practices in order to engage holistically and in coalition for social change” (Licona, 2012, p. 65), and “the motor,” hence the hyphenated word, “that drives an integrated, discursive, and emotional third-space understanding toward coalitional action” (p. 66). Through her zine analysis, Licona (2012) found that e-motion is utilized to aid the zinester’s argument for the need for social change, and to build coalition amongst other zinesters. She also noted how “e-motion interrupts rigid representations of identity that divide the self in ways that are not meaningful” (Licona, 2012, p. 67). It is because of this that I hope to continue finding e-motion to be a tactic in the zines of my study to represent non-binary and third space identities.

Licona’s (2012) concept of “reverso” is something I find very similar to Sandoval’s (2000) meta-ideologizing. However, I have decided to keep both terms separate in my protocol, in hopes of either affirming or denying this suspicion. Licona (2012) wrote that reverso is a “critical [reversal] of the normative (and normalizing as well as often pathologizing) gaze” (p. 70). She

also found that “redefinitions of bodies, beings, desires, and relationships are often the result of the practices of *reverso*, which affects necessary revisionings, including different ways of perceiving and portraying the world for purposes of third-space representation” (Licón, 2012, p. 70). While I believe it is possible to interpret *reverso* as a form of “*ideologization of ideology*” (Sandoval, 2000, p. 109), its “purposes of third-space representation” seem to offer something more directly related to this proposed research, and perhaps something more than what meta-ideologization itself can give.

Finally, I am including three tactics in my protocol originally from Crenshaw (1989) and Muñoz (1999), yet tied together in an intriguing textual analysis by Wallace (2009). Wallace (2009) analyzed Anzaldúa’s (1987) *Borderlands/La Frontera*, and aimed to propose an alternative rhetoric model exhibited in the text based on intersectionality, from Crenshaw (1989), and copresence and disidentification, from Muñoz (1999). I find his analysis compelling in that he argued for the development of an “alternative rhetorics that take as their central task the identification and unseating of inequities” (Wallace, 2009, p. 35). As I hope my zine will engage in this task in their pursuit of non-binary identity representation, I believe the tactics he proposed will be useful for this study.

Intersectionality is perhaps an obvious rhetorical and discursive tactic for third space representation. As “our unique subjectivities cannot be reduced to a single binary identity feature...an intersectional perspective” allows us to see “major features of identity such as gender and race not as mutually exclusive categories but as operating in complex interaction” (Wallace, 2009, p. 21). It is also possible that my sampling strategies (see “Population Selection and Sampling Strategies”) will lead to zine texts that all interact with intersectionality, perhaps making this category less interesting. However, noteworthy findings may still be had in an analysis of when, why and how intersectionality is deployed in the texts.

Finally, copresence and disidentification are two intimately related practices that also blend well with the concept of meta-ideologizing. Muñoz (1999) described copresence as the literal presence of the oppressed with the oppressor, a tactic that allows the interactions and relationships between the two to become visible. While this copresence may be physical, Wallace (2009) noted that it could also be simply:

The act of those of us who have been marginalized claiming the right to redefine the discourse practices...in ways that claim not only a place at the table but call others to question how that table has been constructed and for what purposes it is used. (p. 22)

This means that marginalized individuals (i.e. the zine authors in my study) may rhetorically make themselves “copresent” with their oppressor by claiming the write to discourse on their identities and their marginalization. This is the kind of copresence I will be looking for in the zine texts.

Disidentification, then, is a “mode of dealing with dominant ideology, one that neither opts to assimilate within such a structure nor strictly opposes it; rather, disidentification is a strategy that works on and against dominant ideology” (Muñoz, 1999, p. 13). Wallace (2009) wrote “that the deconstruction of the systems of oppression in American society are dependent on the substantive copresence of the marginalized with their oppressors and on the active disidentification of the discursive practices used to create the underlying marginalization” (p. 22). Similarly, Muñoz (1999) noted that “disidentification is a remaking and rewriting of a dominant script” (p. 23). In this way, disidentification is akin to meta-ideologizing. Again, however, I have chosen to keep the terms separate to explore their nuances within the zine texts.

These eleven rhetorical and discursive tactics (semiotics, deconstruction, meta-ideologizing, differential movement, democratics, embedded metatextual narratives, e-motion, reverso, intersectionality, copresence, and disidentification) come from a large body of literature on the formation of oppositional consciousness and third space sites. Having precoded for these tools in my protocol (see “Data Collection Methods”), I hope my findings reveal patterns, nuances, and even unique outliers in how, when, and to what end the zine texts deploy each specific tactic. In answering these question, it may be possible to discern a comprehensive alternative rhetoric utilized among zine texts to engage with an oppositional consciousness that allows for a third space identity representation outside the restrictions of gender, race, sex, and sexuality binaries.

## ***5.2. Methodologies of the Oppressed in Zines***

Finally, to connect this discussion on third space sites and oppositional consciousness more intimately with zines, I will quickly review how some of the previously cited literature exposes a handful of the aforementioned rhetorical and discursive tactics within the medium. To this end, it may be possible to see why I am hopeful that the technologies established by Sandoval (2000), Licona (2012), Hays (2017), and Wallace (2009) can be found in the zine texts of this proposed research.

An obvious beginning might perhaps be with Licona’s (2005a; 2005b; 2012) work, as she developed the technologies of reverso and e-motion directly from zine texts. Although her essays and book are not empirical, the proposed study could glean significant insights into the universality of reverso and e-



motion in zines. Further, as I mentioned earlier, *reverso* might be best understood as a form of meta-ideologizing (as well as a form of disidentification). Licona (2012) remarked that the practice of “*reverso* implies a critical engagement with dominant cultural mis/re-presentations that have sustained a divisive social order” (p. 71), which is essentially similar to Sandoval’s (2000) “*ideologization of ideology*” (p. 109), and Muñoz’s (1999) “strategy that works on and against dominant ideology” (p. 13). Therefore, this research might further reveal both the similarities between *reverso*, disidentification, and meta-ideologizing, allowing for a consolidation of terms, as well as new and different forms of meta-ideologizing present in the zines.

Licona (2012) also found that “zinesters engage an understanding that spaces and the social interactions that constitute them, and are constructed by them, are imbued with racial meanings and racialized inclusions and exclusions, at once symbolic, historic, and material” (p. 28). This understanding and reading of such spaces and social interactions is similar to the “mode of perception and decipherment” (Sandoval, 2000, p. 91) of semiotics. Moreover, Licona (2012) also noted the “disarticulations and rearticulations,” in zines, “undertaken first to interrupt taken-for-granted connections and then to forge new connections in order to perform and re-present new ways of being” (p. 23). These processes of disarticulation and rearticulation, like *reverso* and *e-motion*, are thus similar to deconstruction (and meta-ideologizing). This is all to say that although Licona (2012) focuses primarily on the technologies of *reverso* and *e-motion*, inklings of various other tools can be found in her work as well.

Hays (2017) also (perhaps unintentionally) revealed other technologies than only her embedded metatextual narratives. For example, in her analysis of the zine *Pinch Kid*, Hays (2017) found that the “ability to incorporate varied textual and visual elements,” a feature of the embedded narratives, allowed the zine author to “[look] at the intersection of gender identity and race” (p. 101). Thus, Hays (2017) found intersectionality to be an important technology in the zines of her study. This finding also shows how the various technologies I am interested in may be related or utilized in tandem with one another. In this case, the embedded metatextual narrative was used to engage with intersectionality. In answering the research questions for this proposed study of how, when, and why the various technologies are used in the zine texts, it’s possible that I might find similar overlap between their uses. Moreover, any pattern in this overlap would be an intriguing finding, particularly in thinking of applying these tactics to more mainstream media practices.

Schilt’s (2003) discussion on zines as a form of resistance for young girls revealed the previously mentioned “*c/overt resistance*,” that is, both covert and overt, “that allows girls to overtly express their anger, confusion, and frustration

publicly to like-minded peers but still remain covert and anonymous” (p. 81). This identification of the strategic use of emotions is the key to e-motion as presented by Licona (2005a; 2005b; 2012). Further, the ability to be simultaneously covert and overt is reminiscent of the differential movement suggested by Sandoval (2000), both in form of oppositional consciousness and in technology. The zine authors in Schilt’s (2003) study deliberately choose to be as anonymous or known as they see fit, reflecting an ability to move between the two forms of resistance (overt and covert) at will. Similarly, differential movement allows its practitioners to move among the different forms of oppositional consciousness named by Sandoval (2000).

Lastly, Atton (2002) provided a handful of case studies in his chapter on zines. In his analysis of *Bamboo Girl*, Atton (2002) found that the author validated her identity “by appropriating repressive elements of her native culture and by providing her with a platform to develop her own identity alongside these” (p. 62). The appropriation falls in line with Sandoval’s (2000) meta-ideologizing and Muñoz’s (1999) disidentification. Further, utilizing the zine as a platform to place the authors identity in context and alongside the “repressive elements” mimics Muñoz’s (1999) concept of copresence, whereby the oppressed claim a part in the conversation with the oppressor. In a similar vein, Atton (2002) later noted that in the act of “embodying one’s own history, experience and opinions within a publication...one is ‘authorizing’ oneself to speak, validating one’s life, making public one’s voice” (p. 67). This is remarkably similar to Wallace’s (2009) description of copresence as “the act of...claiming the right to redefine the discourse practices” (p. 22).

In this section I aimed to provide brief comments on how a handful of the literature on zines, whether in direct relation to the rhetorical tactics I am interested in or not, reveal through their studies and analyses the exact technologies I am looking for. While none of the literature investigates these tools as thoroughly as I hope to, this short discussion is perhaps evidence that the proposed research has much to offer in its pursuits.

## DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

For this proposed research, I am particularly concerned with the zine as a bridge between academic critiques of identity binaries and representational media practices. With this focus, I aim to explore the discursive and rhetorical methods used by zine authors to criticize the binary, to maintain an oppositional consciousness toward binary thinking, and to discourse about their own existence outside of normative identity dichotomies. The main goal of this research is to observe the rhetorical and discursive tactics developed by Sandoval (2000), Licona (2012), Hays (2017), Crenshaw (1989), Muñoz (1999), and Wallace (2009) in my zine sample. Through a qualitative content analysis that addresses when, why, and how the zine texts deploy the various tools, and which “oppositional forms of consciousness” (Sandoval, 2000, p. 62) are taken on by each zine, it may be possible to realize zines as a site of third space, oppositional, non-binary representation. Thus, a secondary goal of this research is to begin thinking about how such rhetorical tactics may be adapted into the realm of mainstream media.

### 1. Overall Approach

As empirical research on zines is a lacuna in communication and media studies, aside from a number of ethnographic studies on zine authors, I will guide my analysis according to the qualitative methodologies proposed by Altheide and Schneider (2013), and Bogdan and Biklen (2007). Altheide and Schneider (2013) described in detail the analysis of newspapers and magazines, which I will follow closely, adapting as necessary for the sampled zine texts. Although there are many differences between zines, magazines and newspapers – in fact, these differences are a primary reason for this study – utilizing the methods for analyzing magazines and newspapers is a suitable approach for this research as the focus is on print media and data versus film and television, rather than the nuances of different print genres.

Bogdan and Biklen (2007), on the other hand, addressed “documents” for qualitative analysis in three categories not particular to medium: “personal documents...produced by individuals for private purposes and limited use”; “official documents...produced by organizational employees for record-keeping and dissemination purposes”; and “popular culture documents...produced for commercial purposes to entertain, persuade, and enlighten the public” (p. 64). In this schema, zines seem to occupy a space (perhaps a third space?) between “personal” and “popular culture” documents, they are often presented in the form of intimate diaries, journals, or letters, yet intended to inform and engage with an audience. Regardless, Bogdan and Biklen (2007) did not thoroughly

differentiate their methods among these document types, so the ambiguous placement of the zine is not a limitation.

Moreover, Bogdan and Biklen (2007) spent some time discussing the theoretical underpinnings of qualitative content analysis and addressed how the frameworks of feminism and critical theory have become embedded in such research. They commented briefly on the “institutional ethnography” form of qualitative research that “connects the macro and micro levels of society...[showing] how issues that many might consider personal problems are actually shaped by the institutions within which one works” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 34) and lives. Although I am not personally focused on the zine authors, but rather their texts, the institutional ethnography is still a critical viewpoint for this proposed research as I aim to observe how the personal, intimate, individual content of zines mirrors larger academic discourses on identity.

Qualitative content analysis will serve as a productive foundation from which to analyze the zine texts for a number of reasons. Primarily, qualitative content analysis allows for an interdisciplinary (or multidisciplinary) approach (Altheide & Schneider, 2013, p. 1). As this research not only lies within communication and media studies, but also in gender, race, feminist, cultural, and writing and rhetoric studies, the proposed methods will allow me to bridge these fields and their associated concepts together in my analysis of the data.

Further, Altheide and Schneider (2013) revealed their method of qualitative content analysis to “blend the traditional notion of *objective content analysis* with *participant observation* to form *ethnographic content analysis*, or how a researcher interacts with documentary materials so that specific statements can be placed in the proper context for analysis” (p. 4). This outlook is of the utmost interest for my study in that I must understand the sampled zines as products of particular contexts and from particular points of view, specifically those of identities I do not have.

Kate Eichhorn (2001) commented on the necessity for such “ethnographic content analysis” in zine research as she recounted the woes of her own project. She noted that “understanding” the zine authors in her study “was not contingent on witnessing their everyday activities, but instead on participating in their lives as they do – in other words, through a shared set of textual and technological practices” (Eichhorn, 2001, p. 577). As someone who has a history with zines and zine making, my prior knowledge will leave me well suited to engage with these texts not only as a researcher, but also as a fellow zine author and reader.

Finally, Goudling (2015) offered an example of how a “constant comparative method” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 73) may be used in a qualitative textual analysis of zine texts. The constant comparative method is utilized to

generate grounded theory, or theory that arises from codes, questions, and categories that come out of the data collection process itself (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, pp. 36, 162). While some of my categories will already be precoded (see “Data Collection Methods”), Goulding’s (2015) work exemplifies how qualitative content analysis is a useful tool in generating findings and theory on broad ideas like “resistance” or “non-binary identities.”

Bogdan and Biklen (2007) emphasize that, in the constant comparative method, the processes of collecting data, looking for patterns, observing uniqueness, and formulating categories and codes “[go] on all at once, and [that] the analysis keeps doubling back to more data collection and more codes” (p. 75). This is an important strategy for my proposed research because the zines I will analyze will be situated very differently from one another, not always talking about the same ideas, or even talking in the same way. Constantly returning to and comparing the data and subsequent codes will allow for the theories on non-binary identity representation I am after to develop.

Further, Charmaz (2006) emphasized that grounded theory in textual analysis not only allows for an understanding of the text itself, but of the document as a whole. She commented on how developing grounded theory “can address form as well as content, audiences as well as authors, and production of the text as well as presentation of it” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 40). As revealed in the literature review, zines prove to be interesting extant texts because of many of their unique characteristics in regards to form, presentation, audience-awareness, and other such factors. Utilizing grounded theory methods like that of the constant comparative method will allow for the inclusion of these features in my understanding of the zine texts.

## 2. Population Selection and Sampling Strategies

The zines in my population must speak directly towards the identity dichotomies of race, gender, sex, and sexuality in some way. I will sample from the population of zines stored in the “Queer Zine Archive Project” (*qzap.org*), an online archive of over 500 zines. By utilizing theoretical sampling (Altheide & Schneider, 2013, pp. 55–60), I will be able to select zines that address the identity dichotomies I am interested in for this research.

To sort through the online archive, I will use the site’s search feature to filter for each of the four identity binaries. In order to obtain an intersectional sample, I will note the zines gathered with each search and then cross-reference my lists, pinpointing the zines that address multiple identity binaries at once. A cursory attempt at such a sampling strategy has revealed the following:

- 20 zines appear in all four searches of identity dichotomies
- 58 zines appear in at least three of the four searches

- 141 zines appear in at least two of the four searches
- 291 zines appear in at least one of the four searches

With this data, I will focus primarily on the zines that met all four of the search criteria (Appendix A). While it is possible that I proceed with only these zines, there may be reasons I wish to include zines that appeared in three searches or fewer. For example, I may wish to include all issues of a particular zine series, or I may want to select all zines by a single author.

### 3. Data Collection Methods

To collect the data from each zine, I will utilize a protocol according to the methods in Altheide and Schneider (2013, pp. 44–50). My drafted protocol (Appendix B) will be tested on several zines and refined as data collection continues. The first six categories in the protocol are simply informative and systematic, giving me an overview of my sample and also allowing me to organize the zines according to a number of factors, such as the date of publication, the identities of the author(s), or the purpose of the zine, which may make patterns in the data more apparent as data collection comes to a close.

The seventh category in the protocol will identify the binaries discussed in each zine. However, if the above sampling strategy is undertaken, all four binaries should be present in the majority of the sample. The eighth and ninth categories are precoded (Altheide & Schneider, 2013, p. 45) to identify the forms of oppositional consciousness (Sandoval, 2000, pp. 55–58) utilized in each zine, as well as the rhetorical and discursive strategies (Crenshaw, 1989; Muñoz, 1999; Sandoval, 2000; Wallace, 2009; Licona, 2012; Hays, 2017) employed throughout (see “Third Spaces and Oppositional Consciousness”). These are perhaps the most important categories in the protocol as they will hopefully reveal the ability for zines to bridge the gap between academic theories of “oppositional consciousness” towards identity binaries and media practices of representation. Extensive attention will be paid to portions of the texts that utilize the precoded modes and tactics. It is this data that will be of primary concern for analysis and comparison, ideally illuminating patterns and further areas of inquiry.

The tenth, eleventh, and twelfth categories speak more directly to the form of the zine, rather than the text specifically. These are important aspects to consider when thinking of the “embedded metatextual narratives” (Hays, 2017; see “Zines and Identity (Binaries)”) that may further reify the rhetorical tactics observed in the eighth and ninth categories. I will consider the images contained within the zines according, again, to Altheide and Schneider (2013, pp. 87–90). These methods allow for a broad approach based heavily on “reflective coding” (Altheide & Schneider, 2013, p. 88) that reveals similarities and differences among the data through careful descriptions and interpretations of the images. I

believe that it is not necessary to precode these form related categories as the rhetorical and discursive methods I utilize in the ninth category are not constrained solely to text.

The remaining categories, then, serve as functional tools to easily access the wealth of data that should result from the data collection process.

#### **4. Data Analysis**

In a continuation of the coding, my data analysis will begin with asking of each zine the research questions. Not only am I concerned with *what* rhetorical and discursive tactics the zine authors utilize to deconstruct identity dichotomies, but also with *how* and *why* they approach each method, utilizing text, images, and the zine form as a whole to create their alternative “third space.” I am also intrigued to note whether my zine sample appears to favor certain tactics over others, as my precoded protocol categories contain codes theorized mainly from academic writing, not zine texts. Further, analyzing the forms of oppositional consciousness deployed throughout my sample, observing the relative distribution of each, and noting any alignment between the form of consciousness and the rhetorical methods used to convey such a form, will be of interest.

This analysis will occur after thorough reading (and rereading) of the zines and refinement of my codes and concepts. I will first look for similarities and differences among the data, then draw connections and attempt to distill these results into concrete findings. I may then wish to pursue additional questions that arise through the collection and analysis process, or to clarify any findings with further analysis.

## LIMITATIONS

While this proposed research seeks to be well rounded and inclusive, there are a handful of limitations that should be considered. First, I am limiting my zine population to those created in the United States. I made this decision based on my background. If we accept that identity binaries are culturally produced, then different cultures will produce unique expressions of each binary. Thus, given my lived experience, I believe I am best equipped to understand the identity binaries as situated in the culture(s) of the United States. With this, I am ignoring zines from other countries. Such an international study of zines would surely produce interesting findings in regards to my research questions, yet it may well be too complicated a project for a doctoral thesis.

Further, in the United States alone, there are still thousands of zines from which to sample. Given the medium's small-scale and ephemeral nature, there are also many zines that, though possibly well suited for this study, will be overlooked in the sampling process, simply due to lack of availability or any kind of consolidated zine record. In my best attempts to remedy this situation, I have opted to sample from the "Queer Zine Archive Project" (*qzap.org*), an online archive that contains over 500 zines. This resource also aids in my ability to sample zines made in the United States while I am conducting the research abroad. However, although the "Queer Zine Archive Project" is one of the largest online collections of zines, it is simultaneously an incomplete and hefty population, making the findings of this study on a small sample of zines hard to attribute to zines and zinesters as a whole.

Moreover, I realize the inherent limitation in my specific focus on the zine text and ignorance of the zine authors themselves. While I am interested in the zine rhetoric, and thus the text itself, there is no doubt that valuable information in answering the questions of when, why and how the individual rhetorical tools I focus on in this study are deployed throughout the zines may be given by the zinesters who wrote them. However, as many zines are created anonymously, under pseudonyms, or with minimal (or now defunct) contact information, interacting with the zine authors proves to be a difficult task, particularly from abroad. In this vein, I also wish to heed Schilt's (2003) precaution that "although zines are public and available as research tools, it is important to remember that [the zine authors] did not expect them to be used in research" (p. 75). With this in mind, I will treat the intimate and personal narratives of zines with care and respect, not merely as data.

In thinking of the data collection and analysis processes, it is also important to realize that the zines stored in the online archive are scanned versions of originally printed material. Although I intend to reprint all the zines of my sample, I will not be able to recreate them in their original versions. Many



zinesters utilize creative binding techniques, colored paper, unique packaging, or any number of other aesthetic decisions in their zines that will be lost in the inevitable scanning and printing of the material. There is no telling how these visual and artistic characteristics, and their absence, may influence my interpretation and understanding of the content. Unfortunately this appears to be a limitation with no easy fix.

Additionally, a series of pilot runs using my drafted protocol may have been helpful in not only revising and fine-tuning the data collection process, but also in proving the applicability of the rhetorical and discursive tactics I have opted to study. While I did not have time for such review prior to the submission of this proposal, I intend to undergo this process at the beginning of my doctorate studies.

Finally, I would like to share some personal thoughts and apprehensions I have with the theoretical foundation for this proposed research, specifically the use of third space and, to a lesser extent, borderlands theory. While the “third space” is often utilized in the singular form, it should be noted that it is multitudinous in its potential locations, just as Anzaldúa’s (1987) concept of the borderlands does not necessarily need to be limited to the physical borderland between the United States and Mexico. That being said, I wish to remain cautious, in both this proposal and in the proposed research, of extending such concepts like the “third space” and “borderlands” outside of their original uses.

Heyman (1994) critiqued the anthropological use of the borderlands concept, noting how “we need to locate some of the bitter realities of border life...rather than simply use the life of the border as intellectual fodder” (p. 46). Vila (2003) similarly suggested that “for those doing border studies from the Mexican side of the line, it is difficult to see the border as a mere metaphor,” and that “it is one thing to write about the metaphor, but quite another to cross it (and wait on the bridge for at least 1 hr) daily” (pp. 609–610). Similarly, conceptions of the third space largely evolved from third world contexts (e.g. Bhabha, 1994), yet are now used in the literature as a disconnected theoretical framework.

With these comments in mind, and realizing that I am a white American man (perhaps the epitome of the colonizer), I must tread these waters carefully in my research. I realize that even in this proposal, I have spoken of the third spaces and borderlands as fertile ground for new and exciting identities and cultures, yet I have barely addressed the true hardships of residing in these outsider spaces. Many of these hardships exist due to identity binary systems, and the dominance of one group over another, a dominance belonging to many of my identities. Because of this, I do not wish to pretend as if I have “discovered” these particular rhetorical and discursive tools and their usefulness for non-binary,

third space representation. Rather I hope to showcase the work done by others, by those who often inhabit both theoretical *and* physical borderlands and third spaces. In this exploration, we may see not only these individuals, who through oppression still managed to carve out the spaces for their identities, but also how those of us in dominant identity positions must work towards decolonization, dismantling hierarchies, and addressing privileges before we may seriously begin to think about how third spaces may be locations of liberation for us all.

**SCHEDULE**

Project Proposal								
Task	Year 1			Year 2			Year 3	
	Sep. - Dec., 2018	Jan. - July, 2019	Aug. - Oct., 2019	Sep. - Dec., 2019	Jan. - July, 2020	Aug. - Oct., 2020	Sep. - Dec., 2020	Jan. - July, 2021
<b>Full Proposal</b> - Writing - Key Concepts								
<b>Reading Period</b> - Literature Review - Previous Research								
<b>Methodology</b> - Finalization - Pilot Analysis - Refinement								
<b>Data Gathering</b> - Sampling - Data Collection								
<b>Data Analysis</b> - Examination - Content Analysis								
<b>Dissertation</b> - Organize Findings - Writing								
<b>Revision</b> - Finalization - Submission								

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**APPENDICES****Appendix A***Potential Zine Sample*

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**Appendix B***Draft Protocol*

1. Publication Title
2. Date of Publication
3. Length of Publication
4. Author(s) of Publication
5. Identity of the Author(s)
6. Purpose/Theme of the Zine:
  - Music Zine
  - Political Zine
  - Perzine (Personal Zine)
  - Other
7. Binary/Dichotomy:
  - Sex
  - Sexuality
  - Gender
  - Race
8. Form(s) of Oppositional Consciousness:
  - Equal Rights
  - Revolutionary
  - Supremacist
  - Separatist
  - Differential
9. Rhetorical and Discursive Tactics:
  - Semiotics
  - Deconstruction
  - Meta-Ideologizing
  - Democratics
  - Differential Movement
  - Embedded Metatextual Narratives
  - E-motion
  - Reverso
  - Disidentification
  - Copresence
  - Intersectionality
10. Form of the Text:
  - Printed
  - Handwritten
  - Clipped (from multiple sources)
  - Altered

Combination

11. Text Sources

12. Image Descriptions

13. Summary

Research Notes