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BEYOND BEHAVIORS, NEEDS, AND SEEKING: A QUALITATIVE
INVESTIGATION OF INFORMATION PRACTICES AMONG INDIVIDUALS
WITH LGBTQ+ IDENTITIES

By

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Beyond behaviors, needs, and seeking: A qualitative investigation of information practices
among individuals with LGBTQ+ identities

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This dissertation examines the information practices of individuals identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and/or queer (LGBTQ+). It responds to two significant problems in current Library and Information Science (LIS) studies examining these populations. First, there exist a paucity of research studying how these individuals act toward and interact with information related to their LGBTQ+ identities. Second, extant research focuses on almost exclusively on gay and lesbian sexualities, imposing a liminal, psychological model of identity development on these actions and interactions. This imposition results in a myopic view of the unique issues, concerns, barriers, and achievements of individuals with LGBTQ+ identities, often imposed by those outside these identities.

To address these problems, this dissertation adopts a constructionist methodology, which envisions individuals as theorists within their own information worlds. A qualitative research design consisting of inductive and deductive data collection and analysis supports this methodology. Findings are triangulated by comparison between two data sources – semi-structured interviews with 30 individuals identifying as LGBTQ+ between the ages of 18 and

38, and web scraping of Question-Best Answer pairs from the LGBT thread of Yahoo! Answers. Both data sources capture participant accounts of how their information practices are shaped by sociocultural context and individual agency, as well as how online technologies, namely social media sites and search engines, afford and constrain these information practices.

Key findings advance an information practices approach, which purports the importance of sociocultural context in shaping how individuals act toward and interact with information. Employing this approach uncovers a litany of practices important to individuals with LGBTQ+ identities beyond needs, seeking, and use. Instead, practices encompass the gamut of human experience, whether such experience is produced by intersubjective understanding, or garnered by an individual's responses to such understanding. Nor can information be considered as formal, recorded sources, passively consumed. Rather, participants' preferred information sources are often unsanctioned, embodied, and emotional. Participants want to know what it is like to adopt an identity, fraught with visibility and questions of what constitutes authentic practice. They value information to address this need derived from their own embodied knowledge as well as from those with similar knowledge. Further, many participants need to address these desires and values within information landscapes that visibly disrupt or deny the legitimacy of their existences. Thus, envisioning a resource, such as a book as instrumental to one's LGBTQ+ identity development only holds if supported by an individual's sociocultural context. For these reasons, this research introduces a new lens via its conceptual framework from which to interrogate the assumptions of past research and integrate a sociocultural perspective to both information and how individuals, seek, share, use, avoid, mistrust, etcetera, information.

In terms of online technologies, research findings denote the importance of search engines and social media sites to participants when engaging in information practices related

to their LGBTQ+ identities. Key affordances of online technologies include connecting participants to similar others, allowing participants to engage in embodied practices, accessing sources that do not go through formal channels of peer production, and facilitating participants' control of what they share about their LGBTQ+ identities and to whom. Key constraints of online technologies include lacking moderation-based features, making visible strategies that erase or stigmatize LGBTQ+ identities, packaging LGBTQ+ identities into monolithic metanarratives, enforcing norms related to authenticity, and collapsing participants' contexts. Whether these technologies represent an affordance or constraint is influenced by how a participant roots them within their own meanings and notions of relevancy. Therefore, online technologies do not provide deterministically good or bad outcomes for individuals with LGBTQ+ identities, but rather these outcomes are shaped by individual experience, sociocultural context, and the material properties of the technologies themselves.

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INTRODUCTION

Consider the following three scenarios. In the first, interview participant Jamie,¹ assigned at birth and socialized as female, created a social media profile using male pictures to express masculinity and be recognized by others as male. Due in part to this embodied knowledge, Jamie now identifies as male. In the second scenario, interview participant Eva, a feminine presenting, or femme, lesbian, was told by other lesbians in her social group to have romantic relationships with women presenting as masculine despite her attraction to other femmes. Since Eva derived most opportunities for socialization with lesbians from this group, she had to seek out other information sources, such as online dating sites, to find a romantic partner. In the third scenario, a social media participant posted a question to Yahoo! Answers asking how to minimize the appearance of their² breasts by binding them using materials from home to hide this binding from their parents. According to the participant, the denoted “Best” Answer links to an online resource created by a transgender man, with “useful, non-judgmental information”³ on everyday life situations experienced by individuals with transgender identities, such as binding, medical information, and romantic relationships. These scenarios were taken from participant accounts comprising two data sources: a) interviews with *individuals with LGBTQ+⁴ identities⁵* between the ages of 18 and 38, and b) data collected from questions and answers shared on the LGBT thread of the social media site Yahoo! Answers.⁶

1. All names are pseudonyms.

2. Third person pronouns are used when one’s gender identity is unknown.

3. See <http://www.ftmguide.org/aboutHUDSON.html>.

4. This descriptor is popularly abbreviated as LGBT, LGBTQ, or LGBTQIA (among other variations including the labels lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex, and/or asexual, among others. Yet labels are problematic both theoretically (Gamson, 1995) and for participants. For this reason, LGBTQ+ is used as shorthand to reflect labels most often used by participants, as well as to recognize the inability of labels to holistically capture all identity expressions.

5. See **Appendix A: Glossary** for a Glossary of all italicized terms.

6. See <https://answers.yahoo.com/>.

Each scenario consists of *information practices*, or “an array of information-related activities and skills” (Lloyd, 2012, p. 285) that reflect “shared particular understandings” (Schatzki, 2001a, p. 3). Examples include Jamie’s embodiment, Eva’s active seeking, and the secrecy of the participant asking a question on Yahoo! Answers. Information practices are inextricable from *identity*, which represents a set of characteristics or affinities (“Identity,” n.d.; Haraway, 1990, p. 197) that determine how individuals are treated. In all scenarios, participants’ information practices responded to to the *stigmatization* of their identities, or the presence of “an attribute that is deeply discrediting” (Goffman, 1963, p. 13) in comparison to normative identity expectations of what an individual “ought to be” (p. 12) in each situation. Both Jamie and the Yahoo! Answer asker’s stigmatized identities are relative to larger cultural expectations, whereas participant Eva’s stigmatized identity, as indicated by her preference for other femmes, is relative to her social group. Social groups and cultures to which participants belong instantiate these expectations through the establishment of *strategies*, such as assigning stigma, which define the boundaries of acceptable practices (de Certeau, 1984, p. 51-55). Strategies materialize within *places*, which disseminate strategies from a specific location with infrastructure such as libraries (p. 124). Individuals who practice within these places transform them into *spaces* (p. 124) where they may engage in *tactics*, or “poaching” (p. xii) of strategies. Jamie’s use of social media sites to upend traditional, corporeal expectations of masculinity represents a tactical information practice. Strategies exercised by dominant cultures and social groups and supported by places, combined with the tactics employed by individuals to create spaces produce a *context*. A context consists of the interaction between individuals and conditions (e.g., structures, reality, information) created by practices within a given point in time-space. In turn, context shapes practices.

The field of Library and Information Science (LIS) concerns itself with the research and practical aspects of helping individuals achieve information-related goals. The sub-field of Human Information Behavior (HIB) examines actions individuals take to achieve these goals. These three mentioned scenarios would be applicable to HIB studies that position individuals and groups with marginalized, vulnerable, disenfranchised, etcetera, identities as facing constraints to such achievement. Current theoretical lenses envision these constraints as arising from obstacles to access, which are predominately physical or intellectual in nature (Burnett, Jaeger, & Thompson 2005). For instance, the application of these lenses would conclude that either participant Jamie lacks physical access to information sources facilitating masculine identity expression, or these sources exist, but Jamie does not know how to locate or use them. Yet these lenses prove inadequate to interpret Jamie's account. While Jamie could not express masculinity in physical places, such as at school, he identified virtual spaces available to him. Further, he did not note any intellectual issues obviating his engagement in virtual spaces. In Jamie's situation, achieving masculine identity expression cannot be condensed to an issue of access in a physically, intellectually, or technologically (for that matter) deterministic sense. Instead, Jamie's cultural and social group memberships shaped what practices he perceived as available at a certain point in time-space (Dervin, 2003, p. 127, scenario 9). Unlike extant research in HIB, Jamie's scenario indicates the importance of social group and cultural context in mediating a host of information practices beyond access.

This dissertation addresses this myopia of extant LIS research by focusing on practices rather than behaviors (Savolainen, 2007), specifically examining how practices both produce and are produced by context. Dervin envisions context as representing "a quest that demands extraordinary tolerance of chaos" (2003, p. 112). Contextualism, or approaches to context, articulate the relationship between humans and worlds. This relationship varies based on one's

methodology, or theoretical approach to the analysis of methods (p. 126), in determining how context is defined and examined as a phenomenon. Dervin (2003) offers various scenarios of how context can be methodologically articulated. This dissertation envisions reality, persons, structures, and information as produced by practices that characterize a context; in turn, context shapes practices (Dervin's 9th scenario, p. 127, scenario 9). Thus, neither humans nor worlds are determined or determining. Instead, the relationships between them is recursive – humans constitute their worlds and are simultaneously constituted by them (p. 114).

This work focuses on how the information practices of individuals with LGBTQ+ identities are constituted by practices and context when individuals are fulfilling information goals related to their identities. The first two chapters outline this research by providing contextual information, articulating theoretical goals, and contending research significance, in the first chapter. The second chapter then provides a literature review, overviews applicable theoretical frameworks, and summarizes findings from a pilot study. Based on these identified gaps, challenges, and implications, the dissertation's conceptual framework is then described and germinant research questions are posed.

CHAPTER 1

Context, Research Goals and Problems Addressed, Significance**Context**

Within the US, certain LGBTQ+ identities are ostensibly accepted. At the demographic level, a record number of more than 10 million individuals identify as LGBTQ+ (4% of the population in 2017, a 117% increase from 2012).¹ Same-sex marriage was legalized in 2015² with polling data denoting public approval as between 55³ and 61%.⁴ At the cultural level, being queer is en vogue. Fashion trends started by queer people like the undercut have been adopted within the mainstream⁵ and 1980s drag ball vernacular such as “yas,” “shade,” and “reading” have experienced a revival in popular culture.⁶ Celebrities have started to identify as queer in both their sexual preferences and dress.⁷ A transgender woman of color, Laverne Cox, was featured on the cover of *TIME* magazine in 2014,⁸ the movie *Moonlight*, featuring a queer black male protagonist, won the Best Picture Oscar in 2017,⁹ and the Showtime television series *Billions* introduced the first gender non-binary character on television.¹⁰

Equating such progress with the notion that all relevant issues have been solved masks many of the extant problems experienced by individuals with LGBTQ+ identities. Such

1. See <http://www.gallup.com/poll/201731/lgbt-identification-rises.aspx>.

2. See https://www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/14pdf/14-556_3204.pdf.

3. See <http://www.pewforum.org/2016/05/12/changing-attitudes-on-gay-marriage/>.

4. See <http://www.gallup.com/poll/191645/americans-support-gay-marriage-remains-high.aspx>.

5. See <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/12/31/opinion/sunday/hipsters-broke-my-gaydar.html>.

6. See http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/heres-the-real-origin-of-the-word-yas_us_578ce747e4b0fa896c3f4306.

7. See https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/can-straight-people-be-queer-435.

8. See <http://time.com/135480/transgender-tipping-point/>.

9. See <http://oscar.go.com/news/winners/moonlight-wins-3-oscars-including-2017-best-picture>.

10. See <http://www.vulture.com/2017/02/asia-kate-dillon-billions-non-binary-gender-identity.html>.

individuals lack federal protections for discrimination,¹¹ signifying that even couples who desire monogamy and marriage must navigate differing state laws where wearing a wedding ring may precipitate getting fired from their jobs. Considering the results of the 2016 US election, the possibility for federal protections soon is not likely. The agenda related to individuals with LGBTQ+ identities being pushed by a cabinet known for their anti-LGBTQ+ stances¹² may only serve to further marginalize, particularly those most underrepresented. A taste of what is to come is exemplified by the president rescinding protections for transgender students to use the bathroom corresponding to their gender identity¹³ and the Supreme Court sending a case that would test this ruling back to the lower court.¹⁴

Both federal and cultural recognition of those identifying within the LGBTQ+ umbrella who do not identify as monogamous, cisgender, white, gay, and/or lesbian remains diminished. In the year 2015, there was a 20% increase in the number of homicides of individuals identifying as LGBTQ+. Such homicides disproportionately affect people of color (62%) and transgender individuals, specifically women of color (54%).¹⁵ As of March 2017, seven transgender women of color have been killed at a rate on track to overtake 2016 as the deadliest year on record for this group.¹⁶ The variability of social and cultural recognition for individuals who identify as LGBTQ+ was exemplified by interview participant accounts. As

11. See <https://www.aclu.org/map/non-discrimination-laws-state-state-information-map>.

12. See <https://www.bostonglobe.com/opinion/2016/12/15/trump-cabinet-who-who-homophobia/9UDr8MnXIQAxjO369qzT0J/story.html>.

13. See <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/22/us/politics/devos-sessions-transgender-students-rights.html>.

14. See <http://www.cnn.com/2017/03/06/politics/gavin-grimm-transgender-case-supreme-court/>.

15. See <http://avp.org/resources/avp-resources/520-2015-report-on-lesbian-gay-bisexual-transgender-queer-and-hiv-affected-hate-violence>.

16. See <http://www.glaad.org/blog/glaad-calls-increased-and-accurate-media-coverage-transgender-murders>.

participant Sage states: “It means jack shit that you can get married if you’re going to get shot on your way home.”

Despite the common rhetoric of “it gets better,”¹⁷ individuals with LGBTQ+ identities continue to experience significant hardships. They are more likely to be socioeconomically disadvantaged,¹⁸ incarcerated,¹⁹ have substance abuse and mental health issues,²⁰ and commit suicide.²¹ Individuals with LGBTQ+ identities are not only targeted for violence in the physical world, but also by the mainstream media. Since lesbian and bisexual characters have been introduced in TV shows, 95 of the total 383 characters (25%) have been killed off as of March 2016.²² This lack of visibility carries over to LGBTQ+ media where straight, white, cisgender men are featured more on magazine covers than individuals with LGBTQ+ identities.²³ One of the arguably most popular current television series to feature a female transgender protagonist cast a cisgender man in the role.²⁴ Therefore, it matters less that LGBTQ+ identities are visible and more which identities are visible and how they are visible.

Considering this information, which admittedly only scrapes the surface of the unique challenges faced by individuals with LGBTQ+ identities, is it surprising that the actor cast in

17. See <http://www.itgetsbetter.org/>.

18. See <http://www.apa.org/pi/ses/resources/publications/lgbt.aspx>.

19. See <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-lgbt-incarceration-usa-idUSKBN14C1ZI>.

20. See <https://www.samhsa.gov/data/sites/default/files/NSDUH-SexualOrientation-2015/NSDUH-SexualOrientation-2015/NSDUH-SexualOrientation-2015.htm>; <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/the-truth-about-exercise-addiction/201612/why-transgender-people-experience-more-mental-health>; <http://highline.huffingtonpost.com/articles/en/gay-loneliness/>.

21. See <http://www.thetrevorproject.org/pages/facts-about-suicide>.

22. See <https://www.autostraddle.com/autostraddles-ultimate-infographic-guide-to-dead-lesbian-tv-characters-332920/>.

23. See <http://fusion.net/story/286099/mykki-blanco-gay-media-so-white-magazine-covers/>.

24. See <http://www.vanityfair.com/hollywood/2016/09/emmys-transparent-jeffrey-tambor-cis-trans-actors>.

Billions did not apply the label “non-binary” to themselves until seeing it on a script? Per an interview with the actor, Asia Kate Dillon, who plays Taylor on *Billions*:

When I saw the breakdown for the character, it said “female, non-binary.” And I thought, “Interesting, I think I know about those words, but let me do research into every aspect of this character and their world and who they are.” And so, female meaning sex and non-binary meaning a gender identity that is an umbrella term for people who identify as neither man nor a woman. I just went, *oh my gosh*, there is language to express something about myself that I’ve always known, but could never put words to. I mean, it really helped. It’s interesting: As much visibility as Taylor is giving to the non-binary community now that *Billions* is on the air, Taylor gave that visibility and hope to me first.²⁵

Asia’s account signifies an information problem experienced by individuals with LGBTQ+ identities, which is that words like “non-binary” might be accessible to them, but not applied. Some of the reason for this lack of application stems from the inequalities that individuals with LGBTQ+ identities continue to face. In the current information landscape for these individuals, they might be able to see themselves, but do not have the language to describe what they see.

Research Goals and Problems Addressed

This research accomplishes an interrelated series of theoretical goals and practical applications. One theoretical goal is to shift from the HIB lens traditionally used for this type of inquiry to an information practices lens. In this dissertation, an information practices lens is envisioned as conceptually distinct from an HIB lens, given both employ separate metatheoretical epistemologies and methodological approaches. These approaches affect how each frames context. An HIB lens defines context as a series of variables that yield predictive effects on behavior (see Dervin, 2003, p. 127, scenarios 5 through 8; see also Talja, Keso, & Pietila, 1999), while an information practices lens defines context as producing and produced by practices

25. See: <http://www.vulture.com/2017/02/asia-kate-dillon-billions-non-binary-gender-identity.html>.

(see **Information Practices** section for a comparison of behaviors and practices). Practices represent enactments of interactions between persons, structures, realities, and information within a given moment in time-space (Dervin, 2003, p. 127, scenario 9). This latter methodological framing of context proves salient for the study of individuals with LGBTQ+ identities given the social and cultural strategies that shape their resultant information practices.

This research addresses another theoretical goal: the contention that power shapes information practices. Power is used in the Foucauldian sense; it does not represent a resource wielded within a specific moment, but rather is pervasive, subject to constant flux and negotiation. Power is agentless and structureless, neither positive nor negative. Rather, power is embedded in everyday practices (Foucault, 1978). Therefore, power can both be used to oppress and as a form of resistance. Adopting such a position posits that individuals are not helpless, either cognitively or culturally, when achieving information-related goals (de Certeau, 1984).

A third theoretical goal is to examine how individuals with LGBTQ+ identities engage in information practices using technologies.²⁶ While technologies such as the internet provide tactical affordances, e.g., anonymity, they also impart dominant social and cultural strategies (see Napoli, 2014) that dissuade individuals with names not recognized as “real,” such as drag performers, from maintaining a profile (see Lingel & Golub, 2015), or, as evinced by interview

26. One may draw an analytical distinction between technology as an artifact and technology as use (Orlikowski, 2000, p. 408). Per the former, technology is conceived of as an assemblage of materials socially, politically, culturally, and economically organized in time-space (Dervin, 2003, p. 127, scenario 9). This assemblage proves analogous to a place. While technological use is shaped by this assemblage, namely its *affordances* and *constraints*, this assemblage does not determine use. Rather, individuals draw on technological assemblages, as well as their own knowledge, experiences, meanings, and habits to enact technological use. This use constitutes a structure, or rules and resources, which shapes future use (Orlikowski, 2000). Yet individuals can also modify this structure by changing their use of technology over time. Thus, the relationship between technology and individuals is not one of determinism or reproduction, but rather is negotiated based on context.

participant accounts, a search engine that provides links for pornographic sites when using the keyword “lesbian.” Given that current LIS research of marginalized, vulnerable, or otherwise disenfranchised groups tends to treat the technology as deterministic (see Haider & Bawden, 2006, 2007), this study instead frames it an actor (see below **Conceptual Framework** section) that affords and constrains information practices.

Significance

This research has theoretical, methodological, and practical significance. Theoretically, this research integrates sociocultural context into LIS studies of marginalized, vulnerable, or otherwise disenfranchised groups. Extant research often conceives of a marginalized identity as an objective, demographic variable, e.g., class, which presents a barrier to achieving information-related goals presumed as shared. This research contends that individuals and groups do not exist in an objective world, but rather operate within variegated *information landscapes* (Lloyd, 2012, p. 773), where “modalities of information ... that people draw upon in the performance of their practices in working or everyday life ... constitute the *intersubjective* agreement that informs our *situated* realities” (p. 773, emphasis added). “Intersubjective” signifies that information modalities – and it is argued in this dissertation – practices, are constantly negotiated among interactants. “Situated” denotes that individuals and groups belong to different realities, or sites, in which these negotiations occur. Individuals and groups thus have multifaceted goals, as well as appropriate practices and modalities to address them, which transcend a specific worldview. Given this observation, this dissertation refutes the argument that information problems related to an LGBTQ+ identity cannot be addressed by an ostensibly objective “corrective,” e.g., a library providing loaner laptops. To make this refutation, this dissertation applies and extends theoretical and metatheoretical approaches not typically brought to bear in LIS research and theory, including practice theory, stigma theory,

and sociomateriality, to capture the intersubjective and situated nature of the information landscapes (Lloyd, 2012, p. 773) in which individuals reside.

From a methodological standpoint, collection of naturally occurring data from the LGBT thread of Yahoo! Answers, as well as the use of semi-structured interviews captured by the critical incident technique (CIT) (Flanagan, 1954) and “Total Time Line” (Dervin, 1983) demonstrate how individuals conceptualize their information practices. The researcher iteratively uses emic/etic coding (see **Appendix F: Final Codebook** for full coding scheme) to identify the types of practices that produce certain contexts and how these contexts shape information practices. This choice of coding method not only introduces theoretical approaches not previously used, or sparingly employed, but also engages with practice as an emerging “umbrella concept” (Savolainen, 2007, p. 109) within LIS (see below **Information Practices** section).

From a practical standpoint, rather than typifying information practices (see McKenzie, 2003a, 2003b), this study adopts a constructionist approach that allows participants to define these practices for themselves, providing rich data to extend extant typologies. This research also examines how technological actors reflect and (re)produce existing strategies, as well as engender tactics, both of which will inform information services and system design.

Some participant characteristics captured in this dissertation are not often represented in existing work. Information sources not granted significant visibility in the literature, e.g., pornography, may emerge and this study legitimates them within the lived experiences of participants. Purposive sampling identifies participants with LGBTQ+ identities less dominant in the literature, e.g., queer, transgender. Many participants do not use libraries to engage in information practices related to their LGBTQ+ identities. Thus, this research conceives of the potential for “the library in the life of the user” as informed by participant

accounts, rather than expecting library use and, therefore, myopically addressing “the user in the life of the library” (Zweizig, 1973; Zweizig & Dervin, 1977).

Conclusion

This chapter provided an overview of the research, including problems addressed, goals, and significance. In sum, this dissertation examines the information practices of individuals with LGBTQ+ identities. “Practices” is used in lieu of “behaviors” to denote the importance of sociocultural context in shaping the relationship between individuals and information. This research is conducted within a Western context, where certain LGBTQ+ identities have become ostensibly accepted at the cultural level over time. When delving beneath this surface acceptance, however, one finds that elements of LGBTQ+ identities remain hidden, e.g., the language to describe them, and that certain identities are subject to negative sociocultural consequences, including stigmatization and violence.

The goal of this research is to explore how participants practice information considering these contextual barriers, as well as how sociocultural context may be identity-affirming. Participant data are collected from two sources – interviews and Question-Best Answer pairs from the LGBT thread of Yahoo Answers. Research findings have theoretical, methodological, and practical significance in extending knowledge of information practices as a salient umbrella concept (see Savolainen, 2007), as well as contributing empirical insights to the LIS field’s understanding of the unique challenges and accomplishments of individuals with LGBTQ+ identities when seeking, sharing, avoiding, etcetera, information.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review, Conceptual Framework, Pilot Study Findings, and Research Questions

Introduction

This section overviews extant literature pertaining to the research area of this dissertation, including inherent gaps and challenges. The conceptual framework used for this research is then outlined with a focus on how it addresses these gaps and challenges. This framework has been subject to empirical testing and improvement, specifically from pilot study findings (see **Pilot Study Findings, and Research Questions** section). Finally, key findings and a discussion of how they informed development of the conceptual framework are examined.

Literature Review

The research areas indicated by **Figure 1** inform this study. Information practices represent an emergent research area and the boundaries between Human Information Behavior (HIB) and, as indicated by the dotted lines in the diagram, Information Practices are proposed to be contested and mutable. For these reasons, research within both areas are examined. The literature review does not examine LIS areas outside of HIB and information practices pertaining to LGBTQ+ identities, such as collection development (for recent examples, see Greenblatt, 2010; Downey, 2013; Jardine, 2013; Cart & Jenkins, 2015; Bosman, 2016), archival practices (for recent examples, see Rawson, 2009; Barriault, 2009; Greenblatt, 2010; Kumbler, 2014; Wexelbaum, 2014; Piemer, 2015; Cifor, 2016), and knowledge organization (for recent examples, see Keilty, 2009; Greenblatt, 2010; Johnson, 2010; Roberto, 2011; Drabinski, 2013; Adler, forthcoming). It does, however, address how these areas impact information practices and their inherent strategic discourse. For instance, Library of Congress Subject Headings

(LCSH) are considered in relation to the information practices they shape, such as searching for LGBTQ+ book titles online and bringing this list to the library due to gaps in LCSH for LGBTQ+ identities (Rothbauer, 2004). Another LIS area explored is research on Social Question-answering (SQA) sites, given these sites comprise one source for data collection. A related area outside of LIS in Computer Science (CS) also examines these sites, but refers to them as community Question-Answering (CQA) sites. Also outside LIS, the literature review covers work in the field of Science and Technology Studies (STS), which is a related, cross-disciplinary concept that contains studies examining the information practices of individuals with LGBTQ+ identities on the internet. **Figure 1** depicts these literature review areas.

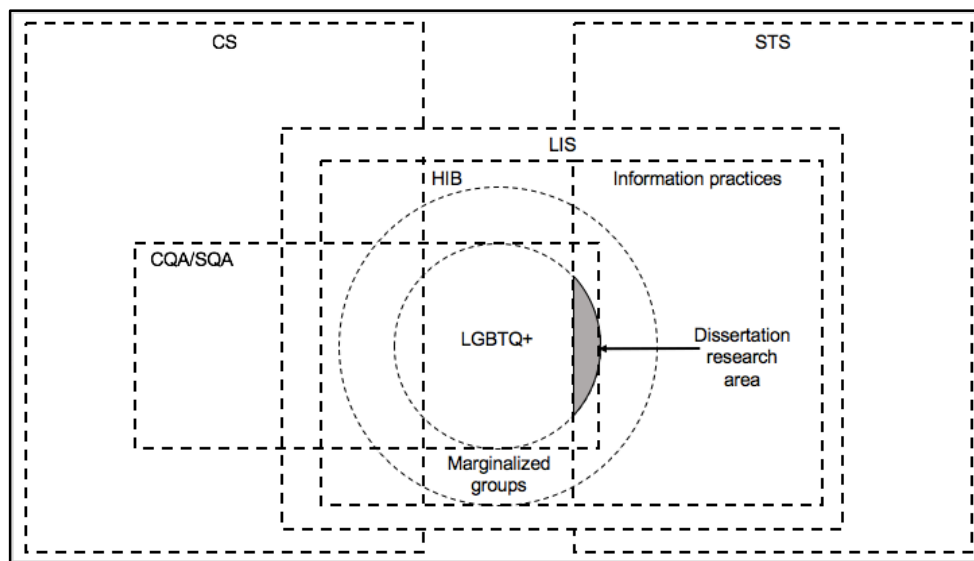


Figure 1: Mapping the Proposed Research Areas.

Information Practices

Information practices represent an emerging “umbrella concept” within LIS (Savolainen, 2007, p. 109). Unlike information behaviors, which denote a cognitivist conception of needs and motivations that drive actions such as information-seeking, information practices signify

constructivist and constructionist¹ perspectives where people's relationships to information are constructed based on their memberships to larger cultures and social groups (Savolainen, 2007, p. 126). Practices constitute routine behaviors shaped by these forces. They are banal ways that individuals "make do" within everyday life (de Certeau, 1984, p. xiv) and provide a lens through which to see the world. An information practice approach has yet to articulate a solid theoretical lens with most in-depth efforts made by Savolainen (1995, 2008), McKenzie (2003a, 2003b), and Lloyd (2005, 2006, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013).

In the introduction of his everyday life information seeking (ELIS) theory, Savolainen (1995, p. 259) describes how individuals strive to achieve a "mastery of life," or the ability to get through day-to-day routines and "keep things in order" by performing quotidian routines. Achieving this mastery depends on maintaining subjective coherence to individual cognition and affect, and objective coherence to social structures. Savolainen (1995) employs these two forms of coherence to describe how ELIS differs by class, finding that differences in how each class group perceived mastery predicated variations in information seeking behaviors² and sources consulted. This work purported the importance of underlying structures, both social and individualistic, in shaping information practices.

Savolainen (2008) furthered the development of information practices by employing a social phenomenological viewpoint from which to explore them. He divides information practices into three modes – seeking, sharing, and use. He illustrates each mode via analysis

1. Although closely related and sometimes used interchangeably, social constructivism relates to how an individual learns based on their memberships to social groups and cultures, while social constructionism examines the artifacts produced from these interactions (see Talja, Tuominen, & Savolainen, 2005, who refer to "constructivism" as "collectivism"). Since this research will examine how practices, strategies, tactics, spaces, places, affordances, and constraints are materially produced, a constructionist approach is most appropriate.

2. Given that information practices represent a nascent concept in LIS, the word "practices" will not be applied to HIB literature unless used by the author(s).

through interviews with 20 environmental activists and 18 unemployed people. Interviews use the Critical Incident Technique (CIT) (Flanagan, 1954) and information source horizons (Savolainen & Kari, 2007) the latter a combination of information horizons (Sonnenwald, 1999; Sonnenwald, Widemuth, Harmon, 2001) and zones of relevance (Schütz, 1946). Findings delimit specific elements of sociocultural context shaping these three modes of practice. Specifically, Savolainen (2008) finds that education and income differences account for variations of information seeking practices among groups studied; media credibility, cognitive authority, and information overload shape information use; and social networks contribute to information sharing practices. Later work by Savolainen enriches his treatment of information practices by demonstrating how they are shaped by virtual contexts, such as online gaming, in which the value of information may be immaterial, e.g., digital currency (Harviainen & Savolainen, 2014). Although critiqued for employing practices as a synonym for habitual behaviors (see Wilson, 2008, who envisions practices as a subset of behaviors), Savolainen (2008) advances the relationship between sociocultural context and the ways people “deal with information” (Savolainen, 2007, p. 126) to capture practices other than seeking, shaped by factors outside of internal needs and motivations.

Informed by Savolainen’s (1995) work, McKenzie (2003a, 2003b) provides a typology of information practices based on a constructionist discourse analysis of interviews with pregnant women. A key contribution of this work highlights the importance of non-active information practices, such as passively scanning or being informed; such practices represent the intersection between information and communication practices (McKenzie, 2003a, 2003b). This intersection plays an important role in this research study, given that stigma as an analytical tool examines how individuals communicate information about themselves to others.

Like Savolainen (1995) and McKenzie (2003a, 2003b), Lloyd (2005, 2006, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013) argues that practices are shaped by sociocultural context. Based on findings from information literacy studies of groups including firefighters (Lloyd, 2006), renal care nurses (Bonner & Lloyd, 2011), and refugees (Kennan et al., 2011; Lloyd et al., 2013), Lloyd (2005, 2006, 2012) develops a “people-in-practice perspective” that positions information literacy as a socially enacted practice. A main contribution of this work is in its identification of the corporeal nature of practices. Per Lloyd “practices are what people do and are therefore visible through the body” (2012, p. 776). Individuals enact practices to further intersubjective understanding and, over time, these enactments become second nature to them. For instance, interview participant Jamie embodied “male,” as intersubjectively understood by interactants on social media, by engaging in practices such as using an image of someone who appeared to be male in his user profile. Other research in LIS examining embodiment include studies of gourmet cooks (Hartel, 2007), theater professionals (Olsson, 2010), individuals on holiday (Haider, 2011), archaeologists (Olsson, 2016), and individuals browsing online pornography (Keilty, 2016). Findings denote the recursive relationship between context and embodied practice, and posit the importance of LIS research that examines information practices beyond needs (see Olsson, 2005). Further, study findings emphasize the importance of material objects, including recycling bins, scripts for a play, and mobile devices, as embedding and shaping information practices.

Recent work employing an information practices perspective adopts it as a starting point from which to identify practices important to specific communities. Examples include bricolage as a practice adopted by welfare workers (French & Williamson, 2016), resilience by refugees (Lloyd, 2014), authenticity by reenactors (Robinson & Yerbury, 2015), wandering by

urban newcomers (Lingel, 2015), and engagement by young children (Barriage, 2016).³ Given the constructivist and constructionist perspectives employed, the research methodologies of studies that use information practices as a central umbrella concept are mostly qualitative. Data collection methods include ethnography, participant observation, and semi-structured interviews. Such research yields smaller sample sizes as compared to quantitative research studies. Since information practices represent an emerging concept, analysis methods tend to be inductive and include discourse analysis, grounded theory, and thematic analysis.

Gaps and challenges. A major tension within information practices is whether it should be distinct from information behaviors, or exist as a subset of this approach. Wilson (2008) contends that Savolainen (2008) frames information practices as “habituated behavior,” since information behaviors contain both cognitive and social dimensions. In fact, many studies of information behavior could be reinterpreted as employing a practices approach (see Fisher, Durrance, & Hinton, 2004, as an example) if practices are only defined by their incorporation of sociocultural context. Wilson (2008) concludes that the burden of proof for establishing information practices as a separate umbrella concept from behaviors lies in accounting for the process by which behaviors become habituated.

Although Wilson (2008) delivers a strong argument against information practices as a separate umbrella concept, he overestimates the incorporation of sociocultural context into work adopting an information behavior approach. If the social dimension of information behaviors lies on equal footing with the cognitive dimension, why do most information behavior studies focus on needs and seeking (Olsson, 2005; Savolainen, 2008, p. 3; Cox, 2012, p. 7-8)? If assumptions undergirding a behavior approach limit the scope from which people’s

3. Many of studies adopting an information practices perspective are from countries outside the US, including Australia and Finland. Research in LIS could benefit from examining to what degree the assumptions undergirding an information behavior perspective (Savolainen, 2007, p. 111) reinforce Western values.

interactions with information can be studied, perhaps it is more viable to adopt an alternate perspective from which to envision these interactions rather than extend the concept of information behaviors to mean all things to all people. Further, one of the reasons why Savolainen's (2008) treatment of practices is not too distinct from behaviors is that its three modes – seeking, sharing, and use – are still very goal oriented (see Cox, 2012, p. 10). As Cox suggests, a reorientation of information practices is needed that focuses more on context and less on information by envisioning the “information aspect of all social practices” (2012, p. 10). The **Conceptual Framework** below employed by this research achieves such reorientation by advancing the work of LIS scholars that align with sociology as a cross discipline (Rothbauer 2004a, 2004b, 2007, 2011; Chatman, 1996, 1999; Burnett, Beasant, & Chatman, 2001; Burnett & Jaeger, 2008; Jaeger & Burnett, 2010).

Another weakness of the information practice approach is the difficulty in defining its breadth and scope (Savolainen, 2007). If practices are comprised of innumerable quotidian activities, how can they be typified and described? Are all practices inherently informative? The challenges in addressing these questions are demonstrated by the lack of consistent terminology to describe information practices. As evidenced by prior research, the concept of information practices signifies different meanings contingent on its use. Examples of these meanings include information practices as domain analysis (see Hjørland & Albrechtsen, 1995 for a definition; see Fry, 2006; Roos & Hedlund, 2016 for examples), social practice (see Sundin, & Johannisson, 2005; Papen, 2013), information in social practice (Cox, 2012), and information work (Palmer & Neuman, 2002; Hogan & Palmer, 2005). Due to the multifocal characteristics of an information practices lens, a related weakness is whether allied theories, such as serious leisure (Stebbins, 1982) and information experience (see Bruce et al., 2014), fall under the umbrella concept of information practices or not.

In other instances, the phrase “information practices” is adopted “without deeper reflection on its ultimate meaning” (Savolainen, 2007, p. 123). A litany of studies employ the phrase “information practices,” or simply “practices,” sans theoretical engagement with these concepts (for a recent example, see Agosto, et al., 2016). Other studies may use “information practices” interchangeably with “information behaviors” (for recent examples, see Julien, 2016; Pohjanen & Kortelainen, 2016). This critique does not suggest that such work cannot advance an information practices perspective. Rather, it illustrates some of the inherent weaknesses of determining the breadth and scope of an information practices perspective (Savolainen, 2007), as well as whether information practices have a centralized meaning within LIS (Wilson, 2008).

Given that boundaries of the more established concept, information behaviors, continue to be contested, it does not suffice to suggest that this dissertation will solve the issues of scope inherent to the more nascent practices concept. There exists no centralized conceptual formulation of practices. Instead, the best this research can achieve is to advance a specific approach to practices derived from the metatheoretical perspective of social constructionism (see below **Conceptual Framework** section).

Adopting information practices as an umbrella concept addresses a problematic assumption – often axiomatic within HIB research – that “needy” individuals (Olsson, 2005; Savolainen, 2008, p. 3) have an articulated goal they are motivated to fulfill by seeking information. Such an assumption only represents the tip of a metatheoretical and theoretical iceberg of the interrelationship between information, individuals, and sociocultural context. To go below the waterline (phrase borrowed from Bates, 1999), an information practice approach is needed. Although information practices are emergent and not well-defined, the overarching notion of practices as quotidian and mundane activities steeped in epistemic,

sociocultural, and embodied understanding (Lloyd, 2012, who refers to “sociocultural” as “social”) represents a key philosophical approach guiding this study.

Marginalized Groups

Information poverty (Chatman, 1996) represents a dominant theoretical perspective within HIB to study marginalized, underserved, or otherwise vulnerable individuals and groups. The theory examines how individuals in highly localized contexts (e.g., a retirement home, a prison) create shared meaning bound to this context. It employs six theoretical propositions to describe conditions of information poverty that center on an insider/outsider dynamic, where the insiders are those experiencing information poverty and outsiders are those within mainstream culture (Chatman, 1996, p. 197). These propositions are further discussed in the **Conceptual Framework** section. Given that this research builds on Chatman’s (1996) theory, and that there exists no centralized way to describe marginalized groups in the LIS literature, the review for this section is based on searches for the phrase “information poverty” included in the abstract of works indexed by core LIS databases.⁴

A significant finding from this literature search indicates the paucity of studies employing information poverty as a central theoretical concept grounding the empirical research. Of those studies retrieved from the past ten years (2007-2017), 12 were empirical and used information poverty as a guiding theory. Yet consider **Figure 2** (see next page), which depicts the number of documents in Google Scholar that use the phrase “information poverty” by year. Although Google Scholar indexes from a larger (in fact, unknown) scope of works considered “academic,” including open source publications and conference proceedings, as well as works outside of the LIS discipline, one would reasonably expect that

4. Databases searched were: Library Literature and Information Science Full Text (H.W. Wilson), Library and Information Science Abstracts (LISA), and Library Information Science and Technology Abstracts (LISTA).

the theory of information poverty would be employed most within the field in which it was developed. Instead, the use of the phrase “information poverty” by hundreds of indexed documents suggests that “information poverty” might function as a buzzword as opposed to a middle-range theory that has been adopted and refined over time per Chatman’s original intention (Chatman, 1996). In fact, it appears that the popularity of the phrase “information poverty” correlates closely with the emergence of first and second wave digital divide studies (see Yu, 2010, p. 908-912; Yu, 2011), suggesting that, like information practices, information poverty is often used without considering its theoretical assumptions and their implications. Further, results of an in-depth discourse analysis of LIS research employing an information practice approach between 1995 and 2005 denote that within LIS, this concept has also been prone to the economic and technological determinism inherent to many digital divide studies, as well as to the paternalism adopted by some LIS scholars when discussing marginalized groups (see Haider & Bawden, 2006, 2007).

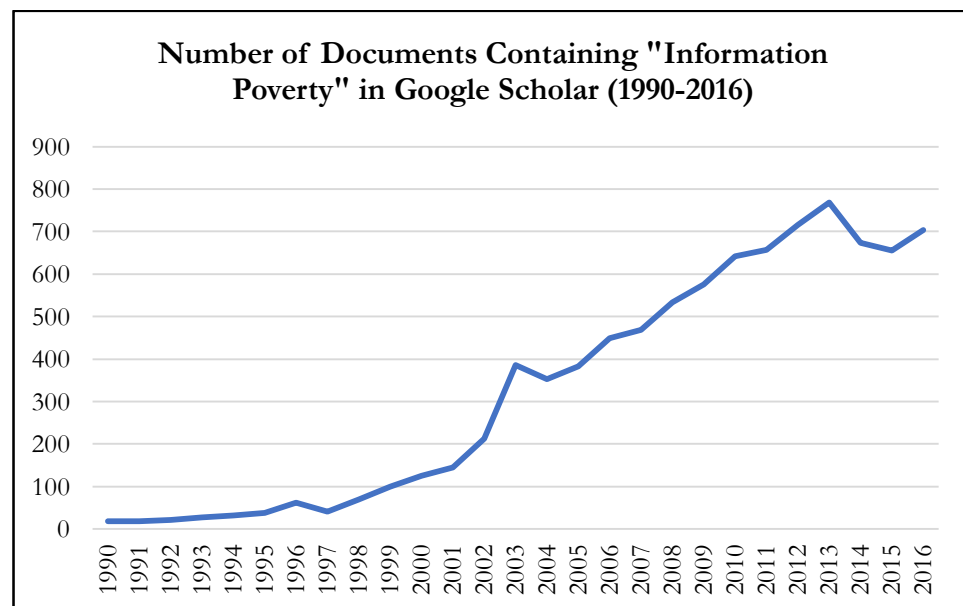


Figure 2: The Number of Documents Indexed by Google Scholar Containing the Phrase “Information Poverty” Between 1990 and 2016.

Few studies employing information poverty as a theory since 2005 expanded the application of its six theoretical propositions (see Chatman, 1996, p. 197). Exceptions include Hasler and Ruthven (2011) and Hasler, Ruthven, and Buchana's (2014) content analyses of online newsgroup content to determine how well expressed situations of information poverty conform to these six propositions. Bronstein (2014) employs a similar methodological approach in examining two online support group threads for individuals who have obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD). Findings from both studies indicate that while the six propositions cannot be applied to all content shared, several propositions supported each data source. Interestingly, different propositions apply to each data source, suggesting that the six propositions may not apply to all contexts of information poverty, nor is information poverty absolute.

Other research on information poverty employs data collection methods such as in-depth interviews and participant observation, coupled with qualitative analyses, to describe how information behaviors vary within specific contexts. Works that employ an information poverty perspective using such methodologies focus on: information needs of HIV positive individuals (see Veinot, 2009), information needs of intimate partner violence (IPV) survivors (see Westbrook, 2009), Latina women's perceptions of gender and information technology (see Burnett, Subramaniam, & Gibson, 2009) information practices of members of the extreme body modification community (see Lingel & boyd, 2013), and adolescent information behaviors in disadvantaged and disengaged circumstances (see Buchanan & Tuckerman, 2016). Findings question whether all six information poverty propositions fully described the lived experiences of participants. Several studies posit the complementarity of interdisciplinary approaches in extending the concept of information poverty, specifically the salience of stigma (Goffman, 1963) as a complementary theory (see Venoit, 2009; Lingel & boyd, 2013).

Gaps and challenges. A significant issue with current work is that it often frames marginalization as something that can be fixed. Such studies propose a series of “solutions” to the “problem” of information poverty, envisioning information poverty as a sort of disease to be remedied, for example, rather than a unique ecological environment where individuals engage in a series of behaviors or practices other than information-seeking to preserve an insider/outsider dynamic.

Findings from work that empirically builds on Chatman’s (1996) information poverty theory indicate issues with the original specification of the theory to localized groups deprived of larger cultural context. Per these findings, the application of related, interdisciplinary theories may capture some of the context lost within the specificity of the original propositions. One interdisciplinary theory that has salience for this research and is used by other studies, is stigma (Goffman, 1963). Venoit (2009) and Lingel and boyd (2013) employ stigma to denote the practices through which individuals control information made visible about themselves. They find that not only individuals, but also information, can be stigmatized. While the Yahoo! Answers asker desires information about binding their breasts, they do not want these resources visible to their parents. Rather, they wish to hide their binding practices, presumably due to the perceived negative reaction to their adoption of a non-mainstream identity. In response to this gap, this research employs an interdisciplinary framework that includes stigma (Goffman, 1963) as a central theory.

A useful mechanism for examining threads of marginalization within LIS is to assign individuals the role of insider and outsider relative to the social group analyzed (see Chatman, 1996). In practice, this assignation results in a necessary inversion as the outsider, stigmatized group becomes insiders within a small world context (see Chatman, 1999). However, findings from studies cited above denote that individuals with a specific marginalized status are not

synonymous with insiders in a marginalized group. While participant Eva shared the same lesbian identity as other group members, they cast Eva as an outsider due to her outsider (relative to the group) romantic preferences. To address this inconsistency, the **Conceptual Framework** incorporates Jaeger & Burnett's (Burnett & Jaeger, 2008; 2010) theory of information worlds, which iterates this dynamic among social group and cultural contexts.

Individuals with LGBTQ+ Identities

Older research on individuals with LGBTQ+ identities focused on the information needs of gay men and lesbians, most often library users, during the process of “coming out”, or disclosing their LGBTQ+ identities to others (see Creelman & Harris, 1990; Whitt, 1993; Joyce & Schrader, 1997; Stenback & Schrader, 1999; Garnar, 2001). Such research adopted an information behavior approach to individuals with LGBTQ+ identities in viewing information seeking and use as shaped by both psychological (e.g., the “coming out” process as liminal) and physical stimuli (e.g., the library not offering a specific resource). Data derived from structured interviews completed by above cited studies indicate specific helps and barriers related to information seeking and sources encountered at each stage of identity development. Conclusions drawn suggest that individuals perceived the library as an important, yet disappointing, resource (Hamer, 2003).

Like research on gay men and lesbians, most research on transgender and gender non-binary individuals has focused on information needs (Taylor, 2002; Beringer & Jackson, 2007). While the information needs of gay and lesbian individuals are centered on the liminal coming-out process, findings from studies of transgender individuals denote that their information needs are centered on a more fluid process of identity formation that is “less episodic and more of a continuum, with many issues being dynamic for longer periods of time and with relatively fewer periods of stasis” (Beringer & Jackson, 2007, p. 46).

Recent research adds to these findings by sampling outside of gay and lesbian individuals (to a limited degree), incorporating sociocultural context and examining technology use. Hamer (2003) dispels the essentialist preconception of the “coming out” process and instead adopts a constructionist approach. He uses the CIT (Flanagan, 1954) to allow gay men to define how specific incidents shaped their identity development. Data garnered from this technique indicate that behaviors such as concealment emanated from feelings of fear over how one may be perceived in a social group and within larger culture. This finding furthers the strength of stigma (Goffman, 1963) as a viable concept in understanding the information practices of these individuals (see above **Marginalized Groups** section).

Rothbauer (2004a, 2004b) examines the reading practices of lesbian and queer women. Her research bridges sociology with LIS (Savolainen, 2007, p. 126) by employing concepts from de Certeau’s (1984) “practice of everyday life” to analyze semi-structured interviews with these women. Findings indicate that queer women have trouble searching for recreational reading sources on queer topics when using both the internet and public libraries. Such difficulty results from inadequate knowledge representation of lesbian and queer topics. Whether sold online or circulated within a library, queer-related works contain subject headings that lack terms to convey the fluidity and multiplicity of queer and lesbian identities, as well as adequate cross referencing. Due to this lack of representation, individuals rely on informal sources, such as fan fiction websites and zines, despite perceiving them as unsanctioned (Rothbauer, 2004a, p. 101). Based on these findings, Rothbauer (2004a, 2004b) offers two prescriptive suggestions for libraries: diversify and extend use of subject headings to categorize queer literature, and exercise an awareness of information sources (therefore implicitly condoning them and rendering them as normative). These suggestions reflect the larger argument made in Rothbauer’s recent work (2007) that it is crucial for libraries to

interrogate their assumptions made when serving individuals with LGBTQ+ identities, and question whether these assumptions benefit those they are supposed to serve.

Mehra and Braquet (2005, 2006, 2007) study the “coming out” experiences of queer individuals and how these experiences shaped their information seeking behaviors. While this work positions “coming out” as a liminal process, it recognizes how larger sociocultural institutions such as work and religion affect information seeking behaviors, and how the library as an institution imbues heterosexism. The authors also focus on internet use, surmising that the internet serves as an emancipatory tool for many, specifically when first learning about queer identities (Braquet & Mehra, 2006).

Most recently, Pohjanen and Kortelainen (2016) employ a phenomenological-hermeneutic analytic approach to examine the information behaviors of transgender individuals. To the best of the authors’ knowledge, their study is the first focusing on the information behaviors of transgender individuals. Findings indicate the important role that serendipity plays in conceiving of information needs related to transgender identities due to the invisibility of transgender identities in larger culture. Such invisibility also contributes to participants’ limited search vocabulary to retrieve relevant information about transgender identities, as well as the lack of information itself. When able to locate desired information, participants most valued information provided by other transgender individuals who shared their experiences (Pohjanen & Kortelainen, 2016).

Gaps and challenges. A key gap of extant research is that many studies overviewed do not critically consider negative consequences of technology use. One exception is Hamer (2003), who found that participants avoided using the internet because of unwanted exposure to sexualized content on search engine results pages, vulnerability to unwanted sexual advances, and privacy concerns. Thus, technology should not be viewed as a deterministic

means through which individuals can achieve emancipation. Rather strategies undergirding the affordances and constraints of online technologies must be considered. Another gap inherent to current research regards the lack of agency given to individuals. Such agency can be captured by employing tactics as an analytical tool. Tactics should be viewed in relation to strategies disseminated by larger culture and social groups.

However, Rothbauer (2004a, 2004b, 2007) warns that strategies should not be viewed as fundamentally bad and tactics fundamentally good. Rather, strategies produce tactics. For example, the strategy of the library to hierarchally classify items using a controlled vocabulary led to a point of commonality among lesbian and queer women in their ritual “coming out” narratives – the inability to find resources. Thus, tactics and strategies should be envisioned as constitutive. By adopting de Certeau’s (1984) rubric⁵ of “everyday life practices,” including the tactic/strategy binary, Rothbauer (2004a, 2004b 2005, 2007) also extends research on individuals with LGBTQ+ identities beyond a focus on information seeking and use to consider the habitual practices in which individuals and institutions engage.

This research addresses these gaps by employing a constructionist metatheoretical stance that does not assume what meanings participants ascribe to their identities, but rather asks participants to define those meanings themselves. Further, the below **Conceptual Framework** employs de Certeau’s (1984) rubric of everyday practices to challenge sociocultural assumptions and determinations of LGBTQ+ identities. This research addresses other gaps related to data collection, namely the overrepresentation of cisgender gay and lesbian individuals, by sampling a group that represents less dominant identities within the LGBTQ+ spectrum. This sample includes individuals who are female, identify as queer, and

5. Rothbauer (2007) regarded de Certeau’s (1984) application of practices to be conceptual in nature, while this dissertation contends that it is metatheoretical.

are actively exploring their gender identities. Additional sampling gaps (e.g., focusing on teenagers and young adults) and intersectionality⁶ (e.g., across class, race, etc.) are partially addressed. Future work will examine these gaps using findings from the current study (see **Chapter 5**).

Another gap noted by other literature reviews of LGBTQ+ studies in HIB is related to the use of small sample sizes in addition to the observation that recommendations for serving users with LGBTQ+ identities are based on anecdotal evidence (Robinson, 2016, p. 162). However, the researcher envisions these critiques as in contention. Namely, the latter observation supports the need for qualitative research that accounts for the lived experiences of individuals with LGBTQ+ identities to revise assumptions inherent in anecdotal research. For qualitative research, a smaller sample size poses less of a concern given the demands for “trustworthiness” differ (see Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 289-331) as compared to those held by quantitative researchers. After all, putting the resources into recruiting a large sample size to triangulate research findings should only be completed once there are substantial findings to triangulate. Given the current paucity of HIB studies of individuals with LGBTQ+ identities, addressing this gap seems premature.

Social Question-answering Studies

Studies of SQA, also referred to as CQA, span disciplines, bridging LIS with the field of CS. SQA approaches tend to be more participant-based in examining why and how people seek, share, discover, etcetera, information online with the assistance of social resources (see Gazan, 2007; Morris et al., 2010; Rosenbaum & Shachaf, 2010; Choi, Kitzie, & Shah, 2014). Such approaches generally are adopted within the LIS field. A sub-area of interest within SQA

6. Winkelstein (2012) completed a dissertation that addresses intersectionality by examining the role of the public library in the daily lives of homeless LGBTQ+ youth. Findings established six theoretical concepts to describe the public library’s role: time, attitude, building relationships, welcoming, feeling safe, and cultural competence.

synergizes these approaches with virtual reference services to determine how strengths of both platforms can be leveraged and their weaknesses mitigated (see Shah & Kitzie, 2012; Radford, Connaway, & Shah, 2012; Shah, Connaway, & Radford, 2015; Radford et al., 2016).

Within CS, the term CQA is preferred in that it denotes a content-based approach that connects an individual to relevant information using community-supplied features (see Jeon, Croft, & Lee, 2005 for an early example). These features include community reviews and voting (see Shah & Pomerantz, 2010; Yang et al., 2013), as well as question and answer content (see Toba et al., 2014; Le, Shah, & Choi, 2016). The gap between an information need and relevant information is bridged by incorporating these features into predictive (generally regression-based) models and using the results to inform this connection.

Both types of studies signify the importance of affective and social group elements in influencing how information is provided and shared. For example, within Yahoo! Answers, answerers identify elements such as altruism and empathy as motivations for participation (see Oh, Worrall, & Yi, 2013; Oh & Worrall, 2013; Oh & Worrall, 2017), and askers value content that provides affective responses (see Kim, Oh, & Oh, 2007, 2008; Kim & Oh, 2009). Unlike “Ask a Librarian” sites in which users seek objective information or instruction (see Radford & Connaway, 2013) Yahoo! Answers content tends to be subjective. Content analyses of questions suggest that most users solicit opinions, advice, and social engagement, rather than content deemed “informational,” or providing a fact-based, verifiable answer (Kim, Oh, & Oh, 2008; Choi, Kitzie, & Shah, 2012).

Gaps and challenges. Despite findings denoting the importance of affective and social information among SQA and CQA participants, most of the literature on these topics limits its scope to examining fact-based content that lends itself to verification. Examples include quantitative approaches that examine how “objective,” textual features of content can

be used to predict the likelihood of a “Best Answer” rating (see Liu et al., 2011), and qualitative approaches that study how often Yahoo! Answers users provide answers judged satisfactory by experts (see Worrall, & Oh, 2013). While these studies make significant contributions to research within SQA and CQA, particularly within the health domain, this overemphasis on informational content shared neglects most content within Yahoo! Answers, which does not have a “right” or “wrong” answer. The negotiation of an LGBTQ+ identity, for example, intersects with information practices and behaviors that do not conform to this fact-based model.

Exceptions to this gap include studies by Bowler et al. (2012, 2013, 2015), which addresses the use of Yahoo! Answers by teenagers with eating disorders. The authors note that this platform represents an information ecology for teenagers that transcends exchange of fact-based content to embody a larger sociocultural context around the stigma of eating disorders and youth, which can be described by how individuals ask questions and formulate answers. Further, such context is (re)produced by online technologies. In one study, the authors find that when browser advertisement blockers are turned off, participants interacting on Yahoo! Answers threads related to eating disorders see weight loss advertisements (Bowler et al., 2012). This finding suggests how technologies often produce unintended, unpredictable effects, given they are co-constituted by sociocultural context.

To address the research limitations of SQA and CQA studies, this research adopts approaches advanced by studies incorporating affect and sociocultural context. Such studies do not approach Question-Answer content as providing a series of data points to train a model. Rather, qualitative approaches informed by the metatheoretical perspective of social constructionism are used to uncover how sociocultural context shapes the content shared and what content constitutes a Best Answer. While the former quantitative approaches prove

appropriate for specific areas of investigation, too often these approaches are employed (seemingly) atheoretically without addressing key assumptions underlying the work, such as that all askers desire fact-based information, or that all grammatical errors and expletives denote irrelevant or poor quality content. The marginalized status of individuals with LGBTQ+ identities displaces this group from mainstream discourses, rendering them subject to the symbolic violence of the legitimacy and authority conveyed by taken-for-granted, fact-based information, such as the male/female taxonomy (Bourdieu, 1984a, p. 109; 1990, p. 125-133; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992).

Science and Technology Studies

Web-based media platforms have become critical resources for LGBTQ+ identity development (Pullen, 2010). However, studies within the field of STS emphasize a false dichotomy between public and virtual spaces, arguing for the “recursive nature” of mediated experiences, which inform culture and vice versa, blurring the boundaries between online and offline (Beer, 2008, p. 51). Experiences of individuals with LGBTQ+ identities within one space influence their practices in the other (Hillier & Harrison, 2007; Gray, 2009; Baym, 2010; Gray, 2015). This observation is particularly salient within the sub-area of cyberqueer studies, which purport the overlap between online and offline contexts as related to individuals with LGBTQ+ identities. Per Wakeford, such overlap reflects the structural disadvantages these individuals face offline, while also providing opportunity to evoke new meanings centered on LGBTQ+ identities online: “Cyberqueer spaces are necessarily embedded within both institutional and cultural practices, and are a means by which the lesbian/gay/transgendered/queer self can be read into the politics of representation and activism confronting homophobia” (2002, p. 408).

In an offline (face-to-face) context, individuals experience significant barriers to establishing an LGBTQ+ identity, including heteronormativity in home (Waldner & Magrader, 1999) or school (Pacoe, 2011) environments, and fear of negative consequences from disclosure (Hamer, 2003). The internet provides a means to establish communities where individuals with LGBTQ+ identities can feel accepted, particularly when they feel marginalized in related offline spaces (Bond, Hefner & Drogos, 2008). Reported motivations for internet use closely parallel Goffman's notion of stigma (1963) and Chatman's "small world" paradigm and theory of information poverty (1991, 1996, 2001) in that internet use maintains anonymity (see McKenna & Bargh, 1998; Driver, 2007; Munt, Bassett, & O'Riordan, 2002; Szulc & Dhoest, 2013; DeHaan, 2013), provides a connection to LGBTQ+ peers (see Hamer, 2003; Hillier & Harrison, 2007; Pullen, 2010; Fox & Ralston, 2016), and facilitates exposure to a new set of norms that allow establishment and reinforcement of cognition about the LGBTQ+ world (see Hamer, 2003; Pullen & Cooper, 2010).

Within online contexts, individuals engage in identity-testing with members of social groups who have "been there" and possess the proper expertise to reframe, normalize, and approve of LGBTQ+ identity expressions (Hillier & Harrison, 2007; Cooper, 2010; Hillier, Mitchell, & Ybarra, 2012). They also gain "lived experience" by perceiving themselves in media texts (Bond, Hefner & Drogos, 2008), such as a YouTube romance between two gay males (Lazzara in Pullen & Cooper, 2010), or within grey literature, such as fan fiction and zines (Rothbauer, 2004a, p. 100). Additionally, individuals engage in autobiographical work, creating LGBTQ+ identities by sharing "coming out" stories (Hillier & Harrison, 2007; Craig & McInroy, 2014) and practicing strategies of self-presentation and disclosure, including managing multiple identities within one social media platform, such as Facebook (Cooper &

Dzara in Pullen & Cooper, 2010; Lingel & Golub, 2015; Fox & Warber, 2015; Haimson & Hoffman, 2016; Dhoest & Szulc, 2016; Duguay, 2016; see also van Dijck, 2013).

In some instances, these activities establish a shared set of sensibilities between members, who simultaneously create and adopt metanarratives of a “normal” LGBTQ+ experience, which often assist them in tasks such as realizing and disclosing an LGBTQ+ identity. In the same vein, these narratives also reinforce the commodification and fetishization of certain LGBTQ+ identity characteristics, such as whiteness (see Tsang, 2002; Mitra & Gajjala, 2008; Raj, 2011). Such homogenization of the LGBTQ+ experience can render certain individuals whose experiences do not reflect these narratives (e.g., those who identify as asexual, lesbian, non-white, or residing in a rural area), as “the other,” essentially marginalizing the marginalized (see Foucault, 1978; Gamson, 1995; Pullen, 2010). One way such marginalization may occur is by casting judgment over who is performing their identity well in a virtual context. Per Wakeford: “The question might not be ‘Are you a lesbian?’ but ‘Are you lesbian *enough*?’” (2002, p. 413). Such judgment can shape the practices occurring both within and outside of this context. Individuals might feel compelled, for example, to self-disclose and provide markers of their experience to be judged as a credible source, which produces a “grey space between public and private spheres” (see Rak, 2005, p. 173). Judgments on the authenticity of one’s performance are not limited to whether one is LGBTQ+, as systems not designed with these identities in mind might evoke norms centered on authenticity that reinforce hetero and gender normativity (see O’Riordan & Phillips, 2007; Carstensen, 2009; Lingel & Golub, 2015; Haimson & Hoffman, 2016). Studies within STS, therefore, highlight a tension between the creation of a public LGBTQ+ identity within an “imagined community” (Sender, 2004, p. 5; Anderson, 2006) and the inevitable differences experienced within the community, related to individual agency and offline contexts.

Gaps and challenges. A significant limitation of STS studies on individuals with LGBTQ+ identities is their Western focus (Dhoest & Szulc, 2016). Such focus can yield several problematic assumptions, including access to online resources, economic self-sufficiency, and the relative safety to explore LGBTQ+ identities both online and offline. One way these assumptions can be countered is to account for cultural and material contexts in addition to the social context of the specific virtual environment.

As addressed by the work reviewed, another limitation of STS studies is when they separate online and offline contexts. Namely, findings from studies reviewed indicate consequences for not conforming to the demands of authenticity encoded into online technologies and normatively practiced by the people using them. Such consequences refute the neo-liberalist ideals of “freedom” determining how individuals present themselves online (Cartensen, 2009). Yet these limitations do not imply that online technologies cannot afford individuals new possibilities for being and identity expression (Wakeford, 2000). Instead, the social, cultural, and material elements undergirding how online technologies work, as well as the practices they afford and constrain, must be holistically examined to determine the unique information landscape available to an individual with an LGBTQ+ identity online.

Conceptual Framework

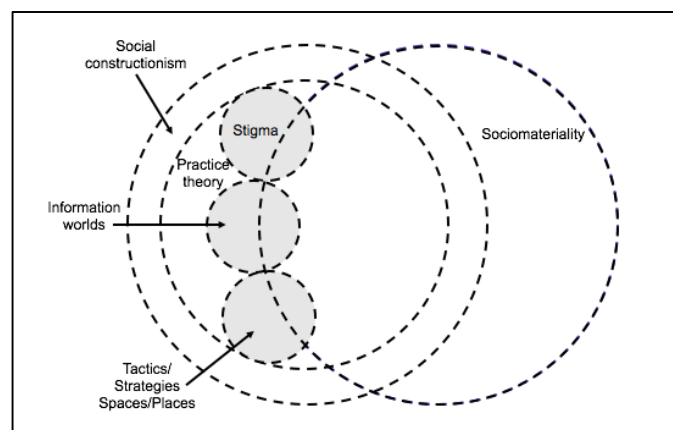


Figure 3: Image of Conceptual Framework. Shaded Areas Represent the Research Focus.

A metatheoretical perspective provides researchers with a series of tools for identifying key research problems and potential theoretical and methodological orientations from which to address them (Talja, Tuominen, & Savolainen, 2005). Theories emanating from these metatheoretical viewpoints and their empirical approaches “are not necessarily in line with their stated epistemological views” (p. 82). Therefore, a metatheoretical approach should be considered somewhat flexible in its deployment.

As depicted in **Figure 3**, theories are nested within metatheories and capture a specified area of inquiry regarding how and what phenomena are studied. Metatheoretical perspectives inform theories and a theory can be reinterpreted, to a degree, based on those perspectives informing it. For instance, information worlds theory consists of five elements, including information behaviors. Given that practice theory as metatheoretical perspective informs this dissertation, information behaviors are not considered applicable when using this theory within the overarching conceptual framework.

Theoretical Perspectives

This research is informed by three related metatheoretical perspectives: social constructionism, sociomateriality, and practice theory, as well as theories of information worlds (Burnett & Jaeger, 2008; Jaeger & Burnett, 2010), stigma (Goffman, 1963), and de Certeau’s (1984) binaries of tactics and strategies, and spaces and places. Practice theory is used both metatheoretically and theoretically. Each metatheory and theory is now reviewed.

Social constructionism. Social constructionism represents an emerging metatheoretical perspective within LIS that counters dominant objectivist and cognitive perspectives (see Talja, Tuominen, & Savolainen, 2005). It contends that individuals and groups assign subjective meaning to the actions of others and, through interactions, negotiate how these meanings are outwardly produced and understood. Intersubjective understanding

manifests as shared agreement between individuals on these meanings. Over time, these meanings solidify into commonsense knowledge of how individuals relate to one another (Berger & Luckmann, 1966).

Different social groups and cultures have vested interests in defining social reality and compete for resources (e.g., economic, political) to do this defining (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Consider choosing between the men or women's restroom. By making this choice, one unthinkingly reinforces a larger cultural notion that gender is binary. Engaging with information practices that refute this notion is difficult given they challenge what has been taken for granted over a long period of time. Societies thus do not "develop" or "evolve," but rather are constituted by how individuals, groups, and cultures negotiate meaning, characterized by struggles for legitimation of a dominant reality (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Kuhn, 1970; Foucault, 1978).

Social constructionism also informs practice by identifying regimes of power and truth that shape how LIS researchers can study a phenomenon and limit what can be observed. For example, Haider and Bawden (2006, 2007) identified four interrelated themes characterizing limitations of information poverty: a) economic determinism, b) technological determinism, c) historicizing the information poor, and d) the library's moral obligations and responsibilities to the information poor. These perspectives invoke a myopic view of information as a commodity that can be successfully accessed by a certain type of expert knowledge.

The consequences of adopting a social constructionist metatheoretical position are twofold. From a practical perspective, individuals assign their own meanings to their information practices, rather than having these meanings imposed by the researcher. From a theoretical perspective, dominant social realities shape what and how information practices can occur within specific places and spaces. In interview participant Jamie's case, a dominant

biological view of gender was expressed in places such as his home and high school, e.g., via use of restroom signage, rendering it difficult for him to express his male identity.

A constructionist perspective also presents gaps related to the areas of inquiry. Constructionist perspectives tend to either fully afford agency to an individual's subjective mental structures or to social and cultural structures (Cunliffe, 2008). As the scenarios presented indicate, neither case is accurate. While participants are influenced by structures, they also circumvent structural constraints to achieve information-related goals. Practice theory clarifies this issue of agency, namely via de Certeau's (1984) binaries of strategies and tactics, and spaces and places.

Practice theory. In *The Practice of Everyday Life*, de Certeau (1984) examines how dominated individuals resist being determined by a “grid of discipline” (p. xiv) imposed on them by the social groups and cultures to which they belong. Two key binaries that make sense of this resistance are strategies and tactics, and spaces and places. Strategies suggest appropriate conventions to be practiced and establish a specific place in which these practices can occur, for example an office or a church. Places are stable. They have a distinct location and permanence, and denote the appropriate strategies that should be practiced within them. A bridge represents a strategy used by an institution, the construction industry, to suggest that when uneven terrain is faced, an individual should use the bridge to safely traverse this terrain. The physical manifestation of the bridge represents a place where this crossing can occur.

Tactics appropriate strategies and introduce meaning into people's everyday lives. Tactics occur in spaces. Unlike a place, which has a fixed physical and temporal location, spaces are fleeting and overlap. As de Certeau states, “space is a practiced place.” (1984, p. 117). A footpath leading under a bridge represents a tactic in that it suggests an oppositional

practice of walking on the uneven terrain rather than using the bridge. Unlike a place, the space created by walking on the footpath is temporary as the path will weather away over time.

Practice theory complements constructionism by rooting meaning within the habitual enactment of everyday life activities. Meaning is shaped by places and the strategies exercised within them, but such places and strategies also create opportunities for resistance via the creation of spaces that facilitate tactics, which then lend agency back to individuals. Practice theory also facilitates production of reflexive research that identifies how dominant strategies and places may shape assumptions inherent to the research.

An unexamined area in both constructionism and practice theory is the role technology – specifically the internet – plays as a context that affords and constrains information practices. This role is important, given that the internet represents more than just a tool providing access to resources. Sociomateriality is thus employed as a final metatheoretical perspective.

Sociomateriality. A sociomaterialist metatheory overlaps with social constructionism in contending that social and cultural structures shape technology. However, it also posits that technologies can also shape these structures via their material features. Traditionally, technology was envisioned as material in the sense of its physical components, such as hardware, but materiality has also come to represent digital materials, such as software (Orlikowski, 2000; Leonardi, 2010; Orlikowski & Scott, 2013; Leonardi, 2014; Scott & Orlikowski, 2014).

However, a sociomaterialist viewpoint does not denote a bidirectional relationship between sociocultural context and technologies. Rather, the relationship between these two entities is blurred, rendering it difficult to discern where the technological material ends and the immaterial, sociocultural context begins (see Callon, 1986). There exist several lenses through which this blurriness can be examined. In this dissertation, the lenses employed are

affordances and constraints. Affordances constitute the materially-based construction and features of a technology that suggest the use to which it should be put, while constraints pose restrictions on how a technology can be used (see Norman, 1999; Latour, 2004; Gillespie, Boczkowski, & Foote, 2014; Leonardi, Nardi, & Kallinikos, 2014; Baym, 2015). Both affordances and constraints can be actual and perceived (see Norman, 1999; Baym, 2015).

Take the search box of an online dating site. Its construction and design suggest a certain use: entering criteria describing individuals one would like to date and pressing the “search” button to see a display of results. Such meaning is enacted by a combination of affordances (e.g., the ability to enter criteria such as radius, suggesting the importance of proximity for a potential partner) and constraints (e.g., no ability to search the full-text of an online dating profile, prioritizing physical characteristics over how personality is articulated). If this meaning of “search box” is continually enacted over time it becomes taken for granted (Starr & Bowker, 1999; Suchman, 2007).

Much like technological affordances and constraints can shape practices, these practices in turn constitute the technology. For instance, an online dating site’s search box can also be used in unintended ways, such as a mechanism to identify and harass individuals with LGBTQ+ identities. These practices in turn influence further shaping of the technology, e.g., the decision of popular online dating site OkCupid to allow individuals identifying as non-heterosexual to hide their profiles from heterosexual users.⁷

One of the key arguments of sociomateriality is that technology can act independently of humans in creating meaning. Although positions on degrees of agency differ (see Gillespie, Boczkowski, & Foot, 2014; Leonardi, Nardi, & Kallinikos, 2014) and human labor undergirds

7. See <https://okcupid.desk.com/customer/portal/articles/2161224-privacy-controls>.

technological development (Brunton & Coleman, 2014), technology has capacity for performativity outside individual control (Leonardi, 2014). Daemons, which are background computing processes that run independently of individual interaction, manifest such performativity. These performances have concrete material effects imbued with meaning by users. Take a Wikipedia bot running as a daemon that detects vandalism and makes ostensibly minor edits to pages, such as correcting grammar or fixing dead links.⁸ Imagine this bot correcting use of the third-person pronoun to refer to an individual, e.g., changing “they” to “he,” within the *Genderqueer* topic page. When an individual reads the revised page, this change communicates a specific meaning to the individual regarding gender. This observation raises an important characteristic of affordances and constraints, which is that they are actual *and* perceived. The meaning one assigns to an affordance or constraint will be shaped by the interrelationship between the material, technological features, e.g., a bot, and the sociocultural context in which these features are used, e.g., to interpret gender. While affordances and constraints are, therefore, subject to individual meaning, they are also shaped by material and sociocultural contexts that disseminate strategies communicating dominant discourses (e.g., gender is binary), which benefit those in power (e.g., cisgender individuals).

In summing up the three metatheoretical perspectives discussed, it can be concluded that shared knowledge of social reality is enacted within everyday life practices. These practices are shaped by dominant social and cultural contexts, and enact these contexts by employing strategies and tactics as well as spaces and places. Actors, both human and non-human, may further strategies and places or produce tactics and spaces in opposition to them. Yet these

8. See <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Bots>

perspectives are metatheoretical and represent abstract ways of looking at the world. The theoretical frameworks now overviewed ground these concepts.

Information worlds. The theory of information worlds (Burnett & Jaeger, 2008; Jaeger & Burnett, 2010) extends Chatman's theoretical work on information poverty (1996), small worlds (1999), and normative behavior (Burnett, Beasant, & Chatman, 2001). These latter works posit the importance of both social roles, namely insiders and outsiders, and norms in influencing the information sources and practices considered legitimate within a specific place. These works also highlight practices outside of seeking, such as avoidance, secrecy, and deception.

Information worlds address criticisms of Chatman's work (1996, 1999) as localized and not considering multiplicity of social contexts. The theory combines small world contexts with the larger lifeworld, which represents the totality of information within a society based on various perspectives within it (Habermas, 1964). This conceptual distinction has been represented in this dissertation via use of the terms "social groups" and "culture." Social forces inhabiting small worlds and the larger lifeworld possess various degrees of influence that shape dominant realities of both. Boundaries exist among small worlds, between small worlds and the lifeworld, and at all levels in-between. How information flows between these boundaries influences people's awareness of their information needs or "gaps" in knowledge (see Dervin, 1999). Recognition of a gap in one's knowledge does not only constitute a cognitive problem, but also a sociocultural one, since people's awareness and privileging of various information-related problems arise from what is deemed important by the various worlds to which they belong (Burnett & Jaeger, 2008; Jaeger & Burnett, 2010).

Jaeger and Burnett (Burnett & Jaeger, 2008; 2010) identify five elements constituting information worlds: a) social norms, i.e., what behaviors are appropriate, b) social types, i.e.,

roles that define the relationships between the social actor and others, c) information value, i.e., a shared sense of what should be paid attention to, d) information behaviors, i.e., activities available to individuals, and e) boundaries, i.e., where information worlds come into contact with each other and where information may or may not be exchanged.

A key contribution of information worlds is the notion that multivariate social and cultural strategies and places exist, and shape information practices. For this reason, it is important to identify contextual elements of these strategies and places, such as their boundaries, social norms, and what information is valued within them, for further exposition. However, this theory does not address the mechanisms undergirding *how* an individual interacts within the contexts these elements characterize. What factors might influence individuals to use tactics and create spaces in the first place?

Stigma. One specific contribution of Chatman's (1996, 1999) earlier work not used by the theory of information worlds (Burnett & Jaeger, 2008; Jaeger & Burnett, 2010) is to describe self-protective strategies employed by individuals deemed "information poor." These strategies include secrecy, "a deliberate attempt not to inform others about one's true state of affairs" (Chatman, 1996, p. 199), and deception, "a deliberate attempt to act out a false social reality" (p. 200-201). Presence of these strategies suggest that individuals may avoid engaging in specific information practices or with specific sources altogether. Thus, their practices are not limited to active seeking that fulfills a need, but are also shaped by sociocultural context. Goffman's (1963) theory of stigma furthers these observations.

Stigma examines how individuals respond to otherness within a given situation from the perspective of people bearing the stigma, those who interact with them, and the context of the interaction. Stigma is relative. Certain elements of a social identity that could be stigmatized in one type of context are not in another. Stigma can also be managed and certain

individuals possess stigmas they can conceal. These individuals can either “pass” as normal or choose to disclose their stigma, ultimately faced with the decision “to display or not to display; to tell or not to tell; to let on or not to let on; to lie or not to lie; and in each case, to whom, how, when and where” (Goffman, 1963, p. 42). As a result, an individual’s social world can be typified between those aware of their stigmatized identity and those unaware, as well as within the contexts⁹ where each type of person resides (p. 66). These contexts can be defined as back, where an individual’s stigma is not discredited and other individuals share their stigma, civil, where stigmatized individuals may be treated as if they are not discredited when they are, and forbidden, where if an individual’s identity is discovered, they will be expelled from the community (Goffman, 1963). Stigma and practice theory thus have a complementary relationship. Namely, de Certeau’s (1984) binaries explore whether stigma disclosure is appropriate and the types of practices that may be encouraged, tolerated, forbidden, etcetera, within each context.

Resultant Conceptual Framework

Informed by the literature review, pilot study findings (described in the below **Pilot Study Method and Findings** section), and theoretical perspectives, a resultant conceptual framework has been outlined as depicted in **Figure 3**. It examines the relationship between information practices, social and cultural strategies employed within places, oppositional tactics created within spaces, the combination of strategies and tactics that shape information practices, and LGBTQ+ identities, all of which characterize, produce, and (re)produce context.

9. Goffman uses “spaces” instead of “context,” however the researcher contends that context as defined within this dissertation represents a more appropriate descriptor.

Individuals are subject to multivalent social and cultural strategies, where information of potential help lies outside of the dominant stock of social knowledge (Berger & Luckmann, 1966) or is privileged and thus hidden away by insiders (relative to the culture) (Chatman, 1996). Both conditions emerge due to the strategic assignment of stigma, afforded by social and cultural mechanisms undergirding legitimation of a specific social reality (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; de Certeau, 1984; Chatman, 1996). Strategies constrain the information practices of individuals with LGBTQ+ identities. Yet practices can also tactically resist strategies. The combination of both strategies and tactics practiced within a specific space or place produces a context, which shapes future practices. This context can further be explicated by the norms, social types, information value, and boundaries that characterize it (Burnett & Jaeger, 2008; Jaeger & Burnett, 2010).

Pilot Study Method and Findings

To inform the dissertation's main data collection methods, a pilot study was performed. The goals of the pilot study were to ensure that a sample of individuals with LGBTQ+ identities willing to address interview questions could be attained, to pre-test the semi-structured interview protocol (see **Appendix B: Interview Protocol**), develop a coding scheme, and test the applicability of proposed theoretical and metatheoretical frameworks. Seven individuals who identified as having an LGBTQ+ identity between the ages of 26 and 32 were recruited using purposive sampling. This age range was selected to examine effects of internet use (Howe & Strauss, 2009, p. 4; "Social Media Use by Age Group Over Time," 2016). The recruitment period lasted for four weeks, followed by phone, face-to-face, and Skype semi-structured interviews that used a protocol composed of thirteen questions.

Through reflexive interviewing, the pilot study strove to establish validity in representing participants' experiences and recognizing the influence of sociocultural factors

on their information practices (Kong et al., 2003). The study had the following features: a) sampling female-identified individuals purposively, b) positioning the participant as theorist of their own, defined information world (Dervin, 1999; Hamer, 2003), c) using semi-structured interviews and probes, d) maintaining field notes, and e) establishing participants' comfort with the interview by explicating types and topics of questions to be asked.

Interviews lasted from 45 to 90 minutes and were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. They were analyzed by the researcher using emic and etic coding (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). High-level etic coding categories were derived from stigma (Goffman, 1963), information poverty (Chatman, 1996), information worlds (Burnett & Jaeger, 2008; Jaeger & Burnett, 2010), and information practices (McKenzie, 2003a, 2003b). Emic codes specific to the research participants were then generated under each high-level category. After initial codes had been developed and applied by the researcher, 20% of the data was coded by another coder. After discussions and clarifications to resolve differences, a final Kappa value of 0.82 was reached. For the duration of coding, the researcher used the constant comparison method (Charmaz, 2014) to develop a refined set of themes and categories. Key themes were identified by data analysis as constituting participants' awareness, exploration, and adoption of LGBTQ+ identities: a) space, b) norms, c) social types, d) information practices, e) information control, and f) information value.

Implications of the Pilot Study for the Main Study

Pilot study findings supported Lingel and boyd's (2013) contention that insider/outsider dynamics are recursive within groups sharing LGBTQ+ identities. There exists a pervasive dialectic between oppression, enforcement of norms related to gender and sexuality, authenticity, and power, with the insiders dictating the "right" way to go about identity exploration and adoption (Goffman, 1959; Foucault, 1978; Chatman, 1996). Insiders create

places, such as clubs and coalitions, through which to instantiate strategies supporting this dialectic. To resist insider (relative to the group) strategies, participants engaged in tactics such as secrecy and deception. Although secrecy and deception are viewed by Chatman (1996) as presenting barriers to fulfilling one's information needs, participants identified them as viable tactics to manufacture and maintain spaces in which to identity test.

This finding supports use of information worlds (Burnett & Jaeger, 2008; Jaeger & Burnett, 2010), which identifies strategies such as the assignation of value to certain social types, e.g., insiders, and information sources. Although the pilot study did not employ de Certeau's (1984) tactic/strategy and space/place binaries directly, findings demonstrate the applicability of both binaries to the data. Goffman's (1963) typology of contexts from which stigma can be managed, i.e., back, civil, forbidden, further characterizes the tactics and strategies that can occur within defined places and spaces. The researcher contends that these theories and metatheory (see above **Conceptual Framework** section) supersede information poverty (Chatman, 1996) in understanding the information practices of individuals with LGBTQ+ identities.¹⁰

Findings from the pilot study also suggest that technology, such as the internet, is not monolithic. Participants identified having different experiences within the same virtual contexts. Further, the nature of spaces and places produced is temporal. A space inviting one tactic may suddenly morph into a place where certain strategies forbid it. The metatheory of sociomateriality is employed to address these shifting boundaries between space and place within virtual contexts¹¹ and the strategies and tactics afforded and constrained within them.

10. Information worlds (Burnett & Jaeger, 2008; Jaeger & Burnett, 2010) leverage some of the strengths of information poverty while mitigating its weaknesses.

11. This notion of spaces as temporary is also addressed in Gray's (2007, 2009, p. 92) discussion of "boundary publics."

Another finding concerns the application of McKenzie's (2003) typology to describe information practices. The researcher initially used this typology in the pilot study given that it represents one of the few instances in which information practices are typified. Further, this typology is empirically supported (McKenzie, 2003a, 2003b). However, the researcher found that this typology did not adequately describe the information practices of individuals with LGBTQ+ identities for two reasons: a) the categories developed by McKenzie (2003a, 2003b) were not absolute when applied to the data, and it became difficult to discern whether an account should be coded as one category or another, e.g., active seeking versus active scanning, and b) individuals with LGBTQ+ identities engaged in several information practices not reflected by the typology, such as avoidance and embodiment. For these reasons, this typology was not employed by the researcher for the main study.

A final implication indicates the importance of embodied knowledge. Embodiment facilitates the transition from living an "authentic" life (Goffman, 1959; Halberstam, 2005; Gray, 2009) based on social and cultural dictates governing how LGBTQ+ identities should be expressed, to exercising realness (Halberstam, 2005) or being true to oneself. Participants who felt they were "putting on an identity" (Stephanie) that a "right way" existed to perform it (Jamie) learned through personal experience (e.g., dating, binding) of no overarching right way, but rather a right way for them. This finding denotes the importance of an information practices perspective, particularly in incorporating a corporeal perspective (Lloyd, 2012).

Summary of Contributions of the Pilot Study to Main Study

Findings from the pilot study made the following contributions to the main study:

- An initial category scheme, built on theoretical frameworks, was created and applied to the interview data (See **Appendix F: Final Codebook**).
- Interview protocol has been refined to incorporate the following:

- Debriefing questions
- Additional probes relating to internet use
- Questions regarding participants' perceptions of libraries and other information agencies
- Researcher's interview skills have developed by using silence to allow participants time to elaborate and asking relevant, follow-up questions
 - Resultant length of interviews has increased, yielding additional rich data not initially gleaned
- Researcher's qualitative coding skills have matured, particularly in comparing and combining high-level etic codes and relating these codes to emerging emic categories
- Identified the following, emergent themes:
 - Valence of an information practice, e.g., secrecy, as relative to the participant
 - Temporal and fleeting nature of back spaces
 - Applicability of de Certeau's (1984) binaries of tactic/strategy and space/place
 - Disclosure and non-disclosure as communicative practices that shape information-related outcomes
 - Extension of insider/outsider social dynamics within social groups comprised of individuals with LGBTQ+ identities
 - Perception of technology not as a tool, but rather characterizing context by affording and constraining information practices
 - Importance of embodiment, specifically as it relates to authenticity and realness

Research Questions

Based on the literature review, pilot study findings, and conceptual framework, this dissertation poses the following research questions:

RQ1. How does sociocultural context shape the information practices of individuals with LGBTQ+ identities?

RQ2. How do the information practices of individuals with LGBTQ+ identities produce sociocultural context?

RQ3. What is the role of technology, namely social media websites, if any, in affording information practices of individuals with LGBTQ+ identities?

RQ4. What is the role of the technology, namely social media websites, if any, in constraining information practices of individuals with LGBTQ+ identities?

Conclusion

One reason why the LIS field proves both challenging and exciting is due to its cross-disciplinary and interdisciplinary nature (see Floridi, 2002). Borrowing theories and concepts from other disciplines and relating them to predominant LIS foci can lead to the development of middle-range theories (see Merton, 1959, p. 108; Chatman, 1996, p. 193). Yet such borrowing also may threaten the coherence of LIS as a distinct field of study and practice.

To content with this issue while leveraging the utility of prior theoretical development from more established disciplines, this chapter addresses some of the gaps and challenges of extant LIS literature. The outside theories and concepts selected have been empirically demonstrated by prior research to complement those within the LIS field. Further, these theories and concepts rest under the same metatheoretical umbrella, denoting the framework's conceptual coherency. A pilot study further refined this framework and informed the development of research questions guiding this dissertation. The next chapter outlines the

methodological approaches employed to address these research questions, by bridging the metatheoretical premises inherent to the conceptual framework with these approaches.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology, Strategies of Inquiry, and Methods

Introduction

“In recent years the term methodology has been used as a substitute for methods when it is more usefully referred to as the theoretical analysis of methods” (Dervin, 2003, p. 126).

Brenda Dervin’s quote reflects a personal observation of the researcher, in that too often “Methodology” sections of research studies are condensed into discussion of what was done sans explanation of the research philosophy undergirding the work. John W. Creswell, a specialist in mixed methods research, qualitative methodologies, and general research design, identifies three factors that comprise the latter: “philosophical assumptions about knowledge claims [*i.e., methodology*], strategies of inquiry, and specific research methods” (2013, p. 32, emphasis added). This chapter reviews each of these factors. Given that the underlying ontological, i.e., the nature of reality, and epistemological, i.e., how individuals know what they know, claims for this study were made in previous chapters, this chapter begins with a discussion of research methodology. It follows with an overview of the strategies of inquiry employed by the qualitative research design, and emic/etic and mixed methods approaches. The chapter then concludes by detailing the specific research methods – analysis of interviews with individuals identifying as LGBTQ+ and Question-Best Answer content from the LGBT thread of Yahoo! Answers, and how the methods reflect the research methodology and strategies of inquiry. **Table 1** (see next page) displays the dissertation research design.

Table 1. Dissertation Research Design

Methodology	Strategies of Inquiry	Methods (Data Collection and Analysis)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practices as unit of analysis • Sense-making methodology <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Context ○ Process orientation ○ Participants as theorists ○ Information as structural ○ Researcher reflexivity ○ Utopian imagination 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qualitative design <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Emic/etic approach ○ Mixed methods approach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data collection <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Interviews with 30 individuals with LGBTQ+ identities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Critical incident technique ○ 300 Question-Answer pairs from LGBT thread of Yahoo! Answers • Data analysis <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Qualitative data analysis ○ Digital methods ○ Constant comparative method

Methodology

Methodology constitutes “a study of the plans which are used to obtain knowledge” (Polkinghorne, 1983, p. 5). Crafting methodology involves “reflexive analysis and development of methods” (Dervin, 1999, p. 728) to bridge “the move from theory to method and method to theory” (Dervin, 2003, p. 126). Researchers must understand and explain the assumptions of their research rather than leap from theory to method and back, sans reflexivity (Polkinghorne, 1983, p. 9). Therefore, methodology identifies the parameters for testing the knowledge claims made by the conceptual framework of this dissertation.

The central knowledge claim of this dissertation can be expressed as follows: Shared knowledge and understanding (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 56; Schatzki, 2001, p. 12) shape people’s “information-related activities and skills” (Lloyd, 2011, p. 285), which in turn reify

their shared knowledge and understanding. Information represents anything that shapes an individual's understanding of their reality. Like reality, the meaning of information is situated in and responsive to time and space (Dervin, 1983, p. 5-6; 1999, p. 730; 2003, p. 115). This conceptualization of information aligns with Buckland's "information-as-process," where "when someone is informed, what they know is changed" (Buckland, 1991, p. 351). This knowledge claim has implications for what this study measures and analyzes. More specifically, the researcher's conception of information is not restricted to recorded information (Bates, 1999, p. 1048), but rather examines the processes through which individuals become informed.

Within Library and Information Science (LIS), the methodology most related to this knowledge claim is sense-making, or how people make sense of their worlds by deciding what information to seek, share, and use (Dervin, 1983, p. 3-8). Yet this perspective differs from the one used in this study in three key ways. First, when using a sense-making perspective, the phenomena of interest, or unit of analysis, is sense-making (Dervin, 1999, p. 729, footnote 4), whereas the unit of analysis for this research is information practices. The latter is not constrained to situations of information seeking, sharing, and use. Instead, it reflects a larger methodological focus – how knowledge is constituted and translated through practices and activities, including but not limited to, seeking, sharing, and use. Second, and related, sense-making "stresses individual rather than collective understanding" (Tidline, 2005, p. 114), whereas a practice approach adopts "a more sociologically and contextually oriented line of research" (Savolainen, 2007, p. 120). Finally, sense-making relies on structured interviewing to dispel the power dynamics inherent to habitual communication activities (Tidline, 2005, p. 115; Koh, 2013, p. 1830). This research employs semi-structured interviewing to capture information practices other than those elicited via sense-making methods.

However, many of the metatheoretical assumptions employed within a sense-making methodology parallel those made in this research. Further, Dervin (1999, p. 730, footnote 5) has developed the sense-making methodology over time to encompass post-constructivist approaches more complementary of a practice orientation. Sense-making has an extensive history of being applicable in cross-disciplinary, interdisciplinary, and multimethod works (Dervin, 1999, p. 729). Some recent examples (from the last five years) of how sense-making has been employed in LIS studies include:

- How theater professionals make sense of Shakespeare's works (Olsson, 2010). The author uses both sense-making and conversational approaches to create an individual interview protocol for 35 participants. Findings indicate the importance of not only rationality, but also emotion, embodiment, creativity, and authority when sense-making.
- How men seek help when experiencing stressful life events (Wellstead, 2011). The author conducts structured sense-making interviews with 15 men. In addition, semi-structured interviews were completed with six professionals. Findings capture information behaviors relevant to this group other than seeking and use, such as avoidance.
- How women make sense of health information that is uncertain and derives from formal and informal sources (Genuis, 2012). Sense-making informs the semi-structured interview protocol for individual interviews with 28 information seekers and 12 health professionals. Findings denote the importance of embodiment and feeling “normal” as motivators to seek information, the importance of social contexts for knowledge construction, and the view of informal and formal sources as mutually enhancing.

- How adolescents collaborate to create digital projects, such as an online magazine (Koh, 2013). The author employs structured group and individual interviews of 12 participants using the sense-making methodology. Findings suggest the development of information creation as a relevant information behavior and a viable addition to the evolving concept of information literacy.
- How Thai immigrants seek information during the settlement process (Sirikul & Dorner, 2016). The sense-making methodology informs the authors' analysis of semi-structured individual interviews with nine Thai immigrants. Findings denote some of the barriers encountered during settlement, including library staff behavior.

A common thread uniting these studies is that they examine information behaviors (sometimes referred to as practices), information, and knowledge not traditionally investigated by LIS research. These studies also consider how power shapes how these behaviors, practices, information, and knowledge can manifest. Therefore, sense-making provides a methodological framework from which to tease out key issues centered on power as well as knowledge creation and dissemination, (see **Conceptual Framework** section) inherent to the key knowledge claim underlying this study.

Many of the assumptions of sense-making align with suggestions made by Kong, Mahoney, and Plummer (2001) for queering the interview. The authors address four elements that problematize how popular methods essentialize, or describe based on a set of innate characteristics, an LGBTQ+ experience (p. 242-244). These elements include: a) the problem with the subjective representation of participants, specifically who and what is being heard by the researcher during the interviews, b) the procedural issue of legitimation, or how an interview is represented as text, c) reflexivity, which represents the connection between researcher and participant, and d) politics, morality, and ethics (p. 244-245). Some of the key

assumptions of sense-making adopted by this dissertation are now overviewed, folding in methodological suggestions of how to queer the interview. As might be expected, many of the methodological implications will apply to the interview method specifically, however, there are also some implications for the second phase of data collection, which is analysis of Question-Best Answer pairs from the LGBT thread of Yahoo! Answers.

Sense-making Methodology

Some of the key assumptions of sense-making adopted by this dissertation are the importance of considering context, adopting a process orientation, conceiving of participants as theorists, envisioning information as structural, exercising researcher reflexivity, and embracing a utopian imagination (Dervin, 1983, 1999, 2003). Each of these assumptions is briefly summarized with information on how each methodological premise informed resultant choice of methods.

Context. Contextualism contends that individuals and their worlds co-constitute one another; neither are independent entities (Dervin, 2003, p. 124). This premise has two consequences for this research. First, contextual stability is an illusion. Instead, “reality is in a continuous and always incomplete process of becoming” (Dervin, 2003, p. 116). Accordingly, LGBTQ+ identities are “de-essentialized” in both data collection and analysis; there exists “no clear type of person,” but rather “multiple pathways and experiences” shaping these identities (Kong, Mahoney, & Plummer, 2001, p. 93; Hamer, 2003, p. 78). Second, context sits at the locus between form and process, as well as within their mutual interdependencies (Dervin, 2003, p. 117). This premise signifies a postmodern return to materiality made within this research, specifically its focus on technological artifacts (Latour, 1996, p. 370; 2005, p. 70-78) and embodiment (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 57-58). At first blush, this premise might appear to refute the “information-as-process” perspective (Buckland, 1991, p. 351). However,

materiality in this research is envisioned as inseparable from practice. The materiality of one's body, or of a technological artifact, is assigned during an interaction rather than inherent.¹ While materials do shape what practices are available and meanings applied to them, it is unclear where the material ends and the symbolic begins.

Process orientation. A process orientation signifies not privileging outcome over process (Dervin, 1999, p. 740). It refutes the idea that information is a “given,” or an objective reflection of reality, as well as the related transmission model of information where, given that information reflects reality, its transmission always leads to a successful outcome (Shannon & Weaver, 1963; Dervin, 1999, p. 740-741). This transmission model is reflected in discussions of information access, e.g., some digital divide studies, which contend that simply providing someone with access to information will fulfill their related information need. In this work, information access and use do not deterministically lead to “good” outcomes or even one outcome, but rather multiple, contradictory ones (Dervin, 1999, p. 740-741). Therefore, this research does not make the implicit assumption that “there is one right way to produce knowledge” (Dervin, 1999, p. 732), but rather investigates what practices are useful “under some conditions and methodologically mandates research to unearth these conditions” (Dervin, 1999, p. 732). To unearth these conditions, attention must be paid to how processes occur across space-time rather than “collaps[ing] many instances of sense-making into one final outcome” (Dervin, 1999, p. 740).

Participants as theorists. Envisioning participants as theorists in their own information worlds reflects the larger constructionist premise of this study that knowledge is not grounded in absolute reality, but rather embedded in cultural and social contexts (Berger

1. Latour similarly argues that the technical and material are not synonymous given technology constitutes a blurring of the material and the symbolic (for a brief, explicit treatment, see Latour, 2014).

& Luckman, 1963, p. 56-61; Talja, 1997, p. 77; Dervin, 1999, p. 733). This methodological move rejects a focus of LIS research on purposive information seeking, which positions individuals as uncertain and unknowing until their information needs are met (Frohmann 1992, p. 379; Talja, 1997, p. 69-74; Julien, 1999, p. 586; Olsson, 2010, p. 243). Instead, this study recognizes the participant as “an expert in her world (e.g. of her body, her work, her life) ... with hunches, hypotheses, and generalizations about how things connect to things and how power flows” (Dervin, 1999, p. 740). Adopting this perspective mandates the researcher to trust participants as being able to “talk about their confusions and stumblings” (Dervin, 1999, p. 734) and translate their knowledge from the unarticulated, e.g., embodied, to the articulated (Dervin, 1999, p. 734). This premise also dispels the privileging of information presumed to derive from “fact” or cognition. Information is not only limited to the cognitive realm, but also encompasses the heart, body, and spirit (Dervin, 1999, p. 739; Olsson, 2010, p. 249-251).

Information as structural. Recognizing information as “inherently a structural term,” (Dervin, 1999, p. 738) is not synonymous with envisioning information as fixed. Structures represent both “medium and outcome of the practices they recursively organize” (Giddens, 1984, p. 25). In other words, structures are constantly being changed as they are enacted in practice, but given their fixity in society appear slower to change over time (Schutz, 1964, p. 11 as cited in Dervin, 2003, p. 117; Giddens, 1984, p. 25-26). The importance of recognizing the structural nature of information is in understanding the conditions “that permits [*sic*] the definers to do their defining” (Berger & Luckmann, 1963, p. 134), namely the “cultural and political discourses” (Kong, Mahoney, & Plummer, 2001, p. 241) that describe LGBTQ+ realities. Yet these discourses do not only operate at the cultural level, e.g., assumed heterosexuality, but also within social groups, e.g., “normalization of the mainstream gay” (Kong, Mahoney, & Plummer, 2001, p. 241). To address information as structural, there must

be a “recognition of a range of experiences” and focus on the “new groups on the ‘outside’” of LGBTQ+ (Kong, Mahoney, & Plummer, 2001, p. 241) by the researcher. This premise aligns with Buckland’s “information-as-knowledge” (Buckland, 1991, p. 351) category.

Reflexivity of the researcher. The researcher is not neutral or objective (Dervin, 1983, 1999, 2003; Kong, Mahoney, & Plummer, 2001). Rather, the researcher has already imposed their own assumptions of how the world works when conceiving of a research problem and defining its importance. Dervin (1999, p. 736-737) contends that all research is interpreted through a “quadruple hermeneutic,” in which: a) methodology involves interpretations, b) which are made by researched human beings, c) and interpreted by the researchers, d) of how people interpret interpretations. A consequence of adopting this view is that it problematizes the argument that the researcher should be a member of the group that they study (Merton, 1972, p. 22) given that insider membership status does not circumvent this hermeneutic. Further, this hermeneutic also brings to bear the power imbalance between the researcher and those being researched (Kong Mahoney, & Plummer, 2001, p. 245-246).

Utopian imagination. One of the goals of this dissertation is to critique assumptions made by the human information behavior (HIB) sub-area of LIS. Yet just as essential as this critique is to put forth suggestions for how information systems and agencies can better serve individuals with LGBTQ+ identities. A utopian imagination tries to break free of “unstated assumptions embedded in the normatively accepted defining discourses of the system” (Dervin, 1999, p. 734) to redesign and reinvent the role of information agencies and systems in the lives of individuals with LGBTQ+ identities. Thus, the specific framework employed in this research examines ways to understand individuals with LGBTQ+ identities minimally addressed within HIB, while also putting forth utopian “universals” or practice-based implications (Dervin, 1999, p. 734).

Summary. The sense-making methodology complements an information practice approach. Specifically, sense-making interrogates the power dynamics inherent to information and knowledge, rather than envisioning them as objective and neutral. While sense-making differs from an information practice approach in a few, key ways, it contains parallel metatheoretical assumptions and an extensive history of applicability in cross-disciplinary, interdisciplinary, and multimethod words (Dervin, 1999, p. 729). Key sense-making tenants used in this work are considering context, adopting a process orientation, conceiving of participants as theorists, envisioning information as structural, exercising researcher reflexivity, and embracing a utopian imagination (Dervin, 1983, 1999, 2003). When combined, these tenants empower research participants by allowing them to express their lived realities with limited constraints imposed by the researcher on the collection and analysis of these data. Such constraints are addressed by interrogating the assumptions made by the research design, including its strategies of inquiry. These strategies are now outlined and follow the key tenants of sense-making informing this study's methodology.

Strategies of Inquiry

The methodological assumptions detailed in the previous section informed the “strategies of inquiry” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 246; Cresswell, 2014, p. 41), or plan for enactment of the research design. This research employs a qualitative design comprised of emic/etic and mixed methods approaches to collect and analyze textual data from individual interviews and social media discourse.

A qualitative design was felt by the researcher to best address a research problem central to this dissertation: that the current theories and frameworks used to explain the information practices of individuals with LGBTQ+ identities within the LIS field and sub-area of HIB do not account for their lived realities. Qualitative research is well-suited for

“exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem” (Cresswell, 2014, p. 32), especially for topics where existing theories do not apply to the group under study (Cresswell, 2003, p. 23). To describe the meanings elicited from individuals of interest, the researcher collected data in participant settings (e.g., an interview location of the participant’s choosing, the LGBT thread of Yahoo! Answers), generated themes to describe the data, and engaged in interpretive analysis (Cresswell, 2014, p. 32).

An emic/etic approach was used within the qualitative research design. Emic viewpoints are exercised by the study participants and represent “the meanings and purposes that people ascribe to their actions” (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 110). On the other hand, etic viewpoints represent the epistemological and ontological constructions of the researcher, articulated within the conceptual framework (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 114). In other words, etic viewpoints are deductively generated by the researcher and imposed on the data being analyzed, while emic viewpoints are inductive and emerge from participant accounts (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 61; See also Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014, p. 81). Note that “these perspectives are not mutually exclusive and can be used in combination to yield a nuanced and ‘multidimensional’ view of the research context at hand” (Connaway & Radford, 2017, p. 215). In addition, the researcher has personally experienced some of the re-identification and socialization inherent to claiming a queer identity disparate to the one in which she was socialized and enculturated. From this lived experience, the researcher observed how her information practices and experiences have not been reflected in the LIS and HIB literature and, therefore, wanted to capture the emic accounts of participants rather than solely imposing etic, theoretical assumptions. An emic/etic approach proves appropriate for this research given the dual desire of the researcher to test the validity of the conceptual framework and uncover emic views of participants that might build on or contradict etic perspectives.

In addition to an emic/etic approach, the researcher uses mixed methods. Mixed methods constitute multiple methods of data collection and/or analysis (Bryman, 2006, p. 97-99; Connaway & Radford, 2017, p. 229). For this dissertation, the following methods are mixed: a) data collection methods, interviews and data scraped from a social media site, and b) the type of data used, semi-structured data from the interview protocol and unstructured data from the social media site. A mixed methods approach provides multiple lenses through which to look at the same problem – “a researcher seeking to learn from the data, rather than test a theory already arrived at, will usually be helped by having more than one way of looking at what is being studied” (Richards, 2005, p. 35). Using mixed methods facilitates data collection from both social group and cultural levels, emphasizing the “practices” stance taken by this research, as opposed to a “behaviors” one. The interview data captured the perspectives of individuals with LGBTQ+ identities at the social group level. In many instances, individuals recruited knew one another personally due to the researcher’s use of snowball sampling, a method well-suited for populations difficult to identify and locate (Connaway & Radford, 2017, p. 135-136) and conducive to inductive analysis (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014, p. 32). The researcher interviewed members of an online meet-up group, friends, and partners in relationships, for example. While each participant had their own experiences, they shared ideological similarities, e.g., alignment with the label “queer” to describe their identities, having attended college. The LGBT thread data depict a cultural perspective as participants are not likely to know one another in person and exhibit weak relational ties with others rather than the strong ones exhibited between some interview participants (Boase & Wellman, 2006, p. 724).

Summary. Per the above **Methodology** section, a goal of this research is to capture how participants interpret their own lived realities, rather than the researcher imposing her

own assumptions on them. For this reason, the researcher selected a qualitative research design. To exercise reflexivity in recognizing the inevitability of her assumptions shaping the research, the researcher employed an emic/etic approach. In this approach, the researcher identified her own assumptions by creating deductive, etic codes, while comparing these codes to emic, participant accounts, inductively derived from the data. Mixed methods were employed to capture both social group and cultural perspectives inherent to the information worlds theory informing the conceptual framework (Burnett & Jaeger, 2008; Jaeger & Burnett, 2010). The specific methods of data collection and analysis are now discussed.

Methods

Defined as “any procedure employed to attain a certain end” (Runes, 1942, p. 346), methods are directly informed by metatheory and strategies of inquiry, “tak[ing] their validity and reliability from their participation in a particular system of inquiry” (Polkinghorne, 1983, p. 6). The subsequent discussion of methods is separated into the broad categories of data collection and analysis, followed by a discussion of validity and ethical concerns. This discussion is somewhat difficult to organize given the two data collection stages overlap in terms of their analysis, but also pose distinct ethical considerations and validity concerns. Therefore, each section will be split into sub-sections for each data source – interviews and Social Question-answering (SQA) data – with sub-sections not being created in instances where there exists a complete overlap in treatment of methods.

Data Collection

Two data collection methods were used by the researcher to study individuals with LGBTQ+ identities – interviews and Question-Best Answer pairs from LGBT thread of Yahoo! Answers. The data collection decisions unique to each method are now discussed.

Interviews

For this study, the researcher interviewed 30 individuals between the ages of 18 and 38 who identify as LGBTQ+. Interviews are a common method in LIS (Connaway & Radford, 2017, p. 239). Connaway and Radford detail several reasons for using the interview method, three of which are informed by the research methodology: “finding out about the past, understanding participants’ experiences and perspectives via stories, accounts, and explanations, [and] discovering participants’ language forms” (2017, p. 239). Finding out about the past is important given the process orientation of the research, while understanding participants’ stories and language forms solidifies their role as theorists and experts within their own lives.

This latter methodological stance of envisioning participants as theorists accounts for why interviews rather than participant observations constituted the data collected. The researcher did not want to limit what these practices can be for people, she wanted to hear how participants described these practices in their own words. Further, there were certain practices detailed by participants that the researcher would not be able to, or at the very least would encounter significant difficulty in observing, such as sexual experiences, getting kicked out of one’s house, and binding one’s breasts, which are all essential to how participants constitute meaning within their lived realities.

Participant selection. One initial question regarding data collection – why focus on individuals with LGBTQ+ identities? Goffman (1963, p. 44) identifies four ways that people negotiate stigmatized² identities over time: a) having an inborn stigma in which the individual is exposed to the differences between themselves and others during primary socialization, b)

2. The researcher recognizes that Goffman’s (1963) use of “stigma” does not represent how most participants describe their identities. She employs the word “stigma” to contextualize Goffman’s typology only and not to suggest that LGBTQ+ identities represent stigmas.

being insulated during primary socialization from the consequences of a stigmatized status, c) becoming stigmatized later in life and experiencing issues with re-identification and self-disapproval, and d) learning a second way of being later in life that is considered “normal.” Individuals with LGBTQ+ identities tend to fall into the middle two categories, which allows the researcher to examine contrasting sociocultural contexts conducive or unfavorable (or somewhere in-between) to fostering information practices centered around LGBTQ+ identities. Since LGBTQ+ labels are not mutually exclusive, in many cases the researcher was also able to collect accounts where participants were beginning to question or explore other facets of their identity aside from the primary LGBTQ+ label discussed.

Participants between the ages of 18 and 38 were selected for three reasons. First, as indicated by the methodology, one of the key aims of this study was to capture past, present, and future information practices. Given that the average age of those identifying as lesbian, gay, and bisexual is approximately 16 years old (Savin-Williams, 2009, p. 163), as compared to the 1980s, when individuals were between 19 and 23 (Savin-Williams, 2009, p. 118), recruiting individuals 18 or older made it likely to capture those who began to re-identify and/or engage in a second way of being (Goffman, 1963, p. 44), rather than those still questioning their identities.³ Second, recruiting individuals under the age of 18 would likely involve obtaining parental consent, which could pose a social risk for participants, particularly if their parents are unaware of their LGBTQ+ identities. Third and finally, participants that are 18 to 38 years old can be described as having traits and values shaped by their interactions with the internet, namely social media sites (Howe & Strauss, 2009, p. 4; “Social Media Use by Age Group Over Time,” 2016).

3. Similar data does not appear to exist for individuals who identify as labels other than bisexual, gay, or lesbian, e.g., transgender, queer, genderfluid, non-binary, etcetera. Therefore this number can only be viewed as a rough estimate.

Recruitment. Recruitment occurred over a two-year period, from November 2014 to November 2016. This extended period was due to the researcher having trouble identifying and recruiting individuals with LGBTQ+ identities for this research. Such difficulty can be attributed, in part, to the small proportion of the individuals who have LGBTQ+ identities. The Williams Institute, which combines Census and Gallup survey data, estimates that individuals who identify as LGBTQ+ represent approximately 3.8% of the US population (“LGBT Data and Demographics,” 2016).⁴ Further, individuals may not want to disclose their identities or discuss some of the information elicited by the interview that can be sensitive or place them under emotional duress. Selecting an interviewing method addressed these recruitment difficulties given that “large numbers of informants are not necessary [to use this method], especially for exploratory investigations that are seeking initial, exploratory, information, not seeking to generalize to a larger population (as is the case in quantitative research)” (Connaway & Radford, 2017, p. 241).

Snowball sampling is useful “when members of the population are difficult to identify and locate” (Connaway & Radford, 2017, p. 135) and for exploratory research (p. 136). The premise of snowball sampling is to identify members of the desired research population, asking them to participate in the research and to identify others who might participate. The researcher sent an email script (see **Appendix D: Email Recruitment Script**) to personal contacts who identify as LGBTQ+, as well as relevant organizations, e.g., the Rutgers Center for Social Justice Education and LGBT Communities. Once the researcher identified an initial round of

4. This estimate may not be indicative of all those sampled for this research, given it does not explicitly count those who do not identify with the LGBTQ+ label or those who may not feel comfortable disclosing their sexual orientations and/or gender identities to polling units. Further, specific groups within the LGBTQ+ umbrella do not share equal population proportions, such as transgender individuals, who represent 0.3% of the population.

participants, she then asked them to forward the recruitment script to others they knew who might want to participate.

The researcher also engaged in purposive sampling over time. This method is used to identify participants based on the research objectives (Connaway & Radford, 2017, p. 136). As interviews began, the researcher found that many participants considered themselves as outsiders, not only within larger culture, but also within the social groups to which they belonged that identified as LGBTQ+. This social group outsiderism was found to be salient to the stated research methodology, which envisions information as structural (Dervin, 1999, p. 738) not only at the cultural level, but also at the social group level. Because this finding emerged during the iterative data collection and analysis inherent to qualitative research (Charmaz, 2014, p. 1; Connaway & Radford, 2017, p. 289), the researcher modified data collection to incorporate purposive sampling for “maximum diversity and maximum contest” (Dervin, 1999, p. 738) to determine what is “unworkable about the ‘information’ currently classified as expert or knowledgeable” (p. 738) within social groups. Specifically, the researcher selected participants who identify as queer, bisexual, and transgender – three underrepresented identities not reflected within mainstream understandings of LGBTQ+ identities.

Interview protocol. The research methodology informed development of the interview protocol in several ways. First, the use of a flexible, semi-structured protocol facilitated interviews that were “much more active, reflexive, and reflective” (Kong, Mahoney, and Plummer, 2001, p. 241) than a fixed, structured set of questions. Interviews were conversational, a technique that allowed participants to bring up topics that might not be included in the protocol, ultimately allowing the researcher to share with participants some of the perceived power inherent to an interview situation (Shuy, 2003, p. 187; Rothbauer, 2004, p. 91; Connaway & Radford, 2017, p. 241). Further, the protocol questions that were asked

employed “how” rather than “what” questions to avoid envisioning information as a fixed set of outcomes, rather than a process (Dervin, 1999, p. 731).

To envision participants as theorists, the researcher employed a nonlinear focus on LGBTQ+ identity development, rather than a psychological view of it as proceeding in stages (Hamer, 2003, p. 77). The interview questions did not presume, for example, that identity disclosure, popularly regarded as “coming out,” was perceived to be an important or even necessary practice. Instead, the interview protocol asked participants to define their LGBTQ+ identities and information practices in their own words (Hamer, 2003, p. 79).

Questions focused on the past, present, and future, as well as the connections made between them (Dervin, 1999, p. 744). Participants were asked to recollect events over different time periods by using two techniques. The critical incident technique (CIT) asks participants to recount their information practices during a recent, memorable moment (Flanagan, 1954, p. 327) within the last six months. The second technique, a “total Time-Line,” asks participants to consider a longer period from when they first became aware of their LGBTQ+ identities to the present – as well as future goals and aspirations – and focus on the “‘most important’ step[s]” bridging these points in time (Dervin, 1983, p. 3). **Table 2** displays selected questions from the interview protocol and their alignment with the research methodology. For a full list of questions, refer to **Appendix F: Final Codebook**.

Table 2. Sample Interview Protocol Questions

Question	Methodology	Method
Please describe in your own words what an <i>LGBTQ+ identity</i> [for italicized text, refer to the participant’s preferred label(s)] means to you.	Sense-making; Participant as theorist	
Think back to one of the first times you began to explore an <i>LGBTQ+ identity</i> : a. What were some of the goals you wanted to achieve by adopting this identity? b. How did you fulfill these identified goals?	Sense-making; Information-as-process	Total time-line

Question	Methodology	Method
c. What were some significant challenges or barriers faced in fulfilling these goals? d. What resources or experiences helped you the most in fulfilling these goals? e. How did this purpose and goals change over time, or did they change over time? f. Do you find the ability to fulfill your current goals is easier, more difficult, or unchanged when compared to your past goals?		
Think back over the last six months, can you remember a time when you spoke to someone about your <i>LGBTQ+ identity</i> which was particularly positive or memorable in a good way? Describe what happened. What was it that made it so positive or memorable in a good way?	Sense-making; Information-as-process	CIT

Interview process. Interviews were conducted either face-to-face (n=10, 33%), via Skype (n=19, 63%), or FaceTime (n=1, 3%), depending on the preference and location of the participant. When interviews were conducted face-to-face, they were at a location of the participant's choosing, allowing the participant to have some control over the interview process. Meeting locations included the homes of participants, coffee shops, and meeting rooms at Rutgers University.

Before the interview, participants were emailed an informed consent form, approved by the Rutgers Institutional Review Board (IRB), which specified the study purpose as well as the risks, benefits, and compensation for participating. Participants also received a form indicating that the audio of the interview would be recorded. They signed and scanned the forms, then emailed them back to the researcher prior to the interview. They were compensated with \$25 for their participation. See **Appendix E: Informed Consent and Audio-recording Consent Forms** for a copy of the informed consent and audio recording forms.

Each interview was audio-recorded and transcribed. The length of the interview averaged 56 minutes, which amounted to over 200 single-spaced pages of transcripts. Following data collection and analysis, all interview recordings were deleted. In addition, all email correspondences between the researcher and participants were also deleted. Two thumb drives containing the digital files of interview audio and participant email communications are kept in a locked drawer. Up to the point of deletion, all digital files were stored on a password-protected computer, in password-protected folders.

The only identifying information about participants elicited was their year of birth and location. Participants' real names are only known to the researcher and kept in a separate password-protected folder with their email addresses. Year of birth and location were recorded on the transcripts, as well each participant's chosen pseudonym. However, in all presentation of the research findings the participant will only be linked to their year of birth, not their current location, to prevent triangulation of information that would potentially identify them. Past participant locations are revealed per participant discretion.

Social Question-answering Data

To gain a deeper understanding of LGBTQ+ information practices, the researcher also extracted Question-Best Answer pairs from the LGBT thread of Yahoo! Answers. As detailed in the **Literature Review**, ongoing research in LIS and Computer Science (CS) studies SQA sites, alternatively referred to as Community Question-Answering (CQA) sites. These sites can either be examined on their own or to triangulate multiple populations and data collection techniques to obtain a deeper understanding of a specific phenomenon (see Westbrook, 2008). Triangulation denotes the use of multiple methods to measure the same phenomenon and is used synonymously with mixed methods by some researchers (Gorman & Clayton, 2008, p. 12; Connaway & Radford, 2017, p. 106-107). As explicated in the above **Strategies of Inquiry**

section, collecting data from Yahoo! Answers allows the researcher to incorporate cultural context into the analysis, addressing one of the research goals: to examine how sociocultural context shapes and is shaped by information practices.

Rogers distinguishes between digital and virtual methods with the latter representing migration of “social science instrumentarium online” (2015, p. 8). An example would be the use of Skype to conduct interviews. Digital methods use methods native to the medium, i.e., “written for the online medium, rather than migrated to it” (Rogers, 2015, p. 9). Due to the instability of the medium conditions, digital methods are “experimental and situational” (Rogers, 2015, p. 9). For example, Yahoo! Answers offered an application programming interface (API) to scrape data. However, this API was discontinued as of June 3, 2014,⁵ making it necessary for researchers collecting site data to either develop new data collection methods or discontinue data collection from the site.

This change directly impacted data collection for this research. The researcher had collected data from 2014 using the API and wanted to collect data again in 2016 to create a longitudinal sample. To collect 2016 data, the researcher had to create a new series of methods, including web scraping and data cleaning. **Appendix C: Yahoo! Answers Scraping Instructions** details these methods and can be used by other researchers to collect data up to three weeks prior. Unfortunately, these methods cannot overcome the constraints placed on researchers who wish to collect historical data. Therefore, it is recommended that researchers looking for older data sets consult those maintained by Yahoo! Answers to identify any relevant to their research objectives.⁶

5. See <https://yahoodevelopers.tumblr.com/post/86260183503/yahoo-answers-apis-will-be-removed-as-of-june-3>.

6. See <https://webscope.sandbox.yahoo.com/>.

Site selection. Yahoo! Answers is an SQA site often regarded as an object of ridicule based on its lack of quality content.⁷ Further, usage statistics, while sporadically reported from Yahoo! and other analytics sources, indicate a decline in use from its peak in the late 2000s and early 2010s.⁸ These two observations might raise questions regarding the viability of Yahoo! Answers as a source for data collection.

Even taking such a decline into consideration, preliminary results from initial interviews used in the pilot study (see the **Pilot Study Method and Findings** section) suggest that Yahoo! Answers provides a rich site for data collection. Specifically, participants noted the difficulty of locating resources when first exploring LGBTQ+ identities. As stated by pilot study participant Eva, “I wish there was a handbook you get because it's hard to know where to look.” This difficulty seemed to emanate from cultural factors, such as fear of adopting an LGBTQ+ identity, but also from social ones, namely one’s outsider status due to a lack of socialization into LGBTQ+ social groups (Merton, 1972, p. 15). Stefan, a dissertation study participant, recalls the barriers they faced when locating information about non-cisgender identities – namely, their outsider status and “notknowing the language.”

To counter not knowing the language, participants relied on sites that did not restrict them to a controlled search vocabulary. As observed by dissertation participant Rose:

Google’s (<https://www.google.com/>) great because you can type in a whole question. Recently, the girl I had a crush on, I kissed her at some point, so I put in ‘Are you gay if you kissed a girl?’ Questions like that that were really specific based on my own experiences hoping something might come up that was similar.

7. See <http://mashable.com/2014/02/18/yahoo-answers-tech/#OMhq8TNfcSql>.

8. Although not always the most reliable, Wikipedia reports, to the best of the researcher’s knowledge, the most comprehensive reports of Yahoo! Answers use. See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yahoo!_Answers#Site_statistics.

The results presented by Google to Rose in response were “mostly stuff from Yahoo! Answers. People talking about their own experiences very similar to mine where they’re not sure and they don’t feel comfortable with the situation.” As indicated by Rose’s account, content from Yahoo! Answers may emerge as a top search result in response to questions expressed in natural language. While Yahoo! Answers may be experiencing a general decline in active users, such a decline does not necessarily apply to those consuming site content.

Data collection. The researcher collected content posted to the LGBT thread of Yahoo! Answers during two time periods – 2014 and 2016. Collecting a longitudinal sample reinforces the methodological stance of this dissertation on “information-as-process” (Buckland, 1991, p. 351; Dervin, 1999, p. 740-741). Specifically, 850 Question-Best Answer pairs were collected between February 26, 2014 and March 17, 2014 and 800 Question-Best Answer pairs were collected between February 26, 2016 and March 17, 2016. Both time frames represent a typical few weeks, in which there were no extraordinary events concerning individuals with LGBTQ+ identities. Sufficient data (1,650 Question-Best Answer pairs) were obtained for this exploratory study within this time frame.

Data collection was limited to Question-Answer pairs in which the asker rated the answer as “Best Answer” since these pairs represent information that provided askers with some sort of satisfaction, meaning, and/or credibility. To the best of the researcher’s knowledge, all Question-Best Answer pairs from the thread were scraped within these time periods. However, there is no way to verify the comprehensibility of the data collected, so it must be specified that the researcher scraped the data that was available rather than an exhaustive sample. From these Question-Best Answer pairs, the researcher randomly sampled 150 pairs from each year, creating a data set for analysis of 300 pairs.

To protect the anonymity of participants, the researcher only collected the question subject, i.e., a short text box in which an asker can write a question or short description, question content, i.e., a longer text box where the asker can elaborate on the subject, the best answer, and the date the question was posted. This latter data point was collected to verify that the researcher was capturing data from the specified date range and was not used for data analysis. User names, which could identify individuals, were not collected. Like the interview data, the Question-Best Answer pairs are saved to a password-protected folder. Further, verbatim Question-Best Answer content is not quoted in the dissertation. Instead, it is paraphrased to prevent content from being pasted into a search engine and used to identify participants due to the site being publically available and indexed by search engines.

This method of data collection should not be viewed as participant observation nor virtual ethnography (see Hine, 2000).⁹ Participant observation can be defined as the researcher residing in a specific place inhabited by a given social group, actively participating in their daily lives, and observing their everyday interactions (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 467). Although translating this method into digital contexts requires redefining concepts such as space, social groups, and even observation (Tsatsou, 2016, p. 108-109), participant observation in virtual spaces requires some degree of researcher interactivity (Hine, 2000, p. 65), which is not present in data collection.¹⁰ One advantage to the researcher's presence being unobtrusive is that she may capture data from participants unwilling to communicate directly (Angrosino &

9. The term "virtual ethnography" is contested for its use of the word "virtual," which presumes that all meaning making occurs online. Cyberethnography denotes the study of individuals in both physical and virtual environments given these interrelate in people's everyday lives (see Teli, Pisanu, & Hakken, 2007).

10. It should be noted that researchers also make the case for unobtrusive observation as a form of participant observation online given that many individuals "lurk," rather than produce content (see Gatson, 2013, p. 251-252). While reading online is performative, the researcher also envisions reading offline as encapsulating the same degree of performativity (de Certeau, 1984). Yet reading a physical book, while active and offering the reader a "place," is not considered participant observation, given that the latter would hinge on the researcher both observing and interviewing participants about their reading practices.

Rosenberg, 2014, p. 473). At the same time not obtaining informed consent from online research participants poses privacy concerns (Connaway & Radford, 2017, p. 349), addressed in the **Ethics** section.

Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis and the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 102-103; Charmaz, 2014, p. 107; Corbin & Strauss, 2015, p. 85) were used on both the interview transcripts and Question-Best Answer pairs. The purpose of qualitative data analysis is “to identify patterns and themes in the data, [and] to discover relationships and insights into the key issue or problem that is being investigated” (Connaway & Radford, 2017, p. 288). This form of analysis is iterative and occurs simultaneously with data collection (Charmaz, 2014, p. 1; Connaway & Radford, 2017, p. 289). For example, preliminary analysis of interviews informed site selection and analysis of Yahoo! Answers Question-Best Answer pairs, as well as refinement of the interview protocol and sampling methods. When engaging in qualitative data analysis, the researcher must also maintain sensitivity to issues participants find relevant, rather than imposing a paradigmatic stance on the data (Marshall & Rossman, 2016, p. 214; Connaway & Radford, 2017, p. 288-289). Maintaining sensitivity allows the researcher to further position participants as theorists within their own information worlds.

Using the metatheoretical and theoretical orientations of the conceptual framework (see the **Conceptual Framework** section), the researcher developed a provisional list of codes and grouped them by thematic category to create a preliminary coding scheme (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014, p. 81). The researcher then imported all transcripts, Question-Best Answer pairs, and field notes into NVivo, a qualitative research environment. NVivo enabled the researcher to change and assign codes, calculate inter-coder reliability (ICR), and generate coding queries (Connaway & Radford, 2017, p. 292). While coding the data, the

researcher relied on the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 102-103; Charmaz, 2014, p. 107; Corbin & Strauss, 2015, p. 85). This method is defined as “the analytic process of comparing different pieces of data against each other for similarities and differences” (Corbin & Strauss, 2015, p. 87). Such comparison enabled the researcher to refine concepts based on themes inductively elicited from the data, categorize these concepts under high-level thematic categories, and identify illustrative exemplars for each category, or code, from the data. The constant comparative method complements an emic/etic approach because it enables identification of emic codes to refine the preliminary etic coding scheme.

The researcher found that a sample of 300 Question-Best Answer pairs and 30 interview transcripts was sufficient to achieve saturation for the coding scheme.¹¹ Saturation is defined as the instance where no new data are providing insights nor are new coding categories discovered (Charmaz, 2014, p. 214-216). Charmaz (2014, p. 214-216) notes how saturation is often used uncritically and suggests that “researchers need to be self-critical about saturation at multiple levels of conceptual development” (p. 215). The researcher was self-critical at various stages of her iterative research process. Along with use of the constant comparative method, the researcher revised her research questions several times to ensure the scope of the questions was appropriate to the data being collected and engaged in purposive sampling to inform the development of emic coding categories. Yet saturation does not signify “a teleological closed system,” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 215) in which no further analysis should be performed. Instead, saturation indicates that the coding scheme provides a good “fit” for the data being described. **Table 3** (see next page) depicts an excerpt of the codebook. The full codebook is presented in **Appendix F: Final Codebook**.

11. Given that field notes were intended to maintain researcher reflexivity, their analysis was not counted toward theoretical saturation.

Table 3. Codebook Excerpt

Code	Definition	References	Example
Social types	Who is taken seriously within a culture or small world	(Burnett, Lee, Hollister, Skinner, 2014)	
Social types\Insiders	People who act “appropriately” within a social group or culture; may have access to certain types of privileged knowledge, but not necessarily	(Merton, 1972; Chatman, 1996; Jaeger & Burnett, 2010)	
Social types\Insiders\Within a culture	People who act “appropriately” within a culture (e.g., heterosexuals); people who have positions of power within the larger culture		<p>"I don't see myself in a relationship with any white, straight identified cisgender man..." (Emerson)</p> <p>We can get rid of one participant, but another takes over. Oh well. There are a million more homophobic people than gays as it is. (Yahoo! Answers asker)</p>
Social types\Insiders\Within a social group	People who act “appropriately” within a social group (e.g., people who identify as either lesbian or gay in a social group where bisexuality is frowned upon); people who have positions of power within the social group		<p>"Whenever there are these conversations about the LGBT agenda and gay marriage it tends to be quite dominated by white gay men and lesbians who I feel at the end of the day they're good on certain levels, so they have money, they have access, they're likely Christian or some you know religiously privileged in some way and then have access to many different things and they can be full humans in society if their sexuality is just accepted." (Amina)</p> <p>I'm a bi female and watch gay porn sometimes. I think it's ok. My other bi friend who's a girl</p>

The researcher considers information as structural by moving from “the abstract ‘What?’ to the sociologically concrete ‘Says who?’” (Berger & Luckmann, 1963, p. 134). To make this move, the researcher added insiders and outsiders as deductive coding categories, specifying this division at both social group and cultural levels (Merton, 1972; Chatman, 1996; Jaeger & Burnett, 2010). As mentioned in the above **Strategies of Inquiry** section, the researcher’s emphasis on developing inductive, emic codes to refine her deductive, etic coding scheme also reflected the methodological framing of participants as theorists.

Validity

Threats to the validity of qualitative research include four types: a) credibility, or how well the researcher represents participants’ accounts, b) transferability, or the degree to which findings can be applied to other settings, c) dependability, or how well the researcher accounts for changing research context, and d) conformability, or whether results can be corroborated by others (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). How the researcher addressed each threat is now overviewed.

Potential threats to credibility include the imposition of the researcher’s own interpretation on participants’ reflections, experiences, and actions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 295-296). A specific credibility concern for this research is addressed in the question: What does it mean for the researcher to be an insider or outsider within a specific group? To address, this question, the researcher borrows from Merton. In his discussion of insiders and outsiders, Merton (1972, p. 22) challenges “total Insider (and Outsider) doctrines of social epistemology,” or the argument that one must be an insider in a social group to understand its members. He contends that this doctrine cannot exist due to the “internal differentiation” within groups of insiders (p. 23). In other words, while the researcher might be an insider within the larger umbrella of LGBTQ+ identities, there are structural differences between her, a white, cisgender queer woman who “passes” as heterosexual (Goffman, 1963, p. 57) and a

non-white, genderqueer individual who reads as non-hetero and non-cis normative. While the researcher's experiences may inform her sensitivity to normative social structures that she construes as oppressive, she is not better equipped to describe the interplay of these structures within participants' lives than the participants themselves (Dervin, 1999, p. 740). Instead of considering herself as knowledgeable of what others are going through, the researcher instead positions herself as yielding power in her researcher role to participants.

To yield some of this power and counter credibility threats within interviews, the researcher employs member checking, which "determine[s] the accuracy of the qualitative findings through taking the final report or specific descriptions or themes back to participants and determining whether these participants feel that they are accurate" (Cresswell, 2013, p. 251). A draft write-up of the findings chapter was sent to all interview participants and they were asked to comment, via email or using a commenting tool, on their assessments of the chapter's accuracy in capturing their lived experiences (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 314; Cresswell, 2013, p. 251). Member checking was not conducted with Yahoo! Answers participants for reasons explicated in the subsequent **Ethics** section.

Transferability threats were addressed within the research approaches. By using an emic/etic approach, the researcher could compare inductive, emic findings with existing metatheoretical and theoretical frameworks via etic coding. A mixed methods approach facilitated comparison of findings across the two data sources.

To counter dependability threats, the researcher maintained field notes during data collection and analysis of both interview and Question-Best Answer data. These field notes provide clarification of "the bias the researcher brings to the study," specifically by inventorying how her "interpretation of the findings is shaped by [her] background," including race, socioeconomic origin, culture, history, gender, and sexual orientation (Cresswell, 2013,

p. 251-252). In these notes, the researcher wrote about her own thoughts and experiences, and took inventory of any notable events that might be shaping the data collected, e.g., an interview that was conducted after Donald Trump was elected into office, but prior to his inauguration. These notes contextualized interviews and Question-Best Answer pairs as produced within a specific point in time-space (Dervin, 1999, p. 730) and assisted the researcher when writing results from data collection and analysis.

Finally, conformability threats are addressed by calculating ICR. Specifically, the researcher sent 20% of the anonymized data (6 transcripts, 30 Question-Best Answer pairs) and the coding scheme to another coder. The researcher then trained the coder on the scheme before she proceeded with coding. ICR was calculated using Cohen's Kappa (Cohen, 1960). This statistic provides a more robust measure than % agreement since it prefigures some of this agreement occurring by chance (Connaway & Radford, 2017, p. 316). Once coding was completed by the second coder, the researcher calculated an ICR value for all coding categories as 0.94, which is indicative of very strong agreement.

Ethics

Research ethics can be divided into two types: procedural ethics and ethics in practice (Sharkey et al., 2011, p. 1). Procedural ethics denote formal regulations imposed by the IRB at Rutgers, whereas ethics in practice represent everyday issues that are more nuanced than what is covered by formal regulations (Sharkey et al., 2011, p. 1). The types of ethics and how they were addressed in the research design are now discussed.

The IRB application for this dissertation was approved in October 2014. The initial IRB draft was for the pilot study and approved interviews with 7 participants between the ages of 24 to 32. The IRB also approved qualitative data collection and analysis from public social media sites, i.e., sites that are not password protected, which specified in their Terms of Service

that data is publically accessible. The researcher purposefully did not name any social media sites in the IRB, instead indicating that her selection of a social media site would fulfill the criteria stated above and be mentioned by interview participants who would inform site selection. When the researcher was drafting her dissertation proposal a year later, she amended the IRB to include 15 participants and changed the age range to participants to between the ages of 18 to 38. Although the researcher made slight changes to the interview protocol after the original study was approved, the changes were not major and, therefore, the original protocol was not amended. The researcher feels that this decision was appropriate given that she specified in the IRB that the protocol would be semi-structured, meaning that smaller additions and changes based on how the participant directed the interview were to be expected. Upon approval of her dissertation proposal, the researcher filed a final amendment with the IRB to increase the proposed number of interview participants from 15 to 30 individuals. Changes to the IRB over time were based on the researcher's commitment to an iterative process of data collection and analysis, and the desire to analytically contend with the concept of theoretical saturation.

In the IRB, the researcher stated that all participant identities would be kept confidential, meaning that the researcher would know of their identities (whether physical or virtual), but no one else would. In the case of interview participants, the researcher took the following steps to preserve confidentiality: a) collecting only their year of birth and location, b) sending them interview transcripts where they could request removal of any potentially identifying information, c) saving all digital records indicating their identities on a password protected folder and computer, d) deleting all digital records indicating their identities and keeping two physical backups in a locked file cabinet upon completion of data collection, and e) using pseudonyms in all research reporting.

For Yahoo! Answers data, one of steps in data collection required scraping a link to each page on the thread where the question and all subsequent answers are located. Compiling these links provided the researcher with access to participant's user names, which in many cases might be synonymous to knowing their identities especially since identity construction is entangled within virtual spaces (Wakeford, 2000, p. 411). For this reason, links to the original Question-Best Answer threads were deleted once collected and saved on two thumb drives, both in locked file cabinets. The only other information collected was question subject, question description, answer, and date.

Outside of the IRB, the researcher also considered more nuanced ethical issues that were not mandated. For interviews, the researcher adopted the concept of "ethics as process" (Ramcharan & Cutcliffe, 2001, p. 363; Cutcliffe & Ramcharan, 2002, 1002t; Sharkey et al., 2011, p. 2), which considers how the researcher's relationship with participants might influence the study. One of the ways the researcher exercised ethics of process was to detect when the research became too intrusive or sensitive to participants (Cutcliffe & Ramcharan, 2002, 1002t) and adjust her approach accordingly. For instance, to end interviews, the researcher would ask, "Was there anything that I did not ask you that I should have?" This question not only elicited focused information from participants that they felt was relevant to the study, but also addressed anything about the interview that made participants uncomfortable. Over time, participant responses to this question assisted the researcher in presenting the negative CIT question. Originally, the researcher specified in the IRB that this question might risk eliciting emotionally sensitive information from participants. She did not consider that this risk could be addressed during the interview process beyond obtaining informed consent. Based on one participant response to the final interview question, the researcher decided to let participants know ahead of time about the negative CIT question by either sending them the protocol prior

to the interview or during the interview by saying the following before presenting the CIT questions: “I am going to ask you two questions now, one is positive and the other is negative. I will start with the positive.”

Reviewing field notes also improved researcher-participant interactions. The researcher strove to make interviews a positive experience where participants felt that their identities and experiences were respected. For instance, by using the verb “transition” when interviewing participants who did not identify as cisgender, the researcher assumed that all participants either felt that they needed gender confirmation surgery or that all non-cisgender identity development followed a linear process, in which one suddenly “becomes” transgender.¹² When one participant expressed her distaste of having the word “transition” being used to describe her experience, the researcher incorporated this information into future interviews with individuals who did not identify as cisgender by avoiding the verb “transition” unless the participant used it themselves. Following her methodological directive to position participants as theorists and incorporate “ethics-as-process” (Ramcharan & Cutcliffe, 2001, p. 363; Cutcliffe & Ramcharan, 2002, 1002t; Sharkey et al., 2011, p. 2), the researcher ensured her evolving relationships with participants shaped future data collection,

Collecting and working with data scraped from social media sites, such as Yahoo! Answers, raises several ethical issues not addressed by the IRB. While guidelines for internet research are available, it is “unclear to what extent ethics committees use these” (Sharkey et al., 2011, p. 1). For this reason, it is often left up to the researcher’s discretion what ethical directives should be implemented within a project. One guiding principle informing this research is the concept of “contextual integrity” (Barth et al., 2006, p. 185; Nissenbaum, 2010,

12. The researcher likely made this assumption due to her outsider status as a cisgender woman.

p. 140). This concept contends that when participants reveal information within a specific context, they have expectations of what will happen with that information within that context. Contextual integrity can be measured by four constructs: informational norms, appropriateness, roles, and principles of transmission (Barth et al., 2006, p. 185). Two constructs, informational norms and appropriateness, are relevant to this work and are now discussed.

Informational norms regulate the transmission of information from one party to another (Barth et al., 2006, p. 2). For instance, a website's Terms of Service communicate the rules an individual must agree to when using the site. Although some researchers contend that content analysis of public websites can be ethically appropriate without obtaining informed consent (Angrosino & Rosenberg, 2014, p. 473), participants do not generally read these Terms of Service or, even if they do, have a clear idea of what they mandate (Kennedy et al., 2016, p. 14-15). For this reason, the researcher debated whether to provide informed consent for those contributing Question-Best Answer pairs to the LGBT thread data collected. She ultimately chose not to do so for a few reasons. First, Yahoo! Answers affords ephemeral participation, which renders it difficult to obtain informed consent. Users can create multiple accounts or post anonymously; further, the site displays content based on how recently a question was asked, meaning that a post is only visible for a limited period. Second, the site has experienced participant attrition over the last few years, signifying that it would be difficult to contact posters who had left the site. Given that the data collected is longitudinal, it is less likely that participants from the 2014 period of data collection would ever be made aware that their data was collected. Therefore, the informal norms of ephemerality and the public nature of the site influenced the researcher's decision to not obtain informed consent.

The second construct of contextual integrity is appropriateness, or what information is permissible to collect within a given context (Barth et al., 2006, p. 3). Since the researcher was interested in analyzing Question-Best Answer pairs, she only collected this information in addition to the date the question was posted. The researcher paraphrased all Question-Best Answer pairs to prevent identification of posts via web searches of verbatim quotes (Eysenbach & Till, 2001, p. 1105). While the researcher maintains a spreadsheet of the verbatim Question-Best Answer pairs and dates, these data will be kept for future research only and will not be shared.

Another question the researcher pondered was whether it would be appropriate to reveal the name of the thread being analyzed in her write-up, as this revelation could risk negative exposure to the thread and those using it. She ultimately decided to name the thread for the following reasons. First, the identity of the thread could be easily insinuated by people reading the work since Yahoo! Answers has a unique model of assigning Best Answers not found on other SQA sites. Further, the identity of the site could be intuited by looking at the researcher's previous publication history, which denotes several articles and talks on Yahoo! Answers content, including about the LGBT thread. Finally, the researcher believes that the implications from this research could be directed toward those instantiating, designing, and facilitating Yahoo! Answers, including the possible need for a content moderation feature.

With all ethical decisions, the researcher has tried to only expose participants to risk when she felt that the risk was relatively low compared to the importance of fulfilling the related research objectives. In the case of interviews, the development of researcher-participant relationships over time caused the researcher to rethink some of the ethical decisions formally articulated in her IRB application and modify them over time. In the case of Question-Best Answer data, the researcher had to make "active and anticipatory" as

opposed to “reactive” ethical decisions given that ethical concepts translate differently over time within virtual environments (Angrosino & Rosenberg, 2014, p. 473-474). Upon reflection, the researcher contends that the decisions made mitigate risk to participants and are justified in strengthening the research findings via a mixed methods approach.

Conclusion

In this chapter, methodology, strategies of inquiry, and methods have been discussed, as well as validity and ethical concerns. One prominent observation made by the researcher when writing this chapter is the consistency of the research design from pilot study to approved dissertation proposal. The strength of this design can be attributed to the researcher critically thinking through the methodology before choosing strategies of inquiry or methods. After all, one should not choose tools for a job without knowing which will be most effective in each context. The sense-making methodology was found to be helpful in creating this context given that it is informed by some of the same metatheories comprising the conceptual framework and has premises complementary to queer methodologies. It has also been tested and proven effective in various disciplinary contexts, including LIS. Once the key sense-making methodology tenants applicable to the research objectives for this study were identified, the actual study design seemed to fall into place. As the researcher encountered questions and issues with the research design at the project onset, she found it helpful to consult these guiding methodological claims. Due to the strong connection established between the three components of the research design – methodology, strategies of inquiry, and methods – this design can be replicated by others when studying the unique intersections between the concept of information practices and marginalized groups. These intersections will now be explored in the following chapter, which reports on the results of data analysis of the semi-structured interviews and Question-Best Answer pairs.

CHAPTER 4

Results and Discussion

Introduction

This chapter overviews findings that address the following research questions:

RQ1. How does sociocultural context shape the information practices of individuals with LGBTQ+ identities?

RQ2. How do the information practices of individuals with LGBTQ+ identities produce sociocultural context?

RQ3. What is the role of technology, namely social media websites, if any, in affording information practices of individuals with LGBTQ+ identities?

RQ4. What is the role of the technology, namely social media websites, if any, in constraining information practices of individuals with LGBTQ+ identities?

Findings are derived from two data sources – participant interviews and Question-Best Answer pairs from the LGBT¹ thread of Yahoo! Answers. As specified in the **Social** Question-answering Data section, the researcher triangulated the conceptual framework using these two sources to obtain a deeper understanding of the unit of analysis, information practices. Participant interviews represent the social group level, while Question-Best Answer pairs represent the cultural level (see the **Conceptual Framework** section for a discussion of social group and cultural levels). Given the permeability between both contexts (see “soap bubble” metaphor from Jaeger & Burnett, 2010, p. 36-37), findings combine the two data types by research question rather discussing them separately. This combined analysis captures how an

1. Although the researcher uses the label “LGBTQ+” to describe participants, the label “LGBT” is used by Yahoo! Answers to describe the thread. This terminological distinction articulates the inherent problems with using umbrella labels to categorize identity – an inherently non-categorical entity.

individual's social group memberships contribute to the perception of information across the lifeworld, or "the whole ensemble of human relations which is coordinated and reproduced" (Brand, 1990, p. xii; see also Habermas, 1992). Participant demographics for both data sources are discussed followed by findings for each research question.

Participant Demographics

Interview Participants

Thirty individuals between the ages of 18 and 38 were interviewed for this research. Their median and mean ages are the same – 29 years old. **Table 4** (see next page) depicts participant numbers, chosen pseudonyms, identity labels,² and preferred pronouns. The researcher employs pseudonyms and preferred pronouns to describe interview participants.

As indicated by the table, umbrella labels such as "LGBTQ+" do not communicate the fluidity and multiplicity by which participants describe themselves. The inability of labels to convey individual identity expressions represents a larger problem with categorizing identities not categorical in nature (Adler, 2013, p. 6). Yet labels prove necessary to organize individuals within a culture or social group and provide them with access to certain resources. As interview participant Autumn states: "My identity is something that exists without labels. But to communicate it to the world and gain access to the healthcare that I need, I'm required to use labels. "Trans" is the label that makes sense to use because of how I want to be treated and what I need access to."³ Autumn's account exemplifies that labels not only represent a set of characteristics or affinities ("Identity," n.d.; Haraway, 1990, p. 197), but also determine how

2. The researcher asked participants to disclose preferred identity labels for their sexual orientations and gender identities. Some participants also labeled their gender presentations.

3. All participant quotes have been lightly edited for clarity.

individuals are treated. Couching one's desires within identity labels thus represents an information need.

Table 4. Participant Names, Identity Labels, and Pronouns

P#	Pseudonym	Identity labels	Pronouns
1	Ben	Gay, Male	He/him/his
2	Will	Gay, Gender questioning, Male	He/him/his
3	Emerson	Queer, Masculine-of-center, Gender questioning, Female	She/her/hers
4	Stephanie	Queer, Bisexual, Female	She/her/hers
5	Eva	Gay, Female	She/her/hers
6	Jamie	Straight, Transgender, Male	He/him/his
7	Diane	Gay, Female	She/her/hers
8	Casey	Queer, Gender non-conforming	They/them/theirs
9	Rihanna	Queer, Androgynous, Female	She/her/hers
10	Rose	Queer, Female	She/her/hers
11	Amina	Queer, Female	She/her/hers
12	Stefan	Non-binary, Queer, Genderqueer	They/them/theirs
13	Whitney	Gay, Female	She/her/hers
14	Sebastian	Queer, Bisexual, Polysexual, Pansexual, Female	She/her/hers
15	Sage	Queer, Transgender, Genderqueer, Genderfluid	They/them/theirs
16	Sierra	Transgender, Bisexual, Female	She/her/hers
17	Campbell	Queer, Gender Non-conforming	They/them/theirs
18	Lauren	Queer, Female	She/her/hers
19	Nicole	Queer, Gay, Female	She/her/hers
20	Rachel	Transgender, Female	She/her/hers
21	Cole	Queer, Butch, Lesbian, Female	She/her/hers
22	Kristen	Queer, Female	She/her/hers
23	Kyle	Queer, Transgender, Male	He/him/his
24	Sarah	Queer, Female	She/her/hers
25	James	Transgender, Gay, Male	He/him/his
26	Jessica	Bisexual, Female	She/her/hers
27	Mary	Transgender, Bisexual, Asexual, Female	She/her/hers
28	Joanna	Queer, Gender non-conforming	They/them/theirs
29	Autumn	Queer, Transgender, Female	She/her/hers
30	Mark	Transgender, Male	He/him/his

As indicated by **Table 4**, the labels participants most often use suggest that mainstream LGBTQ+ communities treat them as outsiders and instead pay attention to the demands of gay and, to a lesser extent, lesbian, cisgender individuals (see Rust, 1993; Gamson, 1995;

Jagose, 1996; Ward, 2000).⁴ Most participants identify as female (n=19, 64%)⁵ and queer (n=18, 60%). More than half do not identify as cisgender (n=17, 57%), meaning their sense of personal identity does not correspond with the sex and gender they were assigned at birth (“Cisgender,” n.d.).

Figure 4 (see next page) depicts a map of participant locations, specified as city and state of residence at the time of the interview. Participants are from 17 distinct locations, almost half of which overlap (n=13, 43%). Such overlap represents the impact of convenience and snowball sampling methods on data collection and captures social group context. For instance, six participants from Minneapolis, MN know one another via an online meet-up group. Of the distinct locations, eight are in the Northeast (47%), one in the South (6%), three in the Midwest (18%), and four in the West (24%). One individual resides outside of the US in El Salvador, but grew up in the Northeast US (6%).

4. Race and class represent other identities overlooked within mainstream LGBTQ+ issues (see Vaid, 2012). While some participants voluntarily disclosed these identities, the researcher did not incorporate them as the focal lens for this research. However, this chapter addresses intersectionality broadly.

5. All percentages are rounded up to the nearest whole number.



Figure 4. Map of Participant Locations.

Yahoo! Answers Participants

The second set of participants created Question-Best Answer pairs within the LGBT thread of Yahoo! Answers. The researcher randomly sampled 300 of these pairs, 150 per year, from a database of 1,650 total pairs collected during the same period of February 26 to March 17 in 2014 and 2016. Unlike interview participants, those contributing Question-Best Answer pairs did not consent to participate in this research. For this reason, demographic information connected to participant profiles was not collected and Question-Best Answer content is paraphrased.⁶

Participants sometimes disclose identifying information in Question-Best Answer content. Others may not disclose due to the stigma associated with claiming an LGBTQ+ label (see Goffman, 1963 for a discussion of stigma; see Hillier & Harrison, 2007; Veinot,

6. Even if these data were collected they indicate the user's activity on Yahoo! Answers such as the amount of questions asked and answered, rather than characteristics salient to the research questions such as age or identity labels.

2009; Lingel & boyd, 2013 for examples of studies examining stigma within a Library and Information Science (LIS) context) or a rejection of identity politics, and, therefore, labels altogether (see Gamson, 1995; Jagose, 1996). Of the 300 pairs sampled, 39% (n=118) contained information about an individual's age and/or identity labels.⁷ Most content with identifying information is from the 2014 data sample (72%, n=84). One reason why more identifying information was offered in 2014 as compared to 2016 may be explained by the content-based differences observed, detailed in the below **Cultural and Social Group Strategies** section.

When participants did disclose, they shared identity labels 169 times and ages 51 times.⁸ Askers were more likely to provide their ages and identity labels (70%, n=83) than answerers (30%, n=35). Regarding age, 65% (n=33) of participants were under 18. Of the 35% (n=18) of participants 18 or older, all but one identified as being in their 20s. This finding suggests that the ages of participants from Yahoo! Answers skew younger than those of interview participants, allowing the researcher to capture the perspectives of a more diverse age group.

Twenty% of participants (n=35) used the label “gay,” thirteen% “female” (n=22), twelve% “bisexual” (n=21), eleven% “transgender” (n=19), and eleven% “male” (n=18). However, as **Figure 5** (see next page) depicts, the frequency distribution of labels disclosed by askers and answerers has a long tail of labels used once or twice, further reflecting the inability of umbrella labels to depict the meanings participants ascribe to their identities. Since most participants did not disclose their genders nor preferred pronouns, the pronouns “they,” “them,” and “theirs” are used when referring to Yahoo! Answers participants. Since the

7. Only explicit statements, e.g., “I am a lesbian,” were coded to prevent misidentification.

8. These counts exceed the total number of Question-Best Answer pairs since both the asker and answerer could disclose labels and, further, may have disclosed multiple identity labels.

researcher did not collect user names, participants are also referred to as “asker” and “answerer.”

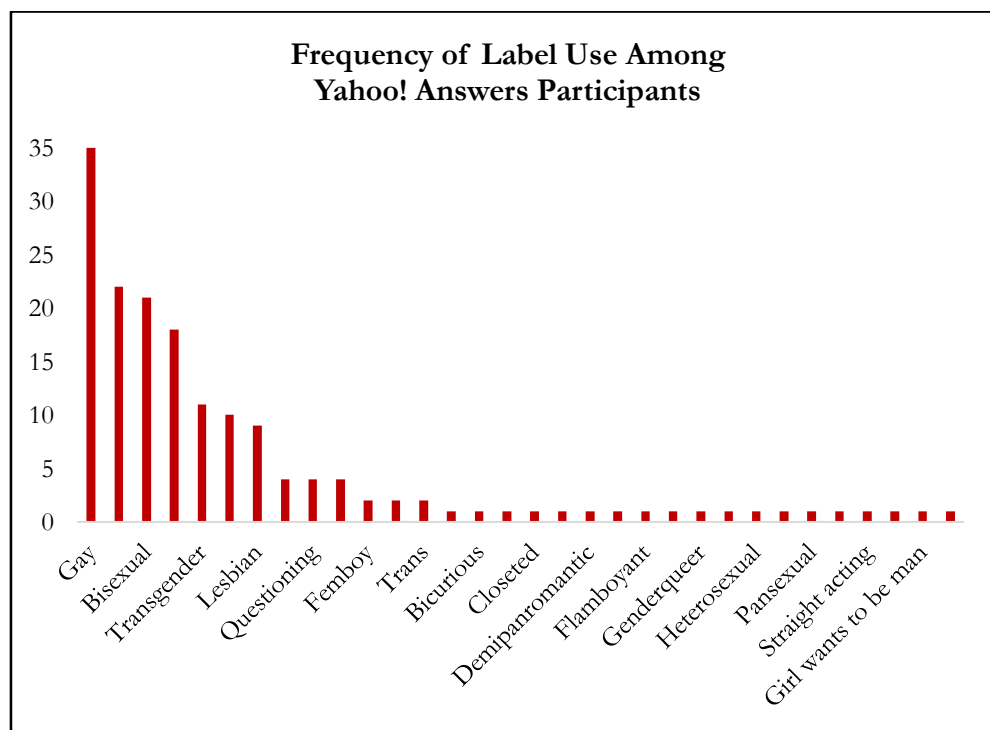


Figure 5. Long Tail of Yahoo! Answers Participant Labels.

Findings for Interviews and Question-Best Answer Pairs by Research Question

Findings are informed by data analysis and the unit of observation for analysis varied by data source. For the LGBT thread of Yahoo! Answers, the unit of observation was Question-Best Answer pairs; the researcher examined pairs rather than individual questions or answers given that the latter responded to the former. For the interviews, the unit of observation was a transcript. Coding was not restricted to a specific unit of text, such as a sentence or paragraph, for two reasons. First, there were a variety of writing styles within the Question-Best Answer pairs and participants may have used nonstandard writing structure, e.g., lack of punctuation (Hasler, Ruthven, & Buchanan, 2014, p. 29). Second, the researcher transcribed participant interviews, meaning that the punctuation assigned was subjective to the researcher. As a result,

the researcher looked for sections of text relevant to themes describing the unit of analysis: information practices (Hasler, Ruthven, & Buchanan, 2014, p. 29). Therefore, the unit of coding was segments of data conveying one or more themes (see Charmaz, 2014). Given the interrelationship between themes, codes could overlap and multiple codes could be assigned.

Findings demonstrate that identity and information practices represent two inextricable concepts. As Autumn's previous description suggests, the labels one adopts and/or is recognized as⁹ determine the information and resources available to them. These labels also shape how one envisions *relevance*, which is described as the "relation between an item of information and a particular individual's personal view of the world" (Wilson, 1973, p. 458), and *meaning*, or the use of relevant information to "reshape, redefine, or reclaim [one's] social reality" (Chatman, 1996, p. 195). Therefore, what individuals with LGBTQ+ identities *do* with their identities cannot be condensed into the dominant practice of "coming out," a historical focus of extant LIS studies (see Hamer, 2003). Instead, this examination must be opened to how people exist in the world based on their identities, including what information they seek, share, use, value, avoid, etcetera.

RQ1. How Sociocultural Context Shapes Information Practices

This section answers RQ1, which asks: How does sociocultural context shape the information practices of individuals with LGBTQ+ identities? Findings from data analysis suggest that strategies (re)produce¹⁰ sociocultural context. Strategies establish both what information should be considered relevant and meaningful, as well as what practices can be used to derive this information. One way that strategies accomplish this "defining" of legitimate practices, relevancies, and meanings, is by creating places where certain practices can occur and from

9. Individuals may not be recognized by their desired identity labels.

10. "(Re)produce" represents the recursive relationship between practices, of which strategies are comprised, and sociocultural context envisioned in this research.

which strategies can be disseminated (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 34). Key knowledge claims from data analysis are presented, followed by a discussion.

Findings

The knowledge claims empirically derived from the data are listed below. These claims are organized by etic and emic themes. The researcher derived emic themes from the data and then compared and matched them to related etic themes from the literature. Comparison and matching occurred simultaneously with analysis. The first time a knowledge claim is introduced in the discussion, it is indicated in parentheses. Knowledge claims for RQ1 are:

- 1.1. Cultural strategies shape what information is accessible to participants
- 1.2. Cultural strategies shape what information is visible to participants
- 1.3. Cultural strategies benefit certain individuals with LGBTQ+ identities over others
- 1.4. Cultural strategies denote who gets recognized as having an LGBTQ+ identity based on whether an individual convincingly engages in authentic practices
- 1.5. Cultural strategies are disseminated via formal sources
- 1.6. Cultural strategies are disseminated via cultural insiders
- 1.7. A special type of cultural insider is the wise
- 1.8. Participants mistrust formal sources
- 1.9. Participants mistrust cultural insiders
- 1.10. Insider/outsider dynamics are recursive at the cultural level
- 1.11. At a cultural level, all LGBTQ+ identities are considered outsider identities
- 1.12. Individuals have multiple, intersecting identities and may have other insider identities despite identifying as LGBTQ+
- 1.13. Social group strategies shape what information is accessible to participants
- 1.14. Social group strategies shape what information is visible to participants

- 1.15. Social group strategies help participants locate identity-affirming resources
- 1.16. Social group strategies are disseminated by informal sources
- 1.17. Social group strategies are disseminated by interpersonal sources
- 1.18. Social group strategies are influenced by cultural strategies
- 1.19. Insider/outsider dynamics are recursive within social groups
- 1.20. Social group strategies render individuals with certain LGBTQ+ identities as insiders
- 1.21. Social group strategies benefit certain individuals with LGBTQ+ identities over others
- 1.22. Social group strategies denote who gets recognized as an LGBTQ+ identity based on whether an individual convincingly engages in authentic practices
- 1.23. Strategies are disseminated by places, which have geographical and temporal permanence
- 1.24. Place can be typified into back, civil, and forbidden
- 1.25. The place types (i.e., back, civil, forbidden) are context-dependent
- 1.26. Participants cited back and forbidden places as most influential in shaping their information practices
- 1.27. Libraries were most often given the designation of civil places by participants

Tables 5-8 denote the main themes and sub-themes coded for RQ1. **Table 5** depicts the main themes coded as strategies from participant interviews and Question-Best Answer pairs ordered by prevalence of total codes assigned.

Table 5. Main Themes Coded as Strategies.

Strategy Themes	Total Sources Coded as Theme ¹¹	Total Codes Assigned to Theme
Strategies	32 (100%)	925
Cultural	32 (100%)	584
Implicit	32 (100%)	468
Explicit	24 (75%)	116
Social group	32 (100%)	341
Implicit	32 (100%)	313
Explicit	11 (39%)	28

Table 6 denotes the insider/outsider sub-themes coded as strategies.

Table 6. Insider/Outsider Sub-themes Coded as Strategies.

Strategy Sub-themes	Total Sources	Total Codes
Social group insiders	32 (100%)	405
Authenticity	31 (97%)	274
Cultural insiders	31 (97%)	241
Cultural outsiders	29 (91%)	222
Social group outsiders	31 (97%)	207

Table 7 depicts the information sub-themes coded as strategies.

Table 7. Information Sub-themes Coded as Strategies.

Strategy Sub-themes	Total Sources	Total Codes
Stigma	32 (100%)	353
Enforcement mechanisms	31 (97%)	288
Affording visibility to insiders	30 (94%)	189
Interpersonal sources	28 (88%)	186
Withholding information	28 (88%)	133
Informal sources	20 (63%)	94
Formal sources	23 (72%)	88
Mistrust of cultural insiders and formal sources	25 (78%)	81

Table 8 (see next page) displays a summary of the number of sources and codes for the place theme and sub-themes ordered by prevalence of codes assigned.

11. Each table presenting main coding categories has been derived from coding 32 sources: 30 interview transcripts and 2 sets of Question-Best Answer pairs from the LGBT thread of Yahoo! Answers. Each set contains 150 Question-Best Answer pairs – one pair from 2014 and the other pair from 2016.

Table 8. Place Themes and Sub-themes.

Place Themes and Sub-themes	Total Sources	Total Codes
Places	26 (81%)	160
Back	21 (66%)	66
Forbidden	20 (63%)	57
Civil	14 (44%)	27

Discussion

Cultural and Social Group Strategies

The information made accessible and visible¹² to individuals by cultural institutions or social groups determines what they consider to be meaningful within their everyday lives. To create this meaning, institutions and groups implement strategies, or sanctioned ways of engaging with them (Knowledge Claims 1.1 1.2). It is expected that individuals belonging to these institutions and social groups will practice strategies, which have both geographical and temporal permanence (Knowledge Claim 1.23). Strategies tend to be unquestioned and assumed to be “the way things are” (de Certeau, 1984, p. xix-xx, 34-39). They can be implicit or explicit.

The identities one can assume are constructed from birth and learned over time. Heterosexual and cisgender represent two hallmarks of such assumed identities within modern Western cultures.¹³ As interview participant Jessica notes: “[When] everyone’s born, it’s assumed that they’re straight.” From the perspective of gender identity, de Beauvoir (1972, p. 267) exemplifies this contention when she states: “One is not born, but rather becomes, a

12. The word “visible” is used in addition to “accessible” given the constructionist metatheoretical perspective of the researcher. This perspective contends that reality is socially constructed and that multiple representations of reality exist based on interpersonal, organizational, and cultural negotiations (see Berger & Luckmann, 1966).

13. An example of a culture not assuming binary gender identities is the historical role of two-spirit people. Two-spirit people are American Indians who embody both male and female spirits. Historically, these people were considered important members of their tribes and still are among certain first nation tribes. See http://www.nytimes.com/2006/10/08/fashion/08SPIRIT.html?_r=0

woman.” Such assumptions are both implied by cultural institutions and codified into law. The information participants are privy to thus reinforces heterosexual and cisgender ideals and does not afford visibility to identities outside them.

One strategy that exemplifies these assumptions is going to the bathroom, a banal, unquestioned, and invisible¹⁴ act for those identifying as cisgender. For those who do not, such an ostensibly simple act refutes the meanings they ascribe to their gender identities. As interview participant Campbell states: “When I go to the bathroom, I keep my head down. I don’t interact with anyone. I put on the armor before I go in. It really bothers me when in gas stations it’s a single-stall bathroom, but you’re forced to make that choice of are you a woman or are you a man?” This strategy of using the bathroom pertaining to one’s biological sex derives from knowledge-power¹⁵ (see Foucault, 1978, p. 58, 70, 143). The scientific institution of biological determinism denotes a physical place, i.e., the bathroom, where this power to define who is a woman and who is a man, can be distributed. In Campbell’s account, this knowledge-power determines legitimate identity categories and appropriate practices centered on (re)producing their legitimacy.

Implicit Cultural Strategies

As indicated by **Table 5**, implicit strategies are more prevalent than explicit ones. Implicit strategies are inferred, but not expressed (Burnett et al., 2014). They simply represent the way things are. Cultural insiders and formal sources communicate these strategies, which showcase insider identities while erasing and stigmatizing outsider ones (Knowledge Claims 1.5, 1.6). On one hand, implicit cultural strategies are insidious since no explicit record exists regarding

14. “Invisible” in the sense that going to the bathroom is not something to which most people pay attention.

15. Foucault’s (1978) treatment of knowledge and power as inextricable parallels the constructionist metatheoretical perspective of the researcher.

which identity expressions should be ignored, limiting participants' awareness of alternate outsider identities. On the other, these strategies can be empowering given they inform and reinforce cultural identity, which can establish an individual's sense of belonging.

Formal sources represent information produced by cultural institutions and insiders. Examples include books, television shows, and even search engine results (see Napoli, 2014 for an argument framing search engine algorithms as institutions). Sources can also be interpersonal. Cultural insiders represent interpersonal sources taken seriously within a culture (Merton, 1972; Chatman, 1996, 1999; Burnett et al., 2014), such as parents, doctors, and gender therapists. These individuals most often identify as cisgender and straight. Both formal sources and cultural insiders occlude visibility of LGBTQ+ identities. Participants often relied on formal sources since they were disseminated within the cultural institutions they inhabited, such as books assigned in school. Those who used these sources indicated not "knowing the language" (Stefan), being "limited to lesbian and gay" (Campbell), not being aware that "transgender was a word" (Rachel), or even that "transgender existed" as an identity category (James). Per Kyle:

In high school, [LGBTQ+ identities were] never talked about. I never thought it was an option. As ignorant as that sounds, it just wasn't a thing. My senior year I had this class and we were talking about the Laramie project¹⁶ and one of my peers was talking about his "coming out" process. I remember being like, "Is he going to get into trouble, can he be talking about this?"

These accounts illustrate a key strategy of cultural insiders: withholding information relevant to cultural outsiders (Chatman, 1996, p. 197, proposition 2). Cultural outsiders signify those whose identities deviate from collective standards held by cultural insiders (Merton, 1972;

16. See http://www.tectonictheaterproject.org/The_Laramie_Project.html.

Becker, 1973; Chatman, 1996). Such withholding of information maintains the legitimacy of these standards.

If represented in formal sources, cultural outsiders may be stigmatized. Stigma is defined as “the situation of the individual who is disqualified from full social acceptance” (Goffman, 1963, p. 11). Stigma complicates visibility at the explicit cultural level. Even if an identity is made visible by explicit cultural strategies, e.g., federal recognition of same-sex marriage, this identity may not be considered by implicit cultural strategies as legitimate. For instance, Joanna describes how information about LGBTQ+ identities is stigmatized by the social news and entertainment company, BuzzFeed, (<https://www.buzzfeed.com/>) and by search engines:

When you’re on BuzzFeed, it’s like, “[A] queer person gets murdered, [a] queer person gets shot.” God, it’s awful. Not only do you have to deal with people writing about their hate [for] gay people, you also have to listen to these incidents. It’s impossible to search without running into these things. Unless you’re searching for something super specific, you’ll come up with at least one thing that’s bad in the results that will taint your experience.

As Joanna’s account makes clear, one can be subject to enforcement mechanisms that reinforce which identities should be expressed.¹⁷ Such mechanisms represent consequences for following or not following a strategy (Burnett et al., 2014). When searching for information, Joanna cannot escape the visibility of enforcement mechanisms, such as violent acts against queer people. Per Joanna, having a specific, articulated search query constitutes the only way to negate such stigmatized portrayals, yet most individuals lack such ability (Belkin, 1980; Belkin, Oddy, & Brooks, 1982a; Belkin, Oddy, & Brooks, 1982b). This inability to formulate specific search queries is compounded for individuals with LGBTQ+ identities

17. This point is recognized in the APA DSM-5 manual’s 2013 change of “Gender Identity Disorder” to “Gender Dysphoria,” to recognize that individuals identifying as transgender do not have an inherent mental disorder, but rather may be susceptible to distress due to stigma applied at the cultural level to their identities.

who do not have the language to express their identities. As a result, participants relied on naïve queries when searching, such as: “I was born a boy and wanted to be a girl” (Rachel), “Are you gay if you kissed a girl” (Rose), and “Feel male, but only inside” (Jamie).

The strategies of withholding information and stigmatization combine to produce a dearth of relevant and meaningful information related to LGBTQ+ identities produced by cultural insiders and formal sources. As a result, participants rely on informal and interpersonal sources that provide them with information about LGBTQ+ identities deemed relevant and meaningful at the social group level (Knowledge Claims 1.13, 1.14 1.15, 1.16, 1.17). Yet cultural strategies occlude visibility of and access to these resources (Knowledge Claim 1.18). Consider Autumn’s description of formal versus informal sources for pornography featuring transgender women:

I don’t watch a lot of porn because it’s hard to find something [that] features trans women in a way that doesn’t fetishize them. I’m dating someone now who works in the sex industry and they’re like, “You know why it’s hard to find?” There’s this one trans woman who refused to be used for fetishization and has managed to carve out a career for herself, but she has literally been blacklisted from all the major porn industries in the US. Now she is indie, but it’s a difficult path. Finding good porn is hard.

This account illustrates the difficulty of escaping implicit cultural strategies given their dissemination by formal sources with widespread coverage and a vast reserve of resources. In comparison to explicit cultural strategies, there exist no formalized statements dictating if transgender individuals should be featured in mainstream pornography or, if so, how these individuals should be portrayed. For this reason, Autumn did not initially know why pornography affirming transgender identities was hard to find. As she comes to find out, pornography is created for cultural insiders who desire fetishized portrayals of transgender individuals. The pornography industry thus influences what content is created by employing economic enforcement mechanisms, such as blacklisting an actor for unsanctioned portrayals

of transgender sexuality. This example illustrates the invisibility of implicit cultural strategies. To those inside the pornography industry, these strategies may be deliberate, however, to those watching the sources produced, such strategies appear as the way things are, and constitute an example of information value.

Findings from data analysis indicate that these limited and stigmatized portrayals of LGBTQ+ identities by formal sources contribute to participants' perceived status as cultural outsiders (Knowledge Claim 1.11). Exposure to stigmatized information could be the extent of one's searching on the topic. As Will recounts: "When I was younger, I [experienced] a fear and conflation of pedophilia with [my gay] sexuality. That was something I spent a long time talking to therapists about." It took Will years to feel comfortable adopting a gay identity in part due to the stigma he perceived applied to this identity.

Despite the influence of cultural strategies on participants' self-perceptions, findings from data analysis indicate that, over time, they consider their LGBTQ+ identities to be legitimate and discount stigmatized portrayals of them. Many exist in opposition to cultural strategies by adopting the label "queer" (n=18, 60%). While the meaning of this label differs for each participant, "queer" deconstructs cultural strategies that create and legitimate identity categories with solid, impermeable boundaries between them (Gamson, 1995, p. 390-391). As Nicole states: "Queer can be all-encompassing of that which is not considered the norm." Thus, identity categories like "queer" represent to participants more than their individual desires, but rather the refutation of what cultural insiders deem relevant and meaningful. For these reasons, participants do not envision formal sources that reinforce dominant cultural strategies as relevant to their everyday lives and, therefore, mistrust them (Chatman, 1996, p. 197, proposition 4; Knowledge Claim 1.8, 1.9). Consider Sierra's explanation of why she does not use the library for information about her transgender identity:

I think that librarians aren't even using libraries for resources in this area. [For] several reasons. Privacy is a big one. I wouldn't ever want to check out any of the books that would have been helpful. Even with circulation, there's no record of it, but do you even want to bring that up to the desk? When I first found out that trans was an actual thing, the only books I saw [in the library] were negative, like *The Transsexual Empire*, which was anti-trans to its core. Just seeing a snippet of that, it was like, clearly this isn't anything I would want. Then it was easy to say, "Well, books aren't going to be an answer."

Sierra does not view the library as relevant to her transgender identity for two reasons. First, the information the library possessed was stigmatizing whereas Sierra envisions her transgender identity as legitimate. Data analysis suggests that such mistrust can become totalizing and difficult to overcome. Just seeing one book that stigmatized transgender identities was enough for Sierra to write off the library and its collection as institutions and sources not to be trusted. Second, not only can information related to LGBTQ+ identities be stigmatizing (Lingel & boyd, 2013, p. 987), but such information can impart stigma on the individual consuming it. To Sierra, just the practice of checking out a book was enough to be recognized as transgender and have the stigma related to this identity category applied. As a result, Sierra had to manage the visibility of her information practices. Since the library employs strategies that engender such visibility, e.g., taking a book to the circulation desk, Sierra did not view the library as relevant since it did not afford control of her information practices.

Explicit Cultural Strategies

At the cultural level, explicit strategies are articulated by formalized statements, such as laws (Burnett et al., 2014). These strategies regulate what identities are visible and how they can be practiced. This regulation occurs via the use of enforcement mechanisms by cultural insiders.

Explicit strategies manage which identities are visible and how these identities can be expressed, e.g., declaring an infant "male" or "female" on a birth certificate. This declaration can be problematic for those who do not choose to identify as either. As Autumn states: "How

I was labeled at birth by some doctor, un-consensually, is not how I choose to identify.” For those identities made visible, explicit cultural strategies can regulate how they are practiced. For instance, the American Psychiatric Association renders “transgender” visible as a mental condition that can be diagnosed as “Gender Dysphoria” (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Those who desire to be explicitly recognized as transgender must engage in a series of practices, e.g., seeing a gender therapist, to attain this diagnosis.

Identity visibility and expression are closely related. To be made visible as a certain identity, one must engage in a series of sanctioned practices. Consider the following example from a 2014 Question-Best Answer pair:¹⁸

Q: I’m a male wanting to be female and will soon start taking hormones. What are their effects?

A: I hope that you’re following the necessary gender reassignment system. You must see a gender therapist for hormones and need to be 18 years old or have parental consent. Don’t self-medicate. First, even if you are on a safe dosage and ask other trans people for theirs, hormone dosages don’t act like other medications. You must have a doctor get your base hormone level to decide a dose. Second, to eventually get surgery, you will need to see a gender therapist. If you’ve been self-administering hormones, it will be difficult for the therapist to determine your base hormone level before legally prescribing. I’m sure you know this and have chosen the right path. Just in case. I even once considered self-medicating. The first effects seem like placebo effects, but you start to feel more at ease and your sex drive starts decreasing. Your erections will come less often. I noticed my breasts growing one month in and a year later I have a B cup. Hope this helps and good luck with your transition.

Here, the answerer overviews practices the asker must take to be recognized as female at the explicit, cultural level. Engaging in these necessary steps to be recognized as one’s desired gender identity represents an authentic practice (Goffman, 1963; see also Halberstam, 2005, p. 125-151; Gray, 2009, p. 123). Goffman (1963, p. 132) defines authenticity as “recipes for an appropriate attitude regarding the self.” In this account, both asker and answerer envision

18. To protect participant privacy, all Question-Best Answer pairs are paraphrased.

transgender identities as created and regulated within the scientific institutions of medicine and biology. Engaging in authentic practices renders an individual as “real and worthy” (Goffman, 1963, p. 132). Those who do not engage in authentic practices are viewed as “self-deluded” and “misguided” (Goffman, 1963, p. 132). For instance, the answerer discourages practices outside the formalized gender reassignment system, such as self-medicating (Knowledge Claim 1.4).¹⁹ Authentic practices are embodied, or in other words, are performed through the body and over time become a habituated skill (see Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. 146-153; Bourdieu, 1984b, p. 78-96; Lloyd, 2010).²⁰

A specific type of cultural insider, referred to as “the wise” (Goffman, 1963, p. 40), prevalently disseminates explicit cultural strategies (Knowledge Claim 1.7). Goffman (1963, p. 40) describes the wise as those “whose special situation has made them intimately privy to the secret life of the stigmatized individual and sympathetic with it.” The wise regulate authentic practices using enforcement mechanisms. For instance, in most states, individuals cannot be formally visible as their desired gender (if “male” or “female”) without being diagnosed and treated by a healthcare provider.²¹ In the Question-Best Answer pair example above, the asker relies on the wise to both permit, e.g., via parental consent, and make visible, e.g., via hormones, their desired gender identity.

Authentic practices are also adopted by those with non-heteronormative sexualities. For example, Will contends that his identity as a gay man has become less visible since

19. The researcher does not suggest that the health effects of taking hormones, even if prescribed by a doctor, could not potentially pose harm to an individual. Rather, since cultural strategies frame one’s transgender identity as only achievable within the intuitions of medicine and biology, these strategies may limit participants’ identity expressions as having to be authenticated by these institutions.

20. Authentic practices can also be regulated at the implicit cultural level, such as Sage being told growing up that “good girls don’t do x, y, z.”

21. Lambda Legal provides updated online resources regarding identity documents for transgender individuals. See: <http://www.lambdalegal.org/know-your-rights/article/trans-identity-documents>

marrying his partner: “I don’t have to assert [my gay] identity as much because it’s obvious [since] I’m married to a man. I’ve created a life for myself where I don’t have to regularly assert the right to express myself in a more offensive way.” Although the explicit strategy of same sex marriage gave Will desired recognition of his relationship, it also narrowed his avenues for identity expression. Since Will has engaged in an explicit, culturally sanctioned strategy of same-sex marriage, his visibility as a gay man has become reduced to the authentic practice of being married. He no longer must “assert” his gay identity in ways not culturally sanctioned, such as activism. Will’s account suggests that explicit recognition of LGBTQ+ identities can be affirming; however, such recognition also limits the multiplicity and fluidity of how these identities can be expressed. Such limitations condense LGBTQ+ identities into taken-for-granted, monolithic categories and identities outside of these categories do not garner the same attention (Knowledge Claim 1.3).

A lack of explicit strategies also determines identity visibility and expression at the social group level. For instance, Rachel details what types of transgender identity expressions were available to her when searching:

When I started searching [for information on transgender identities], everyone was going stealth. Stealth is once you live as your gender, you don’t speak of being trans, you just pretend that you’re cis. Everyone was saying just do that because there was no protection for trans people in the workplace. And I was like, “Shit.” That really had a profound effect on me. Until the day I went female full time, what would I have to do to protect myself in the workplace?

Transgender individuals create the social group category of “stealth” as a response to the lack of explicit enforcement mechanisms preventing them from violence and workplace discrimination (both implicit enforcement mechanisms).²² Some considered engagement in authentic practices as preferable considering these negative enforcement mechanisms.

22. For an overview of state laws and policies related to individuals with LGBTQ+ identities, see http://www.hrc.org/state_maps. At the time of writing, the year 2016, was the deadliest year on record for

Given that “everyone was going stealth,” Rachel first gave preference to a “stealth” identity. Her limited exposure to this monolithic identity category convinced her of a correct or preferable way to “be” or “do” an identity. However, this decision to “go stealth” only lasted until Rachel adopted a female identity and rendered this identity as visible to others. “The day I started to live as female full time I threw everything out the window and was like, ‘I’m just going to educate people.’” Rachel’s unique context, comprised of interactions with her body, with other people, with books, etcetera, contributed to this decision. Yet strategies, such as authentic practice, do not incorporate such context.

By establishing one right way to be recognized as LGBTQ+, strategies narrow one’s avenues for information. For instance, what if some individual wishes to be formally recognized as a gender different from that assigned at birth, but cannot afford or does not desire hormones? This individual has less access to, and visibility of, information sources, particularly within cultural institutions such as libraries. Consider Mary’s explanation for how she thinks the library can improve in serving transgender users:

There’s people who make managerial decisions [who] may have never met or may never bother meeting with a trans person. What they end up doing is turning it into this monolithic category. There’s only one way to be gay, there’s only one way to be transgender, so on and so forth. And they fail to recognize that someone walking through their library who looks just like any other woman could be a transgender man who is just not transitioning or hasn’t transitioned yet. Could be a child. There needs to be this immediate awareness that just because someone looks different, that isn’t the only way to identify them as trans.

The library commits a misstep by condensing transgender identities into a series of authentic practices made visible and permissible by cultural strategies. Through strategies such as collection development, reference, and programming, the library prioritizes serving the needs

transgender individuals, most of them women of color. Of course, no one knows the exact count of such homicides, not only since some may not be reported, but also due to misgendering of individuals by the media. See <http://www.glaad.org/blog/2016-was-deadliest-year-record-transgender-people>

of individuals who engage in these practices.²³ Those who do not, like in Mary's account, may not only consider the library irrelevant to their LGBTQ+ identities, but also may question the legitimacy of their identities and information practices centered around them. As James states: "You sometimes just want to read [a] story and know that in a fantasy world where dragons exist, you exist."

Implicit Social Group Strategies

Data analysis indicates that participants attain information on LGBTQ+ identities within social groups comprised of individuals who share these identities. Participants rely on social groups for such information given that they do not have access to, or visibility of, information representing these identities at the cultural level. Implicit social group strategies maintain insider/outsider dynamics, indicating to attention should be paid (Knowledge Claim 1.20). Participants consider knowledge of such dynamics to be important given their mistrust of formal sources produced and disseminated by cultural insiders. However, implicit social group strategies do not exist in a vacuum. Rather, they are privy to cultural strategies, which also influence who is considered a social group insider, which identity expressions are available, and whose identities are made visible.

Implicit social group strategies can engender participants' identity expressions by introducing them to a set of shared sensibilities and identity outcomes. As Diane recalls:

One of my best friends [participant Eva] came out toward the end of college. She had a group of friends, a lot of them gay. I would spend time [with them] in the summers and this was a time when I wasn't out. I felt a comfort level around these people and it was very much like, "Oh I sort of belong in this." It was good to have community to talk to and be a part of. These people were open and proud of who they are. [They were] not ashamed, their families knew, and everything was fine. It seemed like, "Oh wow this is what's possible."

23. Libraries also engage in explicit cultural strategies to maintain visibility of certain LGBTQ+ identities as conveyed within formalized systems, such as subject headings (see Adler, 2012).

Diane relies on insiders within a specific social group with the shared identity category of “gay.”²⁴ She considers them as insiders given their experience adopting, negotiating, and expressing a gay identity, which parallels Lingel and boyd’s (2013, p. 986-987) expert/novice distinction within social group insider/outsider dynamics (Knowledge Claim 1.19).

Feeling a sense of belongingness and affinity toward insiders within this social group allowed Diane to consider adopting a gay identity. The positive feelings that social group members exhibited toward their identities may have mitigated both the shame Diane directed toward her non-heterosexual desires and fears of disclosing to her own family. Diane’s use of the word “possible” indicates that strategies shape what participants consider meaningful within their lives. Namely, strategies at the social group level can be leveraged by participants to engender visibility and affirmation to identity expressions outside of those considered culturally normative.

Whether one has experience practicing an LGBTQ+ identity does not fully determine insider/outsider status. Much like at the cultural level, social groups contest insider status based on whose practices are considered authentic, which varies among these groups (Knowledge Claim 1.22). For instance, Stefan details their experience with different LGBTQ+ social groups on the social blogging website, Tumblr (<https://www.tumblr.com>):

Truscum are trans people who believe you have to have dysphoria to be trans. You can’t be non-binary, you can’t be genderqueer. You have radfemmes who may be lesbians, but they believe trans women are men. You have people who are like, “You’re doing queerness wrong.” Really? There’s one true path to queerness and I’m doing it wrong? You get one platform and have so many different opinions that there’s gonna be people that make you mad. I don’t think truscum ... like, see? By calling them “scum,” I don’t think they do queerness right.

24. Female-identified participants such as Diane, Eva, and Whitney preferred the label “gay” rather than “lesbian,” since the former was more culturally mainstream. Such preference exemplifies that cultural strategies shape determination of one’s insider status since “gay” is a label most often applied to men, whose needs are given cultural preference as compared to women’s.

While Tumblr offers more variegated social groups found at a cultural level, these groups employ their own set of strategies to both reinforce and challenge the authenticity of one's identity. Such implicit strategies for inclusion may aid in collective organizing. For instance, *radfemmes*²⁵ can organize around shared, collective definitions of “womanhood” and “lesbian” (see Merton, 1972, p. 23-24; Gamson, 1995, p. 392-393). What complicates Stefan's account is that each social group exercises awareness of the strategies adopted by others and tries to undermine them. By their own admission, Stefan uses the label “scum” to qualify a social group engaged in an identity discourse they consider to be inauthentic. This constant observance and regulation of LGBTQ+ identities can become emotionally exhausting for participants. As Casey states: “Tumblr got really overwhelming for me because the community is intense and offers knee-jerk reactions. It felt like I was like being constantly policed, so I exited Tumblr because I couldn't handle it.”

Insider/outsider dynamics among individuals with LGBTQ+ identities are not totalizing. Rather, an individual can have multiple, intersecting identities, some of them insider and some of them outsider. How these identities overlap, also referred to as “intersectionality,” determines what systems of oppression or privilege they are privy to within a given context (see Crenshaw, 1989). Further, cultural strategies influence who is considered an insider at the social group level by condensing insider/outsider identities into monolithic representations. Consider Sebastian's description of intersectionality within LGBTQ+ social groups:

One group that's in the mainstream media when it comes to queerness [is comprised of individuals like] Neil Patrick Harris, Ellen Page, and Ellen DeGeneres. You need more than that. You need poor people, you need disabled people, you need people of color. You can't just say, “Oh, queer people,” and only mean the guys running around at Pride in no underwear. You have to include everyone. I have [four] identities. I'm queer, I'm black, I identify as Latina, I'm a woman. All of those intersect. Even within

25. Some online communities use the term “trans exclusionary radical feminists (TERFs)” to acknowledge that not all radical feminists exclude transgender women. See http://transadvocate.com/terf-what-it-means-and-where-it-came-from_n_13066.htm

[LGBTQ+] communities there's prejudice. If you don't address that, you're not addressing queerness as a whole.

Sebastian's account reinforces a finding from analysis at the level of implicit cultural strategies. Formal information sources, such as the mainstream media, magnify visibility of those considered normative within LGBTQ+ social groups (Knowledge Claim 1.10, 1.12, 1.21). Such visibility may be afforded given these individuals possess other insider identity categories, such as being white, affluent, able-bodied, skinny, attractive, and monogamous. These representations frustrate participants like Sebastian who exist outside of them.

By disregarding individuals with intersecting outsider identities, implicit social group strategies can erase non-dominant LGBTQ+ identities as expressed by the following 2014 Question-Best Answer pair:

Q: How can I "come out" to my Christian parents? Sometimes I'll hear my parents bash gay people and say they are going to hell. They don't know I'm bisexual. Sometimes I think about not telling them. Has anyone else experienced this? Should I wait to tell them until I move out or never mention it?

A: Don't tell them until you can support yourself. When it comes to religious people, it's better to not "come out" to them. Don't get me wrong, I have religious friends and they are great, but will put their religion before anything else. They're scared their imaginary friend "God" will send them to hell for associating with a sinner. When you do "come out", saying you're bisexual can break the ice, but you need to be honest and tell the truth. You may not realize it now, but in most cases people think they're bisexual then later realize they're gay. Keep that in mind and don't fear what is going to come.

The asker wants information related to disclosing their bisexual identity when religion constitutes a barrier. The answerer first delegitimizes the cultural institution of religion, envisioning it as mutually exclusive from LGBTQ+ identities. Much like Sierra expresses mistrust in libraries and books to provide her with information related to her transgender identity (see above), the answerer mistrusts religion as a lens from which to envision LGBTQ+ identity expression. Discounting intersections between those who identify as LGBTQ+ and

religious ostracizes participants such as Mary, who recounted feeling “angst [toward] religious people on [the online forum] reddit [<https://www.reddit.com/>].”

The answerer then trivializes bisexuality as a temporary interstice to gay or lesbian. Such erasure can be problematic when individuals are first learning about LGBTQ+ identities from those they consider insiders within a social group and thus to whom they assign credibility and authority. Recall that this answer was assigned the “Best Answer” designation by the asker. This designation indicates that to some degree, the asker agreed with the answer, which has implications for the identity labels and expressions they believe are possible.

The examples conveyed by interview participant Sebastian and the previous Question-Best Answer pair exemplify why the researcher does not use the word “community” to describe LGBTQ+ social groups. While some participants use “community” to describe their relationship with others sharing one or more of their identities, this word assumes a “cohesive ... self-identified collective authority” (Lingel & boyd, 2013, p. 982). Consider the phrase, “the LGBTQ+ community.” Some insiders with LGBTQ+ identities described, as well as their key demands, such as marriage, likely come to mind. Therefore, “community” signifies “visible insiders.” It also assumes geographical connectedness, further discussed in the below **Back, Civil, and Forbidden Places** section.

Explicit Social Group Strategies

Table 5 indicates the researcher infrequently assigned codes for explicit social group strategies. As cultural outsiders, group members do not command the political, economic, geographic, academic, etcetera, resources necessary to enact them. In some instances, participants were privy to explicit social group strategies, particularly when using online technologies. When social groups employ explicit strategies, they can de-stigmatize information sources related to

LGBTQ+ identities. Jamie remembers how Tumblr moderator guidelines facilitated his information seeking, scanning, sharing, and exchange:

I found a Tumblr that was only for people like me. It was all sorts of trans men. Any issue you could think about or want an answer to, you could ask on there and [the moderators] would weed out things that were hurtful. If anyone tried to bash someone on there, it would be toast.

The explicit social group strategy of moderator guidelines provided Jamie with a safe space for learning about male transgender identities by delineating group boundaries. Social group outsiders, e.g., not transgender men were not welcome. Information moderators deemed stigmatizing was not allowed. These guidelines were created by social group insiders, whose conceptions of meaning and relevance related to male transgender identities appeared, from Jamie's perspective, to align with those held by group members.

When social groups lack explicit strategies, who interacts and what they share can be variable for whom they have meaning and relevance. Longitudinal analysis of Question-Best Answer pairs denotes an increase of content ostensibly²⁶ stigmatizing individuals with LGBTQ+ identities. Content was coded for the stigma theme 22 times in the 2014 dataset as compared to 99 times in the 2016 dataset. The following Question-Best Answer pair from 2016 exemplifies content coded as stigmatized: "Q: To all real women, are you offended that Bruce Jenner speaks for you? A: Yes. He is a man, that's how he was created." Per the example, these social group members do not consider transgender identities as legitimate. Questioning the legitimacy of transgender identities stems from the cultural strategies of biological essentialism and religion: to be considered an authentic woman, one must have been created as woman by God and assigned this sex at birth.

26. The researcher uses the word "ostensibly" given the intent of the asker and/or answerer is unknown. The below **RQ4. How Technologies Constrain Information Practices** section further discusses this unknown intent.

Unlike Jamie's Tumblr group, the LGBT thread of Yahoo! Answers does not contain moderation guidelines or denote specific group roles. Instead, it relies on a site-wide policy in which "*trusted* members of the Community ... consistently and *accurately* report *abusive* questions and answers" (emphasis added).²⁷ The issue with this policy lies in those words italicized. Who does Yahoo! Answers choose to trust and how does it determine the accuracy of their reporting, as well as what constitutes abusive content? This site-wide policy is devoid of context established by specific social groups interacting within the topical threads of the site. For this reason, decisions regarding who to trust, who is accurate, and what content is considered abusive are not bound by clear definitions of who is an insider and what information is relevant and meaningful among them. This example illustrates the temporal, impermanent, and rather fleeting nature of LGBTQ+ social groups. Since these groups are not cultural insiders, they lack access to resources such as the ability to formulate specific moderation guidelines, which can lend permanence to their strategies. Content shared and exchanged within these social groups becomes subject to change due to the permeability between social group strategies and overarching cultural ones.

Summary of Key Findings

Data analysis of interviews and Question-Best Answer pairs revealed that participants envision cultural and social group strategies as permitting access to resources and visibility of information, which affects what participants consider as relevant and meaningful in their everyday lives. Strategies are unquestioned and represent assumptions, whether explicit or implicit, of the way things are. Individuals rely on cultural insiders, namely the wise, to validate the authenticity of their desired identity expressions. Cultural insiders stigmatize identities not

27. See <https://help.yahoo.com/kb/SLN8252.html>

recognized as authentic. Formal information sources, such as libraries and the mainstream media, afford visibility to legitimate LGBTQ+ identities and condense these expressions into a monolithic set of characteristics. Such lack of visibility to non-mainstream LGBTQ+ identities, as well as to their multiplicity and fluidity, further mitigates an individual's awareness of, and desire to pursue, those identities not validated at the cultural level.

Social group strategies help participants locate resources to validate their identities, protect them from stigmatized information, and afford visibility to identity expressions, including language, lacked at the cultural level. However, social group strategies can also condense LGBTQ+ identities into monolithic categories. Such categories privilege those who have other identities rendered insider at the cultural level. Implicit social group strategies also presume insider status based on collective definitions of authentic practice. Both definitions of "insider" can be problematic given one's identity expressions contain multiplicity and fluidity beyond a fixed set of defined characteristics. Insider/outsider dynamics are, therefore, recursive at the social group level, and can narrow horizons of possibility for what an LGBTQ+ identity looks like.

Back, Civil, and Forbidden Places

Strategies determine the information available to individuals, suggest what individuals should consider to be relevant and meaningful in their everyday lives, and shape how they seek, share, use, exchange, etcetera, information. Yet strategies do not occur in a vacuum, but rather possess geographical and spatial context. This section overviews these contexts using de Certeau's (1984, p. 117-118) concept of place and Goffman's (1963, p. 101) themes of back, civil, and forbidden.

The concept of place²⁸ is closely tied to strategies (de Certeau, 1984, p. 35-36). Cultural institutions employ strategies to suggest appropriate practices and establish a specific, stable place where they can occur (de Certeau, 1984, p. 35-36). Emerson identifies the Western Wall in Israel as a place that reinforces gender as authentic practice:

I had short hair and a jacket and sweatshirt on. I went to the Western Wall, which is divided by gender, and got called out that I was in the wrong section by someone in Hebrew. As a masculine-of-center identified person in [my hometown], no one ever gives me any trouble for that. Getting my choice of gender expressions smacked in my face [made me think about] how I feel about my gender.

The religious institution of Judaism establishes the Western Wall as a place to pray. By dividing the wall by gender, this place communicates that gender is binary and those desiring to pray must authentically practice gender by having their bodies present as female or male. Further, this presentation must be recognized as female or male by those who regulate entry.²⁹

Emerson's account represents what Goffman (1963, p. 101) regards as a forbidden place. In his discussion of stigma, Goffman (1963, p. 101) notes that stigma operates differently depending on one's context. These contexts can be typified into three different places or spaces (see the below **Back, Civil, and Forbidden Spaces** section for a discussion of space): a) back, where an individual's stigma is not discredited and other individuals share their stigma, b) civil, where stigmatized individuals may be treated as if they are not discredited when they are, and c) forbidden, where if an individual's stigma is discovered, they will be expelled from the community (Knowledge Claim 1.24). In Emerson's case, she was visibly

28. While place as used in this section refers to geographic location, virtual environments also represent "geographies of enablement and constraint" (Law & Bijker, 1992, p. 301). Such enablement, referred to in this research as affordances and constraints are discussed in the below **RQ3. How Technologies Afford Information Practices** and **RQ4. How Technologies Constrain Information Practices** sections.

29. In 2015, a transgender woman was denied access to the wall since the way her body presented was not recognized as either male or female. See <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4612205,00.html>

recognized as not conforming to the expectations for gendered authenticity demanded by the Western Wall and was told to leave the specific section she inhabited.

In the US, a lack of explicit cultural strategies regulating LGBTQ+ identities signify the importance of place in determining how they are governed. As Mark states: “They passed a law in [my state] saying that you don’t need to medically transition to legally change your name or your gender. That new law [has] made my life a lot easier than it could have been a year ago.” In his state, Mark can be recognized as male without engaging in authentic practices mandated by other states, such as gender confirmation surgery. Living in a place that recognizes his desired gender identity without requiring access to as many economic resources assists Mark in attaining recognition of his desired identity expression. Such recognition proves important for Mark, given his father’s imposed negative enforcement mechanism of cutting Mark out of the family’s insurance upon learning of his transgender identity. Both concepts espoused by Goffman (1963, p. 101) and de Certeau (1984, p. 117-118) were combined to provide a typology of places in the coding scheme (see **Appendix F: Final Codebook**).

Back Places

Despite places being created by, and conduits of, cultural strategies, data analysis indicates that individuals with LGBTQ+ identities could locate back places to practice their desired identities (Knowledge Claim 1.26). Colleges and universities represent examples of back places. As Casey recalls:

When I did decide to use “queer” [to describe myself], I did it in a college environment. I [did not have] to go out of my way to research [queer] because I was surrounded by it. My school had a lot of queer and LGBT academic production. I was exposed to some pretty key people in terms of picking and choosing what I felt [was] relevant.

Casey has access to physical infrastructure, i.e., a college and its resources, as well as wise cultural insiders, i.e., professors, who did not discredit, but rather encouraged, LGBTQ+ identity expressions. Other strategies exercised within the back place also engendered these

expressions and include accepting LGBTQ+ identified students, hiring faculty engaged in LGBTQ+ academic production centered on LGBTQ+ identities, approving LGBTQ+ themed courses, etcetera. By accessing the physical infrastructure of a college, Casey could receive information relevant to their queer identity in a sustained way. For instance, Casey could come back to specific buildings that fostered LGBTQ+ academic production multiple times to get more information; something not possible in other, less temporally bound contexts, such as an LGBTQ+ meet-up group.

Other places identified as back places include radical bookstores, LGBTQ+ centers, and cities and towns that are ideologically liberal and have LGBTQ+ enclaves, such as a “gayborhood.” Yet all back places belong to larger geographic contexts that may be less welcoming to individuals with LGBTQ+ identities. Cultural and social group strategies, such as gentrification, or university or college policies that stifle LGBTQ+ identity expressions, threaten to permeate back places. Therefore, while such places experience more stability than back *spaces* (discussed in the below **Back, Civil, and Forbidden Spaces** section), they remain subject to change or even dissolution due to cultural and social group strategies because they depend on these strategies to attain their status as place (Knowledge Claim 1.25).

Forbidden Places

The strategies imparted by forbidden places encourage authentic practices that erase LGBTQ+ identity embodiment and visibility completely. Examples of forbidden places identified by participants vary in scale and include countries, states, towns, neighborhoods, libraries, workplaces, and churches. Such places erase LGBTQ+ visibility by imparting enforcement mechanisms. As Whitney recalls from several years ago: “When I was in North Carolina, I was on a street with the girl who I was dating, holding hands. We walked past a church and people threw rocks at us. Literally. I still have a scar on my leg where people threw

fucking rocks at us. It was horrifying.” Violence colors the enforcement mechanisms of forbidden places. It explains why participants use words like “scared” or “unsafe” to describe them. This violence can be literal, such as throwing rocks at a same-sex couple, or it can be symbolic (Bourdieu, 1984b, p. 109; 1990, p. 125-133; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992).

Symbolic violence manifests when individuals with LGBTQ+ identities literally embody strategies imparted by forbidden places (Bourdieu, 1984a, p. 109; 1990, p. 125-133; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Consider the following 2016 Question-Best Answer pair:

Q: I’m going to Catholic High School next year and am scared because I’m gay. How is it going to be?

A: If I were you, I think it would be safer not to tell anyone that you’re gay. I have many friends at Catholic schools and colleges that keep it secret. Not saying everyone will hate or bully you. It’s just that a lot of my friends made the decision to keep it secret to be safer. If you do choose to “come out” it will lead to some problems. Your safest bet is to not tell anyone for a while until you’re sure they are going to accept you.

In this exchange, the asker does not have a choice regarding whether they can attend Catholic High School. Their recognition that practicing a gay identity at this school is forbidden manifests in their embodied emotion of fear. The answerer suggests that to be safe, the asker should keep their gay identity secret by practicing an authentically straight identity. To be deemed straight involves neither disclosing one’s gay identity to others nor engaging in information practices that may be recognized as gay, e.g., having a same-sex relationship, and instead engaging in those recognized as straight. For example, Will recalls becoming “more buttoned up” to cover “flamboyant,” “expressive,” and “dramatic” childhood practices recognized by others as indicative of a gay identity.

Two interview participants (6%) considered libraries to be forbidden places. Stefan had the following to say about their experience starting a new job in a public library:

Everybody calls each other “Miss.” “Miss” makes my skin crawl. I was like what about “Mx?” I had to explain, trying not to out myself [that] it’s a gender-neutral title and it

makes me more comfortable than being called “Miss.” Then somebody told my supervisor. She was like, “People won’t accept you if you don’t use an honorific. The honorific is the invisible desk between you and [the user].” I was really upset. People called me “Miss” all day long.

Stefan works at a library in a city most would consider ideologically very liberal. Further, others may perceive the public library as, in Sage’s words, a “magical bastion of progressive liberalism.” Yet the ideological values communicated by both city and library occlude strategies that render these places forbidden for certain identities. Stefan does not have a choice regarding their identity expression. They are forced to feel deeply uncomfortable by conforming to the library’s strategy of establishing authority via an “invisible desk” between librarian and library user. The lack of explicit strategies preventing Stefan from this discomfort, coupled with the enforcement mechanism of being fired leaves Stefan in a situation where they must be referred to and respond as “Miss” with no perceived recourse. As Stefan states: “I’m not saying jack shit to anybody because they can fire me.”

While strategies within the library can produce its status as a forbidden place, so too can the surrounding context permeating the library. When asked what role, if any, the library could play in constructing a back place for individuals with LGBTQ+ identities, Lauren addressed the importance of recognizing such permeability:

[The state where I currently reside] happens to be the most extreme example of a place where [if the library had visible LGBTQ+ services, collections, and spaces] there would be backlash, which if anything could do more damage. I could imagine people picketing the public library close to where I lived. I could imagine a closeted 23-year old [seeing that and] being like, “Wow, this is worse than I thought.” The only reason why I stop from fully saying yes [to visibility of LGBTQ+ identities in the library] is [that] as sites of the production and maintenance of cultural ideas, it’s dangerous to totally be insensitive to the micro-context.

Lauren’s account exemplifies the permeability of boundaries inherent even to proper places like the library, as they are susceptible to strategies from the larger places and institutions of which they are part. Halberstam (2005, p. 33-37, 70, 183-184) and Gray (2009, p. 89-91) discuss

the tensions between demands for LGBTQ+ visibility made at the cultural level and the places where such demands can be actualized, i.e., liberal, urban areas. As their research and Lauren's account demonstrate, such demands cannot withstand places that do not support these identity expressions.

Civil Places

While civil places do not explicitly forbid LGBTQ+ identities, they do not employ strategies that foster their visibility. Sebastian recalls how her high school, "just kind of let the [gay-straight alliance] exist. [The school] didn't really do much about it. It definitely didn't get as much support as say, a sports team." Visibility constitutes a key characteristic determining civil places. Even in places that seemingly accept LGBTQ+ identities, individuals may not have the resources, such as geographical connectedness to other individuals with LGBTQ+ identities, to attain the visibility expected of an authentic LGBTQ+ identity (Gray, 2009, p. 30). As an answerer within a 2014 Question-Best Answer pair expresses: "Feeling like you're the only gay guy at school is very common, even in more accepting places."

When participants discussed libraries, they most often described them as civil places (n=11 sources, 34%; 33 total codes; Knowledge Claim 1.27). One can visit a library to access LGBTQ+ materials, but their physical organization renders them less visible and couches LGBTQ+ identities within a larger stigma discourse. Consider Sage's description of issues they encounter when visiting the library:

I think the biggest problem is that a lot of the materials feel hidden away. If they are there, they are in the "Sexuality" section, which is a problem because I don't really want to go by... It's stigmatizing the books when you put them in with the sex. And so many times I've noticed that they're scattered in different places. You might have some under "Feminism," you might have some under "Gender," you might have some under "Health Issues." There's not a central LGBT section. Nowadays, the library is not somewhere I go to find information.

Despite the strategic rhetoric of diversity and inclusivity espoused by organizations, such as the American Library Association (ALA),³⁰ the library collocates books to areas that communicate stigmatizing discourses to participants. Such discourses do not align with the affirming fluidities and multiplicities participants attach to their own identity descriptions. Further, by hiding LGBTQ+ materials away, the library makes Sage perceive LGBTQ+ identities as closeted and, therefore, invalid. Sage's account bolsters an observation made by Rothbauer (2010) that many individuals with LGBTQ+ identities reject the strategy of closeting employed by libraries and realized in practices such as organizing collections. Even for those who desire privacy when browsing resources, such as Sierra (see the above **Cultural and Social Group Strategies** section) being able to see resources made visible as LGBTQ+, rather than as "Sexuality," "Feminism," etcetera, is identity affirming and can convince participants that the library is a safe, back place where they can engage in identity expression.

Summary of Key Findings

Strategies are inextricable from geographical place. By giving or withholding a specific place to things – whether bodies, information sources, or bodies *as* information sources – strategies produce a type of knowledge that describes how the world works and who exists within it. Laverne Cox, a transgender actress, encapsulates this idea in a response to bathroom bills, which seek to restrict bathroom use to those whose biological sex corresponds with their gender identity: "These bills are not about bathrooms. They're about whether transgender people have the right to exist in public space. If we can't access public bathrooms, we can't go to school, we can't work, we can't go to healthcare facilities" (CBS News, 2017).

30. See <http://www.ala.org/aboutala/governance/policymanual/updatedpolicymanual/section2/diversity>

The type of place one encounters can be described as back, civil, or forbidden. These designations are context-dependent. For instance, a college may be perceived as a back place for those with queer identities, but not for those who identify as transgender.³¹ Further, the boundaries of co-located places experience variable permeability. In some instances, one can locate a back place among many forbidden ones. In others, the properties of surrounding places and cultural institutions seep, or threaten to seep, into the place in question, rendering it difficult for back places to be established.

Data analysis indicates that participants cited back and forbidden places as most influential to their information practices. One reason why participants less often discussed civil places may be that they experience less visibility than back and forbidden ones, since civil places do not adopt an explicit stance on how LGBTQ+ information practices are regulated.

Libraries were most often given the designation of civil places and in only one account were described as back. While libraries ostensibly promote diversity and inclusion, their strategies stigmatize and, in some cases, erase LGBTQ+ identities. As indicated by Sage and Sierra's accounts in this section as well as the above **Cultural and Social Group Strategies** section, prior experiences with the library stuck with participants. Even an interaction viewed as inconsequential by a librarian may have imparted symbolic violence onto an LGBTQ+ individual to the point where they would not choose to visit the library again. The individual has imputed value to the library that mitigates their use of it over time.

However, changing the library's strategies to create a back place does not present a tenable solution. As indicated by Lauren's account above, in contexts where boundaries between places are permeable, these strategies might harm rather than help. Returning to the

31. For a recent example, see <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/10/19/magazine/when-women-become-men-at-wellesley-college.html>

recursive nature of insider/outsider dynamics, strategies always benefit certain individuals over others. There must be an outsider, after all, for there to be an insider. Thus, one person's back place might be another's forbidden one. Sage addresses this argument by asking the question: "When you think about libraries as safe spaces, who are they safe for?"

RQ2. How Information Practices Shape Sociocultural Context

While strategies shape the information practices of individuals with LGBTQ+ identities, these individuals also exercise agency by appropriating these strategies to (re)produce sociocultural context. This section overviews how this appropriation occurs by answering RQ2: How do the information practices of individuals with LGBTQ+ identities produce context? Specifically, this section discusses the practice of tactics, defined as the temporary seizure of strategies to render desired meaning (de Certeau, 1984, p. 36-38). Tactics influence how cultural and social group strategies can be appropriated and produce spaces in which these appropriations occur. This section overviews the properties of tactics, their meaning to participants, and how tactics produce spaces. The section concludes with a summary of key findings.

Findings

The knowledge claims empirically derived from the data are listed below. The knowledge claims for RQ2 are organized by etic and emic themes. For clarity, each knowledge claim is parenthetically cited in the subsequent discussion when first mentioned. The knowledge claims for RQ2 are:

- 2.1. Tactics cannot exist without strategies
- 2.2. Participants are not passive consumers of information
- 2.3. Participants are active agents in determining the relevance and meaning of their information landscapes

- 2.4. Participants engage in tactics by appropriating strategies to achieve desired information outcomes
- 2.5. Key tactics identified by participants are embodied practice, realness, and information control
- 2.6. Embodied practice inspires participants to explore sexual and gender identities outside those considered normative
- 2.7. Participants view information from formal sources as irrelevant to their embodied experiences
- 2.8. Participants view information from cultural insiders as irrelevant to their embodied experiences
- 2.9. Interpersonal sources who share participant experiences are considered more legitimate than formal sources
- 2.10. Realness visibly disrupts strategies
- 2.11. Realness interrogates insider/outsider dynamics
- 2.12. Information control denotes participants' knowledge of strategies as espoused by their ability to creatively and deftly navigate them
- 2.13. By engaging in tactics, participants envision information practices as context-dependent
- 2.14. By engaging in tactics, participants envision information practices as individualized
- 2.15. Spaces constitute a temporary assemblage of practices
- 2.16. Spaces can be typified into back, civil, and forbidden
- 2.17. The space types (i.e., back, civil, forbidden) are context-dependent
- 2.18. Information grounds constitute back spaces
- 2.19. Spaces are immaterial

2.20. Spaces are overlaid on places

2.21. It is difficult for participants to locate certain spaces given they lack physical and geographical permanence

Table 9 displays the major tactics theme and the sub-themes, ordered by prevalence of total codes.

Table 9. Tactics Themes and Sub-themes.

Themes and Sub-themes	Total Sources	Total Codes
Tactics	32 (100%)	2,838
Embodied knowledge	32 (100%)	1,388
Information control	32 (100%)	391
Disclosure	25 (78%)	183
Secrecy	29 (91%)	133
Covering	20 (63%)	68
Deception	10 (31%)	33
Realness	32 (100%)	232
Creating meaning	29 (91%)	205
Consuming	27 (84%)	105
Producing	24 (75%)	100

Table 10 displays a summary of the number of sources and codes for the space theme and sub-themes, organized by prevalence of total codes.

Table 10. Space Theme and Sub-themes.

Space Theme and Sub-themes	Total Sources	Total Codes
Space	30 (94%)	178
Back	29 (91%)	96
Forbidden	23 (72%)	54
Civil	16 (50%)	38

Discussion

Tactics

The conceptual framework underlying this dissertation (see **Conceptual Framework**) contends that individuals cannot escape strategies. Strategies can change over time, but they structure society and thus always exist (de Certeau, 1984, p. xx). However, this contention

does not signify that individuals are without agency. Rather, individuals consistently appropriate strategies and rework them to align with the meanings they assign to everyday life. Consider Joanna's description of their high school's sex education program: "My school had a pretty great sex ed. program. Even though it was very straight, I was like, 'Ok it's based on a body.' I could transfer that." Akin to de Certeau's treatment of reading (1984, p. xxi-xxii, p. 166-175), Joanna is not a passive consumer of information related to sexual health. Rather, Joanna took the strategies of sexual health made visible to them and "transferred" these strategies to their own body. While a strategy may communicate cultural and social discourses, a tactic strips the strategy of this discourse and reinvents it as embodied knowledge (Knowledge Claim 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4). While tactics also include production in the sense that one produces knowledge by engaging in them, this production is often invisible. Therefore, it was important for the researcher to have the interview participants as a data source, given that interviews elicited critical incidents from participants to highlight these tactical practices.

Embodiment

As indicated by the above **Cultural and Social Group Strategies** section, strategies (particularly at the cultural level) render LGBTQ+ identities as invisible, or, if visible, as stigmatized. How then do those unaware of the multiplicity and fluidity of LGBTQ+ identity expressions seek information given they have been led to believe this information is not real or is dangerous to pursue? Data analysis indicates that participants rely on embodied practices (Knowledge Claim 2.6). These practices denote knowledge obtained through the body and personal experience (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. 146; Bourdieu, 1984c, p. 165-222; Lloyd, 2010). Embodied practices are therefore innately linked to feelings and emotions, both of which have been largely overlooked as viable practices within the LIS literature (see Dervin, 1999, p. 730; Olsson, 2010). Consider Mark's account detailing how he became aware of his transgender

identity: “When I was dreaming, my identity in my dream was as male instead of female. That’s how I became aware that my narrative was as a male and then I realized that something was off.” This account expresses a disconnect between strategy and tactic. A certain discourse is articulated to Mark as a strategy – you are a female because you were assigned this category at birth. However, this strategy does not match how Mark feels when dreaming. This sense of difference, or something being “off,” was realized by Mark as a tactical, embodied response to this strategy.

Another key feature of tactics is that they are creative. In Mark’s case, such creativity was literal. What is more creative than what one dreams? In Jamie’s case, he practiced creativity by taking inventory of his body’s responses to strategies when minimizing the appearance of his breasts using a binder:

I’m a little heavier so when I have a binder it cuts in. If you’re a stick, it’s cut perfect, but I’ve got a large chest. I wear three [binders]. I wear a t-shirt one, a muscle top one, and then I wear the strongest one on top. It’s a tank top and makes me as flat as I want. I don’t get cuts because the t-shirt one keeps it off my skin. That took me a long time to figure out what to do.

Jamie had to be mindful of his body’s response to a binder that was not designed for him, but rather for an archetypal “stick” body. Ultimately, he developed knowledge of how to make his binder fit. Only Jamie has this knowledge (see discussion of bras in McGaw, 2003). The fact that embodied knowledge is individualized challenges how individuals traditionally conceive of knowledge from the top down (as per strategies). Instead, as Jamie’s account suggests, knowledge can be developed within the individual, particularly if they are marginalized. As de Certeau (1984, p. 37) notes, “a tactic is an art of the weak.” Much like strategies are subject to tactical interpretations, information does not become knowledge until it is consumed, and thus, actively reworked and reinterpreted by the “ordinary” (de Certeau, 1984, p. v) person.

Information Control

A connection exists between information practices and sharing. By engaging in information practices, one also shares or does not share certain information related to their identities. Information shared determines what is visible and what can be accessed: “To display or not to display; to tell or not to tell; to let on or not to let on; to lie or not to lie; and in each case, to whom, how, when and where” (Goffman, 1963, p. 42). Participants had to be tactical in determining whether to disclose, when to disclose, and how to disclose (Knowledge Claim 2.12). Data analysis revealed four practices centered on sharing or not sharing: disclosure, secrecy, covering, and deception (see Goffman, 1963).

Participants engaged in disclosure to be recognized by others as their desired identities. For example, Diane states that disclosing her gay identity to others “made it real to me.” This practice of disclosure represented a tactic since Diane could disclose on her own terms: “I’ve told everyone I cared to tell that I’m gay. Other than that, I’m living my life and posting the pictures [on Facebook] that I want. If you look at my [Facebook profile] I think it’s pretty clear I’m in a relationship with another woman.” Diane does not feel forced to disclose, but rather wants to be recognized as gay by those she “care[s] to tell.” She appropriates strategies for those she does not care to tell. Specifically, Diane imparts the responsibility of determining her LGBTQ+ identity to them, rather than engaging in the authentic practice of “coming out.” To make this determination, individuals must engage in a series of strategies to recognize Diane’s practices as “gay,” such as assigning certain relevance to the content she posts on her Facebook profile. Diane might also be engaging in social steganography (boyd & Marwick, 2011; Marwick & boyd, 2014) by presenting information on her Facebook in a way that might be recognized by those in the know as gay, while knowing that this presentation occludes such recognition from others, e.g., “Look at that nice picture of Diane and her best friend.” While

in other contexts, such strategies might negatively impact how Diane perceives her gay identity, in terms of disclosure, Diane depends on these strategies to obviate a “need” to disclose.

In other instances, participants weigh the perceived consequences of disclosure with its benefits. For instance, Sierra disclosed her transgender identity to access hormones:

I was flat out broke. If I could have had everything go my way, I would have just started hormones then told my parents much later. You could argue that’s not safe or whatever, but that’s what I was going to do. Since I need[ed] money, I talked to my mom first because she’s the one that always gives me money, but that required a whole new step because it’s like, how do [I] tell her? What kinds of things can I expect?

Sierra’s need, rather than desire, to disclose her transgender identity emanated from two explicit cultural strategies. First, to be recognized by others as her desired gender identity, Sierra had to engage in a specific process of gender confirmation and elicit approval from cultural insiders, such as a gender therapist. Second, due to the lack of federally mandated laws requiring health insurers to pay for any treatments related to gender confirmation, attaining these services is costly. What makes Sierra’s disclosure tactical is that she decided to disclose after carefully weighing the consequences (see discussion of risk-taking, Chatman, 1996, p. 196-197). Sierra views such disclosure as beneficial since it provides her with resources necessary to express her desired gender identity. Further, she set the parameters for when and how the disclosure would occur and prepared herself by researching potential scenarios, or things to expect. This account illustrates how strategies and tactics are intertwined. Sierra could not fully escape from cultural strategies, so instead became aware of their constraints and made informed decisions regarding the best ways to address them.

Disclosure also operates at the social group level. When social group insiders recognize participants as LGBTQ+, such recognition can engender access to information about these identities. As Cole recounts: “I was invited to this group. It was a bunch of older women [and] I think they’re all lesbian identified. They invited me in and took me under their wing like,

‘Hey, you’re a baby butch.’” Like Diane’s account above, Cole’s account denotes how disclosure does not only signify a verbal declaration. Rather, disclosure pertains to any embodied practice recognized by others as indicative of an LGBTQ+ identity. Practices related to self-presentation and dress represent disclosure practices and indicate to whom these practices are visible. Those unfamiliar with the term, “baby butch,” for instance, would not know how to recognize one. Thus, disclosure hinges on an individual’s knowledge of what information others find relevant based on the meanings they assign to their everyday lives – a marker of information value. Cultural outsiders possess a depth of knowledge and unique perspective, given they are both painfully aware of knowledge made dominant by cultural strategies, as well as that espoused by the social groups to which they seek membership. Possessing both types of knowledge renders participants poised to tactically navigate the everyday barriers to and challenges of identity expressions not considered or experienced by cultural insiders.

Participants not only disclose to attain social group membership but also to be viewed as a valuable information source within said group. As Casey states: “I run an LGBT archive and research center. I have to say I’m queer all the time so that people don’t think I’m a random straight ally who is fascinated by the queer community.” However, being visibly LGBTQ+ is not an option or desire for everyone. The visibility required to access resources, be invited to join a social group, or be identified as a valuable information source, is pitted against the influence of cultural and social group strategies in determining who gets to be visible. This tension can lead to situations where participants do not feel equipped to practice information related to their LGBTQ+ identities. As Sage states: “There’s certainly a sense of having to balance the safety of being anonymous with the fact that I can only get so much information anonymously, or I can only express so much anonymously.” Therefore, disclosure

does not solely constitute an “information problem” (Lingel & boyd, 2013, p. 983) from the perspective of what information is shared with whom. Given the complications centered on LGBTQ+ visibility, disclosure also problematizes what information is available to participants and whether those participants are envisioned as a valuable information source by others.

Participants may also not wish or feel the need to disclose their LGBTQ+ identities, instead keeping them secret. Participants maintain secrecy via their tactical selection of information sources. For instance, Eva explains why she preferred watching the lesbian-themed show, *The L Word* to using a search engine when researching her gay identity: “Watching *The L Word* was easier because you’re not saying anything, you’re just watching a show. You’re not making a statement or a question.” Eva’s concern with using a search engine may emanate from her fear that others might discover her gay identity via her search history or a desire to keep her gay identity a secret from herself.

However, Eva’s account cannot be concluded with that a blanket statement, such as “LGBTQ+ television shows are most helpful to individuals when exploring these identities.” Instead, resource choice is subject to the unique intersection of strategies and tactics, as well as the places, spaces (see the below **Back, Civil, and Forbidden Spaces** section), and technologies (see the below **RQ3. How Technologies Afford Information Practices** and **RQ4. How Technologies Constrain Information Practices** sections), in which they are exercised. While Eva may not prefer search engines to maintain secrecy, other participants like Kyle relied on them exclusively:

I [wasn’t] restricted [in researching my transgender identity] because I had my own computer. I wasn’t afraid someone would find my search history and I would have consequences for that. I always felt free to type in whatever I needed or whatever question I had.

Comparing these two accounts demonstrates that information resources cannot be mapped definitively onto information practices. There exists no one “good” resource for a group of

individuals, whose individual, social, and cultural contexts are subject to such variance. Instead, judging the quality of resources selected can only be made by analysis of all three contextual levels.

Participants may also engage in a type of secrecy referred to as covering. Covering entails working either individually or in concert with others to lessen the visibility given to one's LGBTQ+ identity or elements of it (Goffman, 1963, p. 124-127). For instance, Autumn engaged in covering to be recognized by her parents as having a non-binary, non-cisgender identity with the least amount of enforcement mechanisms applied:

I started identifying as genderfluid before I started saying I was trans. It was a term I could use with my parents that they didn't understand. When I say "transwoman" to them, they think "tranny," "transvestite." They think, "You're going to end up as a prostitute, selling yourself behind dumpsters." I wanted to avoid having that association put on me because it would increase the intensity of their reaction. I didn't want them to think I was going to start taking hormones. When they said, "It was just a phase," for me that was safe. It meant that they were trivializing it, and when they were trivializing it, they weren't taking drastic action.

Autumn negotiated the costs and benefits related to the risk-taking inherent in disclosing her non-binary, non-cisgender identity (Chatman, 1996, p. 196-197). To minimize the cost of disclosure, which Autumn interpreted as an "intens[e] reaction," while maximizing the desired benefit of identity recognition, she disclosed as genderfluid. Autumn's awareness of strategies facilitated her decision-making, given she knew that her parents would likely trivialize this identity category, rather than take "drastic action" in response to a transgender one. The following 2014 Question-Best Answer pair provides another example of covering:

Q: I'm a closeted gay guy and met someone in college who is perfect for me. However, I don't know if he's gay or not. How can I let him know I'm interested without outing myself?

A: You need to be clever and give him a way to let you know if he's interested without putting him on the spot. Play a hypothetical "What if" game. Timing is important. You'll have to get him when he is open and wants to talk. When the time is right, ask: "What would you do if you really liked someone, but were scared to approach them

because you were unsure how they felt?” At some point, he will get the idea that you’re really talking about him. Once he figures that out and responds, that’s your answer.

In this account, the answerer carefully weighs the potential sanctions of disclosure against the benefit of a relationship. The answerer employs their knowledge of strategies, specifically regarding those governing interaction rituals (Goffman, 1967, p. 5-46), to create a hypothetical, low stakes scenario, which will provide the asker with information while limiting the risk of disclosure. This scenario also minimizes the extent to which the asker or the object of their desire must acknowledge their LGBTQ+ identities.

A final facet of information control is deception, defined by Chatman (1996, p. 200-201) as deliberately hiding one’s true condition by providing false or misleading information. Data analysis suggests that deception does not always denote negative information outcomes. Rather, individuals can engage in deception to ascribe new meaning to their identities. Consider Jamie’s recollection of catfishing, a term popularized by a documentary and current television series to describe “a person who sets up a false personal profile on a social networking site for fraudulent or deceptive purposes” (“Catfish,” n.d.). When Jamie was catfishing, he identified and was recognized by others as female, but wanted to explore a male identity. He states: “[When] I was catfishing using male pictures, I would wake up and be like, “Oh yeah, that’s not me. I can’t go to school and act the same way as at home [when catfishing].” It was a lot of self-exploring, and figuring and finding out what [practicing a male identity] was like.” Deception highlights how strategies render certain identities and information as legitimate. Formal sources, namely the mainstream media, portray the practice of catfishing as disingenuous and pathologized. The hosts of the recurring television series, now entering its sixth season,³² play the role of detectives to sleuth out those who are

32. See <http://www.mtv.com/shows/catfish-the-tv-show>

catfishing, publically identify them on national television, and then pathologize some aspect of their narrative, e.g., childhood trauma or bullying, to explain their motivations for catfishing. But Jamie's account does not suggest that he interpreted this experience as a negative one or indicative of there being anything wrong with him. Rather, catfishing was a way for Jamie to express his identity in response to the strategies and forbidden places that delegitimized it. By catfishing, Jamie could attain embodied knowledge of what it was like to inhabit a male identity and be recognized by others as male, without incurring enforcement mechanisms he would encounter elsewhere.

Realness

Participants who assigned meaning to their identities based on their embodied knowledge facilitated realness. Realness is defined as the process of individualizing an identity category in a way that "embraces more hybrid possibilities for embodiment and identification" than the authenticity demanded of the category by cultural and social group strategies (Halberstam, 2005, p. 54; Gray, 2009, p. 121-176).³³ Realness represents a specific type of tactic (Knowledge Claims 2.5). It not only appropriates, but also showcases the instability of identity categories (see Butler, 1990). For instance, Kristen denotes taking pleasure from successfully passing as straight: "Part of me likes to fly under the radar. I think I pass for straight pretty well and I like that. Cause it's like, 'Oh surprise, you're not what I want.'" Kristen appropriates the authentic practice of passing, derived from a larger cultural strategy of heterocentricity, to make visible the instability of a straight identity category. Kristen's practice of realness

33. The phrase "*realness*" originates from the ball scene in 1980s New York, documented in the film *Paris is Burning*. In this context, realness was defined as emulations of identity categories, such as executive realness and military realness. As drag queen Pepper LaBeija explains: "To be able to blend – that's what realness is" (Livingston, 1990). However, realness does not approximate performance nor an imitation. Rather, "it is the way that people, minorities, excluded from the domain of the real, appropriate the real and its effects... the term realness offsets any implications of inauthenticity... realness actually describes less of an act of will and more of a desire to flaunt the unpredictability of social gendering" (Halberstam, 2005, p. 51).

demonstrates that “straight” does not represent an innate identity only available to cultural insiders. Thus, realness represents a tactical practice that places the power of strategies and insider/outsider dynamics into question (Knowledge Claims 2.10, 2.11).

Participants practice realness at both cultural and social group levels. While more media representations exist of LGBTQ+ identities as compared to past decades, they do not reflect all possibilities of LGBTQ+ identity expression (Gray 2009, p. 121-176). As discussed in the above **Cultural and Social Group Strategies** section, strategies render certain LGBTQ+ identities authentic and afford them visibility. Strategies also determine what practices are indicative of an authentic identity category. Kyle interprets these practices as a “short-order bill or shopping list,” indicative of his ability to be recognized as transgender by others. Jamie describes some of these practices in his account of realness:

After a while I started trying to go about [exploring a transgender identity] by [asking], “How do I do this right?” I’m very different from a lot of trans guys that I know and have talked to. I’m not out there with it. I’m more laid back. A lot of people have issues getting jobs and stuff and I haven’t. Even with “coming out”. Am I doing it right? I did try and figure out a right way to do [my transgender identity], a wrong way to do it. Eventually I realized my way was the right way for me, even if it wasn’t the right way for somebody else.

The authentic practices for transgender individuals identified by Jamie include affording visibility to one’s transgender identity expression by being “out there with it,” experiencing a shared set of barriers like “hav[ing] issues getting jobs,” and disclosing one’s identity to others by “coming out.” Initially, Jamie conformed to these practices, but over time decided they did not fit his own embodied knowledge. Ultimately, Jamie concluded that there is no one “right” way to practice a transgender identity. Instead, the knowledge Jamie derived from his own embodied practices informed a unique, right way to be transgender, specific to him. In this example, Jamie practices realness by adopting a transgender identity category while simultaneously rejecting certain expected facets of it. Simply by existing, Jamie represents a

disruption to authentic transgender identity practices, which questions the salience of this identity as monolithic.

Since participants rely on individual embodiment it can be difficult for them to evaluate outside information since it does not fully match their lived experience (Knowledge Claims 2.13, 2.14). Merton (1972, p. 13-16) refers to this phenomenon alternatively as “extreme insiderism,” “extreme insider doctrine,” and “total insider doctrine,” and contends that if one defines legitimate knowledge solely based on embodiment, it can shut off information sharing and exchange. Chatman (1996, p. 205) also observes extreme insider doctrinism within insider/outsider dynamics of the information poor: “Theorists debating an insiders/outsiders worldview assume that it refers to ‘us’ against ‘them’ rather than an ‘I’ and everyone else is ‘them.’” Data analysis suggests that participants recognize this tension and approximate information provided by others to their own, unique context. Consider Rihanna’s description of how she evaluates information related to queer identities:

What I look for is a depth of analysis and the ability to hold contradiction. An ability to see how queer experiences [are] intertwined with lots of things like historical contexts and class politics. [The] kind of stuff I look for is not just a description that seems very closed or self-contained about someone’s experience or way of being in the world, but is able to say something or do something or show something that acknowledges complexity and opens up other questions.

This account suggests that Rihanna is not closing herself off to outside information, but rather, her expectation for this information is to embrace the messiness of context rather than condensing identities into a monolithic set of practices or a single solution. Since formal information sources and cultural insiders do not fulfill this expectation (Knowledge Claims 2.7, 2.8), participants take it upon themselves to create meaning that captures this complexity.

Creating Meaning

Creating meaning denotes the tactical practice of using information to exercise ownership over one’s reality (Chatman, 1996, p. 195). Individuals create meaning via production and

consumption. Production involves the creation and sharing of a material object, whether physical or digital (for a discussion on digital materiality, see the below **RQ3. How Technologies Afford Information Practices** section) representative of an individual's embodied knowledge. Participants perceive a gap in information that their embodied knowledge can fill and produce information to fill this gap. Examples of such content produced, described by participants, include comic books, Instagram pictures, Question-Best Answer pairs, fan and slash fiction, and an LGBT archive. Consider Cole's motivations for and production of YouTube videos about female masculinity:

Instead of just viewing content, I started making my own content. On YouTube, I didn't find a lot of female masculinity [videos] so I was like, "I'm going to try and make a video a week." I ended up doing that for two years. Looking back and re-watching [the videos I can] be like, "Oh yeah, I've evolved past that or I've taken how I think about myself in a different direction." It's an interesting ongoing thing when I take the time to re-watch [and] was super helpful to work through some stuff.

Cole not only produces content, but also consumes it (de Certeau, 1984, 1984, p. xxi-xxii, p. 166-175). Over time, Cole reinterpreted past experiences conveyed by her YouTube videos with her present knowledge lens. By engaging in this practice of production and (re)consumption, participants envisioned their identities as continuous. They did not go through some radical change of being at one key moment in their lives, but rather are constantly subject to a process of becoming (Dervin, 1999, p. 730, footnote 5; Dervin, 2003, p. 116). As Rachel states: "There's no such thing as fully transitioned. Let's say I wanted surgery. That's not the end of me changing as a human being. We're not static. I'm constantly changing my worldviews when I get new information." This observation has implications for LIS research that envisions LGBTQ+ identity formation as proceeding in a series of static, linear stages, with a set of predefined information needs (see Hamer, 2003). Instead, individuals are subject to both the messiness of a context and constant (re)consumption and (re)production (see Dervin, 2003). While it might not be possible to capture context since it is

not static, theoretical frameworks that account for the fluidity and messiness of context can better address its complexity rather than condensing LGBTQ+ identities into a preordained model.

Yahoo! Answers participants consistently produce and consume meaning by sharing and exchanging information.³⁴ Consider the following 2014 Question-Best Answer pair:

Q: I'm a 15-year-old girl who wants to be a man. After seeing gay male couples and how they have sex, I've decided that I really want that. I find it so attractive to consider myself a man who is in love with another man. The only problem is that I am a girl and am not sure what to do. I've told my parents, but they say I shouldn't be stupid.

A: The first step is to look for gender therapists in your area. There's a user in this thread that finds these questions and provides links. Here is one [provides link to previous Yahoo! Answers thread]. Scroll down and look for [user name].

The asker indicates the importance of embodied knowledge in solidifying their desires, both sexual and related to gender identity. By consuming the practice of gay couples having sex (presumably in pornography), the asker produces meaning by desiring and wishing to be desired as male. The answerer provides a series of “steps” or authentic practices that the asker must undergo to adopt their desired identity, reiterating that strategies produce perceptions of a “right” way to express an identity (see above **Cultural and Social Group Strategies** section). The answerer also references another member of the LGBT thread who compiles a list of resources for questions related to this topic. This practice denotes the importance of formal sources, such as gender therapists, being reworked and reinterpreted by social group insiders who share the same experiences and affinities to be considered trustworthy.

Social group insiders could also validate how participants produce LGBTQ+ identity expressions. Eva describes a reddit thread discussing drag identities as: “Helping me get my

34. Sharing and exchange represent two distinct information practices. Sharing denotes an active offering or distribution of information with no expectations for reciprocity, whereas with exchange this reciprocity is expected (Burnett et al., 2014).

gay chops. I was able to talk about [my identity] so freely on my reddit.” Eva’s use of the phrase “gay chops” suggests the importance of a shared sense of experiences and practices in fostering her gay identity development. To some degree, Eva imagines this shared sense (Sender, 2004, p. 5; Anderson, 2006). Certainly, not all information practices centered around a gay identity can be distilled to a clearly articulated skillset of “chops.” However, Eva’s ability to contextualize gay identity expressions within reddit threads helped her to practice “doing” this identity by both consuming, i.e., seeing herself within, and producing, i.e., expressing her identity, information (see Butler, 1990; Gray, 2009).

Social group insiders who shared common experiences were viewed by participants as having more legitimacy than cultural insiders. Jamie exemplifies this finding when explaining his participation on a Tumblr forum for transgender men: “It wasn’t a doctor who knew nothing about [being transgender] giving you advice, it was people already living it.” Although doctors represent cultural insiders who sign off on the authenticity of certain transgender identity expressions, Jamie does not identify a doctor as a valued information source to consult regarding issues related to transgender identities aside from providing access to resources. Unlike Sierra’s experience with the library (see above **Cultural and Social Group Strategies** section), Jamie does not necessarily mistrust doctors. Rather, he envisions them as devoid of the collective experience produced and consumed within a male, transgender social group, which would render them as relevant sources.

Summary of Key Findings

Findings indicate that participants do not passively adopt and conform to strategies. Rather, participants represent active agents who locate opportune moments to creatively appropriate and navigate strategies that achieve desired information outcomes. Such tactics include embodied practice, in which participants locate knowledge within their experiences, feelings,

and bodies. They compare these embodied practices to strategies in establishing points of difference, which then motivate them to explore sexual and gender identities outside of those considered normative at the cultural and social group levels. By exploring such identities, participants engage in realness by providing visible disruptions of strategies, challenging their unquestioned assumptions. Because of embodied and realness practices, participants recognize the messiness of context as it applies to individual identities and take it upon themselves to create meaning that captures such complexity.

Participants create meaning via production and consumption, both of which are active. To produce meaning, participants identify gaps in their current information landscape that they contend their embodied knowledge can fill and then create information representative of this knowledge. Participants also consume information, including their prior experiences, as well as the experiences of others, and apply this information to their present situation. Although participants recognize the complexity inherent to LGBTQ+ identities, they did seek out interpersonal sources who shared a series of experiences and affinities. These sources were viewed by participants as having more legitimacy than cultural insiders.

What information participants share about themselves and how they share this information impacts what is visible and what can be accessed. Data analysis revealed four practices of information control centered on sharing or not sharing: disclosure, secrecy, covering, and deception. For each practice, participants had to negotiate between its costs and benefits and choose the most appropriate response. Such negotiation influenced the language participants used to describe themselves and their source selection. While research on risk-taking related to disclosure or lack of disclosure has been framed as self-protecting mechanisms (Chatman, 1996, p. 197, proposition 4), participants envisioned such information management as facilitators of embodied practices; these information management practices

denoted participants' knowledge of strategies as espoused by their ability to creatively and deftly navigate them.

Back, Civil, and Forbidden Spaces

In addition to places, individuals produce spaces that afford alternate means for information interactions. Space represents a "practiced place" (de Certeau, 1984, p. 117) representative of the various actors, actions, systems, agendas, etcetera within. Given their temporality and lack of proper place, spaces foster tactics. The place of Stephanie's college becomes a space when she refers to it as "queer central." Suddenly, the physical infrastructure, which suggests certain practices, disappears, and instead becomes a space characterized by the queer tactics exercised within. Thus, individuals do not need access to infrastructure to change a space, but only need the ability to practice tactics (Knowledge Claim 2.15).

Much like places, data analysis indicates spaces can also be described by Goffman's (1963, p. 101) typology of back, civil, and forbidden (Knowledge Claim 2.16). This finding indicates that neither space/place nor tactic/strategy binaries are innately "good" or "bad." In some contexts, cultural strategies produce back places that affirm participants' desired identities, whereas in others, tactics produce forbidden spaces for certain identity expressions (Knowledge Claim 2.17).

Back Spaces

Unlike places, spaces are not characterized by geographic location or access to infrastructure. To typify a space, one must consider how well the practices characterizing the space align with an individual's desired identity expression. Consider Rihanna's description of a back space: "When I walk into a queer situation, the premise [is] that there's like a lot less explaining [that] I have to do. There's a mutual understanding in a lot of senses, even though people come from different backgrounds." When describing this back space, Rihanna does not give it a

proper name or location. In the context of her quote, this space is merely ideological. It serves as a representation for the shared characteristics of situations she has been in before that have affirmed her queer identity. Therefore, spaces may not be “real” in the sense that participants have experienced them or are currently experiencing them. Rather, they represent what participants think might be possible for individuals with LGBTQ+ identities. This statement does not suggest that back spaces are merely illusory. As Eva’s discussion of “gay chops” and Mark’s dreaming (see above) denote, what is ostensibly “imagined” sometimes constitutes the “real.” This observation expands the notion of what represents “proper” information practices and contexts in which these practices occur from reading in libraries to dreaming up queer situations (Knowledge Claim 2.19).

However, this contention does not signify that back spaces are not actualized. Examples of back spaces provided by participants include communal living spaces, themed nights at bars or clubs, academic conferences, activism events, and retreats. Amina recounts the importance of back spaces created by black queer women:

In [the place I used to live], I had some pushback on my identity and had to be closeted, but it was also the space where I found the most queer community. [I joined] an organization started by black queer women. They have a monthly group where they get together and have a potluck. They put questions in a hat and you answer them, and have food, party, and dance. Out of the places I [have] lived, [that was] where I found the most community at the same time [I had] to tone down my sexuality.

Amina explores the duality of place and space in this account. Spaces are less subject to strategies, giving them a key advantage over places. It is precisely because spaces do not have well-defined boundaries due to their lack of geographic and physical structure that they can exist, even within a forbidden place (Knowledge Claim 2.20). While Amina had to “tone down” her sexuality in response to demands made by the forbidden place, she simultaneously could explore her queer identity within a back space that appropriated the former’s location

and infrastructure. Like tactics, spaces are also creative, temporal and invisible, unless one knows where to look (Knowledge Claim 2.21).

Back spaces also provide participants with serendipitous opportunities to engage in information practices related to their LGBTQ+ identities. Casey recalls how entering a punk subculture validated their genderqueer identity:

In high school, I came across no-wave, which were the Dadas of the punk world. Really into performance art and experimental sound. Also, really fucking queer. When I started to dress ugly, which is what I called it, I had a whole bunch of artists and subcultures behind me who could support my desire to have short hair, and wear cowboy boots, long dresses that were cut in weird places, and weird necklaces. Things that didn't match but I felt good wearing.

Casey's description of their entry into punk subcultures parallels Pettigrew's (1998, 1999; see also Fisher, Durrance, & Hinton, 2004) theory of information grounds, which represent temporary settings, e.g., a punk rock show, where individuals gather for purposes other than information seeking. Within information grounds, individuals share information informally and what and how information is applied depends on the participant's specific context (Pettigrew, 1998, 1999; Fisher, Durrance, & Hinton, 2004). Information grounds, therefore, represent a space, rather than a place, given that the information produced within them does not have a shared context, but rather one subject to individualized meanings and experiences. In Casey's account, these meanings and experiences manifested by the implicit social group tactics of no-wave punk supporting Casey's practice of "dressing ugly" to express their queerness (Knowledge Claim 2.18).

Forbidden Spaces

Like the back spaces, forbidden spaces also operate on an ideological level. Consider how Campbell defines forbidden space: "It was really hard when I was a kid to be queer. Someone hadn't created that space yet. The space that was created for me was tomboy. It's not even encouraged, but it's accepted up until a certain point and then parents, strangers, and teachers

start putting their foot down.” Like Rihanna, Campbell envisions space to describe a horizon of available identity expressions, rather than something specific or actualized. As discussed in the above **Cultural and Social Group Strategies** section, strategies produce and are produced within proper places. Unlike places, which are created and controlled by cultural insiders, spaces are produced by tactics. These spaces belong to the individual, rather than the institution. But strategies can produce spaces if employed by those who are personally invested in maintaining them. A parent does not necessarily want their child to experience negative enforcement mechanisms like ridicule for not presenting as their gender, for example. These spaces are intellectual and philosophical, representing the social organization of knowledge. Much like in Science and Technology Studies (STS), which blur the relationship between the material, i.e., technology, and immaterial, i.e., sociocultural context (see discussion of speed bumps, Latour, 1994, p. 38-41), the concepts of space and place also blur this relationship.

Civil Spaces

Like places, civil spaces only accept certain LGBTQ+ identities and identity expressions. While the characteristics of spaces in some cases lend themselves to fostering more fluid and affirmative LGBTQ+ identity options and expressions, the practices occurring within spaces are fleeting and situational. There exists no guarantee that a specific space will reappear or, if it does, that the dynamics within the space will be the same. For this reason, participants may enter a space they thought would have back characteristics, but end up in a civil, or even forbidden one instead. As Rose recalls:

I was talking to my friend who was involved with [gay straight alliance]. She said, “You should come, it would be good for you.” I went to one of the meetings and the advisor wasn’t there that day. There was this underclassman girl running the meeting and she aggressively said, “Everyone go around and tell us your sexuality.” I felt that it wasn’t the type of environment I wanted to be in and that I had to defend [or] explain to her [who I was] when I didn’t even know myself. It didn’t feel safe.

Gay straight alliance (GSA) meetings do not have a proper location. Rather they occur within places, such as in classrooms or auditoriums. While one could expect to attend GSA meetings with some regularity, the spaces in which these meetings occur are subject to infrastructural and institutional constraints, which could threaten to curb them at any moment. Since the space in which a GSA meeting occurs lacks the regularity ascribed to a place, Rose experienced a situation where the advisor was absent and the meeting was run by an underclassman. The disclosure practices this underclassman advanced made Rose feel as if she might be putting herself at risk if disclosing a fluid, rather than static identity category. This account also exemplifies the finding that having access to LGBTQ+ resources, in this case interpersonal ones, does not necessarily signify a positive information outcome. Instead, Rose was subject to the temporal, fleeting nature characterizing spaces, which in that moment did not produce an identity affirming context.

Summary of Key Findings

Unlike places, spaces lack access to a proper, geographic location and infrastructure. Instead, spaces constitute a temporary and fleeting assemblage of practices. Such complementarity exists between spaces and tactics given the ephemerality of the space and its lack of location. In some cases, spaces constitute information grounds, which participants serendipitously stumble upon and find to be identity affirming. In others, spaces temporarily appropriate geographical and infrastructural resources, such as monthly queer activism meetings. Yet in others, spaces occur in private places, such as one's home. These characteristics allow spaces to be (re)produced by participants and evoke desired meaning for their LGBTQ+ identities.

Given the fleeting and ephemeral nature of spaces, there is no guarantee that an individual can locate the same space again. Further, since spaces are not connected to the material, i.e., geographic location or physical infrastructure, they also may be immaterial

productions of ideological space. Such spaces represent horizons of possibility for individuals, which in some instances can be identity affirming, while in others can close off certain identity expressions if the space has not yet been created for them.

RQ3. How Technologies Afford Information Practices

This section discusses findings for RQ3, which asks: What is the role of technology, namely social media websites, if any, in affording information practices of individuals with LGBTQ+ identities? Although the researcher thought that social media websites would constitute the predominant technology discussed among individuals with LGBTQ+ identities based on prior research (see Hillier & Harrison, 2007; O’Riordan & Phillips, 2007; Bond, Hefner, & Drogos, 2008; Gray, 2009; Pullen & Cooper, 2010), data analysis revealed a major finding that participants cited search engines as an important tool for their information practices. Therefore, search engines along with social media websites, comprise the findings for RQ3 and RQ4 since interview participants exclusively mentioned these two online technologies. Further, the researcher sampled the other data source, Question-Best Answer pairs, from the social media site Yahoo! Answers.

Findings

The knowledge claims empirically derived from the data are listed below. The knowledge claims for RQ3 are organized by etic and emic themes. For clarity, each time a knowledge claim is introduced in the subsequent discussion, it is parenthetically cited. The knowledge claims for RQ3 are:

- 3.1. Participants cite search engines as an important tool that affords their information practices
- 3.2. What constitutes an affordance is based on what participants find as relevant and meaningful within their everyday lives

- 3.3. What constitutes an affordance is rooted in sociocultural context
- 3.4. A key affordance of online technologies is connecting participants to others sharing their LGBTQ+ identities
- 3.5. A key affordance of online technologies is features that allow participants to consume and produce visual evidence of embodied knowledge
- 3.6. A key affordance of online technologies is that they provide access to sources outside formal channels of peer production
- 3.7. A key affordance of online technologies is that they can be used by participants to engage in embodied practices
- 3.8. A key affordance of online technologies is that they can be used by participants to circumvent strategic demands for authenticity
- 3.9. A key affordance of online technologies is that they can assist participants in controlling what information is shared about their LGBTQ+ identities

Table 11 (see next page) displays main themes and sub-themes coded as affordances.

Table 11. Affordance Themes and Sub-themes.

Affordance Themes and Sub-themes	Total Sources	Total Codes
Affordance	31 (97%)	200
Linking to similar others	27 (84%)	86
Information access	22 (69%)	60
Identity expression	21 (66%)	51
Curation	17 (38%)	26
Anonymity	8 (25%)	16
Privacy	9 (28%)	11
Convenience	5 (16%)	7

Discussion

The immaterial characteristics of both places and spaces complicate their reduction to bounded areas (see Graham, 1998). Both place and space (re)produce practices and take on different meanings, i.e., back, civil, and forbidden, depending on the subject inhabiting them.

Geographic place can also be transcended by space. For these reasons, the relational elements of both place and space must be considered as “articulated moments in networks of social relations and understandings rather than as areas with boundaries around” (Massey, 1993, p. 66).

This section and the subsequent one, **RQ4. How Technologies Constrain Information Practices**, examine another type of space: cyberspace. Cyberspace is defined as “a multi-media skein of digital networks which is infusing rapidly into social, cultural and economic life” (Graham, 1998, p. 165). To address RQ3 and the next question, RQ4, the researcher employs a sociomaterialist viewpoint. This viewpoint adopts a middle-ground between technological determinism, which purports that technology shapes society, and social constructionism, which contends that society shapes technology, to suggest that technology and society are inextricable and co-constituted (see Latour, 2005; Gillespie, Boczkowski, & Foote, 2014; Leonardi, Nardi, & Kallinikos, 2014). The relationship between technology and society is not bi-directional as this approach assumes that both actors have distinct influences. Rather, the technological and societal engage in a “constitutive entanglement” of bodies, objects, spatial arrangements, and practices (Orlikowski, 2007, p. 1437).

The concept of constitutive entanglement parallels the treatment of place and space in the above **Back, Civil, and Forbidden Places** and **Back, Civil, and Forbidden Spaces** sections. Findings indicate that bodies, objects, spatial arrangements, and practices intertwine to determine the meaning participants apply to their LGBTQ+ identities. This section explores how these concepts are (re)produced by technology using the lens of affordances. Affordances constitute the materially-based construction and features of a technology that suggest the use to which it should be put (see Norman, 1999; Latour, 2004; Gillespie, Boczkowski, & Foote, 2014; Leonardi, Nardi, & Kallinikos, 2014; Baym, 2015). Affordances

can be actual and perceived (see Norman, 1999; Baym, 2015). For instance, an actual affordance of the blogging site Tumblr is that one does not need to have an account to create a profile. A perceived affordance of Tumblr is that one's identity is anonymous on the site. This affordance is perceived, rather than actual, since Tumblr and the other technologies used to access it, such as one's browser, collect information about an individual, which can potentially be made visible by a data breach or if Tumblr voluntarily discloses this information.

Affordances, Linking to Similar Others

Data analysis denotes that participants envision online technologies as affording connection with others like them (Knowledge Claim 3.4). This finding parallels prior research on technology use for LGBTQ+ identity development (see Hillier & Harrison, 2007; O'Riordan & Phillips, 2007; Bond, Hefner, & Drogos, 2008; Gray, 2009; Pullen & Cooper, 2010). Consider Mark's explanation for his preference of the photo-sharing site, Instagram (<https://www.instagram.com/>) and video-sharing site, YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/>), compared to a library for practicing information related to his transgender identity:

There's something lonely about a library. I enjoy being able to go on social media and having 400 people going through the same thing to use as resources instead of having a book that can't talk back. Having that video and visual evidence is much better. [Using] social media, I've met up [in person] with a bunch of different trans guys. You can't find that in a library book. One of them is becoming my best friend. He's my resource. We can bounce stories off each other and sometimes it's like, "Oh my gosh that's happened to my body, has it happened to yours?" and he's like, "That's ok that happened to me too."

A simplistic interpretation of this account would be that Mark prefers interpersonal resources to the static, recorded information offered by the library. Such an interpretation discounts the importance of features beyond the format of an object, such as practices, bodies, and spatial arrangements. Considering the intersection of these factors, social media sites rely on social networks through which to channel information flow. Features like the ability to "follow"

someone and recommendations of similar individuals to follow facilitate this affordance. Per Mark: “Once you follow one person, [the site] comes up with more people you can follow. You connect with them and that leads to more information.” These connections can be made regardless of geographic location. Unlike libraries, social media sites are not necessarily geographically bound,³⁵ which circumvents some of the geographic dispersion of individuals with LGBTQ+ identities and other physical barriers that might prevent them from convening in person. However, Mark does not envision his engagement with other transgender men as relegated to an online environment. Rather, he also envisions social media sites as affording him the ability to connect with those geographically co-located. This finding echoes an implication of Gray’s (2009) work: the boundaries between online and offline are blurred and mutually reinforcing.

Photo and video-sharing sites like Instagram and YouTube afford Mark identification with those who share similar embodied knowledge – a key marker of value among individuals with LGBTQ+ identities (see the above **Tactics** section). Since Mark might have yet to experience certain forms of embodiment, e.g., the effects of hormones, he can rely on a diversity and variety of experiences from those sharing his male, transgender identity to feel fully informed of the possibilities. Site features, such as the ability to upload evidence of one’s embodied knowledge via videos and photos afford Mark the ability to determine whether one represents a trusted source (Knowledge Claim 3.5).

The importance of verifying whether an individual represents a trusted source leads to participant use of unexpected technologies in unanticipated ways. For instance, Sierra explains

35. Geographic place and online technologies can intersect, such as location-based dating applications like Grindr (<http://www.grindr.com/>), a gay social network, or search engines used in a specific place, e.g., China, which block the visibility of certain content.

why she used 4Chan (<http://www.4chan.org/>), an image-based bulletin board, to explore information related to her transgender identity:

This is so weird because I hate 4Chan, they're this misogynistic hellhole. [But] they have an LGBT board and that board was useful. It was useful, but problematic. Since everyone's posting anonymously, you could have people who aren't trans posting and saying whatever it is they wanna say. You also have people who use tripcodes, which [are] user names with passwords so that the person has an identity on the site. [It] is weird for an anonymous site. But on that board and especially for the trans girls, there's more people with names than anonymous. Because it's an image board, they're posting pictures of themselves in various stages of transition and often pre- and post-transition. That helps. It's like, "Oh that looks like me or something I can do." Their stories carry more weight because even though it's only one person's experience and they don't have medical expertise, it's still something that happened to them and it's a first-person source. That weighs a lot higher than anyone else.

Sierra's account differed from the experiences of others who view 4Chan as an offensive site (see Manivannan, 2013). Despite its reputation, 4Chan was considered useful by Sierra for exploring information related to her transgender identity. 4Chan afforded the ability to post pictures that documented embodied knowledge, making it so Sierra could consume these pictures and recognize herself in them just as Mark had with other social media sites. 4Chan's tripcode feature also facilitated Sierra's verification of people's identities. Using this feature, coupled with photos, Sierra could determine who constituted a trustworthy source, e.g., an individual using a tripcode and posting pictures, versus an untrustworthy one, e.g., an individual posting anonymously.

Aside from technological features, who used 4Chan's LGBT board and how they used it were also socially shaped. Certainly, other affordances of 4Chan can be used in the LGBT board to render it unsafe or irrelevant for Sierra, such as individuals afforded anonymity on the site posting vitriolic content to the board. However, the social group of "trans girls" engaged in a shared set of information practices centered around collective conceptions of meaning and relevance (Knowledge Claim 3.2). For this reason, participants reported that they engaged with site features perceived to afford these practices, which became stabilized over

time. Thus, perceived and actual affordances can be mutually co-constitutive, rather than mutually exclusive categories (Knowledge Claim 3.3).

Individuals who may not feel safe or compelled to disclose their LGBTQ+ identities in offline contexts may disclose online due to the affordance of being linked to similar others. Consider Amina's rationale for her use of secret LGBTQ+ Facebook groups: "Of course it's not 100% safe, but you can find community with these different groups or pages that are for specific facets of society." Within Yahoo! Answers, both askers and answerers disclose information about themselves, whether by creating a profile or providing an email address. These practices are not safe, particularly since the LGBT thread is public. Yet rather than attribute these practices to a lack of privacy literacy, one could also rationalize these practices as necessary risks to capture the affordance of linking to like others.

Affordances, Information Access

Participants identified online technologies as affording access to information not found in formal sources (Knowledge Claim 3.6). Stefan explains their preference for Google to access information authored by individuals with LGBTQ+ identities:

I go to Google because that's where people [are] writing. People who are writing on queer stuff are queer people and you're going to have an income and access problem. You're going to find stuff on blogs, Tumblr, [and] more niche sites because there's not the access to publishing to a research study, etcetera.

Unlike formal channels of production, such as a peer review system for research studies, Google does not discern what it indexes.³⁶ It thus affords an individual with access to variegated information types, including information that exists outside of these formal channels. Since individuals with LGBTQ+ identities do not have access to resources, e.g., economic and social capital, which would lend visibility to the information they produce, they

36. Aside from content indicated as not to be indexed, such as websites containing a robots.txt file.

can rely on self-publishing online using blogging platforms or image and video-based sites, and disseminating access to, and visibility of, this information across social networks and via search engines. Therefore, Stefan's account not only signifies the importance of online technologies as affording information access, but also affording access to resources for self-publishing and sharing of information.

Access to self-publishing also facilitates obtaining up-to-date information on LGBTQ+ identities. The reason why participants appreciate current information can be explained by the value they place on embodied practices. Such practices are individualized and subject to context. What constitutes embodied practice changes over time as more individuals share these practices and social groups debate the meanings ascribed to them. Given that information produced by formal sources undergoes a publishing process, by the time the information is available, it is already irrelevant. For these reasons, participants like Autumn do not think that cultural institutions like the library are relevant to individuals with LGBTQ+ identities:

The reason why I wouldn't go to a library [for information on LGBTQ+ identities] is that I'd expect to find more forward-thinking works online. I [don't] think the people who work at libraries have an inherent bias, but people publishing things can put them up online themselves. [There's no] time in-between."

Affordances, Identity Expression

As discussed in the above **Cultural and Social Group Strategies** section, strategies limit participants' awareness of LGBTQ+ identities as well as the ability to communicate and express them. Search engines allowed participants to type in anything and get results (Knowledge Claim 3.1). This affordance is useful for individuals who lack the language to express their identities and might not be able to locate information in search systems requiring an articulated query. As Rose states: "Google's great because you can type in a whole question. I put in "Are you gay if you kissed a girl?" Questions like that, [which] were specific based on

my own experiences [in the hope] that something might come up that was similar.” Since Rose did not know whether the label “gay” would be appropriate to describe her identity, she relied on a blank search box, which visually afforded the perception that she was not restricted in formulating her search query. She could literally type whatever she wanted. As a result, Rose relied on the natural language query, “Are you gay if you kissed a girl?” When the researcher asked Rose if she remembered what this query returned, she stated: “Mostly Yahoo! Answers. People putting in whole questions that usually weren’t very helpful because anyone can answer them and not all people are very intelligent or nice.”

This account exemplifies a key difference between perceived and actual affordances. Via its simple design, Google offers the perception that participants can freely express their identities by typing whatever they want into the search box. Yet as Rose suggests, the retrieved results are not necessarily relevant; they are not envisioned by Rose to be trustworthy and might stigmatize LGBTQ+ identities. Given that Google’s algorithm³⁷ relies, in part, on a match between keywords, as well as semantic and syntactic structures, Rose encounters information that shares a similar structure but not her desired meaning.

Online technologies also afforded participants new ways to express their identities online by attaining new forms of embodiment (Knowledge Claim 3.7). Jamie’s practice of catfishing, addressed in the above **Tactics** section, provides an example. By catfishing, Jamie could escape strategies confining his physical body to an undesired, female presentation. Jamie appropriated strategies of authentic practice, namely the importance placed on pictures as indicative of one’s authentic identity, to represent himself as male. He could accomplish this practice given the disintermediation between online technologies and bodies. When going

37. See <https://www.google.com/insidesearch/howsearchworks/algorithms.html>

online, one has the potential to escape the corporeal, the literal “meatspace.”³⁸ Jamie could be recognized as male, and practice being male, in a way not afforded by civil and forbidden places where his body was made visible (Knowledge Claim 3.8). Thus, Jamie’s account supports arguments made by cyberqueer scholars of the potential for online technologies to reshape embodiment and embodied practices (see Haraway, 1990; Wakeford, 1997, 2000, 2002).

Affordances, Curation

Online technologies afford participants the ability to curate, or direct the kind of information made visible to them. Participants employ features on social networking sites, such as “following,” “blocking,” and “hiding” to determine information relevant to their LGBTQ+ identities. These features inform an algorithm, which learns what information to curate in future interactions. As Sarah’s account demonstrates, establishing such relevance depends on one’s interpersonal networks:

As far as [the social networking site] Facebook [<https://www.facebook.com/>] goes, my feed is curated by the people and pages I follow that are posting all queer stuff. I’m not following Trump [and] all this hateful right wing [content]. Everybody has that. Even if it’s not someone consciously thinking, “I am curating this for myself,” we are every day. I’m seeking out the things that feel fulfilling. By virtue of that, I’m actively not interact[ing] with information that I don’t want or that doesn’t align with my identity and politics.

Social media sites like Facebook display content from trusted, interpersonal sources. However, Sarah does not experience total control in determining how and what content she sees. The algorithm that directs what is visible in Sarah’s feed yields such control and is subject to the editorial biases of those behind the scenes, engineering it (see Manjoo, 2016). What Sarah deems relevant information is reinforced by the content made visible to her, indicating that

38. See <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/meatspace>

the Facebook algorithm plays a key role in determining the meaning Sarah ascribes to her queer identity over time. Therefore, Sarah's ability to curate information is both actual and perceived.

To curate often requires technical skill. Consider Rachel's description of building her own crawler, i.e., code that indexes a defined set of websites, to curate her search results:

I didn't use Google because their search aggregation would throw you a billion links and you'd have to search through and find the best one. I used my crawler longer than most people because it would find the best links. There was a lot of trans porn that was just demeaning, there [were] a lot of stories of people getting murdered. I had to refine what I wanted to search and what I was looking for.

Rachel's crawler afforded her control of what content the crawler returned, and she could refine this content over time. Such curation can be difficult to achieve due to the technical skill and infrastructure required. Rachel needed to build a crawler, which requires being knowledgeable of coding languages, as well as having the infrastructure, including a computer, internet connection, and server to run it. Given the vast amount of resources published online and the frequency in which they are updated, the more comprehensive one's crawler, the more technical knowledge and infrastructure one needs.

Affordances, Anonymity

Participants reported using online technologies to manage the visibility of their information practices (Knowledge Claim 3.9). As addressed in the above **Tactics** section, participants engaged in tactics to manage information provided about their LGBTQ+ identities. Online technologies afforded new ways to manage this information. For instance, software such as a Tor browser (<https://www.torproject.org/projects/torbrowser.html.en>), affords anonymous seeking, searching, browsing, etcetera. In other instances, participants perceived anonymity affordances. Consider Eva's rationale for why she used the online classified advertisements

website, Craigslist (<https://newyork.craigslist.org/>) rather than online dating site, OkCupid (<https://www.okcupid.com/>) to meet women:

I was too afraid to put myself on OkCupid because that felt really big. The idea of putting my photo up terrified me. I would more comfortably look at Craigslist “Women seeking women” [advertisements] before [using] OkCupid because I was so scared of revealing myself. When in reality, Craigslist is much more terrifying.

Eva perceives her anonymity as compromised by OkCupid making her picture visible. Given that Craigslist does not require pictures, Eva felt comfortable browsing without her identity being revealed. Yet Craigslist does not necessarily afford anonymity. Eva’s browser might be tracking her search history, Craigslist could get hacked, or Eva might provide information, such as a phone number or email address, which can be used by others to identify her. Eva may be unaware of these potential breaches to her anonymity or she might just perceive a picture as indicative of her “true” identity. After all, she equates posting a picture with “revealing” herself.

Both Eva and Mark’s accounts address a perception held by several other participants that one’s “true” identity is expressed by their body. Certainly, this perception is not only held by individuals with LGBTQ+ identities. Shows like *Catfish* exemplify the equivalencies between authenticity and the body made by strategies. Yet given the importance of embodied practice among individuals with LGBTQ+ identities, the body may be valued as the primary means by which individuals denote their trustworthiness. Therefore, when someone like Eva desires anonymity, she must weigh this desire with the perceived consequence of potentially engaging with information or individuals not considered trustworthy, which is “terrifying.”

Affordances, Privacy

Privacy differs from anonymity in that the latter signifies that individuals do not have to divulge identifying features, such as pictures or real names, to access information. With privacy, individuals might divulge identifying information, but it is free from public attention.

Features such as the ability to create private profiles and groups engender information sharing and exchange among social group insiders. For instance, Stefan regards their private account on Twitter (<https://twitter.com/>), an online news and social networking site, as “where me and all my super queer friends hang out.” Privacy afforded in online spaces can mitigate unwanted visibility to the LGBTQ+ identity expressions of participants in civil or forbidden places. As Campbell explains:

Queer shopping [is] easy to [do] online and find things that are your size. You don’t have to go to a suit shop where an old man will judge you. It’s hard to go to the boy’s section at Target and avoid eye contact with these moms wondering what you’re doing in the children’s section.

Yet online and offline cannot be dichotomized into private and public, as other participants identify online technologies as constraining their privacy (see the below **RQ4. How Online Technologies Constrain Information Practices** section). Affordances do not only represent a natural property of a technology, but also, much like strategies, they have features that can be appropriated to fulfill a given task or goal. This task or goal is subject to context, produced by strategies and geographic and spatial organization, and subject to one’s embodied knowledge. In Campbell’s case, the discomfort they experienced (i.e., embodied knowledge) entering civil and forbidden places (i.e., geographic and spatial organization) to shop for gendered and age-specific clothing (i.e., cultural strategies) could be alleviated by privacy afforded by online queer shopping.

Affordances, Convenience

Within the LIS literature, convenience represents a key technological affordance shaping information practices, such as seeking and use (see Connaway, Dickey, & Radford, 2011). Therefore, it may be surprising that convenience was minimally reported among participants. As findings from data analysis demonstrate, participants find it difficult to locate visible, affirming information about their LGBTQ+ identities. Participants thus may not have the

luxury of engaging in information practices that maximize convenience. However, participants occasionally mention convenience, such as Amina's explanation for why she uses Twitter as an information source:

I love Twitter so much. It's just faster. If somebody posts [information] on Facebook, somebody posted it to Twitter like two hours ago. I can be up to date in a second. I just read an article about how fucking Indiana passed anti-LGBT legislation [that allows] businesses with four or less employees to discriminate. [I also see] stuff from Black Lives Matter and [what's happening] on campuses with black organizers. [I'm] learning all kinds of stuff.

Twitter affords the rapid sharing and dissemination of content since it limits posts to 140 characters and allows non-reciprocal relationships, i.e., an individual can follow someone even if that person does not follow them back, among other features. Twitter has also become recognized as an online environment for information that needs to be shared rapidly. Amina's account suggests that the rapidity of information sharing on Twitter proves well-suited for information related to LGBTQ+ identities in the spheres of activism and organizing. Therefore, Amina does not satisfy (Simon, 1956, p. 129) when seeking or scanning for information on Twitter. Rather, she is discerning and only selects sources she thinks "are pushing important work." Therefore, convenience depends on context (Connaway, Dickey, & Radford, 2011), including the meaning individuals with LGBTQ+ identities assign to information.

Summary of Key Findings

Data analysis indicates that technological features and society are inextricable. It is difficult, if not impossible, to parse technological features apart from the social and cultural contexts in which they occur. For this reason, technological affordances only gain meaning as such when a participant roots them within their own meanings and notions of relevancy. Participants reported a key affordance of online technologies as linking them to others who shared their LGBTQ+ identities. The value participants place on embodied knowledge constituted the

main reason why this affordance was reported to be so important. To determine whether one has the requisite embodied knowledge to be considered a trusted source, participants asserted that they depended on affordances offered by image and video sharing sites to provide visual “evidence” of one’s embodiment and relevant practices.

Another affordance important to participants was access. Access allowed participants to produce and consume up-to-date information subject to changing and contested embodied and social group meanings. This information is unique given formal sources do not capture it, since these sources provide select visibility to LGBTQ+ identities and are subject to the time it takes to formally publish information. Since participants have limited awareness of LGBTQ+ identities conveyed by formal sources, they rely on technological affordances, such as a blank text box, to type in whatever they want and receive results. However, such affordances may be perceived rather than actual given the logic a search algorithm determines the results made visible. Participants also recognize that online technologies afford the ability to identity test in ways they might not be able to offline due to constraints posed by their physical bodies.

Since information about LGBTQ+ identities is less visible and stigmatized in both online and offline contexts, participants rely on online technologies that afford information curation. Social networks facilitate information flow from sources that participants trust and manage what types of information are shared. However, for those who do not have social networks that create and disseminate information about LGBTQ+ identities, or are rendered as outsiders within these networks, such opportunities for curation may not exist. Further, to practice curation requires technical skill and access to infrastructure.

Participants are not only concerned about what information is rendered visible to them, but also to whom they are visible. For this reason, participants value affordances

promoting anonymity and privacy. Yet they recognize that few online technologies can fully guarantee either and instead engage in a tactical selection of sources to maximize both.

Paralleling other research findings, participants report convenience as a desired affordance of online technologies. However, this desire for convenience is contextualized to the information practices of individuals with LGBTQ+ identities. Valued information sources must capture the complexity of LGBTQ+ identities. Such complexity can be conveyed by information that is consistently updated. Participants, in part, value convenience given its property of timeliness, which can influence what online technologies they use.

RQ4. How Technologies Constrain Information Practices

This section answers RQ4, which asks: What is the role of technology, namely social media websites, if any, in constraining information practices of individuals with LGBTQ+ identities?

Findings

The knowledge claims empirically derived from the data are listed below. The knowledge claims for RQ4 are organized by etic and emic themes. For clarity, the first time a knowledge claim is introduced, it is parenthetically cited. The knowledge claims for RQ4 are:

- 4.1. Participants cite search engines as an important tool that constrains their information practices
- 4.2. What constitutes a constraint is based on what participants find as relevant and meaningful within their everyday lives
- 4.3. What constitutes a constraint is rooted in sociocultural context
- 4.4. A key constraint of online technologies is their lack of moderation-based features
- 4.5. A key constraint of online technologies is that search engines make visible strategies that either erase or stigmatize LGBTQ+ identities

- 4.6. A key constraint of online technologies is that they flatten the full spectrum of available and visible LGBTQ+ identity expressions
- 4.7. A key constraint of online technologies is that those using them expect embodied authenticity from those with whom they interact, even if demands for authenticity are not encoded into the technology itself
- 4.8. A key constraint of online technologies is that they collapse participants' contexts, which can render them unable to control how they are portrayed and to whom these portrayals are made visible
- 4.9. A tension exists between the desire for the visibility *of others* when evaluating content versus desired anonymity *for oneself* when seeking, sharing, producing, etcetera such content
- 4.10. Online technologies are not designed for individuals with LGBTQ+ identities

Table 12 displays main themes and sub-themes coded as constraints.

Table 12. Constraint Themes and Sub-themes.

Constraint Themes and Sub-themes	Total Sources	Total Codes
Constraint	26 (81%)	214
Moderation	12 (38%)	140
Identity expression	17 (53%)	41
Curation	16 (50%)	38
Anonymity	11 (34%)	23
Privacy	7 (22%)	10

Discussion

Whereas affordances suggest the use to which a technology should be put, constraints are actual or perceived restrictions for how a technology can be used (Norman, 1999; Latour, 2004; Gillespie, Boczkowski, & Foote, 2014; Leonardi, Nardi, & Kallinikos, 2014; Baym, 2015). For instance, Facebook poses an actual constraint to identity expression by requiring

individuals to use their real names.³⁹ This policy disproportionately affects marginalized users whose real names are not considered legitimate.⁴⁰ Groups impacted by this policy include Native Americans, whose names may not conform to the expectations of authenticity held for names by Western cultures; transgender individuals, who experience barriers to legally changing their names; drag queens, who have more than one online identity; and survivors of intimate partner violence, who would be in danger if their real names were made visible.

Participants perceive Facebook as constraining their ability to express LGBTQ+ identities due to the visibility these expressions would be afforded. Rose explains why she avoids Facebook to express her queer identity: “[I have] family friends on Facebook. If I ever shared or posted anything that would indicate my sexuality, I would feel uncomfortable.” Over time, Facebook has become perceived as a site in which one’s social networks are collapsed into one context where “the lack of spatial, social, and temporal boundaries makes it difficult to maintain distinct social contexts” (boyd, 2011, p. 249; see also Duguay, 2016). Facebook also affords such collapse by offering features such as “People You May Know”⁴¹ and “Ticker,”⁴² which lend visibility to those who might not be in one’s immediate social network, but are tangentially linked, e.g., a friend of a friend. Although Facebook has features that afford individuals control over how their content is shared and to whom it is made visible these features are perceived by Rose to be: “Too complicated. It would be too much of a hassle to block certain people.”

39. Although this constraint is actual in the sense that one must use their real name on Facebook, this constraint is also perceived given that those with authentic names are not likely to be reported for violating the real-name policy, whereas those who do not have authentic names are more likely to be reported. See <http://www.businessinsider.com/facebook-apologizes-for-real-name-policy-2014-10>

40. See <https://www.facebook.com/help/112146705538576>

41. See <https://www.facebook.com/help/501283333222485>

42. See <https://www.facebook.com/help/ticker>

Constraints, Moderation

In the previous section, **RQ3. How Technologies Afford Information Practices**, participants did not envision online technologies as affording moderation, as indicated by the small number of sources and references coded with this theme ($n=7$, 22%; 9 total codes). However, data analysis indicates that a lack of moderation online significantly constrained the ability of participants to locate information they considered relevant and meaningful (Knowledge Claim 4.4). Moderation is defined as content mediated by a set of appointed individuals for contributions that may be offensive or off-topic. This lack of moderation was pervasive within the LGBT thread of Yahoo! Answers.

As discussed in the **Cultural and Social Group Strategies** section, some content within the LGBT thread of Yahoo! Answers ostensibly and intentionally stigmatizes LGBTQ+ identities. In other instances, application of such stigma may be unintentional. For instance, some questions dealt with taboo themes such as pedophilia, zoophilia, and incest. While these questions may have been asked to pathologize LGBTQ+ identities, it remains possible that askers perceived their questions to be marginalized and, therefore, most relevant within the LGBT thread. The presence of subcultural content within the LGBT thread denotes a potential risk of exposure to inappropriate or undesirable content, which could deter individuals with LGBTQ+ identities from utilizing Yahoo! Answers as an online resource (Hamer, 2003; Staksrud & Livingstone, 2013).

Participants within the LGBT thread recognize the prevalence of stigmatized content. Some askers sought to preemptively mitigate such stigma by specifying the content they wished to receive. Consider the following examples excerpted from questions asked in 2014 and 2016:

- I'm serious, please no evil answers.

- Can I support homosexuality as a Christian? Please don't answer with, "God doesn't exist." That doesn't help.
- I appreciate everyone's answers, but when you capitalize them it makes it seem like you're yelling and telling me I'm wrong. No one wants to be told they are wrong.

In these examples, the askers recognize that with a lack of moderation comes the potential for content that may stigmatize their identities or be considered irrelevant. For this reason, they attempt to regulate how and which content should be returned.

To ameliorate the spread of stigmatized content, participants also band together to create a shared sense of insider/outsider dynamics. Per the following 2016 Question-Best Answer pair:

Q: Who is the biggest troll in the LGBT thread?

A: I would say [user name 1], with [user name 2] in second place. Whereas [user name 2] is both stupid and homophobic, [user name 1] is mean, homophobic, and mentally sharp, which makes for a worse combination. Then there's a new one called [user name 3] who is religious and ignorant. As soon as we get rid of one, another takes over. What can you do? There's millions more homophobic people than gay people.

In this account, the asker seeks to make visible an insider/outsider dynamic denoted by the information practices in which one engages – those defined as insiders who share relevant content, defined here as non-homophobic, and those defined as outsiders, or “trolls,” who share non-relevant, homophobic content. The answerer reinforces the asker's definitions by rendering certain users within the thread as visible, calling them out by name. Further, the asker assigns additional, negative characteristics to these outsiders, specifically that they are ignorant and religious.⁴³

43. As discussed in the above **Cultural and Social Group Strategies** section, by not considering the intersectionality of LGBTQ+ identities, the answerer closes off the ability for those who identify as religious and LGBTQ+ from being considered legitimate within the thread.

The asker implies lack of moderation as a perceived constraint when discussing the influx of outsiders within the LGBT thread. Although social group insiders have gotten rid of outsiders in the past, either by relying on Yahoo! Answer's moderation policy (see above **Cultural and Social Group Strategies** section) or through implicit strategies, such as naming specific individuals as outsiders in Question-Answer content, the answerer recognizes that these actions are not sustainable since the number of outsiders outnumber insiders. Technological features of Yahoo! Answers including the ability for anyone to view and post content, the visibility of the LGBT thread in search results, and the lack of moderation guidelines contextualized for each thread produce an environment where individuals must navigate stigmatizing, irrelevant information in hopes of locating something meaningful and relevant.

However, it can be difficult to determine an individual's intentions, particularly if they do not have the means to share their information needs in a manner comprehensible to social group insiders. Consider the following (condensed) exchange from the 2016 LGBT thread of Yahoo! Answers:

Q: What happens if a woman gets pregnant, has gender confirmation surgery, and decides to have the baby post-op? She gets the surgery before she knows she's pregnant. What would doctors do? It would be impossible for her to give birth without a C-section, right? I hope this question does not sound stupid.

A: [Provides some detailed medical information]. I realize you're probably trolling this thread, but I wanted to give you a serious answer. I can't imagine what you describe ever occurring unless the person sought medical care to become pregnant and it was all planned.

In this example, the question could have been asked by someone purposefully undermining transgender identities by contending that someone who is authentically male cannot become pregnant. Or perhaps the question is genuine and asked by someone who does not have access or visibility given to transgender health resources. Regarding the latter, research on transgender

health issues may simply not exist, or it may be in such a nascent state that definitive conclusions about certain topics cannot be drawn.⁴⁴

Although this example may seem more extreme than some of the other naïve questions recalled by participants or asked within Yahoo! Answers, it illustrates that an individual given entry to a social group does not signify their insider status, nor that their information needs are taken seriously.

Constraints, Identity Expression

In some instances, online technologies permit LGBTQ+ identity expressions, but they can also reinforce strategies that condense these identities into monolithic categories (Knowledge Claim 4.6). Jessica describes how the self-presentation of individuals with LGBTQ+ identities on YouTube falls into these categories:

People that are offline have real world experiences and you get to see all the sides of it that the internet condenses. All the YouTubers [with] their video editing, fit their whole story into five minutes. I think it takes a lot longer to explain parts of it. They can cut out the bad things and all the confusion that they went through. They seem a lot more confident in their identities than people I know that are offline. Some of them are still trying to find out who they are and it's more relatable to go through that with them than to see these people that are confident and know [who] they are.

Jessica perceives the video editing features offered by YouTube as allowing individuals to condense their identities into a shared set of sensibilities, or metanarratives, characterizing the “normal” LGBTQ+ experience (see Pullen & Cooper, 2010). Individuals may be limited in determining how to express and share their identity expressions once these features bolster strategies suggesting an approved, or “right” way of conveying these expressions.

Individuals may also experience regulation of their identity expressions due to the visibility required to make them. As Rose explained above, a combination of online

44. A good overview of the current state of health research related to transgender individuals who wish to medically transition is provided by the following PBS Frontline documentary: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/film/growing-up-trans/>

technologies and sociocultural norms can collapse the contexts individuals can better maintain offline, such as between back and forbidden places (see Goffman, 1963; de Certeau, 1984; boyd, 2011, p. 249). Due to this collapse in context, individuals lack control over who can use an online technology, what types of content are shared, and to whom their identity expressions are made visible. Such lack of control can prevent participants from engaging in identity expressions for fear of negative enforcement mechanisms (Knowledge Claim 4.8). Consider Sage's explanation for why they consider Tumblr as problematic for engaging in identity expression related to their queer, genderqueer, and non-binary identities:

I've had issues [on Tumblr] where I'd tag a post and someone I didn't know went through the tags and jumped on me for it. There's certainly an expectation that you may have social justice warriors on one hand and men's rights activists on the other and never the twain shall meet except by slinging mud at each other. There's this sense of picking through a minefield, which is very, very difficult and scary. You're balancing a lot. There's a difference between [Tumblr] and an old-fashioned message board where you don't reply instantly and you can clearly see conversations. One of the problems with Tumblr is that it's easy to pull conversations out and to quote different parts so you'll have a million different versions of the same post going around and it's easy for people to dogpile on one person.

Sage identifies several features of Tumblr that constrain identity expression. One feature is social tagging. In some instances, such tagging can be envisioned as an affordance for locating certain discourses, such as those of social justice warriors. Yet in other instances, the tagging feature can constrain identity expression given it allows those outside the discourse, such as men's rights activists, to also identify and access this content. Further, the synchronous nature of communications means that content is disseminated more rapidly than can be controlled or managed by the original poster. Combined with the ability to re-post content or portions of it devoid from its initial context, Tumblr's features contribute to Sage lacking control of their ability to manage how their identity expressions are recognized, interpreted, and responded to, which can lead to negative emotional outcomes.

Through discussion of these examples, it becomes apparent that the role technologies play in affording and constraining information practices is not determining. What affords and what constrains is subject to individual interpretation and shaped by strategies (Knowledge Claims 4.2, 4.3). Like Jamie (see the above **Tactics** section), Stefan perceived features of internet sites, such as asynchronous communication and the ability to be separated from one's physical body, as affording the practice of multiple identity expressions. They inhabited two identities within the same site:

I was pretending to be a boy on the internet, but I was also [user name 1] at the same time. I was two people on the same forum. And when it came out and I outed myself that [user name 1] and [user name 2] were the same person there was a lot of drama. Some people were like, "We're never talking to you again." Other people reached out with valid resources about gender, would talk to me about it, and would let me talk about it. Then I kind of got scared and completely backed off.

Many platforms encode demands for authenticity, such as a real names policy. However, even if platforms do not encode these demands, authenticity often constitutes a normative expectation within online social groups, and as a result, participants who break these norms experience negative enforcement mechanisms (Knowledge Claim 4.7). Some members of the social group in which Stefan interacted envisioned Stefan's inhabiting more than one identity and, further, an identity that did not align with the ways Stefan's body presented, as deceptive and subject to negative enforcement mechanisms. These expectations of authentic practice could be a result of cultural strategies. However, it is also possible that such expectations emanated from the value of embodied practice within LGBTQ+ social groups. Given that Stefan's identity expressions belied their physical body, it is possible that those who never spoke to Stefan again did so because they rendered Stefan as an untrustworthy source.

Constraints, Curation

Data analysis indicates that participants identify online technologies as constraining their ability to curate information about LGBTQ+ identities. Participants indicate that the search

engine Google constrains their ability to curate information, given they cannot control what information is made visible. Rihanna compares Google to Facebook regarding how well each affords curation:

[It is] difficult to find information I want from a Google search. I think part of the reason I have relied so much on Facebook is because other people are doing the finding. I've even tried finding stuff I know exists using Google and haven't been able to find it. [I] have to go back through the conversations I've had with people to find stuff.

Rihanna's issue does not constitute an access problem, but rather a visibility problem given she cannot locate known items. It is possible that Google may not have indexed these items. More likely, Google's ranking algorithm does not present the known item within the first page or two of results. Since Google constrains Rihanna's ability to locate known items, she instead uses sites like Facebook, which present information curated by a known set of intermediaries.

There exist several means by which Google's algorithm may occlude visibility of LGBTQ+ content. Since Google does not publish its algorithm, there is no way to know all the technological features that produce a rank list and how they interact to do so. Even those who design the algorithm cannot predict precisely which results will be returned for a given search query and in what order; the algorithm makes machine learning decisions that render it impossible to determine (LaFrance, 2015). Instead, one can only consider what type of content the algorithm does show and make inferences regarding its logic.

Participants infer that, like other formal sources, internet technologies were not created for them (Knowledge Claim 4.10). Per Joanna: "The internet is made for only white men." Given that most individuals in information technology fields reflect Joanna's

demographic description,⁴⁵ it stands to reason that online technologies like algorithms do not possess logics complementary of LGBTQ+ relevancies or meanings. Rather, algorithms (re)produce social strategies, meaning that information made visible on marginalized groups communicates stigma discourses (see Noble, 2013). Consider Joanna's comparison of how a "Queer Google" would differ from its current version:

It would be exactly what I see on Google except when you would look for information on safe sex, you would find stuff outside [of] "Penises should wear condoms because that's the only type of safe sex there is." Everything related to identity or self or these kinds of things would not [be] centered around a certain kind of identity, but everyone. It would be amazing if the first results would be queer people. If you're looking up the history of Russia, have a queer person be the first search result. I'm not into censorship, but it would be nice if you could put a blocker onto any violent things or hate speech. That's one of the biggest challenges with data science. How do you know what's hate speech? That would be amazing. To have a Queer Google. Where you'd put in "swim suit," and just see images of swim suits, rather than images of women wearing them.

This account signifies how Google constrains Joanna's ability to locate desired information (Knowledge Claim 4.1). They attribute such constraints to several technological features. First, search engines rank results based on their popularity, determined in part by the number of clicks a result receives (see Gillespie, 2014). For this reason, "budding" resources, if yet indexed by the search engine, may not be rendered visible given they are nascent and have not received a requisite number of clicks. Since popularity is determined by the *number* of people that click on a link rather than *who* clicks on it, the type of identity representations made visible reflect cultural strategies espoused by the majority (see Noble, 2013), e.g., the "toxic" trans porn encountered by Rachel when not using her crawler. Participants like Sebastian are aware of this logic: "Groups [which are] very heavily underrepresented in media and mainstream culture [won't] come up on Google cause no one's talking about it in the mainstream." Instead,

45. See <https://www.eeoc.gov/eeoc/statistics/reports/hightech/>

what results do “come up” reflect cultural strategies, such as heterocentricity, biological determinism, and stigmatized portrayals of individuals who do not conform to them (Knowledge Claim 4.5). Further, such results are devoid of historical context. For instance, one might Google “transgender” and be presented with results related to “going stealth,” despite participants no longer envisioning this practice as relevant.

Joanna recognizes that context is lost upon automation. What one might consider “hate speech,” for instance, depends on the individual and is shaped by strategies.⁴⁶ Joanna perceives machines as further complicating this determination given that the definition of hate speech is left to the system designers, as well as the algorithm’s automated learning and subsequent decision-making. Therefore, automated curation of content by search engines constrains participant’s ability to determine what content is relevant and meaningful since they are unaware of the parameters shaping the algorithm’s ranking decisions.

Constraints, Anonymity

Due to the importance participants placed on embodied knowledge as a marker of information value, anonymity was not a desired feature of interpersonal sources. Consider Cole’s explanation for her preference of YouTube for interpersonal sources related to butch lesbian identity expression: “I could physically see myself in people on YouTube channel[s] instead of having to imagine [them]. Also, anybody could write anything on a blog. It could be like, a ninety-year-old super feminine gay man that’s writing it. You don’t know who it is behind the keyboard.” To Cole, there exist individuals who deceive others and technological features afford them with anonymity to facilitate such deception. Cole provides the antithesis of a valuable information source: someone of a different generation who desires men and presents

46. See <https://www.buzzfeed.com/shannonkeating/hate-in-america>

as feminine. These traits are embodied and derived from experience, again signifying their importance to participants as markers of relevancy and trustworthiness.

This example questions what constitutes an intentionally deceitful act, meant to do others harm. As exhibited by the accounts of Jamie and Stefan, an individual with embodied knowledge and characteristics that belie demands for authenticity imparted by strategies are considered deceptive by others. In many instances, this deception is interpreted negatively, as exemplified by the enforcement mechanisms Stefan experienced when revealing their “true” identity. But can there be instances where such deception can elicit positive information outcomes for an individual and not harm others? Perhaps the ninety-year-old, feminine gay man Cole envisions has been questioning both their desires and gender identity, and uses technological features that afford anonymity to facilitate this exploration.

Regardless of the multiplicity and fluidity of LGBTQ+ identities, participants have less tolerance for online technologies that afford such identity expressions. Sierra’s description of tripcodes exemplifies this point (see the above **RQ3. How Technologies Afford Information Practices** section). Although the actual and perceived affordances of 4Chan render it an anonymous site, social group insiders within the thread, the “trans girls,” used tripcodes to subvert such anonymity. This subversion of anonymity countered the girls’ mistrust of outsiders, defined as “people who aren’t trans posting and saying whatever it is they wanna say.”

There exists a tension between participants desiring technologies that afford their own anonymity while viewing the anonymity of others as constraining their ability to evaluate information. Stefan recognizes this tradeoff:

I look for resources created by the voices I’m looking to represent. As opposed to cisgender, straight people. At the same time, this is a research problem for me, it’s not necessarily safe to disclose. I can’t necessarily ask people to disclose to know whether their research is something I’m going to consider more valid.

Strategies complicate visibility for individuals with LGBTQ+ identities and online technologies afford them the ability to manage this visibility. However, anonymity prevents Stefan from knowing whether a source can be trusted. How participants define insider status within social groups – by whether an individual is visibly LGBTQ+ – shapes Stefan’s inability to evaluate information. Expectations for LGBTQ+ visibility at the cultural and social group levels complicate information outcomes for participants. Participants wish to manage disclosure of their identities, but expect, or at least hope, that others will disclose. The tension between these conflicting expectations produces an information landscape where the visibility of identity expressions is both avoided and desired (Knowledge Claim 4.9).

Constraints, Privacy

Online technologies constrain participants’ privacy by inhibiting their ability to control what information is being shared about them within a specific context (see Nissenbaum, 2004). As Amina recounts:

I was the executive director for an organization funded by Catholics. I gave a workshop at a gender and sexuality conference. That’s public online. If you Google my name you’ll find that. The watchdog of this Catholic group and some conservative bloggers wrote about me and how I was this homosexual activist and took screenshots of this conference. They put red circles, BDSM, and all this deviant, crazy shit [in their posts] and [said], “Now she’s the director of this non-profit.” [My job] they wrote back [to them] and they clarified that I wasn’t employed when I went to that conference. They told me [to] not be super visible because at the end of the day, [I] represent the organization.

In this instance, information shared about Amina online impacted her life offline by regulating how she could express her identity both within and outside of the workplace. Amina could not control what could be posted about her online and by whom. Her identity was conflated with other practices considered deviant to portray it in a negative light. Further, Amina’s preferred identity labels were dismissed to reinforce this social group strategy of rendering her identity as pathological. As Amina states: “I don’t even identify as homosexual.” Although

Amina attended the gender and sexuality conference before working for the organization, certain features of the online technologies that made her attendance visible collapsed the contexts in which Amina could manage her various identity expressions.

By posting her name to a conference program published online and indexed by Google, anyone who searched for Amina's name could view this result. After the researcher spoke with Amina, she Googled her name to see if any of the results Amina mentioned would be visible. One of the first results was a blog created by a conservative group with the exclusive purpose of trying to get Amina fired. The posts made by this blog reflect what she described. Of interest is the fact that the group acquired screenshots of content Amina had "liked" and events she indicated "attending" on Facebook. Amina may not have been aware that such metadata was visible given Facebook's complicated and consistently changing privacy policy, or she may have known that this metadata was visible, but did not consider that anyone other than her friends would be able or care to see it. Social networking sites like Facebook and search engines like Google thus have features that flatten the various contexts in which participants have everyday information interactions. Flattening such contexts can lead to participants feeling devoid of the ability to engage in identity expression online since they lack control over what visibility is given to these identities, as well as how these identities might be reinterpreted.

Summary of Key Findings

Data analysis indicates that online technologies constrain the information practices of individuals with LGBTQ+ identities in several ways. A lack of moderation-based features, including explicit community guidelines, leads to an information landscape replete with stigmatized, inappropriate, and undesirable content that deters both use of a given online technology, as well as further exploration of one's LGBTQ+ identity. Within Yahoo! Answers,

such lack of moderation shapes practices at a social group level to regulate how answer content should be presented and to identify those considered outsiders and, therefore, mistrusted sources. However, it can be difficult to determine if those sharing content viewed by insiders as irrelevant or stigmatizing have malicious intent or merely lack the shared relevancies and meanings of insiders since they are new to exploring LGBTQ+ identities. Search engine algorithms also make visible strategies that either erase or stigmatize LGBTQ+ identities. Due to the presence of stigmatized content within online technologies lacking moderation, participants depend on social networking sites for information related to their LGBTQ+ identities since these sites facilitate information curation by trusted intermediaries.

This question of who represents an insider and, therefore, a trusted information source, becomes further complicated by technological features that constrain the full spectrum of LGBTQ+ identity expressions. Features such as video editing may help to produce monolithic metanarratives of LGBTQ+ experience that limit the visibility of alternative identity expressions. This finding has consequences for LGBTQ+ insider/outsider dynamics since the most visible source often signifies the most legitimate and trusted one as well. Such visibility is often tied to the body – a physical marker of one's information practices and authenticity as an insider within a given social group. For those whose bodies do not conform to these social group strategies, such strategies prevent these expressions from coming to fruition, even if online technologies afford multiplicities and fluidity to one's identity expressions.

Participants also identify social group strategies as regulating their identity expressions by means of context collapse. Although the visibility of LGBTQ+ sources is important for those needing them, to whom such content is made visible often cannot be managed. Technological features such as social tagging and the ability to re-blog content devoid of its

original context signify that participants are subject to their information becoming re-purposed in contexts that do not fulfill their intentions or wishes. For this reason, and because of strategies, participants may desire anonymity online. However, the tension between the desire for the visibility *of others* when evaluating content versus desired anonymity *for oneself* when seeking, sharing, producing, etcetera such content, signifies, in Stefan's words, a "research problem" for individuals with LGBTQ+ identities.

Regardless of the capabilities online technologies afford participants, the constraints they experience when using these technologies address a larger fact, which is that these technologies are not designed for them. Features like "People You May Know," which serves to render one's social network into a "global village" (see McLuhan & Powers, 1989) by connecting individuals to weak network ties (see Granovetter, 1973) might benefit an individual trying to find an old high school classmate. However, this feature is less helpful to someone like Amina, when these same weak ties consist of conservative organizations looking for evidence of Amina's queerness to demonize her publically within the first page of Google search results. For this reason, it is not only important to consider affordances and constraints as contextualized to individual accounts, but also as reflective of the cultural and social strategies that suggest who they were designed for and their uses.

Conclusion

This chapter concludes by restating the key findings for each research question. Findings for

RQ1. How Sociocultural Context Shapes Information Practices indicate that:

- Cultural strategies shape what information is accessible to participants
- Cultural strategies shape what information is visible to participants
- Cultural strategies benefit certain individuals with LGBTQ+ identities over others

- Cultural strategies denote who gets recognized as having an LGBTQ+ identity based on whether an individual convincingly engages in authentic practices
- Cultural strategies are disseminated via formal sources
- Cultural strategies are disseminated via cultural insiders
- A special type of cultural insider is the wise
- Participants mistrust formal sources
- Participants mistrust cultural insiders
- Insider/outsider dynamics are recursive at the cultural level
- At a cultural level, all LGBTQ+ identities are considered outsider identities
- Individuals have multiple, intersecting identities and may have other insider identities despite identifying as LGBTQ+
- Social group strategies shape what information is accessible to participants
- Social group strategies shape what information is visible to participants
- Social group strategies help participants locate identity-affirming resources
- Social group strategies are disseminated by informal sources
- Social group strategies are disseminated by interpersonal sources
- Social group strategies are influenced by cultural strategies
- Insider/outsider dynamics are recursive within social groups
- Social group strategies render individuals with certain LGBTQ+ identities as insiders
- Social group strategies benefit certain individuals with LGBTQ+ identities over others
- Social group strategies denote who gets recognized as an LGBTQ+ identity based on whether an individual convincingly engages in authentic practices

- Strategies are inextricable from place
- Place can be typified into back, civil, and forbidden
- The place types (i.e., back, civil, forbidden) are context-dependent
- Participants cited back and forbidden places as most influential in shaping their information practices
- Libraries were most often given the designation of civil places by participants

Findings for **RQ2. How Information Practices Shape Sociocultural Context** denote that:

- Tactics cannot exist without strategies
- Participants are not passive consumers of information
- Participants are active agents in determining the relevance and meaning of their information landscapes
- Participants engage in tactics by appropriating strategies to achieve desired information outcomes
- Key tactics identified by participants are embodied practice, realness, and information control
- Embodied practice inspires participants to explore sexual and gender identities outside those considered normative
- Participants view information from formal sources as irrelevant to their embodied experiences
- Participants view information from cultural insiders as irrelevant to their embodied experiences

- Interpersonal sources who share participant experiences are considered more legitimate than formal sources
- Realness visibly disrupts strategies
- Realness interrogates insider/outsider dynamics
- Information control denotes participants' knowledge of strategies as espoused by their ability to creatively and deftly navigate them
- By engaging in tactics, participants envision information practices as context-dependent
- By engaging in tactics, participants envision information practices as individualized
- Spaces constitute a temporary assemblage of practices
- Spaces can be typified into back, civil, and forbidden
- The space types (i.e., back, civil, forbidden) are context-dependent
- Information grounds constitute back spaces
- Spaces are immaterial
- Spaces are overlaid on places
- It is difficult for participants to locate certain spaces given they lack physical and geographical permanence

Findings on **RQ3. How Technologies Afford Information Practices** posit that:

- Participants cite search engines as an important tool that affords their information practices
- What constitutes an affordance is based on what participants find as relevant and meaningful within their everyday lives
- What constitutes an affordance is rooted in sociocultural context

- A key affordance of online technologies is connecting participants to others sharing their LGBTQ+ identities
- A key affordance of online technologies is features that allow participants to consume and produce visual evidence of embodied knowledge
- A key affordance of online technologies is that they provide access to sources outside formal channels of peer production
- A key affordance of online technologies is that they can be used by participants to engage in embodied practices
- A key affordance of online technologies is that they can be used by participants to circumvent strategic demands for authenticity
- A key affordance of online technologies is that they can assist participants in controlling what information is shared about their LGBTQ+ identities

Findings on **RQ4. How Technologies Constrain Information Practices** indicate that:

- Participants cite search engines as an important tool that constrains their information practices
- What constitutes a constraint is based on what participants find as relevant and meaningful within their everyday lives
- What constitutes a constraint is rooted in sociocultural context
- A key constraint of online technologies is their lack of moderation-based features
- A key constraint of online technologies is that search engines make visible strategies that either erase or stigmatize LGBTQ+ identities
- A key constraint of online technologies is that they flatten the full spectrum of available and visible LGBTQ+ identity expressions

- A key constraint of online technologies is that those using them expect embodied authenticity from those with whom they interact, even if demands for authenticity are not encoded into the technology itself
- A key constraint of online technologies is that they collapse participants' contexts, which can render them unable to control how they are portrayed and to whom these portrayals are made visible
- A tension exists between the desire for the visibility *of others* when evaluating content versus desired anonymity *for oneself* when seeking, sharing, producing, etcetera such content
- Online technologies are not designed for individuals with LGBTQ+ identities

These findings yield significant implications for theory, research, and practice by challenging some of the assumptions inherent to extant work in the LIS field. Yet the metatheoretical and methodological orientations of the research also limit the scope in which the reviewed knowledge claims can be applied. The next chapter outlines these limitations and provides directions for future research to both address these limitations and develop the knowledge claims.

CHAPTER 5

Limitations, Practical and Theoretical Implications, and

Future Research Directions

Introduction

When establishing the relationship between information practices and context, one must be prepared to make a mess. Dervin (2003) deems context an “unruly beast,” after all. The ideation of context in the social science literature indicates its movement from distinct conceptual categories connected by defined relationships to fragmented, decentered subjects with elusive connections between them (Dervin, 2003, p. 126-128). This research embraces the latter, amorphous treatment of context since more rigid ones assume ways of being that do not correspond with the lived experiences of participants. Accounting for this messiness opens new avenues for Library and Information Science (LIS) research employing information practices as an umbrella concept (Savolainen, 2007). Yet it also yields significant challenges, discontinuities, and struggles. This section addresses these challenges and accomplishments by reviewing research limitations, as well as implications and avenues for future research.

Limitations

The limitations of this research relate to its design, comprised of three elements: methodology, strategies of inquiry, and methods. A key limitation from each area is identified, and the below **Future Research** section frames these limitations as future research directions.

Per Dervin (2003, p. 129), there exists no “foundational stable logic” that can bridge the gaps between metatheory, theory, and method. The best a researcher can accomplish is to establish conceptual coherency. Thus, limitations at the methodological level represent instances where such coherency requires development. The researcher’s adoption of a

conceptual framework that uses analytical binaries to describe information practices constitutes one limitation, e.g., space/place, tactic/strategy, insider/outsider. These binaries do not capture the fluidity and multiplicity of LGBTQ+ identity expressions, particularly those opposing binary logic, e.g., gender non-binary. Establishing these binaries represents a difficulty inherent to qualitative research, which entails the identification and application of conceptual categories to data. Having a methodological toolkit of articulated conceptual categories pushes forth the research agenda in advocating for individuals with LGBTQ+ identities, yet it also subjugates participants to these categories. This issue parallels a central dilemma of queer theory: destabilizing identity categories has positive effects when combatting cultural oppression, yet negative ones when facing institutional oppression (Gamson, 1995, p. 403).

Methodological reflexivity frames this limitation as a key tension within the work. While defining the contours of these practices proved appropriate for initial research the researcher must better delineate the movement within them moving forward, even if such movement introduces more messiness into the work. Such messiness will be welcomed. Rather than envision a participant's place among binary categories as absolute and polarizing, the researcher should instead capture the interstices of lived experience, or what Dervin calls the "in between" (2003, p. 130). For a discussion of one method to capture the "in between," see the below **Future Research** section.

At the strategies of inquiry level, the researcher incorporated a mixed methods approach by combining analysis of two data sources – interviews with 30 participants who identify as LGBTQ+ between the ages of 18 and 38, and content scraped from the LGBT thread of Yahoo! Answers. The researcher made this decision since each source represents social group and cultural contexts respectively, and these contexts act in concert rather than

constitute separate entities. Yet such an approach limits the granularity of findings that can be distilled from either source given both must fit into the same conceptual framework. For instance, in prior research of Question-Best Answer pairs from the 2014 LGBT thread of Yahoo! Answers, the researcher uncovered the topical subjects of questions to develop a typology of information needs within the thread (see Kitzie, 2015). Such information proves valuable since it identifies themes that participants envision as relevant and meaningful not addressed by formal sources. Yet this thematic granularity was not incorporated by the researcher into the coding scheme (see **Appendix F: Final Codebook**) since it did not fit the other data source: participant interviews. Given that this research focuses on an under-saturated area, there exist so few avenues for further exploration that not capturing them all seems like its own limitation. Future research could address this limitation by focusing on one data source using the overarching conceptual framework, then refining this framework using emic coding to fit these data. See the below **Future Research** section for further discussion of this potential.

Finally, limitations at the level of methods concern generalizability of findings. Since generalizability is not a goal of this exploratory research, findings cannot be applicable to other identity categories beyond LGBTQ+. Even within this category, findings only pertain to specific identity intersections given the limits of convenience and snowball sampling. Most interview participants were from urban areas and had access to both higher education and online technologies from which to explore their LGBTQ+ identities. Most were able-bodied and white. Thus, findings from data analysis of interviews reinforce visibility given to dominant insider identities. One of the ways the researcher accounted for this limitation was by quoting participants who did not possess some of these insider identities more often (e.g., Amina, Sebastian, Sage, Stefan). By engaging in this strategy, the researcher does not suggest

that one participant's voice carried more weight than others, but rather interrogates her own assumptions inherent to using a conceptual framework that was, in part, etically derived. In the case of Yahoo! Answers data, the researcher has limited knowledge of participant demographics. However, like interview participants, those contributing Question-Best Answer pairs have access to online technologies. An important future research direction is to further incorporate the voices of those who present contradiction and diversity to this framework and its premises. The matrix of domination (see Collins, 2000, p. 227-229) undergirding identity intersections could be applied to the data, specifically participant interviews where these intersections were articulated, to envision how the multiplicity of one's cultural and social group memberships constitute a unique system of oppression and domination, and how this system shapes information practices (see the below **Future Research** section for further discussion).

Certainly, other limitations for this research exist. At the methodological level, this research did not focus on political economy to the same degree as social and cultural hegemony. Yet political economy has relevance in the lives of individuals with LGBTQ+ identities. At the methods level, this research did not use participant observation, which can capture practice and embodiment from a constructivist metatheoretical perspective in ways not addressed by the constructionist analysis of recorded text from participant interviews and Question-Best Answer pairs. Yet these observations do not represent limitations so much as future research directions. As Dervin (2003, p. 128) contends, only by envisioning work outside one's metatheoretical perspective as oppositional would render lack of outside research as a limitation. Findings from a research study cannot be all things to all people. Rather, such outside work should be envisioned as "in dialectic" with one's work and "thus inherently relevant" (Dervin, 2003, p. 128). It is to this dialectic that this chapter now turns,

in both exploring how some of the limitations outlined can be addressed in future work, as well as the potential for metatheoretical stances outside of the one adopted by this research to understand the information practices of individuals with LGBTQ+ identities.

Future Research

Findings from this study inform several areas of future research. This section first overviews areas derived from the study limitations (see the above **Limitations** section). Then, a move is made outward from the metatheoretical and subsequently methodological contours of this research to explore synergies with other research perspectives.

Areas Informed by Study Limitations

At the methodological level, a key research limitation concerns the binary application of concepts. While these conceptual categories may be necessary for qualitative research, namely to group like concepts and identify patterns, their inherent messiness must be recognized. Given that these categories have been developed and substantiated by research findings, the messiness existing within these categories should be addressed in future work. Adopting mapping as a data collection tool represents one way to capture such messiness. The mapping proposed parallels a technique used by the Online Computer Library Center (OCLC) in their Visitors and Residents (V&R) project.¹ This technique presents individuals with a map containing two, cross-cutting axes: visitor and resident behavior, and personal and institutional

1. See: <http://www.oclc.org/research/themes/user-studies/vandr.html>.

context.² A similar technique can be used in presenting participants with cross-cutting axes that represent multiple planes of being. **Figure 6** depicts how such a map would look.

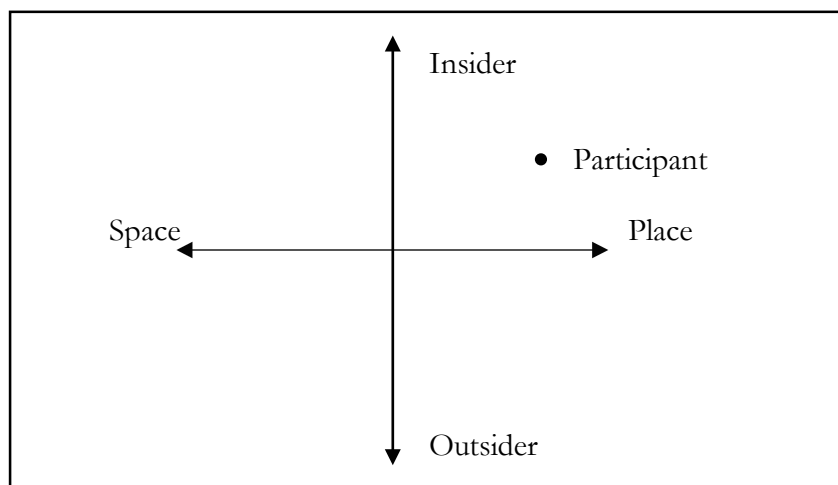


Figure 6. Example of Participant Mapping on Two Cross-cutting Axes.

Using the critical incident technique (CIT) (Flanagan, 1954) and the “total time-line” (Dervin, 1983, p. 3), participants can indicate their positionality within these planes at a given point in time, and then mark how this positionality changed over time. Use of this mapping technique accepts the need to qualitatively describe data while also recognizing that such characterizations operate within a spectrum (and in terms of queer theory, perhaps not so much a linear spectrum as one that accommodates multiple planes of being). Asking participants to characterize their information practices using visual tools that account for this fluidity will facilitate capture of richer data, which can be used to supplement the conceptual framework developed.

2. See: <http://www.oclc.org/blog/main/mapping-the-role-technology-plays-in-your-life/>;
<http://www.oclc.org/blog/main/visitors-and-residents-different-roads-different-maps/>.

At the strategies of inquiry level, future research should both generalize and refine the conceptual framework to specific data sources and analytic methods. Generalization advances the development of middle-range theories (see Merton, 1959, p. 108), which Chatman (1996, p. 193) envisions as necessary to advancing the LIS field. Rather than solely build conceptual frameworks specific to a given data source, Chatman (1996, p. 193) contends that researchers must identify prior assumptions within the field, then test and modify them. These actions lead to theory building necessary for a nascent field sans a tradition that “focus[es] on normative problems in which we can approach a line of inquiry with some measure of certainty” (p. 193). Thus, testing the conceptual framework developed within this dissertation and informed by prior research generalizes the claims it can make by determining the consistencies among multiple modes of data collection and analysis.

Testing the conceptual framework on different data sources also refines the framework by specifying how it can be applied within different contexts and the granularity of findings that can be achieved. Such refinement addresses some of the shortcomings inherent to middle-range theory development. While Chatman’s (1996) middle-range theory of information poverty makes a salient and important contribution to the LIS field, this theory is limited by its use of propositions, which suggest a list of conclusive statements that can be applied to all groups defined as “information poor.” Recognizing how a conceptual framework may be generalized into a theory while also refining the fit of this framework to specific contexts further fleshes out its conceptual scope and determines its boundaries for use. Therefore, generalizability and refinement do not represent two separate areas for future research, but rather interrelated goals to strengthen the framework into theory.

At the methods level, a future research direction is to incorporate the voices of those who present contradiction and diversity to the conceptual framework and its premises. Such

incorporation can be achieved, in part, via recruitment. Namely, the researcher sees the need for future work to continue its use of purposive sampling to capture underrepresented voices within marginalized groups, e.g., transgender, female-identified, and black. Yet purposive recruitment partially addresses the challenge of incorporating intersectionality into any research project given that intersectionality does not represent the sum of a given set of identity categories, but rather a system of intersecting oppressions, subject to individual experience (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991). Collin's (2000, p. 227-229) matrix of domination represents one approach to capture intersectionality. This matrix organizes intersecting systems of oppression along four domains of power – structural, disciplinary, hegemonic, and interpersonal – and roots these interrelated domains within a specific historical and social context (Collins, 2000, p. 271-290). Using this matrix bridges the tension between how intersectionality contextualizes individual experience, while also recognizing the common structural components shaping it. The researcher envisions this matrix of domination as complementary to the conceptual framework, rather than additional. Future work can integrate this matrix into the larger thematic category of social types by asking the following research question: What can the matrix of domination (Collins, 2000, p. 227-229) contribute to our understanding of insider/outsider dynamics (Merton, 1972; Chatman, 1996, 1999; Burnett, Besant, & Chatman, 2001) given that individuals possess multiple and intersecting identities?

Areas Informed by Other Research Perspectives

Now that areas identified as limitations have been translated to future research directions, this section establishes synergies with other research perspectives. These perspectives operate at different levels of scope and address research area, theory, and methods.

Information practices centered on health constitute an area for future research. Inspiration for pursuit of this area was derived from data analysis as well as recent research. A report recently issued by the Planned Parenthood Federation of America (PPFA) and Human Rights Commission (HRC) gathered data from interviews with 92 individuals with LGBTQ+ identities, aged 15 to 19 years, about their health-related information practices (Steinke et al., 2017). Findings indicate that participants could not relate to information presented by formal sources due to the information being isolating, irrelevant, and stigmatizing. Participants turned to the internet and friends to get information instead. However, internet use did not deterministically lead to positive information outcomes. Rather participants found that digital resources did not adequately reflect their experiences; they were too technical or not medically accurate. Findings from Steinke et al. (2017) bolster those from data analysis, particularly that participants do not envision formal sources as meaningful or relevant to their everyday lives since these resources do not evince their embodied knowledge.

Data analysis also informed selection of information practices centered on health as a future research area. When reviewing Question-Best Answer pairs, the researcher observed sharing of medically unsafe health information. For instance, participants asked and received advice on how to bind one's breasts using materials from their home and get hormones without seeing a doctor. Participants engage in medically unsafe practices to mitigate visibility afforded to them. Binding one's breasts using materials from home avoids a package arriving at the doorstep that mom or dad can pick up. Getting hormones without a doctor means not having to attain parental consent if under 18 years of age. Considering the health practices of individuals with LGBTQ+ identities from the perspectives of risk-taking (Chatman, 1996, p. 196-198) and information control (Goffman, 1963, p. 114-127) captures a sociocultural dimension not identified in work that only assesses the quality of the source. Simply because

participants can access a quality source does not signify they will use it. Future research may focus on the health practices of individuals with LGBTQ+ identities employing this dimension to garner an in-depth perspective of information practices beyond needs and use. Findings from such research can also suggest opportunities for health interventions by libraries to address the sociocultural properties of information not found in typical interventions, such as sex education programs.

Other future research directions are theoretical and incorporate salient theories that extend the conceptual framework. One of these theoretical areas concerns Goffman's concepts of face-work (1955, 1967) and stigma (1963), specifically the typology of back, civil, and forbidden spaces (p. 101). Extended integration of these concepts into the framework could further articulate the relationships between places and spaces, and the roles individuals adopt within them, as well as support the metatheoretical approach of social constructionism espoused within this research. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, the concept of place and space envisioned through Goffman's (1963) lens of back, civil, forbidden, has not been applied within the LIS field. While face work has been employed in LIS to study reference interactions (see Radford et al., 2009; Radford & Radford, 2017), it has not been applied within the sub-area of Human Information Behavior (HIB). These concepts have salience for future exploration given that they capture the fluidity of context and its relationship to social roles and information practices.

Another theoretical area for future research concerns concepts of authenticity and realness as they relate to information practices. Savolainen (2008, p. 5) adopts a social phenomenological perspective to understand the individualization of social and cultural meanings. This approach could address questions such as, how closely does realness approximate the "real" (Žižek, 2006, p. 26; see also Radford, Radford, & Alpert, 2015)? If

information is real to an individual, what does that indicate about its value? Perhaps a return to this approach is necessary to explore realness. Yet the related concept of authenticity denotes a constructionist approach. Savolainen's (1995, p. 264-266) initial development of information practices was influenced by habitus, which examines how banal and habitual practices individuals perform daily are socially constructed (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 72-95; Giddens, 1984, p. 21-23). The concept of habitus lends lending visibility to the strategies underlying these everyday life practices (Savolainen, 1995). Savolainen's (2008) later treatment of practices from a social phenomenological lens was critiqued for not capturing the habitual (Wilson, 2008). This critique resulted due to Savolainen's (2007) phenomenological focus on the subject, rather than the intersubjective constructions of their practices. Returning to Dervin's (2003, p. 128) contention that alternate metatheoretical positions are not oppositional, but rather dialectic, a future research direction for exploring realness and authenticity would be to examine each area using both constructionist and social phenomenological perspectives, comparing both analyses.

Participant observation constitutes a method to be employed for future research. The researcher chose not to engage in participant observation given this method could not capture recollection of critical incidents (Flanagan, 1954) and "total time-lines" (Dervin, 1983, p. 3) relevant to one's identity expressions. For future research, however, participant observation provides a salient method from which to extend findings, particularly regarding the embodied nature of information practices. Such embodiment is not only expressed in offline contexts, but also in online ones. Therefore, a related direction for future research is to observe participants in both online and offline contexts, noting how these contexts intersect. Methods such as think-alouds (Lewis, 1982; Lewis & Rieman, 1993) and diaries could also be used to triangulate data collection.

Implications

Findings from this study have theoretical, research, and practice-based implications. From a theoretical perspective, implications denote how the research has contributed to development and application of theories used in the conceptual framework. From a research perspective, implications question some of the assumptions underlying prior LIS research, as well as the explanatory power of the conceptual framework when applied to individuals with LGBTQ+ identities. From a practice perspective, implications relevant to information agencies, specifically libraries and online technologies, are then addressed. These implications bridge the larger theoretical implications of this research to what can be actualized in practice within these agencies.

Theoretical Implications

This work contributes to the development and application of several theories employed in the conceptual framework. These theories are situated both within and outside of LIS.

Within LIS. This work bolsters the theoretical salience of information practices in a field historically characterized by information behavior approaches. Despite their increasing sociological turn, such approaches still focus on active and intentional behaviors like information seeking and searching (see McKenzie, 2003a, p. 19). As indicated by data analysis, participants do not always have an articulated information need in mind from which to guide seeking (see the **Cultural and Social Group Strategies** section from the previous chapter). Instead, they experience alterity based on the information they “discover” in everyday life (Wilson, 1977, p. 36-37) and the embodied desire to ascribe meaning to these feelings. This gap between what individuals are socially and culturally inculcated to desire versus what they *actually* desire cannot be realized by asking the right question or being given the right resource. Rather, this gap must be consistently negotiated by participants over time, based on their

interactions with information sources – whether interpersonal, embodied, technologically mediated, recorded, etcetera. Thus, practices constitute a salient theoretical concept given they encompass banal activities contributing to participants’ meaning-making, often by means which are less obvious, visible, and/or measurable than having an articulated need. As Dervin (1999, p. 730, footnote 5) notes, such meaning or sense-making constitutes a process of becoming rather than a static situation frozen in time-space. A practice approach facilitates capture of such becoming by not presuming to know what types of information or actions taken toward information are important. This lack of presumption proves relevant for marginalized individuals who do not have the opportunity to define their own realities, but instead have these realities imposed on them via cultural and social group strategies.

Research findings also complicate the study of how marginalized identities and information practices intersect. In prior research, marginalization has been framed as an access problem (see Yu, 2006, 2010, 2012), defined as “the presence of a robust system through which information is made available” (Jaeger & Burnett, 2005, p. 465). LIS research envisions such access as physical and intellectual (see Burnett, Jaeger, & Thompson, 2008). As data analysis indicates, participants experience both types of barriers. Some participants cannot access medical information without consulting a doctor or gender therapist, which may not be an option for minors without parental consent, or for those without insurance; others cannot couch their experiences of alterity within keywords or search terms. However, both physical and intellectual barriers are produced by cultural and social group strategies, which determine these barriers and who faces them. What one considers as economically and intellectually viable is thus determined by those in power, who disseminate strategies via formal sources to reiterate these power relationships, e.g., laws govern who can be covered by insurance, information literacy initiatives codify the practices and competencies considered literate, as

well as encode them into systems (see Tuominen, Savolainen, & Talja, 2005). Therefore, social access to information does not represent a third, distinct kind of access. Instead, the social (re)produces the physical and intellectual. Rather than asking what constitutes the material and intellectual benefits of knowledge, findings suggest that researchers must take one step back to ask: What constitutes knowledge and who benefits from the knowledge legitimated and disseminated by strategies?

These findings also complicate the (over) emphasis on access made by LIS researchers. Information is not a “given.” Rather it reflects a certain organization of social reality. By framing the intersection of marginalization and information as an access problem, researchers make an implicit assumption harkening back to the transmission model of information (see Shannon, 1948; Shannon & Weaver, 1949) – once the information is delivered, an individual experiences a positive information outcome. Yet as data analysis indicates, information access does not deterministically lead to “good outcomes” (Dervin, 1999, p. 740-741). Participants *could* type something into Google related to LGBTQ+ identities and receive results. They *could* go to the library and find books with LGBTQ+ themes. Their ability to perform these actions does not signify the “goodness” of information retrieved. Participants might find such information to be irrelevant, myopic, stigmatizing, etcetera. Thinking that an information transmission always proves successful “privileges outcome over process” (Dervin, 1999, p. 740). Such privileging leads to studies that envision certain resources as deterministically “good” for individuals with LGBTQ+ identities and, more importantly, also define what these outcomes are, e.g., “coming out” (Hamer, 2003). LIS studies that assume desired information outcomes for individuals with LGBTQ+ identities fail to capture the process inherent to their information practices. Per Sierra: “Even when [LIS studies] say, ‘These are the needs of LGBT individuals,’ they don’t look at how they’re looking for information.”

Outside LIS. The conceptual framework adopted by this research also incorporates theories outside LIS. A major contribution of this work for the field of Science and Technology Studies (STS) is to further “de-center media as the object of analysis” (see Gray, 2009, p. 16-17) and instead contextualize this media within an information practices approach. This de-centering extends the reach of STS from examining the content of information to considering what people do with that information, and the interrelationship between content and action. A sociomaterial approach complements information practices by not only envisioning media as affecting, but also as being effected by sociocultural context.

The conceptual framework also extends theoretical development within sociology, particularly in furthering work on insider/outsider dynamics (Merton, 1972). These dynamics refute insider doctrinism on the basis that it does not support collective organizing. Yet when such dynamics are applied to contexts outside of organizing, insider doctrinism can prove useful to participants in assessing information via embodied practice.³ By situating insider/outsider dynamics within the matrix of domination (see the above **Future Research** section), researchers can denote instances when insider doctrines benefit one’s information practices versus when they constitute a barrier. In this way, insider doctrines are not envisioned as inherently negative, which the researcher purports to be counterproductive.

By framing information control (Goffman, 1963, p. 114-127) as an active, tactical practice, rather than a passive response to strategies (de Certeau, 1984), this research advances how the LIS field understands this concept. Acts like secrecy and deception do not solely yield negative outcomes. Instead, such acts can be reinterpreted as tactical practices employed by participants to better understand themselves and their surroundings. These practices indicate

3. This finding also advances Chatman’s observation of insider doctrinism as “an ‘I’ and everyone else is ‘them’” (1996, p. 205) by contending that such doctrinism can yield positive information outcomes.

participants' knowledge of strategies required to decide whether, when, and how to disclose one's identity. Further research can further tease out the relationship between information control and the tactic/strategy binary to advance understanding of both concepts and challenge assumptions related to the relationship between structure and agency.

All three implications for the development of outside theoretical perspectives were derived from the cross-disciplinary conceptual framework. Comparing theories within the framework to one another facilitates insight into how any one theory might be reinterpreted. These reinterpretations illuminate the shortcomings of any one theory and suggest theoretical advancement their conceptual engagement with one another.

Implications for LIS Research

Findings have several implications for LIS research. One implication is to recognize the importance of embodiment as an information practice. Individuals do not passively consume information, but rather actively produce meaning. Such meaning is produced via the appropriation of strategies, which calls attention to their instability; this appropriation is embodied as participants creatively live within the confines of strategies. The importance of embodiment as an information practice has only recently been explored within LIS (see Lloyd, 2010; Olsson, 2010; Godbold, 2013), yet such information represents a key way that participants come to know the world and their place in it. Learning how to *do* an LGBTQ+ identity cannot be captured by a handbook, despite participants' wishes otherwise.⁴ Rather such *doing* is embodied in practices such as dreaming (Mark), binding (Jamie), and dressing ugly (Casey). Research within LIS research must frame embodiment as a legitimate information practice, rather than an irrelevant one since it is not recorded.

4. It is worthwhile to return to Eva's quote: "I wish there was a handbook you get [on gay identities] because it's hard to know where to look."

This focus on embodiment can be difficult to adopt since certain embodied practices might be stigmatized. For instance, interview participants mentioned practices such as watching pornography (n=11, 35%; 53 total codes) and engaging in sexual experiences (n 22= 69%; 260 total codes) as formative to their identity development.⁵ Few LIS studies focus on either practice (see Keilty, 2012 as an exception). Since participants often consider formal sources as irrelevant to their information practices, LIS research must be open to studying sources traditionally considered illegitimate by allowing participants to define such legitimacies for themselves. Explorations of embodiment in LIS also denote the importance of qualitative methods to elicit participant voices and ethnographic methods to garner thick descriptions (Geertz, 1973, p. 6-7) of the contexts in which these practices occur and are communicated.

The ability of participants to deftly navigate the interstices between strategies and tactics, as well as between places and spaces denotes a kind of sociocultural knowledge. Participants must be aware of cultural strategies to which they live in opposition, the strategies of social groups to which they are members, and how to embody strategies in a way that is real to them. Participants are, therefore, not “information poor.” They have the agency to change their situations using tactics despite the barriers against them. This conclusion does not imply that participants do not incur significant, sometimes deadly barriers to exercising realness,⁶ but rather to recognize that not all positive information outcomes manifest as a “coming out” narrative (Hamer, 2003; Gray 2009, p. 18-19). Rather, some of these other, positive, information outcomes are rendered invisible by current LIS research confined to examinations of information seeking and access.

5. Since participants voluntarily disclosed these practices, there may be others who considered them important, but chose not to disclose.

6. See <http://www.glaad.org/blog/glaad-calls-increased-and-accurate-media-coverage-transgender-murders>

Another related implication is the importance of engaging with research methodologies and methods that showcase participant voices while maintaining researcher accountability. The constructionist tradition presents an overarching methodological position amenable to work on marginalization based on its focus on meanings constructed between participants and the researcher. Attaining such focus derives research that exercises “general compassion that these are lived experiences and it’s just not statistics on a diversity page” (Sage). Yet qualitative and quantitative inquiries are not incompatible. Rather, quantitative research can be employed much like a drunk person uses lamp posts – for support rather than illumination (Lang in Chambers, 2005, p. 488). Regardless of the methods chosen, researchers must exercise accountability when inventorying the overarching claims inherent to these choices and their limitations. One way to maintain such accountability is to adopt a mixed methods approach that leverages the weaknesses and strengths of each method to bolster findings. Therefore, a related another research implication is to adopt a mixed methods approach when advancing exploratory research to solidify, over time, its legitimacy as middle-range theory.

Research adopting an information practice approach must envision practices as not only informing the individual, but also informing others *about* the individual. To practice information is to also communicate something about oneself. Data analysis indicates that some participants do not engage in certain practices or pursue specific information sources given their fear of being subject to negative enforcement mechanisms. On the other hand, participants may disclose their identities within LGBTQ+ social groups since such disclosure can influence what information they are privy to and how others value them as an information source. But participants are not in full control of these disclosures. Rather, strategies and the

places they create establish a “panoptic presence,” (de Certeau, 1984, p. 36) which determines who is visible and how.

Given the importance of visibility as related to identity, future research should place less emphasis on access and more on visibility. Individuals access information about LGBTQ+ identities not made available via formal sources using tactics rendered invisible by current theoretical and methodological lenses. Rather than assuming the information individuals with LGBTQ+ identities cannot access constitutes the information they need, LIS research should instead investigate why the information and practices of these individuals are rendered less visible than those of cultural insiders, and how varying degrees of visibility shape information outcomes. Further, by emphasizing visibility rather than access, this research does not purport censoring of certain sources at the practice level. Instead, a focus on visibility highlights the strategies undergirding works the library makes visible and privileges versus the ones it hides (see Radford & Radford, 2003). By bringing these invisible strategies to the forefront, research examining visibility can highlight what the library communicates to its users with LGBTQ+ identities.

Finally, research findings indicate that information practices cannot be typified into a series of categories. The pilot study adopted and applied McKenzie’s (2003) typology of information practices, ultimately concluding that this typology was limited in its ability to describe the information practices of individuals with LGBTQ+ identities (see **Pilot Study Findings, and Research Questions**). This finding has been supported by recent research (Barriage & Searles, 2016; Yeoman, 2010), which contends that while McKenzie’s (2003) typology is not without merit, it requires testing on other populations, in other contexts to determine its explanatory power. Taking this implication one step further, perhaps the explanatory power of McKenzie’s typology is better-suited to studies that do not position

marginalization as central to understanding information practices. Trying to fit the experiences of marginalized groups into a typology developed for insiders can lead to gaps in visibility of relevant information practices to the former.

Instead of typifying information practices, researchers should instead inventory the structures shaping them. In this research, such structures were viewed through the lens of tactic/strategy and space/place, however alternate conceptual models can be tested (see the above **Future Research** section). What the researcher ultimately suggests is rather than adopt a top-down analysis that typifies practices based on the core assumptions undergirding an information behavior tradition, researchers should invert this analysis so it proceeds from the bottom up. Such analysis captures practices relevant and meaningful to participants within their everyday lives and interprets these practices using a lens that strikes a balance between structure and agency.

Practical Implications

Study findings also yield practical implications for information agencies and systems. Given that the research design elicited participant accounts related to libraries and online technologies, implications for these two areas are addressed.

For libraries. One caveat to be made before offering implications is that libraries cannot be everything to everyone. This finding is exemplified by the recursive nature of insider/outsider dynamics at both the cultural and social group levels. To have an insider cultural or social status, there must outsiders. For this reason, a library considered a back place to some may be considered forbidden by others.

This argument is not synonymous with defunding libraries since they cannot serve all individuals. Those served may attain immense social and cultural benefit, particularly if the goal of libraries and within the LIS field is to connect people with information relevant and

meaningful within their everyday lives (see Bates, 1999). An exciting challenge for libraries is to acknowledge the existence of varied relevancies and meanings beyond those made accessible and visible at a cultural level, and change their strategies to support these relevancies and meanings. By adopting this approach, libraries have the potential to extend the number of people served and further demonstrate their value as inclusive, cultural institutions.

Research findings denote several implications and recommendations for how libraries can better serve individuals with LGBTQ+ identities, which bolster those made by prior work (see Greenblat, 2010; Jardine, 2013). First, recognize the importance of experiential and embodied knowledge. While information professionals play an important role in “looking for the red thread of information in the social texture of people’s lives” (Bates, 1999, p. 1048), these professionals may not have experienced the social textures to which participants are privy. The lack of visibility afforded to identity affirming information may very well cast off the assumption that such a thread would be red and, therefore, easy to see. It is important for librarians to exercise awareness regarding how their assumptions of LGBTQ+ experiences may color the services they provide, or perhaps inhibit services they could provide. After all, librarians may easily locate the red thread of “coming out” or gender confirmation surgery metanarratives, without realizing that the users they serve may have no desire to engage with them.

Libraries can be more open to the multiplicity and fluidity of embodied knowledge by continuing to make collection development decisions that showcase multiple modes of being. Such a decision might manifest as a librarian purchasing books that, as Mary suggests, “tell a lot of stories.” Telling a lot of stories recognizes the complexities inherent to any identity expression as opposed to bolstering the perception that there exists only one way to *be* a specific identity category. Further, certain information mediums may feel too overwhelming

for participants, such as Eva, who was “too scared of books.” Although libraries have collections in diverse formats, those alternatives to recorded text may not be promoted or suggested enough. Affording visibility to these collections can be achieved by illuminating strategies inherent to libraries to determine when and how they implicitly prefer print collections, such as within catalog search results. Engendering such complexity of LGBTQ+ identities within collection development decisions may change the perspective of someone like Sebastian, who feels that she cannot visit the library for relevant information on transgender identities since “the best I’d [get] is a box set of [the TV show] *Orange is the New Black*.”

Another way that libraries can incorporate embodied knowledge is to recognize individuals with LGBTQ+ identities as experts. This observation has implications for what kinds of knowledge libraries value. Librarians need to think beyond what is considered a “formal” source to the everyday practicalities and barriers of living an LGBTQ+ life. Such informal resources may include topics like how to locate clothing exchange programs, safe facilities, and dating resources. Librarians are encouraged to increase outreach among individuals with LGBTQ+ identities. Such outreach can grow visits to the physical library as well as use of virtual services to provide a deeper level of privacy and anonymity. As Autumn suggests:

Turning the library into a community space that’s welcome to queer people can [be] a start. It suddenly becomes a place that ... my image of it shifts from texts that are already be” coming out” of date to this is where things happen now. You can literally go there and talk to people, and listen to people talk about their experiences. How can you be more up to date than that?

Through outreach, the library can engage what Mary describes as “human libraries,” comprised of individuals that have embodied knowledge of what it means to be LGBTQ+. Like collections, the selection and acquisition of interpersonal sources should account for the

diversity and complexity of these identities. Some ways outreach can be achieved is by hosting movie nights, clothing exchanges, meditation, book clubs, and speed dating. Since not all libraries have resources to support such multifaceted programming efforts, co-located libraries should collaborate in sharing programming and outreach efforts. For instance, academic libraries host movie nights while public libraries host book clubs. Librarians can also determine what local LGBTQ+ community organizations exist and the programming they offer. Reaching out to these organizations, such as by providing free meeting space, ensures that the library is not duplicating effort while also offering physical infrastructure to groups that might lack it.⁷

A specific implication for school libraries is to partner with those setting the curriculum (e.g., administrators, curriculum coordinators) to develop inclusive health and sex education programs. This partnership can include library interventions for different health and sex education units, with collections focused on LGBTQ+ experiences. It is important that digital collections are also available for students to access privately in the library as well as from their mobile devices. Further, all libraries, not just those in schools, should be aware of using web filters of what terms are subject to filtering, as some of them may limit visibility to LGBTQ+ information, particularly related to sexual health.

Despite their promise, these implications may not be a reality in geographic places not inhabited by many individuals with LGBTQ+ identities or where revealing these identities is forbidden. It is further complicated by the visibility required to serve as an interpersonal resource in an established place – the library. For these reasons, librarians ought to maintain a

7. As an example, the researcher has been volunteering with a queer and transgender persons of color mental health initiative to fundraise enough money for the group to host meditation nights at the Brooklyn Pride Center. The Center cannot afford to donate its space to local groups during off hours, so charges a fee. If the library could offer free space to this group, it would provide an invaluable service to them.

sensitivity to context, particularly given that cultural insiders mobilize physical and geographical resources.

Developing online spaces circumvents some of these geographic and infrastructural barriers, as well as affords connection to valued information sources produced outside the formal publishing system. Libraries can create online collections and resources that combine the formal sources held by the library with those informally produced by individuals with LGBTQ+ identities. These collections could also be made available and visible for individuals who may not have access to online technologies at home. To develop these resources, libraries could solicit the expertise of those with embodied knowledge. Consider how Rachel shares information with other transgender individuals: “I’ll post links to websites that have answers that can do more than me, but I’ll try to paraphrase it in my reply. I’ll give you a summary of it, but if you want more information, here are some great sources from PhDs.” This account sounds like the role a reference librarian plays. Yet unlike a reference librarian, Rachel is viewed as a trusted source whereas a reference librarian may not be trusted. Librarians might consider reaching out to individuals with LGBTQ+ identities to identify those acting as interpersonal sources and ask for their assistance in developing, organizing, and presenting LGBTQ+ resources in offline and online contexts, such as digital libraries. Librarians can also crowdsource this resource development, such as asking individuals with LGBTQ+ identities to submit their own collection metadata in the form of social tagging and user-generated reading lists.⁸

The library culture that promotes makerspaces could also support LGBTQ+ making. One way to support such making could be to fund an LGBTQ+ creator in residence, such as

8. These features are afforded by software such as BiblioCommons, currently used by the New York Public Library. See <https://www.bibliocommons.com/>; <https://www.nypl.org/press/press-release/2011/06/20/new-york-public-library-and-bibliocommons-partner-create-new-innovati>

the Boston Public Library (BPL), whose newest recipient is writing a queer, young adult novel.⁹ For libraries sans BPL's resources, providing programming and materials to assist in self-publishing could also be instrumental. For instance, Will wants to publish a memoir, but is it is less marketable due to his gay identity. Having a session at the library directed at marketing LGBTQ+ novels, whether published or self-published, could be of assistance to someone like Will, as well as other LGBTQ+ makers.

Mindfulness needs to be paid in valuing embodied knowledge without exploiting individuals with LGBTQ+ identities. Just because someone identifies as an identity category does not signify their knowledge of all factors that might impact someone living as this identity, nor that they wish to share their knowledge with others. Providing such knowledge can be exhausting. It is why (in an ideal world) information mediators like librarians earn commensurate wages for their work. For this reason, librarians are encouraged to develop an outreach plan, ideally consulting with individuals who identify as LGBTQ+. One way to locate individuals with LGBTQ+ identities who have both embodied knowledge and mediation expertise is by hiring librarians with LGBTQ+ identities. Four interview participants work as librarians, another maintains an archive. The American Library Association (ALA) has a Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Round Table (GLBTRT) where job postings can be made.¹⁰ For potential or current library school students, visibility should be afforded to LGBTQ+ identities as a viable lens from which to conduct research and practice. Diversity and inclusivity initiatives could counteract some of the library strategies curtailing the work of those who are

9. See <http://www.bpl.org/general/associates/childrensres.htm>

10. See <http://www.ala.org/glbtrt/>

both librarians and LGBTQ+, such as Stefan (see the **Cultural and Social Group Strategies** section from the previous chapter).

Beyond hiring librarians with LGBTQ+ identities, it is further recommended that library strategies are adapted to support LGBTQ+ identity expressions, ensuring that when individuals get to the library, they feel recognized and supported. One important strategy to adopt is workplace learning, or opportunities to attend workshops, retreats, and consultations. However, such learning cannot be condensed into a single diversity training workshop. Instead, workplace learning must function as a consistent intervention that fosters cultural competency, defined as “a highly developed ability to understand and respect cultural differences and to address issues of disparity among diverse populations competently” (Overall, 2009, p. 176). While a developed framework exists for cultural competence beyond the scope of this dissertation (see Overall, 2009; Cooke, 2017), a key component of cultural competence is that it “does not end with knowledge about diverse cultures. It begins a lifelong process of learning about cultural differences to effectively reach those who would benefit the most from library services” (Overall, 2009, p. 2000). Therefore, librarians must commit to developing cultural competency in the workplace that extends beyond workplace learning to being inculcated in daily practice.

Another implication regards visibility. Participant accounts support an argument made by Rothbauer (2008, p. 101-116) that libraries should not assume everyone wants LGBTQ+ resources hidden. It is worthwhile to return to the quote by Joanna here: “Don’t put us in the basement. It just ties into this whole thing of like, go to the basement where nobody wants you.” Circulation statistics do not tell the whole story. Even if individuals do not check out books from the LGBTQ+ display, this practice does not signify the visibility of these resources goes unnoticed. As Sierra states:

I think visibility and the idea that [the library] is a safe space is important. Even if you just have the poster with rainbow colors [that] says “Safe space” or “Hate-free place.” You see that in a library and go, “Oh this is cool. Maybe there’s no stigma here. Maybe the resources are here that I need.” Some people don’t even consider that. [Instead they think] this is a topic that’s not in libraries. Just throw in LGBT books in your book displays, in your book talks. For example, you have your Valentine’s display, your summer reading display, just have the queer books in with the straight ones. Because that signifies to people that the library has these resources and they’re friendly enough that they want to display [them].

Sierra’s account denotes the importance of libraries working to overcome that perception that, like other formal sources, they are not as relevant to the everyday lives of individuals with LGBTQ+ identities. The only way to overcome this perception is to promote LGBTQ+ visibility, with the caveat that not all places allow it. One way libraries can navigate the latter issue is through social steganography (boyd, 2011, 2014; boyd & Marwick, 2011). Such steganography manifested in Diane’s account (see the **RQ3. How Technologies Afford Information Practices** section from the previous chapter) of her Facebook practices related to controlling information about what elements of her identity are visible and to whom. Specifically, Diane encoded her presentation of being in a relationship with another woman that those in the know would recognize as LGBTQ+. On the other hand, those not in the know do not attach the same relevancies or meanings to these information practices. Librarians in places that forbid LGBTQ+ visibility can use social steganography to signal that individuals with LGBTQ+ identities are welcome, while hiding this message in plain sight from social group outsiders. One example of how social steganography can be employed derives from a situation, in which GLBTRT Advocacy Committee members, including the researcher, are designing a sign to be displayed by libraries. This sign espouses the sentiment that the library is open or welcome to all. One issue in designing this sign is related to people in mainstream culture complaining about statements like “All Genders Welcome.” A way to circumvent this complaint is through the poster design, which uses visual, symbolic imagery

more recognizable to individuals with non-dominant gender identities,¹¹ while keeping the language used by the poster broad.

This suggestion is not perfect. It requires significant knowledge of LGBTQ+ social group information practices to which those for whom the steganography is targeted might not be aware. This implication, like the others, was crafted with the messiness of context in mind. These implications and recommendations are offered to provide librarians with an idea of how they can get started to promote inclusivity of LGBTQ+ identities, keeping in mind that actual strategies adopted are contingent on the specific institution.

For technologies. Implications from this research also exist for designers and creators of online technologies. These implications center on a key ethic of design within the field of Human Computer Interaction (HCI) – recognizing “stress” cases (Meyer & Wachter-Boettcher, 2016, p. 2). Stress cases are defined as technological features ostensibly created to fulfill specific functions yielding different relevancies and meanings from the creator’s intent that impact a small number of people. An example would be Facebook’s “People You May Know” feature. While this feature may have been designed to expand the social networks of people with weak ties, it takes on a different meaning for someone like Amina, where this same feature may have been used to surveil her (see the **RQ4. How Technologies Constrain Information Practices** section from the previous chapter). Therefore, stress cases exemplify that while affordances and constraints may not take on the same meanings for everyone, they do disseminate dominant sociocultural discourses. When stress cases are anticipated, the benefits emanate outward. Picture a sidewalk ramp. Most people do not require it however some do, e.g., people with disabilities. But this ramp does not just benefit them, it benefits

11. See <http://www.advocate.com/arts-entertainment/art/2014/11/12/smithsonians-queer-collection>

everyone else as well. Caregivers with baby carriages use the ramp, runners use it, cyclists use it, etcetera.

Designing for stress cases requires identifying them, which can be difficult when designers belong to similar lifeworlds (Habermas, 1992, p. 108-109) and, therefore, have uniform ideas of the way things are. Incorporating a diversity of perspectives among designers challenges these taken-for-granted assumptions of who will use a technology and how they will use it. For instance, straight, white, cisgender male designers might not consider offering gender identity options beyond male or female within the online technologies they create. But put an individual with queer, non-binary identities on the team and this feature becomes a stress case.

Stress cases give users autonomy over their interactions with online technologies. For instance, a potential solution to the stress case of “People You May Know,” might not be getting rid of the feature, but rather giving individuals the ability to decide whether they are made visible in search results as a person someone else might know. Stress cases promote transparency. By uncovering the assumptions inherent to a technological feature, stress cases render these assumptions visible, and, in the process, give participants autonomy to decide whether and how to use a feature. These two properties of visibility and autonomy reflect tactics. Specifically, stress cases call attention to social strategies and offer a way to appropriate them for one’s own purposes. Therefore, stress cases as ethical design interventions align with research findings and the conceptual framework.

One example of a stress case is the lack of moderation experienced by participants on social media sites such as Yahoo! Answers. Designing tools for those subject to vitriol and harassment, such as the ability to block users, does not stifle the free speech of those spewing such vitriol and harassment; to make such an argument insults those who have fought for

freedom of expression online (Penny, 2014, p. 183). Rather, these tools provide those marginalized by such speech with the autonomy to control what information they see, which further empowers them to locate sources they consider to be relevant and meaningful.

Stress cases can also be identified in search engines like Google. By employing a vertical rank list, these search engines impart visibility to a certain set of results, reflective of larger cultural strategies. While this ranking mechanism works well for most, it might not consider marginalized groups who may find the search results as stigmatizing (see Noble, 2013). To address this stress case search engines could provide more options for individuals to curate the display of search results. Rather than present results vertically, as in a rank list, search engine providers could present results horizontally, clustered around certain topical themes. This feature would give those who do not know the language the ability to see the discourse centered on certain search terms and select those terms representing identity-affirming discourses.

Conclusion

When people read, they seek to find themselves in the text (de Certeau, 1984, p. 166-175; Rothbauer, 2004, p. 90). If dissertation participants were to read extant work on the information practices of individuals with LGBTQ+ identities, would they be able to locate themselves? Findings from this dissertation suggest not, since prior work may condense these information practices into a series of monolithic needs and behaviors that can be addressed by library-sanctioned collections, many not authored, developed, or organized by individuals with LGBTQ+ identities (Rothbauer, 2004, p. 105-106). This observation does not suggest that collections are not vital to individuals with LGBTQ+ identities or that participants did not indicate the importance of works by Audre Lorde, bell hooks, Rita Mae Brown, Raymond Chandler, and Nancy Garden (to name a few) to their identity development. Instead, data

analysis indicates that participants want to know what it is *like* to adopt an identity, fraught with visibility and questions of what constitutes authentic practice. They value information to address this need derived from their own embodied knowledge as well as from those with similar experiences. Further, many participants need to address these desires and values within information landscapes that visibly disrupt or deny the legitimacy of their existences. Thus, envisioning a book as being instrumental to one's LGBTQ+ identity development only holds if supported by an individual's sociocultural context. For these reasons, this research introduces a new lens via its conceptual framework from which to interrogate the assumptions of past research. This lens employs a sociocultural perspective from which to envision both information and how individuals, seek, share, use, avoid, mistrust, etcetera, it.

Findings from this research indicate that information and information practices cannot be typified into a neat series of categories such as seeking, sharing and use. Instead, practices encompass the gamut of human experience, whether such experience is produced by intersubjective understanding, or garnered by an individual's responses to such understanding. Nor can information be considered as formal, recorded sources, passively consumed. Rather, participants' preferred information sources are often unsanctioned, embodied, and emotional. There is a reason why implications from the PPFA and HRC study on health information for individuals with LGBTQ+ identities (see the above **Future Research** section) include the importance of considering the mental health of individuals when they interact with this information (Steinke et al., 2017).

On one hand, these findings are exciting. They further understanding of both information practices as an umbrella concept within LIS (Savolainen, 2007), as well as the unique challenges and triumphs of individuals with LGBTQ+ identities within a practices perspective. These findings challenge concepts often taken-for-granted within LIS, such as the

importance of information access. Implications from these findings have the potential to render significant impact within the communities in which they are instantiated. However, such findings are also inherently challenging. Harkening back to the above **Introduction** section of this chapter, incorporating sociocultural context is messy. It does not provide the holistic, generalizable results many hope for, such as a representative survey of transgender information needs (nor does it suggest that such a survey is not needed, only that it should not be the sole means through which to envision the experiences of transgender individuals). What this research does accomplish, however, is interrogating the assumptions behind the design and creation of such a survey in terms of who is represented and what constitutes a need. Such interrogation has identified areas for future research that might not have been captured before; not to serve as an oppositional mandate for the field in its treatment of marginalized groups, but rather as an inclusive dialectic (Dervin, 2003, p. 128) that incorporates the voices of those who have yet to be heard.

Appendix A: Glossary

Affordances: The materially-based construction and features of a technology that suggest the use to which it should be put (see Norman, 1999; Latour, 2004; Gillespie, Boczkowski, & Foote, 2014; Leonardi, Nardi, & Kallinikos, 2014; Baym, 2015). Affordances can be actual and perceived (see Norman, 1999; Baym, 2015).

Authenticity. Goffman (1963, p. 132) defines authenticity as “recipes for an appropriate attitude regarding the self.” Engaging in authentic practices renders an individual as “real and worthy” (Goffman, 1963, p. 132). Those who do not engage in authentic practices are viewed as “self-deluded” and “misguided” (Goffman, 1963, p. 132).

Context: Consists of the interaction between individuals and conditions (e.g., structures, reality, information) produced by practices within a given point in time-space. In turn, context shapes practices (Dervin, 2003).

Constraints: Actual or perceived restrictions for how a technology can be used (Norman, 1999; Latour, 2004; Gillespie, Boczkowski, & Foote, 2014; Leonardi, Nardi, & Kallinikos, 2014; Baym, 2015).

Identity: A set of characteristics or affinities (“Identity,” n.d.; Haraway, 1990, p. 197) that determine how individuals are treated.

Information landscape: “Modalities of information ... that people draw upon in the performance of their practices in working or everyday life, and therefore constitute the intersubjective agreement that informs our situated realities” (Lloyd, 2012, p. 773).

Information practices: “An array of information-related activities and skills” (Lloyd, 2012, p. 285) produced by “shared particular understandings” (Schatzki, 2001b, p. 3) within cultures and social groups. When enacted, practices reify these understandings (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Practices are habitual (Savolainen, 2007) and can be epistemic, sociocultural, and corporeal in nature (Lloyd, 2012, who referred to “socio-cultural” as “social”).

Individuals with LGBTQ+ identities. This descriptor is popularly abbreviated as LGBT, LGBTQ, or LGBTQIA (among other variations including the labels lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex, and/or asexual, among others. Yet labels are problematic both theoretically (Gamson, 1995) and for participants. For this reason, LGBTQ+ is used as shorthand to reflect labels most often used by participants, as well as to recognize the inability of labels to holistically capture all identity expressions. The phrase “individuals with LGBTQ+ identities” is used throughout to denote that having an LGBTQ+ identity is not totalizing; rather participants have different, intersecting identities outside of being LGBTQ+.

Meaning: Denotes the use of relevant information to “reshape, redefine, or reclaim [one’s] social reality” (Chatman, 1996, p. 195).

Places: A place represents a social organization of reality (Berger & Luckmann, 1966) within a given moment in time-space. Places are stable and material. They have a distinct location and permanence and denote appropriate strategies to be practiced (de Certeau, 1984).

Realness: The phrase “realness” originates from the ball scene in 1980s New York, documented in the film *Paris is Burning*. In this context, realness was defined as emulations of identity categories, such as executive realness and military realness. As drag queen Pepper LaBeija explains: “To be able to blend – that’s what realness is” (Livingston, 1990). However, realness does not approximate performance nor an imitation. Rather, “it is the way that people, minorities, excluded from the domain of the real, appropriate the real and its effects... the term realness offsets any implications of inauthenticity... realness actually describes less of an act of will and more of a desire to flaunt the unpredictability of social gendering” (Halberstam, 2005, p. 51).

Relevance: Represents the “relation between an item of information and a particular individual’s personal view of the world” (Wilson, 1973, p. 458).

Spaces: A place individualized by interactants, who transform it in ways useful to them. Tactics occur in spaces. Unlike a place, which has a fixed physical and temporal location, spaces are fleeting and overlap. As de Certeau (1984) states, “space is a practiced place.” (p. 117).

Stigmatized identities: Presence of “an attribute that is deeply discrediting” (Goffman, 1963, p. 13) in comparison to normative identity expectations of what an individual “ought to be” (p. 12) in each situation.

Strategies: Represent sanctioned “ways of making do” (de Certeau, 1984, p. 28) within everyday life. Strategies are used by dominant cultures and social groups to define the boundaries of acceptable practices (de Certeau, 1984).

Structures: Represent “Rules and resources, recursively implicated in the reproduction of social systems” (Giddens, 1984, p. 377). Structures are enacted and produced by practices. Therefore, structures are not physical, but rather constitute “virtual” (p. 17) principles that pattern the practices creating them (Sewell, 1992).

Tactics: Represent creative practices employed by “subject[s] of will and power” (de Certeau, 1984, p. xix). These practices appropriate, or “poach” (p. xii) surrounding materials and technologies to serve an individual’s own ends. Tactics are fleeting and must be strategically seized. They overlap with strategies and cannot exist without them.

Appendix B: Interview Protocol

1. Before we begin, do you have any questions for me?
2. (Social constructionism). Please describe in your own words what *an LGBTQ+ identity* [for all italicized text, refer to the participant's preferred label(s)] means to you.
3. (Information worlds, Social norms, Information values). How did you first become aware of *your LGBTQ+ identity*?
4. (Critical incident technique). Think back to one of the first times you began to explore *an LGBTQ+ identity*.
 - a. (Critical incident technique; Information worlds, Information value). What were some of the goals you wanted to achieve by adopting this identity?
 - b. (Information worlds, Information behaviors). What actions did you take to fulfill these identified goals?
 - c. (Information poverty, Lack of perceived resources; Information worlds, Social norms). What were some significant challenges or barriers faced in fulfilling these goals?
 - d. (Information worlds, information value). What resources or experiences helped you the most in fulfilling these goals?
 - e. (Information worlds, information value). How did this purpose and goals change over time, or did they change over time?
 - f. (Information worlds, social norms). Do you find the ability to fulfill your current goals is easier, more difficult, or unchanged when compared to your past goals?
5. (Information worlds, Information values). When exploring information related to *LGBTQ+ identity*, how do you decide what information to use?
6. (Positive critical incident; Information worlds, Social types, Social norms, Information values). Think back over the last six months, can you remember a time when you spoke to someone about your *LGBTQ+ identity*, which was particularly positive or memorable in a good way? Describe what happened. What was it that made it so positive or memorable in a good way?
7. (Neg. critical incident; Information worlds, Social types, Social norms, Information values). Think back over the last six months, can you remember a time when you spoke to someone about your *LGBTQ+ identity*, which was particularly negative or memorable in a not-so-good way? Describe what happened. What was it that made it so negative or memorable in a not-so-good way?
8. (Information poverty, Mistrust of outsiders; Information worlds, Social types). Do you think it is important to be a member of a group where members share your *LGBTQ+ identity*?
 - a. Why or why not?
 - b. Has this changed over time?
9. (Information poverty, Mistrust of outsiders, Deciding not to expose information about true problems). Are any individuals within your social networks unaware of your *LGBTQ+ identity*?
 - a. If so, why?
 - b. If not, what elements of this identity are they aware of? How has this changed over time?
10. (Online technology use). In what ways do you use the online technologies to explore a *LGBTQ+ identity*?

- a. How does this differ from the ways in which you explore this identity offline?
 - b. [If applicable]. Can you identify some online resources that you have used to explore this identity?
11. Is there anything that we did not address in this interview that you would like to add?
 12. Is there anything that you feel I should have asked you, but I didn't?
 13. Do you have any questions for me?

Appendix C: Yahoo! Answers Scraping Instructions

Programs needed to scrape:

- Google Chrome Scraper Web Extension:
<https://chrome.google.com/webstore/detail/scraper/mbigbapnjcgaffohmbkdlecaccepngjd?hl=en>
 - Google Refine: <https://code.google.com/archive/p/google-refine/>
1. Scroll down in Yahoo! Answers LGBT thread:
<https://answers.yahoo.com/dir/index?sid=396546301>
 2. With scraper app installed in Google Chrome, click on any link and select "Scrape similar."
 3. Delete "Link" under Columns.
 4. Export to Google Docs.
 5. Save as a CSV.
 6. Upload data into Google Refine.
 7. Click dropdown menu under URL, select Edit Cells | Transform.
 8. Select language as Google Refine Expression Language and add:
"https://answers.yahoo.com"+value
 9. Select Edit Column | Add Column Based on URL
 10. Name the column as Page and select "Ok."
 11. Select Page | Facet | Customized Facet | Facet by Blank
 12. Select "False."
 13. Select Page | Edit Column | Add Column Based on this Column
 14. Select GREL as language and add:
value.parseHtml().select("div[itemprop=acceptedAnswer]").toString()
 15. Name the column row.
 16. Select Facet | Customized Facet | Facet by Blank
 17. Select "False."
 18. Select Rows | Edit Column | Add Column Based on this Column
 14. Select GREL as language and add:
value.parseHtml().select("span.ya-q-full-text").toString()
 15. Call column "Answer."
 16. Go to Row 1 | Edit Cells | Transform
 17. In GREL add:
value.replace(/<.*?>/,"")
 18. Select Edit cells | Common transformations | Unescape HTML entities
 19. Go to Page | Edit Column | Add Column based on this column
 20. Name new row as "Questions" and use GREL as language and add:
value.parseHtml().select("title").toString()
 21. Under Questions | Edit cells | Transform
 22. In GREL add:
replace(value, "| Yahoo Answers", "")
 23. In GREL add:
value.replace(/<.*?>/,"")
 24. Select Edit cells | Common transformations | Unescape HTML entities

19. Select Rows | Edit Column | Add Column Based on this Column
20. In GREL add:
`value.parseHtml().select("meta[name$=description]").toString()`
21. Call column “Description.”
22. Select Edit cells for “Description” and Transform.
23. In Clojure add the following strings, repeating steps 22-23:
 - `(.replace value "<" "")`
 - `(.replace value ">" "")`
 - `(.replace value "/" "")`
 - `(.replace value "meta" "")`
 - `(.replace value "name" "")`
 - `(.replace value "description" "")`
 - `(.replace value "content" "")`
 - `(.replace value "=" "")`
 - `(.replace value "/" "" "")`
25. Select Edit cells | Common transformations | Unescape HTML entities
26. Create column based on Row
27. Enter GREL:
`value.parseHtml().select("meta[property$=og:question:published_time]").toString()`
28. Call Row “Question Published Time.”
29. Follow step 23.
30. All | Remove/reorder columns
31. Get rid of all columns but “Questions,” “Description,” and “Answers”
32. Select Facet | Customized Facet | Facet by Blank
33. Select “False.”
34. Filter by blank.

Appendix D: Email Recruitment Script

Below is a recruitment email to be used for recruiting participants from the Principal Researcher's personal network. As noted in Attachment 1, the same message will be distributed through various channels. It is understood that every channel will have a slightly different format, but the message will be the same.

From: Vanessa Kitzie <vkitzie@gmail.com>

To: [RECIPIENT]

Subject: Request for an interview on information practices of individuals with non-normative and/or gender-based identities

----- Message Text -----

Dear [RECIPIENT],

My name is Vanessa Kitzie, and I'm a PhD student in Dept. of Library & Information Science within the School of Communication & Information (SC&I). I'm conducting research on the information practices of individuals who identify as having a non-normative sexual and/or gender-based identity (e.g., not heterosexual, not cisgender). Specifically, I am interested in how you assign meaning to exploring, understanding, and adopting this identity based on your life experiences, engrained within the social groups to which you belong, as well as within larger society.

For this investigation, I am conducting around 7-10 interviews. If you identify as having a non-normative sexual and/or gender-based identity, and were born in or between the years of 1977 and 1992, please consider participating in an interview at a time and place convenient to you. Alternatively, if you know of an individual with this identity that would be interested in this study, please consider forwarding this email to others who would qualify for this research. The interview will take about one to two hours. If you agree, please reply to this email indicating your general availability for the next few days. You will be compensated with a \$25 gift card for your time.

Findings from this research will help to inform the field of Library and Information Science regarding the information practices of individuals with non-normative sexual and/or gender-based identities, with practical implications for assisting these individuals in information-based venues, such as a library. No identifying information about you will be used while reporting the findings from this research.

Sincerely,

Vanessa Kitzie
PhD Student, Dept. of Library & Information Science
School of Communication & Information (SC&I)
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey

Appendix E: Informed Consent and Audio-recording Consent Forms

Consent to be a Research Participant

Rutgers University School of Communication and Information

Project:	Exploring the Information Practices of Individuals with Non-Normative Sexual and/or Gender-Based Identities
Principal Investigator:	Vanessa Kitzie (vkitzie@gmail.com)
Co-Investigators:	Dr. Marie L. Radford (mradford@rutgers.edu)
Locations:	Venue convenient to the participant
Duration of Each Session:	First session, from one to two hours; Second session, from thirty minutes to an hour
Number of Sessions:	2
Total Compensation:	\$25
Approximate # of Participants:	30
Participation limitations:	Born in or between 1977 and 1992, openly identify as having a non-normative sexual and/or gender-based identity

General: You are being asked to participate in a research project.

Study Description: We are conducting a study to look at how individuals who do not have a heterosexual and/or cisgender identity interact with information in examining, understanding, and adopting a non-normative sexual and/or gender-based identity.

Procedures: If you decide to be in this study, you will be asked several questions related to your experiences with interacting with information regarding examining, understanding, and adopting a non-normative sexual and/or gender-based identity. Following this interview, you will be contacted once more and asked to read an initial write-up of the study results and provide comments to the Principal Investigator regarding how accurately you feel this write-up captured the experiences you shared during the interview.

Benefits: There is no direct benefit to you aside from a \$25 gift certificate, however your participation will help in assisting the researchers understand online referencing and the factors that affect its quality. If you are interested in receiving the published results of our study you may contact one of the researchers above.

Costs: There are no costs to you for participating in this study.

Compensation to You: None.

Foreseeable Risks or Discomforts: Given that this study examines individuals who adopt non-normative sexual and/or gender-based identities, there is a risk to the individual that should their identity be exposed, they could be subject to damaging of their reputation or other personal harm. In addition, some of the questions asked in the interview could be upsetting to participants given that they address individuals to whom the participant may not have

disclosed their non-normative sexual and/or gender-based identity, and ask participants to recount difficulties experienced when looking for information related to this identity.

Confidentiality: This research is confidential. The research records will include some information about you and this information will be stored in such a manner that some linkage between your identity and the response in the research exists. Some of the information collected about you includes your name, email, and audio. This information will be coded such that no identifying information about you will be revealed. Also note that we will keep this information confidential by limiting individual's access to the research data and keeping it in a secure location and password-protected servers.

The research team and the Institutional Review Board (a committee that reviews research studies to protect research participants) at Rutgers University are the only parties that will be allowed to see the data, except as may be required by law. If a report of this study is published, or the results are presented at a professional conference, only group results will be stated. All study data will be kept for three years.

Participation in this study is confidential. Any information collected about you will be kept private to the extent allowed by law. To make sure that this research is being carried out in the proper way, the Rutgers University IRB will review study records.

Injury/Adverse Reaction: Reports of injury or reaction should be made to the supervising investigator, listed above. Neither Rutgers University nor the researcher has made provision for payment of costs associated with any injury resulting from participation in this study.

Contact Persons: If you have questions about this research, call or write the Principal Investigator above at: Vanessa Kitzie, 4 Huntington Street, New Brunswick, NJ 08901 908-432-0231 or email at vkitzie@gmail.com

Statement of Rights: You have rights as a research volunteer. Taking part in this study is completely voluntary. If you do not take part, you will have no penalty. You may stop taking part in this study at any time with no penalty. You do not waive legal rights by signing this consent form. If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, you may contact the IRB (a committee that reviews research studies to protect research participants) by contacting the IRB Administrator at Rutgers University at:

Institutional Review Board
Rutgers University, the State University of New Jersey
Liberty Plaza / Suite 3200
335 George Street, 3rd Floor
New Brunswick, NJ 08901
Email: humansubjects@orsp.rutgers.edu

Signature of Research Participant

Date: _____

Printed Name of Research Participant

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent

Date: _____

Printed Name of Person Obtaining Consent

AUDIO/VIDEOTAPE ADDENDUM TO CONSENT FORM

You have already agreed to participate in a research study entitled: *Exploring the Information Practices of Individuals with Non-Normative Sexual and/or Gender-Based Identities* conducted by Vanessa Kitzie, a PhD student, and Dr. Marie L. Radford, both of Rutgers University. We are asking for your permission to allow us to capture your voice using a digital recorder as part of that research study. You do not have to agree to be recorded to participate in the main part of the study.

The recording(s) will be used for later for transcribing this interview and will allow us to easily code the data for further analysis and for preserving your identity.

The recording(s) will include our conversations during the interview process.

The recording(s) will be stored in digital format, and converted into digital codes for further analysis and protecting your privacy. With each recording (original or coded) a random identifier will be associated, rather than your real name or email. Along with the recording, we will store various attributes, such as the length of the recording, and the day and the time it was captured. The original recording will be deleted after all the codes for analysis are extracted. The codes will be destroyed upon publications of study results.

Your signature on this form grants the investigator named above permission to record you as described above during participation in the above-referenced study. The investigator will not use the recording(s) for any other reason than that/those stated in the consent form without your written permission.

Signature of Research Participant

Date: _____

Printed Name of Research Participant

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent

Date: _____

Printed Name of Person Obtaining Consent

Appendix F: Final Codebook

Information practices			
Code	Definition	References	Example
Information practices	the quotidian information habits of individuals; information habits are imbued with meaning and represent a complex arrangement of power relationships, centered around defining and legitimating what constitutes knowledge	(de Certeau, 1984; Savolainen, 1995, 2007)	
Information practices\Strategies	sanctioned ways of "making do" (aka engaging with social institutions) by a specific culture or social group within everyday life; communicates a larger meaning of what constitutes knowledge; like places, strategies tend to imply permanence over time (e.g., someone who is female-assigned wearing a dress)	(de Certeau, 1984)	
Information practices\Strategies\Defining the mainstream	agreed-upon strategies that create and reinforce shared meaning within a culture (e.g., teenage girls discussing boys they have crushes on)	(Chatman, 1996, 1999; Burnett, Lee, Hollister, Skinner, 2014)	
Information practices\Strategies\Defining the mainstream\Explicit	formalized statements articulating strategies (e.g., legalization of same-sex marriage; signs for men and women's bathrooms)	(Burnett, Lee, Hollister, Skinner, 2014)	"I still haven't legally changed names. I need to do that." (Jamie, Participant 6) "It just really bothers me when in gas stations it's a single-stall bathroom, but you're forced to make that choice of are you a woman or are you a man?" (Campbell, Participant 17) Does anyone know what the anti-gay law was just passed in Uganda? (Yahoo! Answers Asker)
Information practices\Strategies\Defining the mainstream\Implicit	strategies that are implicitly inferred, but not formally expressed as laws, rules, guidelines, etc. (e.g., a girl growing up with the assumption that she will marry a boy)	(Burnett, Lee, Hollister, Skinner, 2014)	"when I was researching the, my main goal was just to kind of figure out what was wrong with me." (Jamie, Participant 6) "and actually there was a moment in my head where it clicked like oh you can actually be lesbian and gay and function in the world and be healthy and actually functioning. And that was a big epiphany for me just like wow that's an option in my life." (Kyle, Participant 23)
Information practices\Strategies\Defining the small world	agreed-upon strategies that create and reinforce shared meaning within a social group (e.g., a group of lesbians privileging femme-butch pairings for dating)	(Chatman, 1996, 1999; Burnett, Lee, Hollister, Skinner, 2014)	
Information practices\Strategies\Defining the small world\Explicit	formalized statements articulating strategies (e.g., a list of rules on an online forum)	(Burnett, Lee, Hollister, Skinner, 2014)	
Information practices\Strategies\Defining the small world\Implicit	strategies that are either discussed or implicitly inferred, but not formally expressed as laws, rules, guidelines, etc. (a specific Tumblr tag #ftm, which stands for female-to-male insinuating that trans identities represent fixed genders)	(Burnett, Lee, Hollister, Skinner, 2014)	"and sometimes like I said, I call it the queer culture, like it is elitist at times or you have to be educated about the proper terms and nouns and decorum of that culture or you're a completely ignorant asshole [laughs]" (Campbell, Participant 17) "I find that a lot of language speaking about transgender and non-binary identities to be very simplistic because the people who are writing it in the communities have to break it down into tiny little crumbs for people to understand and swallow." (Stefan, Participant 12) I'm not a typical lesbian. Everyone thinks I'm straight because I dress really feminine (Yahoo! Answers Asker)
Information practices\Strategies\Enforcement mechanisms	the consequences for either following a strategy (e.g., positive reinforcement) or not following a strategy (e.g., negative reinforcement)	(Burnett, Lee, Hollister, Skinner, 2014)	"I can't even tell you how many assignments I had where I had to wear, my assignment was to wear a dress for a presentation. Out of all of the kids in first grade I had to demonstrate, we were studying Japan and I had to demonstrate the school girl outfit and it was very much forced upon me." (Campbell, Participant 17)
Information practices\Strategies\Managing visibility	institutions (e.g., culture, education system, larger organizations) render certain preferred identities within a culture or social group visible, while erasing others (e.g., an individual not having the language to describe their LGBTQ+ identity; note: can also be used in the inverse, such as a library having an LGBTQ+ section)		
Information practices\Strategies\Managing visibility\Affording visibility	rendering certain identities within a culture or social group visible (e.g., learning about the concept of being gay from a TV show); sometimes these identities might match with the participants' and therefore be considered in a positive light (e.g., a school library using a "Safe Space" sticker), the main point is that these identities are framed from an institutional standpoint.		

Information practices			
Code	Definition	References	Example
Information practices\Strategies\Managing visibility\Reading	how one is perceived; assigning someone a label or social category from the perspective of a culture of social group (e.g., calling someone a lesbian based on how larger culture defines and views lesbians); making an assumption about how someone acts based on this label or the defining features that characterize a person based on this label (e.g., effeminate gay man.)		"people will tend to put the label on you that they feel comfortable with instead of waiting... sorry I should say it in terms of people will put a label on me that they feel comfortable with without waiting for me to answer the question that they're asking." (Campbell, Participant 17) "truscum are transpeople who believe you have to have dysphoria to be trans or you have to be trans to be trans like you can't be non-binary, you can't be genderqueer." (Stefan, Participant 12)
Information practices\Strategies\Managing visibility\Authenticity	"recipes for an appropriate attitude regarding the self;" how one "ought" to behave based on the identity category either they adopt or are assigned (e.g., an expectation that men don't cry and like sports)	(Goffman, 1963, p. 134)	
Information practices\Strategies\Managing visibility\Authenticity\Embodied authenticity	knowledge obtained through the body; rooting knowledge in one's personal experience; learning how to act authentically	(Merleau-Ponty, 1962; Foucault, 1982; Lloyd, 2010)	"So when middle school or high school came around where people started dating more I was like well shit I'm the girl who dated boys so I was like I guess I'm supposed to do that" (Amina, Participant 11) "Um, you have people who are just like you're doing queerness wrong. Really? There's one true path to queerness and I'm doing it wrong?" (Stefan, Participant 12) "and kind of how society tells you to live your life, like this is supposed to be how you wear your hair, this is supposed to be how you look, this is supposed to be how you dress, this is what your life is supposed to be like." (Emerson, Participant 3)
Information practices\Strategies\Managing visibility\Authenticity\Tied to the body	how one's body is "read" by others and the practices associated with that body; the body is a social construct	(Goffman, 1983; Haas & White, 2001; Butler, 1993; Lloyd, 2010)	"I'm very privileged in that I pass more often than I don't." (Kyle, Participant 23) "You have radfemmes who may be lesbians but they believe trans women are men." (Stefan, Participant 12) I would consider surgery, but I'm indecisive. Sometimes I want to be a guy, other times a girl. I'm afraid I'll go through surgery and then not think that it works for me (Yahoo! Answers Asker)
Information practices\Strategies\Managing visibility\To insiders	only affording visibility to those deemed as insiders either within a culture or social group		"Whenever there are these conversations about the LGBT agenda and gay marriage it tends to be quite dominated by white gay men and lesbians who I feel at the end of the day they're good on certain levels, so they have money, they have access, they're likely Christian or some you know religiously privileged in some way and then have access to many different things and they can be full humans in society if their sexuality is just accepted." (Amina, Participant 11) "Um, was am I being, if I call myself transgender am I shutting down or erasing the experiences of um, people who are more binary transgender and am I, am I taking in their spotlight because their spotlight's really important?" (Stefan, Participant 12)
Information practices\Strategies\Managing visibility\Outing	disclosing one's LGBTQ+ identity without their consent to Other them		"one of the girls who works at the front desk is actually my cousin's cousin so she's known me since I was little and she decided that it wouldn't be a big deal to tell her brother [about my trans identity]" (Jamie, Participant 6)
Information practices\Strategies\Managing visibility\Erasing certain identities	erasing certain identities within a culture or social group (e.g., an individual not having the language to describe their LGBTQ+ identity)		
Information practices\Strategies\Managing visibility\Erasing certain identities\Closeting	erasing the experiences of certain groups by not talking about them (e.g., only mentioning heterosexual sex in a health class; offering two gender categories when identifying oneself on an online form); can also be self-imposed by an individual (e.g., staying closeted, even to oneself)		"For example, a couple years ago I brought my girlfriend to the high school's prom that I worked at. And a co-worker was like, oh is this your friend? Which... I don't see that." (Campbell, Participant 17) "I think the biggest thing is the lack of knowledge and the lack of education. In high school, small Catholic LaSalle school, it was just never talked about" (Kyle, Participant 23)
Information practices\Strategies\Managing visibility\Erasing certain identities\Dearth of information	individuals express having a dearth of information due to it being withheld by cultural and/or social group insiders	(Chatman, 1996)	"I'm in the suburbs so unfortunately most of what I consume is online or through relationships with people or like real life human beings who send me something who I talk to. In terms of being able to for myself feel like I have a place that I could go to, like a bookstore or a library or whatever I can consume information, I don't feel that." (Amina, Participant 11) "when I was thirteen I knew, I knew what bisexual was. But I didn't really know what to do with it. What do I do with this word? Um, and when I started getting into gender I, I really didn't know the language." (Stefan, Participant 12)
Information practices\Tactics	how individuals temporarily seize existing social structures of cultures and/or social groups to render meaning; temporary, fleeting, not fixed (e.g., an individual dressing in drag; an individual representing themselves using pictures of a different gender from how they are read)	(Chatman, 1996, p. 195; de Certeau, 1984)	"I was very strategic. I happen to know just because of the population that I work with, I knew about this market that had small stature suits and I did go with my girlfriend and they did have that." (Campbell, Participant 17) "I did [catfish people] in, when I was young, uh.. middle school, high school, I did that but I always took male pictures" (Jamie, Participant 6)

Information practices			
Code	Definition	References	Example
Information practices/Tactics/Affording visibility	making one's own identity visible (e.g., wearing a rainbow flag) or the identities of others visible that are erased by either larger culture or within social groups (e.g., a positive media portrayal of a trans individual)		
Information practices/Tactics/Affording visibility/To one's own identity	making one's own identity visible (e.g., wearing a rainbow flag)		"I guess, well I was attracted to women, not men. So I guess that's a big goal for having that known and being able to attract the people I wanted to attract." (Kyle, Participant 23) Oh wait. I forgot to mention I used to want to be a guy. Don't know if that information will help. (Yahoo! Answers Asker)
Information practices/Tactics/Affording visibility/To other's identities	making the identities of others visible that are erased by either larger culture or within social groups (e.g., a positive media portrayal of a trans individual)		"and actually there was a moment in my head where it clicked like oh you can actually be lesbian and gay and function in the world and be healthy and actually functioning. And that was a big epiphany for me just like wow that's an option in my life." (Kyle, Participant 23) "the more educated I get, the more I think my goals shift. Like then I run into like advocacy and that became a goal. Um, and as I get into my career like... bringing, bringing LGBT into my career became a goal." (Stefan, Participant 12)
Information practices/Tactics/Recognizing strategies	making visible strategies that are often taken-for-granted and not made explicit with a social group and/or culture (e.g., stating that the mainstream media only portrays certain types of LGBTQ+ representations)		"I was working with refugees from Burma in talking about their culture at work and thinking about cultures of other people that kind of conflict with our standard work culture, which is an affluent white culture basically" (Campbell, Participant 17) "Why are people like this? Some of you know what I'm talking about, guys think 'oh no I notice a guy now I'm gay/bi' or 'oh no I liked a girls clothes now I'm gay' or even 'oh no I'm not attracted to anyone today I'm asexual' It just really pisses me off. The picture is to piss off the homophobes that may look at this question (we all know they come into this category)" (YA) You have to do what's right for you, not what society says is normal (Yahoo! Answers Answerer)
Information practices/Tactics/Realness	individualizing an identity category in a way that "embraces more hybrid possibilities for embodiment and identification" than the authenticity demanded of the category by social groups and/or cultures; recognizing an LGBTQ+ category as subject to one's personal meaning assigned to it, rather than the same across all people who may adhere to a certain label (e.g., rejecting a "coming out" narrative)	(Halberstam, 2005, p. 54; Gray, 2009)	"for me, but I feel like the first couple of years were me like figuring out my sexuality? Like figuring out who I interact, who I interact with and back to how I want to interact with people and just kind of figure it out. Sex and things. Um.. and like doing that and who I'm attracted to and how I want to approach relationships and what dynamics I want to have in those relationships and I kind of had a good sense of that." (Emerson, Participant 3) "and I think a part of me doesn't want to change my birth name [NAME] cause I don't feel like there was a gender attached to it, it's just always how I felt safe being." (Kyle, Participant 23)
Information practices/Tactics/Realness/Appropriating language	defining what one is based on what "fits"; or is not in relation to dominant identity categories; often uses "catch all" or "umbrella" terminology (e.g., identifying as not straight)		"And for some reason lesbian just really doesn't fit well in my mind. It's kind of an icky word that I don't really relate to. So in high school I identified as gay with the caveat of, I like who I like, I love who I love and in my more adult life I realized, well I'm pretty interested in women and I don't really ever see myself at this point with a man. Obviously that could absolutely change. But I think terms are really limiting individuals and I guess in recent time the term queer seems really great because I think that encompasses not only my sexuality but kind of my politics as well. I think you can even be straight and have queer politics or be gay and not have queer politics and not even necessarily be queer. So it is hard to just have one term that I identify with. I very much as a cliché go with it's a spectrum yeah." (Campbell, Participant 17) "I also like understand that it's not a binary with gender, so I kind of um... like I don't want to discount that I will ever... enter into a relationship or have some sort of sexual experience with someone that doesn't identify as female?" (Emerson, Participant 3)
Information practices/Tactics/Realness/Multiplicity of identities	recognizing that individuals have many different identity categories that intersect in various ways (e.g., recognizing that one's experience as a white queer person will differ from POC queer people)		"For me at least, and this is obviously not for all queer people, but for me at least gender does not determine um, whom I'm attracted to, so I personally have been, and I'm attracted to people along the gender spectrum, whether they're men, women, or trans, um or however they identify" (Amina, Participant 11) "So I was pretending to be a boy on the internet, but I was also [NAME] at the same time. So I was two people on the same forum." (Stefan, Participant 12) "Um.. [YouTube had] all sorts of trans men, which was cool. I liked that. I was people who weren't thinking about surgery, people who actually all they had to do was cut their hair and they looked great, which was good for them" (Jamie, Participant 6)

Information practices			
Code	Definition	References	Example
Information practices\Tactics\Realness\Fluidity of identities	recognizing that identity categories can be fluid over time (e.g., identifying as bisexual and then later in life identifying as queer)		<p>"so I was like maybe now it's a good time to go on another journey and figure out more of my gender expression... um... but I feel like I don't think that sexuality and all of this is completely set in stone, I think it can be fluid and changing, I think like our like sexuality grows in time as it should and we should kind of figure out new things and we always have different problems." (Emerson, Participant 3)</p> <p>"I actually found this really interesting guy who was like making a transition and then he was like, he looked very, he had, I don't think he had surgery though, he just transitioned and two years down the road, he wanted to reverse it. He wasn't happy anymore. He was like, over it. So that's also why I waited for so long because I was like oh, that can happen. You can go through all this, spend all this money and then you're out of luck cause, you know, certain things will never go back." (Jamie, Participant 6)</p>
Information practices\Tactics\Creating meaning	how information is used to "reshape, reclaim, or redefine one's social reality"	(Chatman, 1996, p. 195)	
Information practices\Tactics\Creating meaning\Consuming	creating one's own meaning using others' productions or re-reading one's own (e.g., reading a book and seeing oneself in one of the characters; reinterpreting one's past experiences)		<p>"And then again just in hindsight now knowing there was a lot of other queer things about my childhood that I was able to point out" (Campbell, Participant 17)</p> <p>"And I saw their character [a trans character on Degrassi] that was like that and was like ok that makes a whole bunch of sense" (Jamie, Participant 6)</p> <p>I started watching YouTube videos and imagined myself kissing girls instead of boys (Yahoo! Answers Asker)</p>
Information practices\Tactics\Creating meaning\Producing	producing one's own creations to both derive meaning from (individually) and afford visibility to "realness" (e.g., drawing a comic about trans identities)		"I feel that if I'm presenting or publishing on a larger scale or even a smaller scale, um I have an obligation to be out, um, and I have like this obligation to stand in my place of privilege and be like I'm genderqueer, this is my identity because somebody has to do it. Like, um, if you're not talking about gender who, who's going to start talking about it. Somebody has to be open about it for stuff to get started I think." (Stefan, Participant 12)

Information value			
Code	Definition	References	Example
Information value	making an assessment, value, and/or judgment about a specific entity, object, person, etc.; note that each value can also be perceived as its inverse (e.g., if a person says that they do not read articles written by conservatives, they are making a judgment of ideological value)	(Burnett, Lee, Hollister, Skinner, 2014)	
Information value\Experiential and embodied	knowledge obtained through the body; rooting knowledge in one's personal experience (e.g., having a learning experience or moment of realization, being attracted to someone or experiencing desire, binding)	(Merleau-Ponty, 1962; Foucault, 1982; Lloyd, 2010)	<p>"I'm a little heavier so when I have a binder it cuts in, but then I've got a large chest so I had to get something more so I found out that if I wear, if I wear three, I wear a t-shirt one and then a muscle top one. Both of time are mild, they're not very strong and then I wear the strongest one on top and it's a tank top and it makes me as flat as I want and then I don't get cuts because the t-shirt one kind of keeps it off of my skin cutting, so um.. it works that way but that took me a long time to figure out what to do, I was like, I don't yeah.. you know I never had shortness of breath or anything but scab issues. That was something I had to figure out on how to work on that. And I think it went pretty smoothly once I did." (Jamie, Participant 6)</p> <p>When I was little I knew I was attracted to girls. I was really scared and would cry myself to sleep then force myself to only be with boys. (Yahoo! Answers Asker)</p>
Information value\Experiential and embodied\Affective	makes someone feel an emotion toward a specific object, person, etc. (e.g., an individual feeling good when using an online dating website because they were messaged)		"I would say bathroom situations are extremely uncomfortable. It's not even like a current problem for me to go into a women's bathroom. I've never in my recent times gotten harassed or looked at funny, I do know friends that have, but it's more of a post-traumatic experience like from the times it happened when I was younger. When I go to the bathroom I keep my head down, I don't interact with anyone. I put on the armor before I go in. It just really bothers me when in gas stations it's a single-stall bathroom, but you're forced to make that choice of are you a woman or are you a man?" (Campbell, Participant 17)
Information value\Contextual	only valuable within a specific time, place, and situation (e.g., social media would have been beneficial when the individual was coming out, but it was not yet available)	(Burnett, Lee, Hollister, Skinner, 2014)	<p>"Especially because in queer culture our language is changing so rapidly." (Stefan, Participant 12)</p> <p>Why were there more gay people in the 1980s? (Yahoo! Answers Asker)</p>
Information value\Cultural	of importance or of value to individuals within a larger culture (e.g., cultural value of marriage, education, etc.)	(Burnett, Lee, Hollister, Skinner, 2014)	<p>"I kind of like fought the idea [of being queer] because I didn't want to be different" (Emerson, Participant 3)</p> <p>"I try not to associate myself with Caitlin Jenner just because yeah she's this puffed up idol " (Kyle, Participant 23)</p> <p>Is being lesbian ok in Islam? (Yahoo! Answers Asker)</p>
Information value\Social group	of importance or of value to individuals within a social group (e.g., queer politics, specific LGBTQ+ language and social types)		<p>"So I also uh, you know I I know that some people identify as bisexual. I think to me queer, um, in some ways is not only politically connecting me to a broad group of people who don't tend to fit into certain binaries" (Amina, Participant 11)</p> <p>"And just having those older queer people around that, we never talk, like oh you're queer and I'm queer that's awesome. We'd just have this knowledge, they call it the queer nod or the queer look" (Campbell, Participant 17)</p> <p>"and like deciding if I was... like going to be like butch or femme or figuring out like what to wear, how to dress gay, how to cut my hair, I used to have hair like down to here" (Emerson, Participant 3)</p>
Information value\Source	valuable based on who is saying it (e.g., taking something as fact-based because it was said by an expert)	(Burnett, Lee, Hollister, Skinner, 2014)	<p>"Whereas if I view information from like organizers that I really know and respect, I feel like I, I cannot, maybe I mean I always have a critical eye because that's just how I am. I can maybe more comfortably consume that information without a bunch of guards up in a way." (Amina, Participant 11)</p> <p>"I was seeing my therapist at school who had some sort of background in LGBTQ clients and she's a [inaudible] which is awesome cause small town like [laughs] Catholic school just happens to have a therapist like that. So I saw her for a couple of years and especially for the gender thing that I went in there for cause that was definitely a source of my depression and anxiety that I was experiencing so, and I went in to her and talked about the week" (Kyle, Participant 23)</p>
Information value\Source\Experiential and embodied	of importance that source has experienced information for oneself (e.g., a trans person wanting to read things written by other trans people)		<p>"This is kind of how I interact with the world is through experience so I really value people's experiences and their expertise in their own life." (Campbell, Participant 17)</p> <p>Feeling like you're the only gay person at your school is really common. I felt the same way and so did many of my friends (Yahoo! Answers Answerer)</p>
Information value\Source\Experiential and embodied\Mistrust of outsiders	(note: unlike Chatman, such mistrust when exercised does not necessarily mean that individuals are cutting themselves off from valuable information sources); mistrust of sources that have not experienced information for themselves	(Chatman, 1996)	<p>"if it's an article I look at who is writing it. Is this person queer, is this person straight, is this person white, you know depending on what they're talking about. If they're talking about Black Lives Matter and it's a white writer, I'm going to be pretty critical of it. Or if it's about queer issues and it's by someone whose straight I'm also gonna look at that" (Amina, Participant 11)</p> <p>"I look for resources created by the voices I'm looking to represent. As opposed, particularly as opposed to cisgender, straight people." (Stefan, Participant 12)</p>

Information value			
Code	Definition	References	Example
Information value\Aesthetic	craft, beauty, and/or artistry involved in production of work or person's appearance (e.g., a well-designed website, how someone looks)	(Burnett, Lee, Hollister, Skinner, 2014)	"The only place I've ever posted anything is on Tumblr, um... to help other people out with certain things that I've figured out myself that necessarily that like if I see a guy trying to bind with Ace bandages, that's when I'll step in and be like look you shouldn't do that or someone's asked how I've like, what I've done to be comfortable and look good enough and I've told them what I do as opposed to what most people do or like we'll get cuts underneath our arms and I've told people how to deal with stuff like that." (Jamie, Participant 6)
Information value\Economic	profitable in an economic sense (e.g., publishing an LGBTQ+ comic book and benefitting from its sales)	(Burnett, Lee, Hollister, Skinner, 2014)	"[testosterone] was a lot of money and I didn't have any help with money and I still don't, I pay for myself, but when I went to shots it was a lot cheaper so that helped. I still don't have my top surgery because that's eight thousand dollars." (Jamie, Participant 6)
Information value\Entertainment	of value due to the amusement, enjoyment, etc., it brings (e.g., exchanging memes for amusement)	(Burnett, Lee, Hollister, Skinner, 2014)	"Like I said there was the GLBT group, that was more of an alternative group, like they weren't very mainstream. It wasn't, it's not a group that you, at the time, it wasn't a group that you wanted to be in or looked fun, I guess." (Campbell, Participant 17)
Information value\Ideological	a collection of beliefs held by a social group or culture (e.g., politics, religion)	(Burnett, Lee, Hollister, Skinner, 2014)	"There are complicated things about visibility and with Arab queerness um, especially when you bring in religion and things to that" (Amina, Participant 11) "I grew up in a Catholic home with a classic traditional, Catholic traditions, so figuring out where I stand in that given certain sort of people in that community who believe a certain thing and having it just like, dancing around, not necessarily dancing, but like stepping carefully. Picking my words tastefully when talking about this with people who have those certain sort of opinions and figuring out my place in that" (Kyle, Participant 23) Can you support LGBTQ+ people if you are Christian? Is it against what God teaches? (Yahoo! Answers Asker)
Information value\Moral and ethical	the "right" thing to do (e.g., helping others explore their LGBTQ+ identities)		"[My parents] were always very open to me and what they did in turn was just encouraged me to be a good person and so those really, the resources that were really powerful to me were just the people that – whether they agreed with being queer or not, they really cultivated the other attributes of myself. They weren't focused just on my queer identity so I think it was very easy for me to adjust into the society because in the end my true colors showed and people had to ignore the fact that I was gay or they could try to diminish my character, but really the proof is in the pudding, I am still a good person." (Campbell, Participant 17)
Information value\Novel	important because its new, original, or unusual (e.g., reading a study that employs a new perspective on an issue)		"Everything on Twitter or everything that anyone posts on Twitter, if somebody posts it on Facebook, somebody posted it to Twitter like two hours ago. That's just how it is. So um, I can be up to date in a second" (Amina, Participant 11) "if they mentioned certain terms I wasn't aware of or stuff like that I'd go and research the terms and find what they meant" (Jamie, Participant 6)
Information value\Privacy	information is valued because it is not being observed by other people and/or free from public attention (e.g., interacting in a private LGBTQ+ group)		"I think when I first started learning about sexuality part of me was interested in bisexuality, but I feel that in some ways when I'm just talking to people or identifying myself on social media or whatever it's not necessarily their business to know." (Amina, Participant 11) "there may have been a GLBT group at my high school but that's not a very private experience" (Campbell, Participant 17)
Information value\Rhetorical	how something is presented or argued (e.g., an individual saying something well on an online forum about gay marriage)		"Um... and just like how well it's written and like, yeah." (Emerson, Participant 3)

Social types			
Code	Definition	References	Example
Social types	who is taken seriously within a particular culture or small world	(Burnett, Lee, Hollister, Skinner, 2014)	
Social types\Insiders	people who act "appropriately" within a social group or culture; may have access to certain types of privileged knowledge, but not necessarily	(Merton, 1972; Chatman, 1996; Jaeger & Burnett, 2010)	
Social types\Insiders\Within a culture	people who act "appropriately" within a culture (e.g., heterosexuals); people who have positions of power within the larger culture		<p>"If I'm surrounded by traditional females, I feel like I don't really fit into that and likewise when I'm surrounded by all cis males that are rather traditional I don't really feel that I fit into that" (Campbell, Participant 17)</p> <p>"I don't see myself in a relationship with any white, straight identified cisgender man..." (Emerson, Participant 3)</p> <p>"I don't like the idea of me identifying me as a straight white man because having that shift of privilege is difficult for me" (Kyle, Participant 23)</p>
Social types\Insiders\Within a social group	people who act "appropriately" within a social group (e.g., people who identify as either lesbian or gay in a social group where bisexuality is frowned upon); people who have positions of power within the social group		<p>"Whenever there are these conversations about the LGBT agenda and gay marriage it tends to be quite dominated by white gay men and lesbians who I feel at the end of the day they're good on certain levels, so they have money, they have access, they're likely Christian or some you know religiously privileged in some way and then have access to many different things and they can be full humans in society if their sexuality is just accepted." (Amina, Participant 11)</p> <p>I'm bisexual and I think watching gay porn is ok. I asked my friend who is also bisexual and she said it's ok too. (Yahoo! Answers Answerer)</p>
Social types\Outsiders	people who do not act "appropriately" within a social group or culture; may not have access to certain types of privileged knowledge, but not necessarily	(Merton, 1972; Chatman, 1996; Jaeger & Burnett, 2010)	
Social types\Outsiders\Within a culture	people who do not act "appropriately" within a culture (e.g., LGBTQ+ individuals)		<p>"Like I said there was the GLBT group, that was more of an alternative group, like they weren't very mainstream. It wasn't, it's not a group that you, at the time, it wasn't a group that you wanted to be in or looked fun, I guess." (Campbell, Participant 17)</p> <p>Why do the gays have to push their homosexuality on innocent children? (Yahoo! Answers Asker)</p>
Social types\Outsiders\Within a social group	people who do not act "appropriately" within a social group (e.g., people who identify bisexual in an LGBTQ+ group where bisexuality is frowned upon)		<p>"that was kind of a very physical representation of oh there's a queer culture and there's certain language that straight people are just not privy to" (Campbell, Participant 17)</p> <p>"Um, I was the secretary of the GSA my freshman year in college and I had not explicitly said how I was queer. And a couple of the people were like ugh, bi people they should just make up their fucking minds, and I'm like well [laughs]. Um, so that was a goal shift. Find an identity that wouldn't scare people." (Stefan, Participant 12)</p> <p>I posted this picture to piss off the homophobic people that come into this category. We all know they come here. (Yahoo! Answers Asker)</p>
Social types\The wise	"persons who are normal but whose special situation has made them intimately privy to the secret life of the stigmatized individual and sympathetic with it, and who find themselves accorded a measure of acceptance, a measure of courtesy membership in the clan" (e.g., a "woke" ally)	(Goffman, 1963, p. 41)	<p>"I told, I did tell certain people, I told um... my gay best friend, I told my mom, I told my Aunt [name], I had no, I knew she wouldn't care at all. Um... and then I told another one of my friends that I was actually fighting with for over a year.. and I just called her up and I told her and same thing with her she just didn't care, she was just like, that's not important." (Jamie, Participant 6)</p>
Social types\Race and ethnicity	stated racial or ethnic background	(Burnett, Lee, Hollister, Skinner, 2014)	<p>"but I feel that at least for me in the media that I consume, people of color I know tend to be more visible within a queer, queer organizing, queer protests whatever it's about. For example, even the Black Lives Matter movement was started by three women, two of them were queer. There's been tweets about the Missouri protests and that was started by queer black women" (Amina, Participant 11)</p> <p>"Um, and then I found no intersections when it comes to people of color. Gender and sexuality and librarianship. There's just nothing [laughs]." (Stefan, Participant 12)</p>
Social types\Gender	(note: since individuals may either identify as having a non-normative sexual and/or gender identity, this code should be applied to individuals who identify as having a non-normative sexuality, but identify as cisgender); gender identity of individual	(Burnett, Lee, Hollister, Skinner, 2014)	<p>"My gender, again so I'm a woman but often the risks I take or the things I speak or the roles I take often including in the labor movement, we don't often typically see women in these positions so I've often been accused of being this, in some ways painted as this angry woman or you know these types of things so in that way I think I queer gender" (Amina, Participant 11)</p> <p>"even just thinking about a bar scenario for me was really hard watching a masculine of center person kind of bother this more feminine person and then a normal person, if they see someone whose in distress would just go and help without thinking about it, but I feel like there's all this extra thinking you have to do, like I don't want that woman who is more feminine presenting to think I'm being macho by trying to defend her" (Campbell, Participant 17)</p>
Social types\Class	an individual's class position	(Chatman, 1996)	<p>"I was raised in a very working class family, you know neither of my parents went to college, but I had the privilege and I have a graduate degree. But right now in this moment, right now I'm poor as hell, but I could get to a middle class life with an education, so that's queer." (Amina, Participant 11)</p>

Place and space			
Code	Definition	References	Example
Place and space	settings where interactions (between humans and between humans and non-human agents) occur; sometimes the setting is not stated, but implied (e.g., a situation occurring with parents occurred within the home)		
Place and space\Physical	occurring in a specific geographical location	(de Certeau, 1984)	
Place and space\Physical\Place	a geographical ordering of elements each situated in a distinct location; implies (but is, of course, iteratively shaped by the interactions occurring within and outside of it over time) stability of this order over time; suggests a specific set of procedures that should occur within it (e.g., a college building; a specific queer bar; a classroom)	(de Certeau, 1984)	<p>"But I don't really have a physical community of queer people in [my place of residence] yet. I'm starting grad school so I'll have a campus and connect with people and maybe I can help foster that" (Amina, Participant 11)</p> <p>"And honestly at the time of coming out I doubt there was, I have no proof, but I doubt there were many resources in my school library anyway." (Campbell, Participant 17)</p> <p>How do i know if a someone is gay in a homophobic place? I am also closeted so don't want to out myself to him (Yahoo! Answers asker)</p>
Place and space\Physical\Space	a "practiced place," representative of the various actors, actions, systems, agendas, etc. interacting within a place; can represent differing meanings produced by the interactions between actors, actions, systems, agendas, etc. within it; temporary (e.g., a participant referring to this college building as "queer central"; the idea of queer bars in general, not a specific one; a gay straight alliance meeting taking place in a classroom)	(de Certeau, 1984)	<p>If you are LGBTQ+ and live in a homophobic place, blend in with everyone else and don't be completely open unless you have a good support system or move to a more accepting place (Yahoo! Answers Answerer)</p>
Place and space\Virtual	occurring in a specific virtual "location," aka sense of a social setting	(de Certeau, 1984; Dourish, 2006)	
Place and space\Virtual\Place	a geometric ordering elements each situated in a distinct location; implies (but is, of course, iteratively shaped by the interactions occurring within and outside of it over time) stability of this order over time; suggests a specific set of procedures that should occur within it (e.g., Facebook, a blogging website, a chat window)	(de Certeau, 1984; Dourish, 2006)	<p>"Well um.. I think the whole idea of um.. you know that some like just like the the whole idea of having like a lot of countries or different like websites or companies that are that have block lists like for what they search and in a library just like saying sort of something like queer like searching the word queer shouldn't get flagged or be blocked. I think that's really important because um.. with all the issues that kind of that can happen when you're kind of figuring out your sexuality young and all the issues that queer youth have accessing information is really, really important." (Emerson, Participant 3)</p>
Place and space\Virtual\Space	a "practiced place," representative of the various actors, actions, systems, agendas, etc. interacting within a place; can represent differing meanings produced by the interactions between actors, actions, systems, agendas, etc. within it; temporary (e.g., a private LGBTQ+ Facebook group, a specific individual's blog, a specific chat conversation); note: sometimes something can be considered a place or space and other times an information source	(de Certeau, 1984; Dourish, 2006)	<p>"chat groups are kind of the underbelly of the internet and there were all sorts of crazy people on that group that didn't provide a safe space to be gay" (Campbell, Participant 17)</p> <p>"I did a lot of talking to people on the internet. I didn't necessarily like, look up things on the internet, but I was in a queer community online, or at least a community that had... we were talking about queer issues, it was a fandom community and we were basically writing slash fiction together. So I did a lot of talking to the mostly women in the group, um, about what was going on." (Stefan, Participant 12)</p>
Place and space\Types of places and spaces	these types are solely related to how an individual can exercise their LGBTQ+ identity, and should be coded in reference to this identity	(Goffman, 1963)	
Place and space\Types of places and spaces\Back	other people either share the individual's specific LGBTQ+ identity or the specific LGBTQ+ identity of the individual is encouraged to be made visible and the individual does not have to try to hide or downplay their identity (e.g., a lesbian hanging out at a lesbian bar)	(Goffman, 1963)	<p>"I really gravitate towards workplaces that are run by women? and just being in kind of, I really like, like female driven kind of queer spaces feel really comfortable to me." (Emerson, Participant 3)</p>
Place and space\Types of places and spaces\Civil	those who identify as the individual's specific (other LGBTQ+ identities may be accepted) LGBTQ+ identity are ostensibly treated as if they are accepted, but in some way(s) are not (e.g., a queer person at work is publicly out, but not asked about their partner, while other straight people are asked about theirs; a femme lesbian is frowned upon at a gay bar for approaching another femme, rather than butch lesbian)	(Goffman, 1963)	<p>"The space that was created for me was tomboy. And that is only – it's not even really encouraged, but it's accepted up until a certain point" (Campbell, Participant 17)</p> <p>"And the Catholic cam- they wrote back and they clarified that I wasn't employed when I went to that conference and they basically told me like, ok so I'm not saying you can't go to the Pride parade but basically can you like wear sunglasses and not like be, you know, be super visible because at the end of the day you're the ED and represent the organization" (Amina, Participant 11)</p>

Place and space			
Code	Definition	References	Example
Place and space\Types of places and spaces\Forbidden	those who identify as the the individual's specific LGBTQ+ identity are not accepted, and either face expulsion from the specific space or place, or must act as if they do not possess their specific LGBTQ+ identity (e.g., an individual will get kicked out, or thinks they will get kicked out, if they disclose their queer identity to their parents in their home; an bisexual individual attends a gay straight alliance meeting and is told by the other members that bisexuality does not exist)	(Goffman, 1963)	<p>"I grew up in a very conservative environment so we didn't have a gay straight alliance or visibility of queerness or um, um, non-heterosexual you know visibility" (Amina, Participant 11)</p> <p>"And honestly at the time of coming out I doubt there was, I have no proof, but I doubt there were many resources in my school library anyway." (Campbell, Participant 17)</p>

Other information practices			
Code	Definition	References	Example
Other information practices	ther practices or behaviors captured by the literature	(Goffman, 1963; Chatman, 1996; McKenzie, 2003; Burnett, Lee, Hollister, Skinner, 2014)	
Active seeking		(McKenzie, 2003)	
Active seeking/Connecting	actively seeking contact with an identified individual/source within a given information ground (e.g., looking to talk to other LGBTQ+ youth on an LGBTQ+ forum); individual already has in mind what they are looking for and where they are going to look to get it	(McKenzie, 2003)	"so it kinda just went from there um... but yeah it just, I just looked online and started you know saying maybe like in Google stuff like uh... feel male, but only inside like stuff like that and that's how I kind of found all that stuff, so." (Jamie, Participant 6) "And it really helped me to type in a question I had with certain keywords like FtM and transition" (Kyle, Participant 23)
Active seeking/Interacting	asking a pre-planned question (e.g., asking a question on an LGBTQ+ forum)	(McKenzie, 2003)	"or like ummm I went to the synagogue dressed in like a bowtie and like a sweater and I never really presented that way in my synagogue and that community so I posted a picture to the group and was like "ok guys tell me I look ok because I'm really nervous about this" and just got like a bunch of Internet high-fives." (Emerson, Participant 3) "So I'm lucky enough to have a really educated friends group who identifies all over the rainbow, where I can be like, hey do you know anything about this? Um, and they'll be like oh yeah I do or oh no I don't." (Stefan, Participant 12)
Active scanning		(McKenzie, 2003)	
Active scanning/Connecting	identifying a likely source; browsing in a likely information ground (e.g., visiting a gay bar)	(McKenzie, 2003)	"I just kind of sat and read everything. I didn't ever, I don't think I've ever actually posted on a message board about anything." (Jamie, Participant 6) "Oh, I guess Tumblr. I have Tumblr. So I think that's also a great resource. Cause going back to the question of resources that's also one. And that's where I've heard a lot of people just kind of um, different sort of arguments about well this is what it means to be transgender. I'm just a cis dude who had a medical issue at birth, I feel this way. Different sort of people disagreeing on how, what term means what I guess I've never been involved in that, I've just seen it. Like a third window party or whatever. I'm just aware of it." (Kyle, Participant 23)
Active scanning/Interacting	identifying an opportunity to ask a question; actively observing or listening (e.g., listening to a conversation between two men at a gay bar)	(McKenzie, 2003)	"I did a lot of talking to people on the internet. I didn't necessarily like, look up things on the internet, but I was in a queer community online, or at least a community that had... we were talking about queer issues, it was a fandom community and we were basically writing slash fiction together. So I did a lot of talking to the mostly women in the group, um, about what was going on." (Stefan, Participant 12)
Non-directed monitoring		(McKenzie, 2003)	
Non-directed monitoring/Connecting	serendipitously encountering someone in an unexpected information ground (e.g., meeting a doctor who works with trans people at the grocery store)	(McKenzie, 2003)	"I had like insomnia in the middle of the night and Imagine Me and You was on HBO and I caught like the last half of it and I always liked Piper Perabo and it gave me like interesting thoughts so I looked up the video and I liked googled it and it led to Riese's top ten lesbian movies that don't suck? And this was probably in like February or March? And I used to read like College Candy, and then I just started casually reading Autostraddle? Even before I... accepted to myself that I was like not straight... I mean, I just kind of that just random article landed me there and that's how I started reading Autostraddle." (Emerson, Participant 3)
Non-directed monitoring/Interacting	observing or overhearing something in an unexpected information ground (e.g., overhearing from a co-worker about a queer dance party taking place the next evening)	(McKenzie, 2003)	"Someone was like oh you're genderqueer and I was like, what's that?" (Stefan, Participant 12)
By proxy		(McKenzie, 2003)	
By proxy/Connecting	being referred to a source by a gatekeeper (e.g., parents of an LGBTQ+ youth taking them to a therapist)	(McKenzie, 2003)	"And from there, this person outed me to a secret Arab women's email list and so that then, that whole self-organized queer Arab women email list has been really important to me." (Amina, Participant 11) "[My therapist] pointed out that I could change my driver's license, the stuff on it and he gave me the form for that and he explained, he he pointed me to a surgeon that he's heard a lot of good things about. He pointed me out to a lot of places that I might not have been able to find myself or have picked myself um... but that was probably, he actually was probably the biggest um, the biggest help" (Jamie, Participant 6)
By proxy/Interacting	being told (e.g., a therapist telling a trans youth that they need to exhibit a certain set of practices to be cleared for hormones)	(McKenzie, 2003)	"so I went on this trip and I just met some people that were kind of gender non-conforming and they were kind of like, you know what? You, do your own thing it's ok you'll figure it out and that was like a good moment." (Emerson, Participant 3)
Exchange	active trading or swapping of information, with an expectation for reciprocity (e.g., asking for and providing advice within a masculine-of-center Facebook group)	(Burnett, Lee, Hollister, Skinner, 2014)	"[On Tumblr] you got all sorts of um advice, you could give advice." (Jamie, Participant 6)

Sharing	active offering or distribution of information to others with no expectation for reciprocity (e.g., creating a series of instructional YouTube videos on binding)	(Burnett, Lee, Hollister, Skinner, 2014)	<p>"that space had less of an emphasis on like what's our next campaign but more what was your experience this past week and how do you feel and it was more of a check-in and that was really good because often in organizing spaces it's about getting shit done. This was more about really just hearing each other as um, people of color and then sorry, it was mostly a people of color group and then it branched off of that into a queer person of color group, which was smaller but where we could talk about sexuality as well. So that's an example about getting groups together or caucuses and you could share information." (Amina, Participant 11)</p> <p>"The whole experience was really helpful for me accepting who I was and being able to share that with other people and be that person on the other end of whatever it is with what you're struggling with and be like, hey, whatever it is you're struggling with will never be fixed one hundred percent or ever will be but it gets better, it gets better." (Kyle, Participant 23)</p>
Avoidance	can be explicit or implicit nonuse of information; tied to both the value of the information, who is providing the information, and/or strategies/tactics embedded within the information (e.g., avoiding reading LGBTQ+ content posted by the HRC because of conflicting political views; not wanting to find information related to a trans identity due to fear of negative social sanctions)	(Chatman, 1996; Burnett, Lee, Hollister, Skinner, 2014)	<p>"The top is next on my list [top surgery to remove his breasts], I'm thinking about hopefully in October. Um I would do it in the summer, but I work 60, 70 hours a week in the summer so I can't have like a week off to and, and my job doesn't know that I'm [trans], so it's like like I could be like hey, I mean I could tell them but it's not, I'm not. In in public spaces like that. I just kind of keep it to myself because it's a personal, you know preference." (Jamie, Participant 6)</p> <p>"So if you have this person who is ignorant and arrogant person who is just going to spout whatever they want I just choose to be like alright I respect your opinion if that's what it is. I just don't need to see that. So I'll just unfollow them on Facebook or delete them. And I don't feel like I. If they're willing to have a conversation or dialog, I'm happy to do that but I'm also not someone who forces my opinion on anyone else." (Kyle, Participant 23)</p>
Secrecy	(note: unlike Chatman, the individual may not be using secrecy, covering, or deception as a form of self-protection, but instead for embodied learning (e.g., catfishing)); intentional lack of disclosure; can be shared among individuals (e.g., a family not disclosing their child's LGBTQ+ identity to others)	(Chatman, 1996)	<p>"I actually kind of just researched [my trans identity] on stealth." (Jamie, Participant 6)</p> <p>I'm an Arab man and my parents think I'm a virgin, but I'm having sex with a man in secret (Yahoo! Answers Asker)</p>
Secrecy/Covering	working either individually or in concert with others to mitigate one's LGBTQ+ identity or elements of it (e.g., a family not talking about their child's LGBTQ+ identity after the child has disclosed this identity)	(Goffman, 1963)	<p>"I was kind of more raised in a family that was like, you can be gay as long as you're as heteronormative as possible." (Campbell, Participant 17)</p> <p>"Um, I guess with family I, they know [my genderqueer identity] but they don't necessarily get it so we don't talk about." (Stefan, Participant 16)</p>
Secrecy/Deception	deliberately hiding one's true condition by providing false or misleading information (e.g., denying that one has an LGBTQ+ identity when in fact they do)	(Chatman, 1996)	<p>"There was like on the AIM or AOL instant messenger, there were different chat groups you could click on and there was a lesbian chat group, which chat groups are kind of the underbelly of the internet and there were all sorts of crazy people on that group that didn't provide a safe space to be gay and I wound up talking to an older woman who said she was twenty-four, but later on I found out she was actually like thirty something and I was fifteen. And that's inevitably how my parents found out. I don't know if that's another question. But how my parents found out that I was gay was that I left my email up between me and this person and my stepfather was a police officer and used his resources and figured out where this person lived. She was from New York and he called up the police there and they kind of did an unofficial investigation because at the time there was no precedent for online predators in 2002 probably? No it was 2001. There was no precedent to prosecuting, to arresting, to do anything like that." (Campbell, Participant 17)</p>
Sources	where information comes from	(Burnett, Lee, Hollister, Skinner, 2014)	
Sources/Formal	produced by cultural institutions and/or on behalf of a social group (e.g., FAQ page, laws, published books); can also be people (e.g., therapists, doctors), but also code as interpersonal	(Burnett, Lee, Hollister, Skinner, 2014)	<p>"I think the lack of public education about queer identity and queer identified people is pretty lacking and it's to the extreme." (Campbell, Participant 17)</p> <p>"Um.. and I wouldn't necessarily, if I was trying to find a hormone specialist now, I wouldn't necessarily um.. find someone that specializes in it." (Jamie, Participant, 6)</p> <p>See Bruce Bagemihl, Biological Exuberance; St. Martin's Press for insightful reading (Yahoo! Answers Answerer)</p>
Sources/Informal	anything not produced by larger cultural institutions and/or on behalf of a social group (e.g., self-published works)	(Burnett, Lee, Hollister, Skinner, 2014)	<p>"I just looked online and started you know saying maybe like in Google stuff like uh.. feel male, but only inside like stuff like that and that's how I kind of found all that stuff." (Jamie, Participant 6)</p> <p>"I have Tumblr. So I think that's also a great resource. Cause going back to the question of resources that's also one. And that's where I've heard a lot of people just kind of um, different sort of arguments about well this is what it means to be transgender. I'm just a cis dude who had a medical issue at birth, I feel this way. Different sort of people disagreeing on how, what term means what I guess I've never been involved in that, I've just seen it. Like a third window party or whatever. I'm just aware of it." (Kyle, Participant, 23)</p>
Sources/Interpersonal	information shared or exchanged directly between individuals asynchronously or synchronously (e.g., posting in a forum, asking a friend a question)	(Burnett, Lee, Hollister, Skinner, 2014)	<p>"Most of my information comes from firsthand experiences from friends or loved ones." (Campbell, Participant 17)</p> <p>"The only place I've ever posted anything is on Tumblr, um.. to help other people out with certain things that I've figured out myself that necessarily that like if I see a guy trying to bind with Ace bandages, that's when I'll step in and be like look you shouldn't do that or someone's asked how I've like, what I've done to be comfortable and look good enough and I've told them what I do as opposed to what most people do or like we'll get cuts underneath our arms and I've told people how to deal with stuff like that." (Jamie, Participant 6)</p>

Use of technology			
Code	Definition	References	Example
Use of technology	coming from a sociomaterialist viewpoint that technology and society co-constitute one another and are produced by practices; both are inextricably linked; for these reasons technology is not neutral, but rather imbued with values; Note that these affordances/constraints and the values they purport are mutable over time and not fixed	(Latour, 2004; Gillespie, Boczkowski, & Foote, 2014; Leonardi, Nardi, & Kallinikos, 2014)	
Use of technology/Affordances	materially-based construction and features of a technology that suggest the use to which it should be put (e.g., Facebook's people you may know feature affords individuals the ability to link to their weak network ties)	(Latour, 2004; Gillespie, Boczkowski, & Foote, 2014; Leonardi, Nardi, & Kallinikos, 2014)	"and then yeah, just like the lack of knowledge on the trans identity is just thank god I live in an era where I can just plug things into a search engine and it can take me to all of these different sites." (Kyle, Participant 23) On my Facebook I can interact with other fans of the genre. I'm not the only one there who loves it, other people love it as well. (Yahoo! Answers Answerer)
Use of technology/Constraints	materially-based construction and features of a technology that suggest the use to which it should not be put (e.g., when Facebook required a .edu email address to register, it constrained individuals who did not attend college and thus did not have a .edu email address from registering for the site)	(Latour, 2004; Gillespie, Boczkowski, & Foote, 2014; Leonardi, Nardi, & Kallinikos, 2014)	"Well um.. I think the whole idea of um.. you know that some like just like the the whole idea of having like a lot of countries or different like websites or companies that are that have block lists like for what they search and in a library just like saying sort of something like queer like searching the word queer shouldn't get flagged or be blocked. I think that's really important because um.. with all the issues that kind of that can happen when you're kind of figuring out your sexuality young and all the issues that queer youth have accessing information is really, really important." (Emerson, Participant 3) We get rid of one homophobic person trolling the board then another takes over. Oh well. There's a million more homophobes than gays out there anyway (Yahoo! Answers Answerer).
Use of technology/Types of affordances and constraints	Can be coded as either as affordance or a constraint; for this reason, each value can be perceived as its inverse		
Use of technology/Types of affordances and constraints/Autonomy	has control over an interaction (e.g., an individual can log off when they want to)		"So I kind of liked that about it and you could post anonymously, which I liked so you could post either way, you could post by your name if you wanted to or you could post anonymously." (Jamie, Participant 6)
Use of technology/Types of affordances and constraints/Convenience	fits well with an individuals' information practices (e.g., an individual wants to read a particular news article at a given point in time and is able to access their smartphone to do so)		"or you just, it's just faster. Everything on Twitter or everything that anyone posts on Twitter, if somebody posts it on Facebook, somebody posted it to Twitter like two hours ago. That's just how it is. So um, I can be up to date in a second" (Amina, Participant 11)
Use of technology/Types of affordances and constraints/Curation	individual has some control over what information is presented to them and/or with whom they interact (e.g., following certain people on Twitter)		"[The Tumblr group] it wasn't gays and it wasn't bisexual people, it wasn't even pansexuals, it was just trans men." (Jamie, Participant 6) "And then Twitter. I have a public Twitter and a private Twitter and my private Twitter is where my and all my super queer friends hang out." (Stefan, Participant 16)
Use of technology/Types of affordances and constraints/Identity expression	an individual feels they can express some element of their LGBTQ+ identity (e.g., writing a blog post about being LGBTQ+, listing oneself as in a relationship with a same-sex partner)		"But it's also when it... ok, this is a weird thing. So I was pretending to be a boy on the internet, but I was also [NAME] at the same time. So I was two people on the same forum. And when it came out and I outed myself that [NAME] and [NAME] were the same person there was a lot of drama because it's the internet and the internet is full of drama [laughs]. And some people were just completely like we're not ever talking to you again, and other people reached out with valid resources about gender um, and kind of had some better ideas about gender um, and would talk to me about it and would let me talk about it um. And then I kind of got scared and completely backed off. But they were, when that whole thing kind of came down that's where I got a lot of my information. That's where I got the language. Someone was like oh you're genderqueer and I was like, what's that? Does that answer your question?" (Stefan, Participant 16)
Use of technology/Types of affordances and constraints/Information access	can access information related to an LGBTQ+ identity (e.g., reading about the experiences of others posted in forums; getting access to medical information without having to visit a doctor)		"then just had the access of the internet to kind of do my own personal research on the subject" (Campbell, Participant 17) "and then yeah, just like the lack of knowledge on the trans identity is just thank god I live in an era where I can just plug things into a search engine and it can take me to all of these different sites." (Kyle, Participant 23)
Use of technology/Types of affordances and constraints/Moderation	content is sorted by a certain set of individuals for contributions that may be off-topic, offensive, etc. (e.g., a moderator deleting a post for offensive content)		"and they would weed out things [on the trans Tumblr group] that were hurtful or if anyone tried to even bash someone on there it would be toast" (Jamie, Participant 6) Please. I'm serious and don't want any evil answers. (YA)
Use of technology/Types of affordances and constraints/Relationship to physical place/space	interactions in virtual place/space have less perceived consequence in physical place/space (e.g., an individual feels LGBTQ+ online group is safer than trying to find LGBTQ+ group at home or at school)		"And that's inevitably how my parents found out. I don't know if that's another question. But how my parents found out that I was gay was that I left my email up between me and this person" (Campbell, Participant 17) "Um, I I have a friend who I didn't know was trans cause we're online friends." (Stefan, Participant 16)
Use of technology/Types of affordances and constraints/Visibility	an individual can control who can see information they provide (e.g., setting one's website to be indexed by search results, so others can view the page in their search results)		"But yeah products for queer people are more readily available. I can manage to find thrift store finds, but that's more my personal values, but if I was someone who liked brand new things all the time, I mean queer shopping would be so easy to use online and find things that are your size" (Campbell, Participant 17) "Um... Facebook is not, not really relevant when it comes to interacting with genderqueer people or other, other queer people. Facebook is family." (Stefan, Participant 16)

Use of technology/Types of affordances and constraints/Visibility/Privacy	an individual feels their information is not being observed by other people and/or free from public attention (e.g., setting one's profile to private)	"And then Twitter. I have a public Twitter and a private Twitter and my private Twitter is where my and all my super queer friends hang out." (Stefan, Participant 16)
Use of technology/Types of affordances and constraints/Visibility/Anonymity	individual(s) do not have to divulge identifying features (e.g., real names)	How do you spell pedophilia? Don't blame me for asking. This was the first category to come up on Yahoo! Answers (Yahoo! Answers Asker). "I wound up talking to an older woman who said she was twenty-four, but later on I found out she was actually like thirty something and I was fifteen." (Campbell, Participant 17)
Use of technology/Types of affordances and constraints/Visibility/Self-publishing	individual can publish creative works, which can be made visible to others (e.g., an individual drawing a comic book and posting it on imgur)	"So I would go to Google because that's where, that's where people were writing. And I think and this might be way off topic, but I think that a lot of people who are writing on queer stuff are queer people and you're going to have an income and access problem. And so you're going to find stuff on blogs, you're gonna find stuff on more personal, you're gonna find stuff on Tumblr, you're gonna find stuff on more like niche sites. Because there's not necessarily the access to publishing, there's not the access to a research study, etc. etc." (Stefan, Participant 16)
Use of technology/Types of affordances and constraints/Visibility/Linking to like others	can find and interact with other LGBTQ+ individuals (e.g., using a social networking site to find groups of LGBTQ+ individuals with whom to interact)	"And then I think the, one of the best parts about Facebook is um, different like secret groups or whatever. And then you can go to that group and post something and you know nobody's gonna say some like racist stuff or whatever it is. Of course it's not 100% safe, people you know that maybe don't understand trans issues but they're good on everything else or whatever but, you can find community as well on Facebook with these different types of groups or pages that are for specific facets of society." (Amina, Participant 11) "I think with the internet I'm not sure if the legislation around queer people and the information around queer people would be here the way it is without the internet because now people can't be isolated in their small towns or small cities. They easily, anyone with any interest can look online and find someone like them and someone that validates them, which is really good for queer people and really bad for, I don't know, terrorism or something [laughs]." (Campbell, Participant 17)

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