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DOING IDENTITY: A SOCIAL PATTERN ANALYSIS EXPLORING THE
PROCESS OF IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION AND MAINTENANCE

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Doing Identity: A Social Pattern Analysis Exploring the Process of Identity Construction and Maintenance

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Anchored in the tradition of symbolic-interactionism, this project explores identity as a social construct created and maintained by individuals through the continuous identity work they perform in conjunction with others; an accomplishment realized through “doing.” While scholars have explored this notion of doing identity across a host of substantive areas that interrogate a diverse array of identities, much of this work has been specialized, often focusing exclusively on one particular identity. These type-by-type analyses have contributed to a vast, rich body of literature on the subject while leaving the door open for insights best gleaned through a broader approach to the study of identity, one that is not restricted to the consideration of one particular identity but rather, one that draws comparisons across a diverse range of identities. Applying this more expansive multicontextual approach, my project is designed to contribute to a more complete understanding of the topic as I explore how doing identity operates as a generalizable, generic social process.

Through forty-eight in-depth, qualitative interviews conducted among individuals connected to diverse identities (i.e., chronic illness, parent of exceptional child, fan and religious leader), my work utilizes social pattern analysis to identify generic patterns of doing identity that transcend identity type. My research demonstrates that, regardless of

identity affiliation, individuals construct, sustain and experience identities in similar ways. I identify two central concepts that are part of this generic process of doing -- *identity routines* and *identity club membership*. As part of affiliation with any identity, individuals perform *identity routines*, where they coordinate and implement the components of identity work in support of their particular identities; regardless of identity type, these routines are characterized by a range of intensity that reflects the investment, restraint and visibility associated with individuals' identity work. With identity affiliation, individuals also become members of *identity clubs*, and the experience of club membership is similar for identity workers regardless of their particular club affiliation; individuals are exposed to similar hallmarks of identity as they experience member orientation, have responsibilities as club members, take advantage of club benefits and face potential membership drawbacks. By illuminating this generic process of identity work, my work enhances our understanding of the social aspect of identity as it demonstrates that as identity workers, individuals share powerful connections through the implementation of standard identity routines and experiences of identity.

Table of Contents

Abstract	ii
Table of Contents	iv
List of Tables	vi
List of Figures	vii
Part I: A Social Pattern Analyst's Approach To Identity Construction And Maintenance	
Chapter One: Extracting Generic Patterns of Doing	
Identity and Doing	1
A Call for Social Pattern Analysis	8
Four Diverse Identities	10
The Identity Workers	29
Chapter Overviews	32
Part II: Identity Routines: The Generic Process Of Doing Identity	
Chapter Two: Identity Routines	37
Chapter Three: Appearance	56
Chapter Four: Props	80
Chapter Five: Identity Talk	102
Chapter Six: Identity Ecology	122
Chapter Seven: The Selective Association with Others	149
Chapter Eight: Identity Revelation	158

Table of Contents (Continued)

Part III: Identity Club Membership: The Generic Experience of Identity

Chapter Nine: Membership Orientation	176
Chapter Ten: Membership Responsibilities	193
Chapter Eleven: Membership Benefits	207
Chapter Twelve: Membership Drawbacks	220
Chapter Thirteen: Conclusions	245
Appendix A: Methodology	253
Appendix B: Respondents	261
Appendix C: Discussion Guide	263
References	274

List of Tables

Table 1.1: Respondent Identity Affiliation	31
Table B.1 Alphabetical Listing Of Respondents	261
Table B.2 Listing Of Respondents By Identity Affiliation	262

List of Figures

Figure 1.1: Two-Dimensional Slicing Of Identity Space	13
Figure 1.2: Two-Dimensional Slicing Of Identity Space With Selected Identities	15

Part I: A Social Pattern Analyst's Approach to Identity Construction and Maintenance

Chapter One: Extracting Generic Patterns of Doing Identity

Identity and Doing

Identity is a ubiquitous component of the social world, infusing the day-to-day activities and unceasing cognitive processes associated with living within it (Hammack 2015:11). Identity provides individuals with an essential, foundational sense of who they are (Howard 2000:367), an understanding of who others are, and insight into the ways in which the two are related. Identity establishes social positioning in the world by placing individuals into distinct categories: “I am a priest,” “She is an epileptic,” “He is the father of an autistic child,” “We are New York Jets fans.” As such, identity obliges us to engage in the constant, universal human process of classifying or identifying which groups individuals fit into (Hammack 2015:11), a process that reflects the great need people have for arranging the world around them into meaningful categories (Zerubavel 1991:5). As Zerubavel argues, things only become meaningful in the world when they are placed into particular categories (1991:5), and Simpson contends, “if each of the many things in the world were taken as distinct, unique, a thing in itself unrelated to any other thing, perception of the world would disintegrate into complete meaninglessness” (1961:2); identity, therefore, infuses our world with meaning.

Identity is a construct critical to our ability to make sense of ourselves, others, and the world around us. The notion of identity certainly transcends the boundaries of disciplinary attention, inspiring the theorizing and research of a diverse contingent of scholars representing academic arenas such as sociology, philosophy, psychology,

anthropology, history, political science, economics and literature (Hammack 2015:12; Howard 2000:367). And while considerations concerning the multidisciplinary concept of identity are vast and rich, the theoretical foundations of identity scholarship are rooted in the discipline of sociological social psychology (Howard 2000:368). This particular exploration into the identity arena is anchored in the symbolic-interactionist tradition of social psychology, which argues that identity emerges through our interactions with others. And while the specific details of our social exchanges with others might vary based on whether these individuals are positioned as an influential “audience” (Goffman 1959), “looking glass self” (Cooley 1902) or “generalized other” (Mead 1934), the result of such interaction is the same regardless of rendition – it has significant consequences for the development of the self; identity is a social construction that is a result of our day-to-day interactions (Howard 2000:371).

This understanding of identity posits that individuals are instrumental in the creation and maintenance of their identities through the work they perform in conjunction with others, suggesting that individuals do not *have* identities but rather, *create* and *maintain* their identities. West and Zimmerman discuss this active participation in, or “doing” of identity in their study of gender, and consider identity “an accomplishment, an achieved property of situated conduct” (1987:126). Identity does not emerge on its own but rather, is constructed and maintained through the purposeful actions an individual engages in to create and support it. Doing an identity is a continuous, everyday activity where occasions are managed so that “whatever the particulars, the outcome is seen and seeable in context as [identity]-appropriate or...[identity]-inappropriate” (West and Zimmerman 1987:135). Butler similarly constructs identity in her seminal work on

gender, arguing that identity is a “performative accomplishment” that is “tenuously constituted in time...instituted through a *stylized repetition of acts*” (1988:519-520; emphasis in original). Identity, then, can be viewed as an accomplishment, realized through the continuous performance of appropriately managed behavior.

Casting the construction and maintenance of identity in a performative light such as this reflects the dramaturgical approach to social interaction inspired by Goffman. Performing, for Goffman, involves all of the activities an individual engages in, in order to influence others (1959:15). Performing serves as a means of “impression management,” as the mobilized activities associated with it are infused with signs that express messages about who the performer is, thereby influencing the way others see him or her (1959:30, 80). By engaging in performances for others that are “pattern[s] of appropriate conduct,” Goffman argues that an individual’s social place may be realized (1959:75); “who one is” can be viewed as the product of the performance or doing of identity.

This process of doing identity is an unceasing social endeavor, for once an identity is crystalized, it must be continually maintained or modified through social interaction (Alvesson and Willmott 2002:627; Berger and Luckmann ([1966]1967:173; Sveningsson and Alvesson 2003:1165). Sveningsson and Alvesson refer to the acts associated with this constant management of one’s identity as “identity work” (2003:1165), a concept developed by Snow and Anderson, who define it as the “range of activities individuals engage in to create, present, and sustain personal identities that are congruent with and supportive of the self-concept” (1987:1348). Snow and Anderson

argue that the process of identity work is carried out through four complementary activities, which include:

- (a) the procurement or arrangement of physical settings and props;
- (b) cosmetic face work or the arrangement of personal appearance;
- (c) selective association with other individuals and groups; and
- (d) verbal construction and assertion of ... identities [or identity talk]
(1987:1348).

And while the template for this process of identity work is the same for all identity workers, individuals maintain great discretion over how they manage it. The specific activities an individual chooses to engage in, and the manner in which he or she engages in these activities reveal how the individual is “doing” a particular identity. As Mead argues, each individual is essentially a parliament of selves, merging to form one “complete, unitary self” (1934:144). The ways in which individuals engage in identity work as they manage the repertoire of unique selves at their disposal – investing in and affirming some at the expense of others that are minimized and denied -- provides rich information about the significance various identities have in the constitution of who they are.

Stryker similarly argues that a host of diverse, discrete role identities constitute who one is (1968:559), and suggests that these identities are organized hierarchically based upon their “identity salience,” or probability of being invoked across a variety of situations (Stryker and Serpe 1982:206). Identities at the top of the hierarchy are more salient than those identities occupying lower positions, and therefore, more likely to be engaged. An identity’s salience ranking corresponds to the activities that are done in support of it. Identities higher in salience achieve their lofty positions due in part to the higher level of commitment to the specific behaviors necessary to support them (Deimling et al. 2007:760). These highly salient identities command more “concentrated

identity work” (Sweningsson and Alvesson 2003:1165), and a greater degree of obligation to them (Howard 2000:371), while identities holding lower positions on the salience hierarchy reflect and require less identity-supportive behavior or identity work.

Identity work is the way that we organize our selves amidst the varying potential selves at our disposal, reflecting the meaning and commitment we attach to particular identities, and how salient we want them to become within the hierarchy of our identities. Brekhus (2003) mines the identity work patterns of gay suburbanites to explore the different ways individuals organize their selves around potential identity attributes, and identifies three distinct identity work strategies being implemented. The strategy adopted by identity “lifestylers” reflects their desire to develop particular attributes into the most salient, central features of their selves. These individuals invest substantial time and effort in the identity work required to highlight these identities at all times (Brekhus 2003:23-29). For lifestylers, gayness becomes a “master status” (Hughes 1945:357); an “omnirelevant social attribute [whose] relevance pervades and is highly salient across all social contexts and at all times” (Brekhus 2003:39). The identity work of others reveals a very different strategy of incorporation. These “integrators” engage in identity work that ensures that a particular identity attribute never achieves a position of centrality or significant salience, but rather, simply remains but one of the many ways to define them (2003:23-29). A third approach for organizing identity is demonstrated by the identity work of “commuters,” who are very particular about how they organize particular identity attributes, only allowing them to assume positions of salience and importance under particular circumstances (e.g., in certain places, at certain times and/or with certain others). In this way, these particular identities become compartmentalized, temporary

master statuses that can be “switched” on and off according to their surroundings (2003:23-29).

Individuals adapt different strategies for doing identity that enable them to navigate the tenuous and continuous path that ideally leads to the achievement of their “identity goals” -- the preferred identities they assume, desire, hope or plan for (Charmaz 1995:659; 1987:284). Regardless of their ultimate identity objectives, individuals engage in a common process of identity work to assert these preferred identities, and while the template for doing identity is generic, each unique identity is associated with a corresponding set of “identity codes,” which Schwalbe and Schrock define as the “set of rules or enabling conventions for signifying [identity]” (1996:125). An identity’s exclusive “local code” provides identity workers with the information they need to be able to properly demonstrate their affiliation with the identity. Furthermore, as “the human analog of the pheromones upon which animals and insects rely for identification of species mates” (Schwalbe and Schrock 1996:125), the knowledge afforded by these local codes also positions identity workers to be able to recognize and process the identity work of others, so that they may distinguish between those who share their identities and those who do not.

Identity codes present the identity-specific ground rules that must be followed in order to successfully implement the generic process of identity work done to assert affiliation with a desired identity. The nature of the identity work one does in support of a particular identity provides clues about how salient it is to his or her identity -- the extent to which the individual has accepted it, the meaning he or she attaches to it, and his or her degree of commitment to it (Charmaz 1991:65; Howard 2000:371). Determining where a

particular self stands within the constitution of an individual's identity requires the successful interpretation of that individual's body of identity work.

Not Doing

Examining the doings associated with these components of identity work is essential to an understanding of the doing of identity. However, the activities an individual chooses to *not* engage in, the “not doings,” also play a vital role in the creation and maintenance of identity. Mullaney argues that these “not doings” cannot be viewed as mere absences but rather, must be recognized as deliberate behavioral choices that make powerful identity statements about the conscious resistance of certain activities. Not doings are an *active* basis and critical component of some identities (Mullaney 2003:3), and are, therefore, essential to an understanding of identity. By not doing the things that are typically associated with a particular identity, individuals are actively *playing down* particular aspects of their selves. So, while it is important to examine the activities individuals engage in as they carry on their identity work, it is equally important to take notice of what they are *not* doing, and playing down as a result. For example, what would *not* wearing a religious collar in secular space reveal about one's religious leader identity? What would a cancer survivor's calculated *avoidance* of other survivors suggest about his or her identity? What identity clues might be provided by a parent's *refusal* to refer to his or her child as “gifted?” As Mullaney argues, “we cannot treat what individuals do *not* do as dormant, noninfluential, and uninteresting pieces of the identity puzzle”; in order to understand doing identity as a whole, we must consider its parts, and that includes consideration of both the doing and the not doing. (2006:175; emphasis added).

A Call for a Social Pattern Analysis

Scholars have explored the concepts of doing identity and identity work in an array of substantive areas, including gender and sexuality (Brekhus 2003; Butler 1988; Emslie et al. 2015; Ezzell 2009; Ford 2011; Gelber, 1997; Moisio et al. 2013; Pasco 2005; Santos 2009; West and Zimmerman 1987), race (Ford 2011; Khanna and Johnson 2010; Santos 2009; West and Fenstermaker 1995); class (Moisio et al. 2013; Santos 2009; West and Fenstermaker 1995; Yodanis 2006); chronic illness and disability (Adams 1997 et al.; Barker et al. 2014; Brown et al. 2008; Butler 2013; Thorpe 2009; Watson 2002; Williams 2000); and occupations/professions (Ashforth and Kreiner 1999; Foley 2005; Kreiner et al., 2006; Mulcahy 1995; Pratt et al. 2006; Wrench and Robin 2012). And this research has focused on a host of unique identities including injured long distance runners (Hockey 2005), female rugby players (Ezzell 2009), gang members (Phelan and Hunt 1998), midwives (Foley 2005), Episcopal priests (Kreiner et al., 2006), male DIYers (Moisio et al., 2013), civil war reenactors (Strauss 2005), rap musicians (Kubrin 2005), self-taught, aging black artists (Anthony and Schrock 2014), Scottish women who drink (Emslie et al. 2015), smart girls (Raby and Pomerantz 2015), and friends (Anthony and McCabe 2015). Despite the fact that these projects are situated in a great variety of substantive areas and interrogate diverse identities, these efforts tend to focus exclusively on *one* particular identity, as is the case with all of the work considered here – the immigrant identity, the biracial identity, the priest identity, the civil war hobbyist identity, the smart girl identity, the midwife identity, and the white trash identity, to name a few.

These specialized, “type-by-type” (Mullaney 2006:13) research efforts have resulted in a vast, rich, enlightening body of knowledge on doing identity, while leaving the door open for the insights that can only be realized through a broader approach to the study of identity work, an approach that is not restricted to the consideration of one particular identity but rather, one that includes and makes comparisons across an array of diverse identities (Glaser and Strauss 1967:156). Research inquiries focusing solely on the similarity and disparity *within* one particular type of identity fall short in informing our understanding of the generic patterns associated with doing identity. In order to establish a robust appreciation of how identity operates as a generic social process, our efforts must “transcend the boundaries of type” (Mullaney 2006:13) and include a variety of contexts (Zerubavel 2007:134).

Certainly there are advantages to scholars becoming expert within particular substantive areas, for persons can attain deeper multidisciplinary understandings of particular phenomena. At the same time, however, people involved in the study of social life within any particular specialty may be greatly shortchanged theoretically should they neglect research on parallel processes in other settings (Prus 1987:263).

Recognizing the benefits associated with this broader, multicontextual approach to scholarship that cuts across types of settings or contexts, thus allowing for a “generic interactional sociology” (Prus 1987:256), my goal is to enhance our understanding of identity by exploring the notion of doing identity as a generalizable, generic social process. To this end, I have conducted a “social pattern analysis” (Zerubavel 2007:132) of doing identity by simultaneously exploring the multi-faceted performative aspect of identity (i.e., by including and expanding on all of the components of identity work outlined by Snow and Anderson) across a collection of diverse identities. After all, “our understanding of how [doing identity] operates as a generic process of identity will

remain somewhat piecemeal and incomplete until we begin to make comparisons across types” (Mullaney 2006:13).

In order to recognize the presence of generic social patterns of doing identity that transcend particular identities themselves, social pattern analysis demands “multicontextual evidence” that “draw(s) on as many contexts as possible,” and “*the wider the range of our evidence, the more generalizable our argument*” (Zerubavel 2007:134; emphasis in original). This wide-ranging evidence is then scrutinized using the comparative method, which involves focusing on the similarities across these varying social contexts (while inattending to their differences), thus highlighting the “formal commonality” they all share (Zerubavel 2007:136). This unique methodology “helps us avoid ... intellectual blind spots and uncover generic patterns invisible to anyone interested only in the specific” (Zerubavel 2007:141). If generic patterns in the manner in which identity work is implemented and managed across diverse, seemingly unrelated groups emerge, it suggests a common process of identity construction and maintenance. The distinct perspective provided by social pattern analysis facilitates the recognition of these patterns, thus contributing to an inclusive and rich appreciation of the intricate, unceasing and universal endeavor of doing identity.

Four Diverse Identities

In order to gain an understanding of the generic social practice of doing identity, this project was designed in a way to highlight the general patterns associated with the process, patterns that would transcend any one particular identity. To accomplish this, I drew on a number of varied and wide-ranging identities (Glaser and Strauss 1967:156; Zerubavel 2007:134), with diversity being the principal requirement driving identity

selection; the more substantively different the selected identities are, the more compelling the similarities among them, and the greater the generalizability of findings (Zerubavel 2007:134).

The first consideration for the selection of identities was the manner in which an individual comes to be associated with a particular identity; there is a fundamental and critical distinction between an identity that is chosen for an individual and an identity that one chooses for himself or herself. Linton's seminal concepts of "ascription" and "achievement" (1936:113-131), respectively, represent these two very distinct identity types. *Ascribed* identities are those identities that are neither the result of anything the individual does or has done, nor an identity that one chooses for himself or herself (this is not to say, however, that an individual cannot feel a strong sense of commitment to and affiliation with an ascribed identity); association with an ascribed identity is usually beyond the individual's control. Traditionally "assigned to individuals without reference to their innate differences or abilities," (Linton 1936:115) these identities are quite often related to natural characteristics, and examples are those identities associated with gender, age, race, ethnicity, familial ties and having particular illnesses.

In stark contrast to ascribed identities are *achieved* identities, those that are not naturally associated with an individual but rather, require a deliberate choice made by an individual as well as some level of action and participation in the identity. Achieved identities are "not assigned to individuals from birth but are left open to be filled through competition and individual effort" (Linton 1936:115). While an ascribed identity is not an identity that one chooses for himself or herself, one typically plays a role in his or her connection with an achieved identity, and must accomplish certain tasks to cement this

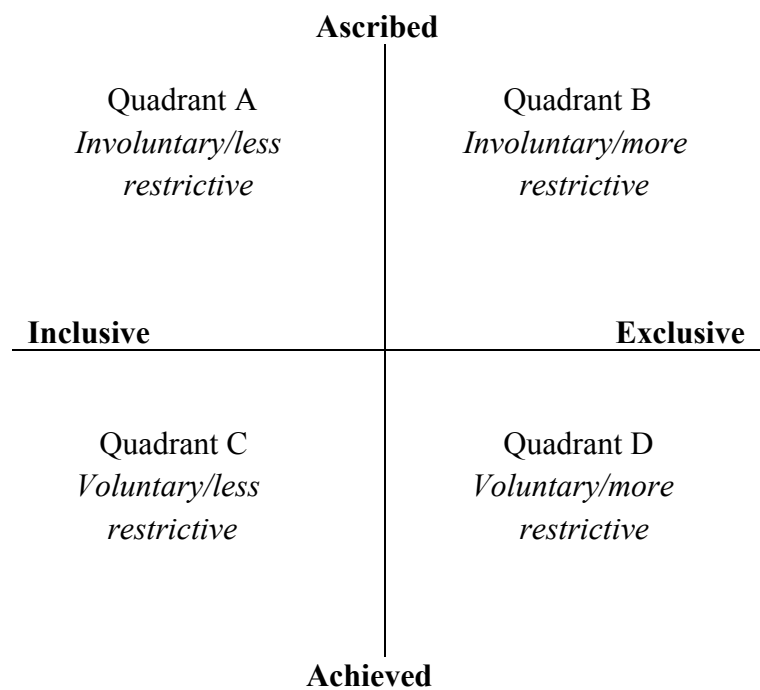
affiliation. An individual generally exercises control over an achieved identity, as association with these identities typically reflects a person's desires, skills, abilities or efforts in some way.

In addition to considering the manner in which an individual becomes connected to a particular identity, it is useful to consider how restrictive the conditions are that must be met in order to secure the association, that is, how *inclusive* or *exclusive* the identity is. One's association with a more inclusive identity typically requires meeting very simple conditions of acceptance. For example, association with the "daughter" identity requires meeting only one requirement that happens to necessitate no effort on the part of the daughter – typically, she must simply be born (or adopted) to be associated with this ascribed identity. Association with a more exclusive identity may require an individual to meet a more rigorous set of conditions. For example, while still requiring no effort on her part, the "daughter of a celebrity" identity is much more exclusive and as such, has a much more demanding set of conditions that must be met to cement association with it – one's parent(s) must meet the demanding requirements necessary to be considered a celebrity. Inclusive identities with less restrictive terms of acceptance would naturally be identities that are more broadly defined and more general, while exclusive identities associated with a more demanding set of requisite conditions would be more narrowly defined and particular.

"Identity space" can be carved up based on these two fundamental considerations driving the selection of the identities to be examined in this research. The first cut into this space contrasts ascribed and achieved identities, and while there is certainly an ideal type associated with each of these two types of identities, the two concepts are not

dichotomous but rather, are best exemplified as anchor points on a continuum. The second cut into this space is the axis that distinguishes between inclusive and exclusive identities. And again, while ideal-typically inclusive and ideal-typically exclusive identities do exist, the critical distinction between the two is best represented by a continuum and not a dichotomy.

Figure 1.1: Two-Dimensional Slicing of Identity Space



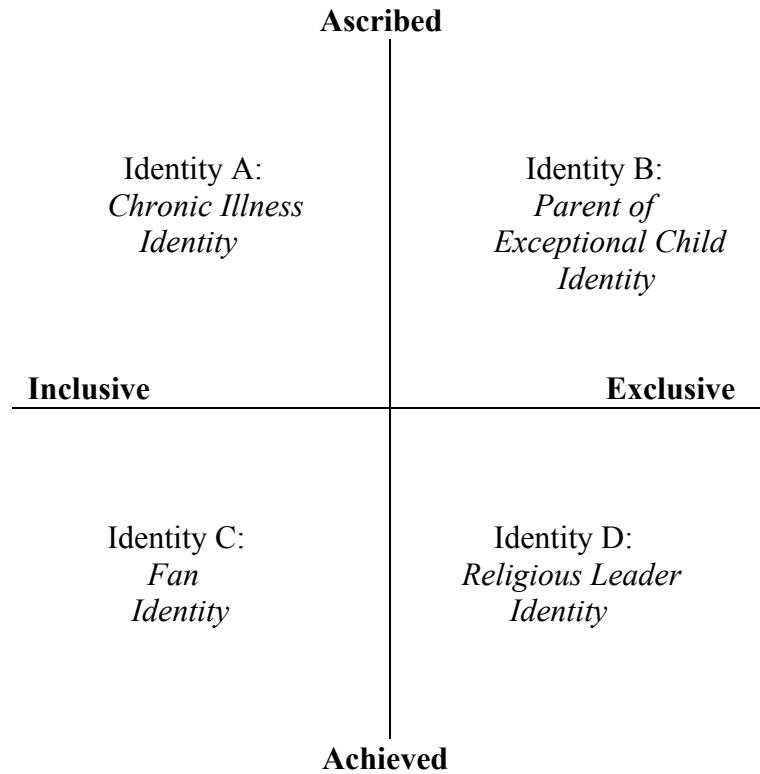
Quadrant A includes ascribed identities that are inclusive, while Quadrant B contains those ascribed identities that are characterized by exclusivity, having more rigorous conditions of acceptance. Quadrant C includes inclusive, achieved identities and the identities located in Quadrant D are those achieved identities that are exclusive or more difficult to attain. Since each dissecting axis is a continuum, an identity may be situated anywhere in the space within its particular quadrant; this can be illustrated with three variations of the “daughter” identity. The generic “daughter” identity discussed

earlier would be found in the far, upper-left corner of Quadrant A, since it represents an exceedingly inclusive (minimal conditions of acceptance) ascribed identity. The “daughter of a celebrity” identity would be located in the far, upper-right space of Quadrant B, since it is involuntary and exceptionally exclusive in nature. Finally, the “daughter of an immigrant” identity would fall somewhere in the space between the two, since it is more exclusive than the “daughter” identity and more inclusive than the “daughter of celebrity” identity. This two-dimensional slicing of identity space results in the creation of four rich identity quadrants representing four unique and diverse identity types. Selecting one identity that encapsulates the essence of each of the four quadrants helps to ensure that the identities are substantially varied enough to provide the multicontextual evidence necessary to yield a fruitful social pattern analysis. The four general identity categories explored in this project include:

- Chronic Illness Identity
- Parent of Exceptional Child Identity
- Fan Identity
- Religious Leader Identity

The four identities discussed here are displayed in Figure 2. Presented for illustrative purposes, this figure depicts the identities in uniform positions within their respective quadrants; in reality, there is great variation in terms of where an identity might be positioned along the horizontal and vertical axes (as previously discussed).

Figure 1.2:
Two-Dimensional Slicing of Identity Space with
Selected Identities



In order to establish breadth across these four contextual areas rather than depth within them (Mullaney 2003:14), there is a wide range of identity variation included in each of these four identity categories; for example, the fan identity includes study participants who are fans of sport, music and movies, while the religious leader identity includes priests, rabbis and ministers.

The chronic illness, parent of exceptional child, fan, and religious leader identities represent an eclectic group that has been assembled to provide the wide range of identity perspectives necessary for exploring the generic nature of doing identity and as such, this research will *not* speak to these four identities specifically. This project is not designed to

provide an exclusive, in-depth look at any one of these four identities but rather, to identify and appreciate the processes of identity construction and maintenance that they share with one another despite their obvious differences.

Chronic Illness Identity (Ascribed/Inclusive Identity)

An identity situated in Quadrant A is an ascribed identity characterized by inclusivity, and the chronic illness identity has been selected to assume this position. Chronic illness is typically associated with “persistent and recurring health problems, and a duration measured in months and years, not days and weeks (Thrall 2005:9), and includes conditions such as asthma, cancer, diabetes, and multiple sclerosis. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, prevalence rates for chronic illness suggest that as of 2012, approximately half of all US adults (48.9% or 117 million people) had one or more of ten specific chronic illnesses, with more than half of these individuals (60 million) suffering from multiple chronic conditions (Ward et al. 2014:1-2). Since these estimates are not based on an exhaustive list of chronic illnesses, prevalence rates are actually higher, suggesting that the majority of American adults are potentially connected to this inclusive identity category.¹

Association with the chronic illness identity is ascribed -- individuals do not generally choose to have medical conditions -- and as such, those diagnosed with chronic illness are involuntarily saddled with potential illness-related identities. Chronic illnesses are excessively intrusive on the lives of those they affect (Strauss and Glaser 1975), as

¹ Ward et al. (as reported by the CDC) only included rates of hypertension, coronary heart disease, stroke, diabetes, cancer, arthritis, hepatitis, weak or failing kidneys, asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COD) in measuring chronic illness prevalence. As an example, obesity (recognized as a chronic illness by the CDC) was not included, and during 2011-2012 approximately 35.7% of adults were classified as obese (Ogden, et.al 2015:5).

individuals must manage the complex and lasting ways diseases can transform “the self and everyday life” (Clark and Stovall 1996:239). As advocates of biographically informed considerations of chronic illness, Bury and Charmaz write extensively on chronic illness’ intrusive, disruptive nature, with particular focus on the implications this has for identity. Bury (1982) conceptualizes chronic illness as a “biographical disruption, [an] experience where the structures of everyday life . . . are disrupted,” resulting in the need for “a fundamental re-thinking of the person’s biography and self-concept” (169). Charmaz argues that the chronically ill often experience the “crumbling away” (1983:169) of their existing identities, which are torn asunder and transformed by chronic disease (Kelly and Field 1996:248). Chronic illness’ capacity to alter identity is further explored by scholars who argue that a cancer diagnosis is often an assault to a survivor’s identity (Hubbard et al. 2010:143) that frequently triggers a process of imperative and continual identity readjustment (Mathieson and Stam 1995: 296-297; 1991:189) as it forces an individual to account for the disease’s presence in his or her life.

While chronic illness has the capacity to dramatically alter the identity of a diagnosed individual, Charmaz argues that agency plays a significant role in this transition as she contends that the chronically ill ultimately regulate how they will incorporate illness into their identities and lives. Charmaz suggests that individuals have a host of options available regarding how they manage the presence of illness; they may, for example, accept it, attempt to ignore it, struggle against it, reconcile with it, bracket or compartmentalize it, embrace it or reconstruct their lives around it (1991:46, 65, 76; 1995:657-658). And chronically ill individuals, regardless of their affliction, engage these strategies with identity work.

It is true, that in spite of having a variety of management strategies at their disposal, chronic illness often forcibly subjects sufferers to permanent identity transformations (Charmaz 1991:76; Kelly and Field 1996:24; Mathieson and Stam 1995:287; Zebrack 2000: 238), as their healthy identities are relinquished and they become identified as diabetics, epileptics, or cancer survivors. As a form of stigma, illness is an abomination of the body that results in the emergence of a “spoiled identity.” It is a deeply discrediting attribute that is capable of “reducing [someone] in our minds from a whole and usual person to a tainted, discounted one” (Goffman 1963:3). Discouraged and dismayed over his illness-triggered transformation from a whole person to a discounted one, a chronically ill man laments, “We stop being people and start being patients ... our identity as people and the world we once knew are both relinquished” (Gottlieb 1994:C3).

The consequences of being ill unquestionably have the potential to reach far beyond an individual’s body, as one’s sense of self or identity may be dramatically altered or altogether eclipsed with the diagnosis of a chronic disease. Situating this process in the realm of doing identity, however, exposes and highlights the active role the chronically ill may take in orchestrating the extent to which their disease is salient within their lives.

Parent of Exceptional Child Identity: (Ascribed/Exclusive Identity)

Quadrant B includes ascribed identities that are exclusive in nature, and the “parent of an exceptional child” identity represents this space. Individuals connected to this identity are parents who have exceptional children, conceptualized as those children who stand out from other children on a particular attribute by being either above

or below the norm, for either positive or negative reasons. “Exceptional children” is a term that refers to children traditionally falling into either the “disabled” or “gifted and talented” categories (Heward 2014). With regard to the former, exceptional children are those who have been diagnosed with conditions such as developmental delays or disabilities, speech or language impairments, hearing/visual impairments, emotional disturbances (e.g., sensory and social problems), learning disabilities, or other health impairments (e.g., chronic illness, ADHD, Tourette syndrome, etc.). Exceptional children falling into the “gifted and talented” category include those who demonstrate the capacity for high achievement or have a special talent in a particular area, such as academics, leadership, the arts, or sports (Council for Exceptional Children 2015; Heward 2014). Due to definitional ambiguities and a lack of adequate data, approximations of the prevalence of children in the United States classified as either disabled or gifted and talented are difficult to establish (Belanger and Gange 2006; Reichman et al. 2008:679). Estimates from The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) suggest that during the 2011- 2012 school year, approximately 20% of students were either disabled (12.9%) or gifted and talented (6.4%),² suggesting that while many parents in the United States can be classified as parents of exceptional children, this ascribed category is more exclusive than that of the ascribed chronically ill category.

Parenthood has the potential to be a powerful influence in the process of identity construction and maintenance. As an individual experiences the normative transition of becoming a parent, it triggers substantial changes in most or all areas of his or her life.

² Estimates for disabled students reflect the percent of students in public schools, prekindergarten through 12th grade, being served under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Estimates for Gifted and Talented students represents the percentage of public school students enrolled in gifted and talented programs.

For example, parenthood reorganizes an individual's perspective, emotional well-being, role structure and interpersonal relationships; one's overall sense of self is altered to account for the parental identity (Cowan et al. 1991:83, 88).

The profound changes associated with parenthood can certainly have weighty implications for one's identity. And when parenthood is precipitated by a nonnormative transition, that is, "one characterized by an unusual or unpredictable set of events" (Cowan 1991:9), such as the birth of an exceptional child (or revelation that a child is exceptional), that transition can be exacerbated. The presence of a disabled child in the household can have profound negative effects on parents as stress levels can increase along with feelings of "guilt, blame and reduced self-esteem" (Reichman et al. 2008:679-680). Lovell et al., (2012) report that parents of children with autism or ADHD have decidedly higher levels of psychological distress than parents of typical children, potentially making them more susceptible to adverse health outcomes. The parental unit also frequently suffers as these couples are less likely to remain committed to and involved in their relationships, and are less likely to remain living together (Reichman et al. 2008:679-680; Reichman et al. 2004:577, 579-582).

Parenthood affects an individual's psychological and social worlds in profound ways, and the baggage that accompanies parenthood for those individuals whose journey involves a child with special needs seems to be a bit heavier, suggesting that being the parent of an exceptional child may have unique consequences for one's identity.

Association with this identity happens by default, as parents naturally become connected with it through their relationships with their affected children. It is as if these parents become "guilty by association," as the identities of their exceptional children have the

ability to infiltrate their own parental identities through “identity spread,” where the stigma or honor associated with someone can “come to circumscribe [the] family unit, not just the individual” (Robinson 1988:57). As one mother states, being the parent of a disabled child has changed *her* identity:

I am the mother of a child with special needs. That truth is written all over me – in the muscles I’ve developed from lifting specialty equipment; in the slower gait that I maintain so that he can keep up with me while we’re in a store; even in the blue placard hanging from my rearview mirror. A disability, or, in my case, parenting a child with a disability marks *me* (Messer 2010:36, emphasis added).

Francis (2015) contends that with the capacity to “‘radiate’ and spill over” into the lives of their parents, children’s’ troubles can result in “family trouble,” or “the disruption of micro-social order and the patterns of action and interaction that make up that parents’ daily lives” (3). This upheaval has a tremendous impact on parents’ identities, according to Francis, resulting in their experiences being similar to those that result from the biographical disruption endured by the chronically ill (10-11).

The often-identity-altering journey of being the parent of an exceptional child involves, “a life that is often filled with strong emotion, difficult choices, interactions with many different professionals and specialists, and an ongoing need for information and services” (Brown et al. 2003:7); the same can be said for those parents whose exceptional children are gifted and talented. Take, for example, the case of elite child athletes, whose parents contend with strong emotion (e.g., watching their children succeed and fail, dealing with injuries, finding a balance between pushing too hard/not encouraging enough), difficult choices (e.g., decisions about optimal schooling options, cost and travel considerations for training), interactions with many different professionals and specialists (e.g., special trainers, coaches, tutors, physicians, recruiters) and an ongoing need for information and services (Gregory 2017:44-51; Swartvager 2016).

Solomon argues that raising gifted and talented children can be “just as daunting a task as raising any other type of exceptional child” (2012b), because as is the case with disability, “prodigiousness compels parents to redesign their lives around the special needs of their child” (2012a: 406). He further contends that issues involved with raising exceptional children simply lie in the “challenge of the difference, [that] it doesn’t really matter whether the difference between a parent and child is a positive one or a negative one” (Solomon 2012b). And just like those individuals parenting disabled children, parents of gifted and talented children must struggle with additional challenges when compared to parents of typical children (Morawska and Sanders 2009:171). Parents of the gifted and talented often encounter a lack of support and negativity in a variety of social contexts and often face increased levels of concern over their parental responsibilities when compared to parents of typical children (Alsop 1997; Feldman and Piirto 1995).

Parenting “abruptly catapults” (Solomon 2012a:1) individuals into a new reality. And whether that new reality includes parenting a disabled child or a gifted and talented child, the challenge of difference is frequently difficult, and certainly affects one’s life in a myriad of ways that have potential ramifications for identity. Again, while a connection to the parent of an exceptional child identity is ascribed, the notion of doing identity assumes agency on the part of the parents, insinuating that they are instrumental in orchestrating the extent to which this potential identity becomes a salient feature of their identities. Parents of exceptional children have the same array of options available to them as identity workers connected to the chronic illness (or any other) identity, as they may attempt to adapt to the identity, ignore it, minimize it, struggle against it, reconcile with it, bracket or compartmentalize it, or embrace it in a manner that is consistent with

the relevance the identity maintains within the constitution of their preferred selves (Charmaz 1991,1995)

Fan Identity: (Achieved/Inclusive Identity)

Relationships between individuals and particular objects of admiration have a ubiquitous presence in today's society (Reysen and Branscombe 2010:177, 191), leading Hills to argue that "everybody knows what a 'fan' is" (2012:ix) and Duffett to claim, "everyone self-identifies as a fan in some sense" (2013:2). Part of the ease of self-identifying as a fan is that the object of one's affection is not restricted to any particular type of entity. It is possible to be a fan of almost everything; one can be a fan of a particular sport, a specific sports team, or an individual athlete; a specific style of art, a certain artist, or an individual sculpture; cooking, a type of cuisine or a particular food item. As Alex Trebeck introduced contestant Dan Feitel on an episode of *Jeopardy*, he began by stating, "Like so many of us, Dan is a fan." Trebeck then went on to say that what was particularly interesting about Dan was the fact that, "*he considers himself a sandwich fan*" (Jeopardy 2015: Episode 104, emphasis added). While the appeal of any entity as a potential object of devotion is certainly in the eyes of the beholder, Reysen and Branscombe find that fans and fan behavior tend to be similar, irrespective of the objects of adoration (2010:187-190).

Testimony to the significance of fandom in our society is the presence of communities of fans or fan bases for an exceptionally wide range of entities, as well as labels that have been adopted by both academic and popular discourse to refer to these groups. Some examples include "Deadheads" (Music/The Grateful Dead), "Janeites" (Literature/Jane Austen), "Rentheads" (Theater/*RENT*), "Trekkies" (Movies and

Television/*Star Trek*), “Cumberbitches” (Celebrities/Benedict Cumberbatch), “Railfans” (Railroad enthusiasts), “AFOLS” (Toys/Adult Fans of Lego), “Dittoheads” (Radio/Rush Limbaugh) and “Cheeseheads” (Sports Teams/Green Bay Packers).³

In addition to being inclusive in terms of the entities considered appropriate for fandom, the conditions that must be met in order for one to claim a fan identity are exceedingly easy. Proclaiming, “I am a/an [insert ANY entity] fan,” can establish entitlement to the identity, even when the self-identifying individual lacks the expected level of dedication to and emotional involvement with it (Duffett 2013:25). The fan identity is so inclusive, that it often begins at a very early age. It is not uncommon to see very young children engaging in fan activities -- paying homage to their favorite Disney characters, sports teams or celebrities by donning apparel in support of them, seeking autographs or attending supportive events such as concerts and games. One young boy’s obsession with Michael Jackson began when, at two years of age, he watched the “Thriller” music video for the first time. Since then, his mother reports, the young boy has become a “superfan,” learning Jackson’s dance moves, obsessively watching Jackson’s *This Is It* documentary (i.e., every day for six months), and now, at age six, dressing like Jackson every day (except when he is in school and not permitted to do so) (McDermott 2017). And fandom can span a lifetime, playing such an integral role in one’s life, that it becomes worthy of mention in an obituary:

Jason E. Entsminger, 55, of Mansfield, died Thursday, July 4, 2013... He was an accomplished musician, loved playing the guitar and was a member of the Old Fogies Band. *A lifelong Cleveland Browns fan* and season ticket holder...He respectfully requests six Cleveland Browns pallbearers so the Browns can let him down one last time (legacy.com, emphasis added).

³ The terms Janeites, Rentheads, Cumberbitches, Railfans were retrieved from “Fan Community Nicknames” tvtropes.org.

Mitchell A. “Mitch” Kueffer, age 64 of Braselton, GA died suddenly Monday, January 16, 2017...He went by several titles – son, husband, father, grandpa, friend and boss...*He was an avid Star Trek fan*, a phenomenal cook, and our own personal John Lennon (Hamilton Mill Memorial Chapel and Gardens, emphasis added).

The relationship between fans and their objects of fandom certainly has the potential to be much more profound than mere enthusiasm or adoration; fandom also has potential implications for one’s identity. Fandom, according to Sandvoss, can play a role in the construction of one’s identity since fans have the ability to actively shape their sense of self and position themselves in the world through their objects of fandom (2005:157,165). Objects of fandom are far more than possessions, they are extensions of the self that can be incorporated into the intricacies of fans’ lives (Sandvoss 2005:104). Sandvoss argues that “the object of fandom, whether it is a sports team, a television programme, a film or a pop star, is intrinsically interwoven with our sense of self, with who we are, would like to be, and think we are” (2005:96). Objects of fandom, therefore, have the potential to have a tremendous impact on one’s identity. In his work on Bruce Springsteen fans, Cavicchi (1998) discusses the transformative power of fandom on one’s identity, arguing that it is often not merely something that someone has or does but rather, can be a “process of being; *it is the way one is*” (59, emphasis added).

While claiming a fan identity certainly has implications for one’s identity, triggering an essential identity transformation is not inevitable (Duffett 2013). As is the case with the other identities discussed here, the fan identity is “an identity which is (dis)claimed [through identity] work” (Hills 2002:xi), and fans ultimately dictate the relevance particular fandoms will have in their lives through the identity work that they do in relation to them.

Religious Leader Identity: (Achieved/Exclusive Identity)

Since it is an achieved identity with a more rigorous set of conditions for affiliation, the religious leader identity represents the Quadrant D of the identity space. The road to achieving this particular identity is indeed exclusive, as most mainstream religious denominations have very specific requirements pertaining to the selection process and education and training of their religious leaders. In order to become a Catholic priest, men (and only men) must complete a rigorous five-to-thirteen year program of priestly development, in addition to taking vows of chastity, obedience and sometimes, poverty (Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, 2016). Few individuals fulfill these obligations; the Ordination Class of 2016 included only 548 men, and recent numbers suggest that there are approximately 37,000 priests in the United States (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops 2015).

To become a rabbi from an accredited, brick-and-mortar rabbinical school (which are only located in Boston, Cincinnati, Los Angeles, New York and Philadelphia), one must commit to a four or five-year program that often includes spending a year in Israel (Heilman 2014). In 2015, only 32 rabbis (13 men and 19 women) were ordained by the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, North America's first and primary institution of higher Jewish Reform education (Hebrew Union College 2015). Estimates suggest that roughly 3,209 rabbis representing the Reform, Orthodox, Conservative and Reconstructionist movements were living in the United States in 2000 (Association of Religion Data Archives 2016). And to become one the 7,279 Episcopal priests in the country (The Episcopal Church 2017), an individual must attend three years of intense

study at one of eleven accredited seminaries across the United States (Kreiner et al., 2006:1038).

Being positioned in these unique, very public occupations (or vocations) has potentially powerful implications for the construction and maintenance of one's identity (Christiansen 1999:547). Work has historically been considered a fundamental foundation of identity (Leidner 2016:3); work plays an integral role in how an individual defines him or her self and is often synonymous with considerations of who one is. Upon meeting and speaking with someone for the first time, the, "And what do you do?" question typically finds its way into the conversation, often quite early on as an icebreaker. This question serves as a "social shortcut," as the answer it elicits seemingly tells us everything we need to know about someone (Unruh 2004:291), reflecting, according to Baptiste (2003), western society's cultural standard of framing opinions about individuals based on how they make a living (202). Christiansen contends that an occupation is *the principal* means through which individuals create and maintain their identities (1999:547). Work identities have the potential to be decidedly salient and highly coveted for many individuals, who go to great lengths, often overcoming formidable obstacles in order to create and sustain these identities as reflections of who they are (Leidner 2016:4, 30).

Notions of "who we are" and "what we do" are intertwined in profound ways, as evidenced by the identity challenges associated with the loss of a job. In her work exploring unemployment and identity among middle-class, white-collar workers, Norris (2016) finds that the majority of those losing their jobs experience identity-related problems resulting in depression, anxiety and anger issues. More than half of these

individuals report that the negative hit suffered by their identity in the wake of unemployment was *the* most difficult aspect of losing a job. Without an occupation, individuals no longer feel like the people they once were or thought they were while they were employed (152).

In addition to having weighty considerations for identity, occupational identities can be especially demanding or “greedy” (Kreiner et al. 2006:1031). Coser (1974) coined the term “greedy institution” to refer to those organizations and groups that “make total claims on their members and which attempt to encompass within their circle the whole personality”; greedy institutions “seek exclusive and undivided loyalty” from their members (4). Recognizing the potential all-encompassing impact and demand particular identities may have on individuals, Brekhus applies Coser’s notion of the greedy institution to identity work, using the term “greedy identity” to refer to an identity that “commands an uncompromising commitment, undiluted by any attributes that could undermine it or by any time commitments that could divide it” (Brekhus 2003:45). These greedy occupational identities place strong identity tensions or strains on an individual, as identity workers must negotiate the extent to which the identity is integrated into the constitution of who they are. And while occupational identities may be greedy in general, Kreiner et al. further argue that Clergical occupations, such as those associated with the priesthood, may be particularly challenging in terms of identity, as they place particularly intense identity demands and on individuals (2006: 1031, 1034).

Despite the overbearing nature of these occupations and the potentially dramatic implications they may have for the identities of those affiliated with them, identity work provides individuals with the means to coordinate identity’s presence in their lives.

Research exploring the identity work of Episcopal priests, for example, reveals that those who find the identity particularly greedy respond by engaging in identity work designed to fend off the identity intrusion, reducing the possibility of overidentification with the priesthood. On the other hand, priests who do not feel threatened by this identity engage in identity work to more fully embrace and integrate the religious leader identity into the composition of who they are (Kreiner et al. 2006:1050-1051). Regardless of the manner in which religious leaders strive to position their occupational identities within the context of who they are, this accomplishment is realized in the same manner as it is for the other identities discussed here – through the process of identity work associated with doing identity.

The Identity Workers

This research explores the process of identity construction and maintenance with a diverse group of individuals. Qualification requirements varied by group -- for the chronic illness identity, qualified respondents were those who had received a diagnosis from a doctor, and who had been living with their illness for at least six months. In order to qualify for the parent of an exceptional child identity, an individual had to be the parent of either: a child who had been “officially” diagnosed or labeled with a particular condition or illness (special needs), a child who had officially tested as gifted (gifted), or a child who was above average in ability in a particular area (talented). Unlike the objective measures that determined whether or not a parent met the requirements for the special needs and gifted categories, qualifying for the talented category was a subjective determination, as I decided whether or not the achievements of a particular child merited inclusion in the talented category. The children of the three parents affiliated with this

identity certainly demonstrate talent above the norm. One child is an All-American soccer player who, in her sophomore year of high school, received a scholarship to play for a top-NCAA Division I soccer program. Another child is a nationally-ranked, All-American Fencer, and the third is an exceptionally gifted “musical theater kid,” who has been involved in the theater world since he was in grade school. A talented actor and singer, he has written many plays and musicals, produced plays in major cities, and recently started his own theater company. In order to meet the criteria for participation, individuals affiliated with the religious leader identity must have been presently active and certified or ordained to perform the official religious duties required of their particular religions⁴, and anyone self-identifying as a fan of any entity qualified to represent the fan identity.

Two things are important to keep in mind regarding these identity workers and their identities. First, the particular identities participants were recruited to represent are not the only identities that they might be affiliated with; after all, individuals’ selves are essentially an assembly of identities, multiple identities that are generally arranged hierarchically in terms of how relevant they are to the constitution of who one is. Since participants were recruited simply based on the presence of a connection to a particular identity rather than the significance the identity had for them, it is also important to keep in mind that the relevance these target identities have in the lives of these participants varies. For some of these individuals, these target identities serve as their primary identities, flooding out the other identities that constitute who they are. For others, these identities are less relevant, taking a back seat to the other identities that they have a

⁴ In this project, women are over-represented in the religious leader identity category. While four of the ten respondents (40%) representing the identity here are women, estimates suggest that women account for approximately 11% of the religious leaders in the United States (Association of Religious Data Archives 2012).

connection to. Since this project was designed to examine how identity work might be coordinated and implemented in different ways, reflective of the varying relevance identities have for individuals, it was important to include identity workers who have adopted different approaches to incorporating these identities into their lives. Table 1.1 presents the identities represented by study participants.

Table 1.1: Respondent Identity Affiliation

<u>Chronic Illness</u> (12)	<u>Parent of Exceptional Child</u> (16)	<u>Fan</u> (10)	<u>Religious Leader</u> (10)
Asthma (2)	<u>Special Needs</u> (11)	Alternative Lifestyle	<u>Pastors</u> (2)
Brain Cancer	Asperger Syndrome	Anime	Evangelical/Protestant
Breast Cancer (2)	ADHD	Black Crowes	Pentecostal
Cystic Fibrosis	Autism (2)	(Music)	
Diabetes (Type 1)	Developmental Delays	Comics	<u>Priests</u> (3)
Epilepsy (2)	Diabetes (Type 1)	Harry Potter	Episcopalian
Esophageal Cancer	Epilepsy/	Mets	Greek Orthodox
Multiple Sclerosis	Developmental Delays	My Little Pony (2)	Roman Catholic
Ulcerative Colitis	Hirschsprung's Disease/ Autism	Non-Sport Trading Cards/Bobbin Heads	<u>Ministers</u> (3)
	Tourette Syndrome	Star Wars	Baptist (2)
	Profoundly Disabled/ No Umbrella Diagnosis ⁵ (2)		United Methodist
	<u>Gifted and Talented</u> (5)		<u>Rabbis</u> (2)
	Gifted		Conservative Reform
	Profoundly Gifted		
	Fencing		
	Musical Theater		
	Soccer		

As Table 1.1 demonstrates, the identity workers participating in this research are affiliated with an assortment of unique identities, and together they serve as an ideal data source for this social pattern analysis (Zerubavel 2007) designed to explore the generic

⁵ Both of these children are non-verbal, immobile and require 24-hour-a-day assistance for all activities associated with daily living.

process of doing identity. In order to be able to speak to a generic pattern of doing that transcends any one particular identity, it was essential that this project be grounded in multicontextual identity evidence. Patton (2002) argues that wide-ranging data sets are ideally suited for identifying common patterns that transcend the “noise” of variation (243). Furthermore, the formal patterns that do emerge from such diverse contexts not only make any similarities more compelling, but also, the findings more generalizable (Zerubavel 2007:134). The goal of this project is to demonstrate that, regardless of the identity any individual may be affiliated with, the way that particular identity is constructed, maintained and integrated into the individual’s sense of self is fundamentally the same; we all reach into the standard identity work compartment of our cultural toolkits (Swidler 1986) to situate our places in the world vis-à-vis identity.

Chapter Overviews

My examination into the ways in which the chronically ill, parents of exceptional children, fans and religious leaders construct and support their very unique identities begins with Part II, where I present one of the two overarching themes to emerge as part of the generic process of doing identity --- *identity routines*. As part of affiliation with any identity, individuals deliver *identity routines*, where they coordinate and implement the various components of identity work in support of their identities. And regardless of the identity, the doing done as part of these identity routines is characterized by a range of intensity. This intensity includes three key features — *investment* (i.e., the time, effort and energy put into identity work), *restraint* (i.e., the degree of regulation with which identity work is implemented) and *visibility* (i.e., how perceptible one’s identity is to others during the course of identity work). When identity routines are evaluated with a

focus on these features, generic patterns of doing emerge reflective of varying degrees of intensity. This range of doing intensity is best expressed as a continuum that ranges from minimal, *understated* identity work (i.e., low investment, high restraint, low visibility) to extreme, *overstated* identity work (i.e., high investment, low restraint, high visibility). And regardless of identity affiliation, identity workers can be positioned anywhere on this continuum based on the intensity of their body of identity work. Chapter two, the first chapter in Part II, provides a detailed look at these identity routines and the range of doing intensity that characterizes them.

Chapters three through eight each discuss the application of this generic concept of identity routines and intensity to a particular component of identity work. Chapter three presents an in-depth look at how identity routines operate with regard to the management of appearances, while chapter four explores the relationship between identity routines and prop management. The performance of the discourse-related aspects of identity routines, identity talk, is presented in chapter five, and chapter six details how identity routines operate vis-à-vis the management of identity ecologies. Chapter seven examines how identity workers manage their association with others as a result of their varying levels of identity routine intensity, while chapter eight explores the ways in which varying levels of doing intensity impact the strategies individuals implement for revealing their identity affiliations to others.

Part III is devoted to *identity club membership*, the second overarching theme that is part of the generic process of doing identity. I use this analogy of club membership to illustrate the similar ways identity workers of all types experience their identities. Chapter nine focuses on the initial phase of club membership, “membership orientation,”

and describes the similar ways in which new identity workers become acquainted with their particular identity clubs, regardless of the particular club's focus. The chapter begins with a discussion of "identity introductions," which reveals how identity workers of all types recount the stories of their identity inceptions with similar detail, providing specifics such as when the introductions happened, who they were with, what they were doing and how they felt. Chapter nine also details how identity club members are provided with "access to insider information," where they become aware of their clubs bylaws (i.e., identity codes), develop an understanding of them, and use this insider information to identify other club members.

As standing members of clubs, individuals are generally obligated to preform certain duties, and there are a number of responsibilities that are associated with membership in any identity club. Chapter ten discusses some of the duties that go along with club membership, the "membership responsibilities." Many identity workers report feeling obligated to share their identity-knowledge with other members, particularly those who are new to the club. More seasoned club members have very often accumulated a substantial base of knowledge, and feel obliged to impart their wisdom with others. Dutiful identity workers are also tasked with showing respect for their clubs by ensuring that the organizations are portrayed in the best possible light possible. One of the ways this is accomplished is by correcting any misinformation that might surface about the club, a responsibility that is important to identity club members of all types. Ensuring that they are exemplary identity representatives is another way that identity workers ensure the upstanding reputations of their clubs, and another responsibility explored in this chapter.

Chapter eleven focuses on the “membership benefits” that are afforded to full-fledged club members, detailing some of perks identity club members can take advantage of. The chapter opens with a discussion of one of the primary benefits identity workers receive with club membership -- a strong sense of community -- as they are connected to a group of identity others who provide them with a sense of connection, understanding and acceptance. For many identity workers, club membership provides the added bonus of establishing a sense of community with family members who happen to be fellow club members; in these cases, membership is a “family affair,” and this concept is presented here. And finally, individuals affiliated with all identities are granted access to substantial reservoirs of information with club membership, as these identity communities tend to amass substantial knowledge about their particular identities, and are happy to share it.

Chapter twelve introduces some of the “membership drawbacks” that identity workers may have to deal with as part of their club participation. One of the drawbacks associated with identity club membership that is presented in this chapter is “not fitting the identity mold.” When identity workers do not “fit the mold,” their identity presentations are not consistent (either in physical appearance or in manner) with the identities with which they are affiliated, and this can have negative (although sometimes positive) consequences for identity workers. Another drawback of membership is “identity competition,” where identity workers compete with one another to establish themselves as the “best” or “most authentic” club members. Identity competition is found, in varying degrees, in any identity club, and is one of the less-publicized negative aspects of club membership. This chapter also discusses identity’s capacity to consume day-to-day living and become “inescapable,” features of club membership that might not

be appealing to all club members. The final chapter, thirteen, offers my concluding remarks.

Part II: Identity Routines: The Generic Process of Doing Identity

Chapter Two: Identity Routines

Introduction

“I have to say, I don’t know what you possibly think I could have in common with a Mets fan” (Joyce, mother of a profoundly disabled child). These words were uttered to me as I was delivering my standard, pre-interview introduction before one of my first interviews, and they stopped me in my tracks. Although I was able to quickly run through a mental inventory of the identity features that I believed these two identities had in common, how could I reasonably expect Joyce to understand how her identity was, in any way, similar to someone who identified as a Mets fan? This woman was the parent of a *profoundly* disabled child, a daughter who has never received a formal overall diagnosis, but is living with multiple debilitating conditions, not limited to spastic quadriplegic cerebral palsy, static encephalopathy, severe scoliosis, microcephaly, and cortical visual impairment. Joyce’s non-verbal, 20-year-old daughter eats through a feeding tube, wears diapers, a body brace, and is confined to a wheelchair, her body lacking the muscle strength required to support itself.

In order to accommodate the needs of her daughter, Joyce’s entire home has been altered (e.g., special ramps, doorways, roll-in showers, etc.), a custom vehicle has been purchased (to accommodate an electric wheelchair and other equipment), and each day, a visiting nurse provides between eight and twelve hours of care in their home; her child requires round-the-clock attention since, as Joyce says, “she can do absolutely *nothing* for herself.” When speaking about how her life has been affected by being the parent of an exceptional child, Joyce remarks, “It *all* revolves around [daughter].” And here I was,

making the audacious suggestion that I found her identity as the parent of an exceptional child similar to the identity of a Mets fan; an identity that revolves around a passion for “America’s pastime.” As I listened to her voice crack while she admonished me (at least that is what it felt like she was doing), it became clear that she was interpreting my unconventional approach to studying identity as the trivialization of her own identity, and this was fueling her emotional skepticism.

Our initial conflicting way of seeing these two identities was based on our fundamentally opposing cognitive approaches to classifying them – while I was guided by the more fluid approach demanded by social pattern analysis, one that requires focusing on the *similarities* these identities shared (despite their obvious differences), she was guided by the more rigid, traditional approach of focusing on the *differences* existing between her identity and that of a Mets fan. I was “constructing similarity” between these two identities and “lumping” (Zerubavel 1996:422) them together into one “mental container” that I call identity, while she was “constructing difference” between the identities and “splitting” (Zerubavel 1996:422) them apart into two distinct units.

According to Zerubavel (1991), the act of splitting involves exaggerating the differences between things while ignoring any similarities they may share. This results in the widening of the perceived gaps between the entities, which reinforces their mental separateness and minimizes the possibility that they can be experienced as anything other than discrete mental clusters (27-28). Joyce’s splitting approach to thinking about these two identities precluded her from seeing them as anything but two, discrete, unrelated entities. Focusing on and highlighting the differences between her identity and that of a Mets fan reflected her “rigid” (albeit certainly understandable) way of thinking about

identity, one that sees the landscape of identity as “highly compartmentalized [and] made up of sharply delineated insular entities separated by one another by great divides” (Zerubavel 1991:115). And because of this, my mere suggestion that she and a Mets fan shared some common ground was outlandish and trivializing to her.

Conditioned by my experience with social pattern analysis, my thinking about identity is rooted in an altogether different perspective, an approach guided by a “flexible mind [that] defies our conventional rigid conception of classification by recognizing that any entity can be situated in more than one mental context” (Zerubavel 1991:121). So while my flexible approach to identity helped me to quiet the noise of any variation and appreciate the harmony between these two identities, Joyce was unable to look past their differences to take notice of what they might have in common. As I wrapped up my routine introduction, explaining to Joyce that my interest was in learning about the variety of things people do as part of their being connected to a particular identity – the items that they use in support of it, how they talk about it, the people that they associate with because of it, the activities they participate in related to it -- and learning how the way people do these things might be similar or different across unique identities, Joyce visibly relaxed, settled in, and spoke to me with tremendous candor about being the mother of a profoundly disabled child. But her initial reaction reminded me that stretching one’s mind and erasing the reified lines that have been drawn between these seemingly distinct identities can be a very difficult task, despite the fact “that the entities [these lines] help us define are, after all, only figments of our own mind” (Zerubavel 1991:122).

So while these two identities, and any identities for that matter, do indeed differ in terms of “content,” my work highlights that regardless of that content, identities of all types share the “form” (Simmel 1950:40-42) that is the identity work implemented to create and sustain them. When exploring the identity work of individuals across the diverse group of identities under consideration here, with a focus on their formal commonality, two generic features characteristic of the process of identity construction and maintenance emerge. First, my research suggests that regardless of identity affiliation, identity workers manage their multiple selves through the performance of a generic process of doing. Through *identity routines*, individuals implement and coordinate the various components of identity work, and assert the salience of their various selves as they create and maintain preferred identities. My research further suggests that with identity affiliation, individuals become members of *identity clubs*, and as such, navigate similar experiences as part of this *identity club membership*; the features of *identity club membership* are similar regardless of identity affiliation.

A general review of the generic process of doing identity through *identity routines* begins here, followed by an in-depth look at how these identity routines operate in relation to each of the elements of identity work; part three will focus on the generic concept of *identity club membership*.

Identity Routines: The Generic Process of Doing Identity

An individual’s “introduction” and potential affiliation with a particular identity can happen in a variety of ways – that connection can be established with a phone call from a doctor delivering a diagnosis, upon hearing a particular song on the radio, or by accepting “the call” to serve a religious congregation. It is what individuals do (or don’t

do) after these *identity introductions* through identity work that establishes the particular way a potential identity will be incorporated (or not) into their notion of who they are. As Schwalbe and Schrock (1996) argue, each unique identity is associated with specific rules or conventions that must be adhered to in order for individuals to make successful claims to it. For each identity, local codes (125) specify the generally agreed upon guidelines for managing the identity work required to support it. For example, the identity codes associated with a masculine identity detail the specific doings that are required of those individuals wishing to stake a claim to the identity; details such as who individuals should interact with, the places they should go, the types of things they should discuss, and how they should physically present themselves. Identity codes can be considered the norms associated with a particular identity; they are the “expected doings” (Mullaney 2006:2).

To make a claim to a particular identity, there must be some sense of conformity to the actions, characteristics and ideas that are associated with the identity; the identity codes must be properly enacted through identity work. Individuals are only able to make authentic claims to identities by engaging in behavior that conforms to the norms outlined by an identity’s local code; failing to deliver identity performances that are congruent with the expected identity code results in presenting discrediting information that brings into question the identity workers authenticity or “realness” (Goffman 1959:18). If we “are asked to believe that the [individuals we] see actually [possess] the attributes [they appear] to possess... [and that] matters are what they appear to be”, identity workers’ performances must be congruent with their identities (Goffman 1959:18). Mitchell, a Baptist Minister, discusses the importance of congruency in identity work:

You know, if you tell me that you're a health and fitness coach, and I see you eat nothing but McDonalds, I'm not going to believe a word you say. And you might be the greatest health and fitness coach, but I'm not gonna believe that if I keep seeing you eating McDonalds.

I refer to these identity performances, the coordination of and participation in the various elements of identity work as *identity routines*. In looking at the various ways in which identity workers deliver these identity routines across the unique identities considered here, it becomes clear that regardless of identity affiliation, individuals deliver these generic identity routines with consistent patterns of intensity ranging from those whose doing is characterized by a minimal level of intensity, to those that seem to go “over the top” with their commitment to delivering extreme, high-intensity identity routines. This range of identity routine intensity is anchored by the minimal or *understated doers* on one end, and extreme or *overstated doers* on the other and based on the intensity of their doing; identity workers can be positioned at any locale on this continuum, irrespective of their identity affiliations.

The intensity of identity routines can be seen as the encapsulation of three key elements -- investment, restraint and visibility. *Investment* refers to the time, effort and energy that is dedicated to the various elements of identity work. In addition to considering the extent to which doing is done (or not done), investment considers the extent to which it is done (or not done) across the key components of identity work (i.e., appearance, props, identity talk, ecology, the association with others, managing the reveal). Individuals might, for example, be minimally invested in all of these areas, highly invested in many of these areas, or their doing may fall somewhere between the two.

When it comes to appearance, investment considers how much effort an identity

worker extends to ensure that he or she is presenting a self that is consistent with the identity to which he or she is connected. The messages about identity sent by individuals who are minimally invested in “looking the part” are quite different than those sent by identity workers who are extremely invested in presenting coherent fronts (Goffman 1959:24). With regard to props, investment considers how much effort is put into collecting the essential (i.e., those required by the identity) and non-essential (i.e., those related to but not required by the identity) props connected to an identity. Investment can also consider the size of the prop collections and the manner in which they are stored and displayed. In terms of identity talk, investment takes into account the extent to which identity workers engage in identity talk, considering factors such as their likelihood of starting such conversations, how frequently and regularly conversations occur, the depth of those conversations, and the details that are shared. Investment in identity ecologies pertains to the characteristics of identity workers’ participation in identity settings and adherence to identity time – how much time and effort do identity workers put into their engagement in these settings? What types of activities do individuals participate? How often do they participate? What are their roles (e.g., leadership)? And finally, when it comes to the selective association with others, investment is concerned with the attention identity workers devote to managing the composition of their social circles; for example, ensuring that their interactions do (or do not) involve identity others.

It is important to note that emotional investment in the identity is *not* considered here, since it is not necessarily directly related to identity work investment; one might have an extraordinary emotional investment in a particular identity, but only display minimal investment in the identity work related to that identity. For example, while an

individual might self-identify as a “diehard” NASCAR fan, his or her current identity work in relation to the identity may only involve hosting an annual Daytona 500 television watch party.

Restraint is the second feature of identity routine intensity, and refers to the degree of discipline or control that is exercised over identity-related doings across different contexts. *Restraint* considers how reserved, inhibited or structured identity workers are about the identity work they employ in both identity-appropriate contexts, that is, during interaction in the marked spaces where these doings are expected, and in contexts that can be described as generic, where the specific doings associated with a particular identity are not expected. While investment reveals the extent of an individual’s identity work, restraint considers the circumstances under which that identity work is carried out; in other words, restraint focuses on the level of *identity policing* that accompanies individuals’ doing. *Identity policing* involves patrolling the specifics of day-to-day interactions and making decisions about whether or not to engage particular identities through doing; by monitoring the details of identity work in this fashion, individuals are able to retain control over their identities.


Restraint operates within each of the key elements that constitute identity work, and focuses on the “Five Ws and How” of identity work -- the who, what, where, when, why and how considerations that accompany the management of doing. Restraint considers who an identity worker shares his or her identity with, what props the individual uses, where he or she engages in identity talk, why an individual participates in spatial and temporal identity settings and how the identity worker manages the composition of his or her social circles. Reflective of different approaches to managing

potential identities, the extent to which identity workers apply identity policing during the course of their doing can be quite variable; while the identity work of some individuals is characterized by a tremendous deal of restraint, the work of others might seem effectively unconcerned with identity policing. The latter's lax approach to identity policing, one that is characterized by a willingness to perform identity work regardless of social context (i.e., in either marked or unmarked space), sends a very different message about the relevance his or her identity than the former's highly regimented approach that demonstrates a reluctance to engage in identity work outside of identity-safe space. There is much to be learned about the circumstances that render an identity worker willing or unwilling to share his or her identity.

Finally, identity routine intensity considers the *visibility* associated with identity workers' identities, or the extent to which individuals' identities are visibly promoted through their identity work across marked and unmarked social contexts. Some identities are "immediately perceivable" (Goffman, 1963:49) to others, while other identities only become perceivable through the efforts of the individuals possessing them. Visibility considers the extent to which identity workers *play up* or *play down* those perceptible identities, as well as the measures individuals take – if any -- to play up those that are more undetectable. Visibility refers to identity workers' willingness to "openly" share their identity across various social contexts, reflecting where they fall within the range of being discreet or conspicuous in the doing that communicates that they possess particular selves (Goffman 1963:48). The ways in which an identity worker manages the perceptibility of his or her identity yields rich information about where a particular identity is positioned in one's parliament of selves.

Visibility applies, of course, to the doing that is done in conjunction with all of the components of identity work, and context is an important consideration. When it comes to appearance, visibility considers how willing an identity worker is to “look the part” in both marked and unmarked interaction: Would a priest remove his collar when he stops at the grocery store after a funeral service, or leave it on? Visibility considers how noticeable one’s prop use is: How likely (or unlikely) is a diabetic to administer an insulin injection, regardless of where his interactions take him? When it comes to identity talk, visibility focuses on how likely identity workers are to instigate and openly engage in identity talk: Would the parent of a special needs child talk about her identity as she leads a Pilates class in her role as fitness instructor? Visibility considers how conspicuous identity workers are in their participation in spatial and temporal identity settings: Does an identity worker with a chronic illness use her social media platforms and community connections to actively promote and secure donations for an upcoming fundraising event that she is organizing?

It is important to note that although highly related to restraint, visibility refers to how *noticeable* one’s doing (and, therefore, one’s identity) is across various contexts, while restraint focuses on the propensity to and ease with which the doings are engaged. For example, an identity worker may be extremely restrained when it comes to his or her doing, yet very visible about when she makes the decision to perform. The father of a special needs child may engage in very little identity work outside of *identity-safe* environments (i.e., marked environments); however, he may very actively and visibly promote his identity when he is securing donations for an annual fundraising drive, promoting the event on his social media platforms, decorating his car to advertise for it

and visiting local establishments to secure donations. Conversely, an identity worker may engage in continuous identity work in generic space, but do so with the utmost discretion. An avid distance runner may regularly promote her identity wherever she goes by wearing t-shirts that reference her participation in races; however, these t-shirts might only include obscure references to these events, references that would only be identifiable to *identity others* – those who share one’s identity -- (such as the  symbol that is affiliated with Ragnar distance races). While the identity worker’s doing might be characterized as uninhibited and more carefree, it is simultaneously inconspicuous.

Investment, restraint, and visibility are independent yet highly interrelated elements that constitute the intensity with which generic identity routines are delivered as part of the creation and maintenance of identity. A more detailed look at the range of identity routine intensity follows, focusing on the ideal-typical continuum anchors – the understated doers and the overstated doers. And while much attention is given to these ideal types, it is important to keep in mind that the intensity that characterizes individuals’ identity routines may situate them at any position on the scale.

From Understated Identity Routines...

Epitomizing the extreme low-end of the continuum are the *understated doers*, whose identity routines demonstrates the lowest level of intensity. These identity workers are those who are invested in their identity work in a very basic, compulsory, fundamental way; their identity work tends to adhere to the norms dictated by their identity’s local code in a way that guarantees their affiliation with the identity, but does not regularly or extensively go beyond that. Understated doers’ identity work primarily focuses on the *essential doing* mandated by the identity – they are less involved with the

non-essential doing that, while not obligatory, has the capacity to fortify identity affiliation. As a result, when compared to other identity workers, these subtle doers engage in less frequent doing that is characterized by an investment of less time, energy and effort; understated doers are also the least likely to do identity through multiple identity forums.

Their essential approach to identity work has the capacity to play out in any of the arenas through which identity work is done – understated doers are more likely to engage in “bare bones” doing regardless of the venues in which they are operating. Understated doers devote less identity work to “looking the part”; they also tend to have smaller prop collections in general, fewer non-essential props in particular, and are less devoted to displaying their props in noticeable, formal ways. While they engage in the essential discourse mandated by their identities, understated doers are less inclined to engage in incidental chatter. For the most part, their infrequent conversations tend to be brief, surface discussions that are more often initiated by others. Understated doing does not typically involve frequent or regular participation in non-essential spatial and temporal identity settings, and when these identity workers do participate, they do not assume organizational or leadership roles. Finally, understated doers are not particularly concerned with seeking out interaction with those who share their identity, *identity others*, as their social circles are the least likely to include these types of individuals.

As understated doers, an alternative lifestyle fan may only occasionally put on her limited fetish wear to look the part, and an asthmatic’s collection of props might only include the inhalers that he keeps in his backpack. With a more understated approach to identity routines, the father of a special needs child may only engage in requisite identity

talk with the individuals providing care to his child, and the music fan might only travel into physical identity space to attend the concerts put on by his favorite band. And when it comes to associating with identity others, the understated parent of an exceptional athlete would be content with her interactions with the other parents who are part of her trips to identity space. During the course of day-to-day interaction, understated doers are less likely to take advantage of the unlimited opportunity to participate in the continuous endeavor of doing identity. By making deliberate choices to not engage in doings in support of their particular identities, understated doers demonstrate their greater tendency to incorporate “not doings” (Mullaney 2006) into their repertoire of identity work.

While being generally less invested in their identity work, the understated doers are also less likely to “spread their [identity] markedness across [many] spheres of their social life” (Brekhus 2003:72). Identity, for these understated doers, is “omnicontextual,” and as a result, their identity displays vary with the context in which their interaction is taking place (Brekhus 2003:56-57). In order to manage their doing in this very particular and structured way, these individuals are comparatively the most restrained and inhibited when it comes to their identity routines, and tend to exercise the greatest level of discipline or control over the contexts in which their work is done. Consequently, understated doing typically involves the greatest level of *identity policing*, as identity workers tightly monitor the conditions under which their identities are “released” or shared with others. Adopting an approach to doing that resembles Brekhus’ commuters (2003), these understated doers are more likely to reserve their identity-related doing for interactions that involve *identity-safe* audiences and those that are situated in *identity-safe* spatial and temporal settlings; the marked environments “where identity communities are

allowed to congregate to openly display their brightest colors” (Brekhus 2003:18); understated doers are particularly regimented in their doing when they are positioned in generic space or with *identity outsiders* – those individuals who are either not at all involved with or are unaware of one’s identity -- and are less like to share their identities in these environments.

Understated doers are especially choosy when it comes to sharing their identities, and as a result, they are exceptionally concerned with the who, what, where, when, why, and how that is fundamental to identity policing; if they are not operating in prime conditions (i.e., identity-safe contexts), understated doers are reluctant to engage in identity-supportive work. As restrained, understated doers, an alternative lifestyle fan would likely only don her fetish apparel during her identity-safe play dates and a minister would only wear his collar during the duties related to his position as a religious leader. An understated asthmatic would be inclined to only take his medications in private or when around her family members, and the father of a special needs child would likely only engage in identity talk with *identity insiders* (i.e., those who have knowledge of one’s identity) and *identity others* (i.e., those who share one’s identity). The successful management of the compartmentalization of an omnicontextual identity requires the understated doer to maintain tight control over his or her identity -- something effectively accomplished through their restrained, regiments approach to their identity routines.

When it comes to visibility, understated doers are the most discreet identity workers, and very “soft” promoters of their identities and as such, their identity routines are least likely to result in the presentation of identities that are immediately perceivable to others. Rather than engage in doing designed to *play up* their identity affiliations,

understated doers generally perform identity work that involves *playing down* the visible components of their identities; in fact, some of the most extreme understated doers go to great lengths to ensure that their identities are unperceivable, especially when interacting in inappropriate identity contexts. Context is, of course, particularly important for the commuter-like understated doers, who are far less likely to present copious identity displays in generic space. These identity workers are most inclined to visibly share their omnicontextual identities when their interactions involve identity-safe audiences and identity-safe environments. And while they are much more likely to be visible doers during the course of their marked interactions, the minimal and reserved tone of their doing precludes many understated doers from being fervent fliers of their identity flags even in safe space – doing so in just not their nature.

The discreet disposition of their identity routines manifests in doing that minimizes the perceptibility of their identities. As a result, understated doers work to ensure that their identity work does not openly signal identity affiliation; they are less likely to employ any identity work that results in their “looking the part.” So, in addition to not being overly concerned with looking the part physically, understated doers would be less likely to use highly-recognizable identity props, openly engage in identity talk, and engage in doing that draws attention to their interactions in identity settings and with identity others. An understated minister would, for example, remove his collar when stopping at the grocery store on his way home from performing a baptism, try to avoid religious conversations when among his secular friends, and not promote his upcoming preaching events on his social media platforms. The minimal, carefully orchestrated, inconspicuous identity routines of understated doers is primarily delivered to comply

with local identity codes as opposed to drawing attention to the identities with which they are affiliated.

...To Overstated Identity Routines

In contrast to these types of identity workers are the *overstated doers*, who represent the high-intensity anchor on the continuum of intensity. As extreme doers, these identity workers engage in steady doing that not only conforms to the identity codes prescribed by their respective identities, but also demonstrates “an intensity and extensity going beyond conventional bounds” (Ewald and Jiobu 1985:144; Hughes and Coakley 1991:310), and as a result, they can be considered “overconformers” (Coakley 2015:113-114). By pursuing their identity routines in an exaggerated manner, these identity workers “carry a good thing to far” (Ewald and Jiobu 1985:144), “overdoing” their adherence to identity codes.

Overstated doers adopt a lifestyle-like approach to their identity routines (Brekhus 2003) as particular identity options tend to emerge as master statuses for them (Hughes 1945), flooding out other aspects of their selves and becoming their primary identifying characteristics. As focal points of who they are, these identities are omnirelevant, or highly salient across all social contexts and at all times (Brekhus 2003:39), as well as omnipresent or visible regardless of context. The pervasiveness of identity for these individuals demands extensive supportive identity work.

Overstated doers are, therefore, extremely invested in the doings associated with their identities, engaging in wide-ranging, frequent and regular doing that involves multiple forums and the dedication of substantial time, energy and effort. In addition to investing more identity work in order to look the part, overstated doers have greater

investments in the collection of props; their prop collections tend to be larger and include more non-essential items, and they tend to display these collections in more remarkable ways. Overstated doers engage in more frequent, regular and in-depth identity talk that they are more likely to initiate. These identity workers are also relatively more active participants in identity environments, where they are more likely to hold positions of prominence, and are more likely to include identity others in their social circles.

As overstated doers, a Harry Potter fan may never leave home without wearing some sort of Harry Potter apparel, an asthmatic may have so many props strewn throughout his home that it looks like a hospital, and the mother of a child with special needs may be an admitted “oversharer” who discusses intimate details about her identity with total strangers. With a more overstated approach to identity routines, a Baptist minister’s travel to and participation in extracurricular workshops and conferences may consume the vast majority of her free time, and the mom of a profoundly gifted child may include many other parents with exceptional kids in her most intimate social circles.

Their greater investment in identity work supports the more omnirelevant identities of the overstated doers, identities that these lifestyler-like identity workers are willing to spread across the multiple domains that house their social interaction (Brekhus 2003:72). Overstated doers are the most unrestrained identity workers, overconformers who “[fail] to recognize any limits to following norms [related to their identities]” (Coakley 2015:113); as such, they are more likely to “do” their particular identities in any context, regardless of whether or not it is identity-appropriate. Overstated doing involves less identity policing; far less concerned with the who, what, where, when, why and how considerations, these identity workers are very willing to openly share their identities

with audiences of all types across both marked and generic identity environments.

Their unquestioned acceptance of and (over)commitment to the value system or identity code associated with their identities (Hughes and Coakley 1991:308, 323) seems to fuel the carefree implementation of their identity work, work that is designed to ensure that their salient identities are highly visible, regardless of context. Overstated doers are fierce identity promoters who frequently adopt a “billboard” strategy of identity promotion, one characterized by the regular display of often-unsolicited, recognizable identity messages designed to reach anyone with whom they might come into contact. In an effort to support their omnirelevant identities, much of the doing that overstated doers participate in involves *playing up* their identity affiliations – they are rarely inclined to play down or minimize visible demonstrations of who they are. For example, an overstated religious leader would not remove his collar before entering the gym for a workout (i.e., he would not play down his identity affiliation) and, as the parent of a diabetic, an overstated father would administer his child’s insulin injections whether they were sitting at home or sitting in the bleachers at a softball game (i.e., playing up his identity affiliation). Overstated doers are exceedingly comfortable in their identity skin, and as a result, are very generous about conspicuously sharing their identities with others through their nonchalant and sweeping identity routines.

Understated and overstated doers are not dichotomous concepts but rather, are best exemplified as the ideal-typical anchors representing the extremes of the identity intensity; individuals can, of course, be positioned at any point in the space between these endpoints on this spectrum, reflecting the level of intensity that characterizes their identity routines. The incremental “amping up” of the intensity of identity work – the

progression from minimal to extreme, inhibited to carefree, discreet to conspicuous – results in gradual movement from the understated to overstated space on the continuum. By looking at the ways in which individuals orchestrate their doing across the key components of identity work in diverse environments, we can determine their positioning in terms of identity routine intensity. And we can make such attributions for identity workers regardless of their particular identity affiliations, as this formal pattern of doing characterizes the identity work done in support of any identity.

Chapter Three: Appearance

Snow and Anderson's (1987) concept of identity work serves as the foundation for this examination of doing identity, and I have adapted their four key activities in my conceptualization of the term.⁶ As such, I consider identity work to include the ways individuals participate in the management of the following six elements as they relate to identity: appearance, props, discourse, ecology, the association with others, and revelation. This section focuses on the first element, the management of appearance, and each of the other components is discussed individually in the subsequent chapters of this section.

Appearance and Identity

Appearance is essential to identity, as it is a vehicle through which selves are established and mobilized (Stone 1962:101). A critical element in identity construction, appearance "announces" who one is by conveying information that demonstrates how an individual wishes to present him or herself to others (Stone 1962:101; Strauss 2005:150). Through identity work, individuals have tremendous opportunity to manage their appearances in particular ways reflective of how they want to be seen by their audiences vis-à-vis particular identities.

Personal appearance is part of one's "personal front," which Goffman describes as the "items of expressive equipment...that we most intimately identify with the performer himself" (1959:24). When an individual becomes affiliated with a particular identity, the

⁶ Snow and Anderson's conceptualization includes "the procurement or arrangement of physical settings and props; cosmetic face work or the arrangement of personal appearance; selective association with other individuals and groups; and verbal construction and assertion of ... identities [or identity talk]" (1987:1348).

identity's corresponding front has typically already been established (Goffman 1959:27), and the expectations for compliance prescribed by that identity's local code. An individual must follow these conventions, and present an appearance to others that is consistent with the identity in order to establish a legitimate claim to it (Strauss 2005); he or she must "infuse his [or her] activity with signs which dramatically highlight and portray confirmatory facts" (Goffman 1959:30). As Goffman argues, a "coherence of front" (1959:24) is expected, where one's appearance is seen as consistent with the identity it claims to represent. In order to be seen as authentic in their respective identity positions, for example, we expect dermatologists to have clear skin, hair stylists to have up-to-date, attractive hairstyles and distance runners to be slight and fit (Hockey 2005:47). When discrepancy exists between "fostered appearances and reality," identity workers run the risk of appearing deceitful in their "misrepresentation" of identity (Goffman 1959:59). And while it is possible for individuals to establish successful affiliation with identities such as these through the other components of their identity work, the management of appearance is critical as the outcome of this branch of identity work is generally the most visible.

One way to convey a particular identity through appearance is with the physical modification of the body, and as one of the few groups in Africa to continue to wear large pottery or wooden plates in their lower lips, the Mursi women of Ethiopia provide an extreme example of this particular type of identity work. As a "powerful visual marker of Mursi identity," these lip-plates serve as "*the* chief visible distinguishing characteristic of the group" (Turton 2004: 3, 5; emphasis added). In addition to establishing group identity by signaling their affiliation with the tribe, this physical alteration shapes the individual

identities of these women; symbolizing fertility and suitability for marriage, the wearing of a lip-plate signals that girls have crossed the threshold into the identity realm of womanhood (LaTosky 2004:385).

Tattooing is another example of body modification, and the prison system provides a rich environment for exploring the appearance-related identity work accomplished through the use of tattoos. In these total institutions (Goffman 1961a), inmates are stripped of their personal belongings, leaving them with meager material resources to assist in establishing and conveying definitions of who they are to others. For many of these prisoners, bodies morph into canvases for the art of tattooing, becoming the primary means for visually expressing association with particular identities (Phelan and Hunt 1998:283, 292). In their analysis of the tattoos of members of the Nuestra Familia prison gang, Phelan and Hunt (1998) find that the specifics associated with tattoos, such as where they appear on the body and the details of the imagery, reveal rich information about the identities of the wearers, including their position within the gang, past accomplishments and future goals (277). A tattoo indicates, for example, whether one is simply an initiate waiting to be accepted into the organization (demonstrated by floral tattoos), a full-fledged gang member (revealed by tattoos with specific references to Nuestra Familia), a veteran member (reflected by tattoos including references to past accomplishments, such as tear drops representing kills or prison sentences served) or an elite superior officer in the gang (revealed through tattoos with images of Mexican banditos) (Phelan and Hunt 1998:284-291).

While the tattooing of the Nuestra Familia and lip-stretching of the Mursi dramatically illustrate the powerful connection between appearance and identity,

individuals seeking to assert particular identities for themselves may also manipulate their physical appearances through far more banal techniques that are just as effective at sending powerful visual identity cues. In their research exploring the identity work strategies of biracial adults, Khanna and Johnson observe individuals manipulating their phenotypes (e.g., their hair and skin) in order to assist them in passing as black. For example, some respondents darkened their skin color through tanning and grew out and picked their hair into “fros,” since such visual presentations were consistent with their identity goals of being “raced as black” (Khanna and Johnson 2010: 387, 392). By highlighting these particular “environmentally encouraged facets of the self,” these identity workers were able to “play up” their blackness (Goffman 1959:38), and successfully pass as a result.

Others took an opposing approach to their impression management, choosing instead to “conceal or underplay those ... facts...which [were] incompatible with an idealized version of [themselves]” (Goffman 1959:48) -- these identity workers opted to “play down” (Goffman 1959:39) or conceal their discrediting whiteness (Goffman 1963:41-104). Growing tired of others referring to her as “white girl” when her very long hair would blow in the wind, one biracial young woman resorted to manipulating her appearance to avoid the label; she explained: “I usually kept my hair pulled back or kept it up or tried to do different things to blend in more...I would never leave my hair down” (Khanna and Johnson 2010:387). Since having straight, wind-blown hair conformed to the identity codes associated with whiteness, this young lady *played down* these attributes in order to distance herself from that undesirable identity. Her successful “role distancing” through the manipulation of her physical appearance drove a “wedge” and

created “pointed separateness” between herself and the white identity she was resisting (Goffman 1961b:108), enabling her to physically present a self that was consistent with who she desired to be.

Wrench and Garrett (2012) discuss the importance of consistency between appearance and occupational identity in their research exploring the identity work of physical education teachers. As educators responsible for promoting the health and well-being of their students, these gym teachers recognize the importance of and were committed to “looking the part,” and as a result, boasted “active [bodies]... inscribed with attributes of fitness and health.” One teacher remarks:

When I tell someone that I am at university studying to be a PE teacher, they often comment that I look like one... I look like a PE teacher because I am physically healthy, fit, strong and active (Wrench and Garrett 2012: 10).

And while it might not be impossible for an overweight, weak, sedentary individual to make an authentic claim to the physical education teacher identity, it might prove to be quite difficult. Physical traits such as these do not conform to the local codes of the gym teacher identity and as such, an identity worker characterized by these attributes would be in possession of “destructive information” that would discredit his or her attempt to establish an authentic connection to the identity (Goffman 1959:141); his or her performance would be unconvincing. The task of delivering a persuasive identity performance is certainly facilitated when one’s physical presentation and identity are harmonious.

Physical appearance can be manipulated in obvious or subtle ways that meaningfully communicate information about identity, and the particular ways individuals manage their personal appearances in relation to particular identities reveal critical insight about the messages they are transmitting regarding their identity goals. We

can call upon the Mursi women, who opened this discussion, to provide a perspicuous (albeit entirely hypothetical) demonstration of precisely how the interplay between identity work and identity goals can operate. One Mursi woman may choose to continuously wear her lip-plate, regardless of the activities she is engaged in and the audiences with whom she is interacting, signaling that she may be working to ensure that her Mursi identity is an omnipresent focal point of who she is (à la Brekhus' *lifestyler* approach to doing identity). Another Mursi woman may choose to wear her lip-plate only when she is with the members of her tribe or engaging in Mursi-related activities -- removing it before interaction with anyone outside of the tribe. Managing her appearance in this way might signal that she is only interested in "being Mursi" when spatially and temporally necessary (à la Brekhus' *commuter* approach to doing identity). Or, there may be no apparent strategy behind the donning of a lip-plate, as some Mursi women may take a more organic approach, wearing it when the mood strikes them, reflecting, perhaps, the desire for Mursi womanhood to be but one of the many identifying features that characterize their identities (à la Brekhus' *integrator* approach to doing identity).

While components of one's appearance might powerfully and instantaneously announce his or her affiliation with a particular identity, such as in the cases of the Mursi women (via lip-plates), breast cancer survivors (via bald heads and lack of eyebrows), and religious leaders (via collars and kippahs), appearance as a trigger for identity may be less conspicuous and more nuanced for other identity workers such as asthmatics, parents of exceptional athletes and fans of comics. Regardless of how the connection between appearance and identity is characterized, identity workers rely on the same identity work tool kit to manage the interplay between the two.

Appearance and Identity Routines: From Understated to Overstated Doing

Due to the nature of their identity work, understated doers are relatively less invested in “looking the part” when it comes to announcing their identity affiliations through their appearances. In fact, the particularly understated doers essentially are *not doing* appearance-highlighting identity work as they devote very little effort to this endeavor – even when they are positioned in identity space. Perhaps an extreme example of this is demonstrated by the way Mitchell, a Baptist minister, manages the way he wears his collar. Mitchell states that he *never* wears his collar outside of the ministry (i.e., in generic space) and claims that he would actually prefer *not* to wear the collar when he is involved with his spiritual responsibilities. He admits that he only wears his neckpiece when someone requires him to do so, which tends to happen when he preaches at a new church for the first time: “I would wear my collar [then] because in most churches they ask you to do that so that people can identify easily who you are. But do I prefer it? Absolutely not.” In fact, Mitchell confesses that his superiors have reprimanded him for failing to wear his collar during the performance of some of his religious duties.

Max, a comic book fan, has “just one” article of comic-inspired clothing, a Marvel t-shirt, and Greg, the music fan, owns *nothing* that he wears to assert a connection to his identity. And even when they are engaged in identity activities with identity others, such as attending conventions and concerts where looking the part is norm, these understated fans do not feel the need to fly the identity flag through their appearances (i.e., wardrobes). Similarly, many of the other understated workers who are affiliated with the chronically ill and parent of an exceptional child identities own nothing that they wear – either within identity space or outside of it -- to highlight their affiliation with

their identities;⁷ no “Cancer Survivor!” t-shirts, “Autism Speaks” sweatshirts, “USA Fencing” hoodies, “Proud Soccer Mama” jackets – nothing! Meredith, one of the understated identity workers with breast cancer, explains why she refuses to wear any apparel associated with the disease, such as items with the pink breast cancer ribbon on them:

The reason I wouldn’t wear it is, I don’t know if it would ever happen, but I don’t want someone stopping me and saying, “Oh, do you wear that for you, or do you wear that...” Like, I don’t want to have that conversation; do you know what I mean?

Meredith fears that presenting a visible identity in public might force her to relinquish some of the precious control over that identity that she works so hard to maintain; opening herself up and putting her identity out there might spark conversations she is not willing to have.

And when they do not feel as if the identities they are connected to define who they are, the staunchest understated doers go through great efforts to downplay or cover up their physical connection to them in an effort to distance themselves from these identities they are resisting (Goffman 1961b:108). The identity work of two breast cancer survivors focused on managing their appearances to ensure that they did not announce the fact that they were affiliated with the stigmatized, sick identity. In an effort to minimize her hair loss during chemotherapy, Shannon used Chemotherapy Cold Caps, a scalp cooling system designed to reduce the amount of chemotherapy drugs reaching the hair follicles by narrowing the blood vessels beneath the surface, thereby reducing the chances of hair loss. Implementing this FDA approved treatment was no small feat, as it required wearing tightly fitted gel caps cooled to -32 degrees Fahrenheit before, during

⁷ Maureen, the parent of a child with Hirschsprung’s Disease/Autism owns one old t-shirt from a fundraising walk, but only wears it on occasion.

and after each chemotherapy session. Applying these caps is extremely difficult (it requires someone's assistance) and painful (think, "the worst brain freeze ever").

Shannon describes her experience with the Cold Caps, "I wore that for 40 minutes prior to [every] chemo and the whole time through [the 6 hour session], changing every half hour, and then for four hours afterward." On her chemo days, Shannon spent nearly half of the day painfully working to downplay and cover up the side-effects of her treatment in order to preserve her healthy appearance because she wanted to look "normal"; she emphatically confesses, "I didn't want to look sick!" While the Cold Caps did not prevent the hair loss on her head altogether, she did manage to retain her shoulder-length (albeit thin) hair, which, to her relief and delight, grew in nicely as time progressed. "I'm feeling a whole lot more normal now and I've had so many compliments from people saying, 'You look so much more like you! You look healthy, you look great!'" Shannon was very invested in her efforts to create discrepancy between her appearance and her reality; by engaging in laborious identity routines in order to appear healthy, she was misrepresenting the reality that she was very sick. All of this enabled Shannon to downplay her illness identity and physically distance herself from it.

Meredith, another understated doer with breast cancer, also dedicated significant effort to continue to "look like herself" over the course of her illness. She purchased a wig and developed a makeup regime to account for her soon-to-be missing eyebrows *before* she even began her chemotherapy sessions because she wanted to be "very ahead" of the hair loss. She describes the grooming routine she went through that involved stenciling on powdered eyebrows, applying a full face of makeup and styling her wig –

all done in order to play down and distance herself from her sick identity so that she could look as normal as possible:

I started doing that right away, yeah. And I thought, "Wow! What a difference the eyebrows make!" It felt a little bit like, the only thing I can liken it to was like a rodeo clown. You know, like you felt like you're getting ready, you know, to kind of go on stage? Like, wow! I used to think I would dedicate some time to getting ready in the morning [REFERRING TO HER GROOMING ROUTINE BEFORE HER DIAGNOSIS], goodness, gracious, now I feel almost like a transvestite! You know what I mean? Putting on the wig, it felt like it was just so much. But yet you're trying to maintain a bit of a natural appearance, right? Not attempting to look so that everything is, that nothing is real, right? So, yeah. That was that. But I wouldn't go anywhere without it [her makeup and wig].

Distancing herself from her sick identity was so important to Meredith, that even those in her most intimate circles never saw her without at least part of her "costume" on; while she would occasionally replace the wig with a cotton cap when she was around her parents and husband, they NEVER saw her bald. She was even reluctant to allow those involved with her medical care to see her bald head:

As a matter of fact, even when I was going in for surgery for [breast reconstruction] I was still in my wig, and I said to my plastic surgeon, "If I can't wear my wig into surgery I'm waiting. I'll do this after my hair grows back." He said, "You can wear your wig into surgery." And who knows, (LAUGHS) it might have been hanging off me in the OR with all the staff around it, but still in my mind [it was on]"

Positioned at the lowest level of the spectrum in terms of the intensity of their doing, these breast cancer survivors engage in highly regimented identity routines designed to present less visible identities. But for Shannon and Meredith, and other identity workers like them, having an inconspicuous identity is not sufficient – they engage in doings designed not only to downplay these undesirable identities, but to create "pointed separateness" that allows them to distance themselves from identities they are resisting (Goffman 1961b:108). Much like the female rugby players and Scottish women whose identity work was designed to promote counter-masculine identities (Ezell 2009;

Emslie et al. 2015), these breast cancer survivors were working to establish and maintain “counter-sick” identities.

The great investment these types of individuals put into their identity routines might seem inconsistent with the low intensity strategy that characterizes the doing of understated workers. However, since this identity work is not being done in support of their cancer identities but rather, is being done to distance themselves from them, I consider these actions *undoings*, which can be described as efforts designed exclusively to negate, invalidate and become uninvested in identities that individuals feel are not reflective of who they are. So, while their *undoings* may reflect a high degree of time, effort and energy, they are not done in support of particular identities but rather to contradict them.

As doing intensifies, understated doers adopt more traditional commuter-like ways of managing their appearances; they become more likely to visibly present themselves as connected to a particular identity when engaged in identity-appropriate interactions, but once they step outside of the realm of this safe space, they are less likely to play up and bring attention to their association with their identities through appearance.

For identity workers affiliated with the religious leader identity, the management of religious attire is one of the key ways through which they are able to control their appearances and visibility of their identities. At certain times, most of the religious leaders included here are obligated by their particular religious affiliations to wear wardrobe accessories that instantly connect them to their religious leader identities. For many of the ministers, priests and pastors, it is the presence of the white collar that designates them as a spiritual leader, while for the female rabbi, it is her yarmulke or

kippah that instantly connects her to the identity.⁸ While all of these religious leaders are generally expected to wear this religious attire during those times when they are acting in their official capacities as spiritual leaders of their respective communities, they have great discretion regarding how they incorporate these pieces into their appearances at other times. For example, there are no specific guidelines dictating when they are *not* to wear these items so, in theory, they could choose to wear these identity tokens at any time and in any place.

In their positions as low-intensity doers, understated religious leaders engage fundamental, commuter-like identity routines that ensures that their appearance-related doing is done in accordance with the identity's local codes; they tend to manage their appearances so that they "look the part" when engaged in religious contexts. However, these individuals are less likely to carry their identity-highlighting performances over into the interactions they are involved with in secular space or with secular audiences, despite the fact that they are permitted to do so. In the following exchange, Anna, the reform rabbi, discusses how she manages her identity-related appearance through the wearing of her kippah:

Rabbi Anna: So, because it's less common for women to wear it, I did start wearing it as my "rabbi hat." So I wear it for *anything* rabbinic I'm doing.

Interviewer: Let's say you're stopping somewhere before [coming to the synagogue].

Rabbi Anna: I take it off.

Interviewer: Or on the way home, you're running into the grocery store?

Rabbi Anna: Yes, if I'm by myself, I take it off. So sometimes we on staff will go grab something at lunch. If I'm with other [CONGREGATION] people, I leave it on. And that's the *only* time I'll wear it in public, is when I'm with them, out to lunch...

⁸ The yarmulke or kippah does not necessarily signify one's position as a Rabbi in the Jewish faith as all men have the option of wearing the skullcap.

With a commuter-like approach to doing, Rabbi Anna turns her omnicontextual rabbi identity on and off through her appearance, depending on whether or not she is positioned in identity-appropriate space. And for Anna, the presence of a group of “marked” individuals from her congregation is enough to transform generic space into an identity-safe environment.

Charles, the conservative rabbi, and Rachel, the United Reform minister, similarly manage their religious leader identities through appearance by typically only wearing the kippah and the collar, respectively, when engaged in identity space or with identity-related audiences. Rabbi Charles explains how his kippah triggers the engagement and disengagement of his rabbi self, “Whenever I am representing the congregation, religious services within the building, I *always* wear the kippah of course. I don't wear the kippah on those occasions where *I don't have to be the rabbi*, quote, unquote.” And for Minister Rachel, it is her white collar that helps her to transition between her religious and secular identities, “I put it on on Sundays, and I *only* wear it on Sunday. Sunday morning I put it on and I take it off Sunday afternoon, Sunday evening.” By *not* wearing the identity tokens that alter their appearances and announce “who they are,” understated doers such as Rabbi Anna, Rabbi Charles and Minister Rachel incorporate non-doings into their body of identity work in order to construct and maintain less visible identities.

The identity routines required to support identities that are flipped on and off according to context are implemented by individuals affiliated with all types of identities. The activity Kathleen participates in as an alternative lifestyle fan almost always results in visible marks and heavy bruising on her body, physical evidence of her identity that is very important to her. At the understated end of the identity intensity scale, Kathleen's

style of doing focuses on maintaining tighter control over her identity, and she has a very particular approach to managing her appearance as a result; she is always very careful to conceal the contusions on her body during her interactions in generic environments, but goes to great lengths to show them off in when she is engaged in identity-safe space.

If, for example, she has an upcoming medical appointment that will require her to remove her clothing, she ensures that there is no physical evidence of her “play dates.” She explains, “If I know I’m going for a test, like I went in for a stress test, I made sure that I had no bruising. Because I play hard. And I usually always get bruising.” However, Kathleen goes to great lengths to play up her appearance as a sadist during her interactions with identity-safe audiences in identity-safe environments. If she happens to be interacting with identity others at local conventions and is not wearing clothing that allows her bruising to be seen, Kathleen states, “I would just pull up my shirt and show people. Or, if I had markings on my ass, I would pull my pants down and show them my ass.” And, like the understated religious leaders who tend to wear their religious attire only when engaged in sacred environments, she only wears her fetish wear (provocative clothing associated with the fandom) when she commutes to the “sacred” environments related to her identity. While managing her appearance in this way may seem predictable given the highly stigmatized nature of Kathleen’s identity, it is not a given – there are individuals affiliated with this identity who manage their appearances in quite different ways, reflective of the different identity routine strategies they employ. While Kathleen manages her appearance in a commuter-like fashion, she explains how others adopt more overstated approaches to presenting their similar identities, “Some people wear [fetish

wear] to other things, I don't, I am very discreet. And I don't feel the need to shove my lifestyle down everyone's throat. Some people do feel the need to do that.”

Intensification in identity routines corresponds with doing that is characterized by progressively greater degrees of investment, indifference and openness; individuals are more increasingly inclined to dedicate more time, effort and energy to their doing while becoming less regimented and less discreet. As doing amps up and identities become more salient, identity workers are more likely to be willing to “look the part,” and this is reflected in the ways they manage their appearance-related identity work. The behavior of the chronically ill identity workers nicely highlights the nuances of more intense appearance-related identity routines. As previously stated, none of more understated identity workers affiliated with chronically ill identities participate in any appearance-related doing that brings attention to their identities; in fact, some of these individuals engaged in appearance-related *undoinings* designed to negate or invalidate their connection to their undesirable, sick identities. Recall, for example, Shannon and Meredith, two breast cancer survivors who implemented extensive appearance-related undoing to ensure that they did not look the part of the cancer survivor. Compare their doing to the more carefree and open doing of Olivia, a brain cancer survivor who takes a much different approach to the management of her chemotherapy-induced hair loss. She describes her experience with a wig she purchased *after* her hair loss:

I wore it twice, three times maybe.... It's in my closet. I should have never bought it... I said the hell with it. I wore scarves sometimes, and sometimes I just didn't [she went out bald]...It was just, what I felt like doing...Because, who gives a shit, who cares? It's just hair and it will grow back obviously.

Other more intense chronically ill identity workers similarly manage their public appearance-related identity work in ways that sometimes result in the highlighting of

their sick identities and sometimes do not. At times, Daphne, who suffers from multiple sclerosis, needs help cutting her food, particularly when she hasn't recently taken her medication. She laments that having someone assist her with eating in this way draws attention to and highlights her sick identity, but this does not keep her from dining out; she simply determines whether or not she will share her sick identity in generic space based on how she is feeling at the time; she explains:

If I haven't taken my pill and I try to go out for a nice steak dinner, [HUSBAND] has to cut my meat across the table. And sometimes I'm okay with that, and sometimes I'll order ravioli so I don't have to have him cut things for me.

During each course of his chemotherapy, Jason, who has esophageal cancer, is required to wear a fanny pack that administers his drug cocktail for 36 straight hours. He reports that wearing this medical equipment does not curtail his travel into public territory. Sometimes, his "fanny pack time" coincides with his errand-running duties and on such occasions, the potential for presenting himself as sick in public does not come into play when Jason decides whether or not to venture outside of his home. Rather, his decisions are based on how he is feeling: "If I feel good and I have something to do I go do it...[I'm] not real conscious of [the fanny pack]."

Olivia similarly managed her appearance after her stem cell transplant. Required to wear a surgical facemask and gloves to reduce the risk of infection, her decisions about whether or not to go out in public were based on whether or not she felt like going, not whether or not she wanted to "announce herself" as someone who was sick. "They [facemask and gloves] were such a pain... I just didn't give a shit [about announcing herself as sick]. If I wanted to go, I'd go." And unlike the more regimented understated doers, these identity workers are more comfortable with the attention that ensues from playing up their identities in generic space. Brain, who suffers from epilepsy, seeks out

and appreciates the reactions highlighting his illness in public brings. He recently received a purple ribbon pin for epilepsy awareness, which he proudly wears *every day* when he goes to work in a large retail store. Comfortable sharing his epileptic identity, Brian states that he wears the pin, “wherever, however and whenever” to make people more aware of his identity. And Maryann, the mother of a child with both Hirschsprung’s disease and autism, similarly uses accessories to *intentionally* draw attention to her identity (and that of her son) when they are engaged in generic space. Whenever she is out with her son, Maryann wears her puzzle-piece⁹ necklace and bracelet, in the hopes of announcing their affiliation with the autism identity. By doing so, this mom is hoping to offer an explanation for what might be perceived as bad behavior on the part of her son, and ineffective mothering on her part. Expressing her desire to announce their identities in public, Maryann laments, “I wish I could have, somehow on me, a big flashing light above my head.”

An escalation in identity work intensity coincides with a greater tendency to perform more intense appearance-related identity routines *within* identity space as well. With more relevant identities, individuals are more concerned with “dressing in” (Stone 1962:114), establishing congruency between their appearances and their identities so that they may deliver more persuasive identity performances when in the company of identity others. Presenting themselves as authentic identity workers seems particularly important to the more overstated fans. Leah is a Star Wars fan who owns a few pieces of Star Wars clothing, and while she occasionally wears this apparel outside of her home, she makes sure to put it on for the Star Wars-related activities she participates in (e.g., going to

⁹ A multi-colored puzzle piece is the symbol for autism.

special events, going to the movies, etc.). The way Elena, a Harry Potter fan, manages her appearance through clothing is similar. While she might wear her Harry Potter apparel when interacting in “secular” time and space, doing so is critical to Elena’s interactions that take place during marked identity time or in marked identity space. For certain Harry Potter events or “celebrations,” as she refers to them, it is very important to Elena that she is wearing something Harry Potter-related.

When the celebrations start, like that’s when it is important to you as a Harry Potter fan to look the part on these specific days... There are select days that are major in the Harry Potter world [like Harry’s birthday, or the first day of school] and it is important to me to acknowledge them [by] wearing the shirts or by wearing something.

Wearing his My Little Pony-related apparel in identity space is extremely important to Anderson’s efforts to present himself as an authentic fan.

It’s important when there are other people around who need to recognize it. Like, it’s important because it’s fun to be like, “Look, I’ve got my stupid shirt and there are 400 other people in this room who also have their stupid shirt.” That’s fun... Otherwise, I would say it doesn’t matter too much... that’s the only time it’s important to me is with other people.

Anderson reveals just how important the consistency between appearance and identity is to him when he is positioned in identity space by describing what happened when he once forgot to pack his My Little Pony shirt for a BronyCon (annual My Little Pony convention) he was attending:

Two year ago I went to BronyCon, and on the third day I didn’t have a shirt so I was like, “Crap! I gotta...” I had to make sure in the first hour of the day I had to buy a shirt. I’m not going to sit around and not have a shirt at *that* place!

While perhaps not as emphatic as the fans, the identity routines of the more fervent identity workers affiliated with the chronically ill and parent of exceptional children identities are also more focused on managing appearances that reflect their identities when they are engaged in identity environments. Emily makes sure that her wardrobe includes something teal (the color for Tourette Syndrome) on each “Teal

Tuesday” during Tourette Syndrome Awareness month or when she is attending a Tourette Syndrome event; “Absolutely. I got it on.” And Olivia found herself intentionally wearing pink for, “Just a little bit of oomph” during her trips into identity space to receive her chemotherapy treatments for her brain cancer; “I had a pink hat and a pink scarf and I wore that.” Since purple is the color associated with epilepsy, Dawn has worked purple clothing into her wardrobe, despite feeling like, “purple is not [her] color.” She respects identity time by making an effort to wear her identity-enhancing purple clothing during March, which is Epilepsy Awareness Month, as well as for special celebrations such as the anniversary of her being seizure free.

As identity work intensifies and identity workers become even more invested in doing that not only conforms to an identity’s local codes but goes beyond conventional work in both intensity and extensity, they approach the extreme end of the continuum of intensity and enter the realm of overconformers or overstated doers. These identity workers tend to be exceptionally concerned with looking the part, and are very open in the ways they manage the presentation of their identities. As the strongest promoters of their omnirelevant identities, overstated doers are the most inclined to visibly and regularly “put their identities out there” regardless of context.

These identity workers are, of course, devoted to adhering to the appearance-related codes for their particular identities, and go to great lengths to ensure that their appearances are consistent with the identities they are working to support. It is particularly important for these individuals to look the part when their interactions are positioned in identity space and/or identity time; Nicholas, a Mets fan, “definitely” has some Mets apparel on if he is going to a game, Jenelle, the mom of a gifted musical

theater kid, always wears her promotional t-shirts for the duration of the runs of her son's shows and Heidi, the mom of an autistic son, wears special autism puzzle-piece nail wraps on her fingernails during Autism Awareness Month. Michael, a Pentecostal pastor, describes how he makes sure he "looks the part" of a spiritual leader when interacting at his church, despite the fact that there is no particular identifying garment (such as a collar) affiliated with his religious denomination:

Although I do not have an official garb, I make sure that what I wear is something, I make sure that I look in a way that's honoring to God. I make sure that I'm clean cut and that I don't look sloppy. I want to bring honor to God.

Delivering identity routines designed to ensure that there are no discrepancies between appearance and identity in identity-appropriate contexts is not, of course, reserved only for these most extreme overstated doers; the identity work of many less intense doers still places a premium on looking the part in identity contexts. What sets the identity work of the extreme overdoer apart from that of others is his or her willingness to more regularly (and often continuously) play up appearance in attention-seeking ways in generic space. Take for example Lexi, an anime fan (anime refers to animation from Japan) who, by design, actually looks like an anime character! She has dark eyes, and dark, dyed hair styled in a short, round bob. She wears large glasses, dresses in attire that "emulate(s) Japanese styles of clothing," and believes that her mannerisms are inspired by anime culture. She describes her appearance as, "A technically, fairly boyish-style [similar] to [an anime] character," and admits, "I think if you look at me you could take a good guess that I look like I watch anime." Lexi also has a visible tattoo on her thigh of the anime character "Princess Mononoke," and always carries with her a key-chain lanyard that is full of anime-related pins, further connecting her physical appearance to her anime identity.

As a lifestyle-like overstated doer, Lexi quite pronouncedly takes her identity-related appearance with her into *any* situation in which she is interacting, and welcomes the attention that it brings; this identity, for Lexi, is omnirelevant and omnipresent and as a result, she is willing to share it with anyone at anytime and in any place. She reports that people approach her to ask her about the pins on her lanyard “a lot,” and she is happy to engage in identity talk during these encounters. In a similar way, the religious leaders who keep their white collars in place when their travels take them into secular space intentionally carry their identity-related appearances into any space they are interacting. Whether they are going to the gym after work or stopping at the post office, the priestly identities of Fathers Bob and John (Roman Catholic and Greek Orthodox, respectively) are always on display, because they choose to keep their collars on in these situations. Shari, the Episcopal priest, leaves her collar on if she’s making stops at local stores on her way home from work as well, and admits she likes announcing herself as a priest through her appearance in public places:

The other reason I like wearing it is because, for a long time, women couldn’t be priests and women have been priests for awhile but it’s still edgy in certain places and so it’s like, “I’m wearing my collar. I’m wearing my collar!”

Unlike the more understated religious leaders who remove their identifying garb prior to any interaction in the secular domain (e.g., Rabbi Anna, Rabbi Charles, Minister Rachel and Minister Mitchell), these more overstated religious leaders quite comfortable inserting their identities into generic space. Those adhering to the more overstated style of performing identity routines often share a greater desire to insert their marked identities into generic space because of the attention that it garners. Shari admits that she likes wearing her collar in public because she believes it is “edgy” and she wants people to acknowledge her identity, “I *want* people to know that women can be priests.” The

extremely conspicuous manner of doing for these very intense doers is frequently marked by an unabashed promotion of their identities, and they are likely to insert their identities into generic space in more provocative ways.

Joyce's non-verbal daughter has limited cognitive functioning and is unable to eat, breath or sit on her own; and despite the fact it is *far* easier to for her to care for her child at home where she is most comfortable, Joyce regularly takes her wheel-chair bound daughter out to participate in "normal" activities. She describes, for example, taking her to the grocery store, simultaneously pushing the child in her wheelchair while pulling the grocery cart behind her, thinking all the while, "Look at me! We're doing this!" She talks about her daughter's trips to the mall and local amusement parks, as well as regular bowling events and Girl Scouts' meetings – her daughter has even made her Bat-Mitzvah. And despite the fact that her daughter cannot participate in any of these activities in traditional ways, Joyce is very determined to continue this type of mainstream socializing rather than seek out activities specially designed for those with special needs, as many of the other parents of exceptional children she knows do. Through her amazingly admirable identity work, Joyce is presenting her marked identity (along with her daughter's) in generic space; she is infusing mainstream spaces with a very special, contrary identity. She knows that her appearance will garner attention, and it never bothers her; in fact, she loves it.

The high-intensity doing of Nicholas, who is a fan of the New York Mets, also demonstrates this tendency to provocatively infuse generic space with marked, contrary identities. Announcing his identity through his appearance is an integral component of Nicholas' doing, and he admits that outside of work, he "definitely" wears his Mets

apparel more than other items in his wardrobe; there is no place that he would not wear it. In fact, he has *intentionally* worn his Mets gear into enemy (i.e., hyper-contrary) territory, despite warnings from his friends not to do so, “I’ve worn it in Philadelphia, and I didn’t get murdered!” Nicholas’ behavior is similar to that of Gustavo, the severe asthmatic who inserts his sick identity into the contrary, “hyper-healthy” space of marathon running, acting as a literal walking billboard for asthma (he walks these races wearing promotional material for asthma products and pharmaceutical companies).

The identity work of Kate, who suffers from ulcerative colitis, is reflective of the overdoing tendency to confidently assert identity through appearance regardless of context. Because of her disease, Kate has an ostomy, a surgical hole in her side through which her urine and waste pass before collecting in a bag or pouch. Most of the time, Kate’s ostomy bag is imperceptible as it lays flush against her body underneath her clothing. As a young, attractive, fit twenty-something living in a year-round seashore community, this young lady makes regular trips to the beach. And while she could certainly wear a one-piece bathing suit that would cover her ostomy bag, she chooses instead to wear a bikini, which clearly exposes the medical equipment attached to her abdomen. Despite the fact that this bag is clearly visible to those around her, she laments, “Now, I’ve walked down beaches and seen a lot of people look at it. Nothing. No-one has ever said anything.” Since she has prepared several witty response options to address any potential inquires, she seems a bit disappointed that no one has approached her about the bag; she also seems perplexed, since some of her far more banal appearance-enhancing props have solicited comments from strangers, “I’m just very shocked...Now, when I went through my horrible arthritis flare up and I was walking with a cane, I had multiple

people stop me and say, ‘What happened to you?’”

The provocative ways in which overdoers are inclined to regularly insert their identities in generic – and even contrary identity space -- certainly sets them apart from other identity workers. Overstated doing is more typically associated with the regular (and often continuous) playing up and garnering attention for omnirelevant identities through appearance, regardless of context, while the focus on understated doing tends to be on playing down and not drawing attention to one’s identity-related appearance, particularly in generic space; middle-of-the-road doers strike more of a balance between the act of highlighting and downplaying their identity appearances. The manner in which an individual delivers an identity routine yields rich information regarding how he or she is doing identity.

Chapter Four: Props

Props and Identity

Identity extends beyond physical appearances, stretching into the “territory of the self” that includes the tangible environments containing the people, places and things -- the “identity-evoking items”-- that demonstrate and reinforce who we are (Nippert-Eng 1996:34). The items or props surrounding us in the territory of the self are “explicitly connected” to and inseparable from our notions of who we are (Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton 1981:16; Nippert-Eng 1996:35). Personal items such as clothing, cosmetics and other tools that assist in the management of the personal front serve as our “identity kits” (Goffman 1961a:20), helping to establish and communicate our sense of self to others. “Objects are tangible evidence testifying to the salient characteristics of personal biographies” (Silver 1990:2), thus providing another forum for doing identity.

While props are important transmitters of identity messages, there is a distinction between what I refer to as *essential* and *non-essential props*. *Essential props* are those items that are required by the identity; props that are either mandated for the well-being of the identity worker, or those that are essential for staking a claim to a particular identity. For those affiliated with the diabetic identity, for example, glucose monitors and insulin injectors are essential props because they are necessary to maintain the individuals’ health and well-being. For identity workers identifying with the parent identity, children are essential props as they are necessary to establish a connection to the identity. *Non-essential* props are those incidental items that, while clearly signifying identity affiliation, are not required to do so. Diabetes awareness and “proud parent” car magnets would be examples of non-essential props; while they may clearly communicate

connection to the diabetic and parent identities, respectfully, identity workers are not required to have them in order to do so. Most identities are connected to an array of props that are reflective of them, and regardless of whether they are essential or non-essential, the specific items included in the territory of one's self, and the ways in which these selected props are managed, offer rich evidence concerning the strategies being employed to achieve identity goals.

As an extension of physical appearance, apparel is an excellent example of a prop that can be used to convey specific messages about who one is (Stein 2011:297), and individuals may manage attire in order to reflect their association with and commitment to particular identities. Successful identity workers must “look the part” by following any apparel-related identity codes associated with their desired identities; they must “dress in,” so that they physically resemble the others who share their identities (Stone 1962:114). Dressing in involves wearing the proper “uniform” that represents a particular identity, and is essential for establishing an authentic claim to it (Stone 1962:113).

In his research exploring the identity work of Civil War hobbyists, Strauss (2001) finds clothing to be *the* key indicator of commitment to the identity (150). The apparel a hobbyist wears during a reenactment signals his or her level of competency and legitimacy as a reenactor, thus establishing his or her position in the authenticity hierarchy recognized by the group. The most genuine hobbyists, the “true believers,” are recognized by their efforts to achieve historical exactitude in all aspects of the fandom, but most particularly, in the area of dress. During reenactment events, these “hardcore” enthusiasts will exclusively don period-appropriate (and frequently less functional) apparel, such as hand-stitched long underwear. The management of clothing props in this

fashion sets these serious hobbyists apart from the group of inauthentic reenactors or “farbs,” who casually disregard this attention to detail (Strauss 2001:150), content to easily obtain and wear the modern, mass-produced synthetic undergarments more likely to keep them comfortable.

Apparel is a similarly important prop in the identity work done by athletes sidelined due to injuries. Hockey (2005) reveals how injured long-distance runners manage their appearances during times of rehabilitation in order to preserve their identities as legitimate runners. Despite being off of the running circuit, these individuals continue to wear the now unnecessary “running kit” of hardcore runners (e.g., serious running shoes, Gortex jackets, etc.) in order to maintain strong connections to their healthy runner identities (Hockey 2005:47). And Khanna and Johnson (2010) reveal how biracial individuals manipulate the styling of their clothing to assist them in passing as black. While one biracial young man works to achieve this identity goal by intentionally wearing “sagging pants” in an effort to *play up* his blackness (this fashion trend is tightly connected to African-American culture), another student chooses to *play down* or distance herself from her whiteness by rejecting the clothing styles adopted by whites (388).

Playing down the attributes that establish a connection to an undesirable identity in attempt to minimize one’s association with it is a strategy employed by defense attorneys with clients who are in need of “image adjustments.” Lawyers and client consultants often use apparel and accessories such as conservative suits, dresses and eyeglasses in an effort to downplay the alleged criminal identities of their clients. The connection between clothing and identity is very powerful; some argue that even the

texture of the clothing worn by defendants has the capacity to send unique messages (Amerman 2011).

Force (2010) describes how Dexter, the fictional serial killer from the US television series of the same name, takes this type of impression management into his own hands in order to control his image. As a well-liked and highly functional blood splatter expert, Dexter leads a double life that revolves around the management of his criminal, “marked” identity and his mainstream, “unmarked” identity (Brekhus 1996). In an effort to distance himself from his marked, serial killer identity – the one that is viewed as unnatural, remarkable, extreme, stigmatized, and “social specialized” (Brekhus 2003:14; Brekhus 1998:35; Brekhus 1996:502) -- Dexter must *play up* the unmarked, “normal” version of his self, the one that others see as natural, unremarkable, typical and “socially generic” (Brekhus 2003:14; Brekhus 1998:35; Brekhus 1996:502). By consciously and actively playing up the version of his self that is taken-for-granted, Dexter is working to “do normal.”

Dexter’s self-description of his existence as a performance, a front, a series of masks and costumes, and participation in a game illustrates the technologies of impression management required to achieve the ‘natural’ fact of normal personhood (Force 2010:339).

Through his continuous identity work, Dexter ensures that both his physical appearance and “manner” (Goffman 1959:24-25) are consistent with one another, as well as with those of typical people; by doing normal, Dexter is able to carefully conceal his discrediting deviance, distance himself from his marked identity, and pass as normal.

Scholars have explored the ways in which identity work can be done to distance individuals from particular identities in other realms. In their efforts to avoid being stereotyped as butch lesbians, Ezzell (2009) finds collegiate female rugby players doing

identity in specific ways designed to distance themselves from masculinity by playing up their feminine heterosexuality (118). By going to great lengths to look exceptionally feminine and attractive (i.e., like “Barbie Dolls on the pitch”), their identity work helps these women to establish and maintain their identity goals of being seen as “heterosexy” (Griffin 1992:252) athletes, something that sets them apart from the traditional masculine female rugby player identity.

The work of Emslie et al. (2015) also exposes women whose identity work is designed to promote counter-masculine identities, something they accomplish through the use of props that extend beyond wardrobes. These Scottish women establish and maintain their femininity by managing their alcohol consumption in very particular ways; by drinking traditionally ladylike beverages (such as wine and “fizzy” cocktails as opposed to beer) out of “proper” drinking vessels (such as cocktail and wine glasses as opposed to pint glasses) these drinking women work to ensure that they play up their femininity and distance themselves from “ladettes,” those masculine women who breach traditional notions of femininity by, for example, drinking pints of beer. (440). Used in this fashion, alcohol serves as an effective prop that assists women in meeting the goals of their very orchestrated gender performances.

A quick inventory of some of the props at one’s disposal – from food and drink items, to personal grooming objects, leisure and entertainment-related articles, and work- and home-related objects -- suggests a potentially boundless list of objects that may serve as identity tools. Props are important vehicles through which identity work is carried out within the realm of do-it-yourself (DIY) home improvement, where male householders perform the household tasks typically done by hired professionals (e.g. home repairs and

improvements). For many of these men, establishing domestic masculinity is an important way to distance themselves from their occupational identities and the stress that goes along with them, and Moisio et al. (2013) find many of these men using props to assist in this transitional identity work (311). Tools are particularly important here as they provide “concrete evidence” about the preferred identities these men are striving to make a claim to (Silver 1990:15):

To have tools, to have more tools, to have them hanging in the garage and other guys seeing them, people seeing them, you know it just gives off that persona that you're kind of a macho man. My friend, from Christmas, he got a brand-new big toolbox and he called to tell me about it (Moisio et al. 2013:309).

Other props used to signal domestic masculinity for some of these men include the completed do-it-yourself projects themselves, such as the addition of a deck on the house or a well-maintained lawn, “the yard is one of the few things that I think is a reflection of how the man is doing in the household” (Moisio et al. 2013: 309-310).

Props can also be used for the identity work performed far away from everyday domestic life -- by individuals working to establish vacation identities. Stein (2011) describes different prop management strategies employed by travelers as they engage in the identity work associated with creating temporary “vacation identities.” While items such as passports, portable alarm clocks and travel-sized toiletries are typically reserved for vacation mode, helping to establish and reinforce one’s travel identity, some travelers intentionally (and perhaps unintentionally) include items from home in their travels, thus integrating their vacation and everyday selves. These types of travelers bring along items such as favorite pillows, beverages and laptops containing music, photos and work-related documents – all heavily connected to their home identities. Other travelers, however, used props to firmly distance themselves from their everyday identities. In an

extreme example, one traveler created a nearly duplicate version of himself, by purchasing a new version of everything he needed for his journey, enabling him to totally disconnect from his everyday, home identity (Stein 2011:297-298). Goffman discusses residents of the Shetland Islands similarly engaging prop management strategies designed to *play down* their wealth and distance themselves from being perceived as financially secure. To avoid giving off the impression that they were in possession of extra money, some Shetlanders “used to refrain from improving the appearances of [their cottages] lest the laird take such improvements as a sign that increased rents could be extracted from them” (1959:39).

While individuals very often have an assortment of props at the ready to assist in their identity work, sometimes the meaning encapsulated by a single item powerfully conveys important identity messages about those using it. Eastman and Schrock (2008) find this to be the case with southern rock musicians who incorporate images of the confederate or rebel flag into their promotional materials, display the images while on tour (e.g., on their tour vehicles, in their dressing rooms, on stage, on band equipment), or permanently mark their bodies with this imagery (i.e., through tattooing) in order to reflect their southern heritage and help establish and maintain authentic white-trash identities (209-211).

It is not the mere use of props that has relevance for the construction and maintenance of identity, but also the particular ways in which the use of props are managed. Are identity-related props highlighted and used consistently, irrespective of context? Or, is the use of props carefully orchestrated and reserved for specific times, places and audiences? The varying strategies motivating the management and

presentation of props are the manifestation of identity work and indicate the relevance of a particular identity within the constitution of one's self.

Props and Identity Routines: From Understated to Overstated Doing

Discussing how identity workers manage the appearance component of their identity work naturally includes references to attire, and while they affect appearance, clothing and accessories are examples of props. Scholars have demonstrated the significance of props as extensions of our selves, used to convey messages about who we are, establish connections to our identities and reflect our commitment to them (Hockey 2005: 47; Stein 2011: 297; Strauss 2001:150). For the purposes of this research, a prop is conceptualized as any item an individual believes to be connected to or reflective of his or her particular identity. And as might be expected, identity workers mention a wide-range of items that they consider to be identity-related props; some examples follow:

For the Chronic Illness Identity: Medications (e.g., pills, inhalers, injectables), medical equipment (e.g., fanny packs, braces, canes, nebulizers), medical supplies (e.g., bandages, tape, personal care products), medical paperwork (e.g., related to insurance, fundraising, support groups), handicapped hangtags, books, wigs, makeup, clothing (e.g., survivor t-shirts, fundraising-related t-shirts), jewelry (e.g., medical alert bracelets), car magnets, mugs, home décor (e.g., inspirational plaques).

For the Parent of Exceptional Child Identity: Medications (that they are responsible for administering to their children), medical equipment (that they manage for their children), medical supplies (that they manage for their children), items that they hold for their children (e.g., iPads, special blankets, special snacks, identification), clothing and accessories (e.g., jewelry in support of child's needs or activities, fundraising t-shirts, support t-shirts), playbills, newspaper articles, trophies, awards, car magnets.

For the Fan Identity: Clothing, jewelry, posters, stuffed animals, figurines, coffee mugs, shot glasses, backpacks, dvds, cds, books, magazines, stickers, key chains, lanyards, artwork, blankets and comforters, home décor, lunch boxes, toys, mouse pads, flags, license plate frames, car magnets.

For the Religious Leader Identity: Clothing and accessories, Bibles, books, artwork, home décor, DVDs, cds, photographs, car magnets.

In addition to being diverse in content, the variation in the sizes of prop collections among identity workers is notable. For example, while some individuals find the task of providing a verbal inventory of their props quite difficult, as there are simply too many items to recall, others find it difficult to think of *anything* beyond the one or two marquee items that they own related to their identities. But, as demonstrated by Eastman and Schrock's research on the confederate flag (2008), the meaning encapsulated in a single item has the capacity to powerfully convey messages about identity affiliation. And while the sizes of prop collections vary within particular identities, there are also notable size differences between the identities. Fans, for example, generally have the largest collections of props followed by the chronically ill; the collections of the parents of exceptional children and religious leaders tended to be the smallest.

The extent to which identity workers collect identity-related props, and the manner in which they manage their collections reveals important information about how they are doing identity. Regardless of the characteristics of their collections or identity affiliations, identity workers manage their props in similar ways, reflective of the intensity of their identity routines. The understated doers positioned in the space at the lower-end of the continuum are relatively less invested in prop-related identity work and have the smallest collections as a result. Max, a life-long comic fan, lists one t-shirt and a box of comics and books in his collection, Kathleen, an alternative lifestyle fan, reports that she only has a few "toys," and the only props Greg has connected to his Black Crowe fan identity are cds of the band's music. Dan, an asthmatic, mentions that his inhaler is his only prop, while Rick includes his medications, a few pieces of medical equipment

(e.g., leg brace and cane) and the handicapped hangtag that he “occasionally” uses in his inventory of diabetic-related props. Liz, the mom of an exceptional soccer player mentions only a collection of newspaper articles as items related to her identity, and Barbara and Ross, who both have children with ADHD, cannot think of a single prop that reflects their identities. The more understated religious leaders mention that kippahs, collars, bibles, jewelry and art comprise their prop collections. The number of props these individuals have related to their identities does not typically outnumber the items they have related to other identities or interests they may have.

In addition to being relatively smaller in size, a distinguishing feature of the prop collections of these understated doers is that they are primarily composed of essential items, those that are mandated by the identity to either establish a connection to it or ensure the well-being of the identity worker; these collections do not typically extend beyond these fundamental items. The understated fans have their requisite merchandise and the religious leaders their essential apparel; the chronically ill have their essential medications and medical equipment, and parents have *the* signature prop mandated by their identities – a child. And while there is an endless array of non-essential props potentially connected to each these identities (e.g., car magnets, coffee mugs, home décor, etc.), securing these types of items is far less characteristic of individuals with more understated approaches to doing.

The ways in which these identity workers use and display their props also differs from others in distinct ways. These identity workers primarily use their props in identity-appropriate contexts, where such use is anticipated or normalized. As demonstrated in the appearance section, understated doers manage their appearance-related props in this way,

primarily reserving their use for identity settings. The ministers and rabbis only wear their collars and kippahs when positioned in the religious world, fans only wear their “fan gear” when participating in their fan worlds, and parents don identity-related apparel props during special times of the year (e.g., awareness months). Understated doers likewise manage their other types of props in a similar fashion. The rabbis and ministers leaders use their bibles and prayer books for the performance of their religious duties, Kathleen only uses her fetish toys when she is participating in play dates, and Max reserves his comic book reading for the comic section of the bookstore or the comfort of his home. Prop use by the understated chronically ill also tends to be limited to essential identity-related activities, as these identity workers almost exclusively only use those props related to their care (e.g., medications, medical equipment such as canes and braces, wigs, etc.) – props that are normalized for their particular identities.

Reflective of their low-intensity identity routines, these identity workers use their props in obligatory ways that conform to their identities’ local codes, but their use does not typically extend beyond that which is requisite. Reserved and discreet doing are the foundations of their identity work, and some of the more fervent understated doers even demonstrate reluctance to bring attention to their identities through the use of props when they are positioned in marked environments. At one point during our interview, Rabbi Charles stops to show me the robe that he wears for very high holidays. The plain, white robe resembles a graduation robe, and is hanging in the office closet next to the robe of a fellow rabbi. “His has more bling,” he remarks, pointing out the silver trim lining his younger colleague’s robe, “Some people are more in your face and some are more low key, can you figure out where I am?” Despite the fact that he would only be wearing this

robe to lead his congregants in services performed at his synagogue, this understated identity worker prefers not to “flaunt” his identity through a flashy prop. Rich is a diabetic who manages his props in a similar way in what seem to be particularly identity-safe environments; not wanting to be “in their face” with his identity, he slips into the bathroom to administer his nightly injectable medication on the evenings he attends his regular jam sessions with a group of long-time musician friends, despite the fact that they are all very familiar with his condition.

The more inconspicuous nature of their doing manifests notably when understated doers must manage their props in generic space. Since they are least inclined to unveil their identities when in public space or among identity outsiders, these identity workers are more likely to engage in identity work designed to play down or conceal their prop usage when in such identity-inappropriate space. The more understated religious leaders accomplish this by removing their collars and kippahs prior to entering the secular world. In the asthma world, there is a technique called “stealththing,” which involves asthmatics’ implementing diversionary tactics when they must use their inhalers (the hand-held devices that deliver medications to the lungs) in order to divert attention away from and “camouflage” the fact that they are taking medication (Zerubavel 2015:44-48). Gustavo explains:

We can use our inhalers, and you wouldn’t even know it. I could do it right in front of you...there are ways of disguising it or hiding an inhaler so nobody knows that we’re actually taking a hit. So, and I do this in public all the time, and I don’t think anyone’s ever caught me.

This is precisely what Dan does when using his asthma inhaler in the gym, a space that is certainly inconsistent with his chronically ill identity.

Their particular style to delivering their identity routines is further highlighted by understated doers' more informal approach to the storage and display of their props; these identity workers are much more likely to store and display their prop collections in more unremarkable ways. Dan keeps his asthma items in his car and Max and Kathleen keep their comic books and fetish toys, respectively, in boxes and bags underneath their beds; while his dining room table stores the majority of items related to Rick's diabetes, Liz uses her dining room table to store her vast collection of newspaper articles about her daughter the soccer star.

Other understated doers indicate that their props are simply "mixed in" with the other items that take up space in their homes and offices. Essentially camouflaged and attentionally difficult to notice due to the unremarkable ways in which they are stored (Zerubavel 2015:27-48), the identity-related props of the understated doers are more often treated "just like the other stuff." From Greg's favorite band's music cds being mixed in with all of the other cds in his extensive collection, to Minister Mitchell's collar kept being kept in a desk drawer along with "pens and things," to Judaica (items pertaining to Jewish customs and life) and medical equipment and supplies being sprinkled throughout the homes of the rabbis and chronically ill, understated doers generally store and present identity-related props in unexceptional ways reflective of the less visible way they prefer to do identity.

And for the most steadfast understated doers, those whose identity work is more likely to involve the undoing designed to distance themselves from undesirable identities, prop management is often correspondingly extreme. While Shannon *always* kept essential props (e.g., medication) tucked away out of sight, some non-essential props that

she received as gifts during the course of her breast cancer journey were purposefully removed from her immediate surroundings, “Out of sight, out of mind. I didn’t want to deal with it.” For example, after receiving a breast cancer mug from the Cancer Institute, she admits, “I didn’t want anything to do with it so that went in the basement or it’s tossed; I don’t even know where it is. I will *not* have that out.” Meredith similarly removed all of her gifted non-essential props. Throughout the course of her journey, she received a number of trinkets related to her cancer-- cards, letters, jewelry, inspirational plaques – and upon receiving each one, immediately placed them in an out-of-sight box. “I don’t want to see it, I don’t need it in my face.”

The more intense performance of identity routines is correlated with larger collections of props that are more diverse in nature – as intensity grows, so too grows the propensity to include non-essential props in collections. Increased intensity has particular notable implications for the prop collection of the fans. While the more understated fans typically have but a few essential props related to their identities, collections quickly grow in line with more active doing. Leah’s collection of Star Wars memorabilia includes t-shirts, mugs, posters, books, magazines, Lego sets, light sabers, collector’s helmets, toys and a copy of every Star Wars movie, among other things. Elena’s collection also includes every Harry Potter movie, as well as special edition movies, every movie poster and every book; she also has t-shirts, mugs, shot glasses, glasses, socks, key rings and a computer mouse pad. And Anderson lists t-shirts, key chains, posters, scarfs, plushies, magnets, mugs, rocks glasses, pint glasses and “massive amounts” of plastic toys as items in his My Little Pony collection.

While prop collections of the chronically ill, religious leaders and parents of

exceptional children grow with more intense doing, the corresponding growth in the diversity of their collections that ensues is particularly interesting, as prop collections begin to extend beyond those essential props affiliated with their identities. These more-invested doers are more likely to mention non-essential props in their collections such as clothing, jewelry, accessories, car magnets, identity-related license plates, home décor (e.g., artwork, pillows), books and illness-related diaries. Additionally, many of these non-essential props are very commonly used in public (e.g., car magnets, license plates, clothing, jewelry and accessories), giving them the capacity to draw attention to the identities of those using them.

An increasing ease of sharing increasing relevant identities accompanies more intense identity routines, and this manifests in individuals' greater willingness to visibly use props in generic space. Olivia has a "Cure Cancer" license plate on her car, and Sue's car, as well as the car of each member of her family, has a cystic fibrosis magnet in support of her illness. Elena has Harry Potter posters adorning her cubicle at work, and the My Little Pony keychain that holds Anderson's car keys is always connected to his backpack; he also regularly uses his Pinky Pie coffee mug at work. He admits that his mug is "a curiosity...an object ... of entertained interest" to his coworkers, and he seems to enjoy its provocative nature. And like many of the more intense identity workers, he is willing to take his identity into even greater public space. Uneasy about flying, Anderson describes a trip he once took with a Rainbow Dash plushie in tow:

Anderson: And I took Rainbow Dash on a plane because I don't like flying, and Rainbow Dash loves flying. So, I put a little, I brought a little Rainbow Dash on the plane.

Interviewer: And where did Rainbow Dash sit on the plane?

Anderson: Seat pocket. Wedged in there.

Interviewer: So no, "This has got to stay in my bag, I know she's in there helping me?"

Anderson: No, no!

Interviewer: She was right there.

Anderson: Right!

Their greater investment in identity work is further reflected in the more exceptional and visible ways that they choose to display their prop collections. Shari, an Episcopal priest reports that her collars “live” on their own in a very special drawer in her jewelry chest; compare this to the doing of the more understated Minister Mitchell, who stores his collars in an office drawer along with an assortment of “pens and things.” Very notable differences regarding the presentation of props is seen among the fans; unlike the less intense fans, who tend to store their prop collections in unremarkable places (e.g., in boxes under the bed, mixed in with props connected to other identities) those fans who are more fervent in doing their tend to more prominently display their props. The bulk of Leah’s Star Wars collection is on display in her son’s bedroom (they share the fandom), “The entire room is full of Star Wars stuff,” stuff that she will never get rid of, “I’ve *never* thrown anything Star Wars away. I have it all...anything else I throw away.” Because she and her son are in the process of watching all of the Star Wars movies, this component of the collection has been moved into the family room, and she is quick to point out: “But...I *always* know where they are, and I panic if I don’t know where they are. And they all have to be put back in their case.” Compare Leah’s more invested, formal approach to managing her prop collection to that of Greg who, as a more minimal doer, clearly has a very different strategy for managing his collection of Black Crowes music, which is indiscriminately mixed in with his entire massive music collection:

I don’t have a Black Crowes, what’s the right word to use, ‘altar’ (HE BEGINS TO LAUGH). But they’re just mixed in with the other CDs, you know. But I can find them, you know, I must have, oh God knows, four or 500 CDs.

While Greg laughs at the thought of displaying his props on an “altar,” this type of prop presentation is something that becomes increasingly common with more intense doing. Leah has admittedly turned her son’s room into a Star Wars shrine of sorts, and the merchandise collections of the Harry Potter, anime, and My Little Pony fans occupy positions of prominence in their bedrooms – perhaps the most important rooms for these identity workers who share their apartments with roommates. Elena, for example, has her Harry Potter shot glass collection lined-up and on display in her bedroom, and Lexi’s college bedroom houses her massive collection of anime figurines, stuffed animals and other collectibles –all presented on special anime shelves. When asked where he keeps his extensive collection, Anderson explains: “It’s mostly in my room. I’ve got a big shelf and all the ponies are on the shelf. The shelf’s now full, so some of them are on the desk, some of them are on the dresser.” Testimony to the more open doing of these identity workers, Anderson’s collection has also spread into the more public space of the apartment that he shares with his friends who are *not* fellow fans: “A couple of [ponies] are in the room, the living room. There are two posters, one in the living room and one in the dining room, both of which are pony related.”

Those chronically ill identity workers whose identity routines tend to be more overstated are also inclined to allow their props to spread into the more public areas of their homes. Unlike the understated doers, who confine their illness-related props to the most private areas of their homes (e.g., bedrooms, closets within bedrooms, boxes in basements), the more conspicuous doers are less concerned with these items being seen by others. Sue describes how she manages the medical equipment that she uses for nebulizing saline multiple times a day:

Sue: I have my nebulizer, it's in the living room so when you go into the living room you always see it because *it's always in there* cause that's where I'll neb.

Interviewer: So, if someone were coming over, if the kids had friends coming over... you'd leave it out? You don't try to hide it or anything like that?"

Sue: Hmmm-mmm (No), Hmmm-mmm (No).

And when she takes off the foot brace she must wear to help with her MS-induced mobility issues, Daphne puts it, "on the coffee table" or somewhere in the family room, knowing that it will likely be visible to outsiders.

As individuals approach the more extreme version of overdoing, they become even more invested in their prop collections, devoting increasing time, energy and capital to securing these items; the most fervent overdoers boast the most extensive prop collections in terms of size and scope. Linda, the non-sport trading card collector, is an avid collector of bobbin head dolls as well, and has well over 1,000 of these figurines. And while she is reluctant to report the size of her card collection, she acknowledges that it *far* exceeds her collection of dolls, and that there are simply "way too many" to even attempt to put a number on. Melissa, who is a Baptist minister, has "a whole library of religious books," and while his inventory of Mets paraphernalia is far too extensive to cite here, Nicholas has essentially been collecting Mets merchandise his whole life, "I've graduated maybe from the lunch boxes and the whiffle ball bats a little bit; now I have Mets pint glasses and whisky glasses and that kind of stuff."

Many of the most intense doers who are affiliated with the chronically ill and parent of exceptional children identities also have markedly larger and more diverse collections of props that tend to eclipse the collections they have in support of other identities that are relevant to them. Kate mentions a variety of props that she uses in support of her ulcerative colitis – from the medications and medical supplies she uses to

take care of her health to the cameras and special lights that she uses to film her regular podcasts. And like Kate, Gustavo finds that the abundance of props he uses in support of his asthmatic identity spill throughout his home, “I don’t want my house to look like a hospital, even though it actually does.” And the countless array of props that Joyce and Stan use to care for their profoundly disabled children can be found anywhere in their homes. Joyce explains,

It’s everywhere...everywhere. Our house is modified so that she can get in it. We had to pick a house that would work for us, we have to have a way to get her in the house and everything is modified. She has a roll-in shower...a lot of our money goes to revamping things which makes life easier.

While the essential props associated with these parents’ identities have undeniably been secured to serve dramatically different purposes than those essential props associated with the achieved identities, we can still glean valuable information regarding identity work by exploring the similar ways in which they are managed.

Prop collections tend to be presented in increasingly more formal and exceptional ways for those with more intense identity routines. As the parent of an extraordinarily talented musical theater kid, Jenelle takes great pride in displaying the mementos she has collected from the various projects her son has been involved with. “I have *every* playbill, *every* poster for *any* show that he’s *ever* done... I can’t throw any of it away.” Each keepsake has been framed and hangs on a special wall that leads into her basement, a basement that is still set up as her son’s theater, despite the fact that he no longer lives at home. Jenelle also has a special shelf in that basement, a “dedicated shelf [that displays] *any* kind of award that he ... *ever* got.”

And while Nicholas’ Mets merchandise and apparel is sprinkled throughout his home, the bulk of it resides in his basement, which has been transformed into very special

space:

Nicholas: Most of it's in the basement, cause that's my little man cave.

Interviewer: So, it's not in boxes in the basement?

Nicholas: No, no, no, no. Oh no!

Interviewer: So, it's displayed down there?

Nicholas: Definitely displayed down there.

The more than one thousand bobbin head dolls that make up Linda's collection are formally displayed in four china cabinets:

I have a beautiful, what do you call that, cabinet in my living room that you normally display dishes and things; that is completely full with bobbin heads. My mother, may she rest in peace, could never understand how I could have that full of bobbin head dolls!

LAUGHS

So when anyone walks into our home they see that. We have two cabinets in our dining room that are completely full of bobbin heads. They can walk into the back where our office is and they would see more two more cabinets full of bobbin heads. I really don't buy many anymore because I have no place to put them!

And consistent with more conspicuous presentations of their very salient identities, overdoers' props are more likely to spill outside of their homes into more visible public space. Greg has a Mets flag that flies outside of his home, a scripture verse is embroidered into the welcome mat outside of Minister Melissa's front door, and Heidi regularly has a blue light bulb in her porch light fixture in support of autism awareness. These identity workers are also more inclined to spread their props beyond their homes as they use them to establish their identities in their places of employment, as demonstrated by the Baptist and Pentecostal ministers. Employed both in the religious and secular sectors, both Minister Melissa and Pastor Michael proudly display props related to their spiritual worlds in their secular offices. Melissa displays both a bible and Christian literature on her desk at work and has a scripture calendar hanging on her wall; Michael

has a photo of his youth ministry group displayed on his desk, in addition to a picture of a scripture verse. As overstated doers, these religious leaders are very willing to share their identities, regardless of context. Their out-in-the-open lifestyler-approach to doing identity is completely contrary to the discreet, commuter-approach adopted by the understated religious leaders who also have (or have had) simultaneous religious and secular employment positions and rarely (if ever) unveil their spiritual identities in generic contexts.

Extending his prop-related doing even beyond the boundaries of the workplace, Nicholas epitomizes an overstated doer with the way he managed identity-related props – that is, Mets orange and blue – on his wedding day. For this most special occasion, Nicholas wore a blue and orange tie, as did all of his groomsmen. The bridesmaids all had orange flowers in their bouquets, and various items through the reception, such as the napkins, were also blue and orange. Nicholas’ desire to infuse his wedding day with elements of his fan identity demonstrates the forthright approach overstated doers take as they do identity. These individuals are more inclined to collect, display and use their identity-related props with greater abandon – something demonstrated by Landon, who wears his My Little Pony plushy to a 5k run; Jack, the father of a diabetic who is willing to administer the child’s medication anywhere; Kate, the young lady with ulcerative colitis who intentionally wears a bikini to expose her ostomy bag, and Father John, the Greek orthodox priest who wears his collar to his gym. These overstated doers are, once again, very inclined to engage their identity routines in very visible – even provocative ways that reflect their particular style of doing. And their lifestyler-like, overconforming strategies carry over to the other areas of their identity work including identity talk, the

topic of the next section.

Chapter Five: Identity Talk

Identity Talk and Identity

As an integral component of social interaction, conversation is essential to conducting identity work; “people actively produce identity through their talk” (Howard 2000:372) by engaging in diverse “rhetorical strategies” designed to establish and uphold their particular identity claims (Schwalbe and Schrock 1996:117). Through the self-disclosure naturally involved in identity talk, individuals open up their “information preserves” (Zerubavel 1982:103) and coordinate the resulting dissemination of the contents in specific ways designed to support their identities. Others make general assumptions about “who one is” based upon the personal information made available to them (Zerubavel 1982:99), suggesting that individuals have the capacity to shape these perceptions through what they share. Discourse, therefore, becomes an important component of doing identity as it provides another forum through which notions of the self are produced (Hadden and Lester 1978: 339).

Perhaps the most fundamental form of identity talk includes verbal identification and disidentification, where individuals either make claims to or reject specific identities by verbally asserting, “*I am this*” or “*I am not that*” (Khanna and Johnson 2010:386; emphasis added). The former reflects the discursive strategy of “embracement,” defined as “the verbal and expressive confirmation of one’s acceptance of an attachment to” an identity, while the latter is indicative of a “distancing” strategy, which identity workers

implement in an effort to distance themselves from identities inconsistent with their self-notions (Snow and Anderson 1987:1354, 1348).¹⁰

Snow and Anderson describe encounters with homeless individuals who they find outwardly embracing their identities by enthusiastically, proudly, and frequently referring to themselves using labels such as “tramps” and “bums” (Snow and Anderson 1987:1354-1355). Anthony and Schrock (2014) contend that this simple verbal identification is the most basic way discourse is used to seal affiliation with a particular identity, and report the strategy being employed by the self-taught artist collective known as The Florida Highwaymen in order to efficiently cement authentic affiliations with the highly-coveted identity. The authors find members of the group routinely referring to themselves as “original” Highwaymen; while one artist introduces himself to someone by declaring, “I’m [name], *I’m one of the original Highwaymen*,” another begins a public speech with the following: “I’ll start by saying, my name is [name], *one of the original Highwaymen*” (78-79; emphasis added).

Howard (2006) highlights the opposing strategy of distancing in her research on “recovery identities,” those identities based on disorder labels such as “bulimic,” “alcoholic,” or “bipolar” (397). In exploring the progression of the recovery identity (i.e., from entering into identity through exiting from it), Howard finds shifting discursive strategies for managing the disorder label. Embracing disorder labels at the early stages of their recovery careers brought explanation, “comfort and relief” to identity workers, who were happy to have a name to attach to their experiences: “It was a relief that there

¹⁰ Snow and Anderson’s concepts of embracement and distancing are inspired by the work of Goffman.

was some way to talk about and identify this thing. I really embraced the label, and it became something that was central to my existence...[it] really helped me get a *handle* on it” (Howard 2006:313; emphasis in original). However, as individuals progressed through their recovery careers, they altered their strategies and engaged verbal disidentification as a tactic to assist in disconnecting from the disorders they were ready to leave behind. Howard’s refers to these individuals who formerly identified with disorder labels as “delabelers,” and they are the focus of her work; she explains the significance of their shifting strategies of verbal assertion:

The comfort provided by using labels... in the short term was replaced eventually by a desire for freedom from the identity prison that the delabelers felt their labels had become in the long term. To ‘break out,’ the delabelers chose to disassociate entirely from their former disorder identities (2006:317).

Delabelers are looking to redefine themselves, and not referring to themselves by their former labels is essential to helping them achieve their new identity goals. Killian and Johnson (2006) similarly describe North African immigrant women in France implementing verbal disidentification to assist in the accomplishment of their identity goals. In their desire to redefine the perceptions others have of them by establishing positive identities for themselves (e.g., being well-adjusted, financially well-off, etc.), these women refuse and deny the immigrant label and identity. Exemplifying disidentification with the identity, a “not me” presentation of the self, one immigrant remarks, “I don’t consider myself an immigrant. Not at all. In fact we have that problem: someone says to you ‘Are you an immigrant?’ I say ‘No, I’m not an immigrant.’” (60,75).

Outright declarations or denials of affiliation are not always appropriate strategies for securing legitimate claims to some identities; the identity work performed in the

construction and maintenance of identities related to gender, for example, could be undermined by such statements. In their attempts to construct authentic masculine identities for themselves, teenaged boys' outright declarations of manliness might likely fall on deaf ears. Pascoe's (2005) research exploring the "fag discourse" demonstrates how high school boys develop and assert their masculinity through a more effective, nuanced use of the an identity label. Pascoe argues that by using the "fag" epithet *to refer to others*, boys are able to place a wedge between themselves and a less-than-masculine identity; they are able to repudiate the "abjected" fag identity and in doing so, create and support their own preferred masculine identities (333).

Kubrin's work (2005) also explores the construction of masculine identities, and demonstrates how identity talk that moves beyond simple verbal identification or disidentification is managed to assert identity. The street code associated with the culture of black youth in poor urban communities dictates that individuals learn the value of developing a reputation of violence in order to gain respect among their peers (Anderson 1999:67). Kubrin (2005) describes how rappers employ a more implicative, linguistic type of verbal identity assertion through rap lyrics, where they use language to construct the hyper-masculine, tough and violent identities so important in these communities. By infusing their lyrics with references to their dangerous and wild nature and violent reputations, these musicians successfully make and uphold claims to their violent identities (370-371).

Individuals may also engage strategies of selective discourse when performing talk-related identity work in support of particular identities. By carefully orchestrating the details associated with their discourse (e.g., what they share as well as when, where, why

and with whom they share it), individuals are able to maintain control over their identities (Charmaz 1991:109-110) by regulating when they are engaged and to what extent. The *discourse policing* an individual implements in connection with his or her identity talk for a particular identity reveals tremendous insight into the identity's salience. Individuals doing identity work in support of omnipresent identities that are central features of their selves adopt a very lax approach to discourse regulation. Since their identities are "highly salient across *all* social contexts and at *all* times" (Brekhus 2003:39; emphasis added), they are willing to infuse conversations with identity-related talk regardless of where they are, who they are with, when the conversations are being held and what is being discussed. Yodanis (2006) observes this lifestyler-like behavior in her research on "doing class," where she describes a woman making discursive efforts to support her upper-class identity; because she believed it to be indicative of an upper-class lifestyle, this individual "managed to insert her travel experiences [into every discussion] no matter what the topic of conversation" (356).

Others choose to be more discrete about their identities, reflected by their tendencies to be more particular about the details related to discussing them. By choosing to engage in identity talk only with particular individuals during particular times and in particular ways, individuals are able to establish a sense of control over their identities (Donovan-Kicken et al. 2011:318). Yodanis observes another woman asserting her working-class identity in conversations with her coffee shop friends by refusing to discuss her daughter's stellar academic performance. She chooses, instead to "bury" the information about her daughter, since she believes that disclosing it to this particular

audience would be discordant with the identity codes of the working-class identity she is trying to support (2006:361).

Raby and Pomerantz (2015) similarly find “self-declared ‘smart girls’” strategically playing down their intelligence in order to avoid the danger of being seen as introverted know-it-alls who are too focused on school. Recognizing the incompatibility between smartness and popularity, these young ladies, who value popularity, monitor their identity talk around their classmates in order to “tinker with [and] negotiate” how their peers perceive them (508, 512-513, 516). While proud of her academic prowess, one “smart girl” is careful not to talk about it when in the company of popular kids, “I do [feel proud] but I don’t try to flaunt it. I’m proud but I don’t say it.” Another young lady employs a “dumbing down” strategy by refraining from identity talk in the classroom in an attempt to avoid being seen as a “braniac”; she explains, “Sometimes I won’t raise my hand in class as often and definitely I don’t share my marks... you really have to watch it. You don’t want to be the know-it-all” (Raby and Pomerantz 514-515). By reserving their identity-related discourse for appropriate audiences, these young ladies have adopted the segmenting approach to identity work described by Brekhus (2003), as they turn their identity chatter on and off based on the contexts in which they are interacting.

In an attempt to secure identities that are not highlighted by disease, Campion (2014) finds breast cancer survivors engaging in conversational strategies designed to minimize cancer talk. For these individuals, talk of cancer was reserved almost exclusively for particular times (e.g., when discussing their past, when directly questioned) and specific audiences (e.g., family members, other survivors, medical staff), and was given a particular degree of attention (e.g., not dwelled upon) (15, 23). One

survivor, who uncharacteristically engages in cancer talk with a stranger, explains her decision to do so, “I don’t normally talk about [my cancer], but somehow, it came out that [this woman] had breast cancer and I did [talk about it], we’re both survivors. So we shook hands [and talked]” (Campion 2014:22).

While rigorous discourse policing is an effective strategy for those identity workers concerned with tightly monitoring the engagement (and disengagement) of their unique identities, individuals implementing identity work to support omnipresent identities tend to be very indifferent towards such regulation. For others, the management of identity talk in support of a salient identity falls somewhere between these two extremes. These identity workers exercise a more organic approach to controlling exchanges about their identities, allowing them to ebb and flow like any other conversations they might have, reflecting the more integrative position of the salient identity. They would be as likely to bring the subject up themselves as they would be to let it surface naturally, and their identity talk would involve the same audiences and receive the same type of attention as any other topic of interest to them.

Identity Talk and Identity Routines: From Understated to Overstated Doing

Discourse is another forum in which individuals do identity work by implementing the “rhetorical strategies” that “actively produce identity” (Howard 2000: 372; Schwalbe and Schrock 1996:117). For the purposes of this research, identity talk includes whatever discourse individuals engage in that they consider relevant to their identities. For the religious leaders, identity talk includes the prayers that they lead with their congregations as well as the private prayers they have with God. Fans engage in identity talk when they discuss their favorite band’s new music, or when making plans to

attend an upcoming concert. Identity talk includes the discussions parents have with the coaches of their exceptional athletes, and the recaps the chronically ill give concerned family members after medical appointments. Engaging in these identity-sharing conversations involves the consideration of a number of details, and regardless of identity affiliation, identity workers exhibit similar patterns with regard to how they manage this discourse policing. The tenor of discursive identity work transitions along the varying intensity of identity routines; low intensity doing generally involves obligatory identity talk that is subject to strict regulation and carried out in a discreet fashion. As doing intensifies in support of more salient identities, individuals become increasingly more relaxed in their discursive policing, engaging in increasingly more frequent, revealing identity talk with increasingly broader audiences in increasingly broader contexts.

The identity routines of understated doers suggest that they are comparatively less invested in identity talk as they do not devote as much time and effort to conversations related to their identities. Much of the identity-related talk these individuals do participate in can be described as requisite discourse -- discussions that are necessitated by identity affiliation. Examples of essential identity talk include those conversations that transpire between the parents of exceptional children and the individuals who are connected to the management of their children's talent (e.g., coaches, tutors) or conditions (e.g., doctors, therapists, teachers), as well as the dialogues that are required of religious leaders during the course of performing their religious duties and the conversations they have with their congregants. Essential identity talk includes the exchanges that arise between the chronically ill and those associated with the care of their conditions (e.g., caregivers,

medical professionals, therapists, insurance companies), or between fellow fans participating in activities related to their fandoms.

Essential identity talk also includes the more casual, brief conversations that are a part of day-to-day social interaction; those exchanges where identity-related inquiries are made, and identity workers feel obligated to participate: How did your last chemotherapy session go? Did your daughter's team win the Geography Bowl? What did you think of the new Harry Potter movie? Compliance in these types of conversations is generally mandated by the identity codes affiliated with these identities, and understated doers generally conform. Their identity talk typically does not, however, extend beyond what might be considered obligatory; the *vast* majority of these identity workers report that their identity routines include very little, if any, non-essential identity talk. As Greg, a fan of the Black Crowes explains, identity talk is "just not important to me."

Another hallmark of understated identity routines is creating and sustaining less accessible and less visible identities. A key way individuals accomplish this is through their very regimented discourse policing. By primarily choosing to engage in identity talk with particular individuals during particular times and in particular ways, these identity workers are able to establish control over their omnicontextual identities (Donovan-Kicken et al. 2011:318) as they carefully manage who becomes privy to the contents of their "information preserves" (Zerubavel 1982:103). These commuter-like, low-intensity doers are comparatively more likely to limit their identity talk to identity-appropriate audiences in identity-appropriate spaces. Max admits that while he doesn't have many discussions related to his love of comics, the conversations that he does have typically only take place with fellow fans. And although Liz doesn't really chat much about being

the mother of an All-American soccer player, she admits that when she is with friends who are also the parents of a phenomenal soccer player, “that’s what we talk about.”

When asked about her identity talk, Shannon states, “I just don’t want to talk about it,” but on the rare occasions when she does discuss her breast cancer, it is because she feels obligated to do so, such as when she is answering questions posed by intimates inquiring about a recent appointment or how she feels, or when interacting with identity insiders, such as medical professionals and other survivors. Despite her great reluctance to discuss anything related to her identity, she regularly chats with a fellow-survivor, “Her I talk to, and I keep in contact with her.” And similarly, Ross, the father of a child with ADHD, does not like to engage in identity talk but will do so when it is necessary, such as when he needs to exchange information about his son’s condition with doctors or teachers, or when he is interacting with identity insiders, such as a close friend who has ADHD or his coworkers who “have issues with their children.”

Matt, who is the father of a special needs kid, and Rabbi Charles admittedly do not engage in much non-essential identity talk; however they do spend substantial time having such discussions with their spouses. I ask Rabbi Charles, “Do you and your wife talk about the things related to your being a rabbi?” and he responds, “All the time!” Matt similarly reports that he and his wife discuss identity-related topics “*All* the time.” Kathleen, who reports that she is not one to engage in much non-essential identity talk, enjoys the opportunity to do so with a friend who shares her identity, “One of the reasons I love getting together with her, is cause I can talk to her even more so than most people... I can tell her really how I feel.”

While these individuals might feel obligated to speak about their identities when directly questioned about them or when in appropriate identity contexts, these identity workers are generally unlikely to introduce identity talk into conversations, particularly in generic settings, further demonstrating their more restrained approach to identity work. Rick reports that he *never* brings up conversation related to diabetes, “No, I would not initiate, no. If somebody else was talking about it, I *might* jump in.” And as more understated doers, both Ross and Matt report that they are not at all likely to instigate identity talk, particularly when they are involved in generic conversations (i.e., conversations not related to their identities). To their dismay, both of these men are married to women who are less restrained about launching these identity-related conversations, regardless of context. Ross describes what runs through his mind when his wife infuses generic conversations with identity talk, “Why are you bringing it up?! We weren’t discussing it! Nobody was discussing it!” Similar thoughts run through Matt’s mind when his wife starts conversations about their life with a special needs child; he wonders, “Did the person really want [our] entire life’s history at that particular moment? . . . I just try to be careful that I’m not gonna just unload or dump my entire life story on somebody who might not be looking for that.”

For some understated doers, reluctance to initiate identity talk is related to the perceived burden they believe such conversations might place on others. Dan reserves his asthma-talk for his family; he is reluctant to allow conversations about his illness to spread to a less-intimate audiences because he “doesn’t want to get into it” with them, as he feels that they don’t really understand his condition and will worry unnecessarily as a result:

With family I guess it's more open, I can talk to them about it more. Where as friends are like, "Are you going to be okay?" They keep asking and it becomes annoying. So I often shield it and I'm like, you know, "I'm fine, leave me alone" and that's it.

Others, like Rabbi Charles, avoid initiating conversations with outsiders in order to personally avoid the potentially messy consequences that might ensue:

With all the negativity that people often have about Jews and Judaism, I never know where this is gonna go. I'm always concerned, "Is this guy gonna blow up in my face? You lousy Jew." I don't want to get involved in that.

Barbara is reluctant to initiate conversation related to her identity as the mom of a special needs child, "Because I [don't] want to open that can of worms," which is precisely what happened when Kathleen once introduced identity talk into generic space. While leading a training seminar at work, Kathleen defined some identity-specific terminology for a crowd of identity outsiders. Unaware of her alternative lifestyle, her coworkers were shocked with Kathleen's knowledge of kinky behavior, and responded by asking, "How do *you* know what it is?!" While she was able to explain herself out of the situation, she acknowledges, "It was a problem...so that was the last time I ever did that!" As the father of two gifted boys, Bruce avoids initiating identity talk because he doesn't want to be viewed as a braggart. He also plays down his identity by not using the "gifted" label when discussing his sons, "I don't say, 'My gifted child,' ... I don't make a reference that [they're] gifted, even though their actions tend to show that."

Adhering to a more understated style of identity routine performance does not mean that an understated identity worker would never engage in a deeply revealing, identity-related conversation with an airplane seatmate; their approach to discourse would simply make it quite unlikely. These individuals tend to participate primarily in obligatory identity talk, investing minimal time in conversations outside of those that are

necessary. Their discourse policing ensures that their conversations typically take place in identity-safe space with identity-safe audiences.

The patterns associated with the management of identity talk transition with more intense identity routines; identity workers become progressively more likely to engage in more frequent identity talk that extends beyond what might be considered obligatory with increasingly less intimate audiences in increasingly more generic contexts. Unlike the more understated doers, who participate in very little if any non-essential identity talk, more intense doing is characterized by the tendency to engage in increasingly more regular, non-essential chatter. Elena admits that working Harry Potter lingo into her conversations with friends is “an every day thing,” and Anderson reports “pony crap comes up pretty often, like once or twice a day at least” during his chats with fellow My Little Pony fans. Stacy also acknowledges the regular presence of identity talk in her life as the mom of an epileptic daughter. When I ask, “How often do you find yourself engaged in conversation about [identity]?” Stacy responds, “More than I should.”

Frequent identity talk is very important to Dawn, who confesses that her family is “over” hearing her talk about her epilepsy. “But it’s me,” she says, “It’s part of who I am, I want to talk about it.” Since her seizures are now under control through medication, identity talk is exceptionally important to Dawn’s identity work since it is one of the primary ways that she is able to establish a connection to being an epileptic. She explains:

From the outside, for me, you can’t tell, you don’t know that I’m epileptic. You don’t know that I have seizures or had seizures, so the only way you would find out for me is you’d have to talk about it. So that, in that sense of the word, I’d have to speak with you about it for you to know.

As a more intense doer, Dawn’s identity work is designed to play up and highlight her epileptic identity; since she is unable to establish and maintain a more visible identity

through her appearance, she relies on identity talk to establish an authentic connection to the identity that is particularly relevant for her.

When it comes to discourse policing, identity work strategies shift along with identity work escalation as individuals become less reserved in their doing, and as such, are increasingly more likely to engage in identity talk with identity outsiders in generic space, something that is particularly relevant for those affiliated with the chronically ill and parents of exceptional children identities. Daphne reveals that her decisions about whether or not to engage in identity talk do not depend on where she is, who she is with, or what time it is – she will discuss her multiple sclerosis across all social contexts. And when I ask Emily, whose son has Tourette’s Syndrome, “Is there anytime you wouldn’t talk about [your identity] or anything you wouldn’t discuss?” she replies, “I can’t shut up to save my life, no!” Olivia admits she would talk about her brain cancer “to anybody [who] would listen” and would “share it everywhere,” and Brian, who is an epileptic, concedes, “I am willing to talk to anyone about it. Whether it be just somebody that’s passing through and looking at [items in the store he works in], or somebody that I work with, it doesn’t matter.” Maureen and MaryAnn, who are both moms to special needs children, also admit to regularly sharing their identities through the conversations they have with both the new and regular clients they tend to as part of their service-related professions.

As identity work intensifies, individuals also demonstrate their greater inclination to “put their identities out there” by being more willing to join conversations others are having that are relevant to their identities. In situations where identity-related conversations are happening around them, understated doers are not exceedingly likely to

join in, and the few who might do so would only yield after feeling out the situation. More intense doers, on the other hand, are much more likely to jump coldly into the identity-related conversations going on around them; they do not tend to let opportunities for identity talk pass them by. When asked if she would ever sit back and not join a discussion related to her identity the parent of an exceptional child Emily responds, “Sit back on conversation? Oh God. No, No!” Leah admits that she seizes *every* opportunity she has to chat about Star Wars, “I want to talk about it... If it comes up, I’ll discuss it, absolutely,” and Olivia is so eager to discuss her identity that if she overhears someone chatting about cancer-related things in a public space, such as grocery store, she cannot help herself, and “ABSOLUTELY” chimes in. And this is precisely what Jason does during a weekend getaway to New England. Upon overhearing the conversation between two gentlemen sitting next to him at the hotel bar, he gets in on the conversation to share his advice on life as a cancer patient.

As identity routines become more intense, individuals become more focused on playing up their particular identities. And when they are not presented with conversational openings that allow them to introduce identity talk, the most overstated doers are quite likely to create these opportunities for themselves, regardless of context. When I ask Charlene if she is likely to instigate conversations about being the mother of one of the top fencers in the country, she laughs and responds, “Yes, oh my God!” If her coworkers are talking about the fabulous dinner they had over the weekend, for example, she would chime in: ““You had [a] fabulous dinner? You know what else was fabulous? My daughter winning the gold this weekend!’ I don’t even do the building up, it’s like straightforward.” And when I ask MaryAnn how conversations about being the mom of a

child with Asperger Syndrome come up, she admits, “Oh, it’s me. If it ever comes up, it’s always me.” Leah likes to bring up movies in order to talk about Star Wars, and Elena reports that she also intentionally brings Harry Potter up so that she can talk about it:

Elena: I bring it up all the time.

Interviewer: So you’re comfortable bringing it up if it’s not being discussed?

Elena: Oh yeah. Yeah, I’m absolutely comfortable.

She describes a particular diversional tactic that she has employed a number of times in order to introduce her beloved Harry Potter into the conversational mix. Elena explains that whenever people are discussing a trip to Florida, “and they’re like, Disney, Disney, Disney. Go to Disney...” she likes to intercede and present the merits of a trip to Universal Studios (the home of Harry Potter); this strategy has never failed to present her with the opportunity to engage in identity talk.

The tendency to insert identity-related topics into conversations, even when they are not being discussed, is something Yodanis (2006) observes in her work on doing class. And while inserting references to Harry Potter during a conversation about Disney is not entirely off topic, other more overstated identity workers draw their identities into conversations when there is seemingly no need to do so. Emily reports that the reason why she engages in so much non-essential identity talk about being the mom of an exceptional child is because “it comes up actually a lot.” As she goes on to describe some of the situations where this identity talk organically “comes up,” it becomes clear that *she* is the one creating an opening for the chatter as *she* is introducing the topic into the generic conversational mix. During one such conversation, Emily was asked if her son could serve as an altar boy for an upcoming Sunday mass. Rather than simply respond by saying that he was unavailable, Emily chose to introduce identity talk into the exchange

by replying, “Oh, he can’t be an altar boy this week cause we’re at Tourette Camp.” She recounts another conversation where her son’s Tourette Syndrome just “happened to come up” with identity outsiders:

Like I just met a group the other day, where was I? Oh, [son’s] little girlfriend’s family had invited us to a huge picnic, and somebody had brought up diet and how do you get your kids to eat. And I was like, “Well [son] follows this special diet which is how we manage Tourette’s,” and she’s like, “Oh cool.”

In both of these conversations, Emily did not have to bring up identity talk but she did, but as a very intense doer, her identity often involves playing up her identity that she is very willing to share.

Brian similarly plays up his epileptic identity by infusing conversations with identity talk when it is not really necessary:

If we go to a bar and we’re watching a game ... I can’t drink too much, like I can have a beer or two, every now and then, you know? And [other people] are like, “How come you’re not drinking tonight?” I’ll be like, “Oh, you know, I have seizures and I can’t drink because of my meds.”

Sue similarly plays up her sick identity when explaining to her boss why she will need multiple days off during the year to participate in a clinical trial for a new cystic fibrosis medication. She acknowledges that bringing her identity into the conversation was something that she did not have to do, “I could have said something else. I could have said I’m on trial medication for some womanly thing and she would have said, ‘OK, fine.’ She wouldn’t have asked anything more from me.”

The most overstated doers who are supporting their omnirelevant identities are tireless identity promoters who are exceedingly willing to share their identities through discourse. For the most steadfast overstated doers, identity talk is not merely a regular occurrence -- it dominates conversations. Both Joyce and Heidi report that they spend more time talking about their identities as they relate to their special needs children than

they do talking about anything else in their lives. Heidi, an admitted oversharer, laments, “I’m a talker, I’m definitely a talker.” When I ask who she tends to engage in identity talk with, she laughs, “Anyone. I could be sitting on the bench at the park and I will tell [a stranger] the whole story...I find myself over sharing way too much (LAUGHS). I’m sure no one at Field Day yesterday needed to know what therapist all the kids go to.” Stan, who has a profoundly disabled son, also acknowledges his tendency to overshare, “You have a hard time trying *not* to share too much of your experience.” And Kate, who lives with ulcerative colitis, finds that she also spends an excessive amount of time discussing her sick identity:

I feel like I’m just talking about me, me, me, me, me, me, me, and I don’t like the other person talk. And I’m not a very dominant person when it comes to social stuff so it’s either I completely fall behind or I talk about my medical stuff cause that’s all that I have to talk about.

As overconformers, these identity workers pursue their identity work in an exaggerated manner, and often admittedly overshare in the identity talk arena as a result. While some overdoers are quick to acknowledge their overdoing vis-a-vis identity talk, the overconforming of others is demonstrated through their discursive practices. One of the many ways identity workers demonstrate their authenticity is by being knowledgeable about their particular identities. We expect diabetics to know a thing or two about diabetes, Mets fans to be informed about the game of baseball, and religious leaders to be familiar with religious scripture. And while every identity worker that I interviewed demonstrated a convincing degree of knowledge about his or her identity during the course of our conversations, some pursued the verbal demonstration of their “insider” identity-knowledge in very conspicuous, amplified ways.

Whether we were discussing appearance, props, discourse or activities, Pastor

Michael's responses were infused with scripture. After introducing the topic of appearance, he responded, "You know, the bible says, 'Let your light so shine before men that they might see your good works and glorify your Father in Heaven.'" When talking about identity-related activities, Pastor Michael stated, "Let all me see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven," and when questioned about his interaction with others, he replied, "If you walk with the wise, you'll become wise but the campaigning of fools will be destroyed." When discussing his passion for spreading the word to others, the pastor remarked, "Don't look out and say that there's three months until the harvest is ready, the harvest is ready now. People are hungry right now." These were not the only scripture references Pastor Michael shared with me, and he was not the only religious leader to passionately assert his or her identity through the persistent demonstration of his spiritual knowledge. The other religious leaders whose identity work positions them in the extreme overstated space -- Minister Melissa (Baptist), Father Bob (Catholic) and Pastor David (Evangelical) -- similarly infused our conversations with constant references to scripture.

In a similar fashion, the most overstated doers affiliated the other identities were more likely to answer my questions in an overstated way in order to demonstrate the breadth and depth of their identity-related knowledge. When I ask Landon about the things he collects and the various activities he participates in as a fan of My Little Pony, he is quick to mention what he collects and what he does but then, unlike those who are less intense in their doing, he goes on to provide a bit (sometimes, quite a bit) of history or information about the particular things he is describing to me. While he collects the "toys" associated with the fandom, he goes on to explain why it is a bit different for him:

I'm interested in the toys for a different reason. Whereas for me, I'm interested in character design, I'm interested in the design of the toys and the product and things like that. ...Let's take for example, Princess Celestia, Ruler over Equestria, blah, blah, blah. Her, she is designed to be the calm, peaceful, benevolent ruler kind of thing and her voice is soft, she is bright colors and her mane, the colors that make up her mane, I can't remember what the term of what the colors are, however, I was talking to a color theorist and they were like, "Oh yeah, those colors, those are the most calming colors that exist in the color palate

Clearly, Landon is very knowledgeable about his fandom, and reveals this throughout our interview with exchanges such as this. When I ask him about the props associated with his asthmatic identity, Gustavo similarly mentions his inhalers and nebulizers, but does not stop there (as more understated doers were inclined to do); he continues

I can go three or four hours in-between treatments and then what happens is that my lungs start closing up. The smaller airways in my lungs. Cause your lungs look kind of like a tree. That's the analogy I use. And as they start you with the main airway, your windpipe, it branches out. And as it branches out, the airways get smaller and smaller and smaller. Until they're down till about, well they get pretty, just a couple of microns, I mean, really, really thin. In my disease and in most people with asthma, it's actually those smaller airways that are affected, not the main ones; not the ones that you see in commercials. Which I don't know why they do that, I guess they don't want to confuse people.

And rather than simply mention "insulin" as a prop he uses to treat his daughter's diabetes, Jack takes the opportunity to teach me a bit about managing blood sugar:

Man-made insulin works very well but not that great. In so much as, if you took a bite of an apple right now your blood sugar would try to go up. Your pancreas would stop it and bring it right back. This process would not take long. ...So for the most part your body is in pretty good control of your blood sugar. Man-made insulin doesn't begin to work immediately when you inject it. And the amount of time it takes to start working is different for everybody in every situation. If you're less hydrated maybe one day or another day, that changes things. And a million other variables that we could sit here all day and I could make a list for you...

Identity workers like Jack, whose identity routines sit at the apex in terms of identity intensity, are the most unreserved and conspicuous of the overdoers, and are more than willing to impart their knowledge onto others through identity talk as they promote their omnirelevant identities.

Chapter Six: Identity Ecology

Ecology and Identity

Physical appearances, props and discourse are all included in the territory of the self and as such, are important indicators of who one is (Nippert-Eng 1996:35). The day-to-day management of these elements is situated across a multitude of spatial and temporal settings, which, as Snow and Anderson contend (1987), also serve as significant channels through which identity work is performed. These spatial and temporal environments serve as much more than the structure in which social interaction is situated; as “behavior settings,” the settings themselves infuse interaction with meaning as they elicit “standing patterns of behavior” from those interacting within them (Barker and Wright ([1955]1971: 9, 45). “Essentially, behavior settings are ... extra-individual units that have great coercive power over the behavior occurring within them.” (Smith-Lovin 1979:31). The social, cultural and physical properties of an environment encourage behavior that “matches” the “affective character” of the setting (Smith-Lovin 1979:41), thus discouraging contrary activity. As behavior settings, a business office, strip club and synagogue all evoke very specific (albeit very different) patterns of appropriate behavior for those interacting within their respective walls and as a result, the behavior demonstrated by the account who spends time in each setting over the course of a week will vary dramatically.

Brekhus argues that just as behavior settings motivate standing patterns of behavior, “identity settings” motivate “standing patterns of identity” (2003:17). Identity settings provide a script for identity work, beckoning particular identities included within our collection of selves (Mead 1934) to step forward, while signaling others to remain in

the shadows. Our accountant's "playboy" identity will likely remain under wraps and be eclipsed by his "religious" identity when he attends services at his local synagogue, demonstrating that, "*Who* one is depends, in part, on *where* one is and *when* one is. Identity resides not in the individual alone, but in the interaction between the individual and his or her social environment" (Brekhus 2003:17; emphasis in original).

Most of us skate from one moment to the next, reacting to the world and adopting culturally and situationally appropriate "identities" to the moment. In this view, an individual's identity is more often than not a series of emergent properties that grow out of his or her interactions with the social, cultural and physical environment (Falk 2006: 154).

While most social space is generic and not specifically related to any particular identity, identity settings can be described as marked, "where identity communities are allowed to congregate to openly display their brightest colors" (Brekhus 2003:18). Identity settings encourage and facilitate the performance of particular identities since in such space, individuals tend to share the same specialized or marked identities (Stein 2012:84) and specific displays of identity are encouraged as a result (Brekhus 2003:19). Brekhus finds some gay suburban men traveling to identity settings such as gay bars in order to allow their authentic "gay [selves]" to step out (2003:54), and Stein details how vacation settings evoke the presentation of one's "vacation identity." One vacationer describes how being around others sharing her carefree vacation identity allows her to present an uninhibited version of her self:

It's different because here you don't have to be careful about anything... You know, I'm an executive. So I have to dress properly and all those kinds of things, and here nobody cares what you're going to wear. If my hair isn't done, nobody cares. If I have make up on, nobody cares. So you feel more free, definitely (Stein 2012:86).

As this executive/vacationer demonstrates, individuals have an array of potential selves at their disposal, and the particular salient identities that they call upon to bring to the

forefront varies, depending on the time and places in which they happen to be situated (Brekhus 2003:17). Ashforth (2001) refers to this as “situational relevance,” or “the degree to which a given identity is socially appropriate to a given situation” (32). Identity work involves orchestrating appropriate responses to the unique “situational pulls” (Kreiner et al. 2006:1040) and cues associated with particular settings.

The particular identity settings in which individuals choose to interact, and the specific ways they go about managing their identities while engaged in interaction within these areas reveals a great deal about their identity work strategies. The drinking behavior of the Scottish women studied by Emslie et al (2015) illustrates just how powerful identity settings can be in terms of eliciting particular identities. While they would typically refrain from drinking big pints of beer in public -- since such behavior would be inconsistent with the ladylike identities they were trying to make claims to -- these women agreed that such drinking behavior would be appropriate in certain situations: “I’ll still do that [drink out of a pint] ... if it’s in the right situation. If I’m at a gig, if I’m at T in the Park [a music festival sponsored by a Scottish brewery], I’ll be drinking out of a pint glass.” (Emslie et al., 2015: 440). Rounds (2006) uses the setting of the museum to explore identity work, arguing that these venues demand unique forms of conduct from their patrons which, when engaged in, result in the construction and maintenance of the authentic museum patron identity (143). The identity setting that is the museum precipitates the presentation of one’s museum identity, as the established patterns of behavior and resulting identity constructions are housed outside of the individuals and reside within the museum setting itself (Falk 2006:154; Rounds 2006:143).

The do-it-yourself movement resulted in the territory of the American home being divvied up in new ways that created identity settings reserved exclusively for the men of the house. By making claim to specific areas of the home where their household handyman activities could be carried out, men were able to recreate places for themselves within the homes that they had to leave due to carryout professional obligations (Gelber 1997:69). These “spheres of domestic masculinity” afforded men workspaces that were integrated inside of the household, while at the same time being spatially and functionally autonomous. This enabled men to preserve their masculinity within a realm that was historically associated with femininity (Gelber 1997:69,73; Moisio et al. 2013 299-300). Spaces such as basements and garages emerged as (and continue to be) “islands of untainted masculinity and pockets of virility” (Kimmel 1987:262) and once entered, trigger the emergence and performance of identities associated with domestic masculinity.

Foley (2005) finds identity settings an important component of the identity work performed in the traditionally female domain of midwifery. Positioned on the fringes of the mainstream medical profession with historically mediated identities, these women frequently find themselves under attack from the media, lawmakers, and the medical community itself and as a result, must regularly engage in identity work in order to help establish and maintain legitimate professional identities for themselves (183, 190). Foley highlights how different identity settings stimulate the presentation of different versions of the midwife identity, and how the identity work of the midwives adjusts to these varying identity demands by accentuating different attributes of the identity.

The identity code pertaining to interactions situated in formal identity settings, such as those in the legal and medical communities (e.g., state capital, hospital), demand the presentation of the more “professional” side of midwifery. One way midwives conform to these local codes is by playing up professional attributes through managing their appearances. One licensed midwife describes the “costume” required for lobbying in the state capital, “We’ve got to play with the big boys whether we like it or not. It’s kind of like knowing that you have to put on panty hose and pumps and makeup to go lobby in Tallahassee or no one’s going to take you seriously” (198). In order to be taken seriously by audiences in less formal identity settings that might include patients, midwives are less concerned with panty hose and pumps, and more concerned with presenting less serious versions of themselves that appear familiar and approachable. Developing intimate relationships with clients is a cornerstone of midwifery (Foley 2005:200), and in order to anticipate possible encounters with patients in public, some midwives discuss the burden of being “on” all of the time when in public space, lest they fail to recognize a client. “I feel like I kind of always have to be friendly to everybody because they look mildly familiar, I don’t remember if they cut me off in traffic or I delivered their baby” (Foley 2005:199). Failing to acknowledge a patient is failing to adhere to one of the most fundamental identity codes associated with an authentic midwife identity.

Day-to-day social interaction typically involves travel to and through a host of spatial settings that have varied relevance for the identities at individuals’ disposal. As identity workers do identity, they respond to the situational identity pulls and pushes associated with particular settings and as a result, certain identities are drawn out while others remain confined. In addition to managing spatial contexts, identity workers also

manage temporal contexts that have similar implications for identity. Our day-to-day experiences are characterized by contrasting periods of action and inaction, which serve as the foundation for our movement through life, our “social rhythm” (Snow and Brissett 1986:3). The identity work that individuals do in support of particular identities is also distinguished by periods of action and inaction, thus reflecting what I refer to as *identity rhythm*. Periods of action refer to those marked times when displays of particular identities are encouraged and expected, while periods of inaction reflect those unmarked times when particular identity presentations are discouraged and not expected. These periods of action and inaction may be described as “duty periods,” where identity workers oscillate between periods of action when they are “on duty” and periods of inaction where they are “off duty” (Zerubavel 1981: 158-161). In this way, there is ebb and flow to identity work, a palpable *identity rhythm* of transitioning between extraordinary (identity) and ordinary (non-identity) time (Zerubavel 1987:348-349).

As an identity setting, time has the capacity to trigger identity action by prompting conventional displays of identity, cuing identity workers “how to feel, how to act...*who to ‘be’*” (Brekhus 2003:17; emphasis added). The significance of temporal relevance to identity work is something Kreiner et al. (2006) observe in their study of how Episcopal priests manage the identity demands and tensions associated with the priesthood. These identity workers acknowledge that particular times demand particular identity action; that is, particular times require one to “be a priest.” One priest explains, “Every time the phone rings at three o’clock in the morning I don’t answer it as a person, I answer it as a priest” (1040). Another describes how marked time triggers his presentation as a priest, where his behavior is expected to adhere to the established

identity codes. This is especially relevant

[During] the time when there is an expectation of the priest being in the position of strength or power. I'm thinking like a funeral service. Dealing with someone who is bereaved... You've got to conjure it up from within and be that for them. Even though you might not be that at that moment, that's what you need to be for them. It is certainly a part of . . . what our faith articulates (1039).

Stein (2012) explores how temporality shapes the identities of individuals who are on vacation. As extraordinary time, "vacation time" triggers a period of action for those identity workers supporting vacation identities, and when immersed in this temporal context, individuals respond by delivering requisite identity performances. One way travelers "do vacation identity" is by disregarding timetables and the schedules that typically constrain their "everyday" identities, "Well, we have no schedule [laughs]. We're just on a vacation, so we're being really, just relaxed and doing whatever. There's no plan, versus when you're at home and you have things do like school and work. Here we're just hanging out" (Stein 2012: 55-56).

Emslie et al. (2015) explore the implications temporal context has for the identity work of Scottish mothers. During the time-period when they were responsible for the care of their young children, many of these women reduced or altogether stopped their consumption of alcohol, since being sober was necessary for making an authentic claim to the responsible mother identity, "As women, you're the main carer (sic) for your child...you're taking that responsibility on board...in an emergency, somebody has to be sober" (441). As their children grew older and became more independent, these moms believed it was an appropriate *time* to once again consume alcohol as they could enjoy it without judgment. Other women still at the stage of life that revolves around the care of young children refused to give up their drinking, developing an alternative strategy that still enabled them to adhere to local identity codes mandated by the responsible mom

identity; these women would reserve their drinking for the evening, during the *time* after their young children had gone to bed. Since they were essentially “off-duty” as parents during that part of the day, as the time had transitioned from “child” time to “adult” time, and it was temporally appropriate for them to temporarily turn off their responsible parenting identity and allow their more carefree selves to emerge (442).

As demonstrated by the Episcopal priests, vacationers, and Scottish moms, there are distinct periods of time when particular identity displays are encouraged and expected as well as distinct periods of time when such displays are discouraged and not expected. Identity work is characterized by a rhythm that reflects the ebb and flow created by times of identity action and times of inaction. The temporal contexts in which interaction is situated have dramatic implications for identity, as do the spatial settings that contain such behavior. “Identity resides not in the individual alone, but in the interaction between the individual and his or her social environment” (Brekhus 2003:17); the way identity workers manage their “identity ecologies” provides tremendous insight into the way they are doing identity.

Ecology and Identity Routines: From Understated to Overstated Doing

Identity settings are those places “where identity communities are allowed to congregate to openly display their brightest colors” (Brekhus 2003: 18). While most social time and space can be considered generic (Brekhus 2003:18), and not necessarily affiliated with any one particular identity, marked identity settings and times are tightly connected to specific identities. Identity settings beckon the situationally relevant identities of affiliated individuals to the forefront (Ashforth 2001:32; Falk 2006:154) and identity-specific behavior typically ensues. Identity settings trigger the emergence and

performance of identity; they house identity work scripts (Brekhus 2003:17) suggesting who affiliated identity workers ought to be upon crossing their thresholds.

Identity settings may be physical, such as the houses of worship and church campuses connected to the religious leader identity, the concert venues and sports arenas visited by fans, the medical and professional offices that visited by the chronically ill and parents of special needs children, and the theaters and gymnasiums and frequented by parents of gifted and talented children. Identity settings also include virtual space, which is a prime environment for social interaction (McKenna and Bargh 2000:57, 72). Social media platforms including social networking sites (e.g., Facebook) video sharing sites (e.g., YouTube), photo-sharing sites (e.g., Instagram, Pinterest), micro-blogging sites (e.g., Twitter) and publishing tools (e.g. WordPress/Blogger for blogs) all constitute virtual identity space.

Time can similarly beckon situationally relevant identities – a child’s bedtime triggers the emergence of the “off-duty” parental identity (Emslie et al. 2015), just as middle-of-the-night interaction elicits the religious leader identity (Kreiner et al. 2006). Identity time refers to the time that triggers an identity, and is characterized by a vast durational spectrum. Identity time can refer to the five years that a breast cancer patient has been living with her disease, the five hours it takes her to complete a chemotherapy infusion, or to the five minutes required for her to take her Tamoxifen tablet. Identity time includes the time a priest spends in the seminary, the time he spends presiding over a mass, and the time he blessing a meal. Identity time is the time a parent spends driving her children to doctor’s appointment and practices, as well as the time she spends administering medications and dusting off trophies; identity time is the time a fan spends

watching an extra-inning baseball game, or the time it takes him to check the score of a recent game.

The identity work done in support of any identity is marked by periods of action, where displays of identity are encouraged and expected, and periods of inaction, where such presentations of identity are not expected. These distinguishable periods reflect the ebb and flow of identity work, the palpable *identity rhythm* of transitioning between extraordinary (identity) and ordinary (non-identity) time (Zerubavel 1987:348-349).

Fluctuations in identity work are very often related to seasonality – there are certain times of year that can be described as *identity seasons* that fuel an increase in identity work, and certain times of year described as *identity off-seasons*, where identity workers experience an unmistakable lull in the performance of identity work. When exploring the identity work done here by this diverse group of identity workers, it becomes clear that seasonality is something that has the potential to impact the doing that is done in support of any identity. For example, the religious world is broken down into seasons; just as the Jewish faith has seasons around its High Holy Days (e.g., Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur), the Christian liturgical cycle divides the year into ordinary time, and a series of seasons (e.g., Advent, Lent, Easter), and while less formal, some of the sacraments tend to be associated with particular seasons as well (e.g., First Communions tend to be held in the spring). Many of the fans are affiliated with fandoms that have a seasonal nature. For the Mets fan (and all baseball fans), there is the regular baseball season, spring training, and the off season; music lovers are familiar with concert season, fans of anime and My Little Pony look forward to the releases of the newest “seasons” of their favorite shows, and since movies are an integral part of the identity work of both the comic and Harry Potter

fans, the various movie release seasons (e.g., summer “blockbuster” season, holiday movie season, “Oscar bait” season) are significant to them.

Parents of exceptional children frequently divide their years into different “seasons” – for example, the holiday seasons, summer break, back-to-school time and the school year. And while special needs’ parents also recognize the healthcare awareness calendar that designates key times of the year dedicated to their children’s particular conditions (e.g., April for Autism Awareness; November for Diabetes Awareness), the lives of the parents of gifted and talented children revolve around the seasons connected to their children’s activities (e.g., for sports -- training seasons, regular seasons, playoff seasons, college recruiting season, competition seasons, etc.). Many of the chronically ill identity workers also recognize the particular seasons associated with their illnesses (e.g., October for Breast Cancer Awareness) as well the traditional seasons (i.e., spring, summer, winter and fall), which often have implications for fluctuations in their health and identity work.

The seasonal nature of identity that contributes to identity’s rhythm is something identity workers of all types acknowledge. And regardless of the ways identity routines are delivered in terms of intensity, identity work amps up during extraordinary, “on duty” identity time, and subsides during ordinary, “off duty” non-identity time. Before detailing the relationship between identity routines and the management of identity environments, I will present the ways in which identity workers generally manage the seasonality of identity work. Religious leaders’ identity workloads naturally increase during the special seasons associated with their target identities, as they preside over more masses, prayer services and sacramental celebrations. Minister Melissa references recently coming off of

such a season at her church: “We just came out of our Woman’s Emphasis Season, so that’s a high season so a lot is going on during those three months that we have that; we do a lot of things for that and then after that it kind of slows down.” The identity work of those connected to other identities picks up during their marked seasons as well; Anderson describes how his weekly identity work will be amping up for the next twenty-six weeks when he will be on duty for the release of the new season of My Little Pony:

Season 6 is starting this month. So once Season 6 starts, there will be a lot more going on. So, when the show’s actually being watched, there’s usually bunch of people, we’ll all get together in a room to stream it; when I say room, I mean virtual room, I mean live stream channel – and that will be like between 100 and say 4,000 people all hanging out in the room watching the show...so that will happen.

And from September through March, this identity worker also puts in more than usual appearance-related identity work; this time of the year is My Little Pony soccer season, and on the days when his team is playing, Anderson makes sure that he is wearing his soccer team scarf to show his support.¹¹

Identity work for the parents of children with special needs often fluctuates throughout the year, picking up on holidays and during summer breaks when the children spend more time at home, and then again before the start of a new school year, when decisions regarding academics must be made. Identity talk definitely picks up before the start of the school year for Matt, who has a daughter with special needs:

Interviewer: Would you say (having conversations) varies on the time of year?

Matt: Absolutely. Just kind of like thinking about where do we want to be next (school) year. We're having a lot of conversations with the child study team at her school. And in turn, I guess I'm looking for inside feedback or advice so I will approach other teachers in my school district, and the child study team in my district, to see it, almost like a second opinion.

Many of these parents also mention an increase in their identity work during their

¹¹ Scarfs are signature pieces of sports memorabilia associated with soccer – they are similar to the jerseys worn by football fans and the baseball caps worn by baseball fans.

children's particular identity awareness seasons – there are more conversations, more social media postings, and more events attended. Maureen explains, “I don't tend to advertise [SON], but I will advertise for the month...my Facebook page is blue right now [for Autism Awareness month].” Chronically ill identity workers also perform more identity work during their awareness months; while she has purple items of clothing in her wardrobe specifically because of her epilepsy, Dawn tends to wear them more often in March “because of epilepsy awareness.”

The parents of the gifted and talented children acknowledge the ebb and flow of identity work that coincides with the school year, as well as the seasonality associated with their children's particular activities. For Charlotte, fall is traditionally associated with a marked increase in identity work activity due to number of fencing events that take place during that time. “October and November are the worst months for us because we have October North American Cup...European circuit two weeks later on Halloween, and then two weeks later, another North American Cup, and two weeks later, another international event.” Jenelle's identity work is much more heightened during those times of year when her son's theater productions are running. From hosting theater company meetings at her home, to promoting the shows with social media posts, “t-shirts, signs, flyers and posters” before opening night, to attending the performances and throwing house parties for the entire company after the final curtain call, she is “very, very active” during these times.

A few of the chronically ill identity workers also mention that their identity work increases during particular seasons of the year that exacerbate their conditions. For Dan, the spring and summer months involve more identity work because he tends to have more

flare-ups, which result in him having to use his inhaler more frequently... which also leads to more identity talk. Similarly, Daphne finds that winter and summer months tend to heighten her MS symptoms and her identity work as a result. Seasonal fluctuation in identity work is something identity workers of all types experience; and just as marked seasons can lead to augmented identity work, specific events also contribute to these fluctuations when they result in an increase in doing. Identity work surges for a priest after someone dies, for a music fan after the release of a new album, for the parent of a gifted child after college visit, and for someone with chronic illness after a physician's appointment. While he and his wife typically do not discuss his diabetes, identity conversations always ensue after Dan's trips to his doctor, "After coming back from my GP, [my wife] will ask about the diabetes, what my long-term glucose [is], what my HBA1C levels were." Identity-related events such as these trigger heightened identity work just as identity-related seasons do, demonstrating the multi-layered nature of identity rhythm. And regardless of the intensity of their doing, individuals affiliated with all of these identities acknowledge an increase in the identity work performed during the these times when their identities are brought to the forefront; identity workers might make more of an effort to "look the part," engage in more conversations, participate in more activities, utilize more props, and attend more events during their more active identity times when they are, essentially, on duty.

More enhanced doing manifests differently for identity workers, depending on where they are positioned in terms of the intensity of their identity routines. And for the most understated doers, heightened doing may still be characterized as minimal. In line with their obligatory approach to doing, minimal doers' interaction in identity settings

most typically results from predictable, essential visits that “come with the territory” of being affiliated with their respective identities; they engage in identity space and time because doing so is required by the identity’s local code. The chronically ill travel to marked territories to manage their illnesses, visiting establishments such as medical offices, hospitals, treatment centers, and medical supply stores. Parents of special needs children report visiting these identity settings as well as they manage the care of their children, and also travel to schools and centers offering identity-related support, such as counseling. Some of the identity spaces that the parents of gifted and talented children travel to include schools, counselors, theaters, practice facilities, and competition sites. Fans attend conventions, concerts, play sessions and movies, and visit identity-specific retail stores and sections of bookstores to validate their identities. And the more understated religious leaders frequent houses of worship, locations for the performance of religious ceremonies or duties (e.g., funeral homes, wedding locations, hospitals), and others settings in their capacities as religious leader (e.g., day camps associated with their churches/synagogues). Upon entering all of these identity settings, situationally relevant identities become triggered, identity-appropriate behavior ensues, and connections to identities are established and maintained.

This travel to identity environments can be described as predictable and not out of the ordinary for these identity workers; we expect people with chronic illnesses and special needs children to spend time in the offices of medical and educational professionals, religious leaders to preach in churches and synagogues, and comic fans to attend movies and purchase comic books. These activities are essential to one’s identity work as they are required in order to make an authentic claim to a particular identity, and

even the most minimal doers demonstrate their compliance through their participation. And while travel to identity settings generally involves the presence of identity others, those demonstrating a more understated approach to doing are less likely to be driven to these identity settings for the sense of camaraderie they provide; travel to these environments is simply fueled by the need to conform to the local code of the identity.

Concerts are the only identity settings Greg travels to as part of the doing he does in support of his identity as a Black Crowes fan, and he believes this behavior is what defines him as a fan,

I couldn't, I wouldn't be able to call myself a Black Crowes fan if I didn't go to the show. With technology today the way it is, you can find videos online and experience the music in other venues, different vehicles. But, to be a fan of any artist, you have to go to the show, you have to go to the show, you have to experience the show.

While he admits that being with his friends and other fans is part of the concert going experience for him, this is incidental to the purpose of this activity – for Greg, attending concerts is essential to establishing an authentic fan identity. For Max, who goes to the theater to see virtually every DC and Marvel comic movie that is released, the movie experience is not about being with a community of identity others, it is his way of conforming to the identity's local code and being the best fan that he can be. As a “serious” fan, Max wants to experience new movie releases in the theater, and insists on paying extremely close attention to the films when doing so, something that he cannot do when the theaters are packed with other fans – so he avoids them! He typically waits for the crowds to subside before going to see newly released movies so that he can fully focus on the screen, “When [the movies] come out ... like for the first week, the theaters are packed as hell, so I wait awhile...cause [the other movie goers] won't shut up.” Despite the fact that identity settings can be considered the safe havens where identity

workers can proudly fly their identity flags with other members of their identity communities, understated doers are not generally drawn to interact in these environments for this reason; their travel into identity settings merely reflects their conformance to identity norms.

Some travel to identity settings is motivated by more than a sense of duty; non-essential trips, on the other hand, are primarily driven by the desire to be more involved with the community of those sharing one's identity. Community-driven participation can be situated in both physical and virtual space, and includes settings such as support groups, fundraising events, conventions, seminars, fan clubs, chat rooms, message boards, and blogs. Identity workers with less intense identity routines are far more likely to "not do" travel for non-essential trips to these settings; in fact, just a few of these identity workers reportedly visit any identity space to participate in non-essential activities. The overwhelming majority of these individuals does *not* attend support groups, seminars or conventions, and does *not* actively organize or participate in any fundraising events, (although they occasionally make monetary contributions when asked to do so).¹² Additionally, virtually *none* of these understated doers has an online presence related to their identities -- they do *not* participate in chat rooms, discussion boards, or blogs and reportedly never mention their identities on social media platforms such as Facebook pages, Instagram, Snapchat or Twitter.

Minister Mitchell is one of the only understated doers who is identity-active in virtual identity space, and he is *very* reserved in his doing there as he is reluctant to share

¹² A few of the chronically ill and parents of exceptional children report that they have participated in a **single** event. Matt participated in a fundraising walk when his developmentally-delayed daughter was very young; Shannon attended one "Survivor Breakfast," but only did so in support of a friend who was speaking there; Meredith attended a support group a few times because her physician, who organized the group, essentially required her to do so.

things about his life as a minister. While he makes an occasional reference to his identity on Facebook, he admits that he only does so because of pressure he receives from intimates. On occasion, Minister Mitchell is asked to preach at locations outside of his own church, and his family and close friends enjoy making the trips to see him. Testimony to his understated approach to doing, he is not very good about advertising his guest-preaching gigs and his intimate social circles are sometimes offended when they find out, after that fact, that he has preached somewhere. To prevent this sort of thing from happening, he now makes reference to his preaching events (i.e., his minister identity) on his Facebook page, but admits that is doing so is only to keep others from being angry with him, “For that reason I did say, ‘Hey, anybody in this area, I happen to be preaching at this church, you guys should come through.’” Once, Mitchell agreed to let a church that he was preaching at post a flyer on *their* Facebook page to advertise for the event, and while he permitted the posting, he states, “I asked them not to put my picture on there because I don’t like that billboard effect.” By tightly managing his on-line minister identity through quite regimented monitoring, Mitchell is able to keep greater control over his omnicontextual minister identity; an identity that he prefers to make visible under very particular conditions.

As identity work progressively intensifies, individuals become increasingly more likely to be active in spatial and temporal identity settings. In addition to those predictable, obligatory visits that come with the territory of identity affiliation, more enhanced doing is associated with a greater willingness to participate in non-essential environments. Identity work intensification spurs greater involvement in virtual space, as more intense doers affiliated with all identities are more likely to report belonging to

identity-related online support groups or “following” identity-related Facebook pages and blogs, and regularly checking these spaces for updated content. Shari, an Episcopal priest, regularly visits and answers questions on the “Rev Gals” blog, and reports that her online presence is “all related to being a priest.” Anderson checks the My Little Pony blog, “Equestria Daily,” as well as a sub-Reddit community dedicated to the fandom “once every two to three days,” in addition to attending on-line watch parties. Elena regularly visits pottermore.com to keep up with latest Harry Potter news, and has created multiple Harry Potter “boards” on her Pinterest account, which she “constantly” updates. Daphne is a member of the Multiple Sclerosis Society (online), a few support groups on Facebook, and follows a “couple of blogs by some MSers,” and Maureen is part of a “bunch” of support groups online where she regularly interacts as the parent of a special needs child.

In addition to interacting in these virtual identity settings, individuals are increasingly more willing to reference their own identities on their own social media platforms, reflecting an increasing willingness to play up their identity affiliation. Identity-mentions might involve passing along general information about the identity itself; for example, religious leaders may pass along information about church events, and fans may break the news of a new book or movie release. Identity-mentions may also involve passing along specific information about the identity worker; a cancer survivor may post the results of her most recent PET scan, while the parent of an exceptional child might promote an upcoming fundraising activity that he or she is organizing. These identity references do not tend to dominate the social media platforms of these more overstated doers but rather, tend to ebb and flow like references to other things of interest to them.

Much of the identity-promotion that takes place in these virtual settings revolves around the celebration of identity time. Dawn celebrates her anniversary of being seizure-free with the annual posting of a special picture on her social media accounts – a picture of “the car and tree.” When I ask her to explain, she says, “the car and tree... my last seizure I had a car accident and hit a tree.” Leah celebrates special occasions like Harry Potter’s birthday with special posts on her social media accounts, a few of the parents of children with disorders on the autism spectrum make their Facebook pages blue during the month of April to celebrate Autism Awareness Month, and Shari celebrates the day of her ordination as an Episcopal priest by making her profile picture a photo taken on that day.

Delivering identity routines with greater intensity also coincides with increasingly greater participation in physical identity settings. Identity workers affiliated with the parents of special children and chronic illness identity attend local support groups, therapy sessions, and identity-specific events (e.g., family Tourette’s Camp, Special Olympic events). They also become increasingly inclined to hold memberships in identity-specific organizations (e.g., Autism Speaks, Multiple Sclerosis Society, New Jersey Tourette’s Society), serve as resources for other families, and participate in fundraising activities. Daphne organized and held a very successful MS fundraiser to support the research efforts of her physician. For months, she promoted the event very publically and actively on her Facebook page, and invested substantial personal time contacting and traveling to local businesses to secure donations for the event, which raised tens of thousands of dollars. Fans also spend more time in physical identity settings as identity work intensifies -- they more frequently attend identity-focused events

(e.g. Quidditch games for Harry Potter fans, light sabre making parties for Star Wars fans), conventions (e.g. BronyCon, Comic-Con), exhibitions (e.g., Star Wars exhibition at the Franklin Institute), and vacation destinations (e.g. Universal Studios); they are also increasingly likely to make trips to other identity-themed settings such as specialty shops and bars.

The way the most overstated doers manage their involvement in identity environments reflects the more invested, uninhibited and visible nature of their identity routines; for example, online activities become increasingly more focused on identities. Nicholas spends considerable time interacting in virtual identity settings to keep informed about his identity. To that end, he follows a number of Mets-related blogs and Twitter accounts that send messages directly to his phone:

I use the Internet more for information than for kind of like, just raw communication with other fans. Trying to figure out where or what's gonna happen with this player or, like I said, if a trade's about to happen, even during the off-season I'll still check on the Mets, what they're doing everyday, through Spring Training. It's rarely a day goes by, I mean, I get alerts on my phone from the, from certain reporters who Tweet about the Mets, or a certain, the MLB APP, anytime there's news it will come straight to my phone, that kind of thing.

His virtual interaction is heightened during identity time -- during the six or so months of the year that his team plays their 162 games, this Mets fan starts *every* post game-day morning with a trip into virtual identity space:

Nicholas: I follow this blog that chronicles the game that happened the night before and kinda recaps what happened and there's highlights and there's the box score, which shows all the stats.

Interviewer: And you do that after every game?

Nicholas: Yeah, I'll do that, usually first thing when I get to work in the morning.
LAUGHS.

Minister Melissa reports that her online activities, although diverse, are “more so (related to) the religious things,” and Lexi admits that, “Most of my Internet presence is fairly

anime related.” In addition to having a Twitter account that could be considered exclusively for anime, Lexi reports that,

If I’m on the Internet, I’m almost constantly exposed to things that would be related to anime in one way or another...like if I’m just browsing around my computer I’m on YouTube, and if I’m on YouTube I’m either looking at makeup tutorials or looking at anime figures looking at like different crane machines in Japan that show different like novelty items from animes that you could get if you were there.

Heidi indicates that her interaction in virtual identity settings is nearly exclusively devoted to her being the mom of child with autism. When asked, “Do you visit any blogs, read any blogs regularly?” she responds, “Yes I do, and they’re all special needs, they’re *all* special needs,” and she routinely draws attention to her identity with her oversharing on Facebook:

I actually probably post too much on Facebook. I do. I've tried to actually cut back, because my husband says I need to stop. I post so much about (my son) and autism...and people probably want me to shut up.

The constant highlighting of her identity on Facebook has made Heidi a “go to” resource in her social circles:

But it's funny, because I'm such an open book on Facebook... I've had high school people, friends, family members, reach out to me. My neighbor around the corner, just inboxed me last week and said, "My friend's son was just diagnosed with autism, can I please give her your number and you could talk to her." Absolutely! I've had so many people reach out to me.

The most passionate overstated doers are also far more active, uninhibited and conspicuous in their doing in these settings. Overstated doers, of course, pass along general information about their identities, discuss specific information that pertains to them personally and celebrate special events and milestones, but they are much more inclined to take their sharing to a higher level by providing much more revealing identity-related information, and they do so with both written and visual accounts. Melissa (who publicly asserts her identity with her Twitter handle “Minister HER NAME)” is very

comfortable posting about her Baptist preaching, “If I have preaching, I’ll put on there like, ‘I solicit your prayers, I’m gong here.’ Or, I’ll write maybe something that I said in a sermon and kinda put it out there just to encourage people.” This is in stark contrast to the doings of the Baptist Minister Mitchell, who *reluctantly* references his preaching engagements due to pressure from his family and friends. And while she is not an open-book vis-à-vis her MS identity on Facebook, Daphne expresses her disapproval for a fellow patient who is:

One of the girls that I befriended, who also goes to my doctor, she’s doing the same injections and she posted a picture after one of her injections of her laying on the table...she says, “I tell people just to get their sympathy, I like the attention.” She posted, “Got out of my Uber ride yesterday and the Uber driver told me I look sexy with my cane.” She just LOVES the attention. Loves it! (emphasis in original)

The doings of this photo-sharing MSer suggest a billboard approach to presenting her identity, an approach consistent with the more extreme lifestyler-approach to doing. Sharing intimate photos and details about their conditions as part of their activities in virtual settings is particularly relevant to the identity work of the chronically ill and parents of special needs children who are more overstated in the performances of their identity routines. The social media platforms of both Kate and Gustavo contain an abundance of videos and photos detailing their identity-related lives – many which are difficult to look at due to their graphic medical content. One series of posts on Gustavo’s blog are devoted to a trip to the emergency room that resulted in his stint in the ICU for a severe asthma exacerbation. He writes:

This is what a severe asthma exacerbation looks like. This is not a portrayal, this is the real thing! Below you’ll find photos and video clips taken during various hospitalizations...I’m posting these images to make others aware that asthma can be quite severe and even life threatening.

Photos and videos that accompany the post provide a step-by-step account of what

transpired, and Gustavo makes no effort to shield anything. He is shown receiving treatment for his asthma flare-up in a flimsy hospital gown, intubated, and connected to a vast assortment of medical equipment, all the while struggling to breathe – it is very disturbing, and very difficult to watch. Gustavo’s blog also provides an extensive list of the various medical tests he has had in the recent years as well as the results (e.g., CT of Chest. Results: Negative), and also provides an inventory of his current medications, discontinued medications, drug allergies and food allergies.

Kate shares her experiences with ulcerative colitis with similar openness on her YouTube channel and public Facebook, Twitter and Instagram pages. Recent posts on Facebook and Instagram include photos and videos of her hospital stays with detailed accounts of the events that transpired; she posts a photo that her mom snapped of her as she sleeps in her hospital bed, a photo of some of her twenty-two daily medications, and one of her first solid hospital meal. Her YouTube channel includes instructional videos such as, “How to Burp an Ostomy,” as well as videos depicting her life with chronic illness. One particularly graphic eighteen-second video shows her stoma passing gas for the first time after surgery. Stan similarly uses Facebook to chronicle his life as the father of a profoundly disabled boy, “To me, it’s a good way to communicate with and give updates on (son’s) condition.” In addition to posting photos and videos of milestone events, such as when his son rolled over for the first time, he also posts during the difficult times, such as when his son is hospitalized. In line with his very open way of doing, his posting is regular and candid, and he makes a conscious effort not to “overdo” it, “I don’t go through a daily diary with people”; while he does not post with the same regularity as his fellow overstated doers, he certainly posts with the same emotional and

visual intensity.

Since her son's life is not affected by a life-threatening physical condition, the subject matter Heidi's postings is naturally less graphic, but she posts in similar fashion during her interactions in virtual settings, sharing "everything," for example, on Facebook:

Heidi: I'll share everything all the time, I do.

Interviewer: Do you post pictures?

Heidi: I do, I post everything. I actually probably post too much on Facebook.

And while she reports that generally people, "find me refreshing because I'm an open book, I'm so honest," not everyone feels this way; some find her admitted oversharing too much. She explains, "A few years ago someone had made a comment that, 'Alright, we get it, he's autistic!'" As the mom of a profoundly gifted child, Kristine posts the good, the bad and the ugly on her very popular blog that she has authored for twelve years. A recent post reveals the results from her "neuropsych testing" where she reveals that she has, among other things, "mild to moderate depression...high stress...general fatigue, and seasonal affective disorder [in addition to] stunning...crazy fast processing speed." The extreme candor that is part of the most fervent overstated doers' identity routines in these settings is not the only thing that sets them apart – their investment in these activities tends to be substantial, eclipsing the attention that they give to other activities related to the other facets of their lives. Kate provides just a snippet of what is involved in maintaining just one of her social media platforms:

Just like making YouTube videos just takes so much time and like the editing process alone for a five minute video it may take me an hour and thirty minutes to edit it... Sometimes I fall behind in making videos just because videos take so much time. Just setting up and getting the lights; I bought camera lights and setting them up and looking presentable. I put my makeup on so I don't look shiny.

Consistent with their high level of recognition and visibility within their respective communities, the most extreme overstated doers are more likely than other identity workers to have positions of prominence, leadership and advocacy in settings related to their identities. Many of these individuals travel to identity settings as “experts” representing their particular identities. Gustavo is frequently an invited “expert” speaker at drug companies, medical research facilities and group meetings for individuals with breathing-related conditions, and Kate, who is sponsored by a major pharmaceutical company, speaks as an expert on UC at a variety of conferences and events. Pastor David is invited to serve on panels as an “expert” in his faith, and Father Bob has been appointed to serve in a special position working with The Vatican. Jack has been hired by a major pharmaceutical company to do a satellite media tour about being the parent of a child with diabetes, and has also been an invited speaker at other events both in the United States and abroad. Kristine has authored a book about parenting gifted children (and has another in the works), and has also been an invited “expert” conference presenter by both national and global organizations affiliated with Gifted Children. Linda was invited to appear as an “expert” in a documentary relating to the non-sporting card collector fandom, and Landon speaks on behalf of the My Little Pony fandom at the conventions he organizes and attends.

A number of these more overstated doers have, in fact, achieved mini-celebrity status within their identity communities and this is most commonly due to their identity-focused presence in identity settings. Linda is renowned in her world of non-sport trading cards and Landon authors a very popular celebrated blog devoted to the My Little Pony fandom. Kristine’s book and blog about parenting gifted children is extremely popular

and well-known in the community, and both Gustavo and Kate are very recognized in their communities because of their online activities; Gustavo for his asthma blog, and Kate because of her YouTube channel as well as her Facebook, Instagram and Twitter accounts that are devoted to all things related to ulcerative colitis. Jack is also established in his community because of his very successful diabetes blog and podcast, and Stan is celebrated for the foundation he and his wife established to support special needs kids, as well as for the groundbreaking surgery his young son endured.

In addition to achieving prominence within their respective communities, a number of the most extreme overstated doers have actually been instrumental in *creating* the identity settings in which fellow community members socialize. Landon has had an instrumental role in organizing and running an annual European Brony convention, Linda is the owner and promoter of an annual non-sporting card convention that has been held since the mid-1980s, and Gustavo started the largest asthma support group on Facebook. Additionally, the blogs and YouTube channels supported by many of these other identity workers are places where community members regularly visit to gather information, exchange ideas, and feel at home with others sharing their target identities.

Chapter Seven: The Selective Association with Others

The Selective Association with Others and Identity

Identity work is not possible without the involvement of others, and as part of their doing, individuals interact with a host of others who are connected to their identities in a variety of ways. Individuals interact with audiences that include family members, friends, co-workers, acquaintances and strangers, who may or may not have knowledge of their identity affiliations.

The way individuals manage their associations with others reflects the strategies they are employing for doing identity. Individuals manage their associations with others vis-à-vis their identities in ways that are similar to ways they manage other components of identity work. Through selective association, or carefully orchestrating the details associated with their social interaction (e.g., who they interact with as well as when, where, why, and how often), individuals are able to maintain control over their particular identities by regulating when they are engaged and to what extent. Khanna and Johnson (2010) describe how individuals who are biracial manage their social networks in order to bolster their connection to their preferred black identities. Through purposefully associating with black individuals and historically black organizations and institutions, these identity workers are able to control the racial composition of their social circles to ensure that their preferred black identities are highlighted. While one young woman would reportedly, “Only date very dark-skinned black men because I didn’t want people to think I was trying to be white...I [wanted] to prove that I was black,” another manipulates the racial complexion of her social circles through her involvement with historically black organizations:

I can't imagine a life where I wasn't part of Jack and Jill and I wasn't in AKA...things that are exclusively black...I feel like I'm pretty segregated. I kind of segregate myself and I pretty much just hang out with black people" (Khanna and Johnson 2010:388).

Moisio et al. (2013) describe similar behavior among do-it-yourselfers, who actively seek out particular retail settings in order to surround themselves with particular types of people who reinforce their preferred identities. In an effort to claim a true craftsman identity, one subgroup of do-it-yourselfers seeks out small home improvement retailers instead of mass-market outlets, specifically because of the type of employees likely to be employed by the former. The smaller "mom and pop" shops are more likely to be staffed the older, more experienced craftsmen who these individuals prefer to rub elbows with in order to learn from their expertise and feel like members of the craftsman club (305). These biracial and DIY identity workers are specifically seeking out the company of others who share their identities –*identity others* -- in order to express, highlight and validate their preferred identities.

Ashforth and Kreiner (1999) detail how individuals employed in "dirty work" specifically seek out *identity others* as a way of managing the identity challenges they face due to the stigmatized nature of their occupational identities. Dirty work refers to tasks and occupations that are tainted either physically (e.g., janitors, mortuary profession), socially (e.g., public defenders), or morally (e.g., exotic dancers, tabloid reporters) (Hughes 1958:122), and the stigma associated with these occupations threatens individuals' ability to construct and maintain positive occupational identities that are validated by society (Ashforth and Kreiner 1999:428). Feeling a great sense of distance from "traditional" members of society, individuals in occupations such as these insulate themselves from the consequences of stigma by seeking out and primarily socializing with *identity others*, those who share their spoiled identities, thus creating a strong sense

of cohesion and strong subculture. This selective association contributes to dirty workers' ability to construct and sustain positive occupational identities despite the stigmatized nature of their work (Ashforth and Kreiner 1999: 420,428).

The selective association with others enables individuals to secure connections to desired identities, but can also help identity workers achieve altogether different goals, by allowing individuals to step away from less-desirable identities. Kreiner et al. (2006) observe Episcopal priests doing this type of identity work in an effort to give themselves a break from the demands of the particularly challenging identity that is the priesthood. At times, these men seek out the company of *identity outsiders* who are entirely disconnected from the realm of their religious arenas so that they might step away from their religious identities:

Well, one of the things that I used to do is I played for ten years in indoor soccer...in the adult co-ed league...most of the people there, with the exception of a couple folks on my team, had no idea who I was. I liked that anonymity because other people could be themselves around me. That was an escape for me because it was a different world where no one knew who I was and what I did (1046).

Mulcahy (1995) finds Internal Affairs police officers similarly engaging in selective association with identity outsiders in order to take a break from the extraordinary tension that accompanies their acutely stigmatized identities as those who police the police (100). As part of their identity work, some Internal Affairs officers strategically disengage from departmental life by seeking out the friendship of identity outsiders. Having close friends outside of the department, rather than inside of the department, reduces the likelihood that an Internal Affairs officer will have to investigate a close friend (110). By ensuring that their friend circles are primarily composed of identity outsiders, these officers are able to help temporarily alleviate some of the identity tensions they endure.

While some individuals manage their association with others in order to alleviate identity tension or to take a break from an identity, others use this identity work tactic in an attempt to completely disengage from a former identity, while attempting to secure a new one. King et al. (2009) describe how street-involved adolescent women selectively associate with certain types of people in order to transition away from street life and construct new, positive identities for themselves. To (re)claim their new identities, these young women manipulate their social networks by purposefully disconnecting from identity others -- the friends and social networks that were part of their former street lives and identities -- in order and reconnect with family and more respectable friends who are more aligned with the new “respectable” identities they are trying to carve out for themselves:

I don't even hang with the same people...I've gained a couple of friends that are more respectful. I spend more time with people who are actually doing something with themselves (King et al. 2009:145).

Scholars have also revealed how those affiliated with other identities utilize selective association, including runners, who frequently seek out entirely different social networks by “shedding sedentary friends, divorcing spouses, rejecting smokers, and finding a whole new set of [identity] others” who will more effectively help them to validate their new healthy identities (Edgley and Brissett 1990:265). And in an effort to distance themselves from the traditional immigrant identity, Killian and Johnson (2006) describe how North African immigrants in France purposefully seek out interaction with better-educated individuals who they believe are less likely to look at them exclusively as immigrants (70). By regulating the types of individuals that they interface with, identity workers are able to fine-tune the development of their identities.

The Selective Association with Identity Others and Identity Routines: From Understated to Overstated Doing

While the previous chapters explore the different ways individuals manage their identity work with all types of audience members (e.g., family, friends, strangers, etc.), this chapter focuses exclusively on the ways in which identity workers interact with those individuals who share their identities, revealing that while understated identity workers are less concerned with interacting with identity others, doing becomes increasingly focused on interactions that involve these identity-sharing others as identity work intensifies.

Perhaps one of the most telling indicators of the comparative insignificance of identity others to the identity work of the most understated doers is the fact that identity others are not likely to be included within their most active social circles. Understated doers may have a family member or a friend or two who share their identities, but they typically do not spend much, and certainly not most of their time interacting with identity others. Their obligatory doing inevitably puts even the most understated doers into the mix with identity others, but outside of these requisite interactions, they are far less likely to purposefully seek out the company of those who share their identities, something reflected by their general avoidance of identity settings designed to promote interaction with identity others. Those aligned with the most minimal identity routines generally spend little (if any) time engaging in either physical or virtual identity settings (e.g., support groups, fundraising events, fan clubs, social media platforms), suggesting that associating with identity others is less important to them.

The identity others with whom the understated doers interact with are more typically incidental to the doings that they engage in as part of their fundamental identity

work; these others are merely the “people props” connected to the particular environments and are less likely to be the impetus for social interaction. This is the case with Greg, who reports that his trips into identity settings (the concert venues that host his favorite band’s performances) are about experiencing the band’s music, not about experiencing the band’s music with fellow fans. And both Leah and Max prefer to go to the theater to see the newest Star Wars and comic-related movies, respectively, after the buzz has died down specifically so they *do not* have to share their experiences with so many other distracting fellow-fans. Seeking out identity others to claim and assert their identities is not an essential component doing for these identity workers (Khanna and Johnson 2010, Moisio et al. 2013); they are likely satisfied with the claims they have made to their identities, and do not need communal support to validate them.

For others with this more understated pattern of doing, minimizing interaction with identity others is a technique designed to downplay affiliation with identities that they prefer to keep less visible. Avoiding interaction with identity others is essentially undoing designed to help identity workers disengage and distance themselves from undesirable identities (Edgley and Brissett 1990; Killian and Johnson 2006; King et al. 2009). During her cancer experience, Shannon admits that she never ventured into identity settings, except for those mandatory visits to medical offices, pharmacies, etc. She refused to travel into non-essential settings (e.g., fundraisers, support groups, etc.) because she did not see herself as sick, and did not want to be around people who were, “I detached myself as far away as I could, I wanted nothing to do with them.”

As identity work becomes progressively more intense, individuals become increasingly more likely to include identity others in their social circles. And ultimately,

for the most extreme overstated doers, identity others become the primary members of their social groups and the individuals with whom they spend the majority of their time. When describing his social circles, Gustavo admits, “I think almost everyone I know outside of my family are (sic) asthmatics,” and Landon states, “The biggest thing that’s come to me is my social circles are massive now, and the vast majority of them are brony-related.” Minister Melissa spends most of her time with people who are connected to her Baptist faith, and Jack, whose daughter has diabetes, admits that his interaction “with human beings is mostly people with diabetes.” Megan primarily interacts with her “IBD family,” a group of others with similar chronic conditions, and Lexi says, “I find the [people] closest to me in terms of friendship are all ones that I’ve made through anime...I feel like the reason that we’re able to connect so well is because we all grew up for anime.”

Sharing a “connection” with others is what motivates Joyce, whose daughter is profoundly disabled, to manage the composition of her social circles so that they primarily include individuals who are in similar situations. As such, she spends most of her time with other mothers whose kids are “dealing with heavy-duty stuff,” because “they get it.” Being with like-minded individuals is something that is important to Pastor Michael, who describes the types of individuals with whom he spends the majority of his time:

They're people that have the same, the same passion for God that I do. And those are the people that I'm interacting most with, on a regular basis. Some of them are pastors, some of them are not, some of them are just volunteers in the church that just love the Lord. But the people that I'm interacting with, that I can open my heart up to, if I can say it that way, cause I have a lot of friends. I have friends in the business world that don't know the Lord, I have family members that don't know the Lord, but the people that I open up my heart to, the people that I'm connected to, are people that have the same love and passion for God that I do.

Father Bob spends most of his time interacting with those connected to his identity as a Catholic priest, something not surprising given the greedy nature of that particular identity (Kreiner et al. 2006 1034). “By giving yourself to the church in full service, one hundred percent all in, my family is my parish, my family is the flock,” he explains, and as the shepherd of this flock, his time is focused on them. Father Bob makes himself readily available to his family, as his home sits on the parish campus along with the church and the rectory; while he could use his home as a private residence to retreat to in order to spend some time away from his “family,” he states, “I keep that open. The living room, the dining room, the kitchen, that’s all, as far as I’m concerned, property for the parish for people to come and go. We host people there all the time.”

Father John similarly (and expectedly) reports that he spends almost all of his time with individuals connected to his life as a Greek Orthodox priest. But unlike Father Bob, who has taken a vow of chastity, Father John is married and has five children, and his greedy identity has, in a sense, infiltrated their identities as well, as *their* social interactions are consumed with those connected to their father’s role as a religious leader.

My boys serve in the altar; my boys and my girls are part of the Greek folk dance group here. So yeah, it really is very little separation of the life of the church to your family life and your friendship life.

In addition to primarily interacting with identity others because it “comes with the territory,” as is the case for Fathers John and Bob, identity workers seek out the company of identity others for a host of reasons, such as sharing information and points of view about their identities, or simply having the desire to be around people who “get it.” Sue explains the special bond that she feels when she has the opportunity to interact with others who share her chronic illness:

Yeah, it's like when you get together with a bunch of Italian people, my family's from Rome, so, we're all of a sudden sitting and it's like, you know, they're your people... but it's that, it's a different connection and you start talking about stuff, where have you been, how have you been... We're all speaking our [cystic fibrosis] language, you know?

As the nature of identity routines become more intense, identity workers' spend increasingly more time with identity others who tend to dominate their social circles. Additionally, the fact that more intense doing corresponds with greater participation in spatial and temporal identity settings for reasons other than those mandated by an identity's local code suggests that identity workers become progressively more likely to actively seek out the company of the identity others who interact there. With more frequent and regular participation in the community-focused identity settings that highlight and encourage the promotion of identity affiliation (e.g., support groups, fundraisers, chat rooms, and social media platforms) more intense doers show their increasing desire to seek out the company of like-minded individuals.

Chapter Eight: Identity Revelation

Identity Revelation and Identity

As rich sources of information, providing others with tremendous insight about who we are and where we fit into the social world, identities are vital components of our “information preserves” (Zerubavel 1982:103). As keepers of these preserves, who must make decisions about sharing this personal information to others, we are “collectively particular about whom we inform about what, and how and when we do it” (Ryan 2006:229), and this certainly holds true for the informing that takes place vis-à-vis identity disclosure.

One of the most recognized notions when it comes to identity disclosure is the metaphor of the closet; “coming out of the closet,” or more simply, “coming out” has been a popular reference to refer to the debuts of stigmatized, non-heterosexual identities. In addition to sexuality, sociologists have used the closet metaphor to explore the notion of identity disclosure among individuals associated with other hidden, stigmatized identities that are not always perceptible; for example, patients suffering from chronic or mental illness, who do not always present visible symptoms (Corrigan and Matthews 2003; Corrigan and Rao 2012; Herman 1993; Schneider and Conrad 1980). Saguy and Ward (2011) further demonstrate the versatility of this coming out language, establishing how it has been applied to the “hypervisible” condition of fatness by fat acceptance activists, who “come out as fat” in order to affirm their fatness and reclaim “the term fat... as a neutral or positive descriptor” (53-54). This suggests that the process of coming out also has implications for those with perceptible stigmatizing conditions, who “may struggle with the issues surrounding the process of coming out no less than those

who bear the less visible ‘blemishes of individual character’ (Goffman, 1963)” (Kitsuse 1980:1-2).

A quick internet search suggests that the coming out process may have implications for identity workers of *all* types, regardless of an identity’s visibility status to others or the implications it may have for an identity worker’s life. Columnist Sara Boesveld (2015), for example, “comes out” as a “bro-country music fan” in an article for online fashion magazine Flare.com, and Adam Paul Levine describes how his experience of “coming out as a republican” to his family went far worse than his experience of coming out to them as gay (Levine 2018). And while former omnivore Joe Yonan discusses his experience of coming out as a vegetarian (Yonan 2013), T. Wise confesses his fear over coming out to his family as a meat-eater after being raised as a strict vegetarian (Wise 2018). And for anyone seeking advice on how to smoothly, “come out of the broom closet,” Patti Wigington can help – in her 2018 thoughtco.com article, she provides helpful hints for managing the coming out of a wiccan, witch or pagan identity. And even identity workers affiliated with the most prestigious of identities must, at times, manage their coming out. I vividly remember when the mom of one of my son’s friends “came out” to me as a physician. Despite the fact that we frequently interacted for a number of years at numerous school and social functions, information about “Danielle” being a physician never surfaced -- until my son was injured at a birthday party we were attending. As she tended to my son, it quickly became clear to me that she knew a bit more about ankle injuries than the “average mom,” and when I let her know that I suspected as much, she casually blurted out, “I’m a doctor.”

Coming out is an event that is managed in the support of *any* identity, and is essentially a form of “notification” (Ryan 2006:229), or passing along information to others; as such, notification includes working out specific details such as who is doing the telling (i.e., the “notifier”), who is being told (i.e., the “notifyee”), when the information is being passed along, and the medium through which the notification is made (Ryan 2006:234-239). Identity revelations can be accomplished through a host of mediums included in the various elements of identity work. Dr. Danielle, for example, is able to reveal her identity as a physician through the management of her appearance (e.g., the wearing of scrubs), through props (e.g., scrubs, physician license plate), through discourse (e.g., “I’m a doctor!”) through her social media platforms (e.g., revealing it on Facebook) and through the other activities and audiences she engages with as part of her doing. Perhaps since the management of identity reveals can be folded into the essential elements of their identity work, Snow and Anderson do not conceptualize it as a mutually exclusive component of doing. Since orchestrating the details specifically associated with identity reveals is part of the constant management of one’s identity, and individuals open their closets in varying ways reflective of their different approaches to doing identity, I believe that we can gain valuable insight into identity work by independently focusing on identity reveals.

As scholars exploring the disclosure of mental and chronic illness identities agree, decisions regarding whether to tell or not tell are not always cut and dry. In analyzing the strategies of unveiling mental illness, Corrigan and Rao (2012) refer to the complexity of deciding whether to stay in or come out of the closet. They describe a “hierarchy of disclosure strategies” individuals can employ, ranging from the extreme “social

avoidance” strategy, where individuals stay in the closet by only associating with identity others, to the extreme “broadcast” strategy, where individuals become identity-advocates, openly coming out about their identities to anyone. Individuals with less extreme approaches to managing their reveals may adopt strategies of “secrecy” (i.e., avoiding isolation but telling no one), “selective disclosure” (i.e., segmenting life into groups of those “in the loop” and “out of the loop”), or “indiscriminant disclosure” (i.e., hiding it from no one, but not broadcasting (466-467)).

Schneider and Conrad (1980) similarly report that revealing information about an epileptic identity is “much more complex than the now-familiar metaphor of being either ‘in or out of the closet’ would lead us to believe” (39). The authors contend that decisions regarding the disclosure or concealment of these sick identities involve, “complex and selective strategies of information management,” and that while “epilepsy is something that is hidden at some times and in some places [it is] disclosed quite readily at other times and in other places” (38-39). And in her work studying the experiences of those living with chronic illness, Charmaz (1991) finds two fundamentally opposing strategies for disclosing information about the sick identity; while “spontaneous disclosure” involves “minimal or no control over how, when, where, what and whom to tell” ... “protective disclosing” is specifically “designed to control how, what, when and who people tell about their illness” (199-201). Although this research focuses exclusively on chronic and mental illness, it certainly demonstrates that an identity reveal involves much more than the mere opening of a door; identity workers must consider a host of factors when making their decisions about sharing who they are with others, and these considerations are made as part of the identity work done in support of any identity.

Identity Revelation and Identity Routines: From Understated to Overstated Doing

The ways in which identity workers go about opening their closet doors to let others know about the particular identity affiliations they maintain vary according to the intensity of their doing identity routines. Individuals are generally particular about the circumstances under which they reveal information about themselves, (Ryan 2006:229), and this is particularly true of identity workers who adopt a more understated approach to doing in support of their omnicontextual identities. A greater investment in “protective disclosing” (Charmaz 1991:199-201) realized through cautious identity policing characterizes their identity routines, and one of the ways they are able to keep a firm grip on their identity reins is through the implementation of strict policies regarding the circumstances under which they open the door to reveal their identities to others.

Details such as who the notifier is, who the notifyee is, when the information is being passed along, and the medium through which the notification is made are *particularly* important to the low-intensity doers, who exercise the greatest amount of “notificational discipline” (Ryan 2006: 243 – 239, 242) as part of their doing. Testimony to the importance of maintaining control over their identities is the significance these understated doers place on “first-person notification,” which occurs when the person who is doing the telling, the notifier, is the “principal,” or the person that the piece of information is about (Ryan 2006:234). The understated doers are more likely to insist on being the messenger when it comes to their “coming out,” and typically unveil this information in personal ways (e.g., one-on-one exchanges). Many of these identity workers express frustration and even anger when describing situations where information about their identity affiliation has not been passed along through first-person notification;

when they have not been in control of their reveals and have essentially been “outed” by others. As Kathleen, an alternative lifestyle fan explains, “*I [with GREAT emphasis] choose who knows, and I’ll make the judgment as to whether or not [to tell someone].*” Kathleen was furious when she once discovered that she had been outed by a friend, “I had to talk to my friend and say, ‘You broke my anonymity. Don’t do that!!’”

Shannon recalls learning that a close friend had outed her as a breast cancer survivor to a mutual coworker, “I was pissed that she said something. I would NEVER draw attention to myself for that.” As an understated doer, Shannon is *very* particular about who she shares her cancer identity with and because of this, she prefers to be the exclusive notifier. She recounts, with great frustration and anger, another encounter where she ran into someone who she hadn’t spoken to in over thirty-five years, who somehow knew about her illness identity:

And it’s so strange because I was actually at a flea market or craft show and someone I worked with years ago, in 1983, said to me, “Are you okay?” I worked close with them, but I haven’t spoken to that person [since then]. “Are you okay are you sure? Well we heard something.” [Shannon very angrily replies:] “Well, how did *you* hear that?”

Shannon describes how, as she tersely replied to this former coworker, her mind was racing as she tried to determine who from her inner-circle was responsible for this notification breach, ““Who knows you, that knows me, that would have told you that?”

Anna is a reform rabbi who also prefers to be the one in control of her identity reveal. As a female religious leader, she is aware of the surprise and attention that often accompany the disclosure of her identity; as such, she is very particular about the unveiling of her rabbi status, and prefers to be the one overseeing the process, particularly when she is engaged in social interaction in generic space. “So, when I meet someone new for the very first time in a social setting, I generally don’t introduce myself as rabbi,

and then I'm usually outed by someone that I'm with." I ask her, "And how do you feel when that happens?" Anna responds, "I do not care for it." This preference to serve as the principal overseers of their identity revelations is inline with the omnicontextual nature of identity for these doers. By acting as the messengers, Rabbi Anna, Shannon, Kathleen (and any identity worker) are able to ensure that their identities are only revealed in contexts they deem to be identity-appropriate. This protective disclosure is so important to Rabbi Anna, that she admits to sometimes withholding the information when she is directly questioned by strangers about what she does for a living, "Some rabbis will say that they're a shoe salesman or insurance, like something that you wouldn't want to talk to somebody about? Or, some people just say they're a teacher; I've done that before."

Another way that understated doers maintain tighter control over their identities is by keeping information regarding their identity affiliations confined to a select group; they are much more likely to report that their identities have only been disclosed to family members and those closest to them. The question, "Who knows about your identity?" elicits similar responses from understated identity workers aligned with diverse identities:

"Anyone who is close with me." (Kathleen, Alternative Lifestyle Fan)

"The closest people to me. So my family, [the friends] I see most of the time, my closest coworker friends and my boss." (Meredith, Breast Cancer Survivor)

"I mean, pretty much everybody knows about it that's close to me. Like, I wouldn't tell a stranger." (Barbara, parent of a child with ADHD)

Mitchell is a Baptist minister who also holds a full-time secular job at a local distribution center. As a low-intensity doer, he engages in a fair amount of identity policing to ensure that awareness of his religious leader identity is restricted to identity-appropriate others – his family and closest friends, and those involved with his religious endeavors, "Well, the

thing is, I never come out and say I'm a minister...Family knows. Close Friends know. Anyone that I've come across in a religious or church aspect know. That's it!" When I probe a bit, "So, nobody at work knows?" He emphatically replies, "No, NO!" By refusing to come out to the coworkers occupying the secular, generic space of the distribution center in which he works, Mitchell works to ensure that his religious leader identity is only engaged in marked space, which is inline with his commuter-like approach to doing.

While the group of identity insiders privy to knowledge about the identities of understated doers typically includes intimates and others connected to their identities in some way (e.g., congregants for a religious leader, physicians for the chronically ill, etc.), these types of identity workers are comfortable with this information extending beyond this group of intimates when they believe it is necessary. A number of them, for example, share their identities with coworkers and employers who they do not feel particularly "close" to because they have been required to do so (e.g., completing medical background documents for employment), while others share because they believe doing so is necessary in order to explain their sometimes frequent identity-related absences from work. Chronically ill identity-workers sometimes miss work because they are not feeling well or need to go to appointments related to their illnesses. The parents of special needs children may miss work to tend to sick kids or to meet with the professionals responsible for managing their children's conditions. Parents of talented children scoot out of work early to attend plays and robotics competitions, or take off altogether to travel to their kids' out-of-state sports tournaments. Liz's confesses that her boss, who knows about her super-star soccer daughter, "Probably wants to kill me at this point. Five

years of running [to attend her daughter's soccer activities], 'I gotta go, I gotta go!' She's never let me miss." When the unveiling of an identity can help explain identity worker's non-compliance with the other obligations they may have, understated doers are more inclined to broaden the circle of those who are in the know.

For twenty-five years of his life, Charles, a conservative rabbi, managed the revelation of his religious leader identity in this "need to know" fashion. During this time, Charles was in a very unusual position as both the religious leader of his congregation and a middle-school teacher, "I had a double life basically," he states. At the school where he taught, located in a "very non-Jewish community," the students, most parents and many teachers were not privy to his religious leader identity, but Charles felt obligated to come out to the principal of the school, in the event that he needed to take a day off to attend to his religious duties, such as presiding over a funeral.

Identity workers whose identity routine performances position them at the lower end of the intensity scale are the most particular about managing their identity reveals. These individuals typically prefer personal, primary notification, where they act as informer, and are more likely to share their identities when engaged in identity-relevant contexts – with identity-relevant audiences and in identity-relevant spaces. As doing escalates and identity becomes less omnicontextual, individuals become more invested in identity work that is implemented in a more carefree and visible fashion, and identity workers become increasingly more flexible when it comes to the specifics associated with the unveiling of their identities. In addition to being less concerned with serving as the personal, primary messenger, identity workers expand their circles of identity insiders to

include less intimate and less involved others, and are more willing to introduce their identities in generic space.

Shari is an Episcopal priest whose more intense version of identity work is more carefree than Rabbi Anna's, and as a result, they have quite different feelings about the ways in which knowledge of their identities is passed on to others. Unlike Rabbi Anna, who does not like to be outed by others in secular, social situations, Shari *assumes* that she will be outed in these generic settings, and is fine with it. She explains:

If I meet new people ... like if you had invited me to your house, you would know that I was a priest so I would *assume* that you would say to your friend, 'This is my new friend [NAME] who is a priest in [TOWN].' ... Like I got invited to join a book group by somebody and she told the book group, "This is [NAME], she's a priest."

Jason, a chronically ill identity worker, is happy to have been outed by his family members and friends, who have passed the news of his recent esophageal cancer diagnosis on to one another, even reaching out to people he has not been in touch with for decades. Jason is pleased that others have taken the liberty of sharing his identity with these distant others, "It was a good thing to hear from friends and relatives from way back... all of a sudden they've kind of rallied back here... You can never have enough cheerleaders going through this whole thing!" Jason's reaction to being outed to people from his past is quite different from that of Shannon, the outed breast cancer survivor described earlier, who, as an understated doer, was furious when someone she had not seen in thirty-plus years questioned her about her recent breast cancer diagnosis.

Dawn is an epileptic who enjoys when her family members make reference to her epilepsy on *their* Facebook pages, and Liz, who is the mother of an extraordinarily talented soccer player, is pleased when her friends make references to her identity on *their* Facebook pages as well. In fact, since she claims that she is not one to brag, being outed

by others is one of the *primary* means through which Liz's identity is exposed. Olivia, a brain cancer survivor, loves the fact that one of her family members has done more than simply mention *her* brain cancer on *his* Facebook page; rather than sprinkle an occasional post on Facebook referencing his chronically ill wife, Olivia's husband started a "feature" about her life as a cancer survivor on *his* Facebook page. Olivia explains that her husband's regular, on-going narrative is devoted exclusively to her life, and has documented *everything*, "Where we were and what was going on..." As a more uninhibited, carefree identity worker, Olivia was fine with this unfolding story that was visible to anyone on the Facebook page, "It was good. And it kept everybody, EVERYBODY in the loop... You know, everybody kind of knew what was going on." With identity escalation comes a more lax approach to the unveiling of identity in terms of both who the informer is, and the manner in which it is done. Jason, Dawn, Liz and Olivia have all been outed in fairly public and generic venues – the Facebook pages of others – and they are fine with it.

More intense identity routine implementation is correlated with a less restrained approach to identity work that also manifests in the corresponding expansion of the circles containing those who are privy to identity workers' identity affiliations. As identity work intensifies, individuals become increasingly more carefree and conspicuous in their identity work, and the awareness of identity is more likely to extend to the distant nodes comprising identity workers' day-to-day social networks. The question, "Who knows about your identity?" elicits similar responses from a host of the more intense doers:

"Everybody, it's not a secret." (Daphne, Multiple Sclerosis)

“Family, school, friends, everyone...I don’t hide it.” (Stacy, mom of a daughter with epilepsy and multiple delays)

“Everybody around here knows.” (Jenelle, mom of a talented “theater kid”)

“Pretty much everybody knows.” (David, Evangelical pastor)

“Everyone who knows me.” (Anderson, fan of My Little Pony)

As the doing of identity routines amps up and approaches the overstated space on the continuum, identity workers become increasingly less particular about the ways in which their identity reveals are managed as they become more inclined to open the door to present their identities to others in generic environments, and do so in more forward ways. One of the tactics the more overstated doers utilize to set up their identity reveals in seemingly discordant generic interaction involves inserting their identity affiliations into the smallest of (and often questionable) interactional openings that they are presented with. Kate, who suffers from ulcerative colitis, takes advantage of a very interesting interactional opening to reveal her chronic illness identity to her new coworkers; she describes how it happened:

For example, last night I was talking to a coworker, another cashier, and she had this chicken, this chicken toy, and she was playing with it and she was like, "Oh my gosh, it doesn't have a booty!" And I'm like, "That's me!" And my manager was standing right there and she was like, "What?" I'm like, "Yeah, I don't have my rectum or my anus or my large intestines and so that includes my rectum as well." She's like, "Wait, what?" I'm like, "Yeah, I don't have it." And I was in the middle of a conversation so I didn't want to veer off the conversation. I'm was like, "Yeah my small intestines are outside of my body and I go to the bathroom in a bag, in an ostomy." And she's like, "What? I've never heard that before. I wouldn't have even guessed." And I'm like, "Whoop, that's the point!"

Father John, a Greek Orthodox priest, enjoys the surprise factor that ensues when he discloses his religious leader identity in generic space. He describes once attending a professional football game with a fellow priest, where he was seated in front of a diehard fan who cursed every time there was a bad play; the fan was clearly unaware of the two priests sitting in front of him, and Father John could not wait to unveil his identity.

Although never directly questioned about “what he does for a living,” Father John finds what he believes to be an opportune moment to launch his reveal. He describes what happened:

So, he was very forward and I was using season tickets of someone he knew, so I knew it's coming at some point. He taps me on the shoulder and he goes, "Where'd you get your tickets?" I go, "They were a gift" And I said, you know what? *I'm gonna lay it on him right now.* I said, "Actually, I'm a priest. Actually, we're priests." His face hit the floor. And he goes to me, "Uh, I'm sorry for my language for the last half hour." But, next play, "BLAH, BLAH, BLAH." He was right back at it.

Another overstated identity worker similarly takes advantage of what he feels is a “clear” opening in order to reveal details about his new identity. Jack became the parent of an exceptional child when his two-year old daughter was diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes. While his family members and those closest to him were aware of his new identity, Jack was exasperated by their misconceptions about the disease and frustrated by their lack of appreciation of the toll it was taking on the lives of both he and his daughter. In addition to setting the record straight with these identity insiders, Jack wanted to unveil his new identity to people who were unaware of his situation, so that they could also appreciate the impact it was having on his life. Jack’s irritation with others became the opening that would facilitate his identity reveal. He describes how he announced his identity affiliation by sending an email to *everyone* in his address book:

I cold emailed 250 people, and I said, this is such an asshole thing to do, I said, “Every time I touch my daughter today for Type 1 diabetes, I’m going to send you an email of a short description of why. You can click a link in it to go to a longer description of why. This will only go on for one day. I know you didn’t ask for this, but I’m hoping you might make a donation to the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation.” [I sent it to] about 250 people. No one asked for it, and no one complained. Because I’m sure they were like, “Crazy guy’s sending us emails.”

Jack did more than simply open the door to reveal his identity to others; he essentially picked the locks of *their* doors, opened them up, pushed his marked identity through and dropped it into *their* generic space. This very intense identity worker continues to

conspicuously reveal his identity in generic contexts today by creating openings with the testing of his daughter's blood sugar in public; behavior that he *knows* will likely prompt an identity reveal:

Jack: Once they see you testing her blood sugar and somebody asks you, then you would tell them.

Interviewer: So if you're out and you have to test her blood sugar, do you try to go somewhere private...

Jack: INTERRUPTS...Never!

Interviewer: You do it wherever you are?

Jack: Wherever I am.

Interviewer: Do you schedule things around...

Jack: INTERRUPTS AGAIN. Never! No! Wherever...that's her and wherever she happens, she happens.

Landon, a fan of My Little Pony, employs a similar strategy for very conspicuously coming out through the use of props in generic space during a 5k run he participated in with some friends -- and lots of strangers -- who were unfamiliar with his brony identity. When a friend asked if he would like to attend the event, Landon's immediate response was, "Yes! And I'm *totally* bringing my ponies with me." As a very intense doer, Landon's brony identity is omnirelevant and omnipresent for him, and as he describes, he intentionally attended the event with his stuffed pony in tow in an effort to openly reveal his identity in a way that he knew would be provocative. His description of the event is tinged with references to the uninhibited, conspicuous approach to doing that he has adopted as an overstated doer:

Landon: I brought one of my smaller plushies, I had it, I had stuffed through my belt so I had this random Pinkie Pie plush attached to my side. And, you know, one of my friends, was just like, "Dude, I can't believe you're gonna do this whole run with that, with that pony?" But, the thing is, that where that PR team was trying to get footage of people, their cameras kept swinging around to me because I was the crazy guy with the

My Little Pony plush attached to him. And it's just like, "Yeah, I'm the one everyone's looking at though." And so, I'm the one who's making this fun, because I'm bringing the party and that's the interesting part of it for me.

Interviewer: So, did you bring that stuff because you wanted to highlight it and draw attention to yourself, or did you bring it because, in the spirit of the event, it seemed appropriate?

Landon: Both for me. I think it's appropriate to the event because it's showing that I'm here for a bit of silliness kind of thing... We all dress and present in a manner that we hope will draw attention and I just like. I like to say, for me, when you do it in this manner, like with brony stuff, it's, you're pretty much saying, you're pretty much being shameless about it. You're like, "I'm not being pretentious about this. Make no bones about it, I'm blatantly being an attention grabber here." And the fact that I'm doing it so, not obnoxiously, but so blatantly shows you that I'm self-aware; I'm doing it deliberately, you know.

Landon's identity was released through the opening created by his use of highly marked props, and he is unfazed about infusing generic space with his very presumptuous identity reveal; positioned at the highpoint of identity escalation, Landon desires and enjoys the provocative attention it brings.

Linda, a non-sport trading card collector, also demonstrates this tendency for overstated doers to spontaneously disclose their identities (Charmaz 1991:199-201) and come out by "inserting" marked identities into generic space. As it turns out, she and Rabbi Charles have a lot in common; for many years, both held positions as teachers in addition to their second identity-related job. However, unlike the rabbi, who *never* revealed his identity to his students, Linda not only disclosed this information to her students, but actually enlisted them to do some work for her identity-related mail order business:

I would bring in boxes of cards that we needed to sort and make into sets... if we had to stay in for recess... I don't know if the powers that be would have appreciated it though. I thought it was certainly something that was beneficial for them.

Gustavo, an asthmatic who generally delivers high-intensity identity routines, actually takes inserting his identity into generic space a bit further, by introducing his

sick identity into *contrary* identity space. Over the past twelve years, Gustavo has participated in approximately fifteen marathons/half marathons (in both the US and abroad), in an attempt to bring awareness to his disease and “show the public that even people with severe breathing problems can do pretty cool things.” To assist in presenting himself as an asthmatic, he frequently wears “asthma gear” – apparel that “plugs” pharmaceutical companies with references to asthma medications – as he walks the courses.

Sometimes, more intense doing is associated with reveals that are forced into even larger public domains. Take, for example, two mothers of exceptional children who very openly out themselves through a very public venue. MaryAnn, the mother of a child with Asperger Syndrome and Emily, the mother of a child with Tourette Syndrome, each appeared with their families in separate stories for a monthly community magazine delivered to the homes of their town’s nearly 15,000 residents. For each of their issues, a family photograph graced the entire cover page of the magazine, and additional photos accompanied the two-page profile inside, which focused on life with a special needs child. And MaryAnn further broadened the scope of outing herself by writing, directing, and starring in a film based on her experiences as the mom of an exceptional child. By staging very public outings for themselves, MaryAnn and Emily expand the parameters for identity insiders to include the community at large – people well beyond their social networks, including many who they do not even know.

Extreme doers are exceedingly generous with the sharing of their identities, and the prototypical overstated doers are often so open about their identity reveals, that they often enjoy a certain “celebrity” status within their identity communities as well as their

communities at large as a result. Joyce describes what it's like to be out and about in her local community with her profoundly disabled daughter in tow, "It's like going out with a movie star. Everyone knows her, everyone's into her. People stop and go out of their way to talk to her...and I LOVE it!" And since Joyce always accompanies her daughter when they go out, she shares in her daughter's celebrity status.

Linda, a non-sport card collector, is quite renowned in her identity community. She tells of one encounter with a fellow fan who, upon meeting her, "started jumping up and down and hugging [her]." But Linda reports that this experience pales in comparison to another encounter she had:

Once, when we were at a show, someone came up to our table and it turned out to be Walter Koenig, from Star Trek, the movies, and he introduced himself to ME and I almost fell over! And I said, "Gee, shouldn't I be introducing myself to YOU?" And he said, "No!" and he said, "I know who you are and I collect cards." And that was quite interesting.

Jack, the father of the young girl with diabetes, is also very publicly out in his identity community, and tells about a similar experience he had with a woman while he was out dining one evening:

We talked for a minute, and in the course of the conversation I said [my daughter's] name, and she puts her hand on me and she goes, "That's [daughter]?" And I was like, "What?" And she goes, "I read your blog!" And I was like, "Oh that's so nice, thank you." That happens more than you would expect.

As the author of a very popular brony blog and organizer of premier brony events, Landon also has a very visible presence in the community of My Little Pony fans. He describes the transition from "average-brony" to mini-celebrity, "So instead of just being another guy in the fandom, I suddenly went to, whenever I went to a local meet-up, people would, just constantly, people were coming over and saying, 'Oh, hey, you work for [company] don't you?'" Kate, the identity worker with ulcerative colitis operates a

very successful YouTube channel dedicated to her condition, has thousands of subscribers, over a million views, and even a few stalkers! The very visible identities of all of these extreme doers essentially out them in their respective communities, and they all seem to enjoy the attention it brings as it feeds in to their particular approaches to identity work.

The day-to-day orchestration of all of the nuances associated with how we manage our “coming out” (identity revelation), who we interact with (selective association with others), where and when these interactions take place (identity ecology), what type of information we reveal during the course of these interactions (discourse), the items that we use (props) and how we present ourselves while doing all of this (appearance) constitute the seemingly arduous task of the identity work we do in order to create and support our preferred identities. However, doing identity is very much one of the taken-for-granted tasks we engage in as social beings and because of this, the intense identity work we put in often goes unrecognized.

It thus seems likely that people will tend to forget, if only as a result of cognitive economizing, how many of their habits originated as acts of self-signification. By implication, people will also tend to forget how much identity work they are doing at most times (Schwalbe and Mason-Schrock 1996:120).

Part III: Identity Club Membership: The Generic Experience of Identity

Chapter Nine: Membership Orientation

Introduction

The second overarching theme to emerge from this social pattern analysis of doing identity concerns the similar ways identity workers experience their identities, regardless of their particular identity affiliations or intensity of their identity routines. When comparing the doing that is done in support of any identity, a number of common features emerge that I consider hallmarks of identity work. And while these hallmarks may manifest in slightly different ways, their presence notably marks the experience of any identity. I find the analogy of “club membership” particularly helpful in illustrating the experiencing of identity. While there are many different types of clubs – service clubs, recreational clubs, social clubs, hobby clubs – they are all designed to unite people based on a common goal or interest. Identity workers certainly have a mutual interest when they are connected to the same identity and as such, they may be considered members of the same *identity club*.

When an individual becomes an active member of a club, he or she transitions from club initiate to club veteran, and along the way, experiences different features of the club. This is precisely what happens when identity workers become members of identity clubs; as they experience “club membership,” they are exposed to various hallmarks of identity work. Identity workers’ club experiences typically begin with “member orientation,” before moving along to include other features including “membership responsibilities,” “membership benefits,” and “membership drawbacks.” While these experiences are not necessarily linear, and not all identity workers may experience each

element of membership, it is important to note that these hallmarks have the capacity to emerge as part of the identity work done in support of any identity. Member orientation will be discussed in further detail here, and the other components of club membership are presented in chapters ten through twelve.

Identity Introductions

Before the identity work associated with a particular identity can commence, an individual must first establish a connection to or become affiliated with the identity. There is a critical distinction between identities that are voluntary in nature, that is, those identities that are chosen *by* individuals for themselves, and identities that are involuntary in nature, those identities that are chosen *for* individuals. Despite this fundamental and profound difference between the former, ascribed identities and the latter, achieved identities (Linton 1036:113-131), association with either type begins with a starting point. And whether one is discussing her achieved identity as a rabbi or masochist, or her ascribed identity as an epileptic or mother of an elite fencer, she can typically pinpoint and describe that starting point with great detail. Whether it was the moment she had a religious calling, the thrill she got the first time the cracker of a whip drew blood, the phone call she received from her doctor, or the moment her daughter received her “A” rating as a fencer, identity workers across all identities recount their *identity introductions* with great similarity; they tend to share details such as when the introduction occurred, where they were, who they were with, what they were doing, and how they felt. Here is how Meredith describes the introduction to her breast cancer identity:

That was in 2005. It was in October, because I remember it was not long before Halloween because we had kids coming to the door and stuff. And when I called [my doctor’s] office, a nurse answered, and she said, “Oh, hold on.” And [DOCTOR] picked up and said, “Oh, I’m just getting into the office.” He said, “I’m sorry, but I’m going to

have to ruin your day.” And I immediately through he was gonna say, “Oh I don’t have the report back,” or something and he said, “Unfortunately this is small breast cancer.” And the world stops. Everything stopped, like, it’s like frozen. I was at work so I walked into my boss’s office and ... I was just floored, and I didn’t know what to do with myself.

This identity worker recounts the story of her diagnosis call with great detail – she describes the time of year, what was going on around her at the time, specifics about her conversation and details about how she felt. Dan talks about the day he became introduced to his asthmatic identity in a similar way:

I was about 5 years old. I remember being called out of class. My mom was saying that I had to go to a doctor’s appointment... So I got called out of class early, went to the doctors, they were saying, “How’s your breathing been?” I was like, “Oh, you know, it’s been all right.” They were like, “Well, we’re diagnosing you with asthma.”

And Brian, who was a tennis instructor at the time of his identity introduction, similarly remembers precise details about the events leading up to his first seizure,

And it was on a Thursday, I’ll never forget. I remember exactly who I was teaching, I remember the lesson itself. I was coming home from work and it was just about ½ mile from here; I was coming down [ROAD], and there’s a turn that goes down and then it makes a right up, and I kept [driving] straight into a house.

Here is how Stacy describes the moment, roughly eighteen years ago, when she became connected to the parent of a special needs child identity:

[DAUGHTER] had her first seizure, and it was a generalized seizure, I would say it was probably a tonic-clonic because she turned blue in the lips. She was eating scrambled eggs, she had just come back from Dr. [PEDIATRICIAN]’s office because she had an infection ... I remember talking to my mom and she was eating scrambled eggs, and they were coming out with foam, and I go, “What the?” My mom goes, “You call 911!”

Jack recounts with great detail the moment during their family vacation when he and his wife came to the realization that their daughter was a diabetic:

Around midnight, the whole family is sitting around, there’s like 16 people there and they’re all sitting around a table, and I said to [WIFE] “Hey I meant to tell you, [DAUGHTER’S] breath smells funny.” And she was like, “How?” And I was like, “I don’t know, like metallic maybe or fruity” And literally, I tell people this all the time, it looked like the skin on my wife’s face like melted and slid off her skull. And as I looked at her I thought, in my head I thought, “Oh my God, [DAUGHTER] has diabetes. “ And before I could say anything, in a split second, [WIFE] said, “Oh my God, [DAUGHTER] has diabetes.”

While it might not be surprising to learn that parents of children with medical conditions and individuals living with chronic illnesses can recall, with great detail, the moments these life-altering ascribed identities were “chosen” for them, Liz similarly recounts the moment when she became the mother of a “star” soccer player. Although her daughter had always been an above-average athlete, she recalls the moment when things changed:

[It was] all of a sudden. It actually happened in Florida at a tournament, Christmas week. My husband got the stomach virus so he was stuck in the hotel and it was only me and [DAUGHTER]. All of a sudden, she played this game and everyone was coming over to me after the game going, “My God! She’s phenomenal!” It was crazy. I’m like, “I don’t know what just happened. She just came out of nowhere.” And from that minute on, it was amazing.

Kristine recalls the day they realized their profoundly gifted son was exceptional:

For his third birthday he got ... [a] Melissa and Doug Puzzle... the big, chunky puzzle. It was like a 15, 20 piece puzzle and from the time you unwrap the present he had it finished [in] under 15 minutes... the punch line is, the image was facing the floor; he was doing it with the cardboard side up!

And identity workers affiliated with achieved identities frequently recall their identity introductions in comparable ways. Take, for example, the way the Elena describes the day that it all began for her over thirteen years ago:

I was in 8th grade and we had to do summer reading ... and we got to the beach house and [my mom] whipped out this *Harry Potter and The Sorcerer’s Stone* book and I was like, “I’m not reading that!” ... But one day it rained, like it was either clean or read [since there would be no beach time], so I read, and at the time I thought it was like a moron like nerd move to do. So I started it that day and it was raining, and I loved it. I was just like, “Oh my God! This is about witches and wizards and magic and this kid doesn’t have his parents!” And being adopted, I was like, “Oh my God I know how he feels!” ... By the end of the first book it was like, I have to read the next book. And then the movies started coming out. And then it was like I absolutely need to see how they’re going to do this!”

Just like the other identity workers, Leah describes when her identity introduction happened, where she was, who she was with, what she said, and how she felt. In a similar fashion, Landon describes his introduction into the My Little Pony fandom:

Well, one of my other friends who I was seeing, at a sort of a geek Internet cafe that I used to frequent, they were talking about it... I was just like, "Ok, I'm going to check this out just to find out what he's raving about." ...I watched the first couple of episodes and then I watched the rest of it and I was like, it's just such a simple pleasure. It's just, it's colorful and it's happy and it's just so, it mellows me out basically... So, I looked up some of the other content that had come up. So, you know, music and interviews with show staff and stuff like that and I just suddenly discovered that it was amazing. The art was amazing, the music was amazing, and I was like, "This is brilliant! I want to get involved, I want to see more of this. I want to be part of it."

And the religious leaders follow suit, as demonstrated by Father Bob (Roman Catholic):

And it wasn't until around eighth grade, so a particular mass, Holy Thursday, I remember not wanting to be there at all, I couldn't wait to go home, and of course the priest that was preaching went on forever and ever and ever I couldn't wait to get out and go home. And low and behold, it was at the end of the mass, it was in the liturgy that I really was struck because they started stripping the altar linens, they removed the candles, they started turning out some of the lights so there's a real sensory experience that I noticed. And I had been to the mass once a year, it was Holy Thursday. But it was at that moment that something really clicked, that something was really profound here. .. a real love spark occurred there where it's like, I need to learn more about this. I need to learn more about this God, this Christ, this moment of that Holy Thursday. So that really, that triggered something in there that I've been chasing ever since.

Here is how Father John (Greek Orthodox) recalls his special moment that occurred roughly thirty-two years ago:

I brought it up it was when I was fifteen and I was a sophomore in high school, I was in an all boys Catholic high school, there were a lot of clergy there, and we had a Greek Orthodox priest teach us "Religion In Contrast." So there was a lot, there was (sic) brothers, there was clergy, so I had that. And I presented that before a whole group of my peers and everybody was asked what they wanted to be and everybody wanted to make a lot of money -- this was the height of the eighties -- and I was the only one that said I wanted to become a priest and I got, of course, kidded quite a bit after that but I just didn't care, it didn't bother me

Access to Insider Information

Once an individual is connected to a particular identity and begins performing the requisite identity work in support of it, he or she is lumped (Zerubavel 1996:422-424) together with others performing similar identity work, and as a group, these individuals constitute the members of that particular *identity club*. As members of an identity club, individuals become privy to the bylaws or identity codes uniquely associated with that

club – and in order to retain club membership, individuals must perform identity work in accordance with these regulations. These identity codes are not only the means through which an individual secures his or her place in a particular club (by adhering to them); by having an understanding of these codes and knowing how to implement them, identity workers gain access to the club's *insider information* that enables them to recognize the identity work of others who are affiliated with the identity (Schwalbe and Schrock 1996:125).

While the interpretation of any indicators of identity clearly requires some knowledge of the identity on the part of others, some of the identity work individuals perform is more easily attributable to their more familiar identity affiliations. It is probably safe to assume that a bald woman participating in a “Cancer Survivor” march is connected to the chronic illness identity, the individual wearing an “I ♥ Star Wars” t-shirt to the fan identity, a man tending to a profoundly disabled child in a wheelchair to the parent of an exceptional child identity, and the woman introducing herself as the priest from the local Episcopal church to the religious leader identity. In the northeast city in which he resides – an area that is home to many supporters of New York based sports teams – Nicholas has grown accustomed to being called out while he is wearing his Mets gear, “If I’m wearing it at the supermarket or at a movie or, I don’t know, at the mall, I’ll have people say, “Hey Mets!” He was singled out as a Mets fan when he recently ventured far outside of Mets territory, to a city in the northwest corner of Pennsylvania, “We were visiting friends in [CITY] just two weeks ago, and I had my Mets hat on, and somebody came up to me and said, ‘Hey, let’s go Mets!’ and I was like, ‘Wow!!’” The use of certain telltale identity tokens such as appearance-related props like these easily

signifies identity club membership -- even to those with even limited knowledge of an identity.

Other identity work, however, is not this transparent, and interpreting it requires a much deeper understanding of an identity, something that only members of the club (or those identity insiders with knowledge it) have access to. Without this heightened level of insider information, the telltale identity work done in support of particular identities can go unnoticed and when this happens, identity workers' identity affiliations are not so easily recognized. This identity work (and proper identity attribution) is, in essence, "hidden in plain sight" (Zerubavel 2015: 1), not because it is perceptually accessible but not noticed, but because outsiders lack the ability to successfully process the meaning behind this insider information.

While the white collar is a very recognizable identity prop used by the Roman Catholic priests during the course of their doing, they also manage a host of other less familiar appearance-related props, and this identity work can only be appreciated by those with a more intimate familiarity with the identity. This insider information allows those "in the know" to glean valuable information about the identity worker from his identity work. Father Bob explains,

So what happens is, when I'm in different capacities I'm wearing different things. *And it's extremely visible.* I mean if I see a priest walking around, "Oh, there's a priest. And he's got a purple stole and he's talking to someone? He's in confession; he's hearing a confession." If he's wearing the chasuble, he's celebrating the mass, if he's wearing the surplice, which is the white kinda half-cut thing, well that means he's doing a ceremony in some capacity, but it's not mass. You know, so there's so many things that circle a priest.

But then you also discover very quickly what level of priest, what rank does he hold. You know does he have a miter on? Does he have a crosier? A staff? Well there's your Bishop. Is he wearing a gold chain when he's wearing a suit? Do you see a chain going across his chest? There's a bishop. So there's a lot of ways to identify rank and file of a priest, especially with a cassock, the colors change for different levels and stuff. So in that sense it's endless.

Notice that the priest describes these props as “extremely visible,” yet for those lacking insider identity information, they are “hidden in plain sight.”

We have seen how Landon manages his more transparent identity props that require a bit of familiarity with the identity, such as his My Little Pony coffee mug and stuffed toys, but he also uses more obscure props connected to the fandom that would only be recognized by those with intimate knowledge of the identity – pony music is one such prop. Within the fandom, a great amount of pony-related music is produced, and this identity worker will sometimes play this fandom music while working in his repair shop:

There was this one time I was listening to fandom music, I was listening to remix songs, and a guy came in and just as he was leaving he just said, ‘Nice music.’ But because I was busy working and stuff, I didn’t think about it, and then after he walked out, I was just like, ‘Huh? Wonder if that was a brony?’ ...He obviously knew what it was, so even if he wasn’t a brony, he knew what bronies were and that in itself is interesting as well.

Anderson, who is also a My Little Pony fan, acknowledges that some of his identity work includes the use of some less obvious identity-related t-shirts, “They’re both shirts that you would only know that they were about the show if you knew the show really well; they don’t just have a huge pony on them.” By sending a “secret messages” that are only perceptible to fellow-fans, these bronies are essentially employing the practice of “steganography,” where an individual sends “a covert message in such a way that no one apart oneself and one’s intended audience...even suspects its existence” (Zerubavel 2015:35-37).

Anderson, Landon and Father Bob may not be intentionally trying to conceal their identities through the use of these less recognizable props, but they are aware that only other members of the club and identity insiders will likely have the insider information necessary to interpret their meaning. Other identity workers, however, do take advantage

of members' only information, and rely on it when they want to conceal aspects of their identity affiliation. After explaining how asthmatics "stealth" the use of their inhalers, "there are ways of disguising it, or hiding an inhaler so nobody knows that we're actually taking a hit," I ask the Gustavo, "And only a fellow stealthther would know what's going on?" He replies, "Exactly!" Assuming that the identity work he is doing in support of his sick identity will only be recognizable to other members of the club, this identity worker is able to keep his affiliation with his identity private.

Like these asthmatic stealththers, there are times when Leah similarly takes advantage of others' presumed lack of knowledge about the Harry Potter identity. Although she does not use insider information to conceal her fan identity, she does use it to cloak certain aspects of her personal life. Leah has recently started dating someone new, and wants to keep his identity under wraps. To facilitate this, she has assigned him a pseudonym in her smartphone so that his real name does not come up when he calls or sends her a text message. The pseudonym she has assigned him is, "Tom Riddle," who is a character from the Harry Potter series, who is also referred to as "He-who-must-not-be-named." So, when Leah's new beau calls her or sends her a text, the name, "Tom Riddle" appears on her phone, with the implication being that the man behind the name "must not be known." She explains that while members of the club and identity insiders "get" that her mystery man is contacting her, those unfamiliar with the reference are left in the dark.

In a similar way, Minister Mitchell intentionally veils his Baptist religious leader identity on his social media accounts with handles and account names that are double entendres. Those "in the know" recognize his "Mister[BLANK]" handle/name as a reference to his work as a Minister, but that connection is lost on identity outsiders.

My Instagram name is Mister [CODEWORD], and even with that, a lot of people that follow me on Instagram, who I work with, don't know I'm a preacher. They don't know, it hasn't [clicked]. But they always say, [NAME], you're always preaching at us!

While the “members only” type of identity work performed by Minister Mitchell, Gustavo and Leah is similarly designed to *intentionally* keep outsiders in the dark, this is not always the case; sometimes “members only” identity work is simply done to establish one's club affiliation and transmit this information to any other club members who might be in the area to acknowledge it. Daphne describes how she recently commented on something posted on a Facebook page that was related to her chronic illness:

Yesterday my sister-in-law shared a video and it was a very funny video of some girl walking in a movie theater with popcorn and she tripped and fell and she landed right on her face, right on her face. And I commented on it, and I said, “[SISTER-IN-LAW], I'm really laughing at this!” I said, “This was me a couple of months ago, face plant, except on concrete.” ...So, people could read that and think what they want. They don't have to know I had MS. Anybody – you could trip, you know, so I wasn't trying to hide it at all because I thought it was funny.

Only those with intimate knowledge about Daphne's identity would get the inside joke and understand that she was indeed referencing the fact that *her* face plant was indirectly caused by her MS.

Identity workers affiliated with other identities also perform this type of identity work, acknowledging that is exclusively designed for fellow club members or those in the know. The Reverend Shari discusses a prop that she uses in her email correspondence:

There is a funny little thing that I don't even know if anybody knows. I'll sign my emails [FIRST NAME] and then the plus sign. The plus sign means “The Reverend.” But nobody knows that. So first name with the plus sign means “The Reverend.” And then if the plus sign is in front of the person's name, so if it says like, plus first name, he's our bishop. So if you're the bishop you put the plus in front of your name if you're a bishop. And if you're the presiding bishop who, there's only one, he gets two plusses before his name. LAUGHS. But nobody knows that, we know it, it's like [our] little insider thing.

And Kathleen, the fan of sadomasochism, describes some props that are “hidden in plain sight” in her home:

I do have, actually, out in plain sight, some things called "crackers." The crackers are at the end of a whip, and because I've bled, you get the cracker; because they shouldn't be using it on anyone else if it's got your blood on it. So, I do have crackers... So that has special meaning to me, but you would not know unless I told you what they are. And no one has ever asked!

Like The Reverend Shari, who enjoys the fact that meaning behind the "+" on her email signature is only reaching privileged insiders, Kathleen gets a kick out of the fact that the meaning behind her crackers is lost on most people:

I love when I have something like the crackers, that people don't recognize. I love that. It's mine and they have no idea... I love that I can have it in plain sight and they don't know what it is!

Landon thoroughly enjoys the confusion his pony coffee mug triggers for the uninformed patrons that visit his shop:

I quite happily have a My Little Pony mug next to me that I drink my coffee from. And part of that is just a silent joke cause... I'll have customers who will walk in, and they'll look at the mug, and you'll see a flash of confusion, but they don't say anything. And to me that's the funniest thing in the world; that never stops being funny for me.

Leah likes wearing a t-shirt with the words, "I solemnly swear I'm up to no good" printed on them because only fellow fans will appreciate the Harry Potter reference. She describes her mindset when deciding to wear it, "Oh, let me wear this t-shirt because I think it's funny, and if someone gets it, cool and if they don't, they have no clue what they are missing out on." I ask her, "Are you hoping that someone might notice it?" "Yes!" she replies, "Cause I know what this means, let's see if anyone else knows what it means. Like if I wear the t-shirt and if you know what it means, than yes, you're going to know that I'm a HP fan... 'Oh, you like HP, come talk to ME!'"

Much of the intentional members-only identity work individuals engage in involves the use of props, and although her t-shirt and phone are both identity-related props, it is the identity-related language that appears on these objects that is suggestive of

the Harry Potter fandom. As a fan of Harry Potter, Leah is essentially multilingual, in that she speaks “Harry Potter” in addition to her native English. As someone who is fluent in Harry Potter, she has mastered the vocabulary, phrases, idioms, and spells; knows the characters, landmarks, potions, dorms and many other details that make-up the Harry Potter world. By incorporating Harry Potter language into her everyday conversations, she is essentially “code-switching,” which is “the alternating use of two languages in the same stretch of discourse by a bilingual speaker” (Bullock and Toribio 2009: xii). Hult (2014) argues that code-switching is a means of expressing group identification, and this is certainly the case for this fan and other identity workers who engage in “code-switching” to signal other group members. Leah explains how she uses the tactic with her family members, who are also Harry Potter fans:

What will happen is, somebody will say something and I’ll turn around and call them a Mudblood. And a Mudblood is a person that has one witch parent and a non-witch parent...and it’s actually not nice...

Lexi similarly engages in code-switching with her friends who are fellow fans, “Me and my friends who are also into anime... we bring up anime in everyday life. Like, we would just be like, ‘Alright you Weadoo [derogatory name for anime fan], relax’” ,

Kristine describes how the special “code words” that she and other members of the club of parents of gifted children use allow them to covertly talk about their kids without being seen as boasters; those code words also allow club members to recognize fellow members. Kristine explains, “Asynchronous is a big tell. If you hear someone say ‘asynchronous’ you’re like, ‘Alright, you know the main code word, you have a gifted kid.’” She continues:

There are so many code words to talk about your kids because nobody wants to hear about your damn gifted [child]... You’re perceived as bragging and you’re not bragging when you’re talking about my kid, at three, putting a puzzle tougher upside down. I’m

not bragging, I'm going, "What the hell is this?"

Through their code-switching, these identity workers are able to deliver identity-related messages exclusively to others who are in the know; these messages will go over the heads of identity outsiders. Although his staff at his secular job is unaware of his position as a Baptist minister, Mitchell admittedly engages in regular code-switching during the meetings he has with his subordinates:

So, at [EMPLOYER], before we start work at 6:00, we have a group meeting for everybody that's working that shift and my job is to tell them what today's goal is; tell them where I need them to be, what I need them to do, and really boost their spirits to get them to do that. So I'll go and tell them, I'm like, "Look you guys. This is our goal, this is what we have to do, this is how we have to get it done. I really think you guys can do it; you guys are made and created to do this. You guys are phenomenal people so on and so forth." They just take it as words, but there are certain people who are Christians as well, or know the bible who are like, "[NAME], that was this bible verse, this bible verse, this bible verse," and I'm like, "I don't know what you're talking about!"

Code-switching effectively allows Minister Mitchell to covertly perform his spiritual job in secular space, reaching other members of the club who happen to be in attendance.

As we have seen, identity insiders of all types recognize the more obscure language and props associated with the doing of their particular identities, but they are also more inclined to recognize and successfully interpret the unique behaviors that are connected to a particular identity. The FitzRandolph Gate on Nassau Street serves as a threshold between downtown Princeton and Princeton University's campus, and on any given day, scores of people pass through the gate to enter and exit campus. Only those with insider information about the Princeton University student identity will notice, however, that while many students are passing through the iconic gate to enter campus, most are not doing so to leave, and the only reason that they notice this is because as

insiders, they are familiar with the myth – that any student exiting campus through the FitzRandolph Gate before Commencement will not graduate.

Those affiliated with the identities here similarly describe how the insider knowledge they have acquired as members of a particular identity club enables them to recognize the behavior of other club members. Gustavo describes recognizing a fellow stealthier:

Gustavo: I was with a friend in [COUNTRY] and we were on a ski lift. This was during the summer there was no snow, but we were riding the ski lifts up the mountain, and [on] the lift coming in the other direction there was an elderly guy, he looked like he was in his seventies or something. And... when he came near us, he was palming his inhaler, and my partner and I looked and said, "Did you see that?" He was stealthing!" And here he is, he's like 40 feet off the ground, on the side of the mountain, there's nobody around, but he saw us, he saw us coming and so he, he hid what he was doing. And we picked it up just like that.

Interviewer: And only a fellow stealthier would know what's going on?

Gustavo: Exactly! We've seen it happen on busses, trains, everywhere in public.

And Daphne, another chronically ill identity worker, uses her insider identity knowledge to recognize fellow club members, and believes, that as a member of the club, she is entitled to approach these individuals and chat about the identity they share:

Daphne: We've been out, and I've noticed somebody limping who might be parked in a handicapped spot and is walking in the grocery store and I'm right behind them, and they have the same limp [as she does] and I can almost... like their arm is and their hand might be [held in a certain position], and I will say to [HUSBAND], "That person, I think has MS."

And so, you know, I'll be walking around the grocery store and they're limping or they're on a scooter and you know I think probably twice I've said, or I was behind somebody in the line and they were having trouble, and you know I've said, "Do you have MS?" And their eyes light up and it's like, it's okay to talk about it. *And I feel it's okay because I'm allowed because I have it too.*

I: You're in the club!

Daphne: Yes, so we can like share, and then that's it!

The parents of children with less visible issues are particularly likely to identify fellow club members through the behavior of their children. For Emily, the insider information she has as the mother of a child with Tourette's makes it hard for her to miss the signals given off by other members of the club:

We were in [CITY] and there was an older gentleman who obviously had Tourette's. And, when we first walked in, he made a noise and my head [MOTIONS HEAD SPINNING]; you can recognize the noises like this [SNAPS FINGERS]. As different as every child with Tourette's or every person with Tourette's is, you still recognize certain squeaks or noises where you like just turn around, your head like, there are times where [SON] and I will be like. [SPINS HEAD AROUND]

Heidi has an autistic son, and she remarks, "It's kind of funny, I can, now that he's had this diagnosis for nine years, I can pick out another kid who's on the spectrum." She even expresses her frustration when others fail to take her ability to recognize fellow identity others seriously:

My husband has a nephew who's older than [SON] he's actually a sophomore in high school this year...I say to my mother-in-law, "He's autistic." In 8th grade, they went and saw a therapist, and at that point, they don't label it Asperger's anymore? With the DSM-5, I think, it's just Autism Spectrum Disorder? He didn't get the official diagnosis from a neurodevelopmental, but his therapist told my sister-in-law, "I would say he's Asperger's." And my mother-in-law calls me, I said, "I told you. I told you!"

Barbara shares Heidi's frustration when her ability to identify children on the spectrum is ignored:

So I have friends who are just realizing that *their* kids might have an issue, and I feel like saying, "Yeah, I called them out on that like eight years ago, where the hell were you?!" The kid's failing in school, he's got no friends, he moves in reverse, he... now they're scrambling to get the College Board to accept their child for extended time for SATs and ACTs... So, now these parents, I have two very good friends, as a matter of fact, and she's like, "Ah, I think that [SON] has an issue." And I'm like, "Ah-huh." And I laugh, and I'm like, "You *think* so?"

And while many of these parents similarly acknowledge their ability to use insider information to identify fellow members of the club, they have different feelings about the appropriateness of approaching other members who have been identified in this way.

MaryAnn, who is the mother of a child with autism states:

We were on vacation and we could tell this, this child had autism, and, pretty severe. And, you know, part of me on the inside, I'm thinking, "Oh, I'm in the club too." You know, but, sometimes it's not an appropriate time to say something, you know?

Maureen agrees that there are appropriate times to approach others based on insider information, and times when doing so is not a good idea:

My husband and I have been in a store, and there obviously was an autistic child who was having a meltdown ... and we've *been* in that situation, and we did have conversations about that and we were able to associate with them and talk to them. But, then there's (sic) times in a store where that's not going to happen.

Emily once felt entitled to approach others that she believed were members of the Tourette's club, but one uncomfortable encounter has changed her viewpoint, and she will never do it again:

Emily: So [SON] was, when he was first diagnosed, he was on the baseball team... And he was on the ball field, and I looked across at a little boy we've known since probably kindergarten, and I saw him do [imitates a tick], and I was like, "Oh my God he's ticking!" And it was so bad because I think it was close to, a championship game, all I could do was watch this little boy. And like, "Did he do it again?"... So I went up to the mom afterwards...and I said, "You know, don't think I'm crazy, but is [YOUR SON] ticking?" And she was all frazzled, and I was like, "Ok" and I just turned around and went home. And she called me that night. And they're not open about it. And I don't think the boy knew at that point, and I felt so bad but then, she wasn't angry...But, I went home I was like, "I can't believe I just did that."

Interviewer: So would you not do that again?

Emily: I definitely wouldn't do it again.

What is interesting is that it was the privileged insider information itself that got this identity worker into trouble. The mother that she approached was not "out" about her son's condition and her related identity, and was likely banking on the fact that nobody would be savvy enough to recognize the telltale ticking that was an obvious beacon to the informed Emily. And while she would not approach someone again based on her ability to recognize the nuances of the condition (due to her privileged insider information),

Emily *would* approach fellow identity insiders who she believed were open about their identity affiliation.

Interviewer: But if someone had a [Tourette] shirt on, might you [approach them]?

Emily: A hundred percent, a hundred percent! Cause if you're wearing the shirt you obviously have some amount of openness about it....But I can't say I would approach anyone cold. To me, we're just so open about it, I have to remember not everybody is.

Being introduced to and affiliated with any identity through identity work affords individuals access to insider information that enables them to reach out to and recognize other members of the club in special ways. The efficient recognition and interpretation of props, language and behaviors that are either cryptic or explicit is a skill identity workers perfect as members of their respective identity clubs.

Chapter Ten: Membership Responsibilities

As club members, individuals are generally tasked with specific club-related duties. And while the responsibilities of identity club membership might not include the standard array of tasks associated with traditional clubs (e.g., dues, meeting attendance, keeping minutes, filing financial reports), there are important “member responsibilities” that emerge as components of the identity clubs that unify individuals doing identity routines in support of any identity. These duties include imparting wisdom, correcting misinformation and being exemplary identity representatives, and they are presented here.

Imparting Wisdom

Sharing information about their target identities is something that identity workers of all types enjoy, but many individuals report that they often feel a sense of *obligation* to impart their wisdom to other members of the club. During the course of their often long and difficult identity journeys, many of the chronically ill and parents of exceptional children have been presented with an overwhelming amount of information and are often forced to make onerous decisions – and through it all, many of these identity workers report feeling alone, as they did not have the assistance of an experienced guide. This fuels identity workers’ desire to prepare others for the journeys of their own. Gustavo describes how he feels:

Another reason that I like to put stuff out there is because I know there are other people like me that never had anyone to go to. So, I want to be ... that someone else out there they can relate to if they're having a difficult time with their disease. Because it can actually, the disease can make you go mad, it can actually make you go crazy because... you feel like you're suffocating sometimes all the time and there's just nowhere to turn.

Heidi acknowledges that she has become the “go to” person at her children’s school when it comes to autism-related information. I ask her how she feels about people approaching

her for information, she replies: “Great, because I didn't have ... I'm getting chills again... I didn't have that when he was diagnosed. I had no one to talk to about it and I've talked to so many people about it.”

The parents of other elite fencers often seek out Charlotte's advice, and she likes to share the wealth of information she has accumulated with other parents who have younger children in the sport. What pearls of wisdom does she share?

“When your kid gets to cadet level, this is what you need to know”... “Don't go internationally without your coach; it sounds expensive, but if you go without a coach you might as well toss the money and kick your kids in the stomach.” Things like that.

Kristine is also a “go to” resource in her world of gifted children, and when she is approached by fellow club members who are struggling, she'll say, “Come into my office, let me get you some wine, because you're going to need it.” Despite what identity outsiders may think, having a profoundly gifted child can be very difficult, and as someone who initially struggled with her experiences, Kristine wants to help others, “My heart breaks for them because, oh my God, it's so hard and it flashes me back to the hardest days.” Parenting a profoundly disabled child can be an exceedingly difficult journey as well, and when it comes to sharing the details of his experience with others, Stan remarks, “I would say I feel *obligated* to”:

You know, “Have you tried this? Have you gotten to this? Make sure you find a way to contact your local congressman when you have a hard time getting a certain approval for additional hours for care for our son.” You want to be able to share that...

We had to fight for a lot of the medical approvals that we have for medicine and certain brand drugs compared to generic drugs, procedures getting done, you know, getting certain things approved through insurance. You know you have to fight for it, you have to then, once you're able to succeed in some of that you want to share that knowledge with other families too.

As an experienced and informed member of his community, this identity worker does not want to see fellow club members negotiating the their difficult journeys alone; he has

transitioned from an identity worker who needed help, to an identity worker that wants to help by sharing his story (Sosangelis 2018). In the same way, the Baptist minister feels obliged to serve as an escort to club members through their rough voyages:

And now I know I'm going through this because somebody else is gonna go through it and I'm gonna be able to help out so they can avoid the roadblocks that I avoided and not crashed into that wall. I think that's really where the minister part kicks in, is how you're gonna help somebody else and not just, "Hey, let me give you some advice" but I might go even as far as, "Let me walk you through this so that way you're not going alone, you've got company. It's always easier to defeat a giant with two heads than one head."

Jacks words eloquently capture the sense of duty some identity workers feel when it comes to sharing their identity experiences with others;

Because, the way I think of it is this. If you were out driving, and you went around a curve and it was slippery and you hit a patch of oil and you crashed into a bush, I would hope you'd get out of your car, if you were ok, and walk back prior to the curve and wave your hands and tell people, "Hey you've got to stop because there is oil in the road and you're going to crash into a bush." And so, I know so much about Type I diabetes now, that when you see someone online in this vast community, almost crying and typing that they're lost and they think they're killing their kid, I don't know how you don't go help them.

Correcting Misinformation

Another responsibility of identity club members is to preserve the integrity of the identity, and correcting misinformation about their identities is a common tactic individuals employ to ensure that their identities are being presented in an appropriate way. Regardless of their club affiliations or intensity of doing, identity workers are very disconcerted by the spread of inaccuracies about their clubs, and are quick to present accurate information when this happens. Despite the fact that they are among the most understated doers who are not particularly public about their identities, both Greg and Kathleen are quick to correct others who are misinformed. In 1990, the Black Crowes' single "Hard to Handle" put them on the map. But, as Greg knows, "That was an Otis Redding song, now it's become a Black Crowes song, and it's just interesting to hear

other groups play that song and [people] relate it to the Black Crowes...and they think it's the Black Crowes song and it's not; it's an Otis Redding song." Greg cringes when others get this information wrong, and is quick to set the record straight. Kathleen couldn't help herself when she corrected some misinformation she was hearing while at work, despite the fact that doing so brought unwanted attention to her inconspicuous identity:

So I was actually at a training for a project and we were asking, we were gonna be asking older Americans if they were homosexual, heterosexual, but they included polyamorous in there, which is not a sexuality, it's a lifestyle. But this was years ago, and they didn't know what it was, and I explained what it was, and they were like, "How do *you* know what it is?"

When she found out that her son's history teacher was misinformed about her non-sporting card fandom, Linda did more than just correct him verbally; she explains:

What did a history teacher say? That he didn't think that there would be anything related to history in non-sport cards and [so] I sent in a set of "Look and See" [cards], which is all about historical characters. So I sent it in with one of my other sons so that sort of shut that teacher up.

Correcting misinformation is not reserved to the identity work of the fans; some of the religious leaders' doing also demonstrates their devotion to ensuring that others keep the facts pertaining to their spiritual identities straight. Shari, an Episcopal priest has no problem at all correcting those who incorrectly address her, "So when people call you Reverend NAME, it's actually not grammatically correct. I don't care, but I say to people, 'That's not grammatically correct.'" And Pastor Michael very clearly states his position on misinformation (and uses some code-switching in the process):

The reality is that when there are clear violations of biblical principle or when somebody is teaching something to other people that's incorrect, it has to be dealt with. So it has to be done with love, and the bible says in Galician's 6:1, "To bear each other's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." So you have to do it in a way that's loving, and in a way that's kind, and in a way that is not a way to tear the person down but to edify them; but it has to be done. And I have had situations like that before where I've had to just say, "Look,

this is not what the bible says, *this* is what the bible says.” And redirect the conversation and, you know, open up eyes.

While he, too, is concerned with others having accurate information relating to his spiritual identity, Rabbi Charles is most troubled by the ways people of his faith are often misrepresented. As such, he feels obliged to set the record straight through his actions, rather than his words:

Rabbi Charles: And unfortunately, because there are so many negative stereotypes that are associated with Judaism and Jewish people, my goal has always been to bring, to non-Jewish audiences or just someone in the supermarket, doesn't matter where I am, to hopefully, if they do have that negative stereotype in their mind, to take them away from that and introduce them to a better view of Judaism and Jewish people.

Interviewer: So if you're in the supermarket, how would you do that?

Rabbi Charles: Make sure I hold the door for everyone. Simple things. Make sure I hold the door for everyone. Allow someone to go in front of me, not that I'm so tall, reach something from a shelf that someone who maybe, an invalid that can't get it. Little, little things.

Parents of exceptional children and chronically ill identity workers join dutiful fans and religious leaders in their efforts to ensure that their identities are portrayed accurately. Like the Episcopal priest, MaryAnn makes it a point to correct people who “misspeak” about facts related to her identity:

Like for example, someone from [GYM] posted something, and she said, that she loved the [GYM] that we work out at, cause they do things for children's cancer and for other diseases like autism. I couldn't let that go, because autism is not a disease. So I reached out to her, and I felt a little uncomfortable. But I said, "I just want," I said, "I know you're such a sweet person, I just want to give you information." I said, "Autism is a spectrum disorder."

Even those closest to them are not spared identity workers' efforts to maintain the integrity of their identities; his misinformed family members were the impetus for Jack starting his very successful diabetes blog:

I was very put off by how many people in my life didn't understand it. Because if you can't take the time to figure it out, no one else is going to. Like, it's interesting how people so misunderstand the disease. Even, in like, your family. Like, my mother-in-law,

whatever [DAUGHTER] is, high or low, my mother-in-law to this day will bring the wrong thing for her. If she's too high she brings her sugar, if she's too low, she brings her water. I'm like, "No! How do you not?" And so at some point you get tired of hearing from people like, "Oh, she has diabetes? What, so she just doesn't drink soda and you give her a pill now, right?" That's it. Cause they think of their fat uncle who's got Type II, and like this whole thing, and so it's very underappreciated for how serious it is.

Gustavo echo's Jack's sentiments, in that he also wants people informed so that they can appreciate how serious his diseases is. And, like many others, he mentions that he feels obligated to correct misinformation when he becomes aware of it:

I felt obligated when someone would go online and talk about something that was false, at least clinically false or medically not true, physiologically not true, or whatever, or if they were just saying something that they read off the internet that I thought maybe could harm someone. Then I always felt myself needing to interject to correct; and with proof, I can always back up my claims and my sources and this and that.

And especially nowadays [asthma], is considered more of a nuisance disease than a severe, debilitating, deadly disease. And that's the message that my group of people are starting to spread now, is that asthma kills people all the time. And it needs to be taken more seriously. It's not just a blue inhaler disease.

Identity workers such Gustavo and Jack certainly have the potential to correct misinformation on a very grand scale due to their regular interaction with the large audiences that interact with them on their social media outlets, and it is very important work for them. Kate is frustrated that she and her "IBD family" cannot do more to correct what she believes is a serious problem in her community:

Kate: There's a popular YouTuber which I didn't know the name of, I don't want to know, and I guess she has Crohn's disease and she listed all this misinformation off and she has about, she had like three million views on that video. And we're sitting there. And you know I'm popular for my area, but generally I'm not. So when you have someone who is popular and who has or is famous and they sit down and they start telling you this information that's completely wrong, you're gonna have everyone thinking something differently.

Interviewer: So what do you guys do about that?

Kate: We try to go in, we go in as a group we try to correct everyone in the comments, we make different videos correcting it but we don't have the following. And there's five million people who have IBD worldwide, five million people, and we can't get the correct information out to them because there are so many people that are providing

misinformation. And that's what we're trying to do. And there's about twelve of us advocating and we're in over our heads.

Exemplary Identity Representatives

Presenting themselves as respectable identity-ambassadors is another hallmark of identity club membership, and identity workers demonstrate this reverence for their identities in a variety of ways. The fundamental way, of course, that identity workers demonstrate their status as adequate representatives of particular identities is to perform the requisite identity work in accordance with the local identity codes. The identity work of many identity workers suggests that representing identities in an exemplary fashion also involves doing identity work that demonstrates respect for the identity. One of the key ways identity workers present themselves as model, respectful identity representatives is through their appearances, and this manifests in different ways for different identities. For some fans, being exemplary identity ambassadors involves “looking the part” and dressing in, particularly during the course of interaction with other members of the club. Nicholas tries to be in Mets gear when he attends games, Elena wears her Star Wars apparel to identity-related events, and Leah dons her Harry Potter merchandise when interacting in identity space and time. Landon admits that when he is participating in My Little Pony events with other fans, “I do feel a desire to ‘fly the flag’ so to speak, so either I’ll try to make sure I’m either wearing a t-shirt, or try to have some identifier, you know what I mean?”

For some, like Linda, representing an identity in an exemplary way means looking your best – something that is very important to her when she is in attendance at the various identity-related events she runs: “At our shows, we do run two non-sport card shows a year, I always dress up and look nice. Some people think that's an excuse to wear

blue jeans and holey t-shirts; I don't feel that way, I like to look my very best.” Parents of special needs children also often find it especially important to look their best when their interactions have direct implications for their children. The lives of many of these parents are particularly hectic, and the physical and emotional demands of caring for their children often have negative implications for their personal physical appearances – suffering from stress, lack of sleep, weight fluctuations and little time to care for themselves, many of these parents report looking “disheveled,” a look they fear can be problematic when they are advocating for their children. As Jack acknowledges:

There are times when I have to go into [daughter's] school to address things about her diabetes, and because I'm not a person who cares what I look like in the moment, sometimes when I walk out I'm like, “Maybe I should make more of an effort not to look homeless in this situation.”

Stacy, who acknowledges the toll being the mom of a special needs daughter has taken on her appearance, admits, “I look like I'm disheveled,” and expresses her concern about making a good impression on the people she interacts with who make decisions about her child. Regarding a recent trip to the courthouse to discuss the legal status of her daughter, Stacy states, “I made a point to look good for that judge because, you know, [we're] getting guardianship for [CHILD].” She recalls the less-than-ideal first impression she recently made on the new one-on-one teacher's aid that had been assigned to her daughter at school, “I just briefly met her one-on-one, unfortunately, going through the carpool line with pajamas on.” Aware of her identity-faux pas, Stacy hopes to set the record straight at her upcoming teacher's conference:

So, when I get a conference next week, I want the one-on-one to be there. And I want to look and I...don't want to act crazy or disheveled; I want to act like I care. Because if you act that way to a doctor or someone that is taking care of [CHILD] then they're going to respect [CHILD] more...If I'm going to [a neurology appointment], I want my clothes to look good, I want my hair to look good, the make up...I do not want to look disheveled there.

Looking “put together” is one way these identity workers present themselves as serious, respectable identity representatives during interactions that are important to them. Shari also finds it important to look put-together when she interacts with her those who are important to her – her parishioners. The priest explains:

Shari: So when you celebrate the Eucharist...your priest is up here like this, and you're bowing [DEMONSTRATES HOW SHE BOWS HER HEAD AT THE ALTAR], and so I'm always thinking, “Oh my gosh! Are [my parishioners] looking going, ‘She hasn't gotten her roots dyed in a while!’”

Interviewer: Do you maybe go for the touchup a little more frequently now?

Shari: I do. I go for the touch up WAY more frequently!

When it comes to delivering his sermons, Pastor David finds it especially important to look like a respectable, authentic religious leader – and he believes one of the key ways of doing this is by always using a physical bible when he preaches. The primary bible he uses is a digital version that he has on his cell phone, and while Pastor David acknowledges that he *could* use that virtual version when he's preaching, he doesn't; he explains:

Even though I could [use my phone bible] in the pulpit, like when I'm preaching, I don't. I carry the bible because I know we have old people, [and that's] important for. I won't offend anybody who's young if I carry an actual book bible when I'm preaching, but I may offend some of the elders, who doesn't (sic) feel like it's a real bible when it's on your phone. Like if I'm flipping through my phone, you know what I mean?

Engaging in identity-appropriate behavior is another way that identity workers prove themselves to be exemplary identity representatives, and this is particularly relevant for the religious leaders. Religious leaders who have official clothing and accessories that announce affiliation with their target identities are particularly mindful of their responsibility to carry themselves in a respectable manner (Goffman 1959:24-25) when they are wearing this apparel, and as such, make a concerted effort to keep their

behavior in check. “[The collar is] a reminder, it's really more a reminder for myself about who I am and what I'm doing. I try to not say bad words [when I'm wearing it]” (Shari, Episcopal priest). In situations where he anticipates that he might find himself acting in a less-than-priestly way, Father Bob makes sure to leave his collar at home:

Now if I'm going out with friends, and maybe mixed group of friends, this and that, and it's a day where I'm away from the parish, and it's time to kind of reboot, recharge and blow off a little steam, have a couple laughs, well then, I would out of respect for the collar, respect for the uniform, I would not wear the Roman collar.

Being able to safely let off a little steam is precisely the reason why Minister Mitchell does not like to wear his collar (remember, he even needs to be reminded to wear it when he is performing his official duties as a Baptist minister). He admittedly enjoys a glass of wine and “the occasional birthday or holiday cigar,” but is fearful that others might find such behavior unfitting for a proper minister; to avoid the risk of being seen as a poor identity representative, Minister Mitchell rarely wears his collar. He seems a bit preoccupied with being a poor ambassador for his identity:

And one of the fears is that, and I don't know if you'll find it as funny as I do, but one of the fears is that I'll be up in front of a congregation and I'll be preaching, and I'll get so excited about what I'm saying and I'll curse in the middle of the sermon. And I'm like, “Oh, did that just come out?”... And I've had dreams where it's happened.

And while Rabbi Anna admits that her behavior changes when she is wearing her kippah -- “It literally is a physical symbol to everyone else but also [to me]; like, ‘Ok, I’m shifting gears not. Now I’m Rabbi [SURNAME] as opposed to [NAME]’” – she recognizes the importance of monitoring her behavior at certain times when she is *not* wearing it; driving is one of those times. A self-proclaimed aggressive driver, Rabbi Anna makes a concerted effort to change her driving style when she is traveling throughout her local community as she believes doing so minimizes the risk that she

might be seen as a less-than-exemplary identity representative. When she is driving locally, she explains:

I can't flip people off. What if they're a congregant? I don't know who's in the other car. And I have a camp magnet on my car, so if like you were paying attention, it's pretty easy to pick me out...And my husband will say, "Why don't you honk at them?" And I'll say, "They could be a congregant!"

Another way this rabbi ensures that her behavior is consistent with her religious leader identity is by keeping a tight grip on how she is being portrayed on social media:

And I'm very sensitive about what I put out there and what people post about me and things like that. I go to parties and say, "Please don't post my picture." When we go to a bachelorette party, my own, I was like... "You can't post *anything* from this night, please." Cause I didn't know what was gonna end up on [Facebook].

Even without her official garb, Rabbi Anna works to ensure that her manner is consistent with that of a model identity representative. Other religious leaders also indicate that, with or without “collars and kippahs,” their behavior is designed so that their manners are reflective of their spiritual identities. Pastor Michael explains:

There has to be good works that are associated with my life and when I'm in the grocery store, when I'm interacting with people... when you experience the presence of God, the bible says, "In His presence is fullness of joy." So I don't walk around with a sloppy look on my face or even my countenance; everything changes when you meet the Lord. And so even what has happened internally in my heart manifests itself in my outward appearance and the way that I look, my countenance, I walk around with joy; I'm genuinely happy because of what the Lord has done for me... So when I'm in the grocery store, I'm in my business, whatever, it's important that not only do I have that expression of joy on my face but that I'm reaching out to people. You know, I'll go out of my way to be a help to people.

Exemplary fans show reverence for their identities through their behavior as well, and this is particularly evident with how they manage the props and activities connected to their target identities. A number of the fans mention the importance of giving their undivided attention to the identity work connected to their fan identities. Both the Star Wars and comic fans, for example, avoid attending the latest movie releases right way because the theaters will be too crowded, and they won't be able to watch the movies in a

meaningful way. When asked if he sees the movies as soon as they come out, Max responds, “Not when they come out cause usually, with Marvel, for like the first week, the theaters are packed as hell so I wait awhile...cause [people] won’t shut up.” Leah echoes his sentiments, “But I don’t want to go see [Star Wars] when everybody else does I wanted to wait, cause I really wanted to enjoy it.” As an exemplary fan, Lexi also likes to minimize the distractions of others while watching her anime shows; her viewing system ensures that she gets the most out of her watching, but is quite arduous:

It’s something I have to focus on because like, a lot of times there’s subtitles to where I want to be able to see what’s going on, so it’s not like a show that I can have on while I’m doing other things, it’s usually its on and I’m watching it. It’s usually full of like different actions or like a lot going on. It’s very fast-paced, I get tired of watching it so I’ll like watch an episode or two once in a while, but I can’t, I’m not very good at like marathoning it unless I am on break.

Because like other times I’m probably going to watch like “Friends” or YouTube just because those are easy things to watch that I don’t really need to think about, don’t really need to know, like what’s going on while I’m watching it... I wouldn’t get annoyed if somebody like bothered me while I was watching YouTube or watching Netflix but if I was in the middle of an anime episode I would be like, “Oh my God, What?!” Like I’m focused on this I’m like listening in, trying to really get into it.

Fans also demonstrate the importance of reverence for their identities by insisting on authentic props. Max will only wear merchandise that is produced and distributed by official comic companies like DC or Marvel, while Anderson seeks out My Little Pony plushies that are *not* officially produced and distributed by Hasbro, because the custom made toys are more authentic. Anderson explains:

It’s Hasbro making cheap toys...they don’t look anything like the characters or not enough. And whereas people making them themselves, handmade ones, could look very much like a character. And so, those are considered much more, like those are the ones people...save up [for]. Like, “I could by this \$15 one but I’d rather save up to buy this very nice custom because it looks like the character I care about.”

In addition to having the most authentic merchandise, fans generally tend to prefer having physical copies of the movies, books and music associated with their particular fandoms,

as opposed to digital copies. Greg explains, “If I really like an artist, I’m not gonna go on Amazon and just download a couple of MP3s. I want to see the artwork; I want to see the CD. I have to have that physical CD and I guess that’s how I kinda relate to the artist.”

This need to “relate” to identity props physically is also something mentioned by Father John. While he uses the computer for many things, this Greek Orthodox priest tends not to do so when it comes to things related to his religious identity – like the music fan, Father John needs to *physically* experience the props to properly connect to his identity; he explains:

I handwrite all my outlines. The computer was a disconnect for me. There was something about the mind to the heart -- because I memorize my sermons pretty much and I outline them and I memorize the outline and I memorize the sermon. The head to the heart to the paper is much better. And it's not that I don't like, you know, the Kindles and these iPads, but I do prefer to research out of books. There's something impersonal about the computer that I don't. I use the computer for so many other things as far as looking up schedules, like a movie schedule, so many things but for some reason for religious stuff, I'd really rather read the book.

Cause I feel like a cold disconnect when I'm reading religious stuff on the Internet. If I'm reading the life of a Saint, I'd much rather read it out of a book. I don't like to read a scripture out of the computer, so I haven't utilized the computer for my ministry of speaking and teaching, which I do bible studies, I do sermons every week; everything is through books and through maybe a more or an old way of doing things.

The primary way that the chronically ill present themselves as respectable identity-ambassadors is by adhering to their treatment protocols; as ideal patients, all of the chronically ill identity workers here follow “doctors orders” as part of the identity work they do in support of their sick identities. However, many of these chronically ill individuals – even those who have accepted their illnesses and are deeply invested in the identity work that supports them – seem particularly concerned with presenting themselves as healthy. Perhaps, for some, being an exemplary “sick person” involves, to some degree, proving to others that they can lead “normal” lives in spite of their illnesses. Efforts to play down illness are common here – from Meredith and Shannon, who go to

great lengths to appear healthy despite their breast cancer diagnoses, to Rick, who removes himself from the company of *very close* friends to take his insulin, to Dan and Gustavo, who both stealth their asthma medications, even though Gustavo is fantastically public about his asthma identity. Perhaps part of being an upright representative of the chronic illness identity is being able to “do normal.”

If I'm not having a good day, I'm gonna make an extra effort to dress in a bright color or dress in something that kind of, you know what I mean? It's like, it's gonna help to set my tone a little bit, but it's also gonna, everybody who sees me, is gonna have a completely different perception of what's going on here... You put on a front almost, you know what I mean? A little bit of a front of, "You know, I'm good!" (Meredith, Breast Cancer Survivor).

In their efforts to more convincingly present themselves as “normal” in these ways, these chronically ill identity workers are utilizing “disidentifiers” in their identity work arsenal -- signs that assist them in “throwing...doubt” on their sick identities in the hopes that others may focus on their unmarkedness (Goffman 1963:44).

Chapter Eleven: Membership Benefits

Identity workers of all types report that there are certain advantages that go along with their identity connections, and regardless of their particular identity affiliations, individuals reference similar perks, suggesting that these benefits are another hallmark of identity club membership. A sense of community, identity as a “family affair,” and access to reservoirs of information are the generic experiences of identity that are included in the “benefits” stage of club membership, and are presented here.

A Sense of Community – Connected, Understood, Accepted

Identity workers affiliated with all of the identities find benefit from being around others who share their identities, and regardless of identity and intensity of doing, club membership affords individuals similar benefit packages. A key benefit identity workers of all types receive from the company of others sharing their identities is a sense of community, and as a result, they feel connected, understood and accepted.

Connection

Interacting with fellow club members provides identity workers with a sense of belonging in that they have been brought together because they share something very special – their identities. And religious leaders, fans, parents and the chronically ill all acknowledge the connection that builds around this common ground. As Leah explains, “There was a common thing that brought us [Star Wars fans] together,” and others mention this common ground connects identity workers. Sue speaks about the community of people with cystic fibrosis, “With a chronic illness, you have something that bridges you together, you know?”; and Greg describes the connection he feels in the music world,

“It’s a camaraderie...and the common thread is the Crowes.” And while this connection might be intangible, it can be quite powerful. MaryAnn describes how she feels about the connection she has with other parents of children who are on the spectrum, “You have this connection that is hard to describe... If I find out that someone else is in the club, it’s this instant kinship. You know? It’s *instant*.” And this powerful connection has tangible benefits to members of the club:

Oh I think just having things in common and just being able to relate to one another or having the same interests. Like I said, a lot of people that I do talk to, we do have the same interests and like the same things and things of that nature so that's the advantage of being able to relate and connect and share similar stories (Minister Mitchell, Baptist)

You know, I want to talk about what I'm interested in, and I want to talk to other people and have them talk about what they're interested in. And just seeing other people gush about things that they enjoy, is fantastic. And when you enjoy the same things, it's even better (Landon, MLP fan)

Understanding

In addition to the unique connections it provides, identity workers of all types appreciate the special level of understanding that accompanies club membership – an exclusive benefit that is of great importance to identity workers. Individuals affiliated with all of the identities report that one of the most important advantages to interacting with fellow members of the club is that they “get it” – fellow club members have a tacit understanding and appreciation of what it means to be a club member; something only attainable by walking in an identity worker’s shoes. Sue refers to those who share her illness identity, and the special understanding of it, as “her people” who “get it” because “we’re all speaking *our* language.” Because members of the club all speak the same language, there is no need for translation and explanation. As someone with cystic fibrosis, Sue deals with occasional physical events that only members of the club can

relate to. Sue imagines that if she were to say, “God! I coughed up this thing, it was like a sponge thing!” to an outsider, it might cause them great alarm (as well as make them gag), because they don’t understand the triviality of the event. But a fellow-club member would take such a comment in stride, nonchalantly responding, “Oh my God, it happened to me. I was talking, and I spewed, and it fell out.” Because of their special understanding of one another, Sue is able to have different identity-related conversations with her fellow club members, something Bruce mentions when discussing being in the company of other parents of gifted children. “It’s about being able to have conversations that are different than we might have in a normal setting...Being around people who don’t quite get it, it’s challenging.” Charlotte describes the frustration she experiences when discussing her daughter’s fencing achievements with those who do not understand the sport:

They don’t understand the sport very much, so they just expect gold all the time. They don’t understand that getting top place [regardless of the color of the medal] is...outstanding. They’re like, “Oh, she got silver. Don’t cry [DAUGHTER], it’s okay.” [Silver] is the best result! Silver is the top medal the United States got at that event!

Joyce also prefers to spend time with identity others, people who “get it,” since outsiders lack the capacity to understand her life. Her frustration is often triggered when out-of-touch outsiders make seemingly innocuous inquiries about Joyce’s life. When individuals such as these state, “Oh my gosh! I went shopping at the mall...how was your night?” Joyce admits that while she usually puts on a smile and says it was fine, she is often really thinking:

“How was my night?! Well [CHILD] screamed until 11:30 last night, and then the nurse left and we didn’t go to bed until 2:00 in the morning.” Like, it’s hard to talk to people about. And we’re always on edge. Because, even when she’s quiet at any moment the dog will bark, something will happen, and then whoop! We’re back at it again. So, I feel like I pick and choose really carefully who I spend my time with.

Emily similarly expresses her frustration with outsiders who cannot relate to the life of a parent with a special needs child:

Nobody knows what your life is. And you know when they say, “Why aren’t you emailing me, why aren’t you calling me?” And you’re like, “Well, cause we just took 45 minutes to brush our teeth...[and]...we tried to stop choking from our choking tick, and he screamed for four hours because he wants to touch an electrical socket but he knows he can’t.”

For these identity workers, the benefit of understanding that goes along with club membership is invaluable -- their realities are sometimes so contrary to the realities of outsiders, that it is often difficult for them to relate to anyone other than fellow members.

Rabbi Anna echoes the sentiments of these moms – she too believes that only those who live her reality can have a true appreciation of her life as it relates to her identity as a religious leader. Because of this, she touts the benefits of being around other rabbis in general, “So, they get it...cause we’re all dealing with the same thing...and you explain it to them and they understand”; and female rabbis in particular, “For women rabbis, there’s a whole host of issues that we deal with that the male colleague I work with just doesn’t get. There are male colleagues who do, but even if they understand, they don’t live it.” When speaking of the benefits of interacting with fellow spiritual leaders, Shari, an Episcopal Priest remarks, “Well because everybody gets what you do, you don’t have to explain it or justify it or defend it or anything else; everybody gets what you do.”

Connecting with others who understand your identity in a way only possible by being an insider is very important to fans, as it is one of the factors that enable them to participate in their fandoms to the fullest. Fans find being around informed identity others advantageous because of the tacit understanding they have. Linda explains that when she is with fellow non-sporting card collectors, “[You] share the same interests...you know what you’re talking about” and because of this, you can get down to business and enjoy

the fandom. “I mean that's what makes BronyCon so fun because you're in a place where everyone can talk about the same thing and be very passionate about the same otherwise very idiosyncratic thing, that's really fun” (Landon). Like the identity workers connected to other target identities, fans understand one another in a special way, as Lexi describes:

I feel like we are able to get each other on a different level...I just think over time we all kind of got some of the same personality traits like little, little things that we do that are almost from probably anime and just things that got ingrained in us, to be able to read people in certain ways, I feel like we were we're all able to do that to an extent and I think that is thanks to anime.

Acceptance

The sense of community being members of the club establishes connects individuals who have a special understanding of one another, and ultimately provides them with a much coveted benefit – acceptance. Identity workers of all types indicate that one of the advantages of being around “their people” is that they feel accepted for who they are; club membership affords individuals a judgment-free sense of belonging. Because of the distinct connection they share and intimate level of understanding they have of one another, club members do not feel judged by fellow members and as a result, are more comfortable and willing to let down their guards and be themselves:

There's no pressure to try and impress or be impressed... there's no awkward social barrier (Landon, My Little Pony fan)

“I’ve always found it’s a time where I can just, even just be myself a little bit more...I don’t have to keep up a front. I’m not trying to put on a show (David, Evangelical Pastor)

They understand our busyness, our running around, our commitment. We’re not looked at like, ‘Oh my gosh, all you care about is sports’ (Liz, parent of an exceptional athlete).

Others also mention the benefit of the “judgment-free zones” club membership offers. Kathleen spends time with a former coworker who is also a fan of alternative lifestyles, and states, “One of the reasons I love getting together with her is cause I can

talk to her even more so than most people cause I don't feel like she judges me.” While Shannon went to extensive lengths to manage her physical appearance in an attempt to distance herself from her breast cancer identity, the one place she was willing to allow her sick self to be present, and made no effort to camouflage herself as a patient, was at the cancer institute where she was receiving her treatment. She explains,

I didn't care because I was in the cancer institute where everyone is the same. There was no judgment there I felt, where out in the general public there would be. And at work, there could be. But when you are in a place that everybody is the same, there's no [judgment]; it was fine.

Maureen similarly finds fellow parents of special needs kids less judgmental, “Because they just get it and accept it and it's fine. Where, people who don't know what your world is about tend to either cash (sic) judgment or just blow you off because they really don't understand.”

Maryann admits that she sometimes physically feels the judgment bestowed on her from non-accepting outsiders, one of the reasons she prefers interacting with parents who have special children, “cause if [my son] has a freak-out or whatever, [a parent who gets it] doesn't roll her eyes... When I used to go over the other lady's house [who doesn't get it] and [my son] would misbehave, I would get like a knot in my stomach.”

The identity work done in support of any identity is normalized and validated when a community of individuals around you is engaging in similar work – and this is a critical advantage of interacting with fellow members. Bruce mentions this as a benefit of being with other parents of gifted kids, when he gets to “feel like our experience is normal.” When individuals are able to do identity among others who share a connection with them and understand and accept the doing, they do not feel alone, and this validated sense of community is important to identity workers of all types. Interacting with other

My Little Pony fans is important to Anderson because “it’s a validation of an identity that I feel is important to me.” And in the words of Jack, whose young daughter has diabetes, “There’s nothing more valuable...than having some sense of community, so that you don’t feel alone. It’s really important.”

Identity as a Family Affair

Club membership provides a very special sense of community to those identity workers who share their identities with family members. While familial identity-connections can be established through different mechanisms for different identities, club membership is especially beneficial when it is a family affair.

For some families, affiliation with a particular identity is a family tradition. Both Nicholas and Pastor Michael, respectively, come from a long line of fans and ministers; Pastor Michael explains,

I'm the fourth-generation pastor. My great-grandfather worked as, he was a plasterer, but he also served in the church. And he began to minister the Gospel and then his son, which is my grandfather, he's the Senior Pastor of our church today at 81 years old, and he still serves as the Senior Pastor...All of his brothers are pastors, he had four, there are four brothers, all of them are pastors and my dad is a pastor and then [there is] myself.

And while “only” a third generation fan, being part of the Mets fandom is certainly a family affair for Nicholas:

I've been told I've been a fan since birth because my dad was watching a Mets game in the delivery room as I was being born. So... he's a Mets fan, my grandfather's a Mets fan; my whole mom's side of the family are (sic) Mets fans, which is very rare in a family. You usually have your, especially in my generation, you usually have your one or two people or siblings who wanted to be different and say, "Well, I'm gonna root for the Yankees cause it's easier."

And although they became affiliated with their identities in quite different ways (i.e., one is ascribed and one is achieved), both Rick, who is a diabetic and Melissa, who is a

Baptist minister are second-generation identity affiliates. Rick's father and two paternal aunts are also diabetics, while Melissa's mother is also a minister.

Elena is working hard to establish the Star Wars identity as a family affair in her household. She describes some of her efforts: "I educated my kids with it. Like I wanted to share my experience with it with them...and I felt like having two boys at first, it was a common thing they could identify with me." And Elena's efforts seem to be paying off – the entire family watches movies, attends events and collects Star Wars merchandise together. Linda brought her sons into the non-sport trading card fandom when they were young boys in the mid-1970s, and one went on to run the family's identity-related business ventures for 26 years! Fandoms are family affairs for other identity workers; Lexi was exposed to anime by her older brother and cousins, who continue to be fans, and everyone in the Leah's immediate family is a Harry Potter fan; "It's something that brought us all together," she explains, "It's like, 'Harry Potter's on!' and you know, three hour movies, we would all sit there [and watch]."

Socialization is a primary means through which identities become a family affair, and this is likely the case for the achieved identities of the religious leaders and fans discussed here. For the ascribed chronically ill identity, genetics is more likely responsible for making identity a family affair. Breast cancer is certainly a family affair for Meredith, as both of her sisters are also breast cancer survivors, just as cystic fibrosis is for Sue, as her brother is also afflicted with the illness. Another way that identity becomes a family affair is through "identity spread." While this concept traditionally refers to process by which the stigma associated with illness can "come to circumscribe a family unit, not just the individual within the unit" (Robinson 1988:57), it is useful in its

application to identities other than those that are related to illness. When an identity worker's identity comes to define the entire family unit, identity spread seems to be an accurate representation of the process. This process of identity spread is something that seems to apply to Father John's immediate family members, who have come to share his identity:

The priest's wife is called Presbytera [which translates to "priest's wife"], which is like a feminized version of the fact that she's married to the priest. There's a nickname, we ... use the term "PKs" all the time, it means priests' kids, but there's preacher kids, and it is a term that is utilized in other Christian dynamics where you have married clergy with kids.

Identity becomes a family affair for many households with exceptional children, but is more typically the result of the spread of the exceptional child's identity, not that of the parent. Nonetheless, these families are often tremendously impacted by the identity spread that comes to define them. Emily describes how her son's identity has infiltrated her family, "Part of my identity of parenting a child with Tourette's is almost to have Tourette's... At this point; I consider our *family* has Tourette's, not just him." And Stan suggests that his family, too, has experienced the identity spread of his profoundly disabled child; when his son is not with him, he confesses, "It's almost like we're a different family, just ...my daughter and wife and I...with no limitations." The connection, understanding, and acceptance identity workers benefit from as members of their particular identity clubs is enhanced when these benefits are delivered by their own family members.

Reservoirs of Information

Another important advantage of being connected to other members of identity clubs is the opportunity it presents to participate in the networks of informational exchange. Identity communities of all types offer rich reservoirs of information, and

identity workers of all types see this as a benefit of affiliation and make use of this important resource in a variety of ways. Identity workers frequently seek out members of the club to keep up-to-date about their identities. And whether that identity worker is a breast cancer survivor finding out about Cold Cap Therapy to minimize her chemotherapy-induced hair loss, the parent of a special needs child finding out about a specialized dentist for her daughter, a father who is seeking advice about international fencing competitions, a minister looking for guidance on how to preach about school shootings, or a comic fan finding out about the latest Marvel movie release date, club members often receive the most complete and up-to-date information regarding their identities from fellow identity workers.

Jenelle reports that the parents of other theater kids are great sources of information who keep her “really well-informed” about what is going on in their world, and Nicholas describes the almost instantaneous delivery of information he receives from his social media networks that are exclusively comprised of individuals connected to his Mets fan identity. These individuals, he explains, are “the people who are kinda first on the scene and get the best information about the Mets.” He continues:

So, if [the Mets] about to sign a big free agent, I'll be glued to it seeing what's happening. Or, if they're trying to make a big trade or if somebody's hurt or something like that, they're the people that are gonna know before anybody else and the way information travels now it's so, it's like, three seconds after they find out I'll find out... I get alerts on my phone from the, from certain reporters who Tweet about the Mets, or a certain, the MLB APP, anytime there's news it will come straight to my phone, that kind of thing.

In addition to using fellow club members to obtain up-to-date information about their particular identities, identity workers of all types find value in the informational exchanges that offer them different perspectives on various aspects of their identities. Fans, for example, learn from and look forward to hearing fellow members' opinions

about the latest movie releases connected to their fandom; after each movie release, Elena eagerly asks other Harry Potter fans, “How do you feel about the ending?” And Leah declares:

I like to discuss things, I like to hear their [other Star Wars fans’] point of view and I like to see their take on it. Cause there’s a lot of messages I think in there. So it’s interesting... I like to hear their opinion, you know, what they like and what they didn’t like. Especially with this last [movie], because there was a lot of conversation because they changed [things].

When I ask if there are any advantages to being around fellow rabbis, Rabbi Charles declares, “Perspective! I get their perspective, they get my perspective. How do you deal with this? Oh, that’s a good idea. So, we learn from each other.” Minister Mitchell shares the rabbi’s sentiments, as he benefits from the perspective and learning of the other Baptist ministers he interacts with: “When I am around other ministers, you get to get (a) different perspective... It might be a different perspective in how you view things and how you live life; how you view or how you deal with people.” Parents of exceptional children are similarly interested others’ perspectives, particularly when they are applicable to their personal situations; Matt describes the kind of information he seeks:

What are the things that you do to cope or to make yourself feel okay with the situation? And just looking at how other people kind of process, internalize and how they handle different situations. Just that idea of pointers. Like, systems, how do you navigate the school system to get the best outcome for your child?

Emily reports that gaining different perspectives from those who share an identity and learning how they approach different identity-related situations is an invaluable benefit of club membership:

I mean, nothing is more priceless than saying, "Ok, um, [SON] developed a gasping tick, and he inhales his food and chokes. We have to go to soft food and we have not yet had to take up the option of medicating, but that may become necessary." There's nothing better than calling up, you know, a group of parents and being like, "What do I do?" And, they're like, "Ok, we do smoothies for two days, don't forget to add some protein."

This is the type of “What do you do?” insight Pastor David walks away with after his annual January meeting with fellow pastors – and this information is so important to him, he states, “That’s why that meeting I will never miss in January, I will never miss that; unless I’m on death’s doorstep, I will be there.” He goes on to explain what happens in these meetings in more detail, and like other identity workers, he is simply interested in securing the advice of others who share his identity:

I'm usually the one that brings the most questions; I come with a whole list of questions. "Hey, we're struggling in the area." Or, "Hey what do you doing with some of the new laws that have come out in this?" ... And if I'm struggling with other staff, it's great to be with other pastors where I can talk about that, you know? "What do you do when you get a right-hand guy that all of a sudden goes whacky?" You know, like that type of thing. Like, "How did you handle that?"

And when Charlotte’s daughter was having trouble with her fencing, she quickly tapped into the reservoir of information within her community:

There is also quite a bit of strategic conversation of how do you support your kid. [DAUGHTER] had her plateau, and it was very dramatic. Suddenly, she went from getting good results at every event consistently to getting nothing for six months. She was really upset and we didn’t know what to do, we were looking for root causes...and we found a solution.

Identity workers recognize that other members of the club often possess a wealth of information, and this is particularly true of those individuals with established tenures in their particular identity groups. The religious leaders, parents of exceptional children and chronically ill identity workers who have been affiliated with their identities for lengthy periods of time are recognized as being particularly valuable resources for fellow identity-workers. Minister Rachel acknowledges her brief tenure as a United Reform Minister, and takes advantage of her more experienced counterparts’ knowledge:

We meet face-to-face, once a month, and we talk about what we've been up to and then, you know, there are suggestions. I'm the oldest one in the group, but I'm also the newest ordained member so they've all had years and years and years of experience in churches. So, you know, there's a lot there that is a big help.

Jason similarly values the insight of more experienced others, and enjoys his conversations at the cancer center with those who have traveled this road before him with success, “They have a lot of patients that have been cured, they come in, and they pep talk, ‘I’ve been through this and this is what's happening, and how I'm doing.’ And they're like cheerleaders too. It really helps.”

Olivia feels interaction with fellow cancer survivors is advantageous because you “learn by what they have experienced,” and Michael, who is a Pentecostal Pastor, seeks out interactions with more experienced identity others:

People that I can learn from, people that I can submit myself to, that I can ask questions that I can learn from their victories and I can also learn from their failures. Learning from people like that who have gone before you can save you years of pain, of loss, of tragedy. Learning from other people's wisdom can really spare your life from a lot of unnecessary pain and heartache.

Chapter Twelve: Membership Drawbacks

Unfortunately, club membership may sometimes result in some unintended negative consequences, something that identity workers associated with all types of identity clubs acknowledge. Not fitting the mold, identity competition, overwhelming life and inescapable identities are some of the potential drawbacks identity club members face.

Not Fitting the Mold

As Rabbi Charles was strolling through the grounds of a local car show one afternoon, a congregant spotted him and exclaimed, “What are *you* doing here? *You* like cars?” (emphasis in original). An individual must present an appearance that is consistent with an identity in order to establish a legitimate claim to it (Strauss 2001), and identity club membership can prove difficult when an identity worker’s appearance and/or manner is not consistent with corresponding local codes of the identity he or she wishes to be affiliated with. In cases such as these, where identity workers do not “look the part” or “fit the mold,” they can be viewed as inauthentic “wannabes” (Brekhus 2003:99) guilty of misrepresenting their identity clubs (Goffman 1959: 24, 59). We generally do not expect young people to suffer from chronic diseases, rock-and-roll fans to be African-American, and religious leaders to be walking around the grounds of car shows; and for these particular “mismatched” identity workers, making authentic claims to their identities can be more difficult – and necessitate more explaining – because there is a lack of harmony between appearance, manner and identity.

Sue is well aware of the fact that she does not fit the mold of someone living with

cystic fibrosis; at fifty years of age, she is well past the average life expectancy for someone with her condition:

When you see a picture of somebody with cystic fibrosis, you see them emaciated -- this little skinny thing with like oxygen on. You don't see this vibrant, bodacious woman... So when you look up and I look fine, I look normal...I don't have a big head, no stubby fingers. So you see me and you're like, "Oh my God, no she's not, she's all right. What's wrong with you? You look good!"

Not fitting the mold can be problematic for those suffering from chronic illness, because others, who might be unfamiliar with their conditions, expect healthy, "normal" behavior from them, which is something these sick identity workers simply cannot always deliver. Sue mentions that others will sometimes mistake her desire to rest from exhaustion for laziness:

Because I smile at you... you think I'm okay. And I'm [thinking] "I'm really tired...I was up last night coughing while you were all sleeping...so I ran a marathon last night cause it was four hours of non-stop coughing." So it just wrecks your body sometimes [but nobody knows that].

For Dawn, not looking like someone suffering from chronic illness is upsetting. Because she is young and active, and her diabetic seizures are controlled by medication, Dawn does not look sick. This bothers Dawn, who believes that her epilepsy defines her, "It's me!" she exclaims, and she wants others to know about the significance the disease holds in her life. As an attractive young woman, Kate has similarly found that not fitting the chronic illness mold can be challenging. "That's probably one of the biggest hurdles is being young and having a chronic illness; people think that chronic illnesses are only old people... Young people get sick too." She describes a situation where she has struggled with misrepresenting her sick identity:

Now when I go to Bush Gardens, I have like an internal battle with myself because I'll be waiting in [a special] line with someone who's in a wheelchair, or someone who may have Down Syndrome or something and I could be standing there perfectly normal, cause people start looking at me, and immediately I start talking about Humira [DRUG SHE IS ON] or something like that, or to my friends loudly so they know, "Oh, she's sick."

However, not looking the part does have its advantages at times. Despite the fact that one of her IBD family members puts out more content than she does on his YouTube channel, Kate gets more views; they both attribute the relative disparity in viewing to her being a young, attractive, female:

He's like, "I don't understand, I'm putting out all of this content?" I'm like, "You have huge amount of content, like three times more content than I have." He has his own website, and he's like, "I think it's because you are a female and you are attractive." I'm like, "That's what it is. You are correct."

Being a young, attractive, female also contributes to a disconnect between Anna and her role as a rabbi, which is why her kippah is integral to helping her deliver her authentic rabbi-performances, "I know I look young, and that's a comment I get all the time, 'You look too young to be a rabbi, you're a kid.' Or, 'You're too pretty to be a rabbi,' and all of those things. So hence, the wearing of the kippah." A number of the female religious leaders also discuss the implications for not fitting the identity molds in their male-dominated religious worlds, feeling like they must put in some "extra effort" to prove their worth.

Minister Mitchell does not fit the mold specifically because he prefers *not* to wear his collar – even when he is engaged in his formal duties such as preaching. "Oh, yeah! Yeah. I'm the black sheep of the group. Cause I don't like it!" As a casual cigar smoker who enjoys his wine and gets a bit aggressive at times, Minister Mitchell also admits that his manner often goes against what he feels is the typical Baptist minister grain, setting him apart even more:

People hear you're a minister, now they expect something, now they expect you to live and to exist and to be a certain type of person. And ministers are given this soft lamb's wool, 3,000-thread count Egyptian cotton perspective; that's not me. If you offend me, I'm gonna let you know. And I'm going to let you know as nicely as possible, until I have to get, not aggressive, but until I have to be more stern about it.

Not presenting as “typical” is something that fans mention as well. Because he is African-American, Greg frequently throws people for a loop when they find out about his affinity for rock-and-roll music, “They just look at me and think I’m an anomaly when it comes to certain things, and definitely I am when it comes to music.” And Landon believes his appearance and manner often lead to others’ inability to see him as a brony:

A lot of people don't see it coming with me either. Because I generally tend to be a fairly, it's not that I'm a serious looking person, but I'm often told that I do have a significant amount of presence in a room and because I also, because I run my own business for a living, I run a computer repair shop, and I maintain a certain amount of professionalism for that, again, people don't clock me for a brony.

Unlike all of these identity workers who acknowledge that they don’t not fit the identity molds for their particular identities, Elena is perplexed as to why people are surprised to learn of her affinity for all things Harry Potter:

People are just like, "Really?" They say they can't see me being a HP fan but I don't know what a HP fan looks like. I just think... Is it something like, does that person look like they like pizza? Like, what are you supposed? Does that person look like he robs houses? Like what are they supposed to look like?

Elena’s point is well-taken – what is a Harry Potter fan supposed to look like?

Certainly, not all identities have recognizable, signature looks and certainly, not fitting the mold is not always problematic. Outside of their particular identity worlds, not looking like a Harry Potter fan, the father of two gifted boys, a minister, or the mom of an epileptic daughter may have no consequence. In fact, there are times when not fitting the mold is desirable; for some of those affiliated with the chronic illness identity, not fitting the mold is precisely what they hope to achieve through their identity work. Regardless of the consequences, not fitting the mold is a consideration for the identity work done in support of any identity.

Identity Competition

One way that individuals interact as social beings is through competition, and identity workers across the board acknowledge the competitive nature of doing. When it comes to identity work, identity competition generally focuses on who is doing identity best, that is, who is the most authentic identity worker. And while authenticity manifests in different ways for different identities, identity workers of all types acknowledge or allude to the presence of these identity contests.

One of the ways individuals connected to chronically ill identities assert their authenticity is simply by being sick, and there is an acknowledged competition of sorts among identity workers trying to establish themselves as “sicker” than others, thus asserting their greater identity authenticity. As someone who has put together many support groups for asthma, including the largest such group on Facebook, Gustavo has much experience in this area:

What I've learned over the years, in putting together these different groups, is that, and I'm not sure if this is true for other diseases or chronic diseases, but for asthma, there's almost competition among people in the group. What I mean by that is, there's a tendency for people, for asthmatics to claim that they're sicker than the other one. "My asthma's much worse than yours"... "My disease is worse than yours."

When I ask Kate if she encounters this type of “competition” in her IBD community, she immediately responds, “Absolutely!... We call it the ‘Who has it Worst Game,’ and I see it on my [Facebook] page and I jump in and say, ‘This is a support group, we are not playing the Who has it Worst Game.’” She goes on to add:

That is huge, it happens in every support group, it happens every day, it happens every minute. And I tell people, “You just have to ignore it; don’t take the bait, don’t let the trolls ruin your day.” And I could say, “Oh, I have a horrible vaginal/anal fistula,” and someone might jump in there, “Well I have three of those.” It’s horrible. You don’t even understand.

By engaging in this competitive, verbal one-upmanship, identity workers seem to be

insinuating that they are more authentic identity representatives since their conditions are more severe or they have suffered more.

This same sort of identity competition goes on in the parent of exceptional children community as well, where parents have been known to verbally attempt to outdo each other's hardships. While she hasn't encountered this type of competition in her regular support group, Emily has observed it in some of the other groups and workshops she has participated in:

We have a lot of parent workshops, and sometimes you see a little bit of the one up... One girl got stuck in a mental institution and they would not release her. And they're like, "You think that's bad, well they held my daughter for [much longer]..." So I definitely see it... [or]... someone's like, "Well my kid won't brush his teeth this week," and somebody's like, "My kid hasn't brushed his teeth in two years!"

Using one's perceived level of hardship as a barometer of his or her authenticity in the chronically ill and exceptional child communities is akin to using one's perceived level of "holiness" as an indicator of authenticity for those affiliated with the religious leader identity – something religious leaders do indeed observe. Rabbi Charles confesses, "Sometimes we also get the authenticity battles among the rabbis too. So also you'll get, 'Well I wear a kippah all the time, or I keep kosher.' One of those 'holier than thou' [people]." In the Greek Orthodox community, a dichotomy exists between the conservative priests who wear long robes and have long hair and long beards, and the liberal priests who resemble Catholic or Episcopalian priests with their style of attire, which includes black slacks, a black shirt and a white collar. According to Father John, the former look clearly "marks" those religious leaders' affiliation with the Greek Orthodox Church, since "*only* a priest looks like that in Greece." And along with their more orthodox style of dress, these priests have adopted something else; he explains:

There's sort of an orthodox persona a lot of [these] priests have taken on. They nod and

they say, “Glory be to God” a lot. There’s a few things they do; I don’t take [the orthodox persona] as a legitimate thing 100 percent because they’re married, they have families, they have houses, they have cars; I mean, they’re not monks!”

The dichotomy between these conservative priests and their liberal brothers is largely fueled by authenticity disputes, with the former believing that they are more authentic – something that frustrates Father John who, save the “uniform,” sees these priests as his authentic equals – since they are living the same non-monastic life as he is. Minister Mitchell similarly believes that authenticity is not just about the uniform and advertising oneself as a person of God in a conspicuous way, despite the fact that some of his fellow Baptist ministers seem to believe that they are “more of a minister” than he is because they do those things:

One of the other ministers in my church is like that, and she's a year older than me and I stay so far away from her, it's ridiculous. And again, it's not about that. Why do you have to have that collar on to be a minister?... Why does it have to be some public billboard going down 95 to let you know that you're a minister? People should know that you're a minister or believe that you're a minister or think that you're a minister by the way that you hold your life.

While identity workers affiliated acknowledge the competitive spirit in their communities, they seem to be less likely to recognize this competitive behavior in themselves. Gustavo, who was the first to mention this notion of identity competition and his intolerance for it, remarks, “This whole thing about competition is really interesting to me; competition among asthmatics and, ‘My disease is worse than yours,’” before immediately displaying some of the very characteristics he criticizes in others:

And I found out that people are intimidated by me because they could never top me. *You will never find a more sick asthmatic than me.* That is something that's a true statement, and I have the evidence to back that up. I have, *I know I'm one of the worst living asthmatics on the planet right now* and I'm talking to you in full sentences right now. And if you didn't know me, you would think, "How is this even possible?" (emphasis added).

As a dutiful identity worker, Stan does a lot of information sharing with other parents whose children are profoundly disabled like his son. During the course of describing one such situation, he displays a bit of *his* implicit competitive nature,

I would say of all my son's conditions...his critical airway (is) the most important. And then when I tell people that, they say, "Well, so-and-so almost died last night, my child almost died and we had to give him oxygen." And like, in the back of my mind I'm like, "Yeah, that happens to us almost on a weekly basis" (emphasis added).

These identity workers are insinuating that the conditions of others who share their identities are not as serious as theirs, just as Pastor Michael insinuates that others sharing his identity are not as "holy" as he is:

As a result of my leadership, I have to meet with other youth pastors, they can be draining because there are times where for them it's a job, *but it's not the passion of their heart* and it's easy for them to complain and if you get around people like that and you allow them to influence you, they could easily, you could easily begin to take on their mentality (emphasis added).

Those affiliated with the fan identity also demonstrate their competitive nature, but it naturally manifests in different ways; fans insinuate their superior authenticity in a variety of ways, such as through references to how their tenure, knowledge and dedication compare to that of other fans. Nicholas considers himself a literal life-long fan, "I've been told I've been a fan since birth because my dad was watching a Mets game in the delivery room when I was being born." And as a life-long fan, he is particularly frustrated by fair-weather or bandwagon fans, those individuals who only support a team when they are winning, "There's nothing worse, in my opinion, that a fair-weather fan or somebody who has those, 'Oh but they're my second and third favorite team so I'm going to root for them today.' It's like, that really, that's really *not what it means to be a fan*" (emphasis added). He goes on to add, "And I guess, maybe, I have the game of baseball *more ingrained in me* than a lot of them do but. I just don't, I just don't see the same

desire I guess, maybe, for a lot of them” (emphasis added). By establishing his lengthy tenure and unconditional dedication to the fandom, he is suggesting that he is a better fan.

Leah seems to be insinuating the same, when she compares her nearly 40-year tenure with the Star Wars franchise to those fans who haven’t been around for quite as long. “I’ve been a fan since I was six...I feel like people get on the bandwagon of it, and I’ve been a fan for a long time.” Since she feels she has no tangible way of validating her exceptional dedication to the fandom, showing individuals the Star Wars “museum” of merchandise she has collected is a way “to prove to other people that I’ve been a fan for a long time and that I’ve had this relationship [since I was six].” Her competitive streak also emerges when discussing other fans; she alludes to her self-perceived fan superiority by describing how they were unaware of some critical fan information that she already knew. When the latest Star Wars movie was release in theaters, she reports, “I thought it was interesting everybody wanted to watch all of them [before seeing the new movie]; but you couldn’t get the movies to watch all of them before it came out; I think now you can.” Not only was she aware of fact that it was impossible to get all of the movies if you did not already have them, but, as an authentic fan, she had already viewed all of the prior movies – multiple times.

And just as there is a certain air of superiority when the Greg mentions that, unlike other fans of the Black Crowes, he recognizes their breakout song as an Otis Redding cover, Elena mentally scoffs at other fans who “think they know more than you,” despite the fact that they are unfamiliar with the most basic information about Harry Potter:

Some people might say a spell wrong, like, “A low a more ha” and it’s, “Aloh Hamora.” Like they might not say the “h,” but the “h” is there, but it’s spelled with an “a” but you have to make the “h” sound. And it’s just like, “Ok, get over yourself, we all know you’re

trying to unlock a door.”

Landon is a bit more forthright in revealing how he feels he stacks up to other fans. The term “brony” is a label used to refer to male fans of My Little Brony that many fans reject because they find the term offensive. As Landon sees it, their reluctance to accept the label is due to their lack of understanding of the fandom in its totality. Since he has superior knowledge about My Little Pony, he has no problem being called a brony or referring to himself as one; he has fully embraced the label and all that entails (Snow and Anderson 1987:1354):

A lot of people are like, "Don't get me wrong, I'm in the fandom, but I'm a bit concerned about calling myself a Brony"... But, *because I understand the fandom in it's entirety*, I can say, "Yes, I am a Brony" *knowing exactly what that entails* (emphasis added).

Landon’s belief that he knows better than other lesser fans was actually the impetus behind him starting his very popular blog. He describes a time when there was “a brony war” on a particular social media platform, and as “one of the most despised fandoms,” a number of other fans were doing their best to defend the fandom. He explains:

The few bronies who were out trying to defend the fandom, were just hopelessly bad at debate. I was just like, "I see what you're trying to say, but you're doing such a bad job of saying it." I was like, " You know what? Enough of this. I'll make my own blog...so I was like, "I will provide a rational response, something that is actually thought out.”

Other identity workers similarly compare their identity work to that of others sharing the identity, and similarly allude to the fact that they believe their doing is better. In discussing the various activities her family participates in, Maureen makes comparisons to what other families do:

Maureen: We do a lot of things; we do a lot of things. Not that I want to talk about other Autism parents, but I find that we do a lot of things that other Autism parents are like, "I couldn't even plan doing that." Or go a lot of places.

Interviewer: So, give me an example.

Maureen: My daughter is singing with the school at the baseball game. And it's supposed to be tomorrow, but I have no idea if it's gonna happen in the snow. But it's supposed to be tomorrow. He [autistic son] is coming, we are going. I happen to know a friend who lives down the street. Her son is the exact same age as [SON]; he's never been to a baseball game. She actually, when we used to go to [OUTPATIENT CENTER] that was her homework one day. You need to take him somewhere, because she doesn't, and she still hasn't. And I know we're going.

And while another Emily is grateful for the attention that appearance-related identity work (e.g., wearing colored ribbons during awareness months) brings to various causes, she prefers to be an active participant by sharing her family's story and working with organizations that support her son's condition, identity work that she suggests is more worthwhile:

I love everything [Teal Tuesday] represents... However, it's so easily done, I would so much rather represent Tourette's by sharing our story... it's very easy to put on a shirt, it's very easy to wear a ribbon. I mean I think it's good, I think it's a little overdone because a lot of people are putting ribbons on and doing all these things and they're not doing a damn thing to help whatever their cause is. I don't know, it's very easy just to wear a color.

A final element of the competitive nature of identity work concerns numbers and money, and this is primarily found in the worlds of the religious leaders. Across denominations, religious leaders acknowledge the sense of competition that exists regarding the size of one's congregation and the amount of money that is brought in. And while they acknowledge that there are competitive individuals who measure their worth as religious leaders by their numbers, none of the identity workers here admit that this is something they personally do. Rabbi Anna states,

I'm just starting out, but I've heard among more experienced rabbis there's also like a, "How big is your congregation?" conversation that happens... Where, I can't imagine that I'm ever going to be interested in that conversation, because I don't aspire to being the senior rabbi of a 1,200-family congregation. That's not my professional plan. I love mid-sized congregations, so I'd love to be the senior rabbi of a mid-sized congregation; you know, five to eight hundred families. But that's not how I'm gonna measure my worth. And so people who do measure their worth, on like how big their salary is or how many congregants they have, I don't like that.

Both The Reverend Shari and Minister Rachel acknowledge this type of competition in their communities:

You know, this is a big parish, so everybody's like, "Oh, you're in [TOWN], you guys have a lot of money... We have average Sunday attendance of like 400, 450, which is big. I mean, there are places that have 35 people on a Sunday, so they are defensive about that (The Reverend Shari, Episcopal Priest).

You know, "I've got two Sunday services and we've got average Sunday attendance of 400 people." Well, most of the churches in the denomination have got 20 average Sunday attendance. So there's got to be some sense that, "What's he doing that we're not doing?" You know? (Minister Rachel, United Reform Church).

And while he is very aware of "my congregation is bigger than your congregation" disputes that exist in his community, Father John is happy to be removed from such competition due to the fact that the next closest Greek Orthodox church is forty-five miles away from his, so parishioners cannot choose which church they attend. As a result, "I'm so happy that...I don't have any issues with other clergy as a result of proximate distance or anything to that effect."

Competition focusing on size does come up a bit with the fan identity as well. Landon acknowledges the numbers rivalry that exists between the bronx convention he runs in his country, and the one run by others in a nearby country. In addition to reciting counts for those attending his own convention, it is clear that Landon has gathered intelligence on his competitor's event:

Let me see, we had about 950 this year. In 2014, which was the previous event, we hit 1,200 which was the peak of our event... This will be their third one and I think last year, their first year they had about 300, last year they probably had about 300-400 and I think this year, because there's no [other convention], I think they might, I think they're looking at the 500 mark. But then again, I don't know how big their venue is. Because we have a kinda-sorta rivalry with them...I'm very interested to know how they run their event, but I didn't want to make it seem like I was snooping on them. You know?

Linda has one of the largest general collections of non-sport trading cards in the fandom, made up of different segments of cards including Batman cards, Garbage Pail Kids cards,

Star Trek cards, and a host of others. Some of her fellow fans, who collect one of these particular segment of cards, were extremely envious of her expansive collection and quite nasty to her as a result. So nasty, in fact, that Linda actually sold off that particular part of her collection: “That is the only part of the collection that I ever sold. I sold the entire thing, almost for spite, they got me so annoyed that I just didn’t want any part of them.”

One thing all of these identity workers have in common is that when they start to compare themselves to others who share their identities, they seem to suggest that they might be doing things a bit better; better because they have a better approach, know a bit more, have been at it longer, or have greater numbers. And because they do identity better, these competitive fans see themselves as more authentic; many those identity workers who don’t stack up as nothing more than “‘pretenders’ or ‘wannabes’” (Brekhus 2003:99).

Overwhelming Life

Regardless of the type of identity, how one becomes connected to it, and his or her intensity of doing, identities have the potential to impact the lives of the individuals connected them in similar ways. Identity can have implications for some of the most consequential elements of an individual’s life, such as occupation. For some identity workers, such as religious leaders, identity and occupation are often inseparable while for others, identities can morph into part or full-time jobs. Linda’s love of her fandom prompted her to quit her job as a teacher so that she could run her non-sporting card mail order business and magazine; Landon is compensated for the work he does in conjunction with the brony conventions he is a part of, and a number of the chronically ill and parents of special needs children are compensated through their sponsorships for the identity-

related part-time work they do through their podcasts, blogs and speaking engagements. And although she receives no salary for her job, Kristine became a teacher seven years ago when she and her husband decided to pull her profoundly gifted son from the public school system so that she could homeschool him.

Identity has dramatically impacted Olivia's and Daphne's livelihoods, as both have had to quit their jobs due to their chronic illness identities, and Ross had to turn down a better-paying job because it would impact his ability to care for his special need's son:

Ross: I was offered a job last week, make \$20,000 more than what I'm making now. Fifteen minutes further than where I work now. Couldn't take the job.

Interviewer: Tell me about why.

Ross: Couldn't take the job because I have the flexibility at work to be able to pick [SON] up from school ... If he gets sick, if he gets sent home, I can go pick him up. I'm close... I have extreme flexibility at my job. A new job, that far away? Up [HIGHWAY]) traffic? I don't care how much you make, you know. It may not be worth it. It's worth it to be able to be there for your family first. And that's what's most important and especially [SON].

Identities have implications for identity workers' home lives as well, as they can impact where and how individuals live. In very extreme examples, religious leaders have their hometowns chosen for them as they are assigned to their parishes by their respective churches. As Father John explains, "We can get sent anywhere at anytime... within reason, you know. My mom used to tease me, 'They could send you to Africa, you'll shoot your big mouth off, you'll go to Africa.' But [the Greek Church officials] don't have that kind of power, but still."

Despite her affiliation with a very different identity, Joyce had little say in the selection process of her home, as she and her family were forced to move into one that maximized their ability to successfully perform the identity work necessary to care for

their profoundly disabled child, “We had to pick a specific house that would work for us, we have to have a way to get her in the house, and everything is modified [to assist in her care].” The homes of other parents are also often modified to assist in caring for their exceptional children. Maureen describes how her interior decorating has been impacted by the need to care for her son. Tired of replacing the coach cushions that her son knocks off while climbing on the furniture, she decided to purchase a brand new couch, “There’s a reason that we have a couch that the cushions are attached, instead of not attached.” And while she likes to “change things up” in terms of her decorating, she no longer does so as it is difficult on her sensitive son who does not like change; Maureen also finds herself purchasing everyday household items such as special plates, cups and pillows simply because they make her job of taking care of her son easier, not because she finds the items esthetically pleasing.

Affiliation with the chronic illness identity also has implications for living arrangements, as many identity workers report the impact the identity has had on their homes; Daphne (MS) has installed ramps, railings and a lift chair in her house, Rick has all of his unused and extra medical equipment stored in his foyer, “[there’s] the walker, the rollator, the crutches, the hospital-issued cane...boxes and boxes of bandages...they’re just sitting there,” and Gustavo admits that abundance of nebulizers and inhalers scattered about his home make it look like a hospital. Fans’ identities also spread into their homes in similar ways; Nicholas’ basement has been converted into a Mets man cave, Linda’s dining room china cabinets have become home to her collection of bobbin head dolls, and special displays of fan-related merchandise curated by the anime, Harry Potter, Star Wars and My Little Pony fans adorn their homes. Religious

leaders also aesthetically enhance their homes with identity-related props, decorating with religious artwork, figurines and bibles.

In addition to impacting physical surroundings, identities impact social circles as they influence who individuals spend their time with. For some religious leaders, social circles are essentially drawn by their identities. All of the priests (i.e., Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox and Episcopalian) have been assigned to their respective parishes, and all report that their social circles are essentially comprised of their parishioners and those involved with the church. As Father John explains, “When you're in a church, you're sent to an area that you're completed unrelated friendship wise, so the community does become your social dynamic as well.”

Identity more commonly impacts individuals' social worlds in much simpler ways -- people either prefer to spend time with fellow identity club members or prefer to keep their distance from them (or some combination of the two), and they design their social circles accordingly. In some cases, social connections can be negatively impacted or even extinguished due to identity affiliation. Kristine and her daughter have both lost their best friends (another mother and daughter) due to rivalry on the soccer field, and Emily acknowledges that her being the parent of a special needs child has cost her friendships, “I know we've lost friends when he was very young because we were very caught up in existing with him.” Father John is noticeably melancholy as he tells me about an important friendship that was negatively impacted when the Greek Church relocated him:

One of the strong friendships I developed, I haven't had an opportunity like that since, but was when I was in [CITY]... there was a gentleman who lived in the area near me... We used to go to his house for dinner. I mean, we would have these Latin parties cause all of his family members were married to different, and I really enjoyed myself with that family dynamic because I could step out and relax a little bit with a friend, pure friend. We had a lot in common as far as opinions about life, he was very philosophical and I really enjoyed our friendship. I mean we keep in touch, but most of your social dynamic

is in the church.

Identity can have implications for the most important people in our lives. During our interview, Pastor Michael affirms that the individuals with whom he spends the majority of his time are fellow-believers, those connected to his identity as a spiritual leader. And when I ask him if he could have married someone outside of his spiritual community, he emphatically exclaims, “No, no way, no way, no way! And I could get into a bunch of scriptures on that but I won’t waste your time. But I’ll just say, ‘No way, no way!’” The Mets fan is more contemplative than forceful when he talks about his wife being a fellow fan, “I don’t know if I could date a hardcore Yankees or Phillies or Braves fan. Which, in some respects, I think it would be kinda fun for the banter aspect, but I mean, I’m pretty serious when it comes to [the Mets], so...”

In addition to the implications identity has for the more consequential elements of life (e.g., occupation, home, social networks), identity similarly has the potential to impact the flow of everyday life for identity workers of all types. Identity workers schedule everything from vacations to party attendance to daily errands around their identities. Charlotte’s family takes their annual summer vacation at the same time every year – the one week after summer nationals for fencing. Linda (non-sporting card fan) and Minister Melissa (Baptist minister) schedule their vacations to coincide with the events they are attending in connection with their identities (e.g., conventions, tournaments). Minister Melissa does a fair amount of traveling around the country, and says of one particular out-of-state trip, “I often joke around because I say I think [that was] the first vacation that I took that wasn’t church related.” Linda admits that, “We did much more traveling related to collecting. We almost always extended our trips to turn

them into a little vacation.” And while he and his wife were avid travelers and hikers prior to his diabetes becoming more serious, Dave has had to alter the destinations and activities of his travel because of his identity-limitations, keeping things closer to home and less physically demanding.

Maureen finds herself hosting her social groups’ “pool-hopping” parties more frequently than others, because it is easier to care for her son in her own home, and Stan describes how being the father of a profoundly disabled son impacts the scheduling of this families’ social life:

It is one of those things where, “Hey, there's a Beer Festival in [TOWN] this Saturday. First Question. "Do we have nursing?" "Hey, my daughter is going to be starring in that play two nights in three weeks from now on a Friday and a Saturday night. Do we have nursing?”

Stacy attributes her lack of a social life to being the mom of a disabled kid, “I never go out and we never go out because we don’t have sitters for [CHILD]; I can’t leave [CHILD] alone, we cannot leave [CHILD] alone.” And while it doesn’t prevent her from getting out and socializing with her friends from time to time, Dawn almost always heads homes before they do, since she has implemented a curfew at the request of the doctor she sees for her epilepsy.

In addition to leaving the house for social events, going out to tend to life’s responsibilities often entails identity accommodations. Kathleen does her best to schedule her medical appointments around those times when she is not bruised from her sadomasochist-related play dates, and the errand-running activities for Joyce are all orchestrated around the need to perform her identity-related duties. As the primary caretaker for her profoundly disabled daughter, Joyce’s daughter has had to accompany her whenever she ventures outside of their home. In order to provide her daughter with

care during these excursions, each errand-running route has to be carefully calculated:

Well, she needs to be vented all the time, so that's the problem; it's harder to take her out because she could be uncomfortable at any moment and then, what do we do? We're out in the middle of.... Like, we know all these places to hide, when we're out. My mom used to always joke when she was little, "Nordstrom's bathroom has this nice little lounge area, oh we could lay down there"; like that's our "run to" place if [CHILD] is having a problem. And it's become that everywhere, like where can I go hide, where can I lay her down to get her comfortable?

Nicholas does his best to schedule his assorted obligations around the Mets games, which is no easy feat. During the nearly seven-month season, there are approximately 160+ games, and this diehard fan estimates that he watches approximately 155 of them. "If you watch something three or four hours a day, almost religiously, you're obviously devoting a good amount of your life to it." He admits that while he does try to schedule events around these games, he is not always successful. His Mets' color-inspired wedding took place on a game day, and while he was not able to watch that day, he was able to keep tabs on how his team was doing, "My dad, during his speech at the wedding reception, actually announced the score and that they were just going into extra innings. And unfortunately they lost that day but what can you do?" For the majority of the year when the Mets are playing, this identity worker's daily work schedule includes accommodations for his identity,

Nicholas: It's not just really watching the games, I'll go online the next morning and look at the - I follow this blog that chronicles the game that happened the night before and kinda recaps what happened and there's highlights and there's the box score, which shows all the stats.

Interviewer: And you do that after every game?

Nicholas: Yeah, I'll do that, usually first thing when I get to work in the morning.

Just as Nicholas sets aside time each day to accommodate his identity, Sue sets aside time each day to accommodate her identity; as part of her treatment for cystic fibrosis, she must use a nebulizer every day, a process, that she reports, "Takes a good

half hour, 45 minutes to do it correctly...if I get it in once a day that's great, if I can do twice a day, it's a bonus." Other chronically ill identity workers similarly report scheduling life around their treatment. Daphne takes medication that helps her with her gait, so she strategically plans her activities around when she knows she will be benefiting from her MS medication, "I know that within a certain amount of time after I take a pill that my gait will be better...so I try to plan to go to the grocery store [then]." She goes on:

Part of the day depends on again, sort of revolves around that pill. Mornings aren't good, it takes me a while to get up and get going. I'm stiff in the morning...So, once I get going in the morning it's better, I have a chunk of time that I feel good. And then by afternoon as this pill is wearing off, I can definitely feel the weakness setting in. And then once I take the pill at night again, I probably have another chunk of good, *good* time where I have a little more energy. So that sort of dictates what I get done during the day (emphasis).

Inescapable Identity

Sometimes an identity impacts an individual's life in such persistent ways that it seems inescapable. Regardless of whether an identity is achieved or ascribed, some identities have a knack for keeping themselves in the forefront of identity workers' minds and lives. For some identity workers, this can happen through the adoption of an identity-inspired mindset that becomes a guiding principle by which they lead their lives; identity is a way of life for these identity workers. This is clearly the case for many religious leaders, as demonstrated by the Pastor David, who admits, "To know Him personally and to follow Him...I would say that initiates *everything*. That initiates what I do overseas, that initiates what I do here, why I do things here, what I talk about, when I talk about it"; but a few of the fans suggest that principles associated with their fandoms guide their lives as well. Lexi, who admits that her sense of style, mannerisms, and way of looking at

the world are all guided by anime states, “it is such a big part of me...because it’s obviously affected every aspect of my life.” And Landon admits, “I do feel like it is a part of who I am...because I’ve immersed myself in this fandom...and it feels like a way of life to me.”

Some identities are greedy by nature and as such, place intense identity demands on individuals, requiring an uncompromising level commitment (Brekhus 2003 45; Kreiner et al. 2006: 1031,1034). The religious leader identity is one such greedy identity (Kreiner et al. 2006), contributing to it’s potential to be inescapable; Father John describes how his former self has been totally eclipsed by his identity as a Greek Orthodox priest:

I realized that maybe five years into it, *our lives are not our own*. LAUGHS. Yeah, I know. And that's, again, that's not something you get 100%, when you're entering into the seminary. You don't get that part of it. You have the religion, the dedication to service; you don't realize how much, once you step into that, *your identity's gone*.

It's hard, it's getting harder and harder as time is going on because even [my] kids are identifying me as a priest. I told you my family is identifying me as a priest, I'm with priests all the time, my friends are priests. You understand? And when I go to the gym, I'm still Father [NAME]... Your life is not your own! (emphasis added)

While the religious leader identity is greedy in particular, occupational identities are greedy in general, and for those identity workers who have parlayed their identity affiliation into full- and part-time jobs, identities are often front and center. For Linda, who quit her job to start a family business around her fandom, and those individuals who advocate for and maintain regular social media platforms in support of their identities, identity work is regular and consuming as they must constantly be coming up with new content and putting in the work to deliver it to their audiences – this can certainly result in an identity having an ever-present nature. Gustavo describes how he is constantly coming up with blogging topics about asthma, “Something pops into my head that is

brand new that hasn't been talked about before. Or something, just an observation that people either need to know or they will find interesting"; he is consciously and subconsciously always on the lookout for new material. In addition to caring for his diabetic daughter, Jack maintains, among other things, a blog and a podcast; the direct and ancillary activities related to these tasks consume a substantial part of his time. He asks, "You know how long it takes to put a podcast on? It's hours a week." The parent of exceptional children and chronic illness identities are also particularly greedy due to the amount of work required to provide the care mandated by their identities; this is certainly the case for those parents who must provide round-the-clock attention to their profoundly disabled children; "our whole...my workday, everything; it all revolves around [daughter]" (Joyce, mom of a profoundly disabled daughter). Just like Father John, who surrendered his identity upon entering the priesthood, Joyce says that her own identity "was taken away" when she became the parent of her special needs daughter, "everything changed to revolve around that and so there was no time to develop [my own identity]." Kristine feels the same way, she has "lost" her identity as the parent of a gifted son – she now refers to herself as "[CHILD'S] mom."

For other identity workers, ever-present identities are not the result of a mindset or a high-volume workload. For some, a prop or task renders identity ineluctable by serving as a "string on the finger," a visible, constant reminder of an identity's presence. Apparel related-props often serve as constant identity self-reminders, particularly for those affiliated with the religious leader identity. The collars and kippahs worn by these individuals not only trigger identity by efficiently and instantly announcing the wearer as a religious leader to others, but also by serving as a constant reminder to the wearer of the

fact that his or her spiritual identity is engaged. As Rachel, a United Reform minister explains:

And [wearing the collar] certainly puts on me the onus of behaving myself in public. I cannot swear, I cannot give the finger to people who have cut me off, you know what I mean? You have to hold it together when you are wearing the collar. Which is why I wear it once a week, it's about what I can manage, it's terrible but.

The Reverend Shari adds:

One of the reasons I like wearing it [the collar] is it's a reminder, it's really more a reminder for myself about who I am and what I'm doing. I try to not say bad words. It's tight, like it's around your neck and so sometimes it feels a little too tight and you're kinda going like this [BEGINS TUGGING AT HER NECK] trying to pull it away. But it's a reminder that I've made this commitment and I'm in this role and I'm wearing a uniform ... And so, it's a good reminder to myself to just remember who I am.

Jason regularly wears an identity token that similarly “pulls” on him physically, reminding him of his affiliation with the cancer identity. Although it is not an article of clothing, Jason wears a fanny pack that administers his outpatient chemotherapy treatment, and on the occasions when he has managed to momentarily forget about his illness, this identity token reminds him of his new reality. He explains, “When you're out, you're doing things, you don't really pay attention to it [the fanny pack]. Maybe I'm taking [life] for granted, and all of a sudden you get up and [the fanny pack is] pulling on you.”

Other chronically ill identity workers similarly “wear” inescapable treatment-related identity tokens that serve as constant personal reminders of club membership – some examples include the vagus nerve stimulator implanted in Brian's body that delivers electrical impulses throughout the day, causing an immediate, perceptible change in his voice, Kate's ostomy bag, and the multiple surgical scars that serve as battle wounds for the surgical treatments of those with diabetes, cancer, and epilepsy. And while her battle wounds are self-inflicted, the bruises that adorn the body of Kathleen are

her way of being connected to and reminders of the identity that is so important to her. Stacy comes to the realization that she, by carrying around her disabled child's identification at all times, is simultaneously carrying both her child's and her identities in her purse. "Oh my God that's interesting! I never even thought of that!" and she is regularly reminded of their identities each time she sees these documents in her bag.

For those affiliated with the parent of exceptional children identity, their children often serve as powerful identity cues. Just as the presence of the Clergical collar around the neck of a priest serves as a powerful and instant identity cue to others as well as to the priest him or her self, the presence of a disabled child being pushed in a wheelchair, or a child verbally ticking serve as powerful and instant identity cues to others as well as the identity workers themselves. When I ask a mother of a child with Asperger syndrome if there is anything that she feels identifies her as the parent of an exceptional child, she asks, "You mean when he is not with me?" suggesting that the mere presence of her son is a key indicator of her identity.

Sometimes it is the regular use of a prop that serves as the identity cue that evokes continual acknowledgement of identity affiliation; taking daily medications, for example, can render identity inescapable:

I have two pill bottles...that literally go everywhere with me. So, if I'm going to spend the night, like last weekend it was my birthday, I went to [CITY]; they've got to come with me. Taking [medications] every day ... totally makes me. Like, epilepsy is me when I'm having to take that medicine all day, every day.

Rick describes how his new daily medication regime, which requires him to take two pills ten minutes before every meal, similarly keeps his sick identity in the forefront of his mind, "I'm conscious every meal...I have to take those pills. I'm very conscious of it...it's never far away from me." With his iPhone connected to his daughter's continuous

glucose monitor, Jack's identity is never far away from him either, as he receives alerts throughout the day that detail "the direction and the speed that her blood sugar is moving and what the numbers should be" – during the course of our interview, he pauses to monitor her numbers a few times. And in a similar way, the daily monitoring of his favorite team similarly ensures that Nicholas' identity as a Mets fan is never far from his mind.

Certainly, *any* doing done in support of one's identity has the capacity to signal identity for the identity worker him or her self, as well as for others. Sometimes, however, the nature of identity work makes taking an identity break more difficult. Whether it is an identity-related mindset that guides an identity worker's life, the heavy workload consistent with a greedy identity, a regular activity with a strong identity connection or a particularly symbolic prop, some identity work serves as a particularly tight and colorful string, reminding the wearer of his or her inescapable identity.

Chapter Thirteen: Conclusions

“I have to say, I don’t know what you possibly think I could have in common with a Mets fan.” These were the words that stopped me in my tracks as I embarked on my journey to explore the process of identity construction and maintenance, and I am grateful to Joyce, the mother of a profoundly disabled daughter, for her forthright delivery of them. While Joyce’s comment sensitized me to the fact that others might not appreciate my unconventional approach to thinking about identity, her tone reflected an acknowledgement of the extreme variation between these two identities, the intentional variation necessary for this social pattern analysis designed to extract generic patterns of doing from specific identity exemplars. And as I theorized then and believe I have demonstrated through my work here, as identity workers, Joyce the mom and Nicholas the Mets fan actually have a tremendous amount in common, as they go about the construction and maintenance of their very different identities in a similar, generic fashion.

Whether an individual identifies as an asthmatic or a brain cancer survivor; the parent of an elite fencer or of a child with diabetes; a conservative rabbi or a Pentecostal minister; a fan of rock music or a fan of My Little Pony, he or she reaches into the same identity work tool kit, accesses the same identity work tools, and puts those tools to work in similar ways reflective of the relevance his or her identity has in the constitution of who he or she is. My research demonstrates that while identities may dramatically differ in terms of “content,” identities of all types share the “form” that is the identity work routines done to create and sustain them (Simmel 1950:40-42).

Identity Routines

When comparing the ways identity workers manage the various components of identity work – the way they orchestrate their coming out, manage their appearances, use their props, engage in identity talk, participate in identity settings, react to identity time and associate with identity others – it becomes clear that generic patterns of doing exist that cut across identity type. These generic patterns of doing, or *identity routines*, are implemented with common patterns of intensity that range from minimal, understated doing to extreme, overstated doing; and regardless of identity affiliation, the identity performances of identity workers can position them anywhere on this continuum.

The doing of the ideal-typical understated doer is characterized by low investment (i.e., the time, effort and energy put into identity work), high restraint (i.e., the degree of regulation that accompanies identity work) and low visibility (i.e., how perceptible one's identity is to others during the course of identity work). Understated doers generally engage in compulsory, fundamental identity work that adheres to the norms dictated by their identity's local code, thus guaranteeing their affiliation with the identity; their identity work does not tend to go beyond requisite doings. Understated doers include the priest who only wears her collar in sacred settings, and the alternative lifestyle fan who only wears her fetish-wear for play dates; the father of the exceptionally gifted child who will only "talk shop" with his wife and other parents of gifted children, and the diabetic who will only "talk diabetes" with his family members and physicians. Understated doers include music fan who only includes his collection of cds when mentioning his identity props, and the asthmatic whose only prop is his an inhaler; the comic book fan who

refuses to attend new movie releases with other fans, and the breast cancer survivor who refuses to attend support groups and fundraisers.

Anchoring the other end of the identity intensity continuum are the ideal-typical overstated doers, whose identity work is characterized by high investment, low restraint, and high visibility. As extreme doers, these identity workers engage in steady doing that demonstrates “an intensity and extensity going beyond conventional bounds” (Ewald and Jiobu 1985:144; Hughes and Coakley 1991:310); these identity workers tend to “overdo” their adherence to identity codes. Overstated doers include the anime fan who actually looks like an anime character, and the Greek Orthodox priest who wears his collar wherever his travels may take him. Overstated doers include the mother of an autistic son who shares intimate identity-details with the stranger she is sitting next to on a park bench, and the Pentecostal minister who infuses an hour-long interview with continuous, lengthy references to biblical scriptures. Overstated doers include the card collector whose vacation time is spent traveling to events related to her collection, and the chronically ill young woman who devotes a disproportionate amount of her time to the management of her social media platforms. Overstated doers include the father of a diabetic who spends nearly all of his time with other people involved with diabetes, and the My Little Pony fan whose social circles are primarily comprised of fellow fans. And overstated doers include Nicholas the Mets fan, who has a seemingly endless assortment of Mets props that pepper his world, and Joyce, the mother of a profoundly disabled child, whose identity-related caretaking props infiltrate all aspects of her life. Despite their obvious differences, Mets fans and parents of profoundly disabled children – as well as individuals affiliated with virtually any type of identity -- do indeed share some common

ground with the similar forms of their identity routines.

Identity Club Membership

The second overarching theme to emerge from this social pattern analysis reflects the similar ways identity workers of all types experience their identities. A number of common features highlight identity work -- identity hallmarks that seem to mark the experience of any identity -- and I use the “club membership” analogy to present these generic identity experiences. As individuals transition from identity club initiates to club veterans, they are exposed to various facets of club membership that transcend identity club affiliation. As part of *member orientation*, identity workers of all types recount the stories of their identity introductions with great similarity. Whether the mom of a special needs child is reliving the twenty-year-old moment when she watched her child’s first epileptic seizure, or a Star Wars fan is recalling the thirty-year anniversary of watching her first Star Wars movie, identity workers of all types share comparable details when recounting their identity introductions such as when it happened, where they were, who they were with and how they felt. Insider information is another common element of identity work that identity workers become privy to as new identity affiliates; this is the special knowledge that enables Episcopal priests to recognize the coded email signature of a fellow priest, Harry Potter fans to decipher cryptic messages on the t-shirts of fellow fans, patients with MS to recognize the telltale gait of other patients, and the parents of kids with Tourette Syndrome to recognize the ticks of other children living with the condition.

As identity workers settle in to their respective identity clubs, they assume a number of *member responsibilities*, and these duties include imparting wisdom,

correcting misinformation, and being exemplary identity representatives. Identity workers of all types are eager to share their identity-specific knowledge with other members of the club. The chronically ill pass along information about navigating the medical landscape, religious leaders council others through difficult times, fans share their backstory knowledge about recent movies, music and sports teams, and parents of exceptional children share advice on how deal with the special needs of their children. And as dutiful club members, identity workers of all types report feeling responsible for ensuring that the identity-related information being circulated is accurate. Parents of children on the autism spectrum want to ensure that the condition is not referred to as a disease, music fans want songs attributed to the proper artists, religious leaders are concerned with bible passages being properly quoted, and severe asthmatics want others to know that asthma is far more than a nuisance disease.

Taking an active role in ensuring an accurate portrayal of their identities is one way that identity workers present themselves as respectable identity-ambassadors, and being exemplary identity representatives is important to identity workers of all types. Another way identity workers demonstrate reverence for their identities is by *looking* the part -- My Little Pony fans don pony-gear at conventions, soccer moms wear spirit wear to their kids' games, breast cancer survivors wear pink ribbons during the month of October and priests wear their collars when presiding over services. And exemplary identity workers show reverence for their identities by *acting* the part – religious leaders don't swear when they are wearing official religious garb, fans don't engage in conversations when they are attending the latest movie releases and the chronically ill and parents of special needs children follow "doctors orders."

Identity workers enjoy a host of *member benefits* as part of their affiliation with identity clubs including a tremendous sense of community -- the powerful connection, tacit understanding and judgment-free environment provided by fellow identity-club members are perks deeply appreciated by individuals, regardless of identity affiliation. And when this sense of community includes one's own family, the benefits of identity-sharing are amplified. Whether siblings simultaneously share a cystic fibrosis diagnosis or a passion for Harry Potter, a family experiences a child's profound disability or mother's brain cancer through identity spread, or generations of families include evangelical pastors, Star Wars fans, or diabetics, there is something quite special when identity becomes a family affair.

Another beneficial hallmark of identity affiliation is the wealth of information that comes along with it – identity workers of all types enjoy participation in vast networks of informational exchange. Breast cancer patients find out about new therapies to prevent hair loss, alternative lifestyleers find out about upcoming conventions, ministers get perspectives on dealing with problematic coworkers, parents of gifted theater kids find out about what's really happening “behind the scenes,” and parents of special needs children learn how to more effectively navigate the education system through their interactions in identity clubs.

Despite these important benefits, there are some potential *member drawbacks* that identity poses for identity workers, drawbacks that include not fitting the mold, identity competition and all-consuming identities. Identity workers of all types risk being viewed as inauthentic when their appearances and/or manners are not consistent with what is expected of the identity, making establishing authentic claims to the identity more

difficult. The African-American rock-and-roll fan, the voluptuous, middle-aged woman with cystic fibrosis, the young, attractive, female rabbi and the young, attractive female ulcerative colitis sufferer all face similar challenges since they do not “fit the mold.”

Identity workers frequently face additional discord through identity competition, which finds the chronically ill and parents of disabled children trying to establish, “who has it worse,” parents of gifted and talented children vying to assert whose child is the most spectacular, religious leaders bickering over who is holier, and fans engaging in contests over who is the most knowledgeable and dedicated. And finally, regardless of type, identity has the ability to overwhelm life. Identity has implications for how individuals make a living, where they live, the homes they purchase and the ways those homes are adorned. Identity has the capacity to draw individuals’ social circles, plan their vacations, dictate the details of socializing (e.g., when and where it happens) and structure day-to-day activities.

The power of identity is such that for some, it becomes inescapable. And whether overwhelming or trivial, banal or exotic, burden or blessing – religious leader, fan, parent of exceptional child or chronically ill – there is a genericity associated with the doing and experiencing of identity, and it is my contention that this generic process of identity construction, maintenance and experience applies to any identity. Despite the different ways we may have become affiliated with our different identities, we are, essentially, all in the “same identity boat” as we similarly navigate the arduous and continuous waters of doing identity.

Symbolic interactionists have highlighted the very social nature of the seemingly individualistic concept of identity by demonstrating how identity emerges through

interaction with others. This research builds upon and advances this social psychological approach to the study of identity in a very important way; by simultaneously exploring the multi-faceted performative aspect of identity across a diverse collection of identities, rather than by analyzing how one or two components of identity work operate with regard to one particular identity (as is the case with much extant research) this social pattern analysis provides a more complete understanding of how identity operates as a generic process. By revealing a common process for the doing and experiencing of identity, this research broadens the scope of the social aspect of identity, demonstrating that as identity workers, individuals share powerful connections through the implementation of standard identity routines and experiences of identity club membership. The findings gleaned here are a rich and important contribution to the social psychological approach to the understanding of identity.

Appendix A

Methodology

Sampling

To enrich our understanding of identity construction and maintenance by recognizing and interrogating it as a generic social process, social pattern analysis was implemented, a methodology designed to expose the formal commonality that exists across seemingly dissimilar units of analysis. In order to ensure the successful implementation of this social pattern analysis, a maximum variation sampling technique was implemented to secure an appropriately diverse sample. This type of sampling, which requires the intentional selection of “a wide range of cases to get variation on dimensions of interest,” is ideal for identifying common patterns that traverse and cut through “the noise of variation” (Patton 2002:243). To enhance the variation by establishing substantial breadth across the chronic illness, parent of exceptional child, fan and religious leader identities, rather than depth within them (Mullaney 2003:14), the respondents representing each of the identities were recruited to ensure that they brought a range of variation to their particular identity category. Diversity was a critical requirement driving identity selection; the more substantively different the selected identities, the more compelling the similarities among them, and the greater the generalizability of findings (Zerubavel 2007:134).

Patton argues that purposive sampling such as this involves the strategic selection of “information-rich cases” – individuals who offer researchers the opportunity to “learn a great deal about matters of importance” because of the wisdom they have in a particular area. (2002:243). My recruiting efforts focused exclusively on identifying and targeting

such information-rich cases – I specifically sought out individuals who I believed to be affiliated with and therefore knowledgeable about either the chronic illness, parent of exceptional child, fan or religious leader identity. I initially contacted individuals who I knew to be connected to these particular identities; while I was familiar with some of these individuals on a personal level, I just “knew of” others through my connections with family and friends. A total of seven informants were recruited in this manner, and despite the fact that we were already acquainted to some degree, we had never had any prior discussions about these target identities (Mullaney 2006:187). These early interviews with respondents who I knew in some capacity were extremely beneficial to my research; I considered these interviews my pretests, where I was able to fine-tune my interviewing skills in the comfort of a familiar audience. A total of forty-eight identity workers were interviewed for this project using this purposive, maximum variation sampling technique, and while neither comprehensive nor representative, this diverse, strategically selected, information-rich sample ideally suits a social pattern analysis.

The majority of my respondents were recruited through the assistance of family, friends and colleagues. I provided these individuals with an overview of my research and detailed screening requirements, and asked for the contact information of anyone they knew of who might qualify; twenty-seven of my participants were recruited in this fashion. I contacted and recruited the remaining fourteen respondents based on public information that I accessed that suggested that they might qualify to participate. I came across the social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, blogs) of seven of my informants online, two respondents appeared as the topics of cover stories of a local community

magazine, and I recruited five of the religious leaders by contacting them through information found on their church/synagogue websites.

Qualification requirements varied by group; for the chronic illness identity, qualified respondents were those who had received a diagnosis from a doctor, and who had been living with their illness for at least six months. In order to qualify for the parent of an exceptional child identity, an individual had to be the parent of either: a child who had been “officially” diagnosed or labeled with a particular condition (special needs), a child who had tested as gifted (gifted), or a child who was above average in ability in a particular area (talented). Unlike the objective measures that determined whether or not a parent met the requirements for the special needs and gifted categories, qualifying for the talented category was a subjective determination, as I decided whether or not the achievements of a particular child merited inclusion in the gifted category. The children of the three parents affiliated with this identity certainly demonstrated special talent; one child began writing musicals and performing in them at a very young age, has written numerous plays and musicals, produced plays in major cities and owns his own theater company; one is an All-American soccer player who, in her sophomore year of high school, received a scholarship to play soccer for a top-NCAA Division I soccer program, and one is an All-American Fencer who is nationally ranked. In order to meet the criteria for participation, those affiliated with the religious leader identity must have been active and certified or ordained to perform the official religious duties required of his or her particular religion and anyone self-identifying as a fan qualified for the fan identity.

A total of forty-eight qualified identity workers were recruited for this project, broken down by identity in the following way:

- 12 participants with chronic illness
- 16 parents of exceptional children
 - 11 Special Needs
 - 5 Gifted and Talented (2 gifted, 3 talented)
- 10 fans
- 10 religious leaders

The Participants

There were twenty-seven women and twenty-one men in the study, ranging in age from eighteen to seventy-nine. The vast majority of respondents identified as white (forty-two identified as white, six as African-American), and most were employed either part or full-time (thirty-nine respondents); six respondents did not work outside of the home, and three were retired. More than half of the respondents were married (thirty-one individuals), thirteen described themselves as single¹³, and four were divorced. These identity workers were a well-educated group; two of the respondents had earned a Ph.D., eleven reported a master's degree as their highest level of educational attainment, and twenty-one had earned a bachelor's degree. The remaining respondents reported either an associate's degree (four respondents), high-school diploma (eight respondents) or technical degree (two respondents) as their highest level of education. The vast majority of the respondents were living in New Jersey during the time of their interview (thirty-three respondents), while others lived in California, Delaware, Florida, Illinois, New York, Pennsylvania, South Dakota and the United Kingdom. In order to protect their confidentiality, I have selected pseudonyms for all study participants. Tables B.1 and B.2 provide the demographic information for each of the identity workers.

¹³ This includes the Roman Catholic priest who indicated that he is single/ordained

The Interview

For my research, I adopted Zerubavel's "analytic fieldwork" approach (1980), and as such, entered the field committed to a particular analytical perspective that that guided the direction of my interviews (30). My goal for this project was to speak to the formal patterns of doing identity that were abstracted from the reality in which they were situated, and Zerubavel argues that in order to achieve such a goal, researches must "develop and cultivate their analytical selectivity by studying only particular aspects or dimensions of concrete phenomena rather than their totality. In other words, they commit themselves to certain analytical foci" (1980:28, 32). Being less concerned with the totality of the reality being studied and focusing instead on particular empirical issues associated with it, researchers become sensitized, thus facilitating their ability to "see" formal patterns which might have gone unnoticed without such focus (Zerubavel 1980:31).

The discussion guide¹⁴ that I developed to use during my in-depth interviews reflected my "cognitive purpose" (Zerubavel 1980:28), that is, my desire to focus on one particular aspect of identity – the doing – rather than on identity in its totality. As such, the primary topic of discussion was identity work itself, and respondents were extensively queried about the specific details associated with their engagement in the key elements that constitute the doing of identity (i.e., the management of appearances, props, discourse, identity ecologies, association with others, revelation). Before delving into talk about these essential components of identity work, I opened each conversation by asking participants to share with me how it was that they came to be affiliated with their

¹⁴ See Appendix C for a copy of the Fan Identity Discussion Guide. With the exception of some minor wording changes to reflect the different identities, the same discussion guide was used for each identity group.

particular identities. And whether they were describing how they received the news of an illness diagnosis, when they realized that they were parenting an exceptional child, what drew them into a particular fandom or the moment they made the decision to serve their God, respondents openly and passionately shared their narratives, establishing ever-important rapport and affirming their status as information-rich cases. While the structure of these in-depth conversations were purposefully designed to focus on the key elements of identity work, the semi-structured format of the discussion guide allowed study participants to digress and discuss bring up other areas that were important to them; I happily engaged in these ancillary conversations, refocusing interviewees when appropriate. In addition to allowing for this flexibility, the semi-structured format of the discussion guide also established a level of comparability across the forty-eight interviews (Mullaney 2006:15).

Interviews were conducted between January 2016 and December 2018. I asked respondents to choose the location of our interviews, and they took place in my home, their homes, coffee shops and restaurants. The majority of the interviews were conducted in-person (thirty-six interviews), seven were conducted via Skype, and five were done over the phone. The interviews ranged in length from forty-five minutes to one hour and forty-five minutes, and all were audio-taped and transcribed with the full consent of the interviewees. I transcribed forty-three of the interviews, and spot-checked the five transcriptions done by a professional transcription service for accuracy by comparing major sections of the transcription with the audio recordings.

Analysis

Prior to beginning my formal data analysis, I had already become extremely intimate with the data through the interviewing and transcription processes. By the time each interview's transcription was finalized, I had listened to it in its entirety a minimum of three times – once during the course of the interview itself, and an additional two times (sometimes more) during transcription. This informal analysis enabled me to gain a very good overall feel for the data. Since I structured my data collection so that I was conducting interviews across the four identities rather than working through and exhausting the sample for a particular identity at a time, I was constantly comparing the content across unique cases. This constant comparative approach afforded me a much deeper understanding of my data (Patton 2002:56), as I began my formal data analysis.

With the assistance of NVivo, a qualitative data analysis software package, I began the process of open coding, where I once again reviewed transcripts multiple times on a line-by-line basis. During this process, I identified coding categories based on the recurring themes emerging from the data. Once these general themes were established, I reviewed and recoded all transcripts once again, focusing on the subthemes within the general categories. I then spent time analyzing how these codes/themes were related to one another, and finally wrote memos developing the themes and relationships identified during the coding process. Throughout my analysis of the data associated with these diverse identities, my “generic analytic lens” enabled me to recognize the common patterns of doing that transcended the identities themselves (Brekhus 2003:232). I believe this generic process of doing identity can be generalized to any identity regardless of type. For any identity that an individual is working towards, the way it is constructed,

maintained and integrated into his or her sense of self is fundamentally the same. We all reach into a standard identity work compartment of our cultural toolkit (Swidler 1986) to situate our places in the world.

Appendix B

Table B.1 Alphabetical Listing of Respondents

<u>Pseudonym</u>	<u>Identity Affiliation</u>	<u>Gender</u>	<u>Race</u>	<u>Age</u>
Anderson	My Little Pony	M	White	28
Anna	Reform Rabbi	F	White	33
Barbara	Special Needs Son (Asperger Syndrome)	F	White	49
Bob	Roman Catholic Priest	M	White	35
Brian	Epilepsy	M	White	42
Bruce	Gifted Sons	M	Black	52
Charles	Conservative Rabbi	M	White	69
Charlotte	Talented Daughter (Fencer)	F	White	38
Dan	Asthma	M	Black	23
Daphne	Multiple Sclerosis	F	White	50
David	Evangelical Christian Pastor	M	White	60
Dawn	Epilepsy	F	White	28
Elena	Harry Potter	F	Black	29
Emily	Special Needs Son (Tourette Syndrome)	F	White	42
Greg	Black Crowes (Music Group)	M	Black	57
Gustavo	Asthma	M	White	61
Heidi	Special Needs Son (Autism)	F	White	40
Jack	Special Needs Daughter (Type 1 Diabetes)	M	White	44
Jason	Esophageal Cancer	M	White	63
Jenelle	Talented Son (Musical Theater)	F	White	58
John	Greek Orthodox Priest	M	White	47
Joyce	Special Needs Daughter (Profoundly Disabled)	F	White	49
Kate	Ulcerative Colitis	F	White	22
Kathleen	Alternative Lifestyle (Sodomasochism)	F	White	50
Kristine	Gifted Son (Profoundly Gifted)	F	White	45
Landon	My Little Pony	M	White	30
Leah	Star Wars	F	White	43
Lexi	Anime	F	White	19
Linda	Non-Sport Trading Cards/Bobbin Head Dolls	F	White	79
Liz	Talented Daughter (Soccer Player)	F	White	50
MaryAnn	Special Needs Son (Autism)	F	White	54
Matt	Special Needs Daughter (Developmental Delays)	M	White	40
Maureen	Special Needs Son (Autism/Hirschsprung's Disease)	F	White	38
Max	Comic Books	M	White	22
Melissa	Baptist Minister	F	Black	31
Meredith	Breast Cancer	F	White	49
Michael	Pentecostal Pastor	M	White	31
Mitchell	Baptist Minister	M	Black	30
Nicholas	New York Mets (Baseball)	M	White	28
Olivia	Brain Cancer	F	White	60
Rachel	United Reform Minister	F	White	64
Rick	Diabetes	M	White	59
Ross	Special Needs Son (ADHD)	M	White	50
Shannon	Breast Cancer	F	White	50
Shari	Episcopal Priest	F	White	57
Stacy	Special Needs Daughter (Epilepsy/Developmental Delays)	F	White	49
Stan	Special Needs Son (Profoundly Disabled)	M	White	50
Sue	Cystic Fibrosis	F	White	50

Table B.2
Listing of Respondents by Identity Affiliation

<u>Pseudonym</u>	<u>Identity Affiliation</u> <u>Chronic Illness</u>	<u>Gender</u>	<u>Race</u>	<u>Age</u>
Brian	Epilepsy	M	White	42
Dan	Asthma	M	Black	23
Daphne	Multiple Sclerosis	F	White	50
Dawn	Epilepsy	F	White	28
Gustavo	Asthma	M	White	61
Jason	Esophageal Cancer	M	White	63
Kate	Ulcerative Colitis	F	White	22
Meredith	Breast Cancer	F	White	49
Olivia	Brain Cancer	F	White	60
Rick	Diabetes	M	White	59
Shannon	Breast Cancer	F	White	50
Sue	Cystic Fibrosis	F	White	50
<u>Parent of Exceptional Child</u>				
Barbara	Special Needs Son (Asperger Syndrome)	F	White	49
Bruce	Gifted Sons	M	Black	52
Charlotte	Gifted Daughter (Fencer)	F	White	38
Emily	Special Needs Son (Tourette Syndrome)	F	White	42
Heidi	Special Needs Son (Autism)	F	White	40
Jack	Special Needs Daughter (Type 1 Diabetes)	M	White	44
Jenelle	Talented Son (Musical Theater)	F	White	58
Joyce	Special Needs Daughter (Profoundly Disabled)	F	White	49
Kristine	Gifted Son (Profoundly Gifted)	F	White	45
Liz	Gifted Daughter (Soccer Player)	F	White	50
MaryAnn	Special Needs Son (Autism)	F	White	54
Matt	Special Needs Daughter (Developmental Delays)	M	White	40
Maureen	Special Needs Son (Autism/Hirschsprung's Disease)	F	White	38
Ross	Special Needs Son (ADHD)	M	White	50
Stacy	Special Needs Daughter (Epilepsy/Developmental Delays)	F	White	49
Stan	Special Needs Son (Profoundly Disabled)	M	White	50
<u>Fan</u>				
Anderson	My Little Pony	M	White	28
Elena	Harry Potter	F	Black	29
Greg	Black Crowes (Music Group)	M	Black	57
Kathleen	Alternative Lifestyle (Sadomasochism)	F	White	50
Landon	My Little Pony	M	White	30
Leah	Star Wars	F	White	43
Lexi	Anime	F	White	19
Linda	Non-Sport Trading Cards/Bobbin Head Dolls	F	White	79
Max	Comic Books	M	White	22
Nicholas	New York Mets (Baseball)	M	White	28
<u>Religious Leader</u>				
Anna	Reform Rabbi	F	White	33
Bob	Roman Catholic Priest	M	White	35
Charles	Conservative Rabbi	M	White	69
David	Evangelical Christian Pastor	M	White	60
John	Greek Orthodox Priest	M	White	47
Melissa	Baptist Minister	F	Black	31
Michael	Pentecostal Pastor	M	White	31
Mitchell	Baptist Minister	M	Black	30
Rachel	United Reform Minister	F	White	64
Shari	Episcopal Priest	F	White	57

Appendix C

Discussion Guide

Interview Guide: Fan Identity

Respondent ID#: _____

Identity Assignment: Fan Identity

Date: _____

Time Started: _____

As you know, this interview is part of my dissertation research that involves exploring the different identities people have. One of the identities I am interested in learning more about is the (BLANK) identity, which is why you have been invited to participate in this project.

We are going to be talking about a number of different topics today that are related to the role being a (BLANK) fan may or may not play in your identity. I am really interested in hearing your thoughts and opinions; there are no right or wrong answers to any of the questions I will be asking you today.

As we are discussing things, please feel free to tell me about any thoughts you might be having as they come up, even if it is not something that I have mentioned. We have a lot to cover today, so if I feel as if we are spending too much time on one question or on one particular area, I may have to move us along. Please do not think that I am not interested in what you are saying, it's just that I don't want to miss out on any questions that come later. At the end of each section and at the end of our talk, I will ask you if you have anything additional to add, so we will have the opportunity to come back to things later.

And I just want to remind you once again that everything we discuss will remain completely anonymous and confidential; your name will never be associated with any of the information that you provide here today, and you will never be identified as a participant in this project.

IDEN1. I would like to begin by asking a very general question, and that is, what does "identity" mean to you?

Section I: Background

Background Questions

We are now going to focus specifically on your (IDENTITY), and I would like to start by asking you some general questions about your being a (BLANK) fan.

BF1. First, what does it mean to you to be a (BLANK) fan?

BF2. How long have you considered yourself (BLANK) fan?

BF3. How is it that you came to be a (BLANK) fan? What attracted you to (BLANK)?

BF4. Why do you consider yourself a (BLANK) fan, what is it that you do that makes you feel this way?

Appearance Questions

There are a number of different things that might play a role in someone being associated with a particular identity. The first topic that I would like to discuss is personal appearance. Personal appearances can be very important to identities, and it has been said that an individual's appearance "announces" who he or she is.

A1. Is there/has there been anything about your appearance that you feel "announces" you as a (IDENTITY)? Tell me more about that.

A2. What kinds of things, if any, do you do or have you done to your appearance to demonstrate that you are a (BLANK) fan? For example, things like clothing and accessories can have an impact on the way people look. Sometimes individuals may wear and use (IDENTITY)-related clothing and merchandise such as jewelry to impact the way they look. Do you currently wear any (IDENTITY)-related clothing or merchandise, or have you ever done so?

A2A. How did you/do you typically obtain items such as these that are necessary for or related to (IDENTITY)? Do you buy them for yourself? Do others buy them for you? Are they purchased without your requesting them?

A3. Why do you do/wear these types of items?

A4. And how does it make you feel when you are wearing/using/doing these things that are related to you being a (BLANK) fan?

A5. Thinking about affecting your appearance so that you appear like a (BLANK) fan, does this vary depending on where you are? IF YES: Tell me more about that. Are there places where you are more/less likely to try to look like (BLANK) fan?

A6. Does it vary according to the particulars of the situations you happen to be in? IF YES: Tell me more about that. Are there certain situations where you are more/less likely to try to look like (BLANK) fan?

A7. And does it vary depending on the time? For example, depending on what time of day or year it is? IF YES: Tell me more about that. Are there certain times when you are more/less likely to try to look like (BLANK) fan?

A8. Does it vary depending on the different people or groups of people you happen to be around? IF YES: Tell me more about that. Are there certain people that you try to look more/less like (BLANK) fan when you are around them?

A9. How does the way you adjust your appearance to look like a (BLANK) fan compare to how you might do so for the other things that are important to you?

(USE SCENARIO PROBES AT THIS TIME IF ABOVE QUESTIONING DID NOT ELICIT KEY AREAS).

A10. Have you ever used your appearance to try to "hide" the fact that you are a (BLANK) fan? IF YES: Please tell me about that.

A11. Have you ever used your appearance to “play up” the fact that you are a (BLANK) fan? IF YES: Please tell me about that.

A12. Have you ever been embarrassed, upset, angry or uncomfortable when someone identified you as a (BLANK) fan? Tell me about that. What happened? Why did you feel this way?

A13. Have you ever been relieved, pleased, proud or excited when someone identified you as a (BLANK) fan? Tell me about that. What happened? Why did you feel this way?

A14./A15. What role, if any, does appearance play in your identity as a (IDENTITY)? How does appearance relate to the identity?

A16. Is there anything else you would like to mention about your appearance as it relates to your (IDENTITY)?

Section III: Props

I'd now like to move on and talk about some other elements that might be important to the role being a (BLANK) fan plays in your identity. Besides things that affect your appearance, there are many items that you might use that are necessary for or associated with your (IDENTITY). For example, this could include things like (INSERT RELEVANT PROP EXAMPLES). I am interested in learning about anything at all that you might use that your feel is related to your being a (BLANK) fan.

P1. Tell me about the objects or props that you use that are necessary for or connected to your (IDENTITY) in some way.

FOR EACH GENERAL CATEGORY OF ITEMS, ASK:

P2. Tell me about why and how you use (BLANK) in general.

P3. How often do you use (BLANK)?

P4. How do you feel when you are using these items that are related to your (IDENTITY)?

P5. Does the way you use (BLANK) vary depending on where you are? IF YES: Tell me more about that. Are there certain places where you are more/less likely to use these types of items?

P6. Does it vary according to the particulars of the situations you happen to be in? IF YES: Tell me more about that. Are you more/less likely to use these types of items in certain situations?

P7. And does it vary depending on the time? For example, depending on what time of day or year it is? IF YES: Tell me more about that. Are you more/less likely to use these types of items at certain times?

P8. Does your use of these items vary depending on the different people or groups of people you happen to be around? IF YES: Tell me more about that. Are you more/less likely to use these items around certain people?

(USE SCENARIO PROBES AT THIS TIME IF ABOVE QUESTIONING DID NOT ELICIT KEY AREAS).

P8a. How does your use of props related to being a (BLANK) fan compare to your use of props associated with other things that are important to you?

P9. Where do you tend to keep or store these items? *(IF NECESSARY: Do you keep them in your home? Office? School? In your car?)*

FOR EACH GENERAL SETTING, ASK:

P10. How are these items organized or arranged at/in (SETTING)? Do you keep them in special places there, or are they found throughout the (SETTING)? (PROBE TO DETERMINE, SPECIFIC ROOMS, SPECIFIC PARTS OF ROOMS, ETC.)

P11. Tell me about your decisions to keep/store the items like this.

P12. How did you/do you typically obtain items such as these that are necessary for or related to (IDENTITY)? Do you buy them for yourself? Do others buy them for you? Are they purchased without your requesting them?

P13. How often do you obtain new items? How do you feel when you obtain new items?

P14. Have you ever made an effort to hide/conceal your (IDENTITY)-related props? IF YES: Please tell me about that.

P15. Have you made an effort to bring attention to your (IDENTITY)-related props? IF YES: Please tell me about that.

P16/P17. What role, if any, do props play in your identity as a (IDENTITY)? How does appearance relate to the identity?

P18. Is there anything else you would like to mention about the objects you have and use and how they relate to your being (IDENTITY)?

Section IV: Discourse

Another important part of being (IDENTITY) might involve talking about it with others. I am interested in learning more about the conversations you have with others about (IDENTITY). For example, I am interested in things like who you talk to, what you talk about and when and where these conversations take place.

D1. Do you have conversations with anyone at all about (IDENTITY)?
(IF NO, ENSURE THAT THIS IS THE CASE...*So you don't speak with a significant other, your doctors, people on-line, etc.? IF HARD NO, SKIP TO SECTION V*)

D2. Who do you tend to talk to about (IDENTITY)? (PROBE FOR A VARIETY OF CATEGORIES)

D2a. How do these conversations about (IDENTITY) tend to come up? Do you usually initiate them? Do others bring it up? Do they come up naturally during the course of conversation? Are you comfortable with this?

D2b. What types of things do you talk about with (BLANK) regarding your (IDENTITY)? How much detail do you go into? Are there particulars that you rarely discuss or avoid discussing with (BLANK)? That you only discuss with (BLANK)? Why is that?

D3. How often do you find yourself engaged in conversations about (IDENTITY)? Are you comfortable with this? Would you like to participate in more conversations about (IDENTITY), fewer conversations, or are you comfortable with how often you talk about (IDENTITY)?

D3a. Do you spend more time, less time or about the same amount of time talking about (IDENTITY) as you spend talking about other areas of your life that are important to you?

D4. Does whether or not you have conversations regarding (BLANK) vary depending on where you are? IF YES: Tell me more about that. Are there certain places where you are more/less likely to talk about (IDENTITY)?

D5. Does it vary according to the particulars of the situations you happen to be in? IF YES: Tell me more about that. Are there certain situations where you are more/less likely to talk about (IDENTITY)?

D6. And does it vary depending on the time? For example, depending on what time of day or year it is? IF YES: Tell me more about that. Are there certain times when you are more/less likely to talk about (IDENTITY)?

(USE SCENARIO PROBES AT THIS TIME IF ABOVE QUESTIONING DID NOT ELICIT KEY AREAS).

D7. Have you ever intentionally brought up the fact that you are (IDENTITY) when the subject was not being discussed at the time? Tell me about that. When are you most/least likely to do this?

D8. Have you ever intentionally NOT brought up the fact that you are (IDENTITY) when the subject has come up during a conversation that you were a part of? Tell me about that. When are you most/least likely to NOT bring (IDENTITY) up?

D9. Have you ever felt embarrassed, upset, angry or uncomfortable when someone else started talking about your (IDENTITY)? What happened? Why did you feel this way?

D9a. Have you ever been angry or upset when someone did not ask about your (IDENTITY) during the course of a conversation?

D10. Have you ever been relieved, pleased, proud or excited when someone else started talking about your (IDENTITY)? What happened? Why did you feel this way?

D11./D12 What role, if any, does discourse/conversation play in your identity as a (IDENTITY)? How does discourse/conversation relate to the identity?

D13. Is there anything else you would like to mention about how talking relates to your being (IDENTITY)?

Section V: Identity Settings (and the Activities the Inspire)

The next topic I would like to discuss focuses on the places that you go to and the activities you participate in that are related to you being (IDENTITY). For example, this could include places that you are required to go such as (INSERT INVOLUNTARY IDENTITY-RELATED ACTIVITIES), as well as places you choose to go such as (INSERT VOLUNTARY IDENTITY-RELATED ACTIVITIES). Or, it could involve other activities that don't require your going to particular places, such as reading or watching programs related to (IDENTITY).

IS1. What types of places do you go to or activities do you participate in that are related to (IDENTITY)? Do you belong to any (IDENTITY)-related organizations? (PROBE WITH IDENTITY-RELATED SETTINGS IF NECESSARY. NOT LOOKING FOR VIRTUAL ACTIVITIES HERE – WILL BE DISCUSSED IN THE NEXT SECTION).

FOR EACH:

IS2. What is your main reason for attending/participating in (BLANK)?

IS3. How often do you attend/participate in (BLANK)? Would you like to participate more in this type of thing, less, or do you feel comfortable with how often you participate?

IS4. Do you spend more time, less time or about the same amount of time attending/participating in activities such as these that are related to (IDENTITY) as you do for the other areas of your life that are not related to (IDENTITY)?

IS5. And what is your level of involvement in (BLANK)? (*Probe for things like leadership or supervisory roles, organizer, fundraising roles, contribute money, or simple participant*).

IS6. And do you participate in a similar way for those activities that you are involved in that are not related to your (IDENTITY)?

IS7. Do you tend to participate in these types of things alone, or does someone usually join you? IF WITH SOMEONE: Who typically accompanies you? Are they also (IDENTITY)?

IS8. How does participating in (ACTIVITY) make you feel?

IS9. Who, if anyone, do you talk with about your experiences at (ACTIVITY)? Are they also (IDENTITY)? What do you discuss?

IS10. What types of virtual places do you visit and participate in that are related to (IDENTITY)? For example, do you participate in any online- (INSERT IDENTITY-RELATED ITEMS), or host a blog or webpage that is dedicated to (IDENTITY)?

FOR EACH SETTING ASK:

IS11. How often do you participate in (ACTIVITY)? Would you like to participate more in this type of thing, less, or do you feel comfortable with how often you participate?

IS12. Do you spend more time, less time or about the same amount of time in virtual places doing virtual activities that are related to (IDENTITY) as you do for other areas of your life that are not related to (IDENTITY)?

IS13. And what is your level of involvement in (ACTIVITY)? (*Probe for things like leadership or supervisory roles, organizer, fundraising roles, contribute money, or simple participant*).

IS14. And do you participate in a similar way for those activities that you are involved in that are not related to your (IDENTITY)?

IS15. What are the main reasons for your participation in these places and activities related to (IDENTITY)?

IS16. Do you tend to these types of things alone, or does someone usually join you? IF WITH SOMEONE: Who typically accompanies you? Are they also (IDENTITY)?

IS17. How does participating in (ACTIVITY) make you feel?

IS18. Who, if anyone, do you talk with about your experiences at (ACTIVITY)? Are they also (IDENTITY)? What do you discuss?

IS18a. From where do you participate in these activities? Home computer/laptop? Portable laptop? Tablet device? Mobile phone?

IS19. FOR THOSE HOSTING A BLOG/WEBSITE: Please tell me about your (BLANK). Is access to it open to anyone, or do you have to be registered to view it? What types of things do you discuss? Do you post pictures? How often do you post material? During a typical day/week, how much time do you spend on your (BLOG/WEBSITE)?

IS19a. Do you host any other blogs/websites NOT related to your (IDENTITY)? Tell me about that? What types of things do you discuss? Do you post pictures? How often do you post material? During a typical day/week, how much time do you spend on your (BLOG/WEBSITE)? How does your participation in this compare to your participation in your (IDENTITY-RELATED) blog/website?

IS20. Do you have any type of social media accounts? Which ones? (*Probe: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, Pinterest, Linkedin, Vine, etc.*). Are they public or private?

IS21. Do you ever share information about (IDENTITY) on these sites? IF YES: Tell me about the kinds of things you share. How often do you share this kind of information? During a typical day/week, how much time do you spend posting about (IDENTITY)? Do you post pictures? Of what?

IS22. Are any of these accounts devoted exclusively to (IDENTITY)? IF YES: Which ones? Tell me about the kinds of things you share there. How often do you post material? During a typical day/week, how much time do you spend on (BLANK)? Do you post pictures? Of what?

IS23. Do you visit the sites of other people who are (IDENTITY)? Do you typically just read while at these sites or do you also comment/post material? What types of things do you comment/post about? How much time do you spend visiting the sites of other (IDENTITY) sites?

IS24. How do your activities on social media related to (IDENTITY) compare to what your activities related to other areas of your life not associated with (IDENTITY)? Are they similar? How? Are they different, how?

IS25./IS26.. What role, if any, does participating in activities such as these play in your identity as a (IDENTITY)? How does this participation relate to the identity?

IS27. Is there anything else you would like to mention about participating in activities such as these as they relate to your being (IDENTITY)?

IS28. Are there any places you visit or organizations you belong to (real or virtual) that are **not at all** related to (IDENTITY)? IF YES: Tell me about your participation in them. Do you specifically seek these types of places out or are you required to visit/participate in them? Do the individuals you associate with there know that you are (IDENTITY)? How do you as a (IDENTITY) tend to behave in these non- (IDENTITY) places?

Section VI: Selective Association with Others

I would now like to talk about the people that you typically associate with.

SA1. Do the people you spend **most** of your time with happen to be (IDENTITY)? (IF YES, SKIP TO SA2. IF NO, CONTINUE WITH SA1a)

SA1a. Do you **ever** spend time with other (IDENTITY)? (IF YES, SKIP TO SA2, IF NO, CONTINUE): Why don't you spend time with other (IDENTITY)? How does it feel when you happen to be around other (IDENTITY)?

SA1b. Would you like to spend time with these types of people? Do you see yourself spending time with these types of people in the future? Why or why not?

SA1c What might be some of the advantages/positive things about spending time with other (IDENTITY)? Disadvantages/negative things? **(SKIP TO SA13)**

SA2. Why do you spend time with other (IDENTITY)?

SA3. How frequently do you interact with them? Tell me more about that. When do you spend time with them? Where? What types of things do you do?

SA4. How do you feel about the amount of time that you spend with other (IDENTITY)? Do you feel as if you spend too much time with them, not enough time with them, or just the right amount of time with them?

SA5. Do you specifically seek out the company/friendship of other (IDENTITY)? Why or why not? Do you ever avoid the company of other (IDENTITY)? Please tell me about that.

SA6. How does it make you feel with you are with other (IDENTITY)?

SA7. What are some of the advantages/positive things about spending time with other (IDENTITY)?

SA8. What are some of the disadvantages/negative things about spending time with other (IDENTITY)?

SA9. Tell me about the time you spend with people who are not (IDENTITY).

SA10. Why do you spend time with individuals who are not (IDENTITY)?

SA11. How frequently do you interact with them? Tell me more about that. When do you spend time with them? Where? What types of things do you do?

SA12. How do you feel about the amount of time that you spend with people who are not (IDENTITY)? Do you feel as if you spend too much time with them, not enough time with them, or just the right amount of time with them?

SA13. Do you specifically seek out the company/friendship of people who are not (IDENTITY)? Why or why not? Do you ever avoid the company of other (IDENTITY)? Please tell me about that.

SA14. How does it make you feel with you are with people who are not (IDENTITY)?

SA15. What are some of the advantages/positive things about spending time with people who are not (IDENTITY)?

SA16. What are some of the disadvantages/negative things about spending time with people who are not (IDENTITY)?

S17./S18. What role, if any, does spending time with other (IDENTITY) play in your identity as a (IDENTITY)? How does appearance relate to the identity?

SA19. Is there anything else you would like to mention about spending time with other (IDENTITY) as it relates to your being (IDENTITY)?

Section VII: Identity Centrality and Summary Questions

I have just a few more final questions about how you see yourself in relation to (IDENTITY).

ICS1. Thinking about your current identity, how much would you say that your current identity is centered around (BLANK)? Would you say your current identity is totally centered around (BLANK), greatly centered around (BLANK), moderately centered around (BLANK), slightly centered around (BLANK) or not at all centered around (BLANK)?

- _____ Totally
- _____ Greatly
- _____ Moderately
- _____ Slightly
- _____ Not at all

ICS2. Think about the following statement: "When I think about who I am, I think about being (IDENTITY)." How much do you agree or disagree with this statement? Would you say that you:

- _____ Completely agree with the statement,
- _____ Somewhat agree with the statement,
- _____ Neither agree nor disagree with the statement,
- _____ Somewhat disagree with the statement, or
- _____ Completely disagree with the statement?

ICS3. Now, please think about this statement: "When other people think about who I am, they think about me being (IDENTITY)." How much do you agree or disagree with this statement? Would you say that you:

- _____ Completely agree with the statement,
- _____ Somewhat agree with the statement,
- _____ Neither agree nor disagree with the statement,
- _____ Somewhat disagree with the statement, or
- _____ Completely disagree with the statement?

ICS4. When you think about your current identity, what else, if anything, comes to mind besides (IDENTITY)? What else makes up who you are?

ICS5. Is there anything at all you would like to add?

Section VIII: Demographics

I have a few questions for classification purposes only if you could take a few minutes to answer them. Again, you do not have to respond to any questions that make you uncomfortable (HAND DEMOGRAPHIC SHEET TO RESPONDENT)

Those are all of the questions I have for you today! Thank you so much for your time and cooperation!!

Time Ended: _____ Elapsed Time: _____

ID: _____

DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS

D1. What is your birthdate? Month: _____ Date: _____ Year: _____

D2. How do you describe yourself?

- _____ Asian/ Pacific Islander
- _____ Black or African American
- _____ Hispanic or Latino
- _____ Native American or American Indian
- _____ White
- _____ Other: _____

D3. Are you currently...

- _____ Single, never married
- _____ Married or domestic partnership
- _____ Widowed
- _____ Divorced
- _____ Separated
- _____ Other: _____

D4. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

- _____ Some high school
- _____ High school graduate or equivalent (GED)
- _____ Trade/technical/vocational training
- _____ Some college
- _____ Associate's Degree
- _____ Bachelor's Degree
- _____ Some postgraduate work
- _____ Master's Degree
- _____ Professional Degree
- _____ Doctorate
- _____ Other: _____

D5. Are you currently...

- _____ Employed part-time
- _____ Employed full-time
- _____ Self-employed
- _____ Out of work and looking for work
- _____ Out of work but not looking for work
- _____ Homemaker
- _____ Student
- _____ Military
- _____ Retired
- _____ Unable to work
- _____ Other: _____

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