Bordering processes for youth with non-binary genders - A feminist relational discourse analysis

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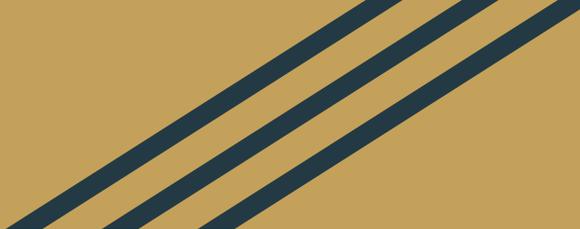
Outline of the presentation

→ Set the scene for non-binary literature

→ Why feminist relational discourse analysis?

→ Considering some initial analysis

Non-binary genders - what do we know?

Goldberg & Kuvalanka (2018) - compelled to be educators, wanting recognition and wishing to avoid scrutiny that comes with self-advocacy

Richards et al. (2016) - expression of non-binary identification through: stretching; diversifying gender; dissolution or negation of sex difference and creating ambiguity

Travers (2018) - resources to support trans and non-binary youth are unevenly distributed

Ehrensaft (2017) - affirmative approach as 'best practice' for supporting non-binary (and trans) youth

Border theory

"... the process of bordering, through which territories and people are respectively included or excluded within a hierarchical network of groups, affiliations and identities" (Newman, 2003).

Borders as institutions, governing the extent of inclusion and exclusion, the degree of permeability and the laws governing trans-boundary movement.

What kinds of bordering processes do youth with non-binary genders experience?

Feminist relational discourse analysis (FRDA) - (Thompson et al., 2018)

Justification for FRDA

- Discourse analysis - a useful way for exploring power and identity
- Desire to capture power relations that operate around non-binary youth (bordering processes)
- The process itself is a discursive practice - researcher translating voices of participants into theoretical account(s)
  - Power relations set up by this process can work to obscure the voices of those already marginalised (non-binary youth)
  - Absence of first-hand experiences of the participants within broad discursive accounts
- FRDA as an approach to capture both experience and discourse simultaneously

FRDA - an outline of the process

Phase 1 - Poststructuralist discourse analysis

1. Reading and listening to the talk
2. "Chunking" talk into sections
3. Labelling chunks of talk with descriptive codes
4. Identifying recurring codes or in-vivo themes
5. Identifying discourses
6. Identifying discursive patterns
7. Theoretical accounting - identifying discursive realms

Phase 2 - Analysing emergent voices in relation to discourses

1. Multiple listenings
2. Generating I poems
3. Listening for contrapuntal voices
4. Putting the personal in the political

Phase 1 - discourse analysis

Identifying discourses - non-binary expectations are unrealistic, gender presentation is difficult to negotiate, presentation should feel comfortable, presentation must be non-conforming in political climate, find your own style/be an individual

"You've got to find your own way of doing it that makes you happy" (P2, 555-556)

"You've got to dress in the way that you're not going to get you know like bullied" (P2, 561-562)

"A lot of it is understanding that I will get you know called a freak... weird looks in the middle of the street" (P1, 117-119)

Discursive patterns - discourses around non-binary genders and visibility that oppress youth in order to keep them marginalised e.g. being visible is a difficult negotiation fits with discourses of *expectation of androgyny, desire for individuality, need for recognition*

Overarching discursive pattern of - ***navigating becoming visible as a non-binary youth***

Phase 1 - discourse analysis

Theoretical accounting -

- Expectations of androgyny as a way to reterritorialise non-binary genders, a way to regulate these youth to ensure they are readable by society/institutions (Deleuze & Guattari)
- Reproduction of need to be classifiable, to be read, cultural intelligibility, to fit within colonial constructs of gender (Butler)
- Borderlands (Callis) that non-binary genders as emerging through the cracks within binary, cisgender, heterosexual society - impossibility of youth 'escaping' this framing?
- Imposing structural and cultural normativities onto non-binary visibility - androgyny as white, able-bodied, slim, often masculinised…

Phase 2 - I poems

118 – I will get you know called a freak and I have done it happens

119 – I will get weird looks in the middle of the street

557 – I physically on my jacket I have a patch that says they them

560 – I want to be seen I want to be known

695 – I am non-binary but I do gender nonconformity

702 – I think it to be non-conforming is authentically me

704 – I think you know a lot of being non-binary in the current political moment has to be it's in some way non-conformist to have an effect

706 – (Presenting) myself in a way where people are confused when they look at me as to where I fit

713 – I guess authentic for me means being existing in a way where people don't know where I fit

733 – I guess for me authenticity means visibility it also means not being quiet about the problems that I experience

163 – (What if) I look a bit like a boy today

164 – (What if) I look a bit gay today

553 – You can't force yourself to be exactly like any of these people

555 – You've got to find your own way of doing it

561 – I think with like dress with outfits in some places you've got to dress in the way that you're not going to get bullied

564 – (What) I want to look like can be very difficult

604 – I had to find the perfect outfit the perfect way of getting across that…

605 – I don't care what anyone thinks

606 – (The only thing) I was thinking about

Some *working* thoughts…

No clear theoretical account of the analysis… yet… in progress.

Non-binary youth are drawing on available and accessible resources to be able to increase their visibility within society whilst resisting categorisation (issues of lack of autonomy, inability to access some resources, positioning of youth as 'phase', neo-languages, marker options, appearance)

Binary normative structures that surround these youth and a lack of legal recognition are 'forcing' these youth to a) collectively distinguish themselves from binary identities and also to be categorically distinguishable from binary trans genders in order to be legitimately recognised b) negotiate the creation of a cultural script(s) as a way of being recognisable and readable within society

Thanks for listening!
Happy to take any questions.

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