
Packers, Binders, Dino-Dresses, and Rainbow Bikini Tops: Transforming the City through Craftivism

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Résumé

What happens if you are a trans* person, and you do not have access to the supplies or accessories you need to fully adopt the gender identity of your choice? This issue of access could be linked to the availability of these supplies to you locally, your economic resources, or your social liberty. In a dynamic metropolitan context, it may be easier to procure packers and binders, or to shop openly for clothing and lingerie in a section some may view off limits to you. But, in some smaller cityscapes, procuring trans accessories could be difficult, and in rural settings, where perhaps the only store available is Wal-Mart, it may seem impossible. The virtual space of Internet shopping provides access to some of these accessories, but on-line purchases require financial resources, and they are not entirely private, therefore making them risky for some people.

However, there is another Internet space that provides an alternative: some social media groups provide inspiration, patterns, and emotional support for making your own packers and binders, in addition to adapting patterns for dresses and lingerie to a variety of body types. Many parents are dealing with the question of how to create gender fluid clothing for their children-either CIS children who prefer clothing motifs deemed in opposition to their gender (girls wanting dinosaur dresses, or boys wanting princess shorts and T-shirts), or children wanting to wear or sew outfits that do not conform to society's set binary idea of how a girl or boy should dress. The social media groups are also a place to share patterns and ideas for annual PRIDE parades, with many rainbow motifs and patterns being circulated among trans* and CIS ally members who are preparing to meet up in person.

Furthermore, these groups, which are often closed to the general public, create a safe space of transition for their members and for parents to post "proud" photos of their children dressed in ways deemed inappropriate elsewhere. Although the groups are made up of members from all over the gender continuum, they promote a policy of respecting preferred pronouns, encouraging members to post as such. Sometimes, birth announcements are shared when a person declares their new gender, emphasizing the point of transition in their life. And, perhaps the strongest way in which these groups are an ally to the transitioning population is that they make it possible to create desired accessories using what people already have on hand or what can be easily procured in a mainstream store.

The goal of this study is to analyze how trans* and queer people, along with allies, create their own place in society through the virtual space of DIY sewing and crafting social media groups. More precisely, we will investigate how the factors of class and geographic location (urban vs. rural settings) impact the need for (or desire to) make the accessories

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rather than purchase them on-line. Finally, we will examine how the virtual space generates activism that impacts the georeferential (mappable) space of the cityscape, often resulting in the establishment of trans* friendly crafting locales. In this way, the closed social media groups function as a means to *transform* the city through craftivism.

Theoretical Frameworks:

Spatial Approaches:

Lynda Johnston and Robyn Longhurst, *Space, Place, and Sex: Geographies of Sexualities*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2010.

Doreen Massey, *Space, Place, and Gender*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1994.

Linda McDowell, *Gender, Identity, and Place: Understanding Feminist Geographies*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999.

Gillian Rose, *Feminism and geography: the limits of geographical knowledge*. Oxford: Polity Press, 1993.

Bertrand Westphal, ed. *La géocritique mode d'emploi*. Limoges: UP, 2000.

—. *La géocritique: Réel, fiction, espace*. Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 2007.

Feminist Approaches:

Chris Bobel and Judith Lorber. *New Blood: Third-Wave Feminism and the Politics of Menstruation*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2005.

Colleen Denney, *The Visual Culture of Women's Activism in London, Paris and Beyond: An Analytical Art History, 1860 to the Present*. Jefferson : Mcfarland, 2018.

Nicola Rivers, *Postfeminism(s) and the Arrival of the Fourth Wave: Turning Tides*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2017.

(In addition to these sources, I work under the influence of Hélène Cixous and Luce Irigaray, like many American Feminists studying in the 1990s.)

Trans* and Queer Theories:

Patrizia Gentile, Gary Kinsman, and L. Pauline Rankin, *We still demand!: Redefining Resistance in Sex and Gender Struggles*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2017.

Judith Halberstam, *Trans*: A Quick and Quirky Account of Gender Variability*. Oakland: University of California Press, 2018.

Elahe Haschemi Yekani, Eveline Kilian, and Beatrice Michaelis, eds. *Queer futures: Reconsidering Ethics, Activism, and the Political*. Farnham: Ashgate, 2013.

Liz Montegary, *Familiar Perversions: The Racial, Sexual, and Economic Politics of LGBT Families*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2018.

Lisa M. Stulberg, *LGBTQ Social Movements*. Oxford: Polity Press, 2018.

Corpus:

Social Media Posts from craftivism groups, such as Mildly Offensive Fiber Artists (MOFA), Stitchers with Anxiety, and Millennial Needlecrafters, with a focus on North American mem-

bers.

Biographic Note:

Amy D. Wells holds a double Ph.D. in American Literature from Texas Tech University and the Université de Limoges. Associate Professor at the Université de Caen Normandie since 2012, she teaches American Literature, Civilization, and English for Digital Humanities. Her research interests are Women's Studies, Geocriticism, Modernism, and Craftivism. Recent publications include "Liberté, Francophonie, Sexualité: Cinq écrivaines américaines en Normandie dans l'entre-deux guerres" (Éditions La Gronde, 2019); "Feminist Geocritical Activism: Natalie Barney's writing of women's spaces into women's places," *The Routledge Handbook of Literature and Space*, Robert Tally, ed., (Routledge 2017). She is co-editor of the essay collection *Déclinaisons des espaces féminins de l'après-conflit* (PULIM 2016) and guest editor of volume 3.1 of *The Arts of War and Peace*. She is president of the Association Nationale des Langues Etrangères Appliquées (ANLEA), and treasurer of the Société des anglicistes sur les femmes, le sexe et le genre (SAGEF).

Mots-Clés: craftivism