

COMPONENTS OF BODY EGO TRANSFORMATION
LINKED TO FEMALE HOMOEROTICISM:
AN EXPLORATORY AND QUALITATIVE STUDY

by

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A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Psychology in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York.

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Psychology in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Abstract
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This is a qualitative, exploratory study of body ego transformation. Eight components of transformation were arrived at from this researcher's own experience, observations of other females, and identified in psychoanalytic literature. These were then explored in the projective and narrative responses from lesbian, bisexual and queer identified women about their female homoerotic experiences. Nine women ages 25-35 were recruited and interviewed in two sessions using phenomenological methodology. An original projective and semi-structured interview was created to elicit participants' unencumbered responses about their experiences of homoeroticism, so as to minimize the effect of external expectations that might color them. Participants were asked to respond to prompts about erotic parts of their body in a projective format. Subsequently, they were asked to describe their homoerotic thoughts, fantasies, and behaviors across their lifespan. Two women's interviews were chosen based on the presence of substantive, multilayered responses and narrative construction, evidence of a transformation of body ego, and their ability to shed light on the quality of other participant's transformations. These two participants' responses were analyzed in-depth. Speculated components of transformation were identified using psychoanalytic understandings of metaphor and basic principles of Rorschach Inkblot Methodology (RIM). All eight components were cited varying

in frequency, intensity, and significance. Components were employed in common and unique ways. The variations in how component were used seemed to reflect participants' life experiences and personality style. Although this was a small sample, the findings indicated that eroticism is a regressive experience from which transformation of body ego can occur.

Keywords: body ego, transformation, female homoeroticism, phenomenology

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Crazy Jane Talks with the Bishop

I MET the Bishop on the road

And much said he and I.

‘Those veins soon must be dry;

Live in a heavenly mansion,

Not in some foul sty.’

‘Fair and foul near of kin,

And fair needs foul,’ I cried.

‘My friends are gone, but that’s a truth

Nor grave nor bed denied,

Learned in bodily lowliness

And in the heart’s pride.’

‘A woman can be proud and stiff

When on love intent;

But love has pitched his mansion in

The place of excrement;

For nothing can be sole or whole

That has not been rent.’

William Butler Yeats (1996, pp. 148-9)

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Similar to Yeats' Crazy Jane, Freud wanted sexuality to be opened up, examined, and better understood. He also believed the id and unconscious were the regressed realms from which erotic sensations, feelings, and behaviors originate, not the ego. In the first essay of Freud's theory of sexuality (1905 SE in 1975), he called for sexuality to be investigated further believing it played an extraordinary, even pivotal, role in human development. This researcher thought the same and sought to provide some of this needed research on sexuality in this dissertation.

For more than a century, sexuality has been a serious topic in clinical psychology and beyond. Efforts have been made in the physical sciences, including neuroscience and endocrinology, as well as the social sciences and cultural studies, such as sociology, philosophy, feminist studies and queer theory. Many within these disciplines as well as non-academics have come to be identified as sex researchers and sexologists with the purpose of understanding sexuality better. These writers, researchers, clinicians, and theorists spanning the last century concur: sexuality is central to being human, presents in many forms, but it is not yet fully understood.

One hundred years after Freud, Nancy Chodorow (1999) wrote:

We know that sexuality in all forms—as identity, behavior, fantasy, drive, passion, physical sensation, ways of relating—is unique among human experiences and central to life. Yet this same sexuality in all its forms remains for psychoanalysts, as for everyone else, basically mysterious as we try to define it and describe its contours and significance.

(p. vii)

Others similarly emphasized sexuality as having a fundamental role in the experience of being

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human. Reich (1942) “equat[ed] *it* to with all-inclusive life-energy” (in Mitchell, 1974, p. 317) and Person (1980) believed sexuality was “the true individual core ...maintain[ing] a unique position in psychic development” (pp. 60-61). These statements highlight the serious role that sexuality plays in our lives and behoove us to continue the study of sexuality in new and perhaps less conventional ways.

First person narratives, often found in literature, poetry, and song lyrics, speak frankly in rich, detailed ways about sexuality. Yeats’ 1933 poem about Crazy Jane is one such example. First person narrative research of sexuality has rarely been done. This researcher believed this might provide inroads into what Chodorow (1999) called sexuality’s “contours and significance” (p. vii).

Early in the century, psychoanalytic literature was derived from case studies of patients, self-narratives of writers and theoretical conversations and observations of peers. This literature by Freud and others has surely been landmark, as it introduced Western Culture to the idea of sexuality as a reasonable topic of serious study. Given Victorian sensibilities and the woman’s movement, Freud’s writings have been both praised and criticized for their sexual content, the particular assertions he made, and the empirically unproven beliefs put forth. It is important to keep in mind that much of his ideas have not been disproved and may still have merit.

After much psychoanalytic efforts to understand sexuality, two well-known researchers conducted phenomenological studies of participants, collecting empirical data on sexuality. Notably, these researchers were not psychologists or psychoanalysts. They were Kinsey, Pomeroy, and Martin (1948, 1953) and Masters and Johnson (1966, 1970). Kinsey, et al. (1948, 1958) did pioneering research, resulting in his treatise on sexual orientation as a continuum and

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not discrete categories of heterosexual or homosexual as had been previously thought. Masters' and Johnson's (1966, 1970) direct observations of the human sexual response in the laboratory presented invaluable findings that proved women had the capacity for multiple orgasms and debunked long held erroneous beliefs about differences between clitoral and vaginal orgasms. These researchers' findings are now commonly understood tenets of women's sexuality. Further empirical, quantitative research then dominated the field's efforts to understand sexuality, particularly homosexuality, for the much of the 20th Century.

More recently, philosophers Einstein and Flanagan (2003) explained their understanding of "the sexual self" (p. 22) as derived from multiple factors. They wrote, "A sense of the whole body is certainly required for a narrative to emerge about the sexual self" because "...the sexual self—are rife with interactions between body and brain and set the stage, for a narrative that requires thinking about the whole organism" (2003, p. 22). This includes interaction between "...phenomenological-neurobiological-biochemical..." (2003, p. 214) processes. Einstein and Flanagan (2003) next included the role of culture in forming the sexual self:

Understanding how a personal narrative is generated from the interaction of different body systems—which include the brain—and culture will also yield some general lessons about the sorts of empirical relations and explanations we might expect as mind-science progresses. (p. 214)

Phenomenological data were identified by these philosophers as crucial to understanding sexuality better. These philosophers believed that narratives of the self were critical data from which future research on sexuality, along with empirical findings, might produce greater insight. They also believed narratives reflecting the sexual self would improve understandings of

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empirical data and cultural effects on sexuality. After a broad review of literature in mental health fields on sexuality over the past century, this researcher came to see that there was a great paucity of qualitative, phenomenological research.

Dissertation Research Topic

This researcher, reflecting on her own sexual experiences and a variety of experiences of others, found her own sexual experiences with women particularly notable. Female homoerotic attractions, fantasies, and behaviors resulted in my feeling significantly different or transformed. Often, charged, pleasurable experiences can change a person in fundamental ways, leaving one transformed. Taking the premise that sexuality is central to human development and an individual's sense of him or herself, this researcher wanted to explore how this might be so for other lesbian, bisexual, and queer identified women. As lesbian, bisexual and queer women, perhaps we, more so than heterosexual women, might be able to shed light on sexuality about which, so little is known. Perhaps the reflection of and/or engagement with another woman has a special and unique power for some women.

The transcendence of some aspect of one's self experienced as negative is one working definition of transformation. The structure of the self is overwhelmed by new possibilities and subsequently reorganized. Behaviors and feelings once felt to be a transgression might now feel acceptable, expected, even desirable. This might be accompanied by feelings of expansiveness or boundlessness. Transformation has multiple dimensions, such as the drive, affects, anxieties, and objects that can look different from person to person. Exploring my transformation experience and that of other women related to their female homoeroticism might provide information about the contours and significance of sexuality of which Chodorow (1999) and

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others had spoken.

This researcher had developed an appreciation of the negative influence of cultural biases and stereotypes toward women and homosexuals as an undergraduate sociology major studying social constructionism, feminism, and queer theories. Coming out as an undergraduate, I was struck by the juxtaposition of how a female, homoerotic body had historically been the very reasons for discrimination or devaluation while my body in the throes of female homoeroticism felt to be a phenomenal source of strength and excitement. This left me with questions about how females, the female body, and female homoeroticism were understood psychologically. I was left with questions about the psychology of my transformation experience.

Phenomenological, Narrative, and Projective Methodology

Given my experience with my body, a paper entitled, 'The Body as Rorschach' by Muriel Dimen (2000) had made a big impact on this researcher. She wrote about the strength of one's subjective bodily experience in the context of theories of female development and experience. From the perspective of relational and critical theory, Dimen (2000) wrote:

The psychoanalytic body is going through changes. Once upon a time, it was real, substantial, finite, mapped by excitable but containable erogenous zones. Thanks to Jacques Lacan and Michael Foucault, what was for Sigmund Freud biological entity has become, in postmodern thought, a linguistic/cultural coproduction, always unstable and contingent, deeply theorized in literary, feminist, queer, and cultural studies. (p. 65)

She asserted that the body's meaning was flexible and in opposition to what she understood as Freud's belief that the body had fixed, biologically determined meanings. Having previously studied the role of sex and gender in women's lives, I became curious about what knowledge of

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the female body was privileged. Bodies, particularly female bodies, were pivotal to Freud, Lacan, Foucault, and me. Just as these theorists wrote on what each understood the reality of the body to be, experiencing my female homoeroticism affected what I understood the reality of my body to be. It was as if we each had our own unique experience of the female body as a projective inkblot. I concluded that Dimen's reference (2000) to the body as Rorschach could be used in a Rorschach-like interview to explore and understand how other lesbian, bisexual, and queer women experienced their bodies and what information they prioritized in this process.

The usefulness of a projective interview for this research was supported by the writings of Luce Irigaray (1977), a Lacanian analyst, feminist, philosopher, sociologist, and cultural theorist. Irigaray (1977) believed language and discourse has acted to define and control women, concluding:

She senses something *remains to be said* that resists all speech, that can at best be stammered out. All words are weak, worn out, unfit to translate anything sensibly. For it is no longer a matter of longing for some determinable attribute, some mode of essence, some face of presence. What is expected is neither a *this* nor a *that*, not a *here* any more than a *there*. No being, no places are designated. So the best plan is to abstain from all discourse, to keep quiet, or else utter a sound so inarticulate that it barely forms a *song*. While all the while keeping an attentive ear open for any hint or tremor coming back. (p. 129)

Irigaray's point of women's plight, their difficulty in articulation, their need to find their own voice, was thought to concur with Dimen's writing (1998). Dimen called attention to the "linguistic/cultural coproduction" (p. 65) in which women's voices had a role. However, their

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voice has not been present in clinical and academic discussions about their body. With this in mind, this researcher took the next step to design a research methodology in which women were asked to use their own body much the way an inkblot functions. The projective, open-ended style of this interview (Appendix D) was designed to elicit female utterances that might “barely form a *song*” (Irigaray, 1977, p. 129).

In regard to the tension about who represents the meaning of female’s bodies, Dimen (1998) wrote, “The body is what it is and what we make of it” (p. 11). Agreeing with Freud, De Beauvoir (1960) held that the psychological meaning of the body was critical. She wrote:

...not the body-object as described by biologists that actually exists, but the body as lived in by the subject...It is not nature that defines woman; it is she who defines herself by dealing with her own nature on her own account in her emotional life. (p. 65)

Although the body was understood as integral to the mind and conscious sense of who we are, the dichotomy of lived experience verses its intellectual depiction or externally defined meaning was anticipated as a source of tension for participants interviewed for this dissertation. It was important methodologically to access that lived, erotic, bodily experience. It was important in this research to not impose restrictions, such as asking participants to speak well, sound smart, or please others like this interviewer. In fact, how a participant was able to ‘utter a sound’ indicated what their lived experience of eroticism was or their components for transformation.

We hear de Beauvoir’s and Dimen’s concerns spoken by Young (2005) when she stated her suspicion that women struggle with overall confidence and their cognitive or leadership abilities. She pointed to women’s experience of living in discontinuity with their body resulting from living in a patriarchal society, where they consistently have to view their body as an object

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separate from a first-person experience of themselves. Young (2005) wrote:

...an essential part of the situation of being a woman is that of living the ever present possibility that one will be gazed upon...as the potential object of another subject's intentions and manipulations rather than a living manifestation of action and intention. (p. 44)

She concluded:

None of these questions can be dealt with properly, however, without first performing the kind of guided observation and data collection that my reading has concluded, to a large degree, is yet to be performed. (p. 45)

The experience of each woman's body was prioritized in the research interview questions, hoping to convey that *her* physical experiences were of utmost importance. There were minimal parameters in the interview questions and few implications that there was right or wrong answers. In fact, there was no demand for the participant to give a logical, rational, linear narrative. In an initial projective interview, participants were asked to speak about their physicality in whatever way they chose. In the second interview a more logical narrative was requested.

This researcher's interest was on each woman's experience of homoeroticism, not the causes of her female homosexual desire. This research also did not investigate the worthy topic of how socio-cultural forces affect lesbian, bisexual, and queer identified women. These surely play a role in one's sexuality and deserve to have research done in its own right. This dissertation focused on women's psychological experience of their homoeroticism believed to be evidenced in one's body and mind, as one's body ego.

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Theoretical Perspectives

Various psychological perspectives have put forth theories of sexuality. Person (1980) reviewed cognitive theory, object relations theory, and libido theory. Looking at all three theories, she made four points relevant to this dissertation. First, Person noted that experiential testimony leads one to reflect on how untapped the experiential, phenomenological data on sexuality has been. Secondly, Person (1980) believed the phenomenological data reflected sexuality as central to being human and “one is left with the task of explaining the experiential testimony that sex is the ‘core’” (p. 48). Thirdly, Person believed questions still remained about what compels human sexuality in all three theories reviewed. Lastly, Person thought that Freud’s explanation of sexuality via his libido theory had simply not been understood well. This researcher is in agreement with Person on all points.

Freud identified the sexual instinct as a fundamental underpinning of all human development. His theory is easily joined with object relations theory as its counterpart to create a fuller understanding of human sexuality. His libido theory leaves room for numerous types of sexual expression leading to Freud’s belief that deviances from the statistical norms of heterosexuality in object choice or culturally-condoned sexual behavior would reveal information about the “motor forces” or “components instincts” of sexuality (1905, SE in 1965, p. 34). He wrote:

...perhaps the sexual instinct itself may be no simple thing, but put together from components which have come apart again in the perversions. If this is so, the clinical observation of these abnormalities will have drawn our attention to amalgamations which have been lost to view in the uniform behaviour of normal people. (1905, SE in 1965, p.

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28)

These component instincts or motive forces have not been identified, nor have his suspicions been confirmed or disproved. These words of Freud are very important in understanding why this dissertation research was done with lesbian, bisexual and queer woman. By virtue of homosexuality's deviation from the norm of heterosexuality, homosexuality offers great potential to help us see what has been unseen or escaped us about sexuality.

Freud proposed that a sexual instinct existed and served as a fundamental structuring source in human development. As such, it has significant power for our growth that is sometimes discussed as transformation in analytic literature. Transformation is ignited by intense, emotionally charged experiences. This research was an exploration of transformations of lesbian, bisexual, and queer women related to their homosexual or homoerotic experiences.

Freud had believed that the sexual instinct was a "psychical representation of an endosomatic, continuously flowing source of stimulation" from "an erotogenic zone" or "organ" with "the immediate aim of the instinct to diminish or stop the stimulus" (1905 SE in 1965, p. 34). Growth or transformation of the sexual instinct was believed to occur throughout an individual's development. Freud identified transformation of the sexual instinct as occurring during childhood via the erotogenic zones, unfolding in what he called the oral, anal, latency, and genital phases. Throughout life, sexual experiences could lead to transformations founded on their excitement and pleasure. Freud's conceptualization of transformation of the sexual drive, or sexual instinct, rang true for my transformation experience. If the sexual instinct functioned as critical to human development, my experience of feeling physically, emotionally, and mentally transformed made sense. Transformation became understood as the best theoretical

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concept to describe the physical and mental effects of homoeroticism that I and other lesbian, bisexual, and queer women were believed to have had.

This researcher attempted to identify the psychological traits, or components, of the female homoeroticism present with the above mentioned transformation experience. Person (1980) agreed that eroticism was unique and special or comprised of particular unique and special traits, writing:

Regardless of lacking absolute knowledge of true sexuality, the individual's sexuality is not endlessly plastic. Once subjectivity and sexuality are consolidated in the course of individual development, they are as nature to the individual, not to be changed lightly or with ease. Thus a healthy respect for eroticism as it is experienced is in order. (p. 60)

Little research, phenomenological or otherwise, has been done on understanding the experience of eroticism or homoeroticism. This is a particular gap in research and writings, in the already limited pool of literature on homosexuality.

Eroticism

According to the Oxford Unabridged Dictionary, eroticism is defined as the love life in any or all of its physical or psychical manifestations (psychoanalytic). This is the primary definition of eroticism used in this dissertation. "Erotic," the adjective, was defined as: (1) strongly affected by sexual desire; (2) deserving of love, lovely; and (3) of, related to, caused by, or a production of love. Eroticism is an affect generally referencing sexual desire, such as (1) the sexual or erotic quality or characteristic of something; (2) the use of sexually arousing or sexually suggestive symbolism, settings, allusions, situations in art, literature, drama, or the like; (3) the condition of being sexually aroused or excited; (4) an affect disposition of the libidinal

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drive; and (5) the sexual drive or tendency.

Eroticism is an illustrative term, taking place on the frontier of what is physical and mental, unfolding in conscious and unconscious ways. Eroticism is not a term referenced often in public. It is mostly used in the privacy of an erotic contexts or one's own home. The whole individual, including the sense of who one is and the world around oneself, is affected by erotic feelings. The term "eroticism" conveys the panoply of sexual productions because eroticism can exist outside the context of social mores, staying solely dedicated to the experience of sexual stimulation. This is evidenced by the breadth of identified sexual attractions and perversions (Freud 1905 SE in 1975).

Freud (1905 SE in 1975) noted, "the impulses of sexual life are among those which, even normally, are the least controlled by higher activities of the mind" (p. 15). It is the ego Freud hypothesized that had the high activities of the mind. With its mature mechanisms playing little role in eroticism, its regressive nature became more evident. For some, the loss of ego control can be overwhelming. For others, it can be liberating. For many, shame and embarrassment are felt when being observed during feelings or behaviors of eroticism.

In this exploratory dissertation research, homoeroticism was understood as eroticism between two individuals of the same sex. This included conscious and unconscious same-sex sexual attractions, wishes, fantasies, thoughts, and behaviors. This working-definition of homoeroticism was intentionally broad. It seemed beneficial to use an inclusive concept for exploration since so little is understood about sexuality and homosexuality. The spirit of this exploratory research was to arrive at meaningful observations that can be further investigated. This researcher felt that broad exploratory, as opposed to a narrowly focused, research would be

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more beneficial to the field in these still early research stages.

Body Ego

The concept of the self that best reflects transformation was body ego. Freud (1923) first identified the concept of body ego, writing “the ego is first and foremost a body ego and the ego ultimately derived from bodily sensation...it [the ego] may be regarded as a mental projection of the body” (p. 126). In a general sense, body ego refers to the earliest traces of the individual’s sense of self, seeking to identify feelings, wishes, and anxieties, which are one’s own. Body ego is un verbalized, regressed, unconscious id material and psychic phenomena. Body ego mostly manifests in unconscious processes that are not yet recognized thoughts but feelings, sensations, or stimuli that may or may not move into the subconscious. As such, the content of body ego is tricky to observe and measure directly.

Body ego is commonly understood to be part of the more comprehensive concept of self-representation, reflecting instinct and object relations theories. Self-representation is believed to be the concept of the self, most accurately accounting for all factors involved in sexual development but body ego was chosen as the focus of this research because body ego holds physical experiences as giving rise to mental functions and ultimately a more conscious sense of self. It was body ego’s primitive nature, as seemingly uncensored data, that attracted this researcher to choose it as central to the dissertation.

Explanation of Study

This research is a phenomenological, qualitative study exploring components of female homoeroticism linked to body ego transformation. Nine lesbian, bisexual, and queer identified women in the New York City Area, ages 25 to 35, agreed to participate. Based on this

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researcher's own experience and self-reflection, personal observations as well as verbal and literary reports from other lesbian, bisexual, and queer women, numerous ideas for components were considered. These component ideas were also found to be reflected in readings of classical instinct and object relations psychoanalytic theory on body ego development and transformation. Eventually these were distilled into eight components (Appendix A) including:

- [1] Internal Physical and Psychic Tension
- [2] Rudiments of One's Self
- [3] Foul Parts of One's Self
- [4] Heightened Affects
- [5] An Increased Capacity to Be Alone
- [6] Physical Actions Taken
- [7] Wishes Actualized
- [8] Particular Object Relations Dynamics

In this dissertation, references which support these components in the literature review and the participants' responses in this and other chapters are identified and denoted in brackets []. An original measure employing a semi-structured, projective interview (Appendix D) was used for this research to elicit relevant data.

The projective interview for this dissertation's study includes two parts. The first part is entitled, "Description of Body." This researcher prompted the participants with simple requests, such as the following:

Tell me what your body feels like.

Tell me about your breasts.

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Tell me about your orgasm.

The second part is a narrative interview entitled “Retrospective Homoerotic History of Body,” in which participants are asked to reflect on their erotic experience of their body over the course of their lifetime, particularly in relation to homoerotic ideation, feelings, and behaviors (Appendix D).

Given the elusive and regressive nature of body ego and eroticism, being on the cusp of conscious and unconscious, it is important to prepare the listener to hear what is being communicated beyond the literal words. A psychoanalytic understanding of metaphor guided the researcher in listening for the proposed eight components in the data gathered.

Transformation Examples

This study was meant to collect common and unique body ego transformation statements in which the proposed transformation components could possibly be observed. Two transformation examples are now provided and will be explored in a fashion similar to the way participants’ responses in this dissertation were explored. The following transformation statements were made by this researcher and the female protagonist in the cult-classic lesbian novel entitled *Fingersmith* (2002) by Sara Waters.

When this researcher kissed another woman, I thought gloriously, “I could die right now!” This saying or metaphor denotes that such a significant wish of mine had been fulfilled; if I were to die right then, my life would not have been in vain. That kiss rolled over into other areas of my life, sharpening who I was in seemingly unrelated realms. I was more focused, less distracted, and mentally more agile. I excelled academically and developed career ambitions, in a way new to me. My ability to concentrate, work, relax, joke, and laugh with others increased

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as my capacity for appreciating myself and experiences deepened. In sum, I felt less timid and more consolidated.

Subsequently, I recognized how my erotic female body and physical experiences emerged as pivotal. I was more attached to my physicality, admiring my body for what it could do and get. With this intensely positive valence to my body, I felt connected to every inch of my being in ways unknown to me before. Qualities, that had previously been only descriptive adjectives and adverbs about me now felt intrinsic to whom I was, not something I wished for. Newly cathected to myself, it was a time of great aliveness.

Another tale of transformation linked with homoeroticism can be observed in Maud, the literary character and teenage protagonist of Sarah Water's (2002) novel. Maud spoke to how powerfully she found the experience of her erotic desire for another girl. When first realizing the homosexual attraction she felt, Maud thought,

Is this desire? ...But I thought desire smaller, neater; I supposed it bound to its own organs as taste is bound to the mouth, vision to the eye. This feeling haunts me, like a sickness. It covers me, like skin. (2002, p. 293)

We hear Maud trying to understand what she was feeling physically and emotionally. In her efforts to do so, Maud provides a series of metaphors that perhaps reveal components of her transformation. First, she tries to concretize her erotic desire by likening it to other physical senses, such as smell and vision. These easily belong to one organ or body part, making them seem neat and contained. Seemingly dissatisfied that desire is not similarly contained, Maud moved on to describe how this desire affected her. She described homoerotic desire as uncomfortable, scary, and haunting. She portrays it as if desire was separate from herself, as if it

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had a malignant agenda to make her ill. Without Maud as part of this dialogue, this researcher acknowledges taking liberty in interpreting her words. This researcher believed other bisexual, queer, and lesbian women may have had similarly daunting or exciting reactions to their homoeroticism when experienced in conjunction with body ego transformation.

Discussion of Transformation Examples

These two transformation tales were notably different in depth and content; their purpose here is to serve as examples. They are not meant to be compared with any standard in mind. Despite their differences, they also had similarities. Both described feeling changed in a global way--I for the better and Maud for the worse. We both had powerful affective responses and both experienced our individual power as growing or diminishing.

In retrospect, my transformation was about finding myself, becoming more aware of my feelings and developing the capacity to value them. In so doing, I became acutely aware of physical and internal sensations, tension or friction [Component 1] between rudimentary parts of the self (i.e., primary process id desires, tensions, excitement, etc.) [Component 2]. These were not painful experiences, but simply the ins and outs of everyday life. (More on these tensions and affects are discussed in defining the components' definition in Chapters Two and Three.) This included enjoying or valuing what had been considered foul or dirty aspects of me [Component 3]. Aspects of me, which others seemed to devalue or disapprove, had invariably been communicated to me as 'bad'. This had led me to feel I was 'bad' when happy, 'bad' when in control, 'bad' when confident, and 'bad' when acting with agency. My transformation left me able to own these heightened excitements and pleasures gladly [Component 4]. Before my transformation, I had experienced others as intrusive, controlling, and judgmental. Now life was

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calmer, more peaceful. I could own myself more easily. I felt 'all good' after having felt mostly 'bad'.

In Ms. Water's (2002) novel, Maud's associations to her homoeroticism had similar paranoid tones and primitive defenses (i.e., splitting and projection). At an early point in the novel before Maud had come out, she was very uncomfortable with her erotic feelings for another teenage girl. They eventually become lovers, having a passionate relationship. At this early point she questions whether she felt desire. In so doing, Maud made numerous references to heightened affect [Component 4] and rudiments of herself [Component 2] in both concrete and paranoid ways. She wondered if what she was feeling was 'desire'. Her romantic and erotic affect were not 'small', not 'neat', not 'bound'; it did not feel contained. She did not like her inability to control or direct her sexual and romantic feelings. Wanting to get rid of them, disown them, Maud makes an almost psychotic interpretation, as if this desire were not her own but a malignant illness thrust upon her. She demonizes her feelings of desire, initially rendering a narrative of pathology, just as the mental health field had done to homosexuals for the better part of the 20th century.

Conclusion

Based on personal, social, clinical, and academic experience, research is needed on the phenomenology of women's homoerotic experience. In this dissertation's research efforts were made to remain close to the individual's authentic experience, affected as little as possible by the expectations, pressures, and demands of others. This resulted in the use of a phenomenological methodology with projective data using metaphor to unlock its meaning. The rich data obtained was explored for eight proposed components of transformation related to these erotic

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experiences. These components were believed to be observable in the inarticulate 'song' of the women interviewed. In the next chapter, literature relevant to this exploratory study is reviewed in the following four domains: Female Homosexuality, Female Body Ego and Eroticism, Transformation, and Phenomenological Methodology.

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CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

This dissertation centers on the phenomenological experiences of female homoeroticism in lesbian, bisexual, and queer identified women. These erotic experiences were explored in these women's interviews to identify elements of the erotic experience that seemed to play a role in bringing about significant change like body ego transformation. Towards this end, we need to look at what has been written and understood about homosexuality, body ego, erotic experience, transformation processes, and the phenomenological methodology utilized. Literature that is particularly relevant to the components of transformation of body ego being explored in this dissertation are noted and marked with the specific numbered component in brackets. The literature review is presented in four domains:

- I. Female Homosexuality
- II. Female Body Ego and Eroticism
- III. Transformation
- IV. Phenomenological Methodology

Domain I: Female Homosexuality

Domain I provides a brief sketch of available literature on homosexuality. Theoretical literature on female body ego, eroticism, and transformation are topics that have rarely been addressed with this population. Since the participants in this study were lesbians, bisexual, and queer women, we need to assess what we know of them as a group. While this dissertation is not about why a woman is lesbian or bisexual, or about other issues related to homosexuality, as important, needed, and timely as these issues may be, literature in the mental health field on

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homosexuality needs to be addressed because female homosexuals, the participants in this study are a unique population that has remained poorly understood, more at risk, and underserved.

Homosexuality at the Turn of the Century

Writings for much of the last century have medicalized and marginalized the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and queer community from the normal population (Lewes, 1988). Various claims and allegations were made and subsequently challenged or disproven. Freud himself wavered across the years about whether homosexuality was a perversion or a normal outcome of development, finally he clearly stated in 1935, homosexuality "...cannot be classified as an illness; we consider it to be a variation of the sexual function..." (1935a, p. 786). Despite this, the view of homosexuality as a form of mental illness pervaded the social, cultural, legal, and religious milieu of western culture for the better part of the twentieth century and beyond. In 1973, the American Psychiatric Association declassified homosexuality as a mental disorder in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual, followed by The American Psychological Association Council of Representatives in 1975. While years have passed, many still view homosexuality as pathological (Isay 1996). Some continue to work for a cure looking to 'reparative' therapies for the effective treatment for homosexuality (Spitzer 2003, 2012).

While some research on homosexuality had already started, Chung and Katayama (1996) provided a critical review of the methodology for assessing sexual orientation in 144 previously completed lesbian, gay, and bisexual research studies, finding that women and bisexuals were underrepresented and questioning the assumptions that had been made about sexual identification. In 1999, the Institute of Medicine drew attention to the lack of research on lesbian health, noting that there had been little evidence-based studies done by the scientific community.

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Acknowledging the lack of resources and funds, new strategies and priorities for proceeding towards this end were developed (Bradford, 2001). Progress on removing the stigma of mental illness associated with homosexuality was being pursued by the scientific community and others (Morin & Rothblum, 1991), while issues of heterosexism (Rothblum & Bond, 1996) and heterosexual bias in language were being addressed through the American Psychological Association Committee on Lesbian and Gay Concerns (1991).

Let us assess what empirical literature can tell us about this population. Recent findings (Kristiansen & Pedersen, 2008) on the rate of homosexual behavior for young adults found it to be 10% for males and 25% for females, using the least restrictive definition of homosexual identity. This led these researchers to conclude that homosexuality is more normative. Tate (2012) looked specifically at the definition of lesbian and recommended ways to clarify this definition. Other literature has looked at sexual orientation and the development and stability of sexual identity over time (Rosario, Schrimshaw, & Hunter, 2010; Rosario, Schrimshaw, Hunter, & Braun, 2006).

In 2002, the *American Psychologist* reported on epidemiological research on health problems in the homosexual community. Using data from studies of HIV and related risk behaviors, Cochran (2001) found higher rates of major depression, generalized anxiety disorder, substance use and/or dependence, and suicidal ideation. Other studies have looked into the relationship of sexual orientation and physical health (Conron, Mimiaga, & Landers 2009), mental health (Bostwick, Boyd, Hughes, McCabe, 2010), and suicidality (Garofalo, Goodman, Wissow, Wolf, Woods, 1999; Fergusson, 2000). Studies investigating sexual orientation and increased substance use (Rosario, 2008; Rosario, Schrimshaw, & Hunter 2009; Rosario,

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Schrimshaw, & Hunter 2012b) have clarified sexual orientation's connection to positive/negative disclosure reactions (Rosario, Schrimshaw, & Hunter 2009) and homelessness (Rosario, Schrimshaw, & Hunter 2012a, 2012b).

Within the last year, the Human Rights Campaign with findings from a Landmark Survey of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgendered (LGBT) Youth (Human Rights Campaign, 2012) reported that LGBT youth in comparison to straight youth have lower rates of happiness (37% vs. 67%), higher rates of feeling that they did not "fit in" (47% vs. 16%) and higher rates of being verbally harassed (51% vs. 25%). Only 49% expect that they will find happiness in their town. Unlike their straight peers, LGBT youths worry about issues related to their identity as LGBT. Given these stressors, Willoughby (2010) looked at how negative sexual identity (i.e., negative feelings one has related to one's sexual orientation) affect the way stress may be expressed in problematic behaviors (substance use, nicotine use, internalized problems).

Coming-out is critical to homosexuals, and studies have explored disclosure to family (D'Augelli, Hershberger, & Pilkington, 2010), to siblings (Hilton, & Szymanski, 2011) as well as the order and manner of disclosure (Rossi, 2010). Other issues plague the population of LGB individuals: greater difficulty in accessing health care (Conron, Mimiaga, & Landers 2009), family rejection and detachment (Wilson, Zeng, & Blackburn, 2011), greater stress related to their legal rights (Levitt, et. al., 2009; Rostosky, Riggle, Horne, & Miller, 2009), and homelessness. The latter has been associated with symptoms of anxiety, depression, conduct disorder, and substance abuse (Rosario, Schrimshaw, & Hunter, 2012a; Rosario, Schrimshaw, & Hunter, 2012b). Hatzenbuehler (2011), studying the role of the community in reducing suicidality among lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) teens compared with heterosexual peers,

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reported higher rates of suicidality (21.5% vs. 4.2%) concluding that rates in non-supportive communities were 20% higher for LGB youths, and 9% higher for heterosexual youths as well.

A final issue of significant stress to the homosexual population centers around their present lack of standing in same-sex relationships related to medical, legal, and financial matters. Ongoing heated campaigns for and against same-sex marriages, with negative comments and images, have been correlated with higher levels of stress for many homosexuals and their families, who fear possible victimization and loss of legal rights (Arm, Horne, & Levitt, 2009; Goldberg & Smith 2011; Levitt et al. 2009; Mays & Cochran 2001; Riggle, & Rostosky, 2007; Riggle, Rostosky, & Horne, 2009; Riggle, Rostosky, & Horne, 2010; Rostosky, Riggle, Gray, & Hatton, 2007; Rostosky, Riggle, Horne & Miller, 2009). These stressors in turn have been linked to health risks, substance abuse, and risky behavior. Despite these stressors, research on committed same sex couples found them to be quite similar to committed heterosexual couples (Kurdek, 2004, 2005; Matthews, Tartaro, & Hughes, 2002), and lesbian women compared to their heterosexual sisters had higher self-esteem, more education, and were more mobile with no difference in mental health.

Much of this research into the struggles of homosexuals with social and mental problems has found relationships or associations but not causality. Does sexual orientation or the underlying cause of homosexuality cause much of the subsequent problems or do the rejection of family and society and the task of living as a rejected minority lead to subsequent difficulties? More research needs to be done to understand this better.

Clitoris: Being Out at Last

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Female homosexuals find themselves dealing with triple difficulties, those related to misunderstanding about being female, those related to the lack of knowledge about female sexuality and those related to being homosexual. All of these have worked together to keep them misunderstood by others and hindered understanding themselves. The most egregious example of this poor representation was the lack of knowledge and use of the word clitoris in everyday language (i.e., low frequency of words vulva and clitoris in the readings for sex education classes). A pointed example of this was discovered in writing this dissertation in which this researcher, wanting to use the plural form of the noun clitoris, was unable to find it in multiple dictionaries (n=7), including unabridged dictionaries. This makes it apparent how critical it is that we better define female sexuality and female homosexuality, not simply because of how it has limited women's pleasure, gay or straight, but also because of how it has affected the way we as humans identify and represent the reality of the world around us. Clitoris is a noun that has no plural reality? Dogs, cats, and penises have a plural reality but not clitorises or clitorides?

For all women, lesbian and straight alike, the lack of language has been a roadblock to cognizing the self. This has been noted and studied by Waskul, Vannini and Wiesen (2007), who pointed out that many women discover their clitoris long before they have a name for it. Ogletree and Ginsburg (2000) noted the lack of knowledge of the term, clitoris, among students in a sex-ed course. They found a lower frequency of the words clitoris and vulva in sex instruction books as compared with penis, as well as the equating of vagina with penis which correlated with increased negative attitude towards masturbation and greater belief in sex related myths. Roth (2004) looked at the absence of the word clitoris and other power words for female

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equivalents of male genitals (i.e., having balls, etc.) from common parlance.

Contemporary Theories of Female Homosexuality

A number of theorists in recent decades from a range of disciplines and theoretical orientations have worked to alter old theories and generate new perspectives for understanding the inner world of women and homosexuals as non-pathological. Theorists and academics have used critical and postmodern theories under the rubric of the history of consciousness, as well as more contemporary psychoanalytic theories such as relational theory, to revise and address earlier classical analytic theories of homosexuality. These theorists, such as Irigaray (1977), Foucault (1978), Butler (1993), Lacan (2006), and Dimen (1998), often engaged in a dialogue with Freud's writings on sexuality. In sum, these theorists purport that other motivations for power by means of psychological, financial, and/or social dominance have exerted control, manipulating or pressuring participants' narratives to facilitate other agendas, and not to accurately represent the individual's homosexual experience. In essence, these theorists study how we know what we think we 'know,' through our own experience or other's. The following are examples of these contemporary writings that portray female homosexuals' internal dynamics and their development.

De Lauretis (1990) believed that women, regardless of sexual orientation, "... are excluded from the established discourse of theory and yet imprisoned within it or else assigned a corner of their own but denied specificity" (p. 115). She took this one step further in discussing female homosexuals. De Lauretis believed that old classical theories held 'myths' that had become coded in the "matrix of the body ego" or body as a type of habit or knowledge (p. viii). Continuing, she held that instinctual drives were cast in these classic myths and could be

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refocused in new ways, affording both society and female homosexuals alternate ways of representing what it is to be female and homosexual. She noted that Freud did not attach components of sexuality specifically to a heterosexual orientation with its classic aims of the phallus and castration anxiety.

De Lauretis (1990) took this opening in Freud's theory to propose a model of perverse desire, using Lacan's (2006) beliefs and theories of structuralism. She revamped classical psychoanalytic developmental concepts, proposing the lesbian primal scene as the original primal scene at the mother's breast, postulating a lesbian castration complex as arising from the absence (of seen external genitalia) or decreased experience (of largely unseen sexual genitalia) leading to difficulties representing their genitalia and a lesbian oedipal dynamic. Many of the same themes proposed in classical versions and subsequent developmental struggles, arose in these lesbian versions as well, such as female's difficulties with representation. De Lauretis believed that all original fantasies function like myths becoming the component instincts which differently structure one's sexual identity. Regardless of the same sexual orientation, De Lauretis (1994) asserted each individual had a unique set of myths or "sexual structuring," (p. xix) such as butch vs. femme lesbians. She believed sexual structuring was a more accurate concept than sexual identity, the term typically used in academic discussions about homosexual individuals.

Additional writers re-conceptualized classical themes of instinct theory, such as Elise (2000a, 2000b). The components proposed in this dissertation would still seem to be true of Elise's new ideas of female's psychological studies, such as a castration anxiety narrative for lesbian, bisexual, and queer women, in which a story of absence or

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loss persists. Elise (2000a) believed lesbian, bisexual, and queer female's inhibited sexual desire perhaps reflected the difficulties in representing their somewhat "hidden" and "inaccessible" sexual genitalia, or rooting their (homo)erotic attraction in their primal scene with their mother (p. 157). Lastly, Elise (2000b) asserted a belief that women's reduced, or "deflate[d]," sexual desire might be an outcome of their castration story in which the phallic is equated with sexual desire (125-6).

Burch (1997) also worked to create psychological theories of sexuality, gender identity, and the body based on newly understood erotic and family romance dynamics. Burch relied on feminist social constructionism and contemporary psychoanalytic theories to reconceive the fundamental psychoanalytic ideas of Freud, Jung, and Lacan that embrace women's diverse sexualities. She argued that the dynamics of lesbian and bisexual relationships stem from women's psychological development and are not necessarily dysfunctional. Similar to Burch, embracing postmodernism and encouraging other theorists to do the same, Chiang (2008) and Drazenovich (2010) offered new perspectives on dynamic theories of development.

A steady stream of literature in the last two decades has been published in the journal, *Gender and Sexuality*, by relational and cultural studies theorists to redress prior writings on homosexuality. To be sure, these perspectives would appreciate this dissertation's prioritization of phenomenological methods and may apply their newly revised understandings to the data just as classic theorists might do. For example, Dimen (2001), in her writing entitled "Perversion is us?" (p. 825), used Foucaultian perspectives to question whether they felt homosexuality was perversion, a deviance with dark/immoral underpinnings, thus writing a script in which the homosexual is inherently a weak, disempowered individual. Dimen concluded that the

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perversion today is what sexuality was in the Nineteenth Century. After discussing how the organized processes of mental health, morality, and power structures have played out so as to create the concept of perversion, Dimen concluded that “sexuality has nothing inherently to do with mental health or mental illness.”

There continue to be differences of opinion about what the inner world of homosexuality looks like and how these mental structures and psychological dynamics were formed. We have only to look at a series of articles in which a number of prominent psychoanalysts carry on a debate about homosexuality (Bergeret, 2002; Philips, 2003; Friedman & Downey, 2004) acknowledging the confusion and each presenting views that differ about whether homosexuality is true sexuality and about the need for psychobiological research with “findings from behavioral genetics, psycho-neuro-endocrinology and extra-analytic fields of knowledge” (Philips, 2004, p. 523). All agree, regardless of theoretical perspectives, we need to understand the unique diversity of homosexual experiences and not presume that one developmental story is fully known or can explain all.

These contemporary theories all relate to this dissertation’s participant but were not useful in providing new information about components of body ego transformation. These contemporary theories, like classic theories, contextualize the components. These contemporary writers might confirm some of what classical writers had written as basic psychological dynamics but this cannot be stated for the simple reason that they have not theorized about the development or ongoing state of specific mental structures. It is in that domain that the components of transforming body ego linked to female homoeroticism are studied. These contemporary theories looked less at detailed internal structures of the self, like body ego, and

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more to the dynamics within which similar internal structures or themes unfolded in classic understandings of psychosexual development. Classic instinct and object relations theories write about this domain of body ego as a structure in which the human develops cognitively, emotionally, and sexually. For this reason, the components proposed in this dissertation would match up with much of the experiences and dynamic outcomes as was previously proposed by what contemporary writers might identify as Freud's classic myths.

Classical instinct and object relations theories were primarily used for their detailed connections to the body and the primitive nature of the erotic experience that is the heuristic tool used in the dissertation, whereas relationalists generally wanted to know what meaning the raw experience has for the individual in terms of his or her relationship to others in the world. Contemporary theories would likely embrace the same phenomenological method used in this dissertation's research, using their own revised theoretical framework to explore the data. As a reminder, it was Dimen's (2000) work in "The body as Rorschach" that germinated into this dissertation's methodology.

Summary of Domain I

In Domain I, past literature on homosexuality was presented. Our understanding of homosexuality and sexuality, in general, has unfolded in powerful ways since Freud initially wrote at the start of the twentieth century. Most subsequent theorists, clinicians, and researchers have written in tandem or dialogue with Freud's original writings. While Freud waffled back and forth as to the degree of health or unhealth homosexuality reflected, the field, predominantly psychoanalytic at the time, wrote about homosexuality as a perversion that was at best, a less than ideal outcome of development if not downright pathological. The psychiatric and

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psychological establishment also struggled to understand women and their sexual experiences.

What ensued were inconclusive and unsatisfactory efforts to understand female homosexuality.

Academics, clinicians, and researchers in the latter half of the twentieth century, have undertaken greater efforts to understand sexuality and homosexuality, mostly by empirical means. In this research, males have been over represented leaving gaps and misconceptions about females. Nonetheless, this research accomplished two things. It showed earlier theorizing on women's erotic experiences to be inaccurate. It also indicated the plight of the homosexual population to be more stressed, more at risk, and underserved.

The most recent trend to represent the homosexual experience, in more accurate psychological terms, has involved critical analysis of past theoretical works and their development. With the introduction of feminist voices, postmodern ideologies, and cultural studies, theoretical and clinical understandings of homosexuality as a normal outgrowth of development has started to develop. Albeit progress has been made, phenomenological methods remain rare in homosexuality research. Due to the shortage of writings on homosexuality, new exploratory research is welcomed, especially when accompanied by a guided line of inquiry. Components of female homoeroticism linked to body ego transformation were the particular phenomena taken up by this dissertation.

Domain II: Female Body Ego and Eroticism

Writers in this domain describe different aspects of female body ego and female eroticism. Although instinct theory can seem dated and has been widely criticized, this research indicates the need to understand how Freud's concept of body ego developed and relates to the physical and mental realms of the self. Body ego is a concept of the self utilized in this research

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because it holds that mental life is inextricably grounded in physical experience. As such, body ego provides a unique portal to examine a less censored experience, which a female has of her own body and its' physical eroticism in keeping with this dissertation's phenomenological research. It helps to circumvent social, cultural, and religious values, which might taint the first-person narrative, if not the experience itself. The writers presented here on the body ego concept, whereby the physical body generates psychical realities and vice versa, speak about perspectives that generally support one another despite what has been a passionate dialogue. In many cases they come to similar conclusions.

As this literature is reviewed, proposed components of transformation can be heard and are pointed out as they will be later, in participants' responses. Finally, three themes emerged in these writings as particularly meaningful. These include unique erotic realities for women: 1) the skin as an erotic or sensory organ, 2) early female, pleasurable sensations (i.e. muscle contractions and secretions in the vaginal area), and 3) being alone as a sought, feared, and developmental experience.

Body Ego Concept and Development

Freud (1923) first identified the concept of body ego, writing "the ego is first and foremost a body ego and the ego ultimately derived from bodily sensation...it [the ego] may be regarded as a mental projection of the body" (p. 26). He understood body sensations as triggered by stimuli originating within, as well as outside one's self. Regardless of where they originate, these body sensations and stimuli were thought to be experienced as pleasurable and unpleasurable, even foul, physical and psychic tensions [Components 1, 2, 3].

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Freud believed body ego existed on the frontier of what is mental and physical. He understood body ego as propelled by the sexual instinct, a psychical force or representative of an endosomatic continuously flowing source of stimulation that can best be observed by its demands or effects on the human mind (Freud, 1905). Accordingly, the instinct is observable in the context of body realms and organ responses toward certain people, identified as ‘objects’. For this reason, research women were asked to respond to projective prompts about their erotic genitalia in this dissertation study. He believed that the libidinal instinct was observed and transformed through body ego processes. Freud (1935 SE in 1965) maintained that the ego is largely unaware of its physical origins, writing "the psyche is extended, knows nothing about it" (p. 32). If this is true, research and literature on ego were believed to have meaning for body ego too.

Freud (1905) identified erotogenic zones, “any part of the skin and any sense organ—probably, indeed, *any* organ—can function as an erotogenic zone...” (p. 99), concluding, “...the skin, which in particular parts of the body has become differentiated into sense organs or modified into mucous membrane, and is thus the erotogenic *par excellence*” (p. 169). He postulated that early development centered on these erotogenic zones, identifying developmental phases as oral, anal, and genital. Freud’s conceptualization of erotogenic zones of the body is believed to relate to the proposed dissertation’s components: rudiments of the self and sexual excitations as internal tensions [Component 1, 2]. Freud then moved away from his prioritization of stimulation in female psychosexual development, focusing on what was observable about women’s bodies, most notably women’s lack of a penis. Freud’s speculation

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on penis envy and the castration theory was and still is met with strident rejection and a subsequent backlash.

Freud (1926) later acknowledged he had difficulty understanding and correctly theorizing about female sexuality saying, the sexual life of adult women is a ‘dark continent’ for psychology (p. 212). Despite his failures, other parts of his theory of psychosexual development are relatively comprehensive and pivotal enough to have remained in dialectic with many contemporary theorists today because of the importance Freud placed on sexuality in development and experiences of the body.

As recent as 2000, Lasky expressed a renewed interest in Freud’s appreciation of early pleasurable, libidinal sensations (i.e. erotogenic muscle contractions, producing moisture internally) in young, prepubescent children, toddlers, and infants which are physiologically very similar to what occurs in female adults when erotically stimulated. Lasky (2000) believed that “women’s...vaginal secretions...play an important role in the unconscious organization of feminine gender identity” (p. 1391). Lasky felt these involuntary sensations and fluid productions were a significant part of the reality for girls and lead the way for girl’s body ego formation and gender identity, concluding that body ego,

“...is increasingly considering the mental transformations of body anatomy and sensations that were ignored or dismissed in the past, when a more distant relation to the body was conceived, based on what was seen rather than what was felt and experienced.”
(2000, p. 1408)

In this, Lasky referenced Freud’s initial efforts to understand women’s psychology through attention to bodily sensations. Going back to Freud’s original premise, Lasky highlighted simple

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facts about women's sexual experience. Hoffer (1950) also emphasized these as rudiments and tensions of the female erotic experience [Components 1, 2]. In fact, Hoffer also wrote on the importance of transformation in body ego development. He identified a crucial aspect of body ego development, as structural differentiation, in which dynamics very similar to, if not the same as, seven of eight proposed components in this dissertation were discussed [Components 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7]. As such, Hoffer's writings seemed to support the proposed components as developmentally meaningful in transformation processes.

Hoffer (1950) believed body ego developed incrementally through the infant's struggle to identify the self through increasing knowledge of one's own mental and anatomical parts. Just as the infant learns to cognize the various body organs: hands, nose, feet, etc., ideally she also learns to identify and understand the clitoris, vulva, and vagina. As the infant comes to suck on her thumb when milk is unavailable, she also learns to satiate her sexual needs resulting in an increased sense of agency [Components 2, 6]. In so doing, the individual comes to understand her own sexual preferences, needs, and desires. This is learning rudiments of the self (that may be desirable, undesirable, even foul) and tensions helping the child distinguish herself from the surroundings and others [Components 1, 2, 3]. With this increased knowledge and competence, object relations change and the capacity to be alone increases [Components 5, 8].

According to Hoffer (1950), internal tensions vary in frequency, intensity, and physical location. Hoffer believed pleasure and unpleasure tensions make the individual aware of the need to address them and thus aware that these pleasurable or unpleasurable stimuli are rudiments of the self from internal sources [Components 1, 2, 3]. Actions taken to increase

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pleasure by moving closer or conversely to decrease unpleasure by moving away would cause an individual to feel increased mastery and agency [Components 2, 4, 6].

Body Ego During Orgasm

Understanding the importance of libidinal pleasure in body ego development led some clinicians/researchers/theorists to investigate sexual health and dysfunction. Ferenzi (1938) and Keiser (1952) believed that sexual behavior and experiences of orgasm (or failure to orgasm) reflected the individuals' ego functioning. For this reason, both called for research on sex and orgasm, which supports this dissertation's research. Ferenzi's wrote: "...libidinal development is recapitulated during the sexual act...ego development is also represented in psychological reactions during intercourse, and that it too could be treated as if it were an experimental situation for a study of the ego" (Ferenzi, 1938 cited in Keiser, 1952, p. 154). Extending Ferenzi's statement to include body ego, Keiser (1952) wrote, "the term ego is used here to denote the primitive ego's awareness of self and libidinized investment of the body" (pp. 154-155), believing an acutely libidinized investment in one's body was necessary for successful orgasm.

With psychic resources so intensely directed towards orgasm, Keiser (1952) like Hoffer, thought a mature, intact ego experiences unfounded loss and disorientation. Healthy erotic experiences were believed to entail this regression during which the subject is unable to maintain a conscious awareness of the object's existence and the subject's own existence as orgasm climaxes, 'la petite mort'. Such a loss might be too frightening for some individuals, producing anxiety, making them unable to enjoy orgasm. Keiser (1952) described this as "...precipitated specifically by apprehension of the physiological, momentary unconsciousness that accompanies

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a healthy orgasm, which is comparable to death or to falling asleep—all accompanied by withdrawal of cathexis from the body ego” (p. 154).

Without consciousness of the object, it would be difficult for some to maintain a sense of their own structure and boundary subsequently causing anxiety. The overwhelming fear for these individuals is an outcome referenced symbolically by fears of irrevocable damage or loss that would render them completely incapacitated, similar to death. If an individual is able to tolerate this and experience orgasm, the outcome would be an increased capacity to individuate and stand alone [Component 5], if not the individual is left unsure she/he can survive on her/his own leading to a sense that one *cannot* be alone. Keiser believed a healthy ego tolerates being alone [Component 5]. His writing help supports this dissertation’s components as reflecting a healthy, strong ego appropriately regressed in the context of eroticism. He identified dynamics similar to components 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8 and especially 5 as necessary for successful orgasm to occur.

Keiser (1952) argued that, “At the moment of orgasm in both sexes all disappears save the inner need for personal gratification; the needs of the partner are completely forgotten” (p. 164). The momentary loss of the sexual object at the moment of orgasm echoed loss of the primary object earlier in development. If this earlier loss was unresolved, its experience with the current loss will be too unbearable to endure and will inhibit orgasm. Moreover, he wrote:

The acquisition of an adequate sense of self—originally through a sense of one’s own body image—and its separation from the world is obviously a complex problem ...every instinctual, sensory, and emotional experience contributes to the construction of the body image, which is constantly in a state of flux and change; but it is logical that to assume

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that the most important element in forming this mental representation derives from the emotionally overdetermined erotic zones. (Keiser, p. 156)

Just as Freud originally proposed about the erotic body, Keiser thought that erotic zones were critical in the development of a mental representation of the body. This is reflected in the questions put to this researcher's participants requesting that they associate to their erotogenic zones. It was believed that information on powerful or notable aspects of their experience of female homoeroticism would likely be expressed.

Themes raised here by Keiser (1952) mirror themes of the proposed components. Thematically, components focused on a sense of self-sufficiency in which the participant would feel her capacity to be "separate from the world," (1952, p. 156) to be alone [Component 5]. With aloneness, it was proposed that females would have heightened sensory focus increasing their awareness of that which comprised themselves including internal physical and psychic tensions, rudiments of the self (foul and otherwise), and a wished for orgasm [Components 1, 2, 3, 7].

The importance of being alone arises multiple times in these writings on body ego and orgasm. Keiser (1952) wrote about fears of being alone during orgasm and being alone was tacitly at the heart of Hoffer's (1950) writings on early body ego development and Moore's (1977) writings on the primal dyad. Winnicott (1958) focused on the ability to be alone, unlike these writings by Lasky (2000), Hoffer (1950), Keiser (1952) and Moore (1977) about the fear of or wish to be alone. It's an interesting and notable finding of transformations related to female homoerotic activity that may need to be thought about more.

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Winnicott (1958) believed, “the capacity of the individual to be alone...is one of the most important signs of maturity in emotional development” (p. 29) [Component 5]. In regard to eroticism, the ability to be alone in the presence of another is crucial. Winnicott connects the power of the ability to be alone in the presence of the object, back to the initial primal scene. The primal scene is the relational paradigm having only two bodies, two people. Thus the dynamic with the object is similarly crucial to the ability to be alone. The nature of this relationship is proposed as a component of transformation in this research [Component 8]. Winnicott discussed being alone as the goal after intercourse, calling it: “sharing solitude” (p. 31). His thinking captured the relatedness and closeness to others inherent in the ability to be independent.

Orgasm: Physiology and Psychic Representation

Masters’ and Johnson’s (1966) ground breaking qualitative and empirical investigation of sexual arousal greatly impacted the psychiatric and psychological understandings of female sexuality and corrected some important prior errors. For sixty years, it was believed that clitoral orgasm was less satisfying than orgasm derived from penetrative vaginal stimulation. The physiological data found by Masters and Johnson corrected this misperception. They were able to discover this because of their phenomenological approach, whereby they listened to women’s reports and then sought supporting empirical evidence.

Masters and Johnson (1966) identified multiple stages of orgasm starting with the initial response to sexual stimulation, vasocongestion, also known as flushing, involving the engorgement of the blood vessels most intensely in the genital area and elsewhere, such as the breasts. This venous congestion increases until a level of tension is reached, and pelvic floor

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muscles contract rhythmically, the upper two thirds of the vagina extends, and discharges in orgasm [Components 1, 2, 4, 6]. Masters and Johnson's research concluded clitoral orgasm and vaginal orgasm ('coital orgasm'), (Sherfey, 1966; Moore, 1977) were the same physiologically.

Five components in this dissertation research can be identified in the physiological experiences described by Masters and Johnson [Components 1, 2, 4, 6, 7]. Their findings describe in detail what females ideally become aware of through erotic affects and sexual activities. This is an acute awareness of their physical and psychic rudiments, shifts in tension, and heightened homoerotic affects [Components 1, 2, 4]. Then, there is the involuntary physical action of the vagina, towards orgasm and her wish for orgasm hopefully actualized [Components 6, 7].

Moore (1977) discussed the implications of Masters and Johnson's (1966) findings related to clitoral and vaginal orgasm [Component 2], for earlier psychoanalytic interpretations of female orgasm. He concluded that the psychic representation of female orgasm played a greater role in female sexuality than had historically been understood. Moore concluded that the quality of females' orgasm was determined most by the conscious and unconscious meaning of sexual anatomy and behaviors [Component 2, 6].

Moore (1977) held that females' psychic representation of orgasm was complicated by genitalia that are not completely visible and their arousal responses dispersed over multiple sites of their anatomy including the vaginal region, the breasts, and the skin anywhere over their entire body [Component 2]. Moore believed vaginal secretions experienced passively by females before adolescence, including during the primal scene while breastfeeding, caused difficulties with forming a robust psychic representation of orgasm [Component 1].

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Moore (1977) pointed to Masters' and Johnson's (1966) findings on the physiological evidence to support the female phenomenological experience of greater variation in orgasm (intensity and degree), stimulation sites (clitoral and vaginal), and capacity of multiple orgasms. He also noted that psychoanalytic understandings of female sexuality had historically failed to include what females reported their experience to be. It was the psychic meaning of the sex act that Moore believed was fundamental to the frequency and intensity of climax or frigidity.

Moore discussed the role of past physical intimacy, as well as observed sexual relations between others, on the individual's own erotic behavior, fantasies, and wishes. He noted that Sarlin wrote:

The "primal scene" of the phallic period, the observations of sexual relations between the parents, is superimposed upon an earlier and more basic primal scene at the oral level in which the infant at the mother's breast was an active participant in an overtly erotic relationship and not an outside observer (Sarlin, 1963 (as cited in Moore, 1977, p. 312)). Moore believed that a reenactment of the oral primal scene takes place most explicitly in adults kissing and engaged in mouth-breast erotic stimulation. Object relations dynamics reflect the original primal scene and were thought to be one of the components in body ego transformation.

In conclusion, Moore bridged body ego development to one's self-representation, stating: Genital organization of the libido ("the combination of the component instincts and their subordination under the primacy of the genitals") is accomplished through the maturation of the ego, which, as Freud (1923), Schilder (1935), and many others have shown, is largely related to body structure and function. The child's perception of body sensations

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gradually builds up self-representations which are finally amalgamated into a sense of self (Jacobson, 1964, (cited in Moore 1977, p. 311).

This dissertation research responded to Moore by exploring homosexual women's sensations, perceptions, and cognition of their erotic experiences with other women [Components 1, 2, 4, 6, 7].

The Skin as a Sensory Organ and Psychological Structure

The concept of skin was raised in different ways by Freud (1905), Masters and Johnson (1966), Bick (2000), Moore (1977), and Lasky (2000). Freud had believed skin became an erotogenic zone, or what is called sexual genitals, when it developed a "mucus membrane" (1905, p. 35). Masters and Johnson observed the physiology of the skin during sexual arousal and orgasm, called vasocongestion, as having a significant role for women based on phenomenological and empirical data. Related to Masters and Johnson findings and Freud's conclusions, Moore held that the significance of women's skin in creating a greater variance of erotic body organs, causing female's to have more difficulty in forming a psychic representation of orgasm. Both Moore and Lasky wrote about experiences of the skin as experienced at the mother's breast in the 'primal scene' as possibly complicating what are primarily, adult erotic endeavors by any conflicts in feeding experiences earlier in life.

Bick (2000) believed the skin was an extremely meaningful body organ in fostering a sense of unification for the individual for its sensual nature and containing function. She held that during infancy, the skin "bind[s] together parts of the personality not as yet differentiated from parts of the body" (2000, p. 187) including early primitive anxieties, affects, and fantasies

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until introjects and identifications with others creating a deeper internalization of this containment function until these object representations develop [Component 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8].

This early primal skin optimally results in the individual developing a sense of interior space through the process of containing aspects of one's internal experience and containing introjects. Without successful whole object representations, the individual continues to need external containing objects more than is developmentally appropriate [Components 8, 5].

According to Bick (2000), when the primary function of skin is unsuccessful, a secondary skin develops entailing "pseudo-independence, by the inappropriate use of certain mental functions, or perhaps innate talents... as a substitute for the skin container function" (p. 188). The second skin is a guard or boundary used to protect a fragile semblance of self, "manifest[ing] as either a partial or total type of muscular shell or a corresponding verbal muscularity" (2000, p. 190) and leading to un-integration of "body, posture, motility, and corresponding functions of mind, particularly communication..." (2000, p. 190).

Bick's writing (2000) suggests support of this dissertation's eight proposed components. It was also found to be useful in understanding participant's interview responses. Bick drew attention to skin as an erotogenic realm and as a containing organ, when successful as indicative of the achievement of object internalization and subsequent integration of the self. This draws our attention to how verbal and physical presentation can compensate as a secondary type of skin suggesting pseudo-independence when development of primary skin fails.

Early Female Experiences of Erotic Arousal

Lasky (2000) emphasized girls' early physical experiences as the primary means by which they come to know their gender and sexual genitalia. He focused on the physical realities

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females are now known to have with eroticism, such as the engorgement of erectile tissue and “involuntary vaginal secretions” (2000, p. 1381). Lasky believed these realities played an early role in female body ego and were at the core of gender identity reworked through a woman’s lifespan. He noted that prior to knowing and seeing the male body, women had their own pleasurable erotic and genital experiences. In contrast to Freud’s penis envy, Lasky (2000) believed “girls may have an *equal* attachment to *their* genitals” (p. 1386). Lasky thought females *had* erotogenic experiences before having to confront what genitalia they did *not have*.

Like Moore (1977), Lasky (2000) was also concerned with “how the psychic representation of the body is constructed and functions” (p. 1383). He hypothesized that young girls have knowledge of their genitals because they have felt sensate, pleasurable experiences of early autoerotic activities. This reflects two components identified in this dissertation: an awareness of rudiments of the self from increasing or decreasing tensions [Components 1, 2].

Females have an internal, core sensory and genital experience that becomes represented mentally debunking the concept of penis envy. Lasky (2000) believed, “the concept of the body ego as the core of the ego is still essential... to any understanding of the richness and complexity of mental life” (p. 1408). He spoke of the individual’s bodily experiences as the starting point of mental reality that transforms over the course of one’s lifetime. One could reasonably conclude this occurred for lesbian, bisexual, and queer women in consolidating their body ego with their sexual identity.

The Role of Motor Activity in Eroticism

Jacobson (1971) believed motoric activity is necessary for the ego in controlling drive discharge and related affect states, by “taming” (p. 29) primitive affects and is expressed in two

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ways: first as external physical actions and second, as unseen internal physical tensions and sensations. Four speculated, research components were thought to stem from these libidinal drive's motoric and sensory excitations [Components 1, 2, 4, 6]. Jacobson (1971) wrote:

What first catches the eye is the significant role of rhythm in libidinal processes... related to the peculiar interplay between sensory and motor excitations which induce and enhance each other. (p. 40)

Jacobson speculated that libidinal pleasure was finely tuned variations in motor activity working in tandem with a heightened sensory awareness, such as erotic affect. Initial motor activity is often spontaneous and unchecked while mature motor actions tend to be done without upsetting the individual's internal sense of stability or safety.

Jacobson's (1971) writings are particularly important to this dissertation because she attempted to identify highly detailed and nuanced dynamics of affect, such as eroticism, in physical and psychical terms. Of all the writings on eroticism and the body, Jacobson's work was closest or most similar to the endeavor of this dissertation. She attempted to identify and describe difficult to see psychological dynamics that have a physical reality to them. She considered the psychological experience as necessarily physical and gave the abstract concepts of the libidinal drive or instinct real terms as defined by their literal and physical nature. This dissertation endeavored to explore the literal and physical female homoeroticism because it seemed to have psychological import for transformation.

Jacobson's (1971) work is significant to this dissertation because it identified the dynamics of four components proposed in this dissertation [Components 1, 2, 4, 6]. These rudiments and dynamics of physical actions and affect tensions are believed to be part of body

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ego transformation linked to the libidinal expression in female homoeroticism. Jacobson's work supports and details how specific erotic feelings and behaviors lead to changed mental and body states. She steps back from the earlier writings on body ego and orgasm, identifying how eroticism is able to make the individual seek change in the regression of the psyche with motor actions and sensations of orgasm.

Summary of Domain II

In Domain II, the way in which body ego unfolds and develops is presented, moreover, the development of body ego in relation to libidinal pleasure and eroticism is discussed in great detail. This literature provides examples of how one learns about the way one's physical anatomy works for one's self, leading to the development of ego skills to manage, even foster, positive affective experiences and decrease negative affective experiences. Instinct theorists, in their exploration of body ego development, had noted the same, if not similar dynamics, as those proposed as the eight components of transformation in this dissertation (Appendix A). These dynamics were highlighted and their relationship to the eight proposed components noted. The psychic experiences of erotic stimulation and orgasm had been intensely debated and discussed. Let it be noted again, that this literature on body ego was discovered by this researcher after having experienced the identified components firsthand and observed them in others. Body ego was chosen as the theoretical concept of the self for this study due to its foundation in the physical and bodily experiences of early life and is less affected by forces external to the participant. The theoretical concept of body ego was also chosen to be used in this research because it reflected and explained the powerful role of firsthand experiences of eroticism and the self that were the overarching questions asking to be explored in this dissertation study.

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Domain III: Transformation

In Domain III, literature pertaining to transformation is reviewed. Transformation of body ego has not been researched, nor written about. However, transformations of two related, core constructs have: transformation of the libidinal drive and transformation of affect. The paucity of literature on transformation of body ego made the use of related transformation literature necessary as a starting point for this dissertation.

According to Freud (1923), body ego develops from the demands of the libidinal and aggression instincts manifesting overtly as affects. Similar to Freud, Kernberg (1982) wrote: “Affects...are the building blocks, or constituents, of drives” (p. 236). Eroticism can be understood specifically as an affect disposition of the libidinal drive. The seminal works on transformation of affect by Jacobson (1953, 1971) and transformation of the libidinal instinct by Loewald (1980) may provide possible qualities of body ego transformation. Both these writers understood transformation of affect and libidinal drive as part of body ego.

Transformation of Affect

Jacobson (1953, 1971) proposed a theory of affect in which experiences of pleasure and unpleasure manifest as tensions [Component 1] in the context of discharge processes of psychic energy. Jacobson (1971) believed the key to understanding affect’s tension dynamics and discharge processes was “related to the mystery of the pleasure-unpleasure qualities of feelings” (p. 14) [Components 1, 2, 3, 4]. While pleasure and unpleasure reflect what feels good or bad to the individual, Jacobson specified that pleasure and unpleasure serve particular functions [Component 2] in the psychic economy as well. She understood that “...our affects and especially our conscious feeling experiences—complex, subtle, and highly differentiated though

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they are—divulge very little of these complicated conditions in the depth of the psychic apparatus” (1971, p. 22). How the structural and dynamic terms of affect are remarkably similar, if not the same, to seven of the eight components are explained and highlighted in this section [Components 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8].

Jacobson (1971) thought that there were many ways psychic energy was moved around, building and dissipating within and between structures in the psyche [Components 1, 2]. This occurred in different ways, such as when pleasure is discharged or changed into unpleasure. Jacobson summarized,

This schematization reflects the dynamic course of life, which represents not only inevitable changes between pleasure and unpleasure—stemming from the demands of reality—but, insofar as it is pleasurable, alternates—continuously between excitement and relief pleasures, which correspond to discharge processes involving rises and falls of psychic excitation from a certain median level. ...a striving for cycles of pleasure having different qualities, alternating between excitement and relief...” (1971, pp. 26-27)

In sum, the drive and its affects manifest in multiple ways and were experienced as tensions [Component 1] different in quantity. The quantity is measured by its rhythm, speed, and frequency. Jacobson believed another notable feature of affects was their different expression [Component 2] depending on what preceded and followed it.

According to Jacobson (1971) simple affect, also called intrasystemic affect, originate in one intrapsychic system. Affects derived from different psychic structures are compound affects. The affect of homoeroticism is an example of a libidinal instinctual tension that occurs in the id. Feelings of love, guilt, embarrassment, or disgust [Component 3] that commonly accompany

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eroticism are intersystemic affects arising between the id, ego, or superego. She believed intrasystemic and intersystemic tensions moved at different speeds; the tensions in libidinal affects changing quickly and tensions in compound affects changing slowly [Component 1]. With maturation these are “interrelated, which condition one another, and which arise simultaneously or sequentially at various sites in the psychic apparatus (1971, p. 47).” Over time, “the psychic organization gain[s] an ever-increasing subtle power over the distribution and release of energetic forces and, consequently, over affective manifestations...” (1971, pp. 31-32). These aspects of affect described above by Jacobson are believed to be reflected in this researcher’s proposed components: dynamics of psychic tension, awareness of rudiments of the self, and taking physical actions [Components 1, 2, 6]. Jacobson identified specific changes in high and low speed tensions unique to particular affective experiences, such as life’s most outstanding pleasurable moments [Component 4]. Jacobson (1971) held that certain affects were linked directly to physical and motor pathways, as in orgasm or laughter [Components 4, 6]. She believed that these convulsive motor phenomena indicated a “special connection between excitation of the motor apparatus and the high speed energetic flux” (1971, p. 40). This high speed energetic flux was believed to be related to heightened erotic affects.

Jacobson (1971) described the erotic object as critical in allowing libidinal energy to be expressed and then taken back into the self [Component 8]. In summary, she wrote:

A study of these different types of erotic pleasure makes us aware of the important role that outside stimuli play in the speed conditions of the psychic processes. The ideational and self and object representation in the ego represent central areas where psychic energy is accumulated, bound in lasting cathexis, and thus prevented from direct discharge...it

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appears that the outside stimuli have the function not only of helping to mobilize bound psychic energy, but also of cathecting and forming a sort of gathering pole at the stimulated area, which attracts and directs the energetic flux toward the site of final discharge. The speed of the discharge processes and the affective qualities thus depend greatly on the quality and intensity of the external stimuli. The regulating and selective influence of the various types of external stimuli on the mode and speed of psychic release is of great importance for the special study of affective phenomena. (1971, p. 41)

This dissertation study is based on the belief that specific types of erotic-object experiences play a role in transformations of body ego for bisexual, queer, and lesbian identified women.

Jacobson believed that objects had the ability to engender and organize libidinal energy that ultimately gives rise to body ego [Component 8]. The effect could be successful as Jacobson describes above or libidinal expression could be inhibited.

Jacobson (1971) explained how the quality of pleasure one felt might be diminished, when anxiety from painful, premature demands to sublimate libidinal energy is integrated with pleasurable experiences. Jacobson (1971) held that realities, such as the erotic object, parental prohibitions, and cultural prohibitions may, "...curb direct instinctual discharge, postponing action, and introducing attenuated unpleasurable affects..." (p. 36) [Component 8]. When the original pleasure sought is unobtainable, Jacobson believed the energy seeking pleasure is expressed as unpleasure and the individual could develop masochistic tendencies.

Jacobson (1971) argued that one way females develop limitations for their libidinal pleasure stems from internalization and identification with a primary object limited in her own ability to feel pleasure. The daughter would need to achieve true independence to get beyond her

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mother's body ego limitations before being able to have the capacity to be alone (away from her mother) [Component 5]. Other factors that might diminish homoerotic libidinal pleasure include negative social attitudes towards homosexuality. The participants in this dissertation were expected to have had a history of unpleasurable affect (resulting from the need for sublimation of the libidinal drive) and increased pleasurable affect (resulting from successfully actualized homoeroticism) [Component 4]. This was one reason this researcher focused on homoeroticism in this dissertation research. Given past cultural limitations lesbian, bisexual and queer women might have needed to sublimate and control their erotic affects. This might made the components of transformation of body ego linked to libidinal instinctual satisfaction more apparent. Here we can see that Jacobson's writing about sublimated pleasure is very similar to Freud's (1905. SE in 1965, p. 28) (cited previously on page 10 of Chapter One) quote appreciating what the sexual instinct might look like, when finally released towards its original aim. This dissertation research wanted to take advantage of this as Freud had suggested.

Transformation of Instinct

Loewald (1980) wrote about transformation of instincts as they became psychic functions and structures. He did not explicitly focus on understanding the transformation of the content of the mind or representation of the object world. According to Loewald, transformation was restructuring that which was already there in another form. Loewald (1980) wrote:

If instincts are resolutely conceptualized as psychic forces, these vicissitudes are not something that happens to instincts (once they are there as it were) but are the processes by which they become organized as instincts, by which, we might say, somatic processes become transformed into psychic processes, into psychic representatives. (p. 129)

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Freud & Breuer (1893-1895, p. 7, cited in Loewald, 1980, p. 130) [Component 1, 2] identified one type of somatic process as unconscious memories, mnemonic action patterns, mnemonic images, memory traces, or kinesthetic memories. Loewald understood these to be memories comprised of motor and kinesthetic images once experienced or witnessed. These are not visual memories but physical memories or memories of physiological states. At one time, these sensations were either witnessed in others or had occurred in one's body as tensions, movements, stretches, contractions, aches, or pains [Component 1, 2, 3, 6, 8]. According to Loewald (1980), these sensations had their own particular pace, rhythm, and intensity.

The libidinal instinct is not easily observable to the adult mind. This is largely because instinct tensions [Component 1] undergo transformation in early development becoming psychic structures and processes. Loewald (1980) thought the unconscious was most visible in automatic repetitions, which result from a failure to internalize these objects, reliving instead a kind of concrete reenactment to hold onto them [Component 6, 8]. Automatic repetitions mimic what was previously known. The individual repeats what he or she had done in the past or observed others doing. Once internalization processes have been successful, transformation of libidinal and aggressive instincts crucial to the formation of a new, independent identity can occur.

Loewald (1980) wrote:

By internalization, then, the libidinal-aggressive relations between subject and object, as well as identity of subject and object, are given up, destroyed, and separate "identities" are formed or reconstituted. The identity of the individual as well as the identity of his objects becomes defined or redefined. (p. 83)

Loewald (1980) believed the transformation of unconscious psychic material led to an "an inner

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freedom we call maturity” (p. 83). He concluded that kinesthetic memories were templates that organized one’s instincts. Following from this conclusion, this researcher believed some of the components of transformation, proposed in this dissertation, are reflected aspects of one’s personally meaningful mnemonic images and kinesthetic memories [Component 1, 2].

Loewald (1980) thought the object plays a crucial role in transforming instincts and wrote: “...the object does not become assigned to the instinct (understood as a psychic force) but contributes crucially to the organization of instincts *qua* instincts, just as instinctual forces crucially contribute to the organization of objects *qua* objects.” (p. 130) [Component 8] Objects are not just targets or recipients of the instinct but also act as instigators. This supports the idea that acknowledging and acting on one’s felt homoeroticism would likely facilitate the organization of the instincts and the meaning of objects in a new way. Loewald (1980) went on to say, “appropriate environmental activity does not necessarily only reduce or abolish excitation but also *engenders* and *organizes* excitation processes. So-called mnemonic images are thus created, which are not additions to but constituents of instincts.” (p. 130) The object’s role is active, not only passive in respect to drives. The object ideally had synchronous body ego and intrapsychic dynamics that create or change stimulation in an ideal way [Component 8].

Loewald (1980) explained how transformations of body ego resulted from transformations of the libidinal drive, causing the individual to experience less anxiety and more agency. According to Loewald, transformation of the libidinal drive would result in the ability to produce and sustain a greater range of affect states. This would bring more varied, nuanced, and sophisticated pleasures and heightened affects [Component 4]. It would also result in a reduction of unpleasure caused by redirection of psychic energy once invested in delaying wish fulfillment.

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In this dissertation research, Loewald's idea was reflected in the belief that the fulfillment of homoerotic wishes would allow heightened or more sophisticated affects [Components 4, 7].

According to Loewald (1980), the language one uses reflects whether their mental function is in primary (a more regressed psychic state) or secondary process functioning (a more mature psychic position). Primary process language has an intensity that resonates with the total emotional experience, whereas secondary process language contains reflective, clarifying interpretations of behavior, ideation, and affect. Loewald (1980) held that mental functioning did not occur in a linear, all-encompassing manner from primary to secondary process, but rather shifted between primary and secondary process in a way that,

...was characterized by a to and fro between, an interweaving of these mental processes, granted that one or the other is dominant and more manifestly guiding mentation...

Language itself, considered in terms of these categories, partakes of two sides of the coin of mentation. (p. 179)

This "to and fro ... interweaving" of mental processes was reflected in proposed components: psychic tension and rudiments of the self [Components 1, 2]. Loewald bridges the concrete phenomena of language with psychic states, illustrating what participants did in their narratives during the interview. The transformation processes can thus be observed.

Summary of Domain III

Transformation of body ego has not been researched, nor written about; therefore Domain III reviewed literature pertaining to other transformations. These include the transformation of two related, core constructs: transformation of the libidinal drive and transformation of affect. Body ego, drive, and affect are interrelated and thus the latter two may

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serve as prime resources in shedding light on the type of transformation being studied in this dissertation. As such, they can help show how different elements of psychological change may occur.

According to Freud (1923), body ego develops from the demands of the libidinal and aggression instincts that manifest overtly as affects. Similar to Freud, Kernberg (1982) wrote: “Affects...are the building blocks, or constituents, of drives” (p. 236). Eroticism, understood specifically as an affect disposition of the libidinal drive, also offers a rich avenue into understanding body ego and its transformation. The seminal works on transformation of affect by Jacobson (1953, 1971) and transformation of the libidinal instinct by Loewald (1980) likewise provide rich potential for insight into possible qualities of body ego transformation. All of these writers understood transformation of affect and libidinal drive as part of body ego. These theoretical domains need to be teased apart as finer conceptual details of body ego’s transformation related to homoeroticism are arrived at and need to be understood.

The paucity of literature on transformation of body ego made the use of related transformation literature necessary as a starting point for this dissertation. For exploratory purposes in this early phase of research on female homoeroticism, transformation of drive and transformation of affect offer the best potential for exploring transformation of body ego at this point.

Domain IV: Phenomenological Methodology

Phenomenological methodology is the study of the way things are felt, as opposed to the way they are. Psychoanalytic theorists have believed metaphor organizes and expresses bodily and sensory information for us. We all are familiar with the concept of metaphor, whereby an

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application is made between a word or phrase and another object or concept which it does not literally denote, suggesting a comparison between the two. Understanding the nature of metaphor as philosophers and psychoanalytic clinicians/theorists have written about was necessary to hear these female lesbian, bisexual, and queers female participants in this dissertation research.

Language and Metaphor

Recalling the philosophers Aristotle and Locke, as well as Grindon's (1879) work on figurative language, Sharpe (1940) spoke of how the metaphysical is inexorably tied to the physical and bodily experiences give rise to metaphor concluding "Metaphor fuses sense experience, and thought into language" (p. 155). How an individual uses language, speech, and other forms of metaphor reflects one's sensations of psychosexual development, a concept used in this dissertation study's methodology.

Rooting metaphor in psychosexual development, Sharpe believed each metaphor reflected an attempt to actualize a wish or defend against it. Erotic pursuits are transformations of the pleasure instinct. Sharpe (1940) summarized:

My theory is that metaphor can only evolve in language or the arts when the bodily orifices become controlled. Then only can the angers, pleasures, and desires of the infantile life find metaphorical expression and the immaterial express itself in terms of material. A subterranean passage between mind and body underlies all analogy. (p. 156)

Similar to the concept of body ego, the concept of metaphor prioritizes physical experience as primary in the human experience of the world and ourselves. Metaphor (Borbely 1998) itself helps to organize past and current experiences. Sharpe (1940) explained that speech and language are metaphorical productions:

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The activity of speaking is substituted for the physical activity now restricted at other openings of the body, while words themselves become the very substitutes for the bodily substances. Speech secondly becomes a way of expressing, discharging ideas. We may say speech in itself is a metaphor, that metaphor is as ultimate speech. (p. 157).

Sharpe identified three types of words in language: words expressing affect without thought, words expressing ideation without affect, and metaphors which allow affect to be expressed but the extent of the affect is kept contained. Words expressing feelings without thoughts are primary process psychic discharge, typically simple words such as ‘damn’ and ‘Oh God!’ (1940, p. 158) or onomatopoeias (words imitating sounds: scream, piss, chuckle, and suck).

Alternatively, there is speech in which the meaning of actual words matters little, but the speech may be laden with affect communicated in its volume, rhythm, rate, or intensity, the affect is obvious and accurate to what the individual feels but the reason for the affect is not. Sharpe (1940) believed that only by listening metaphorically could one come to understand what patients were saying and wrote, “Just as in the study of language we find no word is metaphysical without its first been physical, so our search when we listen to patients must be for the physical basis and experience from which metaphysical speech springs” (p. 156). For this reason, metaphor is fundamental to this dissertation study.

Sharpe (1940) understood metaphor as complex, sensate forms of communication, transferring sensate knowledge to verbal sounds and behaviors, and wrote “a live metaphor reveal[ed] a past forgotten experience and that this was originally a psycho-physical one” (p. 158). Carrying nonverbal information, metaphor affords the listener knowledge of the speaker’s full experience. Some of that information are commonly known, others idiosyncratic and known

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only to the speaker. The sensual nature of this language also encourages the listener to identify with the speaker.

Building on Sharpe's work, Arlow (1979) discussed metaphor positing that metaphor had multiple functions. It helps in communicating, integrating, organizing, and making sense of new encounters in one's everyday life. Arlow(1979) thought humans came to understand something new by seeing how it was or was not similar to something previously known, writing:

...metaphors constitute the only way by which what was hitherto unknown may be organized and conceptualized in a novel way. Any new term for a set of relationships not previously discerned will ultimately have to be expressed in some form of metaphor, because of the very nature of human thought and language. (p. 383)

Arlow understood metaphor as crucial to being human. Both Sharpe (1940) and Arlow (1979) believed metaphors expressed universal instinctual meaning as well as personal information. The personal aspects of metaphor can easily be observed in a slip-of-the-tongue comment, wherein the words and speech are understood as expressing the unconscious content normally kept hidden and internal.

Arlow (1979) and others had observed that unconscious fantasies were also reflected in metaphors. Forrest (1973) wrote, "metaphorical expression reveals the nature of the patients' character structure as well as their unconscious fantasies" (1973 (cited in Arlow, 1979, p. 372). Arlow believed each metaphorical expression was connected to an impulse and unconscious fantasy waiting to be expressed, and the metaphor serves as wish fulfillment or a defense against that wish. This can be observed as metaphor in swearing, profanity, or crude words and phrases, such as "Shit!" or calling someone "a Dick." Similar to Sharpe (1940), Arlow (1979) believed

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“slang terms in particular derive their exquisite specificity of evocations by virtue of the carried-over meaning from other contexts” (p. 382). The other context for such crude terms tends to involve pleasure seeking behaviors or shaming bodily processes. This layered, transformed meaning from earlier life experiences makes language inherently metaphorical.

Though unseen and inexplicit, metaphorical expressions always have historical references to past, personal experiences according to both Sharpe (1940) and Arlow (1979) and can be simultaneously revealing and concealing. Arlow (1979) described metaphors as either “vitaly innovative and expressive or of a stale, cliché quality” (p. 370). The more stale and common a metaphor is, the more an individual using it can hide with it. The common meaning of the metaphor serves as a wall behind which one’s feelings and thoughts remain safely undisclosed. The listener is fooled into believing he or she understands what the speaker feels and thinks. Arlow (1979) believed there was “an element of displacement of meaning, metaphor readily lends itself as a means of warding off anxiety” (p. 371). The speaker does not share real thoughts but hides personal, historical meaning and charged associations, using canned metaphor as a decoy.

Arlow (1979) identified psychological properties and the metaphorical nature of speech and language. Because the data from this transformation research called for nonverbal experience to be verbalized and exhibited, the psychological properties of language and speech itself needed to be identified in its methodology. So fundamental to our experience of ourselves and the world, speech and language can sometimes be taken for granted. It is almost as if speech and language cannot be observed or noticed.

Arlow (1979) wrote, “Speech represents how individuals avail themselves of their

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language and how they employ it for the several functions it can serve” (p. 364). The goal an individual has in saying what he or she says is the function of one’s speech, which may be cognitive (speaking of objects and their relationships), expressive (sharing thoughts or feelings), or appeal (eliciting a certain response). Motives of speech reflect an individual’s aim. In this dissertation, participant’s motives were observed and understood as part of the data to be explored.

This research used techniques meant to elicit unconscious processes for both the participant and researcher. Arlow (1979) believed, uninterrupted, open space facilitated the disclosure of the unconscious and the therapist’s understanding of patient’s words metaphorically, and wrote “...the basic rule of reporting uncritically whatever comes to mind, as well as the relatively one-sided flow of dialogue, facilitate[s] the emergence of derivatives of unconscious processes...”(p. 364). Participants’ style and function of speech, as well as choice of metaphor, were all vital in observing components of transformation linked to homoeroticism. In this dissertation study, participants were asked to free associate, making the content of participants’ narrative and the style itself data. The prompting was the researcher listening to participants’ responses literally and metaphorically.

Arlow (1979) believed the metaphorical nature of language facilitated communication of experiential, nonverbal, and somatic content, noting “mutual understanding derives from the power of human speech to create states of mind in the listener akin to those in the speaker” (p. 364). Thus, a clinician could tacitly know aspects of non-verbal experience for themselves. Arlow also believed metaphor helped organize ideation and beliefs not yet formulated. Arlow (1979) understood transference as an “intense, lived-out metaphor of the patient’s neurosis” (p.

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382). What the patient superimposes on others and pulls for is then metaphorical, too. For this reason, this researcher's countertransference was another part of the qualitative data in this research.

Metaphor helps to organize and express how eroticism unfolds and gets expressed. In this research, metaphor was expected to play a role in generating participants' responses and as the lens through which participants' responses were understood. Understanding metaphor was expected to aid in exploring components of transformation of body ego relating to eroticism and homoeroticism.

Projective Methodology

Building on the understandings of Sharpe and Arlow, as well as his own work with the Rorschach, Weiner (1994) expressed his insight that the Rorschach does not 'measure' personality to see how much personality one has. Rather the Rorschach elicits data so as to assess personality structure and dynamics to shed light on the manner in which one sees the world, deals with people, relationships, and problems, one's strengths and weaknesses, one's personality characteristics and emotional functioning. Weiner (1994) wrote, "viewing the Rorschach as a method promotes full use of the available data, both perceptual and thematic, to paint a comprehensive picture of personality structure and dynamics" (p. 498).

Weiner (1994) found that Rorschach Inkblot Methodology (RIM) generates data, rich with details of participant's cognitive structuring (arrived at through attention, perception, logical analysis) and thematic imagery (generated through projective and symbolization processes). He explained that "Rorschach responses involve both a perceptual organizing process that has continuity with perception in everyday life and associational processes that reveal underlying

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personality dynamics” (Rappaport, Gill, & Schafer, 1946/1968, Chap. 9). RIM was successful in revealing both the structure and dynamics of personality. Both body ego and erotic experience entail these same crucial elements, perceptual organizing and associated processes.

RIM was believed to be a good model for the dissertation interviews because the specific information it generates is crucial in the formation of body ego. Weiner (1994) reflected on what psychological processes have been understood to be involved:

...In a contemporary statement of their dualistic approach, Blatt (1990) described the Rorschach as both a test of perception, involving how people construct their experience, and an evaluation of representation, involving the meanings that people assign to their perceptual experiences. (p. 500)

Rausch de Traubenberg (1993) similarly explained that in the Rorschach “What is perceived and what is experienced are co-mingled” (p. 9). It calls on participants to perceive simultaneously external and internal reality (i.e., fantasy). In experiencing their body, women do the same thing. Dimen (2000) takes this further in her exploration of women’s relationship to their own bodies, treating this relationship as if it were a Rorschach response. It is her point that “The body is what it is and what we make of it” (2000, p. 11), that ignited the idea for this dissertation research. Perceiving external or “objective” reality and internal or “subjective” reality at the same time, is the same cognitive task at the heart of female body ego. In particular, this is the core cognitive and psychological experience navigated in sexual excitement and eroticism.

The translation of the Rorschach inkblot to the use of one’s own body as the percept is complicated by the idea that body and mind are intertwined. Body ego theorists believed this debacle has been and continues to be an ongoing reality for women. When responding to the

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prompts in the interview of their body anatomy, there was tension in identifying with one's perception of objective and external reality or subjective and internal reality. This tension is also reflected historically in the development of theories on women's psychosexual development. Lasky (2000) argued that females also develop a sense of their physicality and internal genitalia from sensations occurring within themselves. Adequately attaining pleasure, successfully transforming the libidinal instinct, and being good enough at actualizing erotic wishes is at the center of development and believed to be evident in body ego.

Body Boundaries

Early on psychologists expressed theories related to women's concern about their body and its' boundaries. Freud's (1914) original writings emphasized female's body openings as inevitably causing women's perceived vulnerability and weakness. He emphasized individuals' positive and negative associations to body openings. In his work with females suffering from inhibited orgasm, Keiser (1952) reported his theory that this difficulty was connected to an unconscious fear that death would occur with orgasm. Keiser theorized that this fear of death was actually the loss of consciousness of all but what was directly involved with orgasm. At the moment of orgasm, there is an unawareness of external reality, external objects, and de-cathexis to the body as a whole that occurred with increasing sexual stimulation and during orgasm. Keiser (1952) observed this with patients, who had "anxiety from a sense of insecurity about peripheral and internal aspects of the body image" (p. 154). One cannot orgasm and hold onto an awareness of others.

Fisher (1986) believed that the way people depict the boundaries of their inkblot responses mirrored how they felt about their own body boundaries. Others have also written on

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body-boundaries in personality organization, including Fisher & Cleveland (1958, 1968), Shontz (1969), McCrea (1982), and Fisher (1986). Two aspects of body boundaries were found meaningful (Fisher 1986, Fisher & Cleveland 1958, 1968), the first was experiences of openness and penetrability verses firmness and definiteness, and the second was experiences containing, protective, and boundary defining qualities of the percept's periphery.

Female representation of body periphery provides dynamic information about their sense of boundary integrity and object relations. On Rorschach inkblots, Fisher and Cleveland (1958) identified what they called, "barrier" (p. 207) responses, as protective, containing, or covering. Examples included warm and tactile descriptors (i.e., fuzziness) or inviting, decorative patterns (i.e., a checkered table cloth at a romantic Italian dinner). Examples of more intense coverings, such as men in armor or a cave with rock walls, were believed to portray impenetrable or fortified boundaries. These were indicative of not having accessibility to others and not being penetrated from forces in the outside world. In this transformation research, boundary integrity and participants' attitudes toward their body openings were similarly understood and observed.

Summary of Domain IV

In Domain IV, literature on the details of the phenomenological method employed in this study was presented and discussed. In this study, the first priority was to elicit a robust subjective and retrospective narrative of life-time experiences of female homoeroticism free of internalized censorship, from which components of transformation might be gleaned. Given this priority, literature on methodological and interpretative techniques, as has been used in projective assessments like the Rorschach, was reviewed and considered. Psychoanalytic theorists have long believed that metaphor both organizes and expresses bodily and sensory

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information for the speaker and the listener alike. In the dissertation interview, participants were asked to associate to their erogenous zones and genitalia, providing responses that reflected affective qualities of their body orifices and body integrity. Pieced together, these responses revealed a narrative of body ego development linked to eroticism.

This domain's literature supported the use of these projective processes for exposing metaphorical data. These methods illumined the nonverbal and regressive material in a way that allowed it to be heard, explored, and hopefully understood. As such, these methods provided access to areas of experience which might otherwise remain unrecognized and hidden, possibly from the speaker and interviewer alike. The material provided in the participant's responses was considered for possible components of transformation.

Literature Review Summary

In Domain I, a detailed discussion of what has or has not been researched and written about female homosexuality clarifies why certain questions still need to be asked and answers found. The psychological and mental health literature presented in Domain I elucidates our present understanding of female homosexuality and illuminates a way to move forward. Early in the twentieth century, Freud and other psychoanalytic theorists prioritized the role of sexuality. Generally however, women's sexuality was regarded as less mature and female homosexuality as 'deviant' and 'perverse'. In some measure, this was due to the lack of women's voices in describing their own sexual experience. A paucity of phenomenological-based research and writings on female homosexuality and a review of what research has been done, indicates that female homosexual experiences needs to be better documented, researched, and understood.

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The pioneering and phenomenological research of Kinsey, Masters, and Johnson mid-century moved the field forward by asking women to describe their sexual experiences and finding empirical evidence to explain it. This had a significant effect in understanding the role of sexuality that psychoanalysts had thought so meaningful. The phenomenological and empirical research confirmed its importance, while also debunking previous errors made. Kinsey, Masters, and Johnson's (1970) findings were an important breakthrough for all women, heterosexual and homosexual alike. Numerous studies were then published about homosexuals in the remainder of the twentieth century, but were subsequently found flawed and inconclusive regarding females. A large review (Chung and Katayama, 1996) of research on female homosexuality noted the significant underrepresentation of females and serious methodological flaws which called into question much of their findings.

Literature since 2000 has revealed female homosexual behavior to be more common than originally thought (Kristiansen and Pederson, 2008) but painted a concerned picture involving higher rates of homelessness and high rates of mental health issues. Other studies have shown that LGB women were as healthy as their heterosexual peers and much like their counterparts in committed relationships. Overall, these studies found the homosexual population to be more stressed, at greater risk, and underserved. This literature supports the need for more research to better understand homosexuality and is pivotal in providing mental health services this population needs

Domain I pointed to the need and responsibility for research that stays close to the first person experience of female homosexuals, thus assuring that it is their voice that is heard to formulate more accurate representation and developmental theory. The misunderstandings and

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lack of knowledge about being female, being sexual, and particularly being homosexual have made it difficult for women to talk about, explore, and represent their own sexuality regardless of sexual orientation. For example, evidence of the linguistic poverty and lack of nomenclature for female sexuality, as symbolized by the difficulty this research had in finding the plural form of clitoris when writing this dissertation, was documented in numerous studies. A review of this research also showed that the inner world of female homosexuals needs to be better documented, researched, understood, and represented.

More contemporary theories using cultural studies, with feminist, postmodern, and queer theories have proposed female homosexuality as a normal developmental outcome of the challenges and milestones common to heterosexuals (i.e. conflict, competition, rivalry, etc.). These writers included Dimen, whose 1998 paper, 'The Body as Rorschach', ignited the concept of this dissertation study. The writings of these contemporary theorists provide excellent examples of new developmental models that hold the body as a sacred concept and make great efforts to protect its rights for representation on its own account. Writers, such as De Lauretis (1990), Elise (2000), Chiang (2008), Drazenovich (2012), have framed and contextualized how the body could have played a key role in transformations linked to female homoeroticism. Better representation by women and homosexuals has been an ongoing priority for these contemporary writers, leading them to broadly support phenomenological research, such as this dissertation research

In Domain II, literature on the development of female body ego, particularly in relation to the libidinal pleasure of eroticism was reviewed. These writings were important in the development of this dissertations research for two reasons: they support the idea that pleasurable

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experiences can play a significant role in bringing about transformation of body ego and they provided detailed explanations for how the physical and psychological processes of transformation occur. The components of transformation proposed in this dissertation were arrived at from three sources. They were experienced firsthand by this researcher. This researcher then observed and heard the components in the accounts of other female homosexuals. Lastly, these components were recognized in the literature presented in domains II and III. These all happened prior to interviewing research participants.

Domain II literature, rich in dynamics similar to the eight components of transformation, provides support and a theoretical foundation for this exploratory research. The classical writings of Lasky (2000), Hoffer (1950), Ferenczi (1938), Keiser (1952, 1956), Moore (1977), Jacobson (1953, 1964, 1967) and Winnicott (1958) on body ego development hold true for body ego development, regardless of sexual orientation or sexual identity. As previously pointed out, contemporary writers on female homosexuality, such as De Lauretis (1990) and others, believed that the developmental challenges at play in body ego development were the same for homosexual and heterosexual women. This researcher pursued this exploratory study looking for components of body ego transformation guided by these classic tenets of body ego development and transformation. Each writer highlighted specific aspects of body ego formation, which were recognized by this researcher as being fundamentally similar to particular components presented in this dissertation. These were discussed in the context of how one comes to know one's physical self and in doing so, comes to develop one's mental self. The concept of body ego was chosen for this dissertation because it is believed that the components are a distillation of the processes of body ego development.

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Lasky (2000) first theorized about the importance of body ego, noting the way females are able to use initial cues from what they felt in their body [Components 1, 2, 3] to transform the meaning of their relatively unseen genitalia to compose their gender identity. He had an understanding of females' gender identity as stemming from the preoedipal experience of their kinesthetic sensations, involuntary vaginal secretions, and erectile tissue response [Components 1, 2, 3]. Another theorist reviewed was Hoffer (1950), who wrote about 'structural differentiation' as a key psychic process in the early stages of body ego development whereby an infant cognizes body parts and their function, thus gaining agency of them [Components 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7].

The writers (Hoffer, 1950; Ferenzi 1938; Keiser 1952, 1956; Moore 1977; Winnicott 1958) reviewed wrote about psychological aspects of successful orgasm, understanding orgasm as a mature psychic achievement, involving regression and laden with primitive affect. In their writings, orgasm entailed varying states of physical and psychic tension and actions, revealing key rudiments of the self, even including foul parts of the self, more typically avoided out of shame or conflict [Components 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7]. Interestingly, many of these writings arose in ongoing discussions on the differences between vaginal and clitoral orgasm. Master's and Johnson's (1970) work proved these to be empirically the same. In supporting findings on women's multiple erotic stimulation sites and capacity for multiple orgasms, Master's and Johnson's (1970) was then discussed in Domain II as providing physical evidence for components 1, 2, 3, 4, and 6. Lastly, Jacobson's (1971) belief that motoric activity with accompanying sensory excitations was necessary for the ego to control libidinal drive discharges

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was discussed at the heart of erotic experiences and likely producing components 1, 2, 3, 4, and 6.

Other themes stood out and were discussed, such as skin as an erotic and sensory orgasm serving as a containing psychic structure for the individual's emerging sense of self (Bick 2000) [Components 5, 8]. Another ongoing theme discussed by Lasky (2000) was female's experience of her erotic body realms and genitalia including her vaginal secretions [Components 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7]. The final theme was on experiences of being alone as feared (Hoffer, 1950; Keiser, 1952; Moore, 1977; Lasky, 2000) [Components 5, 8], sought (Winnicott, 1958) [Components 5, 8], and developmentally necessary (Hoffer, 1950; Keiser, 1952; Winnicott, 1958; Moore, 1977; Lasky, 2000) [Components 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7] for orgasm and maturity. Notable object relations theory (Winnicott, 1958; Bick, 2000) was also reviewed, especially in regard to the capacity to be independent and alone [Component 5].

Domain III literature helped to give clarity to an important time of change or transformation, inherent to individuals 'coming out'. Since there have not been writings directly on transformation of body ego linked to female homoeroticism, prominent writings on transformation of two concepts deeply involved in body ego and eroticism were reviewed. These were Jacobson's (1953, 1971) transformation of affect and Loewald's (1980) transformation of instinct. Jacobson's and Loewald's writings on transformation provide a theoretical foundation that shed light on how transformation of body ego linked to female homoeroticism might occur. In addition, this literature had multiple references to what seemed to be the same dynamics as the eight components proposed in this dissertation study. This

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highlighted how the components of transformation seemed to reflect qualities of body ego and also reflect the nature of the transformation process itself.

Jacobson's (1953, 1971) theory of affect theorized psychic energy as moving around. She wrote about psychic energy building and dissipating within and between structures in the psyche [Components 1, 2] when pleasure is discharged or changed into unpleasure. With maturity, intrasystemic and intersystemic tensions become interrelated, conditioning one another and causing growing control over how affect manifests [Component 1, 2, 6]. Objects can limit feelings of pleasure or engender and organize libidinal pleasure [Component 8]. These all give rise to body ego and it came to be understood that transformation of body ego in light of homoerotic feelings was very similar to what had been before observed and theorized about body ego development by classical, Instinct and Object Relations theorists.

Before transformation of the instinct, like Freud, Loewald (1980) believed that instinct was most visible in the individual's automatic repetitions of behavior, thought, or mood. Loewald believed that such repeated actions originated from motoric and kinesthetic memories of one's self or memories of others doing so [Components 1, 2, 3, 6, 8]. Loewald wrote that these actions or kinesthetic memories were taken up without having a good grasp on the meaning of the action, what one was doing, or why one was doing it. These behaviors do not stem from independent decisions made of one's own volition, which could occur only after the instinct is transformed. If the individual's actions do not grow out of an unconscious and automatic repetition but stem from a true chosen decision, Loewald believed the individual was living more independently and maturely [Component 1, 6]. Transformation of instinct makes one freer to choose one's behavior, thought, or mood and have ownership over it. In regard to this

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dissertation research, it may be unclear which type of action participants have made, but either form would likely qualify as any number of component permutations.

According to Loewald (1980), transformation of the instinct also leaves the individual able to make freer choices about what object relations dynamics are desired [Component 8]. The relational dynamic with the object is always present, either loudly or tacitly. These two types of object dynamics can be observed in their components—either concretely in the form of tensions, rudiments of the self, including foul parts, and physical actions [Components 1, 2, 3, 6,8] or in other forms, such as heightened affects increased capacity to be alone, and wished being actualized [Components 4,5,7,8]. In automatic repetition the object is more concretely mimicked and with more successful transformation, the object is internalized becoming a standing part of the whole self. This reflects how one might be more aware of one's self as comprised of parts when functioning in automatic repetitions of one's self or others from the past [Component 2]. With more successful transformation, the sense of being comprised of parts would seem to decline as one has an integrated whole-self maturity.

In Domain IV, literature supporting the phenomenological method employed in this study was presented and discussed. It was believed that these writings provide explanation and support for the design and methodology selected for this dissertation. These were explored and used for their ability to elicit a robust subjective and retrospective narrative of female homoeroticism, unencumbered by external influence as much as possible. Projective techniques, Rorschach methodology, and metaphorical concepts were explored for their appropriateness and usefulness in this phenomenological task of exploring components of transformation in homoerotic

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experiences. At such, they provided the 'tools' for collecting and unlocking the content of the projective data collected. This literature validates the process employed towards this end.

In summary, it was Dimen's work on the Body as Rorschach that gave impetus to the phenomenological and projective methodology for this research. Certainly, it was Freud's work on the primacy of body experiences, the central role of sexuality, and the concept of the body ego that was the foundation for this dissertation. Finally, it was Jacobson's effort to identify and describe difficult to see psychological dynamics, that have a physical reality to them, and to consider the psychological experience, rooted in the physical, that served as a model and pointed the way for this research to be done and understood.

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CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

This study is exploratory research looking in a phenomenological way at female homoeroticism and its power to bring about transformation in participants' body ego. Many aspects of this study involve areas of research where much is unknown, data is difficult to access, and methods for collecting data are limited. Keeping this in mind, it behooves us to recall what Mintzberg (1983) had to say regarding any effort in exploratory research, when he described it as, "...peripheral vision, poking around in relevant places, a good dose of creativity—that is what makes good research, always has, in all fields" (1983, p. 109). These aspects of Mintzberg's "good research" are particularly relevant to the research of new and undeveloped topics, such as women's sexuality, homosexuality, body ego, and transformation.

The exploratory question behind this research is whether consciously felt female homoeroticism (when acknowledged, acted on, and incorporated into one's sexual identity) can be linked to transformation of body ego for these women, the components of which can be identified. Eight possible components of this transformation were proposed (Appendix A). These included experiences of internal physical and psychic tension, an awareness's of rudiments of one's self, an awareness of foul parts of one's self, heightened affects, an increased capacity to be alone, physical actions occurring, and wishes being actualized in the context of particular object relations dynamics. While these components were thought to occur in transformations, it was not expected that all eight would necessarily occur in every transformation. It was also thought that certain individuals might present with components of varying degrees of intensity and components that were particularly salient for them. This researcher also expected that participants might present with unanticipated components of

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transformation.

Research Method

Women identifying as lesbian, bisexual, or queer were recruited and administered a projective and narrative qualitative interview created by this researcher (Appendix D).

Participant's responses were gathered in two sessions, recorded, and later transcribed verbatim.

The data obtained were explored metaphorically for evidence of the identified eight proposed components of eroticism seemingly linked to transformation of body ego.

Participants

This researcher recruited participants by inviting friends and professional colleagues to speak with others who met the criteria of the study and assess their interest in participating. This investigator contacted interested women, at which time an oral script (Appendix B) describing the research study was read and potential participant's questions were answered. Individuals, who consented orally to participate, were set up with interview times. Written consent was obtained in the first meeting (Appendix C). Participation was voluntary.

Nine individuals consented to be participants in the study. They were females from the New York City area, between the ages of 25 and 35, who self-identified as lesbian, bisexual, or queer. A ten-year age range was chosen to avoid significant generational differences in the social and cultural context, in which these women had homoerotic experiences and identified their sexual orientation. Individuals age 25 to 35 were the first generation to come of age after the second wave of feminism and gay liberation in the 1960s.

Procedures

Each participant was interviewed in two separate sessions, ideally one week apart. This

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time span was thought to maintain continuity as well as allow for participant's reactions to the interview material to surface. Two sessions were needed to complete the semi-structured interview and to allow time for the participants to verbalize any questions, concerns or feelings that might have surfaced. The first session was typically one to two hours long, depending on the quantity of responses and speed of responding. This was usually enough time for the participants to answer more than half the interview questions. The second meeting was usually shorter, lasting only as long as was needed. During this time the remaining questions from the interview measure were administered. Time was also allowed for the participant to discuss thoughts that might have come up regarding the research project or the subject matter. Referrals were also made to mental health professionals in case any participants wished to discuss any of these issues in greater depth. The interviews were conducted in a private room at The Graduate Center of The City University of New York and audio taped.

Instrument

The instrument designed by this researcher for use in this dissertation inquiry was a semi-structured, open-ended, projective interview (Appendix D) which had two sections. In the first part, participants were asked for descriptions of their body in general and specific erotic body organs and regions. This gave specific features of her body ego. The second part of the interview had prompts for the participant to describe her body over the course of her life and in the context of female homosexual thoughts and behaviors. This was a retrospective sketch of the participant's erotic experiences over the course of her life. Questions then focused on the participant's homoerotic experiences with women. The overall developmental trajectory of the participant's felt eroticism was needed to contextualize and ground transformative phenomena

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she may or may not have had with women sexually.

The interview was designed to have participant's associations drive the data and not this researcher's exploratory question. By asking participants to simply talk about their body in relation to eroticism, it was left up to the participants to determine in what way, on what level, or in what context. The participant's response would then likely contain unconscious qualities related to the specific subject of the prompt.

This style of questioning encourages participants to freely give the features and characteristics they associate with their body and eroticism, as opposed to specifically asking if they had had particular types of experience. If direct explicit questioning had been used, this researcher would have missed aspects of the participant's transformation not anticipated (i.e., not matching this researcher's transformation). These interview questions were meant to be as un-intrusive on the participant as possible. The qualities of the participant's transformation were evident, not only in the literal content of responses, but also in how the response was organized, articulated, and communicated.

Following a projective model of inquiry, using questions broad in scope and simple in language, helped to create space for participants' unconscious associations and idiosyncratic meanings to emerge. Some examples from the interviews might help to illustrate this. When prompted, "Tell me about your body," participants frequently asked "in what respect?" This however, was articulated differently by each participant and how it was articulated was thought to be partly indicative of aspects of body ego and partly of how she experienced eroticism. In their variations, participants revealed dynamic themes in which they live in, through, and with their bodies. One participant responded, "Experience in terms of like, what I think of my

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body...? Another asked, “As a lesbian? As a woman?” A third laughed saying, “Oh. That’s such a broad question. I guess deliberately so. Um I guess I pretty much always liked my body... So what do you want to know about my body?” The articulation of their request for more direction reflected different qualities about their body ego.

The first woman’s question was delivered in the fewest words and used nonverbal communication with a well-positioned pause and questioning look. She was immediately comfortable using her body, not just her intellect, to process her world and communicate with others in an attempt to feel comfortable with the nature of the prompt. Alternatively, the next woman directly turned the request back to the interviewer, and then, in her speculation of how it was intended, treated her body formally—referencing it three different ways from external sources (i.e., the interviewer’s wishes and her social identities as a woman and lesbian). None were derived from how she felt about her body or experienced it. The last participant mentioned above, familiar with the question’s projective nature, devalued the request slightly with a laugh. She gave a cursory answer, and then seemingly unsatisfied with her answer, formally asked for redirection. It seemed as if the latter two participants felt anxious, leading to premature closure and dissatisfaction with their own response to the prompt. The interviewer responded to their requests to specify more by stating the same request that they tell me about their body. The first participant went on to state,

Okay. I feel like I’ve had a lot of transitions and in my life have experienced it [her body] in a few different ways. At this point in my life, my experience of my body is a very positive one. ...I went through a long period where I constantly felt negative about my body...once I freed myself of that...

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The second participant replied,

I mean, I think - like most women, you have a lot of self-doubts...Certainly I'm a Type A personality and I do very well with setting goals...and I think that tends to help when you are a woman and...you need to sort of control what her body looks like, and how you feel, and how you present yourself...

And the third responded,

Um, I have to get out of work mode. I worked too many hours today. I guess it's just when you get into your thirties you kind of have to try and make a huge effort to try and look the way you did in your twenties. Or whether you're going to let it go a little bit...

These three responses subsequent confirmed what had been observed in their idiosyncratic requests for more direction with the prompt.

Generally, the first participant above made reflective statements about her body that included her feelings. This made her seem comfortable with her body. She had a narrative of her experience with her body to tell, as if they had traveled places together. Whereas, the second participant's comments seemed to indicate conflict between herself and her body, as she spoke about her need to control her body as it needed too much or not the right things. The third participant observed how she had at first responded intellectually, as if she was in "work mode." She then told how she had painful feelings about her aging body and had difficulty using it as she once had in years past. She and her body had been more unified then when her feelings were positive but negative feelings about it left her either embattled with her body or defeated by it.

Transcription

Each participant's narrative needed to be micro-analyzed and probed for the identified

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components, internal consistency, unforeseen dynamics pertaining to transformation, and their relationship to the narratives of others. For this exploratory data analysis to be done a verbatim transcript of each participant's narrative was needed. This researcher transcribed the interviews of two participants. Based upon this work, standardized transcription guidelines were developed and given to a professional transcriber, who transcribed the rest (see Appendix E). Full, unedited transcripts for two participants were explored in-depth and can be found in Appendices F and G.

Sample Rationale

Upon completing the interviews, two participants were selected by this researcher to be analyzed in-depth. These two were transcribed by the professional transcriber, who was not aware of the ideas being explored in this study, so as to control for any bias that might taint the transcription of the participants' responses. A number of factors were taken into consideration in choosing the two narratives to be explored in depth. Selection of the two interviews was based on three rationales:

1) Upon initial exam, the participant's narrative suggested a transformation of body ego occurred.

2) Each had substantive, multilayered responses and narrative construction, comprised of all or some of the following characteristics:

- Coherent and consistent narratives, with few contradictions.
- One or more responses with temporal references to past, present, and future.
- Body language and grammatical style matching word content.
- Anxiety, affect, and mood appropriate to content of response and interview setting.
- Evidenced ability to reflect on the past.

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- Memories and details matching generalizing statements, assertions, and conclusions.
- Detailed and vivid metaphors and/or imagery.

These requirements were meant to ensure the transformation narratives be well-articulated, rich, and descriptive. The research goal was for these narratives to provide two comprehensive data sets for thorough exploration of the relationship and manifestation of proposed components with transformation of body ego in the context of female homoeroticism to the individual's body ego transformation. The research aim was also to compare participant's responses to one another. In order to explore the individual responses and compare them to one another, multiple rich, identifiable qualities needed to be available.

The relationship of the components to one another was found to render differently nuanced transformations. Many permutations potentially exist between the concepts of each speculated component (such as affect range, anxieties, or object relations), shared formations, the nature of the transformation as it unfolded in other than its components, or the integrity of a speculated component itself.

3) Both participants were selected for more comprehensive analysis based on how their transformation account highlighted the qualities of the other participant's transformation. They were selected for their power to elicit certain qualities of their components that made the two interviews able to engage one another due to their differences and/or similarities in how component(s) presented.

Two participants' narratives were also chosen because they were quite divergent in their transformation's tempo and speed, or their most pronounced components regarding attached affects most frequently spoken. The decision for their selection was based on their potential

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differences as presented above. Similarly, the two were chosen for their similarities, thus suggesting validation of the shared components. Either by way of similarities or differences, the inquiry was informed by having two, detailed transformation stories for an exploratory dialectic.

Data Analysis and Presentation

Component Identification

Transcripts of two participants responses can be found in the appendices (Appendix F & G) and were summarized (Appendix H & I) and analyzed in the qualitative and quantitative chapters for proposed components of transformation. The frequency of a component was counted as presenting once within a response to each interview question or prompt. An additional frequency would be noted for mention in other interview questions or prompt responses. Below is a descriptive guide that helped identify the components of transformation in participant's responses:

[1] Internal Physical and Psychic Tension – Included in this were literal and metaphorical, verbal and nonverbal, statements or behaviors focused on identifying any movement, mechanics, and dynamics of tension, such as references to friction, weight, the speed, rhythm, power, or pattern of change(s).

[2] Rudiments of One's Self – Included in this were literal and metaphorical, verbal and nonverbal, statements or behaviors focused on a basic principle, dynamic, process or part of one's self.

[3] Foul Parts of One's Self – Included in this were literal and metaphorical, verbal and nonverbal, statements or behaviors focused on messy, devalued, unkempt, disorganized, depreciated, shameful parts that comprise something (i.e., sick, ill, unhealthy, etc.).

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[4] Heightened Affects – Included here were verbal and nonverbal indicators (i.e., hand gestures, smiles, etc.) depicting strong or intense feelings, emotions, and moods. These may have been positive or negative experiences for the participant. This component references the experience of a full, strong affect as identified by a feeling state (i.e., happy, excited, sad, and scared, etc.).

[5] Increased Capacity to be Alone – Included in this were literal and metaphorical, verbal and nonverbal, statements or behaviors focused on identifying features of being or existing without any immediate, sense of other's expectations, needs, wishes, or presence. This includes descriptions of literally feeling alone or feeling alone when actually in the presence of others.

[6] Physical Actions Taken – Included in this were literal and metaphorical, verbal and nonverbal, statements or behaviors focused on body movement with the whole body or parts of the body, the more minimal movements of the internal body such as organs function (i.e., pulse, digestion, peristalsis, etc.).

[7] Wishes Actualized – Included in this were literal and metaphorical, verbal and nonverbal, statements or behaviors focused on identifying the dynamics of things hoped for, identified as goals, dreamt of, or fulfilled a previously unarticulated wish.

[8] Object Relations Dynamics – Included in this were literal and metaphorical, verbal and nonverbal, statements or behaviors focused on identifying conscious and unconscious dynamics of mutual relatedness, caring for, arousing, facilitating, or receptive to the participant's erotic aims. Also included here were the opposite type of object relations dynamics, such as controlling, dominating, or conflicting relationships with others.

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Interpretative Lens

As stated earlier, body ego and eroticism are concepts grounded in unconscious, primary processes, methodology for the study needed to take these implicit processes into account. A tool for accessing these processes involved the use of metaphor. The principles of a psychoanalytic understanding of metaphor were used to form the interview measure and interpret participant's responses. Psychoanalytic understandings of metaphor were methodological tools that had the ability to account for symbolic, unconscious, and non-verbalized aspects of this research topic.

Metaphorical listening was used as the interpretive lens with the data in exploring transformation narratives for their components. First, the interview responses were examined for their most explicit and literal meaning. Second, this researcher's countertransference, associations, and conjectures were utilized to help elucidate the meaning of what was expressed nonverbally. To return to the identified goal of this research, the rationale for use of this researcher's associations was to glean more from the interview data than the participant's literal words provided. Put another way, this researcher's associations further informed our understanding of the identified phenomena.

This researcher used her doctoral training in clinical psychology and its applications in research and the clinic setting to inform this work. Additional training in a subfield of psychology specializing in non-verbal communication and unconscious processes of the mind, known as psychodynamic or psychoanalytic psychology was also relied on for this work. To be clear, if the participant said X, it was discussed as X. If X seemed to be more than just X, its affiliates and associations, both the participant's and this researcher's, were discussed as well.

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This admittedly took liberties with the data; however benefits gained greatly outweighed potential hazards when certain standards were applied to its usage.

The proposed components are non-verbal and experiential phenomena. Some or all of these operated as nonverbal and/or unconscious processes, which could only be known theoretically after a thorough analysis. Without this researcher's conjectures and elaborations in these narrative gaps, we would have "complete," ego-filtered descriptions of the phenomena, making it unlikely for any new understanding to emerge. This analytic work occurred both during the interview and later during the data analysis. During the interview, this researcher's observations, associations, conjectures, and countertransference certainly informed any decision to prompt for more clarifying information. Subsequently, during the data analysis, it also informed the efforts to understand each participant's narrative and identify potential components of transformation found therein.

Great attempts were made to specify what the participant said on a literal level and what was being speculated on an unconscious or pre-conscious level. The two levels were never meant to eclipse one another. The purpose was to create a dialectic between this researcher's conjectures and the hard data of the participant's words and intended meaning. The data presentations and discussion were a venture, or exploration, utilizing these participants' life experiences and the special training of this principle investigator to begin to figure out the nature of this phenomenon as it has played out in these women's narratives.

Principles of the Rorschach Inkblot Methodology (RIM) (Weiner, 1994) were applied in this study. To be clear, this does not mean that the Rorschach cards were used, rather the techniques expounded upon by Weiner for use with the Rorschach stimuli cards were used to

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form and understand the interview's projective responses. Applying this methodology to this study, the perceptual-cognitive aspects of the responses noted boundaries, movements, coloring, shading, and depth. Personalized form and unusual descriptors were understood as idiosyncratic associational processes. After descriptors were identified, their content was looked at and hypotheses made about how the individual understood their experience and by what means they arrived at that conclusion. Components of transformation were observed as changes in their body ego descriptors.

With that said, the standards and protocol in applying this researcher's associations and conjectures are now discussed. The most blatant manifestations of excluded or missing response content from literal responses were gaps (i.e., gaps in time, continuity, or logical sequence) or grammatical snafus. For example, when silences lasted for unusual lengths of time (unusual for that participant or the participant pool) it was assumed the participant was having thoughts with attached affects and anxieties, which were preoccupying her but not shared. Another example was the participant saying unintentional, un-recognized, and un-explored double-entendres. This was understood as a red flag; what was being said explicitly was being expressed about something else as well. In such a case, this researcher reflected on what had been spoken about earlier but perhaps prematurely concluded, or potentially left unfinished. Other inexplicit communications were changes in speech tone or rate, shifts in mood or affect, increased anxiety as well as affect inappropriate to content. If observed, this researcher reflected on what these changes or shifts were and what triggered it.

Lastly, this researcher's countertransference to participants was also an invaluable part of the data, as well as the participants' observed and expressed transference responses. This

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researcher's countertransference was reflected on and attempts were made to make meaning of it.

These countertransference feelings, along with all associations, were then judged for their coherence with one another and the participant's literal words. These associations that comfortably ran throughout the participant's narrative and were verified in further quoted material were thought to be viable data. As this occurred, this researcher identified and explained these alternative communications for consideration as part of the data set.

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CHAPTER FOUR: TRANSFORMATION NARRATIVES

After interviewing nine participants, two interviews were explored and analyzed in-depth. As discussed in chapter three, the choice of these two was made on three criteria: evidence of a transformation of body ego, presence of substantive, multilayered responses and narrative construction and their ability to shed light on the quality of other participants' transformations. The two selected interviews presented richly detailed, coherent transformation narratives (Appendix F & G). The juxtaposition of their similarities and differences afforded an opportunity to explore and understand transformation's components better.

Each of Emilie and Jan's Transformation Narratives begin with a quotation from the participant depicting her transformation's predominate storyline. This is followed by the participant's demographic information and a description of how the interview unfolded with regard to logistics of interviewing and appointment scheduling. A few comments are then made about the participant's general response to this interviewer and the interview itself. After this introduction, two main sections follow.

Beginning with the participant's earliest erotic memory, the section titled, "Eroticism: A Developmental Narrative," tracks the participant's sense of her body and self via eroticism from childhood through adolescence into adulthood. We traverse their experiences of their body through coming-out and arriving at a stable sexual identity for themselves. This broad developmental sweep of the participant's body ego and erotic experiences provides the crucial platform from which the components of their transformation can be identified and explored. This is followed by a compilation of narrative vignettes supporting various Components of Transformation. These include erotic memories, observations, or reflections the participant

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found notable. The dynamics of the components are noted in the narrative and explicitly discussed in the Quantitative and Qualitative Analysis chapters

Within the transformation narratives, interviewee quotes are organized into what are called vignettes. The vignettes are entitled to highlight the key processes of eroticism and transformation in that vignette—the titles selected from the participant’s own words. Occasionally, the quoted phrase in the title is set before or after a theoretical construct or conceptual phrase thought to convey its place in the narrative schema as her story unfolds. Quotes from the participants’ interview are followed by the name of the interviewee and the response number from which the quote is taken. These citation references are placed in parentheses and may be accessed in the appendix, Jan in Appendix F and Emilie in Appendix G. Citations from the interviewer’s questions are noted and placed in italics, and may also be found in the appropriate appendix.

JAN’S TRANSFORMATION NARRATIVE

...Increased sexual awareness, increased contact with self, increased self- analysis, increased examination and reexamination of identity, and increased time spent in my body - with my body - as I get better at being me. The more time I spend in touch with who I am, the more I’m able to be present not just in my head with who I am, but in my body with who I am. And that plays out in lots of ways. Everything from reading a feminist article about how women view their bodies today or don’t view their bodies, to the way I train for my rugby season, to the way that I make love to different women - are sort of feeding into that connection between identity and body and the presence that those require of one another. (Jan, R. 28)

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Jan spoke rhythmically, in a pace with an aim. The aim was living. The aim was to be. She spoke in the present tense of living: an ongoing process with the tensions of exploring, reflecting, breaking down, misplacing, resolving, falling apart, and finding. The degree of the experiences just listed varied from mild to intense, and was communicated through the cadence of her words.

Jan not only concluded there was an intricate relationship between her body and identity but that their existence required one another. It was through becoming in and of her body that she was brought into being. As Jan stated, this necessitated “being in my body” and then “with my body”. She experienced her body firsthand and then cognized it. Jan enhanced her existence through knowing her bodily urges. Jan remarked, “I get better at being me,” through this process. This infusion of libidinal energy into her ego allowed her to sharpen herself—to reconsolidate.

Jan’s “getting better at being” herself is reminiscent of Irigaray’s (1977) words. Jan has the experience Irigaray had wished for in this passage,

She senses something remains to be said that resists all speech that can at best be stammered out. All words are weak, worn out, unfit to translate anything sensibly. For it is no longer a matter of longing for some determinable attribute, some mode of essence, some face of presence. What is expected is neither a this nor a that, not a here any more than a there. No being, no places are designated. So the best plan is to abstain from all discourse, to keep quiet, or else utter a sound so inarticulate that it barely forms a song. While all the while keeping an attentive ear open for any hint or tremor coming back. (p. 193)

Jan felt “tremors” coming back, back from her body. Jan experienced what Irigaray had wished

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to feel or hear.

Bouncing between bodily experiences and her mind, Jan arrived at a mental representation of herself and the “social face of presence” Irigaray referred to—an identity:

I identified as a lesbian around Christmas of my senior year of high school, and did a lot of thinking and personal reflection triggered mostly by that first kiss experience, and went on to date that girl for the next six or seven months, and began exploring that identity at that point - at the end of high school. And that remained pretty much the same in terms of how I identified through college, and the next couple of years after college. In the past couple of years I have thought more about...I've contemplated my own identity – my sexual identity– and have thought a lot more about “queer” as maybe a more appropriate term but... depending on who I'm telling, and how much access I think they have to queer theory and queer thought. I'd like to identify as a queer lesbian, but often that just becomes lesbian. (Jan, R. 50)

Jan insightfully used various social identities to represent herself best given the discourse available to the other. The rigorous and thoughtful manner in which she reflected on body and sexual identity here was true of most her responses throughout the interview.

Not surprisingly, Jan was a 25-year-old graduate student studying gender politics in an interdisciplinary graduate program. She was generally relaxed and autonomous in the interview, responding to questions when first posed without hesitation or ambiguity. She spoke succinctly of a robust, predominantly body-generative experience. Highly attuned to her physicality and rich in detail, she broke down what she felt and how she knew it. Her emotions and memories were in concordance with the content, making this a coherent narrative.

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Jan's answers were comprehensive and thoughtful, rarely needing elaboration or clarification. With notable skill, Jan relied on her words to communicate her experiences, using her body little. Interactions between the interviewer and Jan were at a minimum. She was quite serious throughout the interview and made little eye contact, she felt remote.

Section I: A Developmental Narrative

Some of the earliest feelings of being present in my body, I think were probably – and this is sort of a really “sexual being in one’s body,” as my little eight-year-old self – I used to wear these little jumpsuits – they were like – not corduroy, but sort of these canvas...like, shorts, and a top that would just snap all the way up. Like tomboy attire for the summer. I had four or five of these, and I went through a phase where I wore them every day, and they were fine one summer, and then the next summer I was a little bigger. And when I went on the monkey bars I could feel that it was pulling up, and it was tight against my crotch, and I sort of liked it. It sort of hurt, but I sort of liked it. And then I think my mother sort of realized I was too big for them and whatever, but I sort of remember feeling – for the first time internally feeling my body in a way that wasn’t like “Oh, I scraped my knee. Oh, I pinched my finger.” And sort of liking it, and not knowing what was going on. ...I didn’t know if it hurt or didn’t. Because it was like, this is uncomfortable in a way that I didn’t know how to classify, and clearly like my baby clitoris was enjoying itself and being stimulated in a way that it hadn’t before, and sort of like, “Oh, wow. Hmm.” And I didn’t know how to respond to that and the heat that it produced – like, “Does this hurt? I’m not sure. This is making me uncomfortable but I kind of want to go across the monkey bars again, and it has nothing to do with the

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monkey bars.” So I sort of remember feeling this, this one time, and sort of feeling like,

“Does this hurt?” and not knowing the answer to that. (Jan, R. 26-27)

Similar to Ms. Water’s protagonist, Maud, in the novel, *Fingersmith* (2002), Jan was troubled with not knowing how to make sense of or label that which she was compelled to continue pursuing. Both Jan and Maud described those moments between feeling something and knowing what it was called or meant. Jan had no words to label it and no experiences yet to know if it was positive or negative. Nor did she know the ramifications of continuing to pursue it. It was good. It was nice. It was painful. It was overwhelming, exciting, and maybe scary. This was interrupted by her mother getting rid of the utilitarian clothing—someone intervenes. Her primary object stops the pleasure.

This memory carried a lot of tension: her tight shorts and swinging body, the physical sensations of constriction and release, and the psychic tension of desire and prohibition. She could not know what it meant objectively or personally, or what it would mean to others. What should she do? Jan kept going across the monkey bars, not knowing what was happening or what would happen next. She kept going because it felt too good to stop. The physical experience was not yet cognized; it had not even been given a word to label it—a name. Yet she managed her anxiety enough to continue pursuing this pleasurable feeling.

Full Force

Jan’s inclination for a physically stimulating life continued into her adolescence at the all girl’s Catholic school she attended. She remembered fondly being utterly in her body “playing hard...being...sweaty and disgusting,” and then things disrupting that,

...literally running around like little kids and being all excited about whatever we’re

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doing, playing dodge ball or whatever like full force, like absolutely you know, like very seriously playing hard and being like sweaty and disgusting for class – that didn't matter, that was ok. So walking this sort of strange line between athletic bodies and...I was suddenly aware that people looked at bodies in a certain way. (Jan, R. 49)

Jan's description of their animalistic athletics was disrupted by her awareness of being seen, and seeing others. Her libidinal body went from being everything in one context, where she felt the center of her story, to being in another world with other people, other interests and other stories.

People Looked

Jan had to adjust to her physicality in a sexual context:

The next phase I can remember in any sort of detail is later, in sort of pre-teen and early teenage years, when I rapidly moved into a stage when I looked at my body and when I felt my body - that I wasn't happy with it. But I felt like I was always too fat, always too big, that I wasn't attractive, that no one would ever be interested in me. And I was a heavier teenage girl, but I also played sports regularly and was running around quite a bit, what was clearly going to be a bigger girl - and sort of didn't want to feel that way about myself. I went to an all girls high school and was being encouraged in so many other ways that I was so successful at, that I didn't want to counter any of the ways that I felt so good about myself -intellectually, socially, even athletically - that I sort of ignored some of the feelings that I would have about my body. (Jan, R. 27)

Jan tried to hold her body in abeyance. She was fairly successful when the feelings she had regarding it were positive. Now she felt negative about her body. Then Jan began to have feelings she did not want to reject.

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Sexy

And as I continued to grow, towards the end of high school when I became sort of sexually awake and aware, that perception changed again and I began to sort of feel sexy - to feel present in my body in a way that I liked a lot more, in a way that made me feel good about myself. (Jan, R. 27)

Jan was developing a representation of her body that included a more mature sexuality. It was around this emerging sexuality that transformation was felt. As she became more linked to her body's sexual functions, her physicality was infused with erotic feelings. This was not only feeling "sexy," but also "present" in her body. This last comment was striking. Eroticism was much bigger than acts of sex. It has a key role in the relationship of the conscious self to the physical self.

A Conversation with Myself

As Jan described connecting more with her body, she was getting into a relationship with herself. Less split off from her body, Jan could find in herself that for which she had once sought from friends.

More willing to tap into what I was physically and how I felt about that, and what I looked like, and pay more attention to that instead of focusing on other aspects of my life and other ways I could be... And later in high school as those parts of my life were much more solid, they provided a wonderful support network for me to then take a step back and have a conversation with myself instead of with my friends. To look at who I might be, and the relationship I had with myself. (Jan, R. 28)

Jan was integrating two split parts: her conscious self and her very real, physical self. In doing

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so, she found new experiences of herself and more:

...sort of a growth in an emotional and sort of spiritual way of being. Just kind of, sort of generally getting older so that I think opened up – with the relationship helping – feeling attractive, and needed, and feeling like my physical body might be part of that. It sort of began to let me connect with my body in ways that were sort of positive, and there were things that I enjoyed and felt good about. And when that sort of connection only continues to develop, and as I became even more comfortable with my sexuality, myself, and my identity in relation to that, and then my own physical body through increased sexual awareness, and increased, sort of, noticing presence in my body – athletic, sexual, sort of spiritual – I feel like that sort of moved up to a different place for most of my college years and sort of – like, moved that to another place. (Jan, R. 28)

She was experiencing herself beyond the boundaries of what she had previously known or expected. This could be heard in Jan's reference to spirituality. To put the formal aspects of spirituality aside, at the very least, we know that a spiritual experience is a special realm where emotions and sensations elude human control. Using this common vernacular, Jan was referencing an expansive, kind, and pleasurable experience that had strong momentum or draw. She was moving closer to her ego ideal.

Thus far, we have heard Jan describe the development of herself in relation to her body. For the remainder of her data presentation, we will read what are her most salient memories and observations about her erotic life. In these are notable components that allowed her to feel generally more coherent with her body. They also made it possible to feel explicitly, divinely *in* and *of* her body in erotic ways.

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Section II: Components of Transformation of Body Ego

...The first many times I had sex with a woman it was sort of an extension of hooking up – and by hooking up I mean things that you could do with your pants on. Kissing and touching and fondling. I never had the same feelings that I’ve had since then where there’s a building sort of throughout – you start with one level of foreplay, and move on to another level, and then clothing comes off, and it’s much more genital, and there’s a lot more focus on an orgasm or on making each other happy, and paying close attention to what the other one’s doing and feeling and needing, so I guess I see it in three stages. With Christina in specific, but also in high school in general, it was mostly sort of blind fumbling. Like, in college it was very orgasm focused - a lot of that building, paying a lot more attention to the partner, and recently sort of within the last year sex has become a lot more about pleasure and different ways in which to find that, and experience that, and less orgasm focused I guess. Sort of a heightened awareness of my body and the other person’s body and what – the smaller details of what’s going on, and what feels good and expanding definitions of what feels good. We talked a little bit last time about new explorations into S&M and stuff, but the sexual side of that shift parallels my own shift in terms of paying attention to my body and being in touch with my body. (Jan, R. 53)

Jan spoke of giving great attention to that which made her feel good, exploring that from many angles. She noted a “heightened awareness” of her body, eroticism “building,” exploration of “pleasure,” “making each other happy,” “attention to the partner” and “the smaller details” of how this all worked. Jan essentially sketched out her components of transformative erotic

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experiences.

The First Kiss

(Interviewer: What did it feel like – the first kiss? And why?)

That's like the first grounding. (Jan, R. 29)

(Interviewer: What were your thoughts? What did it feel like? How did it go?)

...so we were sort of both in our respective sleeping bags, and all of the sudden we were sort of next to each other and sort of snuggled up together, and then our faces were next to each other like, very close to each other, and then we were kissing – and it just sort of happened. And I remember thinking several moments into kissing her – thinking, “I think I'm kissing her,” and having this momentary like – “This is what's happening,” and not really connecting with feeling – that – just sort of like – “Okay – let's go.” There was no analysis, no interpretation, it just sort of happened. And it didn't bother me, and it wasn't like, “Yes!” It wasn't like floodgates opening, it was just – “This is what's happening.” “This is what's going on right now.” And I couldn't even sort of be there. It was just happening, and eventually the two of us got up and went into a neighboring bedroom, and sort of kissed all night long. And I remember thinking, “This feels so right.” And that's when I started being more emotionally present, and being like, “Wow, this feels really good!” But at the same time it was never – I wasn't really physically present. My body was not really there because my mind was barely there. I was exhausted, which was probably why this is still sort of so...fuzzy, and feeling of general disconnect. But in a way that's not troublesome at all. And I sort of spent two days in a general daze of not really knowing what had happened, or how I felt about it, and then all

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of the sudden having a lot of time to think about it and feel about it, and think about what it meant, and what it could mean, and what I wanted to happen going forward, and sort of going thorough that self-analysis. ...it sort of just happened in a very good, natural way. It just sort of was the natural progression. And I knew what I wanted to do – what I was going to do and what I wasn't going to do – it was just – it just fit. And I think that was part of why I then had very little agony in terms of coming to terms with being a lesbian or being gay. It just was right. It just made sense. And it wasn't like bells were ringing, or excitement, or alarm bells were just going crazy, it was just – this fits. The puzzle piece fits here. (Jan, R. 30-31)

In retrospect, Jan described becoming grounded in her physicality. Her mental self met her bodily self. She described acting without an observing ego—having no mind. She reported having no thoughts about getting physically close enough to a girl to kiss her. It “all of the sudden...just sort of happened.” Her mind caught up soon thereafter, “I think I'm kissing her...Okay – let's go.” Jan noted, “There was no analysis, no interpretation, it just sort of happened. And it didn't bother me... more emotionally present.” She thought, “This feels so right... this feels so good.”

Jan's body was leading the way. She became disorganized around whether she was present or not for this, “I couldn't even sort of *be there*, it was just happening.” To *be there* meant for her mind to be there. She said, “I wasn't really physically present. My body was not there because my mind was barely there.” Jan went on to identify this as “fuzzy, and feeling of general disconnect.” The next “two days were in a general daze,” she said. This makes you wonder if this was enjoyable or traumatic, perhaps both! Jan generally relied heavily on her

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mind to define herself, so this confusion did not come as a surprise. It highlighted how an expansive, regressive experience did not include reflecting and mentalizing activities.

Later in the interview, as she relaxed, laughed more, and associated more freely. Jan remembered rudimentary, physical details about her first kiss,

...the stuff I remember most specifically was that first night – the first kiss and – it sort of ended up being a long naked make-out session. There was no actual sex. I was exhausted, but so totally wired. Sort of this weird mix between the two, and sort of feeling tingly and numb but mostly focused on – my blood was in my hands and my lips, that was where my nerve endings were focusing. Which is sort of interesting. That’s not always the case now. (Jan, R. 52)

In describing the visceral experience, Jan honed in on the physiological symptoms suggesting a transient loss of body integrity: feeling “tingly and numb...my blood...in my hands...my lips...my nerve endings...” Again, her awareness of her own physicality and the sensations triumphed over mental thought. This is aestheticism: the beauty of the sensory experience was the basic principle from which all other principles were derived. Perhaps ego and self-representation are principles derived from such beauty.

Jan felt two seemingly antithetical experiences: being wired and feeling exhausted. References to wiring were things felt to be out of one’s control. Exhaustion was the extreme fatigue of her mind, perhaps from being consumed by her felt attractions and eroticism not yet conscious or acted on. Her unconscious or very biological, hard-wired bodily experiences were pumping energy into her mind causing her to feel “wired.”

Her mind was exhausted for many reasons, one of which was fighting her erotic wishes.

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Her felt desires and wishes had won and no longer had anything to confront. She was able to be in the world, to act and exist outside the reality of subjective experience (i.e., consciousness, reflection) and not inhibited by super-ego constraints. This was identified by Jan as an “automatic response,” in which conscious thought and monitoring were unneeded to successfully accomplish something.

Kissing Herself

Jan had earlier described her interest in more primitive, physical experiences that alter, both literally and symbolically, how she was in reality and space. She had observed the flow of her movements to understand who she is in greater detail. She reflected,

I’ve had actually several discussions with a friend of mine – I’ve always been very sports oriented – very team sports oriented – and competed on a pretty serious level, and a friend of mine has been equally serious in terms of dance, and, sort of our comparisons of some of the same – we’ve had some discussions about the ways in which our sense of, sort of being in touch with one’s self emotionally and spiritually through that physicality were very similar, and I thought that was pretty interesting. I’d never really thought about that – dance is not something that interests me, so I’d never really thought about how those experiences could be the same. It’s hard to describe. It’s feeling – I don’t know if you’ve done yoga, but this is something that happens sometimes to people in yoga class. It’s feeling the way things work, and allowing, sort of conscious thought to follow what’s an automatic movement, or an automatic expression of energy, or an automatic response from your body. It’s sort of like paying attention to something that you do automatically, and that sort of hyper-awareness of how your body is working, and

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then fine-tuning that. Making it better, making it stronger. But I've grown to appreciate, and sort of develop that later in my life, which has sort of changed my relationship to my body. Instead of feeling like automatic, like a sort of a battering ram, you just keep on going...but I tend to break down the steps that I'm doing and look at ways to heal through that as well. Instead of just putting an icepack on it - working a muscle out, or figuring out exactly what it is that hurts and why. (Jan, R. 3)

In this passage, Jan described her desire to make conscious that which she naturally felt and acted on. That is, she described her desire to cognize. Jan identified and defined an automatic movement, response, or expression of energy. Seeing herself in a relationship with her body, Jan took it a step further. She wanted to learn from her body to enhance her life. Now in consciousness, she had "fine-tun[ed]" her body, "making it better, making it stronger." Jan spoke specifically of pain or injury's rudimentary parts. Next, she spoke of trying to identify pleasure's rudiments.

In regards to kissing, Jan remembered a time when she was particularly focused on motoric and sensate rudiments,

I used to have a tongue ring which I enjoyed very much. ...it made me more aware of my tongue and feeling in my tongue. Especially when it comes to sex....Instead of sort of just doing something – for example, in sucking on someone's nipple. There's a big difference between just doing it and maybe existing more in your head, or in your emotions, and really *feeling* it in your tongue. And with my tongue ring all of a sudden having that barbell there meant that I was sort of negotiating physically my tongue and this barbell – in good ways and in bad – sort of working with what I was trying to do with

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the barbell and without the barbell...but it sort of focused my attention back on my body. Sort of removed the sexual experience from some sort of fuzzy – I’m thinking sort of slightly ridiculous romantic music – um...much more sort of spiritual like floating kind of sensation to a very physical, very intimate, sort of back to my nerve endings. And that was part of that – that’s something that I feel like I’ve generally been able to do on my own with my hands, but I hadn’t really thought about it until I was negotiating the tongue ring with my tongue and with other parts of my body, so it changed the focus of being present in different ways in my body, and not in my body during sex. (Jan, R. 16)

Jan emphasized the different ways through which she could experience something. She appreciated the intense focus the tongue ring caused her to have on the sensate experience of kissing. Jan said the burden of the tongue ring brought her “back to my nerve endings.” It was “very physical, very intimate.” Without the “ridiculous romantic music –um...much more sort of spiritual like floating,” she had an intimate moment with herself. That is, with her own physical sensations. Indeed, she kissed herself!

With this excitement and a sense of aliveness, Jan elaborated, “There’s a big difference between just doing it and maybe existing more in your head, or in your emotions, and really *feeling* it in your tongue.” Sometimes the fantasies, hopes and expectations are a lot of white noise. It can “fuzz up” kissing. In staying close to the sensate, Jan could feel the energy of the kiss and thus, cognize her tongue, kissing and self anew.

Jan referred to her nerve endings throughout the interview (Jan, R. 16-18). She referred to the most fundamental biological system by which she sensed herself in existence. She was establishing who and where she was. This will be discussed again when Jan speaks of her

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definition of self in her appreciation of the external shapes and “curves” of the physical body parts. The act of trying to know or locate one’s self was an act of self-love. A love affair with one’s self was fundamental to pleasure and eroticism. One must tolerate, bear, appreciate, and even rejoice in the un-cognized bodily part objects: the good, bad, extraordinary and ugly. For this, regression was necessary. For a love affair, for eroticism, regression was necessary.

Variant Body Experiences

A theme running through Jan’s interview was her attempts to appreciate both sides of the coin. Utilizing these split parts, Jan maintained the truth of both, for example, being both muscular and having a “soft tummy” (Jan, R. 9). She went on to say that each was actually needed to give rise to the other, as she had said at the start about her body and identity. She reiterated that seemingly disparate, even antithetical, things existed in herself or her body. Moreover, she repeatedly found these things necessary for one another to exist, for her to represent herself. For instance, Jan says,

Sports have always been a big part of my life and obviously something that impacts my body pretty seriously. I play rugby, and not only does it make me stronger, but it also breaks me. It also hurts me and bruises me, and I’ve had broken bones and serious injuries, so it’s sort of both sides. But I like feeling strong. I like feeling confident in my body and the way I look. (Jan, R. 2)

Jan was injured and strong. That which broke her also makes her strong. It is hard to integrate these together, given how different they are. Feeling strong made Jan happy. Getting injured was painful. This entailed the negative giving rise to the positive of her existence. Both sides of the coin—in breaking down the body or regressing psychically—she was in a better position to

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put the pieces back together more consciously. This was an attempt at mastering a passive experience through action. Jan talked of needing part object experiences, with their adjunctive states of anxiety and affect, to experience a broad enough range of self-experiences. In the end, this gave her a fuller range of affective experiences and a more robust self-representation.

Active Regression for Un-cognized Parts

Jan enjoyed controlled, deliberate pseudo-regressions to primitive, part object experiences. These attempts to regress were from a relatively, whole-object platform, which was key. Without the whole-object foundation, regressive play became too real and felt unsafe. The power of experiencing deliberate regressions to more primitive experience arose here. Jan described the power of this as an ongoing developmental pleasure of hers. It was the full spectrum of (dis)organization she sought but had a hard time obtaining because of her need for control.

Jan sought losses of body integrity but simultaneously prevented them from truly occurring by establishing rules and formality regarding when, how, and where she played with her body integrity. The rules prevented and ensured that she would never truly lose control. Most literally, she discussed this in regard to sadomasochistic sex (S&M). In a formalized position of submission, this was an agentic dismantling of a relatively cohesive bodily self and self-representation. Jan was never completely submissive or passive. She never fell to bits, but rather played with pieces of one's self and enjoyed putting them back together, making her feel more coherent, more her.

...the smaller details of what's going on, and what feels good and expanding definitions of what feels good. We talked a little bit last time about new explorations into S&M and

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stuff, but the sexual side of that shift parallels my own shift in terms of paying attention to my body and being in touch with my body. (Jan, R. 53)

(Interviewer: Can you tell me a little about the S&M – like what it feels like, what physically is going on?)

Um...it's pretty new for me. Um...I've found actually that I like things that echo sort of other pastimes of mine – like, for example, rugby. So like, hitting and pounding versus sharp isolated pain – that would be like pinching or biting. I like playing with – like with this specific partner – we play with bondage and we play with roles a lot and that's – I'm not sure how much of that is – is – specific to my relationship with her. The power structures that happen in that relationship are a part of that sexual tension.

Um...fisting.... (Jan, R. 54)

(Interviewer: Being fisted or fisting?)

Both. (Jan, R. 55)

Rugby was similar to S&M. Pain, injuries, bruises, being tackled to the ground, tackling another player into dirt and making a down (e.g., scoring) were things that all hearken the S&M bedroom. Fisting is the act of putting your entire hand, folded in a fist, within your partner's vagina. Being fisted is being the recipient of this sex act. In literal ways, all these S&M sexual practices test and stretch the participant's capacity for heightened affects linked directly to physical actions and tension in the body and psyche.

Jan felt in touch with experiences of her body when it was broken apart, survived and put herself back together again. For Jan, her body was actually the weakest or most vulnerable aspect of herself. Thus, she worried, saying, "I didn't know how my body would respond." Jan

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split off from her body because in it she felt the fearful, weak and vulnerable feelings which she wished to avoid. She did not feel comfortably in control. Moreover, these were the very physical phenomena she needed to hide from others' view, as others needed her to be a competent, smart, and able individual. As said before, Jan excelled at presenting well. Perhaps this might have played a part in her interest in S&M.

Jan was curious about how she would experience S&M. She fantasized about it but was not sure if the actual, physical reality of it would be as enjoyable:

I was very interested in much more extreme sort of S&M type sexual exploration, and that was something that was happening in my head or emotionally, but I didn't know how my body would respond, and have been very happy to find that that was not a problem. That sort of the emotional excitement, the desire that I was feeling translated into my body being a willing and receptive partner in that exploration and in that – in trying new things. (Jan, R. 19)

(Interviewer: What kind of S&M things?)

Fisting, rougher more aggressive penetrative sex specifically would be the things that involved my vagina. Otherwise they would be less – not really at all vagina focused. Beating, pinching, biting – I had a partner for a little while that was quite experienced in that and would – we had fun – we had fun teaching each other, and exploring each other's bodies in very physical ways. It was good to see my body in general – I'm used to pain, and I'm used to physical abuse through athletics, but this was different. When I'm playing rugby there's an instant of bracing for contact. There's that split second before you get hit when you know you're going to get hit, so your body does something in

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response to prepare for that, and in an S&M setting you're able to totally sort of relax and not have that anticipatory preparation – not be tense or tighten waiting for something just to receive it – it's sort of taking apart your body and then putting it back together. It's something that I don't know if my body knew how to do because it had always experienced intense pounding like that in a very athletic manner – in a very prepared manner. And I didn't know if I would be able to balance that – the extreme physical – and totally relax. I was surprised. Most pleasantly surprised. To experience the different ways of being with someone that I really wanted to. It was really interesting. But like I said my vagina was sort of along for the ride. (Jan, R. 20)

Jan explored her comfort and connection between her body and her thoughts in S&M. The split between her body and thoughts existed here as relics of her earlier passive experiences of pain. She said this is “taking apart your body and putting it back together.” In so doing, she was also doing the same with mental representations of self and objects. Jan was able to experience something anew.

As this part of the interview moved on, Jan's mood lightened. She became playful and less defensive. When next asked to tell about her vagina, she responded,

Sure. Ok...I get turned on pretty easily. When I get turned on I don't actually get as wet as most women I've known – I don't know where to sort of place myself on the general scale of wetness. My vagina is sort of the – my vagina and my clit are sort of the center of my eroticism. Over the years, as I have had more sexual experiences with women and become more confident in myself as a lesbian –probably because I've been with so many breast women – breasts are less exciting for me now. My new sexual experiences have

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been much more vagina focused. I really appreciate sort of open – Open exploration with women in bed. With vaginas in general. I like to be touched. I like to be penetrated. My vagina likes lots of attention. And rarely – I don't get very tired – it's just – I like the fitness of my vagina. It works well for me. It's like it's been on the treadmill like it's supposed to be (*laughter*). (Jan, R. 19)

Jan was extraordinarily well connected to these body parts. She said straightaway, “My vagina and clit are sort of the center of my eroticism.” Their erotic function was what most defines them. As such, these parts or organs played a crucial role in her erotic life. They served her. She easily elaborated on how she liked to explore, receive and give pleasure specific to them. Jan seemed to feel quite in control regarding their services – she made her vagina work out! She continued:

I was never the child masturbator, never really aware of the sort of my potential, and um... With my second girlfriend, and then with sort of increased comfort with my own body and my own sexuality, I've grown to know and love my clitoris. I enjoy orgasm that way the most – having my clitoris touched in various ways – and (*laughter*) I do, actually I think – I don't know. It's sort of one of those things that I don't want it to be too central to my sexuality, but I like to have orgasms. I like to come. (Jan, R. 21)

(Interviewer: Why don't you want that?)

Because I think it becomes too goal focused – too focused, too oriented on getting somewhere, and there are other things that I take equal pleasure in that I'm finding ways to balance with straight orgasm. And – yeah, I feel like I – I'm very comfortable with my clitoris, I like it, I think it's big enough, I don't think it's too big! (*laughter*) um...yeah, I

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think – (Jan, R. 22)

(Interviewer: What do you mean comfortable with it? I guess you said you liked it before that...)

Yeah, I don't take issue with it ever – I don't have any concerns. I don't know – I guess I do sort of associate it very much with its function. I have a hard time thinking about it outside of coming. Outside of what it can do for me. Yeah. But generally I have enjoyed the time that I've spent with it, and the time that I'm able to share it with others, (*laughter*), and what it can do for me. (Jan, R. 23)

One recurring theme in this last segment was her concern that her excitement and desire regarding her clitoris and orgasms were too much or “too big!” She did not want her clitoris or orgasm to be “too central...too goal focused...too oriented on getting...” When she joked her clit is not “too big,” this was a double entendre. It was certainly not too big considering its physical size, relative to every other body part. Nor was it as big as a penis. However, it got more attention than any other any part of her body, physical size notwithstanding.

As the organ that delivered an ‘all me’ experience, the clitoris was the gateway to the complete pleasure (physical and psychic) of the whole self-object experience. And this presented a conflict for Jan. She seemed self-conscious of the enormous pleasure it gave her, as if it were selfish or not okay, noting, “I'm able to share it with others.” Before looking at Jan's experience of the other more explicitly, we'll hear about another kind of pleasure in re-constituting the self as a whole object. This is comprised of symbolizing components, such as narratives, stories and play.

Rendering a Whole Object

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Jan was committed to redressing splits in her self-experience. She felt the importance of holding onto different self-states. She explained:

I think my body has sort of a balance of strong and soft, and at times I sort of fight with one or the other. More often fight with the soft feeling – the soft is weak or somehow undisciplined, but in reality I need both of them. I need to be able to be strong and powerful and solid and connected in some spheres and at some times, and soft and open and supple and relaxed in others. And I've found the best sort of physical relationships come with women who have appreciated that, and who have really relished the back and forth, and have been able to love both strong shoulders and soft tummy, and wouldn't want all one or all the other, and I think that in reality is what I look for too. I don't find bodies that are very solid muscle and very hard all over very attractive. That's something actually I associate very much with men, and I want a level of softness available in a lover. And at the same time, too much soft doesn't connect with me - it has too much of a connection with old feelings of being fat and being overweight and unhappy, and with that time in my life. (Jan, R. 9)

Jan's "relish[ing] the back and forth" was the foundation of play. She was aware of her experiencing part objects, with their varying constellations of affects, anxieties, aggressions and pleasures. She identified this above as "spheres." At this point in her life, she did not reject them but "relish[ed]" them. She was able to tolerate this complicated existence. Jan found and valued the aestheticism of these experiences—the pleasure that could be found in both, alongside the mess.

Spots where two body parts or regions met were extremely erotic for Jan because there

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was the potential for playing, for developing her own narrative, and experiencing herself as a whole object:

I find the *almost* touching, the *almost* there to be much more charged than any sort of actual touching. It's the buildup that works better for me. I like kissing and touching and licking that sort of around – the outside of my breasts, the underneath, down in between my breasts, just closer and closer. It's like, by the time it gets to my nipples, it's overkill, and it's sort of too much. I think most women make love to other women's breasts the way they like their breasts to be made love to, and so that doesn't always work. And I think part of my feeling – my sort of sexual eroticism surrounding my breasts has to do with the fact that I've been with a lot of breast women, who really loved having their breasts given a lot of attention – sucked, kissed, bitten – and I don't, but I've received a lot of that. And so my response now is that I don't really want that, and that sort of it's overkill, and it's like too much. But I don't know. Every time I sort of say something and come to a conclusion, I sort of stop myself and I'm like, "Well, but – Well, but –" So I guess there are exceptions to everything. But generally that's sort of a part of the whole package, and somehow I feel like it's nice to have someone appreciating my breasts, sort of excited by them and wanting to give them a lot of attention, but I don't want them to be what someone's there for. And that hasn't happened too much, but it has happened before where it's sort of like, "Ok, now I'd like you to kiss me instead of my breasts." It's sort of like there's someone else in the room – me and my breasts and the other person. Rarely do I want my breasts to sort of be the end location – sort of the goal point of a love making session. I find other areas much more sexy. (Jan, R. 17)

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Along the lines of developing a body narrative, Jan described the importance of play, flirting and foreplay. She found “the *almost* touching, the *almost* there to be much more charged than any sort of actual touching.” The “kissing and touching and licking... around...outside...underneath” the actual object, such as the breast, created the excitement for her. The nipples were not the point of the interaction. They might be the agreed upon, concrete stand-in for the goal of their interactions but it was not what made the play compelling. The true interest for Jan was the oblique, intangible tension between different “spheres” of the self (i.e., part objects, physical states of tension or energy, self and other) (Jan, R. 7-9).

Jan experienced someone in pursuit of another goal as intrusive—an object not receptive to her wishes. With a partner whose aim was to kiss her breasts as opposed to playing with their presence, Jan retorted hypothetically, “Ok, now I’d like you to kiss me instead of my breasts. It’s sort of like there’s someone else in the room – me and my breasts and the other person.” Interestingly, she identified the partner’s aim or agenda as a third object. This was an experience of being excluded from pleasure, the essence of the oedipal crisis. Jan needed to be an active participant to feel turned on. There must be engagement to create tension and sustain it.

Jan continued to elaborate on how play and narrative were essential for building tension, for building a whole object:

I find it much sexier to be kissed on my hipbones than on my nipples or sort of all over my breasts...I find them very attractive. Because you can manipulate someone’s whole lower body by pushing on someone’s hipbones. Because I find the curve underneath someone’s hipbone very sexy. Because it’s sort of that invitation to something else. It’s similar to the sides and between someone’s breasts – it’s not here yet – it has that

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foreplay tension to it. I don't know why I like it. I think I also find it very attractive when bone and muscle structures protrude in very curvy ways. I like collar bones a lot, and the space between your neck and your shoulder where there are these natural lines that can be traced. I find those very erotic on myself and on others as well. Where shape is really defined. I think that's why I like the outside – like for me the space between my breasts is very flat and boring, but on the outside my breasts is very charged for me because that's where my breasts are defined – that's where the curve is, and I find it more attractive. My hipbones stick out a decent amount because of my hip flexors there, and my muscle starts to develop up and down my leg, and I think that there's sort of a similar – I think the level of definition that comes from various combinations of bone and muscle and flesh makes those spots sort of erotic spots for me. It's hard because they're not the same spots on – I'm thinking about whether or not the spots on my body that are the most erotic are because I find them very attractive on other women, and that's not necessarily the case – because I don't like having my stomach kissed very much, probably because I don't like it very much, but I love the stomachs of certain women I've been with, so that doesn't fit there but...I like to trace lines and curves, and I think that plays into why I'm aware of the things I like on my body. Why I like my shoulders, why I like my legs, why I don't like my stomach, and why my breasts aren't so exciting and you can't see my butt so it doesn't matter. I don't know why I'm sort of going on here (*laughter*). (Jan, R. 17-18)

The aspects of her shape and body that excited Jan were where there was tension and a dynamic. These spots had a potential narrative: a start and an ending. She liked the contrast of two

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mediums (i.e., muscles and bone) or ongoing defining phenomena (i.e., curves or lines). These represented the “spheres” of the self she was working with to render herself as a whole object. These were charged with anticipation and the unknown. Either two forces were meeting or a story had begun and ended. Jan identified this with “foreplay tension,” which was “an invitation to something else” not yet set. What’s important here was that she developed a narrative about her body. Experiences of her body were made meaningful in her reflections, and contextualizing them.

We know one possibility in the preceding passage: someone’s whole lower body can be manipulated by pushing on his/her hipbone. This one action had a lot of power. It begs the question: who was pushing and who was being manipulated? Who was working and who was receiving? The flirtation began. It was all very alluring. Tentative places, edges, rims, curves, creases, ridges or grooves were typically produced by heat or pressure of some kind. In a strange way, this unknown with the excitement it aroused, was that which “defined” her at these times. Like Matisse’s paintings, the subject was not the woman *per se*, but rather the feelings or sensations induced by the textures and colors.

Jan stopped herself abruptly at the end of the passage, just when she was enjoying herself. She was joking around and felt less anxious. Her speech flowed and her affect became fuller, she seemed more fluid. Then she turned on herself. One answer to her question might be: she was “going on here” because she was enjoying herself. What made her suddenly self-conscious was unclear. However, she was generally less anxious, freer in her associations and more interactive with this interviewer from this point on. In discussing this kind of eroticism, Jan was feeling more at ease with her body.

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Casual Eroticism

Jan discussed what she had coined as, “casual eroticism,” in which fun and play were possible as whole objects:

I don't – hmm...I generally don't find my anus or other anuses or anal sex very interesting. Or very erotic. I guess I find butts sexier than the actual anus. I would rather do or have done to me, like someone rubbing behind...And that's really taking pleasure in their butt rather than their anus. I think I had some not fun experiences with anal sex early on, and that's probably what turned me off it. It also seems –there's also something about penetration from behind that seems sort of impersonal. It seems not very loving. Hard to be involved with the person, instead of the person as an orifice. I don't find my ears really – that's not really a turn on. Some people really like ears. I don't like toes – I don't find them erotic. It's nice to get a foot rub but that's about it. I guess the closest anuses come, as sort of erotic to me, is that sort of exploration I was talking about earlier – sort of “fun between someone's legs.” Not goal driven, not sort of under the blankets and hidden, sort of like being able to be with someone in a way that's so comfortable, that it's – in a way it's sort of less erotic at that point because you're spending so much time there, so it becomes a little sort of normalized but I find the area of sort of the very crease between someone's torso and leg – like everyone has very soft skin there – that poor little layer of skin that never gets out, it always has multiple layers of clothing over it. So – your underwear crease line. I find that very sexy. Yeah, sort of some of these can be covered in pubic hair, and some cannot be, and that doesn't really matter. Sort of the ending of your butt and the beginnings of your legs and torso are nice spaces to not be

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super energetically aroused about, but as part of that building process, I guess. It sounds funny to say “casual eroticism” but... I don’t mean like holding hands, but like, just something that’s a level down in intensity. When that’s going up and down and it’s building – that would be down time – time spend hanging out there. Touching, kissing, licking, whatever. (Jan, R. 25)

Feeling comfortable with oneself and others was fundamental to casual eroticism. Things were not hidden by blankets, nor did they fall by the wayside in the pursuit of a goal. This was about the comfort and niceness of being a known object to the self and others. Jan gave examples of this, such as touching, kissing and licking. This play and lightness brought in other elements of her, necessitating more symbolization in her play, as it was not defined by one objective. This was more whole object eroticism.

Jan spoke of “fun between someone’s legs.” By framing it between someone’s legs, it was a space that set the stage for this kind of eroticism. If it were a body part, it would be a goal driven erotic act. At this point in the interview, after all the questions about body parts; she wanted to reconstruct herself as a whole integrated object. In reference to these questions focused on specific erotic body parts, and more specifically in reference to a question about anal sex, Jan said, it’s “hard to be involved with the person, instead of the person as an orifice.”

“That poor little layer of skin that never gets out” covered under “layers of clothing” sounded like a metaphor for id content that were vulnerable, disowned or repressed. Jan noted that “everyone has very soft skin there.” Some were “covered in pubic hair,” which did not bother Jan. In today’s culture, pubic hair is generally considered something unattractive and dirty. Nowadays, it gets trimmed, shaved or waxed. But Jan did not reject this aspect of the

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body. What others found foul, she valued, empathized with and was even turned on by it. This brings us full circle to whole object eroticism. What is so often cut back, trimmed, shaved or waxed off (i.e., split off) was held onto. In its symbolic physical manifestation of regressed and untamed id energy, pubic hair was heralded.

The Sum is Greater Than the Parts

As the last question in the interview, Jan was asked if there were any profound moments she had had but not yet shared. Jan shared one that exemplifies a whole object experience of eroticism in which she was deserving of love or lovely. She had spent the night with another woman who bathed her in admiration:

But sort of much more sexual – you know this is kind of bad that I don't remember who this was with, but I do remember – maybe it was...I don't remember – I remember being in bed with someone in the morning. It was quite light out, and whatever she was saying sort of all of the sudden made me feel really beautiful. Instead of feeling like I had parts of me that I didn't like, that I was heavier here than I wanted to be or there, my stomach was better, but my thighs were whatever. That just the way that she was looking at me, and touching me, and talking to me in sort of a very gentle, very admiring way made me feel like I didn't ever want to look like supermodel X, Y, or Z, like in the magazines or on TV. That I didn't want to look like all the media images that were sort of the presenting force in high school or...yeah, that I for the first time valued not having a perfectly flat tummy, and being curvy, and having actual substance of weight to me instead of being, you know, so super skinny and perfect. (Jan, R. 58)

(Interviewer: What does being beautiful feel like?)

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It meant that my physical awareness moved from certain body parts to my whole body. Instead of focusing on sucking in my tummy, or not wanting to show or have a lot of attention given to my butt or my thighs, that I wanted to be really naked, wanted to be seen and be touched and...it sort of made me much more – horny – it made me much more wanting to be naked, and much more with her. And sort of a little bit greedy that I wanted her to keep saying what she was saying. Keep telling me these things that she was telling me that made me feel so good. Yeah, I guess that's the best way I can come up with of saying it – that it sort of moved from an isolated to a general awareness of...because I can't remember exactly who it was – that is so bad. (Jan, R. 59)

(Interviewer: I think it's awesome. I think it's better than if you did.)

Clearly I was in my own head and not – yeah, I think they were more or less just platitudes. “You look so beautiful right now, your skin is glowing...” That kind of stuff. (Jan, R. 60)

Jan could not remember who she was with in one of her most profound memories, in which the other played a significant role. “Clearly I was more in my own head,” she said. The world was not just *all her*, she was the *whole world*. Actually, the world was *all ideally her* – her usual critical thoughts about parts were not present. Jan described this as moving “from an isolated to a general awareness.” The general awareness she spoke of was the culmination of all the cognized part body objects.

At that time, the ideal self dominated the self-experience. In the pursuit of ideal pleasure, boundaries of reality stretched to accommodate the self. In her expansiveness, Jan “felt *much more* – horny... *much more* wanting to be naked, and *much more* with her.” She “wanted to be

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really naked... to be seen... be touched.” Jan was feeling sensations more than she had previously. Because her self-representation was more robust, she was feeling things deeper and more exquisitely. This was aesthetics in vivo—a body transformed by eroticism.

EMILIE’S TRANSFORMATION NARRATIVE

I felt like something had released from me physically, like a weight lifted off, and I felt connected to my body. It was as if I denied it for so long, and almost would talk about my body in the third person. And after that, I got to repossess it in a way. (Emilie R. 10)

Emilie described feeling a weight lifted off her and excitedly described re-owning or repossessing her body. Her body had been difficult, even overwhelming, to her and others, until a change occurred in which she developed a positive cathexis to her physicality.

At the time of the interview, Emilie was a 28-year-old performance artist. She had performed in, directed, and produced local and international projects, including live troupe productions and short films. She also taught performance art to school-age children, undergraduates, and the mentally ill at various programs in the northeast. When necessary, Emilie waitressed to make ends meet. She identified as queer. As this particular sexual orientation and professional life might suggest, she was able to tolerate and sustain a complex perspective on herself and life.

Emilie’s articulations of self were quite reflective. She took great pride in living by her principles and attempting to be honest. Her narrative starts with an overwhelming body experience largely dominated by others but transitioned, in tandem with acknowledging her homoerotic desires, to be increasingly body-generated and organized. In our two meetings, she portrayed an imperfect self with imperfect knowledge, in not so good enough circumstances.

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Emilie spoke about her family and upbringing a great deal. It will be easier to follow if some facts are stated at the outset. Emilie was one of four children. As a young child, her father had difficulties with substance and alcohol abuse, and her parents divorced. Their socio-economic status was poor, working-class. They lived in tight accommodations, causing Emilie to share a bed with her brother for much of her childhood. Later in life, this brother had a psychotic break and was diagnosed with paranoid schizophrenia. Emilie had recently written and produced performance pieces about their experience with this situation.

In the interviews, Emilie was both engaged and object-related. Having reflected on her sexuality previously in life, she continued to do so throughout our meetings. Attentive to this interviewer's wishes and needs (both real and imagined), Emilie's story felt authentic. Waylaid by anticipation of a critical or dismissive response, Emilie frequently gave caveats and qualifiers so as to be comprehensive and avoid anticipated criticism.

Section I: A Developmental Narrative

In the beginning, again with puberty and adolescence, it was a complete mystery. Even though I had sex education, it was a Catholic school, and it was very sterile, and – I didn't really understand, "Oh, wait, this is what's happening." It took a lot for me to understand what they described in the books and how I actually experienced it. I remember being like, twelve, and taking baths, and having this discharge come out, and being like, "Oh, my God, something's wrong," and not understanding that was part of like – I very specifically remember that. And then when my period started I tried to talk to my mom about it, and she was like okay, mark it on the calendar, take one of these and put it in your underwear, and that was it. I didn't understand – you know like, "Okay,

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you have to wear it at night and..." None of this made sense to me. ...I just worked up to ask a friend of mine about it who had already started. And I think that was the extent of my experience for a very long time, like in terms of my vagina. Not any source of sexuality for a very long time. I didn't kiss anyone until I was seventeen, nor did I allow myself to experience what everything meant. (Emilie, R. 31)

Emilie's last statement connected an act of eroticism with a broad sweeping mental function. She spoke of a "kiss" on which the "mean[ing]" of "everything" hinged. It was unclear what "everything" meant. It was unclear to what "everything" she is referring. What seems clear was Emilie's linking erotic feelings and actions (even simple ones like a first kiss) to the ability to symbolize the world.

Earlier in this vignette, Emilie struggled with something. Her thoughts were disrupted. She was trying to understand the discharge. She says, "understanding that was part of like – I very specifically remember that" (Emilie, R.31). What did Emilie understand about this discharge? She went on to note with 'exactness,' but she could not verbalize it. She could not symbolize it. It was too unspeakable. Perhaps what was so unspeakable was a young girl exploring her body. Perhaps Emilie was masturbating. Emilie's break in speaking may have mirrored others in her life falling silent on topics of erotic bodily experiences.

Isolated and Uncomfortable

Emilie's subjective reality met objective reality. Like with her discharge, she and others said, "Oh, my God, something's wrong..." Physical occurrences were rarely tagged with positive affect, symbolized or contextualized in a positive light. Emilie explained:

I don't have a lot of memories about my body when I was very small. They mostly start

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when I was an adolescent, like thirteen. And my being Catholic, and being that my mom was very closed off about – even though now it seems strange because she’s very open, or more so now, and I think that I had to break that boundary or something. But she never would talk about our bodies, and I remember feeling – trying to intellectualize, “Okay, this is what’s going to happen to my body, we learned this in health class,” or something, but at the same time was completely shocked when my body started to change. And thinking, “Oh my gosh, what is happening here?” And feeling really isolated and uncomfortable, with no one to ask questions to and in this constant state of embarrassment. And when my period started, I did tell my mom, “Hey, I think my period started,” and she not believing me, thinking that I cut myself. Then she was like, “Okay, this is where you draw it on your calendar.” Things like that really factual and I never – never was really obsessive about my body even though I grew up hating being so small – so tiny. And always being size 6x – I was never in a woman’s size – always 6x. (Emilie, R. 59)

At first, Emilie perceived herself as not believed; her subjective reality was not accepted, along with all her unstated attached affects, hopes and fantasies about being a woman, not a child. Girls wore size 6x dresses and only get to play. Women can act on eroticism and do. It was as if she was not allowed to grow up, to have fully developed genitals or to be a menstruating woman. These would have great implications for her sexuality and eroticism. In a sense, the idea that she had cut herself implied that her menstruation was an injury. Instead of growing up, she was injured.

Very Strange

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...I remember I was allowed to take baths by myself, but my brothers and sisters would always turn the lights off, lock me in, those kinds of things, but that's one thing I remember is taking nightly baths. I came up with this song that I used to sing when I was twelve, about my body – something like: This is my body, it's not perfect, but it's who I am. I don't know where it came from but I used to sing it to myself in the bathtub.

That's something very distinct that I remember. This is very strange. (Emilie, R. 62)

“I don't know where it came from.” What is ‘it’? Is she saying, “I don't know where [my body] came from” or “I don't know where [the song] came from?” She was talking about her physical imperfections and committed to singing her song of an unknown and imperfect body while alone in the bathtub. Emilie described her efforts to sooth herself. Her situation (paternal absence, sibling tricks, shared sleeping arrangements, etc.) was disappointing and chaotic, just like her bath time, just like her body. Her narration remained focused on her feelings of discomfort, confusion, and concern about herself, so she sang to herself, perhaps masturbating. Control was what Emilie wanted and perhaps sometimes was able to wrestle it out of the chaos for herself.

She hinted at things not making sense, not adding up, and concluded, “This is very strange.” As we continue Emilie's narrative, you will hear Emilie drop other similar comments marking her body experience as abnormal with a vague, dark edge. Things were ‘bizarre,’ ‘odd’ or ‘funny.’ These words were said seemingly without the intention or ability to follow through with exploration or answers. In so doing, Emilie implicitly was attacking herself.

Am I In Pain?

At 17, Emilie had her first kiss and romantic relationship (lasting 5 years). She reflected now on her erotic experience with him:

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And he was a very – I mean everything of course went awry in the first year that we were together, and the whole time he really wanted to be like a good lover, and he would read girls' magazines, and he would want me to know about my body, and all of these things, like in theory. And so I really, I started to learn about myself and look at myself, and think about it and – but it was – when things didn't go as he thought they would, it didn't make sense to him. Like, "This is what I've read, this is what it's supposed to be like," and really into like, "Oh, let's take nude pictures," So everything came to be about beauty, and the looks of how things are supposed to be, and like, "Oh, I want to shave you, and we'll make it like a thing," and, "Yeah, sure, you know I want to please you, I want to make you happy." So that's when my body became for another person's experience as well as my own, and I felt disconnected to it because of that – to it, to my body. And also experienced other people's bodies as – their sexuality, their sexual organs as separate from their mind, and didn't see it as one thing. It was very alien. I was very scared of like, male body parts. It doesn't seem connected. And then when I started to get like, all of these infections, like consistently, like cervical infections, all of these things, then I became obsessed with my vagina and wanting to – looking at it, making sure like, "Okay, is it alright? What's wrong with it today? What's happening? What is this discharge? Is this red, or is this just flushed?" I became obsessed with ideas and symptoms and things, but not having a complete understanding of how the body works, and how the body reacts to sexuality and sex, like everything was confusing. Everything was, "Okay, am I in pain? What's happening?" (Emilie, R. 33)

Emilie had experienced of her boyfriend and others discussing her body in the third person. She

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had a sense that her boyfriend's interests and requests were intrusive and controlling. He was more interested in what a magazine said "it's supposed to be," than how it was. The priority had been for her experience to "make sense" to him, so she could make him feel alright. This is an example of how other people's expectations were presented as more important to her than her own. As with her mother, Emilie's body made others uncomfortable. Her body and others' were a source of fear and anxiety, making Emilie's connection to them difficult.

The Transformational Summer

And then during the transformational summer, or during the time before with that woman when things started to reconnect, and even after that, it took a while. I don't even think that summer, because it was so fast, and then I wasn't with anyone for a really long time – after that I lived in London for three months and just had time to myself – I feel like it was – it has been a growing experience for the last few years. And then when I was in my steady relationship with my ex-girlfriend, and felt like I was able to experience another vagina that was so closely related to me in a sense, that I really felt like I was able to experience many more things about myself through an understanding of her.

(Emilie, R.33)

It was with different women that Emilie reported her body and conscious self "started to reconnect." This was a controlled titration of erotic excitement evidenced by her decreased anxiety and less inhibited positive affects. These cathecting experiments developed into "a little secret life."

A Little Secret Life

Emilie was now free and alone in a foreign country, literally and figuratively. She

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described how she found this both wonderful and frightening. Let it be noted how Emilie immediately reported experiences of heightened affects. In this next vignette, she explained the role of secrecy in accommodating her homoerotic wishes in the face of a discordant, impenetrable objective reality. Emilie reported:

...during that time I had a lot of – I obviously came out in a lot of ways and had experiences with women during it. A little secret life. It definitely helped my growth and helped my understanding to then come to an ending. I don't know – it was really interesting, that time. Now that it's been a while, I have more of a perspective on it, and can see where it fit in and how I've changed since then.

I think that I'm so much stronger and really demanding of people's respect of me, in what I like and what I don't like in reference to sexuality, in reference to how people talk to me. And I have no qualms telling people that, or saying, "No, this is how it is." And I think I also realize just how sexuality is such a – sexuality and pain – they're so personal and yet no one really teaches you about it. There's no one right way. That's a really hard thing to realize, and when you've realized it, then it's like there's this whole world of freedom. But it's scary too. Just like normality and mainstream. When you live in New York, when you go to another country, and then you realize, "Wait – everything's a choice." We just buy into this idea of what mainstream is, and I think we do the same thing with sexuality, and sex in general. (Emilie, R. 7)

Emilie's excitement was palpable. Her subjective body-driven life had previously been hidden from others. Her subjective reality was now matching objective reality more where previously it had been hidden. Emilie seemed to need to hide less. She described her separation from past

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relationships in pursuit of better objective realities. She had realized, “There’s no one right way” as objective reality had previously told her. She now had more freedom to try, to play, to expand, and to consolidate anew.

In so doing, Emilie realized both the potentials and disappointments of others’ realities. As discussed, her objective realities had been frustrating and disappointing because they had been misaligned with her subjective reality. Her primary objects at home, teachers at school, role models in the church, did not want to see people with bodies as acceptably pleasure-seeking, in the way she thought. In the context of newfound choices and freedom, Emilie’s eroticism and actions would have been scary because they might potentially provoke accusations and abandonment, disconnections from important people.

Emilie’s anxiety about other’s receptiveness to her subjective reality emerged. Just having expressed her excitement and feelings of expansion, she became anxious and looked for reassurance from this interviewer. She needed to know exactly where this interviewer stood:

I want to know more specifically, is it a physical thing, or it’s like a more of an emotional thing or – which one are you more wanting to know – when you say experience, is it like a physical thing or like the way that you think of it? (Emilie, R. 8)

This was Emilie’s erotic dilemma: others did not seem to want to hear what she thought and how she felt. In her words, it’s as if a “physical thing” was more valid than “an emotional thing” or the “way that you think of it.”

Wow, I’m Hot

Emilie was reassured that the interview was meant to pull for this tension: the nature of understanding and owning one’s erotic feelings that manifested physically and psychically.

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Whatever she found herself thinking was exactly what was wanted. She relaxed, thought more freely, and rendered a markedly rich response:

I've often wondered what it feels like to have somebody else's body, and, like I said, because of the society we live in, probably the reason why I don't think about my body is because I'm small, and because people make me think about my body more than I think about it. People bring it up. People will say, "Oh, I wish I had a body like yours," and I never look in the mirror and think, "Wow, I'm hot," or something like that. I never really think of it more than as me, but I guess that's really because I connect it with myself and I – it's like, I'm left-handed, and I think of it as part of myself, but people will always comment to me, "Wow, you're left-handed," like it's such a big deal, and to me it's just part of who I am. But there's little things that I notice and feel that since I have like confidence about it—it would be an issue for other people. Like, I'm pretty hairy. I went through my initial relationship feeling bad about that and having to fix things or shave or whatever, and after that I was like, "You know what? Never again. I don't care. This is who I am and I'm not going to put myself through pain to look like something else – I like how I look." So, I think that was a negative experience in reference to my body at first, but like I said, during that transition where my mind/body connection – it was almost as if I was repairing that – that distinction that I made. (Emilie, R. 9)

(Interviewer: In what transition?)

I don't know exactly if I can describe it, but I think that when I broke up with my first boyfriend I felt like something had released from me physically, like a weight lifted off, and I felt connected to my body. It was as if I denied it for so long, and almost would

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talk about my body in the third person. And after that I got to repossess it in a way and – you know there’s still so many things about the body which I don’t understand, which I find fascinating. Like, I have this, I guess, morbid obsession with wanting to see a cadaver dissected. I just think – I don’t want to kill someone to do it, I just want to see it. I want to see how everything fits together. Bodies are so constantly amazing to me – how it works. Just like, every day I understand my body more, and I don’t think that people think about it enough and investigate. It’s so scary – my sister and I are very, very different. She’s just starting to be able to talk about sexuality at all, which I had to blow out of the water when I finally came out to her. I’d been in a relationship with a woman for a year and I was finally like, “I can’t lie anymore.” And I just told her straight out in a really long letter, because it was bigger than sexuality and who I was dating. It was like an entire thought process with her disconnection with sexuality and sex and not wanting to think about it at all. So I can really bounce myself off of her to see, wow, how can she be like that, to never have looked at themselves in the mirror, don’t want to think about it, don’t want to know how the body works. I don’t know if that’s a guilt thing or a fear – I don’t know what it is. But I do feel freer than that, because I know, and remember that thought – I also grew up Catholic, too, so it was never something that in our household got talked about, even your period or anything, more like, “Alright, just deal with that. We don’t wear tampons because only sluts can wear that,” so it’s been a long journey for me. (Emilie, R. 10)

(Interviewer: So, did you not wear tampons?)

Until I was eighteen, and I left home. (Emilie, R. 11)

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Reassured that she was not disappointing this interviewer, Emilie described the choice she had made to understand her erotic body, a choice different from the ones she (like her mother and sister) had done in the past. Perhaps she needed to check in with this interviewer because she was at the point in her story where people in her past had cautioned her not to go. She wanted to share things that they had not wanted to hear. She no longer needed her boyfriend to lead the way, following his path. What he saw as a dysfunctional clitoris, Emilie suspected worked in an amazing way. Emilie had started cognizing her body better. That which they were critical of or silent about, she was now complimented for. She noted that others found her attractive and desirable, not a slut. She could not say this proudly, however, because it was unfamiliar, and old negative aspects still held power.

Emilie recognized her wish to know her body and not be afraid of it. With this decision, she conveyed her potential for eroticism. Now she could say in her letter to her sister, this was “bigger than sexuality. It was like an entire thought process...” Her first tampon came to symbolize her growth away from the active ‘unknowing’ ways of her past towards the freedom to experience erotic sensations as they arose in her future. Repressed or disavowed fantasies, feelings, excitations, and sensations of eroticism started to be expressed as pleasure, not unpleasure. With this slow titration of body-generated pleasure the intrusions of others became less effective or just too far away to be heard.

Now more unified with her body, Emilie says, “Never again.” Never again, will she try to live as if in someone else’s body. Now Emilie knew these were someone else’s fantasies. She knew they were someone else’s fears and wishes. They were someone’s projections, not necessarily her thoughts and feelings.

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Peach Fuzz

Like I've said already, I feel like I've had two different experiences with it. Now I feel really light and I guess it feels – I feel in control, which I think makes me feel excited about my body, and in control and strong even though I'm not very strong, but I feel comforted by my body – it might sound strange. And soft. And grounded. I have this funny story about my shoulder – I have a fuzzy shoulder, just kind of peach fuzz or something. And I started to realize that not everyone has a fuzzy shoulder. And there was this summer after I had broken up with the boyfriend and it was a really transformative summer, but I would go through these times almost every day where I just felt completely like, “Oh, my gosh, I have to re-make myself, I have to discover who I really am now, because this is the first time I've ever been alone, and I've left my family.” I had left with him – my hometown – and went to college and had been away for several years and everything was new. And I would sit on my porch and put my head to my fuzzy shoulder, and it was like this strange sense of comfort, it's really bizarre. And I think I've slept alone – I grew up with two brothers and a sister in a slightly impoverished environment and my brothers didn't have a bed and they would sleep in sleeping bags for six years – but they were small, and so they would sleep with us – my sister and I had bunk beds – almost every night, like if they got cold or something. So I think I grew up used to sleeping with someone my whole life, and then I went straight into a relationship that was pretty committed, and then suddenly I was alone, and that was a different transition. And I feel like my body has come to a place where I feel comforted by it. But that was something that I had to get to. (Emilie R. 14)

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Emilie reflects on how her newly cognized bodily experience was “excited... light... strong... soft... rounded.” As she had said earlier, “something had been released... a weight lifted off.” She was now truly alone for the first time. More importantly, she *felt* more alone. Now, Emilie’s eroticism was as benign as her fuzzy shoulder. It was a calming, organizing strength. She identified with her fuzzy shoulder. This was the beginning of her confidence, which had the potential to grow and become bigger or stronger.

Thus far, we have heard Emilie describe a trying and sometimes painful development of herself in relation to her erotic bodily experience. It was so fundamental to her development, Emilie often referenced back to this difficult past as she described currently having more pleasurable, erotic experiences. For the remainder of her data presentation, I will report on her most salient memories and observations about her erotic life. In these are notable components that allowed her to feel generally more coherent with her body. They also made it possible to feel freer and more agentic.

Section II: Components of Transformation of Body Ego

At the start of our second meeting, Emilie astutely reflected on how she had previously disowned her body and her physical sensations. She said,

I kept thinking the next few days after the interview, really about how my self-image or my mind/body connection has changed in the last five years, and how I’ve become so much of a stronger person in reference to my sexuality. And I haven’t really thought about that in that particular way, or articulated that there was a big change. And when I talked to other people I realized that not everyone has had that transition, and some people have always felt connected to their bodies, and some people don’t and they don’t

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really want to. (Emilie, R. 45)

Emilie did so amidst recognizing what others had or had not done the same. She tried to relate her experience to other people. Early in life, Emilie's experience of herself was not as informed by her body as she would have liked. She recalled not being given the knowledge or space to understand it. She continued:

...when I talk about myself, or am being upfront about my body, or talking about it even in reference to reproductive things and sexual things, people are a little bit taken aback being so upfront about things. So all those things I kind of started to think about after the interview. And also – I think I have it on my computer – I was going to bring in this monologue that I wrote that was really relating to the dichotomy that I talked to you about when I was with my first boyfriend and then when I started to re-experience my body with that woman... . (Emilie, R. 45)

The interviewer speculated that Emile was concerned about this interviewer reaction to what she had said previously. Was the interviewer “a little bit taken aback” by her “being so upfront about things” last time? Was this interviewer like figures from her upbringing, not wanting to talk about it, not wanting to hear what her body could do? The past still holds power for her.

My Body In Terms Of Me

Emilie reflected on the “positive transformation about myself and my body” (Emilie R. 18) that took place in her first relationship with a woman. She said:

I felt like a completely different person, but I still couldn't leave the relationship. It was like some kind of security or something – this is my future, this is my life, this is everything. You know? And when I realized I could leave. Then I finally left that. And

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felt like, this weight had been lifted off of me. ...I felt so powerful and in control of myself, because I didn't have to let anyone else know about my body. There was just me. ... I didn't have to worry about it. I didn't have to think about it in relation to anyone else. There was just me. Because I think for so many years I didn't think of my body in terms of me, I thought about it in terms of, "Oh, how am I feeling today? Do I think I can have sex today? Am I too tired, or am I in pain, do I need to have a shower, do I smell bad..." All of these things that weren't about how I felt about myself. I was like, living like my body was my own apartment... I lived by myself now and I could put the dishes wherever I want... it just felt like this amazing thing. That seems so strange now, but looking back I was such a different person, and I was living in really stressed circumstances with my family, so I can understand why I did have those times and thoughts about myself. And then I went out with a few different people that summer and one was a girl, and it was this amazing, kind of – not emotionally amazing because it was this horrible affair...I didn't know she had a girlfriend and so on and so forth. But physically, it was like a brand new thing for me and it was great to have that. And then I also kind of dated this guy for like two weeks and I just wasn't interested, and I felt completely in control, and like, "You know what? I don't want to do this, this isn't working out." Or like, "I'm not going to have sex with you tonight." And I had no qualms about stating how things were going to be with me. So that was a transition for me. (Emilie, R. 19)

What she had was an 'all me' experience—a drive-generative experience, rendering a more unified "mind/body connection." Emilie said, "I felt like a completely different person...

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physically, it was like a brand new thing for me and it was great to have that.” Her absolute enjoyment of this new sense of herself was obvious. This depicted the agency she gained when becoming closer to her ideal self.

With the metaphor of living in her body as if it was her apartment, Emilie explained that it was “amazing;” it felt like she now lived alone. She declared, “I...could put the dishes wherever I want.” Emilie felt agency and wanted no more forced containment from others. She could enjoy cleaning up and organizing her things as she desired. “I didn’t have to worry about it... There was just me,” Emile said. With only herself to attend to, Emilie described her capacity to be more alone than before. She could now focus on herself.

As depicted in this vignette, Emilie reported feeling more relaxed, her ego was more robust. The disparate id and super-ego, and resultant pockets of unpleasure in the ego, were transformed and the energy focused on more appropriate pleasurable places. Boundaries between her self and others were stronger. Boundaries between psychic structures were softer.

Emilie identified the role of her relationship with her boyfriend as, “some kind of security.” Perhaps this investment in unpleasure assuaged her anxiety. Having true pleasure might have evoked negative or angry reactions from others. The relationship with her boyfriend was constraining and critical. Their separation allowed Emilie to feel more alone in positive, healthy ways.

Bizarre and Passionate

There was a more prominent moment with this other woman who I had been watching – not watching like stalking, but she went to school with me. And I’d always seen her and I always wanted to talk to her but I never had. And when Julie and I broke up, we just

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happened to be at this party together. And we were having this great conversation and so, we decided let's hang out, so we went out a few times and we had like a really great time. And then I heard through the grapevine that she had a girlfriend and I was like, how can this be? So the next time I saw her I asked her about it. And she said, "Who told you?" And I was like, "Well, I was kind of forming these feelings for you, but I still would like to be your friend," and she was really conflicted about things, and then her girlfriend went out of town, so then we met up and spent like the whole day together and ended up having this sexual tension leading into this – oh I remember I skipped a part of the story. So I found out that she had a girlfriend, and we were talking, and I brought up the fact that I had seen her like two years ago and had this crush on her. And then I found out that she felt the same way about me and we had this common meeting point of like two years ago – we'd both seen each other but both been too nervous—which is like the height of romantic crushes brought to life. And I was like, "Great. How am I going to give this up now?" And that day we spent all night until the morning – until the sun came up – just talking by the water, and that's when I asked her, "Do you guys have an open relationship or something?" And she said, "No," and I was like, "Well, is she going to get angry or something? It's like six o'clock in the morning." Even though we hadn't done anything. So then her girlfriend goes out of town and then we have this like, amazing night of passion. And it was the most strangely like, bizarre and passionate thing. But then you know she felt guilty the next day and it was pretty horrific after that (*laughter*). (Emilie, R. 52)

(Interviewer: You said bizarre and passionate. What do you mean?)

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I think it was bizarre because I didn't – I think kissing a woman is different than kissing a man in relating to bodies. And just really with bodies in general, because it was a new thing for me to be with someone different. And also to see how women – I don't want to generalize, but to see how this woman did things. And it was just very different – just talking and bodies and understanding each other...Fascinating. It was one of those times where I'm like, "Oh, yeah, I have to remember everything." (*laughter*) Which I often – like, "Mental recorder on." There was something so strange – it was like out of control. We were walking through these woods, and she brings me to this hidden staircase and we're like against these like, stone rocks and she's shaking, and I'm like, "Why are you shaking?" And she's like, "I'm so nervous," and we're – it felt strange to be – to have so much mutual control or something? Not control in a power sense, but to feel like everything I'm doing is because I want to do it and I don't feel like one of us has more control than the other one. Which I think was a new thing for me. But again, not to generalize – I would say that's what it means to be with a woman, you know, but definitely that was a shift. (Emilie, R. 53)

The first thing I remember is how soft her lips were, and small. Small and soft. And wet. It seemed that we just related to each other and there was no, kind of like, how do I do this? Or, is this the right way? Or, are we both enjoying this? It just felt like I didn't have to think about it. (Emilie, R. 55)

This was a fantastic example of wish actualization. Emilie's thoughts were not leading her behavior, not intervening in what she wanted to do. The body/mind split was completely dissolved; she "didn't have to think about it." She couldn't think clearly. Regressed with all its

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primitive libidinal energy, the ego was left unable to attend to other mental functions; she even got lost in telling her own story. She tried to use her “mental recorder,” a dissociated aspect of herself to capture the magic of this body-driven experience, doing what “I want” and not thinking. This scene had a primal feel, not controlled by others or by ego functions. Even the “shaking” she referenced seemed reminiscent of the uncontrollable movements of sex and orgasm.

With heightened affect and a sense of boundlessness, Emilie described extremes, such as “stalking... the whole day together... the height of romantic crushes... all night long... until the sun came up... amazing... horrific.” Things were felt and occurred with a force that went as far as they could go. Emilie had not had been able to have this type of regressed, primitive, erotic experience before.

The Way My Engineering Works

That’s another funny story. I think because of where my G-spot is or something, my body’s really sensitive to like, if I have to go to the bathroom, or if there’s any sort of pressure in my body, I can have an orgasm just anywhere. It’s really bizarre – it doesn’t happen all the time. I’ve talked to a few people who know what I’m talking about, but I think it’s just the way that my engineering works or something. I always have funny stories. Because I can feel it – I’m assuming it’s my G spot. I’m not sure. I can’t definitely find it from the outside. So I don’t know. Like I said, I’ve never possessed anybody else’s body, so it could be just something that nobody else ever talks about and I do, but it’s a little bit odd. (Emilie, R. 15)

Surprisingly, Emilie’s description of frequent pleasure here was somewhat disorganized.

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Perhaps her disorganization was related to feeling overwhelmed. Perhaps this resulted from her fearing disapproval or envy. Emilie spoke with a slight smile and light-heartedness but her words said differently. There was confusion in this narrative that even Emilie acknowledged. She stated, “it’s really bizarre...it doesn’t happen all the time...I’m not sure...I can’t definitely find it...I don’t know...it’s a little bit odd.”

On the other hand, Emilie was quite fortunate. No other participants spoke of a plethora of orgasms. Inability to orgasm was the more frequent complaint. To avoid other’s anger resulting from moral disapproval, resentment, or jealousy, Emilie may have turned pleasure into unpleasure to feel safer. Perhaps her smiles communicated some appreciation of its more pleasant side despite this dilemma.

She also spoke of a body that operated on its own. It can be overwhelming to have one’s body do anything out of one’s control. Even a highly desirable “G-spot” orgasm might not feel so desirable if it came unbidden and not at one’s discretion. Emilie described being over-stimulated and struggling to make sense of pleasurable sensations stemming from both potentially external and internal sources. She could not know her G-spot or her imminent orgasmic experience by seeing it, only feeling it, nor could anyone else.

In saying, “I think it’s just the way my engineering works,” Emilie referenced the engineering of a slightly disowned, uncognized body. If her body had been better cognized or if the sensate had been more comfortably the focus, she would potentially have had a spectacular, body-generative exuberance. Disorganized, Emilie looked for validation from others who had had similar experiences, even imagining being in another’s body might have helped clarify her experience.

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Morbid Obsessions with Cadavers

All this talk of her questionable normality caused Emilie to want to understand how the body was supposed to work. Recalling Emilie in R.10, quoted a few pages ago in Vignette, *Wow I'm Hot*, we heard her speak of her desire "to see a cadaver dissected" so she could "see how everything fits together". She spoke of how she finds the way body's work "amazing". She compared her curiosity and desire to talk about sex to her sister's reluctance, finally recounting her need to come out about her sexuality, stating "I can't lie anymore".

At first glance, it seemed that Emilie was still relying on the idea of really "knowing" how this all works. As if there was a singular right answer and she was just not the one in possession of it. She had this concrete notion that watching a dissection would tell her about her body. This brought us back to her earlier experiences in which she believed someone had the 'right answers.' Developmentally appropriate then, she had a pre-symbolic childhood wish that this were so. If she could only have that knowledge, all would be solved. She would be relieved and feel calmer. This 'third object' or what could be referenced as the 'other' was idealized more than herself. Their objective reality had always dominated Emilie, leaving her subjective reality to exist on the sly, or not at all.

In dialogue with herself, Emilie knew that what she wished for was more than knowing the parts. Dissection would not provide this. She wanted to feel more comfortable with her body erotic. It was bigger than whom she was dating, her sexual orientation, or identity. As in her letter, Emilie wanted to communicate her frustration with others' rejection of this. It had had a grave impact on her. At this point, Emilie understood how damaging repressing sexuality and eroticism could be. Implicitly, she grasped how eroticism was responsible for forming a

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coherent self-experience. Emilie then felt, saw, and knew that eroticism was a central organizing force at her core.

These other objects in her life never did look at themselves in a mirror, and they wanted Emilie to do as they did. They wanted her to mirror themselves. Her failure to do so was threatening, forcing them to see things they did not want to look at. What is new here was Emilie's rage. She no sooner stated her desire to see a dissection, than she qualified it denying any violent desire to kill. Once denied, she felt more liberated from the anxiety and spoke more freely.

Emilie's pain was that she had difficulty overcoming the discrepancy between her own subjective reality and objective reality reflected in her mother and sister. She wished people would stop presuming that they knew what it was like to live in her body. Their actions repeatedly separated her from her body and separated her from them. Even overtly positive, appreciative comments were spoiled in this manner.

Special Attention

With enriched cognition of her body, when asked to talk about her clitoris, Emilie responded exuberantly:

I – oh my gosh, it's so interesting, because I never realized like, how much my – like, how diversified my experiences are, considering like, this long term relationship, and the rest of my life – maybe because he would always talk about sex so much – I don't know, it's interesting. He would talk about it, and maybe because that was my first experience, I think back and maybe I don't realize how much that relationship formed my initial view of sexuality and my body, because I can remember him talking about my clitoris talking

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about, “Oh, it doesn’t work the same way as most girls.” It was all about the dysfunction. Even though visually I knew about the clit, I didn’t really understand how it worked or how for me, what worked about it. Or how to make everything work together, but now I’ve – I can say that the clitoris is something that definitely has a big impact in my sexual experience in general, and when I have – when I’ve had intercourse with a guy in a good way, it’s when it feels good because there is some sort of special attention paid to the clitoris. And with my relationship with my ex-girlfriend, I felt like that was – a big main focus was the clitoris, and finding different ways that we could both feel good at the same time, which was really fascinating to me because I didn’t – that was really something that we both discovered together. And that’s something that’s so interesting, I think, about female to female sex – each body type is so different. Like I haven’t been with that many girls, but each girl is so different. I don’t know. It’s really interesting to me. (Emilie, R. 34)

This transformation of her clitoris felt authentic and believable. With its multiple dimensions, she described its historical context, current affects, and anticipation of the future. What had previously been all about dysfunction, now powerfully rendered her more capable, more whole. Emilie had come to know this rudiment of her body and what pleasure it could provide her. The meaning and function of her clitoris was transformed. She believed this transformation of her clitoris involved her whole body on a broader level. She believed this transformation process would also help “make everything work together.”

Once owned and marked by others as something negative, her clitoris was now hers, and only hers. In Emilie’s comment, “each body type is so different...each girl is so different.” She

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started to appreciate the uniqueness and integrity of each individual and was glad to be her.

There were boundaries and difference between her clitoris and the clitoris of others. These were body parts that give life. And now theirs and hers were getting cognized.

Anything to Pleasure Her

So that was a whole new thing for me, and amazing because I had never felt turned on by satisfying someone else before. I would say that the fling doesn't even – it never progressed enough that I felt completely comfortable, but with Sarah it was always – it was an exciting thing to do. Anything to pleasure her. Which I never had that kind of reciprocal feelings with guys. I was like, "Oh, I'll do this for you." So that was a strange turn of events – everything was something I looked forward to. There was nothing that was like, "Oh, yeah, I've got to do that." And I felt so satisfied all the time, and it was so strange to have sex and not feel pain afterwards and not feel – I don't know – some kind of fear of my body, like, "Oh, is everything going to be ok? Do I have to take care of myself?" And to know that she cared about my body and cared about me, it just made me relax. (Emilie, R. 57)

Emilie could enjoy the other in full, whole object eroticism, producing more whole object excitement and relaxation. As she said, this was "a whole new thing for me." Emilie also described this as "reciprocal." This object relationship was less about object control and more about object feelings. This was notably different than the object relationship dynamic she had had with her boyfriend.

What used to be a job (sex) was now more all-encompassing excitement. She said, "everything was something I looked forward to...I felt so satisfied all the time." Emilie spoke in

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expansive superlatives now. She said, “I had never felt turned on by satisfying someone else before...Anything to pleasure her.” Instead of her sexual organs being a job with requisite tasks, female genitalia had erotic functions not checklists. Genitalia had been hooked into pleasure. The more cathected she became to her body, specifically her genitalia with the function of sex, the better cognized her body had become with eroticism. Up until now, it seemed like Emilie experienced the erotic object as disorganizing. She seemed to be organized by the female erotic objects that left her feeling “cared” for and “relaxed.” This was new.

A Brand New Me

We found Emilie alone in this next vignette. No one’s there. Emilie said:

We broke up almost a year ago. She’s my last official relationship. She’s really great, and when I first met her she was probably the first girl that wasn’t like, straight, or calling herself straight, and wasn’t in a relationship, so that was a little scary at first to be like, “Oh, she’s cute and she’s single,” and I was a little nervous that this could really happen. And the first time we went out we talked for like, six hours, and she had come to see a show that I directed, and being the smart girl that she is she’d come to see it twice and had all these ideas, and we had this amazing conversation about my play, which was very impressive. And we found out all these things we had in common. And then we dated for like, three weeks, and then I got really scared – the show I was directing closed and I’d been working on it for a year, and it was really close to me – it was about my brother and I felt really – like I needed to be alone, and I told her that, and I was, “I don’t know, this is all going so fast for me.” It had gotten to the point where she was calling me her girlfriend and I was like, this is all so brand new. And then I went to visit my family, and

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on the way there, September 11th happened, and I spent a week alone in an airport. And even though it was so scary in so many ways, it was also like a good – I’d never spent that much time by myself and couldn’t do anything, so it was like this release of all these ideas and expectations and pressures, and when I came back home I just felt like, “Wow, why am I so worried about everything? I just need to take things one day at a time.” So then we started dating seriously after that and it’s pretty – I would say intense and focused – like, I never thought about anybody else, and I felt completely satisfied with her and our relationship for at least a year after that. (Emilie, R. 57)

The scary experience of 9/11 and being stranded in an airport for a week, alone and separate, gave Emilie perspective. On a bigger level, no one knew what was happening or what to expect, but on the personal level this was her time to allow herself to relax. There were no harsh objects to criticize her or tell her how to feel, no objective realities to worry about. In objective reality, expectation of any sort had come to a halt.

Having weathered this national event of significant aggression, she was more secure in herself. In the context of surviving this alone, Emilie was freer, editing herself less, thinking and acting bolder. In a sense, she was embodying herself better. Emilie said she never had that much time alone. After hearing about her life, we knew this was true, physically and mentally. We felt the weight of others’ presence lifted: their criticalness of her eroticism silenced.

Her newfound sense of self allowed her to reconsider the recent events in her personal life, the play closing and the new relationship unfolding so fast. With a smile, she said frankly, “she [her new girlfriend] had come to see a show that I directed, and being the smart girl that she is she’d come to see it twice.” A healthy, strong, positive narcissism grew.

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Sense Memory

(Interviewer: Could you tell me a little bit about the first time you slept with a woman?)

...a lot of things that went through my mind like, “Oh, my gosh, am I doing this the right way?” But also feeling really comfortable. And also, the idea of like, a mirror body, and the idea that breast against breast was like, such an amazing feeling for me and so interesting. And to feel back some of the comments that people had made to me – like, “Wow, your skin’s so soft, it’s glistening.” And just feeling a connection to someone and them being a woman, it made a lot more sense. It felt like I could relate to her in a different way than I could with men. But at the same time, I think because of the build-up to this and the situation, I think I also was kind of concerned. And that’s why I was in documentation mode. Like, “Wow, I can’t believe this is really happening.” And because of the – the taboo of it – even though with Christine it had kind of begun to erase that, but with Sarah it was still a little bit there. Like, “Wow, this is all of the ideas that I had, and the dreams,” because I always used to have these recurring dreams about having sex with women, but every time that we would get to actually have sex it wouldn’t happen, so this time it actually happened, which is interesting. And since then I don’t have those dreams anymore. And I think that what’s also memorable is that the next day I could feel her body – going through the day. Just the sense memory of it was so strong. And it just made me feel really warm (*laughter*). (Emilie, R. 58)

This was the actualization of an outstanding wish—Emilie’s thwarted dreams of sex with women. The frustration of her desire was resolved, her wish actualized. The nocturnal dreams lived out to fruition.

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As Emilie tells it, this first time with a woman was stored as a “sense memory.” It was preserved in her body, running over and through vastly different sensate mediums: thermal (“warm”), visual (“glistening”), tactile (“skin”), unconscious (“the dreams”), and cerebral (“in documentation mode”). Emilie presented a multi-dimensional sensate memory. She highlighted “the build-up” of energy going into this and how the physical sense of it remained with her afterwards.

This wish had a long historical journey in her unconscious and real relationships with women. For some time, it had been against her under-eroticized, and externally monitored representation of self. In light of all the thinking and grappling Emilie had been doing, the sense memory presented as starkly different. The id and body reigned supreme. Thinking and remembering (Emilie’s “mental recording”) were less worthwhile goals. Wanting to remember and think during such an evocative erotic experience seemed to imply she would have to report back to some others at some time, maybe to her superego or those demanding introjects. They might try to tell her how to feel, but only Emilie could feel what she was feeling. What Emilie would remember were the sensate experiences. Emilie had “sense memories” of her eroticism. These were non-cognized affects and stimulation. With eroticism, this was all that one wanted.

Where the Rest of the World Is Quiet

(Interviewer: Can you tell me about what an orgasm feels like to you, and where you would locate it in your body?)

It feels like going underwater. In a good way. Almost like, in a bathtub. I would locate it in my chest – starting in my chest, and then all the way down and sometimes extending into the limbs. (Emilie, R. 40)

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(Interviewer: Tell me more about the going underwater?)

It feels like you're warm and you're no longer thinking. And you're just completely relaxed and the rest of the world is kind of quiet. Like you're kind of engrossed in this warmth and you can't hear anything. But you feel also protected by the warmth and the water. (Emilie, R. 41)

Emilie appreciated these vital silences. There had always been so much noise. The quiet she chose was organizing. The silences imposed by others when she had wanted to ask questions, talk about things, or understand something had been disorganizing.

Emilie did not highlight the movements or noises that often accompany orgasm. Like the white that avails itself to an inkblot, it was the expansive silence of the world around her that she saw, leaving just her, all her, exactly where she should be. It was an intrusive and disorganizing world that moved her. In a life where she had been so vigilantly aware of others, Emilie wanted to attend to the silences to which she need not be attended.

Emilie stated that orgasm started in her chest, which was not typical in these interviews. This was an abstract depiction, unlike the usual ones of realism. It was the area of the body we most identify with the gravity of life. It is where the lungs are—her breath that enables her to speak for herself. It is where the heart is—her pulse and her feelings. It made sense that it was here in her chest that she focused, since she had felt her very existence so oppressed in the past. Her feelings and pulse were at the core of life when the rest of the world had gone quiet. It was here her orgasm started and it was here her body was found through eroticism.

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CHAPTER FIVE: QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

The aim of this quantitative analysis is to identify exactly which proposed components were present in Emilie and Jan's narratives and how frequently. The components were distilled from their narratives and cataloged, and can be found in Appendix H and I. Comparisons were then made between the participant's catalogs to observe the similarities and differences in which components were cited and their frequency. More light will be shed on the meaning of the data and why they presented as they did in Chapter Six. One note about the data analysis in this study requires us to recognize the limitations and advantages of a small case study. This case study was kept small so that detailed and comprehensive attention could be given to exploring components of transformation linked with homoerotic experiences.

Component Citations and Frequency

All eight identified components of female homoerotic transformations were found in the two case studies, although neither case study included all eight. Both Emilie and Jan cited six of the eight speculated components, four were common to both participants and two were not. The four components mutually reported by both participants included: experiences of physical and psychic tension, rudiments of one's self, object relations dynamic, and increased capacity for time alone. The two components reported by Jan but not Emilie were: foul parts of the self and having physical actions taken, whereas Emilie's responses included: experiences of heightened affects and wishes actualized. The frequency of a component was counted as presenting once within a response to each interview question or prompt. Additional frequencies were noted for subsequent mention in other interview questions or prompt responses. A summary of these findings are presented in the Table 1.

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Table 1.

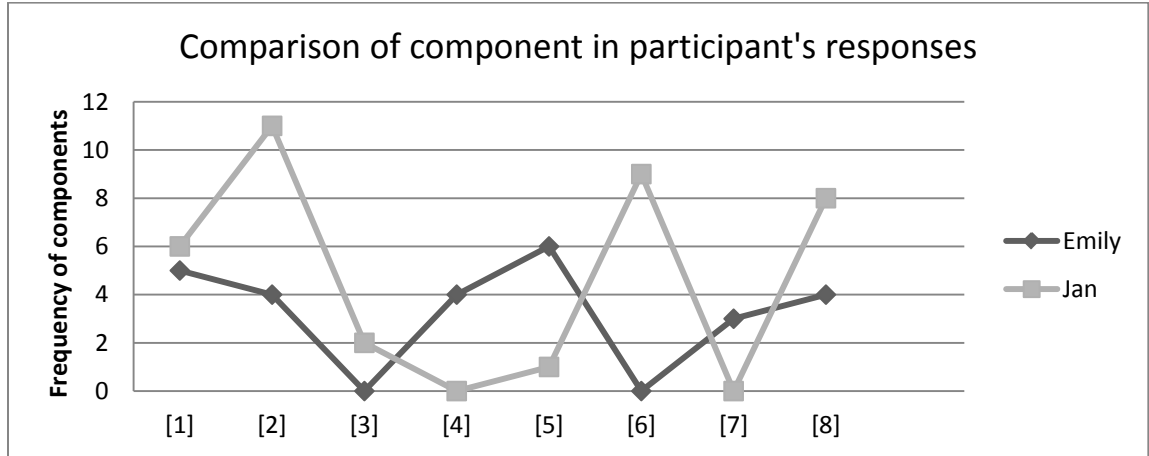
Citation and Frequency of Components in Participants' Narratives.

<u>Components</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	
	<u>Jan</u>	<u>Emilie</u>
[1] <i>Internal Physical and Psychic Tension</i>	6	5
[2] <i>Awareness of the Rudiments of One's Self</i>	11	4
[3] <i>Foul Parts of the Self Appreciated</i>	2	0
[4] <i>Heightened Affects Experienced</i>	0	4
[5] <i>Increased Capacity to Be Alone</i>	1	6
[6] <i>Physical Actions Taken</i>	9	0
[7] <i>Wishes Actualized</i>	0	3
[8] <i>Object Relations Dynamics</i>	8	4

All values indicate the number of times specific components occurring in each participants responses and are raw nonstandardized values.

An exploration of what each participant commented on was pursued to provide insight into what might have contributed to each participant's transformation. The appearance or absence of certain components was thought to have some meaning for the participant's transformation. The frequency of specific components, although interesting, cannot at this point provide any definite information as to that component's significance for transformation for that individual participant or the population in general. It did connote the need for further exploration to make sense of that component role for transformation.

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Components:

- [1] Internal tension
- [2] Awareness of Rudiments of the Self
- [3] Foul Parts of the Self
- [4] Heightened Affects
- [5] Increased capacity to be Alone
- [6] Physical Actions Taken
- [7] Wishes Actualized
- [8] Object-Relation Dynamics

Figure 1. Comparison of Component Frequencies in Emilie’s and Jan’s Responses.

These configurations highlight the idiosyncratic utilization of various components by each participant. All numerical values for frequencies are non-standardized raw scores.

Emilie and Jan had distinctly different frequency distributions for the eight components. Emilie’s distribution was more uniform with one component in the low range ($f=1-3$), five in the medium range ($f=4-6$) and two components absent ($f=0$). Jan’s utilized the components in a ‘hot and cold’ manner. The distribution of the components was skewed, with more extreme frequencies. Jan cited three components in the high range ($f=7+$), one in the medium ($f=4-6$), and two in the low-range ($f=1-3$). Chart 1 may be helpful in presenting a visual picture of the unique frequency for the components presented by each participant.

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Emilie most frequently referenced the following components in her transformation: capacity for being alone, internal physical and psychic tensions, awareness of rudiments of the self, object relations dynamics, heightened affects, and wishes actualized. She did not mention physical actions taken, nor foul parts of the self.

Jan cited at the very high-end of the frequency range, awareness of rudiments of the self. She also referenced two others in the high range: taking physical actions and object relations dynamics. All three of these far outnumbered Emilie's reference to them. Jan did not cite experiencing heightened affects or actualizing wishes.

Quantitative Analysis Summary

In looking more closely at each component in the two transformation narratives, they started to take on a life of their own. That is, each component existed as a sought-after experience in its own respect. Each participant wanted transformation of particular things and for particular reasons. Transformation per se, was not what drove the individuals but the experiences that comprised.

With this in mind, the research shifted from whether a component was present, to an exploration of why it had arisen in that individual's transformation. Each component was next investigated as the purpose onto itself, not merely a given occurrence in a string of phenomena resulting in something called "transformation." And what better way to take stock of what Emilie and Jan wanted to transform than to be familiar with what the types of life experiences they found compelling or troubling, which is accessible within the rubric of character formation? In the course of the research, it became apparent that each component manifested in direct relationship to the conscious and unconscious processes that were woven together in the

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individual's personality or character. Using character style and organization as lenses, the reasons why components presented as they did could be identified and understood. A notable observation was that both participants reported being struck by remarkably similar experiences involving a sense of body/self-coherence.

The two transformation narratives presented in chapter 4, were strikingly different yet, remarkably similar. Jan reported a stable, tempered transformation while Emilie's entailed more dramatic affects and anxieties. Although unfolding differently in tone, tempo, and thematic content, both narratives contained most of the same components proposed in this research. With Emilie's and Jan's detailed attention to particular aspects or dimensions of each component, as well as the discrepancies in the sheer frequency with which each was referenced, it became obvious that other dynamics played a role in how their transformations took shape. The components themselves were utilized to different degrees and in different ways. These findings are explored and presented in the next chapter.

In summary, the analysis in this chapter provides a detailed presentation of those components Emilie and Jan cited in their transformation narratives. Specific quotes that were believed to be evidence for those components were identified (Appendix H and I). Speculated components were largely substantiated in these two participants' narratives—the vast majority cited by each participant. The distribution and frequency of each component varied from participant to participant.

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CHAPTER SIX: QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

Emilie and Jan's different character styles seemed to drive their transformation's components to unfold as they did—both similarly and differently in sequence, frequency, and meaning. The two women had different transformation needs, making each component different experiences for them, causing each component to become more or less significant, more or less desirable, more or less discombobulating, and so on. The concept of change itself, with the implicit idea of being affected and becoming different than what or how one was one's self before, meant very different things to these two participants. The components came to be understood as holding currency in realms other than eroticism or transformation proper. These psychic experiences comprising transformation had meaning onto themselves that was separate from both a part of and separate from transformation. What components manifested and how, came to be understood as deeply related to Emilie and Jan's experiences in life and their character organization.

Before we examine this conclusion, one more critical aspect of the data collected is briefly presented: this researcher's countertransference to Emilie and Jan. The countertransference gives us first-hand knowledge of how the two participants were experienced by another object. Combined with the participant's narrative in Chapter Four and the quantitative findings in Chapter Five, sketches of Emilie and Jan's character styles were formed. We then can see how the components of Emilie and Jan's transformations were deeply related to the participant's character. Six exemplars of transformation in vivo are presented, providing quick snapshots of transformation's components in their inner worlds. The roles of character

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dynamics in making components operational are explored in six particular vignettes.

Countertransference

This researcher's countertransference to Emilie and Jan was informative data—the feelings and associations stirred by each markedly different. An idealizing and a devaluing countertransference were experienced with both: one during the interview and a second while analyzing their narratives. As their transformations narrative were explored and understood, the previous processes of splitting.

Countertransference with Jan

Without more spontaneous expressions or interactions, it felt as if some things had not been said. It felt as if something was set to unfold, but did not. Telling a confident and robust story of physical strength and self-sufficiency, Jan was thought to be the ideal participant when interviewed. Her narrative supported this researcher's theory without her knowing it. Emilie's less physical pastimes and steadfast orientation to others in her life were presumed to be part of a weaker transformation story. While analyzing the narratives, the idealizing and devaluing countertransference changed. Emilie's reflective narrative was thought to be complex, as she worked to make meaning of her eroticized body in light of multiple hardships and complications. Jan's narrative felt flat and over-simplified. Speaking powerfully but simply about her bodily experiences, Jan failed to acknowledge that she did not always understand them.

During the interview, this researcher's conscious response to Jan was positive and idealizing. However, having both played rugby at comparable universities and studied similar disciplines, there was an expectation that we would connect more easily. That was harder than anticipated. Jan seemed unmoved, but her strong, body-driven experiences and highly detailed

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descriptions of her physicality were appreciated. Speaking eloquently and succinctly, Jan conveyed herself as an almost seamless, confident individual. As noted previously, she did not request any clarifications or seek help in responding to prompts. Verbally and non-verbally, Jan participated in the interview as a complete independent. In retrospect, what Jan was invested in presenting, was what I had, un-admittedly, wanted to hear: clear, confident articulations of physical and mental strength. Meanwhile, this researcher felt increasingly self-conscious, worried the interview questions were boring. While reflecting on the interview, feelings of annoyance emerged. Jan had seemed so disinterested—making little-to-no eye contact and expressing little curiosity about the research. This amount of interaction was markedly atypical for these interviews.

Processes of devaluation and idealizing were at play. In retrospect, Jan was perhaps nervous in being asked intimate, open-ended questions. She produced a robust and detailed self-narrative that was invulnerable or impenetrable. Her narrative had little conflict or self-doubt. It was as if Jan had either known the questions, so as to have prepared her answers beforehand, or was simply brilliant. This was ironic because Jan had come to the interview claiming to have forgotten what the interview subject was. But she had been told the research topic in our initial phone contact, which indicated that something about her body, ‘the body,’ or this interview had made her uncomfortable. Forgetting was a method she used to cope with a conflict. We observed this defense during her interview in other places.

Jan was notably controlled in the interview. Always satisfied with her first responses, she appeared to do no new thinking, revising, or exploration on the spot. There was little digression in Jan’s answers and few breaks in the question-and-answer format. Without conversation or eye

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contact, Jan left few openings for interaction. This researcher felt frustrated. There seemed to be no way to reach her, whether to move her or engage her. Jan felt remote. The interviews were complete, but a sense of incompleteness lingered.

Countertransference with Emilie

Emilie was an engaged individual who had a heartfelt story of confusion, pain, and conflict. Emilie's history of doubts, lack of interest in athletics, and great attention to this interviewer's "wishes" (often projected) led me to devalue her narrative (in regard to its transformative qualities). With shame now, I admit I was disinterested and disappointed, because of her similarity to this researcher's own transformation. Over time, I came to appreciate how every transformation is personal and need not mirror any aspect of my own experience. Jan's confidence and strength were similar to the outcome of my transformation, while Emilie's story was more similar on the whole. Emilie told a compelling story, but her great focus on her negative erotic experiences was a downer. This was felt to be the antithesis of this study's exploratory conceptualization of eroticism as positive and generative.

As previously noted, Emilie frequently referenced her troubled past, even when sharing later experiences of eroticism as empowering. She voiced her thought process while responding and seeming to want emotional responses back. This was very different from Jan. Jan was noted for her lack of attention to me and Emilie for too much attention. Emilie felt needy as she pulled for something either I did not have or did not want to give. Only after the interview was I able to reflect more sensitively on Emilie's great need to tell her story. Her earnestness was clear and apparent. She deserved a listening ear that I had provided, begrudgingly.

Upon revisiting her interview, when writing the results of the dissertation research, this

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researcher's countertransference changed. Speaking of physical sensations, unconscious fantasies, conscious wishes, and relationships, she told a complex narrative containing multiple dimensions of eroticism both experienced and thwarted. Emilie's struggles with others over how her eroticized body worked, could be understood and should be valued. Her rich narrative actually contained many of the components speculated. This suggested there may have also been something in Emilie's presentation that played a role in my devaluation of her transformation experienced. She may have pulled for an uninterested, devaluing, or disappointed listener.

Character Style

The dynamics of Emilie and Jan's character played a significant role in how transformation's components manifested. Certain themes and dynamics arose in their respective narratives, were observed in the quantitative analysis, and articulated in this researcher's countertransference. A general sense of Emilie and Jan's character styles were arrived at from these three sources. It should be noted that these character dynamics were perceived using Rorschach Interpretative Methodology (RIM) with an exploratory, open-ended interview on eroticism and sexuality, not from an empirically-based objective personality inventory. The participant's character dynamics are presented loosely and generally.

Emilie Character Dynamics

Emilie reported a life that had entailed tremendous exogenous and endogenous stimulation, along with frequent intrusions and misinterpretations by others. These disruptions and judgments were anxiety provoking for her. One example involved Emilie's first menstruation. What had been a potentially joyful occurrence, linked to maturation with its implied independence and sexual pleasure, was treated as an injury. The bleeding was an issue

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and her body potentially damaged made menstruation an unwelcomed problem. This was one example of many in which Emilie reported others having difficulty with her eroticism. As a result, Emilie took great pride in her internal strength and resiliency. By focusing on this and her compassion for others, Emilie could reframe her unpleasure as part of a noble effort to help support those for whom she cared. In accommodating other's wishes (both pleasurable and aggressive), the boundaries of who she was became blurred. She tried to function as if she could contain and gratify both other's needs and her own. This was difficult for Emilie, as she was overwhelmed by her own endogenous stimulation.

To endure this unpleasure, with its disappointments and pain, Emilie had turned against herself, redirecting pleasure-seeking energy toward unpleasure. Examples of this were her frequent conclusions that something about her body was "wrong," "bizarre," "funny," or "odd." In the past, finding wrong with herself, idealizing the object, and enjoying minimal sexual pleasure were solutions that had appeased her libidinal drive with its expression of unpleasure. However, it left Emilie wrestling with the integrity of herself—her body, her agency, and her reality. This was a matter of teasing out parts of the object she had taken in and organized her psychic economy around.

Emilie's transformation with homoeroticism led her to feel more boundaried and more comfortable both in her inner and object related world. Emilie's transformation elicited those components serving to protect and consolidate. She cited for instance, being alone most frequently. This provided the space and safety needed to focus on herself (not others) and appreciate her own experiences, involving tensions and rudiments within the self. Feeling more independent and relaxed, she described having heightened affects. Eventually, Emilie found her

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wishes being actualized and object relations shifting. Given her past, these components mirror the responses one would expect after transformation. If Emilie was given what is commonly referred to as The Rorschach Personality Test, I would expect to observe these personality dynamics. Before transformation, boundaries of percepts would be sites of confusion, anxiety, and conflict. Blurring, defects, or penetration would likely be common. Boundaries with containing or protective functions would likely have some defect, such as incompleteness or openings with the potential for loss. The boundary aspects might be less defining and internal attributes more pronounced. Percept openings might likewise be sites of anxiety or conflict because questions about perceived defects (such as her first menstruation) and rights to control what enters and exists (such as the questionable use of tampons). Given how boundaries highlight potential separation from others and independence, boundary responses would be expected to be different before and after transformation.

After transformation, her body boundaries, functioning as a container, would be more intact with attributes elaborated from details within the percept. Internal aspects of the percepts would have likely had rich qualities denoting her active inner world, such as shading, color, or texture. One imagines the gamut of her responses stemming from Emilie's strengths that include her warmth, relatedness, and ability to deal with criticisms and failures.

It was believed that intellectual and obsessive traits would probably manifest for Emilie given her life experiences and subsequent dynamics. She believed that comprehensiveness would safe-guard her against impingement or attack. Therefore, responses would most likely be detailed. Containment and barrier responses between the internal and external or two objects would be given. This would have occurred as familiarity with the interview measure increased

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as the cards progressed and on those cards with color and less depressive black shading.

Jan's Character Dynamics

With a long history of recognition for her intellectual and physical achievements, Jan was a self-assured, hardworking individual who was clearly accomplished. She spoke of refining her body: making it better or stronger. Jan was invested in her physicality and cognizant of what about it was good, lacking, or weak. Jan also spoke repeatedly of wanting to help her body heal, which implied injury or pain. With her emphasis on being self-sufficient and taking care of herself, Jan felt disconnected from others when in need. Organized generally around narcissistic concerns, she connected with her body in the contexts of its strengths, not weaknesses or vulnerabilities. She seemed to believe that others only wanted to see self-sufficiency and competence, and split herself off from her body when she was injured, weak, or vulnerable.

Along these lines, Jan rarely presented dangerous and messy affects such as anger or disappointment. Generally, she did not report many experiences of strong affects, whether positive or negative. Presenting in a tempered and deliberate manner, passionate affects seemed to threaten her sense of control. They were experienced as vulnerability and thus presented her with a conflict. What if this neediness pushed others away because they were already too overwhelmed with caring for others or just not interested in disorganization and mess? For this very reason, Jan most likely valued foul aspects of eroticism and cited these as transformative. Foul aspects of life's experiences that had burdened her, with their ensuing conflicts and potential loss, were joyfully engaged.

Jan exercised tremendous control over how she communicated with others. She seemed to feel that controlling what she felt in her body was necessary for maintaining optimal object

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relationships. To follow this countertransference example through, Jan communicated a precise narrative. No feelings other than absolutes were given. Her narrative had few openings with the potential for interactions, movement, or process. This is akin to a Rorschach percept in which the openings are completely avoided. There was little eye contact or conversation. In a sense, she was completely bound.

Jan had been admired for her athletic prowess, academic achievements, and enviable confidence. Given this, Jan seemed to feel more comfortable knowing herself as a well-developed, competent individual—not a newcomer with the uncertainty a transformation might have entailed. Towards the end of each interview, Jan disclosed her attraction to the idea of pleasure that did entail her vulnerabilities. She did not want the interview to end without sharing these wishes. It became apparent that her achievements and words sometimes functioned like clothes to hide behind, covering over her shamed or less admired attributes.

Jan reported excitement in engaging others in an oppositional manner. Explicit examples of this were described by Jan in intellectual conversations with friends and when speaking about S&M activities. She described enjoying being somewhat provocative with others (especially those close to her) thus presenting herself in the world as a strong presence to be noted. As she said, she delivered powerful words purposefully to provoke enjoyable engagements with others.

Given Jan's history and her presentation, she was very aware of what she could do well and accomplish. With regard to speculated components, this would manifest as appreciating tensions, rudimentary, and foul aspects within the self, acting with one's physical actions. These manifest as experiencing the details of the self and what it could do. Along with these components, object relations would play a large role in transformation. With recognition from

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the object being so important, experiences of being alone were expected to present less significantly.

If these personality tendencies were manifested on the classic Rorschach Inkblot Measure, they would primarily be concerned with form, boundaries and movement as defining qualities of the percept. Things noted would be those easily visible and identifiable therefore, more palatable aspects of the percept. Firm and definite boundaries would serve defensively as a protective covering for the less understood, less tolerable, and more anxiety provoking internal aspects of the inkblot such as texture and shading. These internal attributes of the inkblot are understood psychodynamically to reflect aspects of the self (i.e., negative affects, anxieties, wishes, and fantasies). These more difficult facets of inner life were not discussed much by Jan.

While Jan presented reflections on her thoughts and feelings as integral to her understanding of her bodily self, we did not often hear spontaneous, un-reflected thoughts and feelings piecemeal in the process. Her sharing in a more packaged, formalized manner was akin to Popular Rorschach responses or boundary as defining responses. Functioning defensively, these kept her feelings and anxieties unseen and unexamined. An example was her references to “spirituality,” (Jan, R. 3, 16, 28) functioning much like a common, barrier boundary response for an inkblot. It encapsulated her subjective feelings and fantasies in a form easily presumed by others to be recognizable, and thus barricading the content within. Spirituality, used in this context, is commonly understood to be some variation of highly valued and respected personal and non-rational experiences. While perhaps accurate, this phrase or label does not bring one closer to knowing *what* Jan actually felt or thought. We are left knowing she was affected in some way, but not how.

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Snapshots of Components with Character Dynamics

Skin Adorations

Emilie and Jan both recalled a remarkably similar erotic experience, in which they were lying with a lover who spoke adoringly about their skin. These responses arose from a particular question unsolicited by this researcher. This made their reports all the more meaningful. When explored, the erotic role of skin was found to function both similarly and differently for these two participants. The following comments are what Emilie and Jan reported their partners had said:

“Wow, your skin’s so soft, it’s glistening” (Emilie, R. 58).

“You look so beautiful right now your skin is glowing...” (Jan, R.60).

The similarities are almost uncanny. Yet, while quite similar, there are differences that reflect how the skin and the object exchange functioned in each participant’s transformation. They both experienced these adorations as resolving one of their primary conflicts. Both Emilie and Jan described the experience to be incredibly pleasurable. More notably, they both reported that the comments made them more comfortable. As they told the story, their lover’s praise was given in juxtaposition to self-critical thoughts and insecurities. The lover’s words put them at ease. The experience had been a pleasurable, objective reality intervening at a time of more enduring painful subjective realities.

The pain experienced by Emilie and Jan’s respective dilemmas and criticisms were not the same. Their negative subjective realities differed. Given this, their lovers’ soothing words helped produce different outcomes or different transformative experiences. Their lover’s comments were experienced as resolving the respective conflicts of each: Emilie’s efforts to

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successfully contain and protect herself, Jan's deeper wish to have herself completely seen and known.

Emilie's Skin

Emilie reported feeling insecure about her skill in bed, wondering if she was "doing things right." Her concerns were about her physical competence when experiencing and creating eroticism. Emilie's anxiety took the specific form of her believing there was a "right" and "wrong" way of stimulating her lover. She was so concerned about being critiqued or criticized, Emilie admitted having trouble with knowing whether stimulation felt good or not.

Emilie's vigilance here regarding actual and possible intrusions kept her from attending to her own sensate pursuits of desire, fun, and excitement. With the expectation that her enjoyment in receiving and giving pleasure would be thwarted by "objective" realities, Emilie's lover's words calmed her. These very real words seemed to assure her that no violations would be committed that night. Emilie recalled her lover kindly touching her skin relating to her, not violating her. This was an incredibly intimate moment. Her lover's comment about Emilie's softness showed appreciation of her warmth and her relatedness, the comment about her glistening skin showed awareness of their separateness. This implies a strong boundary with the power to reflect off of or repel.

For once, Emilie need not do a thing; she was pursued, adored right then and there, as is. For someone with a history of skewed exchanges of pleasure and displeasure, mismatched subjective and objective realities, this mirroring of erotic pleasure was new for her. She identified this matching of erotic interests when she said their female bodies mirrored each another and that she was hearing back the kinds of adoring things she had often said to others.

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For Emilie, this was a transformation of the object and its complimentary aspect for her body ego. She had not been seen by someone else as a separate person nor felt admired as an individual in her own right until now.

Jan's Skin

Functioning as her self-percept boundary, Jan's skin was an organ of great investment. For her, its most historical function had been as a defensive cover, an enactment. It had a secret soft spot, though, that she linked to her desires and vulnerability: "...that poor little layer of skin that never gets out, it always has multiple layers of clothing over it" (Jan, R. 25). This was Jan's potential Achilles' heel.

The experience of being naked with someone must have presented a powerful wish and fear: the wish to be completely seen and loved, and the fear of being completely seen and rejected. We can speculate that this is what moved Jan to identify this as one of her "most profound" memories of eroticism and her body. That morning, in the sunlight, she was completely naked, vulnerable but admired.

The outcome of her lover's adorations was one of enormous satisfaction and a desire for more. Poignantly, Jan says she was hungry, for 'more.' Feeling hornier, she wanted to be *more* naked—the reality of boundaries and limits gone. These words might make us entertain how little she was naked and how far from the object she had been. Jan suddenly realizes she could not remember with whom she wanted these things, nor could she remember who had given her such a special and rare experience of herself. Jan's forgetting was a continuation of this regressed, 'all me,' narcissistic experience. Forgetting the individual was also an attack on linking herself to her conflicts and vulnerability. If this moment had gone another way, it would

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have been one of Jan's worst fears, too painful to bear.

Jan tried to defend against that vulnerability and her subsequent discomfort and embarrassment by forgetting someone whom she had just reported being part of something so meaningful, by downgrading it. She attacks the kind words that were said to her, calling them "platitudes." (Jan R. 58) What had she had referred to as a 'profound' memory was now hollowed out and empty. She could not bear someone seeing, knowing and admiring all of her. This had been profound because it directly addresses her greatest concerns. Jan had not mastered one facet of eroticism: that all of her was deserving of love, including what was inside the boundaries of her percept. This would include the less attractive or weaker aspects of herself, such as the hives she gets or the weight she gains when stressed.

A Whole Body Cognized

In this section, we explore the predominant themes raised by Emilie and Jan in their efforts to understand what their bodies meant and how they worked. Components used by both went hand-in-hand with these notions that best afforded them permission to have physical pleasure and cognize their reality. The components of their transformation matched the psychic characteristics or experiences with which they were familiar, yet yearned to embrace or change. For each participant, two themes are presented. The first theme reflects the way the participant had predominantly cognized her body or physicality before transformation. The second theme is a more developed reflection on body ego transformation. Particular metaphors or imagery, which the participants spontaneously offered, captured how they had best been able to maintain, cognize, and mentally represent their whole body. These themes reflect the keys each had identified to cognizing her body and holding it together in a condensed form.

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Jan's Metaphors

It became apparent in Jan's interview that her body felt remote to her, as she worked diligently to become more familiar with it. In the tight, pressured logic of her thinking, we first hear her trying to present her body as perfectly controlled. With the frustration that this was not in fact the case, Jan described repeated attempts to master her physical experiences—to know them and navigate them comfortably. She attempted to do so using rote, formal knowledge of the body's mechanics in attempts to bring it closer to her. In her frustration, she criticized her body for not performing well enough. Alternatively, she sometimes sympathetically understood her body as injured or not well. In reality, it was her troubled relationship to her emotions and unreasonable need for perfection that played out in this dialogue between herself and her body. Jan had sought relief and resolution in her transformation.

Jan's Baseline Metaphor: A Puzzle Piece

Predominant components utilized by Jan in her transformation could be gleaned from how her body was cognized. The metaphor she used to describe her coming-out captured significant features of that. It reflects how Jan had historically tried to manage her body and the feelings she had had. Jan reported:

...very little agony in terms of coming to terms with being a lesbian or being gay. It just was right. It just made sense. And it wasn't like bells were ringing, or excitement, or alarm bells were just going crazy, it was just – this fits. The puzzle piece fits here. (Jan, R. 31)

Jan described this crucial developmental experience as clean and organized. Just as a puzzle piece snaps precisely into an awaiting slot, Jan described homoeroticism and its implications for

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her orgasmic life and sexual identity as entirely bound. The way she presented suggested her sexuality was not only well-formed and un-conflicted, but that there were possible secondary considerations to be explored. She pointed out that the alternative ways in which others experienced coming-out would have entailed experiencing heightened affects or wishes being actualized. As was clear in the frequency analysis (see Ch. 5, Chart 1), Jan did not report experiencing either of these components. With this in mind, we then wanted to explore what it meant for her to have the experience she did and not this alternative.

Like a jigsaw puzzle, Jan's metaphor is an image suggesting a perfectly neat covering—the piece that fits exactly and the puzzle eventually completed. Ultimately, a completed puzzle would render a perfect whole image. With nothing missing, there would be a seal created that would make further penetration symbolically and hypothetically impossible. It is a one-dimensional image that is perfectly still, without change or evolution, a *fait accompli*. This describes sexuality as an identity or construct, but not the felt or lived experience of having a sexual orientation.

It is a notably heady metaphor for such physically stimulating phenomena made up of flirtation, lust, and eroticism. Fitting a puzzle piece in place is the most intellectual or heady a physical action as could be. The metaphor is quite accurate for how sexuality is observed as a sexual identity or orientation. On the Rorschach, this would be a popular, boundary periphery response. It is completely accurate and commonly understood but does not convey its internal experience, meaning, or ramifications.

Usually, a puzzle piece is completely separate and split off from the remaining puzzle. What if this reflected how Jan had tried to represent her eroticism before coming-out, as discrete

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and bound? Maybe she had attempted to treat her eroticism as an isolated, contained set of experiences—like something to hide or keep secret. Perhaps knowing her passions and drives was a big deal that Jan felt nervous about facing and potentially losing control. She tried to put up boundaries or barriers so as not to be overwhelming to her and others. Did it all feel reasonably calm and manageable for Jan or did she want to present herself this way and only know herself, in a controlled, manageable way? If this were the case, she would never need help or support from others. Perhaps she attempted to hide or rid herself of the many thoughts, feelings and reactions she might have had.

Jan's Transformative Metaphor: Fine-tuning Automatic Movement

When Jan became more interested in knowing her body, she used great mental effort to track and know its movements and expressions in detail. Her wish to study it so diligently called attention to a disconnection or split she had experienced between the two. Jan's attention to her physical rudiments seemed to grow out of her need to fix and maintain them. Her body was used as an enactment for fixing and maintaining her vulnerable, injured or feared internal attributes. For example, Jan reflected on:

...sort of being in touch with one's self emotionally and spiritually through that physicality were very similar... It's feeling the way things work, and allowing, sort of conscious thought to follow what's an automatic movement, or an automatic expression of energy, or an automatic response from your body. It's sort of like paying attention to something that you do automatically, and that sort of hyper-awareness of how your body is working, and then fine-tuning that. (Jan, R. 3)

She is filled with questions of how to make it work for her and anxiety when it did not.

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Why is her body so remote?

Jan's efforts to understand and master her physicality are reminiscent of a younger stage of development—a time filled with questions of how one's body will work and under what conditions. It becomes a broader issue of what comprises oneself. Hypothetically, without the object's help, it would be completely up to the child to make her body work. She would be alone in this venture and undoubtedly overwhelmed at times. That seemed to be how Jan felt with her body, as she described repeated trials of observing it, engaging it, injuring it, and fine-tuning it.

Jan did not explicitly say she found it hard to understand her body. Nor did she say that it was beyond her control. She did, however, talk steadfastly about her work to care for it, even master it. Jan explained her recent efforts to relate to her body in a new way:

Making it better, making it stronger. But I've grown to appreciate, and sort of develop that later in my life, which has sort of changed my relationship to my body. Instead of feeling like automatic, like a sort of a battering ram, you just keep on going...but I tend to break down the steps that I'm doing and look at ways to heal through that as well. Instead of just putting an icepack on it - working a muscle out, or figuring out exactly what it is that hurts and why. (Jan, R. 3)

Jan became a more sympathetic individual as we understood her as deeply concerned about herself. This included physical concerns about her emotional self. Jan practiced identifying how she was hurt or injured, and what would make her feel better. Jan's focus on mastering this self-care suggests a history of needing to rely on herself for care.

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Jan engaged her body as if it were another object. She spoke diligently and frequently throughout the interview, in an almost obsessive way, of how her body or the ‘physical’ works. Specifically, how it has been hurt, how it heals, and how it can be controlled. For these reasons, Jan strongly appreciated the components of her transformation that accompanied that goal. She most frequently cited appreciating rudiments of herself, physical action taken and object relations dynamics. Likewise, Jan spoke of her using physical actions with high frequency. She enjoyed a heightened awareness of ways to control her body. She also found that this excitement informed her eroticism.

Following the tension/un-tension aspects of Jacobson’s (1971) theory of affects, Jan described feeling and valuing the relaxation or un-tension of her drive master her physicality. She realized that without slowing down, her frenetic energy had bruised and broken her (i.e. broken bones and injuries). She had a history of pushing her body to the limits, probably spurred on in a counter-phobic attempt for mastery of her bodily experience. We can speculate that this had played a significant role in her choice to play rugby, her tongue piercing and S&M activities. The pleasure Jan took in these experiences of physically coming undone and regaining control was reflected in the components with high frequency.

Emilie’s Metaphors

Emilie struggled with an over-stimulating body. She felt anxious about what her body did and did not do. Her physicality was simultaneously downplayed or treated as unruly by others, making it even harder to utilize others’ experiences to help her navigate her own. In frustration, Emilie first reported attacking her body’s experience and having fantasies of getting into the body of others. Early on, she seemed to want knowledge of others’ physical experiences

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to help her learn to manage her own. When this was not possible, she may have unconsciously wished to literally have their bodies instead of her own.

Through her transformation, Emilie found relief in periods of solitude. Being alone facilitated her cathecting to her own physicality more comfortably. When alone, she did not have to wrestle with the disappointment and anger at having no access to others' bodies, the lure of wishes to magically own someone's body, or the brunt of other's devaluing hers.

Emilie's Baseline Metaphor: Funny Engineering

The predominant components employed for Emilie's transformation could be extrapolated from how she characterized her body and physicality in her most common experience. She spoke during the interview of one specific facet of her generalized body experience:

That's another funny story. I think because of where my G-spot is or something, my body's really sensitive to like, if I have to go to the bathroom, or if there's any sort of pressure in my body, I can have an orgasm just anywhere. It's really bizarre- it doesn't happen all the time. I've talked to a few people who know what I'm talking about, but I think it's just the way that my engineering works or something. I always have funny stories. Because I can feel it – I'm assuming it's my G-spot. I'm not sure. I can definitely find it from the outside. So I don't know. Like I said, I've never possessed anybody else's body, so it could be just something that nobody else ever talks about and I do, but it's a little bit odd. (Jan, R. 15)

Emilie described an experience of her body that was out of her control. This pleasure was a disorganizing experience. And what a struggle it would be to come to understand how and why

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her body orgasmed as it did. To integrate these clearly positive yet negative aspects of this experience was difficult. This was tricky with its conflicting dimensions. She reported extreme sensate pleasure occurring at inappropriate and undesired times. The best way she could wrap her mind around this was to call it funny engineering. In part, this seemed to drive her desire to know other's bodily experiences.

Emilie vaguely suggested here having entertained a magical wish to possess someone else's body, which arose again in her references to dissecting a cadaver. Here though, in this vignette about her unsolicited orgasmic experiences, this had the potential of giving her the experiential knowledge of a body without unexpected orgasm. Another outcome would have potentially been finding that others had the same spontaneous orgasms. Validating that she was not alone would provide relief. In a family that spoke so little and so uncomfortably about their physical experiences (never mind orgasms), being in their body promised the knowledge she sought. Then again, maybe she had a desire to lose her body altogether and take on another's. If magical thinking were true, this conflict might then be quelled or even put to rest.

Emilie's response focused on the very particular, somewhat ambiguous G Spot. She spoke of how difficult it was to say what made it look or feel like a G Spot. She presents its dilemma in being internal and external—located and accessed from the inside and outside herself. In describing this, Emilie combed through the rudiments and tensions of her erogenous genitalia. These components were pursued in her desire to know the form, boundaries, and experience of herself. Unlike her being able to find and locate herself in her G Spot via her own physical exploration, she struggled to cognize these orgasmic experiences without the help of others.

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Emilie's Transformative Metaphor: Fuzzy Shoulder

Emilie highlighted what was an appreciation of her body cognized anew. She stated:

I feel like I've had two different experiences with it. Now I feel really light and I guess it feels – I feel in control, which I think makes me feel excited about my body, and in control and strong even though I'm not very strong, but I feel comforted by my body – it might sound strange. And soft. And grounded. I have this funny story about my shoulder – I have a fuzzy shoulder, just kind of peach fuzz or something. And I started to realize that not everyone has a fuzzy shoulder. And there was this summer after I had broken up with the boyfriend and it was a really transformative summer, but I would go through these times almost every day where I just felt completely like, “Oh, my gosh, I have to re-make myself, I have to discover who I really am now, because this is the first time I've ever been alone, and I've left my family.” I had left with him – my hometown – and went to college and had been away for several years and everything was new. And I would sit on my porch and put my head to my fuzzy shoulder, and it was like this strange sense of comfort, it's really bizarre. And I think I've slept alone – I grew up with two brothers and a sister in a slightly impoverished environment and my brothers didn't have a bed and they would sleep in sleeping bags for six years – but they were small, and so they would sleep with us – my sister and I had bunk beds – almost every night, like if they got cold or something. So I think I grew up used to sleeping with someone my whole life, and then I went straight into a relationship that was pretty committed, and then suddenly I was alone, and that was a different transition. And I feel like my body has come to a place where I feel comforted by it. But that was something that I had to get

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to. (Emilie, R. 14)

The meaning of Emilie's newly cognized body coalesced into her fuzzy shoulder phallus. This peach fuzz provided a snapshot back on how certain components functioned in her transformation. She described experiencing a wish actualized with her heightened appreciation of feeling in control, strong, soft, calm and grounded. For once, her body was a source of comfort and not anxiety. Notably, the body part that did so was her arm. The arm is a powerful limb, providing agency for the individual. All alone, she continued to enjoy its texture, her own texture and its meaning.

As mentioned in the narrative presentation, this peach fuzz seemed to suggest the thematic development of her own sexual genitalia. Specifically, she was enjoying the development of having more phallic attributes. This seemed to be an aspect of Jan's body that represented her increasing independence, power, and agency. Emilie's fuzzy phallus was understood from the meaning of her experience that summer with the RIM implications of a boundaried, textured, and colored response.

Object Roles

In this section, we explore one aspect of how each participant enjoyed the erotic object for its role in her transformation. The two vignettes selected were purposefully chosen for their differences. These are not meant to depict a comprehensive understanding of the role of the object in their transformations. They provided thematic insight into how Emilie and Jan's character and object relations shaped their reported components.

The first vignette, entitled "Kissing Herself: An Interest in Cognizing," explored Jan's description of kissing a woman when she had a tongue ring. It depicted Jan's attention to her

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own pleasure and mastery, at the expense of keeping her object in mind.

We then turn to Emilie's memory of the first time she had sex with a woman. In her narrative presentation, this vignette was entitled, "Sense Memory" (Emilie, R. 58). This told of an experience quite different from what Jan reported. Emilie's experience was marked by appreciation on an intimate level unparalleled in her eroticism before.

The Object's Role: Jan's Barbell Tongue Ring

In this vignette, Jan replaces a human object with an inanimate object—a tongue ring shaped like a weight room barbell. Jan experienced the human object, as introducing emotions and feelings, "some sort of fuzzy," that complicated the act of kissing in ways she disliked. In regard to the tongue ring, she had said:

There's a big difference between just doing it and maybe existing more in your head, or in your emotions, and really *feeling* it in your tongue. And with my tongue ring all of a sudden having that barbell there meant that I was sort of negotiating physically my tongue and this barbell - in good ways and in bad - sort of working with what I was trying to do with the barbell and without the barbell...but it sort of focused my attention back on my body. Sort of removed the sexual experience from some sort of fuzzy - I'm thinking sort of slightly ridiculous romantic music - um...much more sort of spiritual like floating kind of sensation to a very physical, very intimate, sort of back to my nerve endings. (Jan, R. 16)

We hear Jan's desire and attempts at becoming familiar with her body. More specifically, she enjoyed seeing what her body could do and accomplish. Jan looked for new opportunities to master—the tongue ring being one of them. Mastery is used here in the sense of proficiency or

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confidence in one's ability to engage or navigate something, not necessarily dominate. A human object, such as a kissing tongue, is more challenging to master.

Jan described this with a human object in her S&M practices, where she engaged and enjoyed her partner more explicitly in her S&M practices. This is explored in detail later in this chapter, but let it be noted here that, without the parameters and guidance of S&M, Jan turned her attention away from the object to herself.

We hear Jan's difficulty with symbolizing what the barbell, tongue ring had provided her. She moved away from the human object and stayed with her desire to master her body via the tongue ring. There, she was able to explore more comfortably her physicality and experience mastery. The anxieties and feelings that arose, experienced as "some sort of fuzz," seemed difficult to navigate. They were ill-defined, less predictable and less understood. Jan was able to derive erotic pleasure if the object was quiet, safe and controlled – the human or the inanimate.

In this example, we have heard Jan appreciate the rudiments of her body. The object's role was minimal in the sense of participating with her but vital in her stability and unobtrusiveness. This is similar to Jan's minimal engagement with this researcher (me) during the course of the interview. It was as if I watched her answering questions but had not been the one who interviewed her.

The Object's Role: Emilie's Sense Memory

As Emilie tells it, the first time she slept with a woman was stored as a "sense memory," in which her erotic object lingered as a sensory composite with its textures, color, scents, temperature, and stimulation. She reported the intensity and intimacy as multi-sensory. This reflects Emilie's fine attunement to the rudiments of bodily self in this experience. It is akin to a

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Rorschach response in which the internal characteristics of the percept made it “look like” a powerful erotic experience. Allowing sensate experiences to emerge and identifying them, was her means of holding on to the object, which was relatively easy for Emilie.

Emilie’s sense memory of the object reflected how she had now cognized her own body with her transformation. We saw this vividly in her appreciation of her shoulder’s peach fuzz. More comfortably contained, internally solidified, and generally strengthened, Emilie was able to actualize an outstanding wish—her thwarted dreams of having sex with women. Now with this woman, she had learned how to be with herself. She had learned to have a more sensate-based experience, a bodily experience. The frustration of her desire was resolved, her wish actualized. The nocturnal dreams stopped.

We see how Emilie’s transformation followed Emilie’s own object relations experience in reverse. For Emilie, the object’s mirroring function had been rare and thus highly valued. Having needed to stay close to others’ mental states, Emilie keenly read the small bits of evidence for where they were, where they were headed and what they wanted. A lot of this was sensate data from others. Now she was the recipient of exactly what she had always provided them: evidence of being a potential sense memory for someone else, memory against memory, breast against breast. Memories are internal phenomena, meaning Emilie had successfully penetrated someone else, moved someone else.

This experience as Emilie tells it, reflects her character style in which the internal dynamic of her body-percept are quite alive. It is not just a flat or rote memory but a sensate memory. The memory contained all those internal aspects of the experience.

Secret Worlds

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Both Emilie and Jan brought up the role of secrets pertaining to their experience of eroticism and transformation. Certain questions arose: What were their secrets? Who controlled them? Was the secrecy deemed critically necessary or just desirable? What did secrecy provide or maintain? What functions did these secret worlds serve?

Among a few instances of secrecy, Jan spoke excitably about one called the little layer of skin that was always kept hidden or secret. Jan's dynamic traits were playing a role in why this spot on her external boundary was so erotic. This little piece of skin made a statement to others that they did not see everything about who she was, even if they thought they had. This is a flirtation device, a tease. That which was never seen, was erotically charged. The external percept of her body had a secret to it—one spot never seen. Jan was pleased that this part of her exterior was rarely known to others, as if it alluded to her inner world always hidden inside her boundaries. Her outside image had easily been recognized by others and was quite the focus, what she did and achieved was those boundary-defining responses that most overtly defined her. Her inner world however, remained unknown to others and herself. When visible, eroticism was deepened for Jan. Ironically, Jan called this "Casual Eroticism" (Jan, R. 25).

Never discussed in detail, Jan only alluded to it with phrases that left you believing you knew her more intimately than you did. She first called it a "spiritual" thing (Jan, R. 16, 28) but then later called it a "secret" thing (Jan, R. 16). Jan seemed to know and not know that she was missing certain self-knowledge and experience. In Jan's framing these were secrets. A little similar to the tongue ring, she enjoyed concrete examples of things hidden or covered such as this little piece of skin that is rarely seen. If and when this "poor little layer of skin" and the secret inner world which it symbolizes were seen, it would become a critical component of

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transformation for her in more profound and meaningful ways.

In our exploration of secret worlds, we heard Emilie describe her affairs with women as “A Secret Little Life” (Emilie, R. 7). In this vignette, she described a secret homoerotic life that has a parallel to her public heterosexual love-relationship. Unlike Jan’s example, Emilie was quite aware of her secrets. They were in her control and actively pursued. As far as secrets go, Emilie’s were straight-forward.

Emilie and Jan’s secrets followed their respective character dynamics. Jan’s centered on the thoughts and feelings of her inner world and Emilie’s on implementing her boundaries with others. The secrets were historical ways they navigated their conflicts—the troubled regions of their self-percept.

Secret Worlds: Jan’s Little Layer of Skin

When asked to tell this researcher about her anus, Jan said she did not find erotic excitement with this orifice (hers or others). She found other areas nearby more stimulating. She then explained her interest in a swatch of skin on the hip or groin area, which is undoubtedly covered by underwear or a bathing suit most hours of the day and most days of the year. She pointed to the soft tissue where the leg meets the abdomen, and said she found something else particularly sexy and alluring about “...that poor little layer of skin that never gets out, it always has multiple layers of clothing over it” (Jan, R. 25). An exploration of this response inevitably brings the question that provoked it to the fore. It can be speculated that Jan’s interest in this layer of skin was connected to foul aspects of her anal orifice. These were the aspects of herself that were usually covered over and hidden, so as never to be seen. Jan’s “poor little layer of skin” seemed to embody the parts of herself that had some foul connotations and were kept

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secret from others out of shame.

Perhaps for these very reasons, having this piece of skin seen was a meaningful component for Jan's transformation. As discussed, having her exterior seen and recognized had been so crucial in her development. So the wish for her vulnerable, hidden, secret self to be seen would have been particularly powerful. This transformed the object's defining function in experiences of being seen with good attributes to experiences of being seen along with her negative attributes.

In Jan's response, she astutely moved toward shameful and curious aspects of herself that have been hidden. She recognizes how this spot on her exterior had similar qualities to the substance of her interior. Namely, they are rarely seen. Jan said, it "never gets out" (Jan, R. 25). She creatively had cognized this little spot of skin as having dimension and depth. It had interiority. Skin, which had mainly been cognized as a barrier or covering for her, in fact had a small section with "multiple layers" (Jan, R. 25).

This response was remarkably intimate, entailing tremendous vulnerability for Jan. For this reason, eroticism that included this entrance into her secret world would be quite special. This was an unusual internal response for Jan. Given the question, it would make sense as an association to anal penetration. While the actuality of anal intercourse might be undesirable for Jan, she provides a detailed response with what her pleasurable equivalent would be.

Secret Worlds: Emilie's Secret Life

Emilie offered a rich description of what her secret life had been about. She said the following:

...during that time I had a lot of- I obviously came out in a lot of ways and had

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experiences with women during it. A little secret life. It definitely helped my growth and helped my understanding to then come to an ending. I don't know – it was really interesting, that time. Now that it's been a while, I have more of a perspective on it, and can see where it fit in...I think that I'm so much stronger and really demanding of people's respect of me, in what I like and what I don't like in reference to sexuality, in reference to how people talk to me. And I have no qualms telling people that, or saying, "No, this is how it is." And I think I also realize just how sexuality is such a – sexuality and pain – they're so personal and yet no one really teaches you about it. There's no one right way. That's a really hard thing to realize, and when you've realized it, then it's like there's this whole world of freedom. But it's scary too. (Emilie, R. 7)

It had provided her with a much needed, safe space to explore and understand herself.

Her "little secret life" was a "whole world of freedom." Whereas, Jan's was a whole world of shit, so-to-speak. With Emilie, having this freedom alongside the very relationship(s) she did not have it in, gave her an opportunity to navigate her transformation piece by piece. Her secrecy provided a protective boundary for her to actualize wishes. As she developed her own internally derived set of boundaries, she grew more confident and felt less affected by others. Slowly, Emilie was able to let her secrets diminish and meld into the fabric of who she was.

Primal Scene Renditions

In this section, one vignette is presented for each participant that most conveyed a palpable experience of erotic sex for us to hear. As the participants spoke in these, they seemed the most alive and least aware of a listener or audience. Because of the participants' indulgence in their subjective reality at the time, the reader (or listener) was made privy to Emilie and Jan's

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private experience of erotic passion. As an audience, these were the times we were easily drawn into the intimacy and exchange between each participant and their lover.

We may have felt curious or wanted to hear more. In a sense, we were listening on the other side of the door. These were reminiscent of primal scene fantasies or experiences. It was there in the voyeurism it provoked in us as the reader. Fundamentally, the participant's own primal scene fantasies were present because their own sex acts and narratives were or were not some amalgamation of them. Elements of these participant's current erotic experiences were versions or statements about their own idiosyncratic primal fantasies. Those elements transposed, or ignored, were dynamically informed by their character type and reflected their own self-representation and body ego. The vignettes we have explored contained key components of their eroticism at that time, and thus key elements that made their transformation possible.

We first revisit Jan's vignette entitled, "Active Regression for the Uncognized Parts," in which she described the details of her erotic S&M activities (Jan, R. 53 & 54). In this, we once again see the role Jan's dynamics played in what activities or story structure made her erotically excited. The power of these activities vividly displayed what seemed transformative for Jan. The predominate dynamic that emerged was the object's formally defined role in attacking the integrity of her boundary percept. Dynamically, Jan's narcissistic shell was repeatedly attacked in what she described as well-defined, sadomasochistic "play." The shifts in power relations were discussed and assigned. In a different way, Jan also reported transformative changes in her experience of power dynamics with the erotic object as key.

Like Jan, Emilie's rendition of the primal scene clearly depicted some resolution for what

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seemed to be her predominate dynamic conflicts and anxieties. We revisit Emilie's vignette, "The Aliveness of Erotic Regression: Bizarre and Passionate," to investigate (Emilie, R. 52, 53 & 55). In this, Emilie reported an erotic night in which her sense of boundaries for herself was not only maintained, but strengthened. Her amazement and awe of how little power dynamics played out with the object seemed almost bizarre to her. It was that unusual. She reported this romantic experience being different than any she had known before—most specifically, one without pressure from obligation to the object. A healthy sense of agency, independence and control was reported as the outcome. Emilie also noted a wide array of other components.

The Primal Scene: Jan's S&M

Although Jan had predominately described her pleasure in having an admired, seamless body (or self-boundary), she had described alternative wishes to be penetrated. This would afford her and her lover the opportunity to know her interior or inner world better. Jan hinted repeatedly at this as a feared but ideal transformation outcome. This seemed to be a significant conflict for her: the need to be invulnerable and the wish to be fully embraced in full knowledge of any shame, injury or weakness. The dynamics surrounding this characterologically dynamic story-line were observed in her S&M activities.

One observation is the level of definition in this erotic experience, labeled by Jan as an "S&M type sexual exploration" (Jan, R. 25). Like "the little layer of skin" secret spot we just discussed, Jan needed to keep her passionate affects very private and contained. It seemed notable that it was within the realm of S&M that she seemed to experience eroticism as most transformative. Her erotic S&M activities needed a name, a title, to remain split off from sexual activities in general. In doing so, her kind of sex was treated as a discrete, private, hidden

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eroticism, as if it were not an integral part of her as a whole person all the time. With that said, Jan reported experiencing this as an experience in which her body and mind were remarkable integrated:

I was very interested in much more extreme sort of S&M type sexual exploration, and that was something that was happening in my head or emotionally, but I didn't know how my body would respond, and have been very happy to find that that was not a problem. That sort of the emotional excitement, the desire that I was feeling translated into my body being a willing and receptive partner in that exploration and in that – in trying new things. (Jan, R. 19)

Jan's remote body felt much closer to her. Imagine the excitement for transformation this promised, were it more pervasively maintained. With heightened affect, she at least had these sexual experiences in which there had been a more comprehensive, unified state of being herself. She was able to get there by using those components that were dynamically related.

Dissolution of Jan's body-boundary percept was critical. She described enjoying the assaults on her physical exterior, which she prized as the outer face she allowed others to see. This outer face had brought her much recognition and acknowledgement. She had been valued by others for what she visibly did. The surface of her as a person was highly valued, so one anxiety which she had, centered on being in disrepair. With all that had not been visible about her, where would she be, or in what state, if these fantasies, thoughts, anxieties, and wishes were seen? This is the question on which her conflict hinges, and thus deeply related to her rendition of the primal scene.

In Jan's words, she most enjoyed percept attacks on her body exterior. She described

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these in the form of biting, pinching or beatings (Jan, R. 20, 54). Secondary to this, she described “more aggressive penetrative sex,” such as fisting (Jan, R. 54). Jan derived tremendous pleasure from the thrill of losing control of her boundary barricade. The psychic energy she had used maintaining a strict boundary and worrying about the contents hidden inside was diminished when someone forced penetration. It was a thrill to relinquish the effort she employed to quarantine aspects of herself. This resolved her central dynamic dilemma. She wanted to know and master other aspects of herself, or her body percept.

The object’s repeated attacks also entailed “physical abuse” (Jan, R. 19 & 20). This leads us into the need for the erotic object to identify squarely with someone who hurts Jan. The object’s comfort with the outcome of their actions was a critical component here. Navigating the emotional traumas to herself, being comfortable with those experiences internal to her percept, appeared to necessitate her handing over control to someone who was able to bear the burden of what they were doing to her. Then she was able to identify herself fully as the victim, as someone injured and hurt—to feel those accompanying affects more fully than if she also had caretaking responsibilities for the perpetrator. In a different way, Emilie also spoke of relinquishing responsibility for the object as a critical transformative component.

The Primal Scene: Emilie’s Bizarre and Passionate

Emilie told a classic kind of love story in this vignette. It was an experience with both great excitement and disappointment. What Emilie referred to were the hardships of this erotic experience taking place in the Oedipal or Electra context of a triad.

As a reminder, Emilie had been attracted to this particular woman from afar, for a few years. When they ultimately met, she found out the woman had similarly been interested in her

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from afar, but was now in a relationship with someone else. Feeling disappointed Emilie had said, "Great. How am I going to give this up now?" (Emilie, R. 52). In the end, they did spend what Emilie thought was a wonderfully erotic night together. More specifically, she went on to describe that night as "bizarre and passionate."

So, why bizarre, passionate how? These two descriptors seemed to sum up one of Emilie's primary conflicts: most of the time, Emilie had a wonderfully stimulating physical life that had often been neglected or attacked by others as somewhat wrong, weird or inappropriate. She was not happy or comfortable with these reactions. This "objective" reality often bound up her subjective reality in negative terms. Emilie wished to feel less overwhelmed by her erotic experience and decide the definitions of her percept for herself.

Emilie was most notably excited about the mutuality of the relationship with her erotic object, facilitating her control over the boundaries of herself. Without a domineering "objective" reality, she was freer to set her own boundaries. Without the traumatizing penetration she had received in her past, Emilie's anxiety was lessened. In this erotic adventure, she reported heightened affects, rudiments of the self, and wish fulfillment. This matches our observations that Emilie had an inner world she had become more familiar with and now often found enjoyable.

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CHAPTER SEVEN: DISCUSSION

This research was conducted to explore the ways queer, lesbian, and bisexual women were affected by their homoerotic experiences. More specifically, it was a qualitative study exploring components of body ego transformation linked to female homoeroticism. Based on self-reflection and observations of others, eight components (Appendix A) were speculated as playing a part in bringing about change, and were listened for in participant's responses. A semi-structured interview (Appendix D) employing projective methodology was developed for this research in an effort to access material from participants. Data relevant to body-ego and eroticism, the nature of which is elusive and regressive, was believed to come from conscious and unconscious levels of awareness; therefore, care was taken so as to capture the content of communications underlying the literal words. For this purpose, the psychological understandings of metaphor, as found in the Rorschach Inkblot Methodology, guided the researcher in listening to the narrative data gathered. Nine lesbian, bisexual, and queer identified women, ages 25 to 35, participated in this study. Two of the nine were selected for analysis in-depth.

Summary of Findings

The eight components, introduced in Chapter One, were believed to occur in most transformations, varying in frequency, intensity, and significance. As noted in the quantitative analysis (Chapter 5), although all eight components were found in the two case studies, neither case study included all eight. Each participant revealed six components, four were common to both including: experiences of rudiments of one's self, experiences of tension, changed interactions with an erotic object, and increased desire for more time alone. Conceptually, the

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components proposed reflected a fundamentally regressive experience believed to go hand-in-hand with experiences of psychic growth. These two participants' transformation narratives showed these components working simultaneously in common and personal ways. An overview of the components used and the frequency of use as presented on Table 1 showed a characterological snapshot mirroring each participant's inner world, which was explored further in the qualitative analysis.

In the qualitative analysis, particular images or metaphors emerged as meaningful, capturing the themes of these transformations. These images and metaphors were the contexts in which a transformed body ego had been experienced by the participants. Not only did these images and metaphors depict the role of character in these specific transformations but they also highlighted the erotic realms in which the body and the experience of the self came together anew. The responses of participants were akin to photographic snapshots, showing components interacting with different characterological traits. This illustrated how transformation components became operationalized via dynamics, and it was seen in both the cases presented.

Jan reported a tempered transformation employing a remarkably un-tempered usage of components. Three components were used excessively: rudiments of the self, physical actions, and object relations dynamics. Three components were used little or not at all: heightened affects, wishes actualized, and being alone. In general, components involving the external world were high, while those involving the inner world were low or absent. Jan had unevenly developed components. She seemed to have terrible difficulty feeling comfortable with her inner world and therefore focused on her outer world. Her inner affects and thoughts were painful, conflicted, or confusing. Feeling her inner world as complicated and messy, Jan enacted it with

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her physical body in the outer world. She made repetitive, misguided efforts to fix the internal stressors, as if they were physical elements of her body needing fine-tuning, repairing, and mastery. Physical activity was a way to help her master tensions and rudiments of the self and bring external praise to her, thereby improving her standing with the external object. With transformation, foul parts of the self were celebrated as a testament to her hard work.

Painful affects, confusing ideation, and un-actualized wishes were kept secret and hidden away, even from Jan herself. Any revelation of messiness might diminish her in the eyes of others, detracting from her pleasing external image. She believed others did not want to see her inner world, and neither did she. Sealing herself closed contained her inner world, which felt overwhelming, even dangerous, to her. Jan was filled with these thoughts: What am I made of? What will others think or notice? She had a hard time sitting with and answering these questions. Due to this difficulty, Jan did not often cite those components derived from well-developed, comfortable, internal experiences of herself, such as experiences of heightened affects, actualized wishes, or being alone. External matters such as her appearance and presentation to others were her focus. Her skin or periphery had been a site of pride. Jan enjoyed anything that supported this focus, anything that was ego syntonic. In the context of her family and others, being anxious or worried would be a problem. Being competent and capable was helpful, decreased stress, and made her look good. Changes in Jan's relationship to the object, whose role had included watching her, were Jan's second most frequently referenced component.

While Emilie's transformation narrative was a more dramatic story, she cited using components in a fairly tempered way. Those she reportedly experienced were used more or less

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to the same degree. Like Jan, Emilie cited experiencing heightened awareness of rudiments of the self and tensions but employed them differently than Jan. Emilie reveled in these internal experiences, knowing they were hers alone. She did not cite appreciating foul aspects of the self, as she had already been inundated in experiencing herself in negative ways. Transformation for her was growth away from the understanding that she had “foul parts.” It was discovering her great parts that needed to happen, and did. She cited using those components that kept her safely away from others, as interactions with the external world and those who populated it had been the largest impediment to her pleasure. It made sense that she would prefer and use components involving increased physical distance from others and time alone to support her unsteady boundaries of the self, strengthening and shoring them up.

Emilie reported having experienced heightened affects and her wishes actualized. These components were appreciated culminations of her internal dynamics. Actualizing wishes can overlap with taking physical actions but is different in having internal content, such as fantasized ideation. The latter, taking physical actions, focuses on its doing and accomplishing aspects. Like actualizing wishes, experiencing heightened affects is an occurrence that transpires internally. Emilie is the only one to know the affects have occurred. Jan’s experiences of the components of transformation were more heavily weighted in her external world, whereas Emilie’s centered more on her internal experience. Suffice it to say, the differences observed here between Emilie and Jan’s reported components were indicative of their respective character dynamics.

An interesting finding that emerged in this study was the extent to which character dynamics played a role in how components were manifested. Character not only affected

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whether participants utilized each component, but if so, how and even to what degree. It would appear that character was actively choosing which components to employ. Both women were focused on their boundaries, Jan because it was what she presented to the external world from which she received much positive feedback and because it protected and hid her messy and damaged inner world. On the other hand Emilie used time alone, less concerns about the object world, and more attention to fulfilling her own wishes as a way to strengthen her boundaries, as protection from intruding and devaluing others.

The idea of “transformation” was understood as overarching. The individual’s unique wishes or goals were fundamental to how components were configured in service of transformation. Additionally, transformation itself looked different for each of these participants. For Emilie, it involved a more dramatic change away from the difficulties she had experienced in the past, away from objects that devalued her, and intruded on her. It was movement towards an appreciation of her own inner world, her own strengths, a stronger sense of self, and clearer boundaries. Conversely for Jan, it involved a more muted change, a progressive development of what was already there. She focused on boundaries as these served two functions: an outer shell for others to see and praise a source of accomplishment and pride, and conversely a containing shell for holding her damaged self, her inner world, much in need of repair.

Lastly, this research on cathecting to one’s body continually raised the issue of hardships women face in doing so. These were unexpected findings. They were unwanted findings. This research had hoped to find participants’ narratives full of freedoms but these stories also contained their fears and failures in pursuit of themselves.

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Benefits of Study

Hopefully, this study will have a positive effect on the clinical services provided to lesbian, bisexual, and queer women. It provides phenomenological data about female homoeroticism and possible links to components of body ego transformation. This examination of homoerotic experiences and the power they have to transform people will hopefully move others in the field to study this relationship more, as well as homoeroticism and transformation independent of one another.

This study provides a contribution to the understandings of female homosexuality which in turn may contribute to a better understanding of women's sexuality regardless of sexual orientation. This may invigorate others to do serious phenomenological research on eroticism and sexuality with men and women regardless of sexual orientation or sexual identity. Another benefit of this study involves an advancement of the understanding of components of transformation in other contexts, such as the treatment room. This study can also reinvigorate what has been a long road trying to define women's sexuality better.

Implications for Clinical Work

One thing clinicians can take away from this research is the potential for understanding patients' verbalizations about their body as projective statements from which insight into patients' inner worlds can be understood better. In their comments, the body can be understood much the way the Rorschach works with an inkblot. That is, not as a test to measure personality, but as a means to gain insight into the warp and woof of character—the way character is woven together into the idiosyncratic fabric that is their character. Ironically, the very mechanism by which the Rorschach works, projection, was first hypothesized by Freud to be based on the

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individual's experience of her body.

In this study, an individual's body was treated as if it were a distinctly separate entity from the individual's consciousness. The participant's body was treated as if it was an inkblot to facilitate participant's recalling what they felt or physically experienced with its' dynamic meaning. When patients talk about their body or physical experiences in treatment, it should be understood as having meaning beyond the explicit; it is often a commentary on their inner world and needs to be understood as such.

With eroticism understood as seminal to the individual's growth and development, the clinician should always keep erotic feelings and the erotic self in mind. Additionally, the clinicians' own experience of eroticism should be analyzed as part of their countertransference. The patient's erotic feelings and experiences need to be discussed in treatment. Often this does not happen. It is not reflected upon or examined. Frequently people just want to do something or feel something; they do not try to understand it. People's discomfort, shame or embarrassment can make erotic feelings difficult to discuss, for patients and clinicians alike, which easily leads to an unspoken collusion to avoid this topic. Eroticism seems to be cheapened by popular culture's unabashed fixation on it, which leads one to believe it is simple and easy. To the contrary, this study indicated it is a complex experience—both universal and highly personal. Moreover, it has significance for human growth and meaningful change, which should be explored in both the consulting room and with research studies. The findings of this study strongly suggest that eroticism and sexuality are fundamental building blocks for higher ego functions and accomplishments. When not being used defensively, eroticism is generative for the individual and should be held in mind and explored as such in treatment. Chodorow

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(1999) wrote:

...psychoanalysts, like Freud, pay attention to cultural definitions and redefinitions of sexuality, sexual orientation, and gender, because these so centrally affect practitioners and their patients, in relation to both their behavior and their conscious and unconscious fantasies; psychoanalysis itself has led ordinary people to have different ways of thinking about their sexuality. And of course, no practitioner can work without being continually aware of the anxiety sexuality can evoke, in him or herself as well as in the patient— anxiety derived from thinking and fantasizing about sexuality, active sexuality, or addressing childhood sexuality; about erotic transference and countertransference; or about one's own body integrity and sexuality (vii, xviii).

In equating the relationship of therapist and patient with the erotic object and participant in this study, there are implications for the role of pleasure in clinical work. First, eroticism, which is one form of pleasure, plays an important role in transformation and needs to be appropriately heard and supported in the therapeutic relationship. The therapist needs to respond naturally in what will be condoning and supportive of the patient's pleasure. This can be tricky for the therapist to do because the priority must be the patient's use and experience of pleasure and not the therapist's. This can be very complicated with the erotic form of pleasure because of the therapist's own dynamics and ethical obligations related to his/her professional role. Clinicians need to keep their own reactions, erotic and otherwise, recognized, controlled and understood. Just as the two participants in the research found that disruptions in their pleasure were frequently caused by the object's own priorities, clinicians need to support their patient's understanding of fantasies and wishes in the treatment room. They should not be interrupted by

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the clinician's anxiety and desires. Otherwise, unpleasure is the result. It is as stimulating as pleasure but not as generative. Clinicians must contain their personal desire for pleasure gratification and anxiety reduction related to their work. When not done sufficiently, the patient may be overwhelmed by the therapist's concerns and refrain from bringing up the material in a caretaking gesture towards the clinician.

Limitations of Study

This study began with some assumptions about components of transformation linked to female homoeroticism. Analyzing a small sample means the themes that arose are not necessarily generalizable to the larger population. This was one fundamental limitation of the study, inherent to its design. What this study set out to do was to gather detailed narratives of growth or change affiliated with female homoerotic experiences. More specifically, the goal was to hone in on what the individual's experience of eroticism entails psychically and what of that may be necessary for the individual to feel differently after the formal experience of sexually excitation ends. This goal was accomplished. Given this study's findings, eroticism's effects, that of female homoeroticism and eroticism regardless of sexual orientation, should be investigated with other research methods. Suggestions for this were given earlier in this chapter.

One unexpected limitation I would like to acknowledge resulted from the methods with which participants were recruited. Over the course of interviewing participants, it became apparent that this was a biased subject pool. Many of these participants were individuals that had been traumatized. Friends and colleagues were asked to refer potential participants, who fit the identified age and sexual identity profile and might be interested in discussing their body experience. It became apparent to this researcher that those individuals perceived to have an

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interest in reflecting on their body experience came to mind because they did not feel comfortable with their body due to some type of trauma in their history. Some of these subjects seemed to want to be helped from participating in the research interview, hoping that their traumata would be ameliorated or repaired in some way.

At times, the broadness with which terms and concepts were utilized was a limitation of this study. This had been done in what was thought to be a more open, and therefore, more comprehensive approach. Given how unstudied and unarticulated eroticism is, this seemed appropriate. Why start off defining the very concept that was being studied in an effort to understand it better? In the analysis phase of the research, however, this became a hindrance. The broadly defined subject matter made it difficult to draw conclusions. Sometimes, in fact, it was hard not to just feel lost in the data. Luckily, certain key questions arose as seminal issues in the pleasurable experience of eroticism. The overlap of pleasure in general and eroticism was great. This made it difficult to know what specific aspects of these experiences were occurring as transformative. Eroticism, sensuality, sexual acts, and acts of comfort are all pleasurable but clearly are not all the same. In the design of the study, the discrepancy between these had purposefully been left vague. For the purposes of exploratory research, a wider catch net was deemed more conservative so as not to exclude content that was critical but as of yet unknown.

Over the course of reflecting on participant's responses and analyzing the interviews once the data was collected, another limitation of this study was identified. This researcher became aware of a conflict that had arisen at times and may have exerted power to skew the results of this exploratory study. Some of this was due to the study having a sole researcher. With reflection and hindsight, this researcher came to see that on a few occasions she had made

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directive statements to subjects, as well as sometimes formed strong counter-transferences toward participants. Looking back, this researcher could have made fewer comments to participants and been a little less judgmental about what constituted the components of transformation. However, after having been observed, efforts were made to diminish its occurrence and effects. This was one limitation in an otherwise, open-ended and exploratory interview.

As discussed in Chapter One, this researcher's young experience of female homosexuality and observations of other females engaging in homoerotic behavior was reflected in the eight components proposed in this research. These components comprised this researcher's own unique and idiosyncratic transformation. This researcher came to see how she had at times inappropriately supported or encouraged subjects, when their responses mirrored my own or what I expected. Sadly, this researcher's unacknowledged and tacit agenda likely pulled for and may have helped foster subjects' reporting specific types. One specific example was this researcher's response to Jan on Response 59. Another example involved this researcher's admission to initially finding Emilie's responses disappointing, when they did not support the proposed components (discussed in Chapter Six: Qualitative Analysis). With this said, this researcher did not purposefully misrepresent subjects' experiences. Over time, this researcher simply grew more mature and better able to tolerate seeing the imperfections of what this researcher had proposed at the outset and how the qualitative research had unfolded.

When explored, participant's responses suggested that the components of transformation were more complex than had been proposed. One conclusion that could be drawn from the data indicated that, while erotic experiences and the act of sex factored into experiences of successful

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or thwarted transformation, other elements also exert influence. Participant's transformation seemed to result much from participants' conflicts between their wishes, desire, reality, and the object world. A limitation of the study involved not sufficiently acknowledging the influence of the object world on transformation. The details and richness the object world was a primary interest of this researcher and had attempted to be addressed in the eighth component, Object Relations Dynamics. In hindsight, the dynamics of the object world were acknowledged only in a cursory way. Given this study's findings, it would be interesting for future research to explore the diverse and varied ways in which object relations play a fundamental role in transformation.

Suggestions for Future Research

One suggestion for future research is for an almost identical follow-up study with a larger sample size. This would also analyze transformation narratives from the same population, for the components tentatively confirmed here. Given that these components were sketched out initially in this study and confirmed by two participants, the next step in furthering these findings would be to repeat the narrative analyses with more participants. A bigger sample size, even ten to twenty more participants with the same findings, would be important to broadly confirm the validity of transformation's component findings.

Secondary to the confirmation of these eight components functioning in transformations, a longitudinal study of women in the process of developing a lesbian, bisexual, or queer sexual identity is suggested to continue with these findings. Data could be collected in debriefing sessions or from paper questionnaires over a number of years. This could be undertaken in a college setting, the attending student body in a four-year college or two-year community college providing an ideal frame to study participants over the time of their erotic experimentation and

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coming-out. The initial wish fulfillments and actions based on one's erotic feeling is a critical developmental time for individuals of all sexual orientations. It affords us the chance to see firsthand how eroticism functions in shaping the individual—transforming us into the people we know. It is a crucial time for sexual development in the gay and lesbian community, particularly for women, who have a more predominately come-out during these years. This would be a rare opportunity to study eroticism almost *in vivo*. A difficult issue to address here would be the observer effect that is the unintended effect which any method of observation or study may bring to bear on individuals and questions of study. As in other areas of social research, care would have to be taken to minimize this. Data could be obtained as eroticism was unfolding in one's sexual development, along with measured changes in one's self-representation. This examination of eroticism would be extremely timely, as many female homosexuals explore and consolidate their sexuality later in life than others including male homosexuals, as well as male and female heterosexuals. Only in the female, lesbian, bisexual, and queer population do such a significant number of individuals actively engage their eroticism for the first time as adults. For other sexual identities, the majority experience this at much earlier developmental times, usually when they are legal minors. This study would be able to finely identify and watch how specific erotic experiences affect women's body ego and self-representation. The benefit of this study would be the possibility of a detailed understanding of homoeroticism, and eroticism in general, working as a key element in the development of the person as a whole.

This researcher's general suggestion for future work is to have a lot more investigations of human experiences of eroticism. In contemporary American culture, images of eroticism are abundant. Despite this, it can be one of the hardest topics to discuss. The very nature of the

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intimate vulnerability involved and the many taboos still existing about talking and/or asking about sex, make it extremely difficult for us to say what we really do know or do not know about eroticism. Popular images are not necessarily the way it is experienced every day, nor does it help us understand its psychological functions. Eroticism is the foundation for all sexual orientations, sexual identities, and behavior.

Along these lines, conducting this study in other populations would be important. Exploring the components in a heterosexual population is a natural next step. Alternatively, researching these components with individuals younger and older would be very interesting—either older generations' retrospective accounts of eroticism or that of children and youths. Culturally, the young are often upheld as the epitome of sexual objects full of erotic yearnings, but they are also the least experienced. This makes them notable in their drive to act on sexual feelings but not necessarily to understand how that unfolds for them. A difficult issue to overcome here would involve both ethical concerns to do no harm and parental and societal concerns, valid and non-valid, to protect youth from any damaging effects of such research.

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Appendix A: Components of Body Ego Transformation

Linked to Female Homoeroticism

Experiences involving:

- [1] Internal Physical and Psychic Tension
- [2] Rudiments of One's Self
- [3] Foul Parts of One's Self
- [4] Heightened Affect
- [5] Increased Capacity to Be Alone
- [6] Physical Actions Taken
- [7] Wishes Actualized
- [8] Object Relations Dynamics

In this dissertation, references supporting these components in the literature review are identified and denoted in brackets.

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Appendix B: Oral Script for Qualitative Research on How Lesbian, Bisexual, and Queer Women Experience their Body

Hi. My name is Lisa Braun. I'm a doctoral student in clinical psychology at City University and Graduate Center. I am doing a dissertation study exploring how lesbian, bisexual, and queer women have experienced their bodies over the course of their lifetime. I am doing in-depth interviews with self-identified lesbian, bisexual, and queer women on this subject. In the interview, I'll talk with participants about how they've come to experience their body, its changes, and how this may or may not relate to their sexuality and identifying as a lesbian, bisexual, or queer woman. My hope is that the information gathered through interviews will contribute to psychologist's understanding of alternate sexual orientations and our bodies as they relate to the development of lesbian, bisexual, and queer women.

Taking part is voluntary. If you choose not to participate, there is no penalty. The risk in taking part is that unanticipated, sensitive topics or strong feelings may arise. If you do participate, you may refuse to answer any question or end the interview at any time. However, I ask that you share your thoughts on these matters as best you can. At the conclusion of the interview, you will be invited to discuss your experience of it and give feedback. If, at any time during or after the interview, you feel uncomfortable or disturbed by what is discussed, I can refer you for counseling or mental health services.

All interviews will be audio taped. This information will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by law. Tapes and transcripts will be stored in a locked storage container. Only a research advisor and I will have access to this information. There is minimal risk of

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identification, because numbers instead of names are used to refer to all participants. There will be one master list that matches your name to your participant number. This too will be stored in a locked storage container. All identifying information will be deleted in the written transcripts. All data, including audiotapes, consent forms, transcripts, and the master participant lists will be destroyed within five years of the date the data was gathered on. The interview involves two sessions, each running between two and three hours. These will be scheduled at your convenience.

If you have any questions about the interview there are three people you may contact. I can give you the following contact information now over the phone and it will be made available to you again, in writing, in the future. You can contact myself, the principle investigator, Lisa Braun, at (646) 522-4203 or my research advisor Dr. Elliot Jurist at (212) 650-5676. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact:

Ethel Breheny, IACUC/IRB
Shepard Hall, Room 16
The City College of New York
Convent Avenue and 138th Street
NY, NY 10031

At this point do you have any questions for me? Any concerns about participating in the study? Would you like to participate in this study about your experience of your body and how this relates to your sexual orientation? You have just given me verbal consent that you would like to participate. When we meet in person I will ask you to sign a written consent. At that time, or anytime during the interview, you can terminate your participation.

Thank you for agreeing to participate.

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Appendix C: Volunteer Consent for the Study:

How Lesbians and Bisexual Women Experience Their Body

I would like to participate in this study on how lesbians and bisexual women have experienced their bodies over the course of their lifetime. I am a self-identified lesbian or bisexual woman and am interested in exploring how I have come to experience my body and its changes, and especially how this relates to my sexuality. I am aware this is a pilot study with the hope that information gathered will ultimately contribute to a dissertation study and the scientific understanding of women's bodies as they relate to women's psychological well-being.

I know that taking part in this study is voluntary. The risk in taking part is that sensitive topics or strong feelings may arise that I had not anticipated. If I choose not to participate, there will be no penalty. If I do participate, I may refuse to answer any question or end the interview at any time. I will share my thoughts on these matters as best I can. At the conclusion of the interview, I will be invited to discuss my experience of it and give feedback. If, at any time during or after the interview, I feel uncomfortable or disturbed by what is discussed, a referral can be made for counseling or mental health services.

All interviews will be audio taped. However, information will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by law. Tapes and transcripts will be stored in a locked storage container. Only a research advisor and the principle investigator, Lisa Braun, will have access to this information. There is minimal risk of identification, because a number instead of my name will be used to

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refer to me within the research. There will be one master list which matches my name to my participant number. This too will be stored in a locked storage container. In addition, taped interviews will be transcribed by the principle investigator, Lisa Braun, and all identifying information will be deleted in the written transcripts. All data, including audio tapes, consent forms, transcripts, and the master participant lists, will be destroyed within five years of the date the data was gathered on. The interview involves two sessions, each running for approximately two hours.

If I have any questions about the interview, I will contact the principle investigator, Lisa Braun, phone (646) 522-4203 or her research advisor, Dr. Elliot Jurist, phone (212) 650-5676. If I have any questions about my rights as a research subject, please contact:

Ethel Breheny, IACUC/IRB
Shepard Hall, Room 16
The City College of New York
Convent Avenue and 138th Street
NY, NY. 10031.

I agree to take part in this study about my experience of my body and how this relates to my sexual orientation. My questions have all been answered. I can terminate my participation at any time or refuse to answer certain questions.

Signature

Printed Name

Date

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Appendix D: Semi-Structured Projective Interview

Projective Interview: Description of Body

(When elaboration needed: What do you feel and think about it?)

Tell me about/describe your body?

Tell me about/describe what your body feels like?

Tell me how you hold your body.

Tell me about parts of your body.

Tell me about/describe your mouth.

Tell me about/describe your breasts.

Tell me about/describe your vagina.

Tell me about/describe your clitoris.

Tell me about/describe your anus.

Are there other parts of your body you feel are erotic? If so, tell me about it.

What is the most powerful part of your body?

Tell me what an orgasm feels like for you. Where would you locate it in your body?

Retrospective Interview: Retrospective Homoerotic History of Body

Tell me about when you first kissed a woman?

Tell me about when you first had sex with a woman?

Tell me how your feelings about your body have changed over the years. How do you understand these changes?

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Tell me about your body before having sex with women, when you first had sex with women, and since then?

Tell me about any sexual experiences you've had that had an impact on you and your experience of your body?

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Appendix E: Transcript Guidelines

...???	Inaudible on tape recording
-	<p>A dash (–) after a word, followed by a space indicates the participant stopped her efforts at expressing her idea in the sentence or grammatical structure that she had begun.</p> <p>Examples: just- , like- ,</p>
<i>Italicized words</i>	Words are italicized in the transcript that a participant says with an exaggerated tone indicating more meaning is conveyed than just the literal words.
/ ... / ... /	Slashes before and after words indicate an interruption of one person speaking and an overlay of the two people speaking at the same time.
...(silence)...	Participant is silent for a longer period of time than what has been established as her typical pause in the interview.

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Appendix F: Jan's Interview Transcript

The following pages are typed transcripts of interviews with research participant Jan.

Questions presented to Jan are in **bold** for ease of identification. Jan's responses are numbered in sequential order for ease of reference.

I guess the first question, the main thing I want to hear about – tell me about your body.

Response 1. Oh wow. Okay...sort of in general? Like now? Like how I feel about my body?

Whatever comes to mind. Whatever you want to tell me about your body.

Response 2. Okay, um...alright, well, this week in particular - and I guess also within sort of the past year - I've definitely had an increased sort of awareness of my body, from within it. I happen to be sick this week, so my body was definitely speaking to me and telling me it wasn't happy with certain things. Um...but in terms of feeling very connected to my body, and connected to who I am physically - it's something that I've come into as I've gotten older. Sports have always been a big part of my life and obviously something that impacts my body pretty seriously. I play rugby, and not only does it make me stronger, but it also breaks me. It also hurts me and bruises me, and I've had broken bones and serious injuries, so it's sort of both sides. But I like feeling strong. I like feeling confident in my body and the way I look. I never felt this way in high school – I was always very weak, and preoccupied and concerned with numbers and sizes and that -- it doesn't bother me so much any more. It's more important that I feel sort of strong and solid within myself, and that's a very physical feeling – it's also very tied to what I am physically. That's a hard question. I tend to be a very physical person in my relationships. When I'm comfortable with someone – the people that are close to me in my life - Sometimes I use my body to express certain emotions when I can't find words to say what I

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want. Hugging, and holding, and touching, and sort of *comforting* physically are important.

Um...and I don't know...I have three younger sisters and have always been sort of a pseudo caretaker for the young children in my life and extended family, and I don't know if that comes from being around babies a lot – you know, people who like to be held and hugged and comforted but – I do that with adult relationships more than a lot of other adults that I know.

Let's see...other things about my body...I mean, there are parts I don't like – I've had struggles with my skin sometimes. I've gone back and forth on that. There are certain parts I really do like – I've always liked the way that my legs look – I've always been forced to run a lot, or kick the ball a lot or...I don't know. I feel, while I definitely look in the mirror and sort of check my image more often than I feel as some sort of good feminist that I should – I look around and see all the women in my life, and sort of women in general spending a lot of time being very critical, and I don't feel that same level of *dislike*, I think, for my body. And actually something that makes a big difference to me in intimate relationships – if someone is unhappy with something that I find really attractive, it's a big turn off. For me it's somehow insulting. I think you're beautiful, do you have to keep going on and on about how fat your hips are or whatever? (*pause*)
So...I'm trying to think what else -

Just tell me if there are any major areas that you think of – about you – that feel important. 'cause really it's all about you. Talk about whatever occurs to you.

Response 3. I've had actually several discussions with a friend of mine – I've always been very sports oriented – very team sports oriented - and competed on a pretty serious level, and a friend of mine has been equally serious in terms of dance, and, sort of our comparisons of some of the same -- we've had some discussions about the ways in which our sense of, sort of being in touch

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with one's self emotionally and spiritually through that physicality were very similar, and I thought that was pretty interesting. I'd never really thought about that – dance is not something that interests me, so I'd never really thought about how those experiences could be the same. It's hard to describe. It's feeling – I don't know if you've done yoga, but this is something that happens sometimes to people in yoga class. It's feeling the way things work, and allowing, sort of conscious thought to follow what's an automatic movement, or an automatic expression of energy, or an automatic response from your body. It's sort of like paying attention to something that you do automatically, and that sort of hyper-awareness of how your body is working, and then fine-tuning that. Making it better, making it stronger. But I've grown to appreciate, and sort of develop that later in my life, which has sort of changed my relationship to my body. Instead of feeling like automatic, like a sort of a battering ram, you just keep on going...but I tend to break down the steps that I'm doing and look at ways to heal through that as well. Instead of just putting an icepack on it - working a muscle out, or figuring out exactly what it is that hurts and why.

I guess I'm curious about a couple of things you mentioned – one of them – I think it was in relation to feeling confident and strong – it was one of the first things that you were talking about. And you were mentioning that feeling confident was tied to what you feel you can do physically?

Response 4. Yes.

And I guess I'm curious about – what is it that you can do physically?

Response 5. It's – like an example might be – it makes a big difference to me to be able to go into a weight room and know that the guys in there are obviously going to be able to outlift me,

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but I can see in their eyes and – it’s like I’m on sort of the same level as them. That I can go in there and lift an amount that they’ll look over and see and be like, “Wow, a girl is lifting that,” sort of in this judgmental, like, slightly derogatory way, but also with a little bit of respect. And I like being able to - for example, on my rugby team I play the positions that involve kicking and speed and, sort of finesse, and sheer brute force, and I like the fact that I can do both of those and very few people can do that. And part of it is simply genetic – that I happen to have broad shoulders and a large size frame, and the other half is sort of social conditioning that I played soccer since I was three, so I can kick well, so that sort of takes care of both sides. But I like being able to excel at very specific things and have that recognized within a specific context. I’m actually not very good at trying new things that I don’t pick up quickly – I like to do things well, so my body very much relates to that. It’s part of why, like, dance will never work for me, because I don’t do it well initially. I’d have to put in so much work, and sort of force my body into ways that it didn’t want to be, that it would just never really work for me. It makes a difference to me that I can carry sort of equal loads with my male roommate that the other female roommates can’t. It sort of makes a difference, and it’s part of my independence - part of who I am, sort of, individually. I’ve always been sort of a big sister, and because I was older, or I was bigger, I sort of had to take the heavier pack or “Carry this or carry that for your sister,” but that sort of carried on in my adult life, I think in great part because of my body, or because of my general strength and because of the correlating attitude that, “Yes, I can do it, no I don’t need your help” kind of attitude, and that I can’t do those things when...like one time I broke my arm and I had to wear a cast and couldn’t, for example, move my own stuff back into the dorms in the fall. I found that extremely frustrating. I felt like I wasn’t doing anything, I couldn’t get

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anything done – even though there were lots of things I could do with one arm – or unpack things – or many other things that needed to get done, that I could still clearly do, but because I couldn't do the things that I could normally do – carry a heavy box in – all of the sudden I was very aggravated, very frustrated, because my body wasn't working the way I wanted it to. I couldn't function. I couldn't sort of switch gears.

Tell me what you meant in the sense of the skin.

Response 6. Um...allergies, I used to get pretty severely stress-related - not hives, but like a rash on my face which made me feel – it's hard to feel physically comfortable when your skin itches or hurts, but also to look at myself in the mirror and be unhappy with what I saw which would then only aggravate the rash with the stress.

When was this?

Response 7. I got it for the first time near the end of my college experience – junior year or senior year - and it was probably triggered in part by living conditions – old dusty, musty buildings, but also sort of by general stress. The first year I was living in Maine I was really unhappy at the job I was in, I was really unhappy with the relationship I was in, I was feeling really isolated from my friends, all those major stressors sort of brought like a huge relapse, and the dermatologist was like “I can't do anything, you're not allergic to anything, I can't help you – you can do all these things which will help, but the biggest thing is you need to deal with your stress and figure out a way to balance that.” And it went away, like when unhappy frameworks of my life changed, like when I changed jobs and my relationship changed, when I became more in touch with my friends....it's something I'm still very aware of now. I'm in sort of an academic schedule that has high and low points of stress – I'm working on balancing stressors in

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my life to keep from having such a physical reaction.

I guess you mentioned at one point specifically - we were talking about relationships with people and the stress of things that you can't put into words. That you can't put into words...

Response 8. Sure, sure - I guess when I said that I was thinking more specifically like when a friend or lover or someone close to me is really upset, I sort of have this overwhelming, sort of maternal urge to just hold them. And not necessarily say anything -- Um...having someone cry in front of me and not hug them and not hold them seems very awkward and very cold, and so if the person is not someone who it's appropriate, or is not someone who would fall into a closeness range of physical contact, and they're crying or visibly upset, a lot of times I don't know what to say because what I want to say is through touch. I want to hug them, I want to rub their back I want to, sort of just mothering them and muttering, "It's okays." That's specifically what I was thinking, but I would say that the comments were extended to, sort of, loving gestures as well - sexual or otherwise. Just sort of reaching out to someone physically at a point where they need it or where you need them but sometimes, to *say* something seems sort of – not cheesy, but to trivialize or sort of nail down concretely that something that touch can leaves open that touch, sort of, allows a multiplicity of thoughts and phrases to exist.

Could you describe what your body feels like?

Response 9. I think my body has sort of a balance of strong and soft, and at times I sort of fight with one or the other. More often fight with the soft feeling - the soft is weak or somehow undisciplined, but in reality I need both of them. I need to be able to be strong and powerful and solid and connected in some spheres and at some times, and soft and open and supple and

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relaxed in others. And I've found the best sort of physical relationships come with women who have appreciated that, and who have really relished the back and forth, and have been able to love both strong shoulders and soft tummy, and wouldn't want all one or all the other, and I think that in reality is what I look for too. I don't find bodies that are very solid muscle and very hard all over very attractive. That's something actually I associate very much with men, and I want a level of softness available in a lover. And at the same time, too much soft doesn't connect with me - it has too much of a connection with old feelings of being fat and being overweight and unhappy, and with that time in my life.

Can you tell me how you hold your body?

Response 10. I've actually had several friends see me on the street without me seeing them first comment on how hard a face I put on when I walk down the street. And I thought it was pretty interesting, because I've only lived in the city for like seven or eight months. I think I generally walk and carry myself in a pretty aggressive, sort of confident manner. I'd like to think that when I put on high heels and a skirt that I don't walk like such an awkward, sort of jock like a few of my friends do, but I always admired women who make noise walking down the hall. Women who sort of cut their path, and people get out of their way. And I think I try to do that. I absolutely emulate them and -- So that it's sort of a head high, bumping others, or receiving a bump back but not being thrown off by it, walking fairly quickly, pretty seriously. I had some colleagues commenting the other day during a review on the way in which I present myself in an employment setting, and their comments were very interesting in that, even though I think that I am presenting my own questions or misgivings or uncertainties, that I come across very confident and very sure of myself. And I found that very interesting. I don't think of myself as

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generally very confident but I give that off. I guess I like a fair fight. I want to be -- I don't like to argue about something. If I 'm going to talk about something and I'm going to be involved in it, then I'm going to be passionate about it. I'm going to be engaged and I expect the same from whomever I'm in conversation with, and that requires a certain amount of energy on my part and of course on theirs and I don't see it as aggressive or overly confident, I see it as very involved. It's not that it doesn't allow for questions or rebuttals but I want that full level of engagement. I want that high level of energy, and that is -- I think that is how very specifically in an academic setting but in other settings as well is how I do come off. I think that energy can be translated into seriousness, into confidence, into aggressiveness depending sort of on what's happening or the specifics of the setting. I think that happens in sports to me; I think that happens even in friendship or relationships. One of the reasons I am such good friends with Anna is that we are equally intense on some levels. And so I have a hard time being close with people who are very withdrawn, very thoughtful and internal. I like it when things are right there on the table between us and it's going to be happening right then and there and it's going to come out of my mouth sounding like I've thought about it for years but that doesn't mean that it's right, and it doesn't mean that I'm not wanting sort of the same back

And so what about – you've talked about friendships, sports, your academic work – what about romantic relationships?

Response 11. Relationships which – most specifically my last relationship – which absolutely have that same intensity which has been why it worked so well - that emotionally and intellectually she was just as engaged as I was, in fact she would sort of push me to be more emotionally present - to put more energy into things - and I loved that. I was in a long term

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relationship that ended in November where I think that connection was there initially, but after a while I was doing so much putting in and not receiving back that my confidence plummeted, and I became a very different person in that relationship. It would be interesting to hear what she would say about that confidence comment because I don't think I was very confident with her. In sort of the last two years of the relationship I was not confident at all. I think that based on that dynamic I became very needy, very uncertain, and very much looking to her for answers instead of coming up with my own, or looking to her for the next move and – yeah – it wasn't – it led to a very different place for both of us, but that sort of coupled with other things, sort of multiple factors lining up made - I think - made that confidence very different, but at the same time that wasn't -- When I was at school and I was teaching- I don't know maybe I was sort of multiple people at that time. Because at school when I was teaching -- I was teaching and had a very successful year, received a lot of praise and attention for what I was doing, and felt great about myself in that context, and some of that would drift over into the relationship, but there were so many foundational things that were going on that my job wasn't going to make up for the deficiencies between Meredith and I. I don't know. I don't think that that confidence was there for the two of us. And I don't know - I think part of that has to do with her, and the back and forth that -- Some of what I'm saying - this energy connection, this intensity connection that I'm looking for wasn't happening between the two of us for a multitude of reasons, and I was sort of spinning my wheels. There was nowhere to go with that. It was definitely pretty different. Generally though, I don't know. I guess I look for very much emotionally and intellectually a certain level of engagement and mutual interaction. Um...and general level of sort of confidence and aggression, and I guess that would transfer into sexual relationships as

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well, but I think the closeness that's established in the emotional and intellectual circuit also enables other ways of being sexual with one another. I don't always continue that sort of power dynamic into the bedroom. I guess because I can be strong with someone emotionally and intellectually that sometimes means that I can be meek with them, or soft with them, or very different with them sexually, and so it doesn't always transfer neatly into the sexual in relationships.

Can you describe parts of your body to me – what you like and how you feel?

Response 12. Ok, um, my face – um, I think I generally have a kind of a cute face - like a girly face. I look like my mother, and have always kind of felt like, no matter how extreme my hair gets, I always have that sort of little cherubic side that is hard to hide or change. And that's not always a bad thing - it lets me find sort of a balance in sort of gender transgressive looks. Um...I like my eyes sometimes. I like when they get really green. Um...I don't feel like my face is extraordinary but I'm pretty happy with it. There isn't really any part of it that I would change. I'm not gonna have a nose job or...

What do you mean when your eyes get really green?

Response 13. They change depending on my mood, what I'm wearing...I'm not really sure. But sometimes they're much more green and sometimes they're much more brown. Technically they're hazel, so technically there's always some of each in them, but sometimes they're just really, really green and I'll have people comment on that. "Oh, your eyes are so green." And other times they're much darker. (*Pause*) My relationship to my arms has been sort of a changing one. In high school I really hated the size of my shoulders, how broad my shoulders are, because it meant shopping for a prom dress was a nightmare because nothing would fit me

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through the shoulders, which is sort of that teenage angst...Um, but sort of in the athletic endeavors I've done later in life they've been very useful and served me well. Also I -- As I've worked on my arms more they've become more toned and stronger and I like that a lot. I've always kind of felt like I didn't love so much the little pockets that I carry on the back of my arms. I think that's mostly because in high school a family friend of ours -- My mother's best friend sort of grabbed me back there in a flabby stage and made a joke about having old lady arms already, and it was sort of...Don't say that to a teenage girl. So I was sort of hyper-aware of the flab at the back of my arms. Um...my left forearm is skinnier than my right forearm because that's the one that was in the cast for so long, and my left wrist doesn't bend as much as my right wrist naturally because of that injury. And that's something that doesn't bother me in everyday life, but does occasionally interfere with sort of random basic activities, like boosting myself out of the pool, or doing sort of standard pushups, that sort of straight down pressure. I can't do that and I hate feeling like I can't do something that affects how I feel in terms of strength and capability. And I feel like an old lady getting out of the pool, going to the stairs instead of boosting myself where I normally get out. Um...there are times when it was much worse - when my flexibility was much worse, and it was sort of scary in terms of -- well what if I *needed* to get out of the pool right now? Right here? Just sort of random, weird fears that I couldn't actually do something that I should be able to do. But that's not so much of an issue any more.

What did you do?

Response 14. I broke a bone in my left hand, and the doctor wanted to see if it would heal on it's own and it didn't, so it ended up being in a cast twice as long as it would have been, and then

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he ended up having to go back in surgically - molding it back together with some new bone growth in between – putting together these two pieces of bone and then screwing them together, and then I had to go back in the cast again, and so...it was more like a usage thing. It wasn't really the injury itself, it was that all the tendons and ligaments sat for so long without being used. Just in daily use, you wouldn't believe how loose things stay, and not using them meant that they were sort of shriveled and unhappy. And I was dumb, and in college, and so not really thinking, "Hmm, I should take advantage of rehab and fix it so I don't have problems when I'm 35 and 55 and..." It's better now that I sort of focus on it, and pay attention to it. Let's see – my breasts – I don't feel like my breasts are extraordinary. I don't know. I feel like for my frame sometimes I would like them to be a half a size, or a size bigger, but I know that then I would be aggravated with them being that big and doing sports, based on experiences with large breasted women that I play sports with. So I guess I'm sort of neutral about them. Um...I've always sort of carried a nice little ring around my tummy which...I guess I'd rather carry it there than my butt.

Why would you like your breasts to be a size bigger? Do you think your body would look better?

Response 15. I think it would -- I think it would -- I have a sort of pretty square torso, because I don't have a very narrow waist, I don't have very curvy hips – I mean, they're plenty wide but they're not sort of wide in that super feminine, sort of curve out at the hips that would help give me a little more curve I think. I think it would help break down some of the squareness because my shoulders are so broad that they line up with my hips fairly equally so that there's no like, sort of curve in between, and having larger breasts would help create more of that hour glass for

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me? Although most of that is probably sort of a culturally instilled “the bigger the better” sort of attitude about breasts. And I guess – breast size never really mattered that much me in terms of sexual desire, so I don’t know why I had always felt like, “Oh, a little bit bigger would be nicer,” sort of without ever thinking about why. But I don’t have – I did a paper in a class on breasts, and breast size, and male perception of breasts, and sort of sexual attitudes towards them and general feelings about one’s own, or breasts ones been with... Those sort of areas and – I don’t think I had a reaction to my own breasts at least anything close to as passionate as some of the respondents. So they haven’t generally been the focus for me. I do remember when I was twelve or thirteen that my best friends went through puberty quite early, and all of the sudden had breasts and I was sort of the flat little tomboy and so desperate to have breasts, but that was sort of it. So now that’s not really a focus. I think if I were to -- If I were to make one change it would probably be my tummy. The middle is the one thing I would change, and that’s because it’s the most frustrating thing for me to work off, in terms of my fitness and general perception - when I look down that’s what I see – otherwise I don’t know. My legs are big, they’re always going to be big. I have large muscles that are either in shape or not in shape depending on what I’m doing and that generally works – it balances with the rest of my body. I don’t like feeling um...like – I know that when I put weight on I put it on in my thighs – that’s sort of a spot that I’m aware of. I guess - I kind of like my butt. I’ve always gotten lots of complements on my butt. It’s not something I look at a lot um...but it’s something that I’ve had sort of fun, random comments about and that’s nice to hear when you’re not paying attention.

[break – end of side A]

Right, right – I think the sheer physical fact that it’s not my hands, it’s not my legs, it’s not

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something that's immediately in front of my face sort of all the time, that I don't really pay that much attention to my butt or look at it. I'm not really saying like, "Oh, what's my butt look like in these pants?" I mean, it's...I don't know. I look occasionally, but it's not a big focus for me. But when I've had random friends make a comment – I had a friend of a friend – I knew her sort of only minimally - at one point say, "You know, you just have such a great butt. Every time I'm around you – " So, like wow, like what – somebody who had obviously sort of thought about it, and noticed multiple times, and it sort of made me feel good. I was like, "Great, thank you, wow, thank you so much." It sort of made me go look in the mirror and be like, "Wow, ok great." But again it's not something that would really make or break me. It's just not really something I pay a lot of attention to, but that was nice of them to say that (*pause*) my dad used to always tease me about having big feet but I don't know that – the more friends that I make that are my age or my size or whatever, I realized they all have big feet so – does that help? Sort of running through the list? I'm not very hairy, which I kind of like. I don't shave my legs, and a lot of times people don't notice. I have friends that have pubic hair like almost to their knees, and I don't ever have to wax or shave. I have friends that have hair that they have to pluck and tweeze, and I've never had to do any of that, which is nice. I don't know that I would anyway. But generally pretty happy with that. Um...I like spring and summer and fall a lot better because I get quite chilled a lot, when it's frigid. And I like to be outside a lot so that makes sense. Obviously when it's cold outside the muscles can be quite sensitive and it's injury time. I have seasonal affective disorder and my body feels sometimes like there's not enough sunlight going on.

Could you describe your lips?

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Response 16. Yeah. Um...I think – I'm very attracted to women who have very naturally pink lips or colorful lips, and I think part of that is that mine have so little color. Mine are generally very pale – there's no blood flow or – I don't know what makes your lips more pink than not. I have a pretty thin upper lip and a slightly fuller bottom lip. I don't think they're super sexy – they're sort of functional. I like my lips the most when I'm smiling. I have an awkward mix between my mother's teeth and my father's teeth. My father has horrible, horrible teeth, and my mother has pretty nice teeth. And I wish my teeth were bigger and fuller and straighter. Sort of slightly larger. My younger sisters had teeth that were such a mess that they got the full braces treatment and now their teeth are beautiful. Mine weren't quite so messed up to get fully adjusted. I used to have a tongue ring which I enjoyed very much, sort of for the – for the – awareness of sort of both the openness and the secrecy of it. Because you could see it if you were paying attention and if sort of I wanted you to see it. Not to mention various sexual implications of having your tongue pierced. I don't know - for a while it was a big sort of...implied sexual deviance I guess. And sort of the playing with it, and rolling it around in my mouth sort of on my own was sort of fun sort of -- the secret part, I guess. It made me very aware of my tongue, but it also sort of disabled my tongue in a lot of ways. Sexually it sort of got in the way – we'd want it to be there and not want it to be there. So it was sort of strange having a foreign object constantly in my mouth. But it made me more aware of my tongue and feeling in my tongue. Especially when it comes to sex. Otherwise – um...instead of - it's hard to explain. Instead of sort of just doing something – for example, in sucking on someone's nipple there's a big difference between just doing it and maybe existing more in your head, or in your emotions, and really *feeling* it in your tongue. And with my tongue ring all of a sudden

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having that barbell there meant that I was sort of negotiating physically my tongue and this barbell - In good ways and in bad - sort of working with what I was trying to do with the barbell and without the barbell...but it sort of focused my attention back on my body. Sort of removed the sexual experience from some sort of fuzzy – I'm thinking sort of slightly ridiculous romantic music – um...much more sort of spiritual like floating kind of sensation to a very physical, very intimate, sort of back to my nerve endings, and that was part of that – that's something that I feel like I've generally been able to do on my own with my hands, but I hadn't really thought about it until I was negotiating the tongue ring with my tongue and with other parts of my body, so it changed the focus of being present in different ways in my body, and not in my body during sex.

Can you tell me about your breasts? You did describe them and talk about them, but more specifically in an erotic sense?

Response 17. Um...I really – I think a lot of – I find the *almost* touching, the *almost* there to be much more charged than any sort of actual touching. It's the buildup that works better for me. I like kissing and touching and licking that sort of around – the outside of my breasts, the underneath, down in between my breasts, just closer and closer. It's like, by the time it gets to my nipples, it's overkill, and it's sort of too much. I think most women make love to other women's breasts the way they like their breasts to be made love to, and so that doesn't always work. And I think part of my feeling – my sort of sexual eroticism surrounding my breasts has to do with the fact that I've been with a lot of breast women, who really loved having their breasts given a lot of attention – sucked, kissed, bitten – and I don't, but I've received a lot of that. And so my response now is that I don't really want that, and that sort of it's overkill, and it's like too much. But I don't know. Every time I sort of say something and come to a conclusion, I sort of

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stop myself and I'm like, "Well, but – Well, but - " So I guess there are exceptions to everything. But generally that's sort of a part of the whole package, and somehow I feel like it's nice to have someone appreciating my breasts, sort of excited by them and wanting to give them a lot of attention, but I don't want them to be what someone's there for. And that hasn't happened too much, but it has happened before where it's sort of like, "Ok now I'd like you to kiss me instead of my breasts." It's sort of like there's someone else in the room – me and my breasts and the other person. Rarely do I want my breasts to sort of be the end location – sort of the goal point of a love making session. I find other areas much more sexy. I find it much sexier to be kissed on my hipbones than on my nipples or sort of all over my breasts.

Can you talk a little more about the sensation of being kissed on your hipbone?

Response 18. I think I like it because – I find them very attractive. Because you can manipulate someone's whole lower body by pushing on someone's hipbones. Because I find the curve underneath someone's hipbone very sexy. Because it's sort of that invitation to something else. It's similar to the sides and between someone's breasts – it's not here yet – it has that foreplay tension to it. I don't know why I like it. I think I also find it very attractive when bone and muscle structures protrude in very curvy ways. I like collar bones a lot, and the space between your neck and your shoulder where there are these natural lines that can be traced. I find those very erotic on myself and on others as well. Where shape is really defined. I think that's why I like the outside – like for me the space between my breasts is very flat and boring, but on the outside my breasts is very charged for me because that's where my breasts are defined – that's where the curve is, and I find it more attractive. My hipbones stick out a decent amount because of my hip flexors there, and my muscle starts to develop up and down my leg, and I think that

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there's sort of a similar – I think the level of definition that comes from various combinations of bone and muscle and flesh makes those spots sort of erotic spots for me. It's hard because they're not the same spots on – I'm thinking about whether or not the spots on my body that are the most erotic are because I find them very attractive on other women, and that's not necessarily the case – because I don't like having my stomach kissed very much, probably because I don't like it very much, but I love the stomachs of certain women I've been with, so that doesn't fit there but...I like to trace lines and curves, and I think that plays into why I'm aware of the things I like on my body. Why I like my shoulders, why I like my legs, why I don't like my stomach, and why my breasts aren't so exciting and you can't see my butt so it doesn't matter. I don't know why I'm sort of going on here (*laughter*).

Can you describe your vagina for me?

Response 19. Sure. Ok...I get turned on pretty easily. When I get turned on I don't actually get as wet as most women I've known – I don't know where to sort of place myself on the general scale of wetness. My vagina is sort of the -- my vagina and my clit are sort of the center of my eroticism. Over the years, as I have had more sexual experiences with women and become more confident in myself as a lesbian – probably because I've been with so many breast women – breasts are less exciting for me now. My new sexual experiences have been much more vagina focused. I really appreciate sort of open -- Open exploration with women in bed. With vaginas in general. I like to be touched. I like to be penetrated. My vagina likes lots of attention. And rarely – I don't get very tired – it's just – I like the fitness of my vagina. It works well for me. It's like it's been on the treadmill like it's supposed to be. (*Laughter*) There are times when I become so turned on that I become so swollen that I can't get off - that I can't have an orgasm,

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and that's frustrating. But that rarely happens when I'm in bed and fully able to do what I'd like to do with someone. I don't -- I kind of like the way I smell -- I don't think I smell offensive, or taste offensive. With the women I've been with that's never been a problem, thank goodness. And I like the way that with the right touch, and the right level of patience and encouragement, that my vagina is a very willing partner in sexual exploration. Things that I didn't know how they would go, that -- I was very interested in much more extreme sort of SM type sexual exploration, and that was something that was happening in my head or emotionally, but I didn't know how my body would respond, and have been very happy to find that that was not a problem. That sort of the emotional excitement, the desire that I was feeling translated into my body being a willing and receptive partner in that exploration and in that -- in trying new things.

What kind of S and M things?

Response 20. Fisting, rougher more aggressive penetrative sex specifically would be the things that involved my vagina. Otherwise they would be less -- not really at all vagina focused.

Beating, pinching, biting -- I had a partner for a little while that was quite experienced in that and would -- we had fun -- we had fun teaching each other, and exploring each other's bodies in very physical ways. It was good to see my body in general -- I'm used to pain, and I'm used to physical abuse through athletics, but this was different. When I'm playing rugby there's an instant of bracing for contact. There's that split second before you get hit when you know you're going to get hit, so your body does something in response to prepare for that, and in an SM setting you're able to totally sort of relax and not have that anticipatory preparation - not be tense or tighten waiting for something just to receive it - it's sort of taking apart your body and then putting it back together. It's something that I don't know if my body knew how to do because it

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had always experienced intense pounding like that in a very athletic manner – in a very prepared manner. And I didn't know if I would be able to balance that - the extreme physical – and totally relax. I was surprised. Most pleasantly surprised. To experience the different ways of being with someone that I really wanted to. It was really interesting. But like I said my vagina was sort of along for the ride

What about your clitoris?

Response 21. I was actually just thinking there -- in the gender politics program that I'm in - after class some colleagues and I were hanging around for conversation, and someone had a really old medical textbook –really old, and it had sort of these funny diagrams in it, pictures of the clitoris, various sizes and shapes and sort of what that meant, and so of course I'm looking at them and thinking, "Hmm, I wonder which one is me." And I wish I had gotten to know my clitoris better. I wasn't a very sexual person in high school – I was too busy being in high school. And it was sort of end of my junior year, beginning of my senior year when I realized I was possibly going to be a lesbian, had my first girlfriend, sort of started all these sexual experiences, but even then clitoral orgasm was not something that was really happening for me. I was never the child masturbator, never really aware of the sort of my potential, and um... With my second girlfriend, and then with sort of increased comfort with my own body and my own sexuality, I've grown to know and love my clitoris. I enjoy orgasm that way the most – having my clitoris touched in various ways – and (*laughter*) I do actually I think – I don't know. It's sort of one of those things that I don't want it to be too central to my sexuality, but I like to have orgasms. I like to come.

Why don't you want that?

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Response 22. Because I think it becomes too goal focused – too focused, too oriented on getting somewhere, and there are other things that I take equal pleasure in that I’m finding ways to balance with straight orgasm. And – yeah, I feel like I – I’m very comfortable with my clitoris, I like it, I think it’s big enough, I don’t think it’s too big! (*laughter*) um...yeah, I think –

What do you mean comfortable with it? I guess you said you liked it before that...

Response 23. Yeah, I don’t take issue with it ever – I don’t have any concerns. I don’t know – I guess I do sort of associate it very much with its function. I have a hard time thinking about it outside of coming. Outside of what it can do for me. Yeah. But generally I have enjoyed the time that I’ve spent with it, and the time that I’m able to share it with others, (*Laughter*), and what it can do for me.

Well I guess while we’re on that note – about what it can do for you – tell me what an orgasm feels like for you – what effect it has on your body, and where you feel it...

Response 24. Ok. What does it feel like? When I first started having orgasms I felt like I was slowly walking up a big hill - sort of crawling up a big hill. The top was just in sight, and if only I could get there...The pressure was building up, and then all of the sudden I was racing down the other side. It’s like being on a bike, or skis, or something and going down a major hill and then over these smaller hills, but sort of at a furious pace and - sort of the visualization was really important to me when I was first working on being aware of orgasm, and what was happening, and what I wanted to happen, and working on making it happen. And now if I had to put an image with it it’s much more a focusing of color and light, like something was building, building, building inward, and now it sort of explodes outward. I think it’s kind of like a firework image. And then like I feel sort of the echoing – the repercussions, the smaller hills for

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several minutes afterwards, and sometimes there's an automatic building up again...And to move on to your next question about where, it's always located very much in my clitoris until that split second before – like right before the explosion. All of the sudden it's everywhere. Like I can't feel local sensation anymore – it's like sort of the opposite of local and general anesthesia. It's like as if there was sort of local sensation and general sensation - all of the sudden the transfer is immediately – all the sensation going from local sensation to general sensation. And then the aftershocks are more localized, but not even so much in my clitoris anymore - and sort of in my general vaginal region. And in like all my muscles – like they're all relaxed for a second. The building is always the best – the tension right before you come for the first time is the best sensation – that sort of the culmination of all of that foreplay energy – the tension building up – it builds in my muscles, it builds in my thoughts and in my emotions, and then finally has its form of release. It doesn't mean that everything is sort of released at that point, but it's a major release.

Are there any other parts of your body that are erotic that we haven't spoken about? And another question that you may be able to answer is to tell me about your ass – your anus.

Response 25. I don't – hmm...I generally don't find my anus or other anuses or anal sex very interesting. Or very erotic. I guess I find butts sexier than the actual anus. I would rather do or have done to me, like someone rubbing behind...And that's really taking pleasure in their butt rather than their anus. I think I had some not fun experiences with anal sex early on, and that's probably what turned me off it. It also seems – there's also something about penetration from behind that seems sort of impersonal. It seems not very loving. Hard to be involved with the person instead of the person as an orifice. I don't find my ears really – that's not really a turn on.

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Some people really like ears. I don't like toes – I don't find them erotic. It's nice to get a foot rub but that's about it. I guess the closest anuses come as sort of erotic to me is that sort of exploration I was talking about earlier – sort of “fun between someone's legs.” Not goal driven, not sort of under the blankets and hidden, sort of like being able to be with someone in a way that's so comfortable that it's – in a way it's sort of less erotic at that point because you're spending so much time there, so it becomes a little sort of normalized but I find the area of sort of the very crease between someone's torso and leg – like everyone has very soft skin there – that poor little layer of skin that never gets out, it always has multiple layers of clothing over it. So – your underwear crease line. I find that very sexy. Yeah, sort of some of these can be covered in pubic hair, and some can not be, and that doesn't really matter. Sort of the ending of your butt and the beginnings of your legs and torso are nice spaces to not be super energetically aroused about, but as part of that building process, I guess. It sounds funny to say “casual eroticism” but...I don't mean like holding hands, but like, just something that's a level down in intensity. When that's going up and down and it's building – that would be down time – time spend hanging out there. Touching, kissing, licking, whatever.

The next question is – can you tell me about your feelings about your body, or your feelings of physicality in your body, and how that's changed over the years in your life, and how do you understand those changes?

Response 26. Ok. Um...some of the earliest feelings of being present in my body, I think were probably - and this is sort of a really “sexual being in one's body,” as my little eight year old self – I used to wear these little jumpsuits – they were like – not corduroy, but sort of these canvas...like, shorts, and a top that would just snap all the way up. Like tomboy attire for the

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summer. I had four or five of these, and I went through a phase where I wore them every day, and they were fine one summer, and then the next summer I was a little bigger, and when I went on the monkey bars I could feel that it was pulling up, and it was tight against my crotch, and I sort of liked it. It sort of hurt, but I sort of liked it. And then I think my mother sort of realized I was too big for them and whatever, but I sort of remember feeling - for the first time internally feeling my body in a way that wasn't like "Oh, I scraped my knee. Oh, I pinched my finger," and sort of liking it, and not knowing what was going on.

What did it feel like? What did it feel like that was different from scraping you knee or pinching your finger?

Response 27. It was more like, I didn't know if it hurt or didn't. Because it was like, this is uncomfortable in a way that I didn't know how to classify, and clearly like my baby clitoris was enjoying itself and being stimulated in a way that it hadn't before, and sort of like, "Oh, wow. Hmm." And I didn't know how to respond to that and the heat that it produced - like, "Does this hurt? I'm not sure. This is making me uncomfortable but I kind of want to go across the monkey bars again and it has nothing to do with the monkey bars." So I sort of remember feeling this, this one time, and sort of feeling like, "Does this hurt?" and not knowing the answer to that. And then the next phase I can remember in any sort of detail is later, in sort of pre-teen and early teenage years, when I rapidly moved into a stage when I looked at my body and when I felt my body -- that I wasn't happy with it. But I felt like I was always too fat, always too big, that I wasn't attractive, that no one would ever be interested in me. And I was a heavier teenage girl, but I also played sports regularly and was running around quite a bit, what was clearly going to be a bigger girl- and sort of didn't want to feel that way about myself. I went to an all girls

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high school and was being encouraged in so many other ways that I was so successful, that I didn't want to counter any of the ways that I felt so good about my self - intellectually, socially, even athletically - that I sort of ignored some of the feelings that I would have about my body. And as I continued to grow, towards the end of high school when I became sort of sexually awake and aware, that perception changed again and I began to sort of feel sexy - to feel present in my body in a way that I liked a lot more, in a way that made me feel good about myself. It helps to have a significant other -

(End of tape)

So that was sort of the end of high school when I became aware of – a little more concerned with the way I was presenting myself, the way I looked. Um...and that was pretty – I mean, that was tied into the way I felt about my body. And then moving off to school – going away to school...It became -- I grew a little taller, I was a little thinner, I felt better about being in touch with my body, because I felt happier with the way – with what I was *getting* when I looked at my body. With what I felt when I was in touch with my body that -- I was happier with that, and more willing to do that. More willing to tap into what I was physically, and how I felt about that, and what I looked like, and pay more attention to that instead of focusing on other aspects of my life and other ways I could be. And...

Do you think being with women had something to do with that change?

Response 28. Um...no actually. I think some of that started to happen in general -- I mean it helped, but I think if I had been with – if I'd had a boyfriend at that point who gave me equal amounts of attention in positive ways, that a lot of the feelings would have been the same. A lot of it was, I think, just growing up – moving beyond early high school social anxieties – allowing

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myself to be...there was a lot of self-analysis that took place, and that definitely was part of that, but before I could get to self-analysis I had to sort of open up a space for me to be an individual instead of being part of a group, whereas earlier in high school I was more concerned with my friends, and my social group, and what I was doing with this group and this group and my team here and my after school group here, and all those relationships were more important than the relationship I with myself. And later in high school as those parts of my life were much more solid they provided a wonderful support network for me to then take a step back and have a conversation with myself instead of with my friends. To look at who I might be, and the relationship I had with myself. Sort of a growth in an emotional and sort of spiritual way of being. Just kind of, sort of generally getting older so that I think opened up – with the relationship helping – feeling attractive, and needed, and feeling like my physical body might be part of that. It sort of began to let me connect with my body in ways that were sort of positive, and there were things that I enjoyed and felt good about. And when that sort of connection only continues to develop, and as I became even more comfortable with my sexuality, myself, and my identity in relation to that, and then my own physical body through increased sexual awareness, and increased, sort of, noticing presence in my body – athletic, sexual, sort of spiritual - I feel like that sort of moved up to a different place for most of my college years and sort of – like, moved that to another place. But then – even sort of since graduation there's been like another shift for me, and I think it's due to a lot of the same factors. Increased sexual awareness, increased contact with self, increased self-analysis, increased examination and reexamination of identity, and increased time spent in my body - with my body - as I get better at being me. The more time I spend in touch with who I am, the more I'm able to be present not just in my head

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with who I am, but in my body with who I am. And that plays out in lots of ways. Everything from reading a feminist article about how women view their bodies today or don't view their bodies, to the way I train for my rugby season, to the way that I make love to different women are sort of feeding into that connection between identity and body and the presence that those require of one another.

What did it feel like - the first kiss - and why?

Response 29. That's like the first *grounding*.

What were your thoughts? What did it feel like? How did it go?

Response 30. A total – it was both totally a surprise and totally expected. It was after a high school fall dance – sort of in the gym kind of thing, and I was spending the night with my two best friends, at one girl's house, and Hillary - who would become my first girlfriend – we were lying asleep on the floor – and we were pretty affectionate sort of friends, like I am with most of my friends. She would sit in my lap, we would hug each other and hang on each other shoulders...but this is not uncommon in an all girls high school. People hang on each other. Girls are intimate with each other. And so we were sort of both in our respective sleeping bags, and all of the sudden we were sort of next to each other and sort of snuggled up together, and then our faces were next to each other like, very close to each other, and then we were kissing - and it just sort of happened. And I remember thinking several moments into kissing her – thinking, "I think I'm kissing her," and having this momentary like – "This is what's happening," and not really connecting with feeling – that - just sort of like – "Okay – let's go." There was no analysis, no interpretation, it just sort of happened. And it didn't bother me, and it wasn't like, "Yes!" It wasn't like floodgates opening, it was just – "This is what's happening." "This is

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what's going on right now." And I couldn't even sort of *be there*, it was just happening, and eventually the two of us got up and went into a neighboring bedroom, and sort of kissed all night long. And I remember thinking, "This feels so right." And that's when I started being more emotionally present, and being like, "Wow, this feels really good!" But at the same time it was never -- I wasn't really physically present. My body was not really there because my mind was barely there. I was exhausted, which was probably why this is still sort of so...fuzzy, and feeling of general disconnect. But in a way that's not troublesome at all. And I sort of spent two days in a general daze of not really knowing what had happened, or how I felt about it, and then all of the sudden having a lot of time to think about it and feel about it, and think about what it meant, and what it could mean, and what I wanted to happen going forward, and sort of going through that self-analysis.

So it sounds kind of like you were stunned. Like you weren't thinking, you weren't feeling, in a way...

Response 31. Stunned isn't a bad word. Yeah...it sort of just happened in a very good, natural way. It just sort of was the natural progression.. And I knew what I wanted to do – what I was going to do and what I wasn't' going to do – it was just – it just fit. And I think that was part of why I then had very little agony in terms of coming to terms with being a lesbian or being gay. It just was right. It just made sense. And it wasn't like bells were ringing, or excitement, or alarm bells were just going crazy, it was just – this fits. The puzzle piece fits here. Yeah a little bit of stunned. I sort of tend to blame it on a little bit of shock and a little bit of exhaustion, having been up all night and having had an exhausting school week – the whole week leading up to it, um...and just sort of – trancelike. A little bit trancelike.

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And you said it was like that for two days...

Response 32. Because then we didn't sleep at all, and I was very involved in Model UN, and I had a Model UN conference the next day, and I was also the kind of kid who needed eight to ten hours of sleep each day - like it really wasn't an option for me to not get sleep, and after getting up at 5 am and going to school that day, having a week of school already, going to soccer practice, going to this dance, being up all night and then going to Model UN all the next day, it was sort of like holding my eyes open and just - I had so many things on my schedule because I was one of those overscheduled kids - there was no time for me to go to my room and think or cry or sleep - any of those things - I had to go home from the Model UN conference a little early because there was a birthday party for a friend, and there was no time, and I was just sort of like this, and you know my parents were sort of were like, "Oh she's tired from a long week and she went to the dance last night and..." Well that sort of thing, but there was also sort of something else that was like, "You can deal with me when you get to it." So I spent the whole weekend being out of it and stunned for various reasons, and then got back to a place where I was able to take my little bits of personal time out of my hectic schedule, and get enough sleep so I could use those times in functional ways, and be able to look at what happened and process. Yeah stunned on multiple levels - physically stunned, emotionally processing...

[end of first session]

So I guess if you could start by - and as I said before, some of these questions we've already covered - but anything else that comes up - I wanted to ask if since the last time we met, if anything has come to mind.

Response 33. No, I mean, nothing specific - nothing that changed anything or...I haven't really

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even had a lot of extra time to think about anything that I'd like to think of, much less let things like this percolate through. So not really. Or if it happened it didn't have time to register.

Alright, so maybe if you could tell me about how your feelings about your body have changed over the years, and how you understand these changes.

Response 34. I think last time we talked a little bit about how I was sort of not -- my relationship to my body was very much centered around sports, and wasn't really something I paid a lot of attention to, especially in high school or junior high or whatever, that I was always a little bit heavier, but was able to mask a lot of that in being athletic, in being strong, and in sort of using that to my advantage in those kind of situations, and didn't really start to be aware of my own body and sort of in touch with my body until late in college. Even then sort of would go through periods of being more in touch with my body and sort of listening to it, and I think that it sort of coincides with my sexual development, and sexual activity, and what I was doing and not doing, and how that was relating to sort of emotional growth along a maturity line. Now I would say I pay a lot of attention to my body -- listen and look for certain signs - of pain, of stress, of what it's telling me it needs or doesn't need, and I'm better able to sort of adjust what I'm eating, or how I'm working out -- sort of in general how I'm acting or not acting, in order to make my self and my body respond till it says it's happy. And like I said, that's something that's changed a lot in the past year, year in a half. Being aware on a smaller level -- it's not just "Oh, I feel sore after a tough game." It's not my leg is bruised so it hurts. It's understanding the details of what's going on in my body and what affects them -- makes me feel better or worse, helps me heal faster, or helps me feel more balanced again -- whatever it might be that's going on.

So, what was happening to cause this change?

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Response 35. Nothing...there had been – I had been playing rugby after I graduated, and then I stopped for awhile because I wasn't living anywhere near a team. It more had to do with coming to - like in the relationship I was in - coming to understand that I needed to pay more attention to my own needs, and that was sort of stemming out of my emotional needs within the relationship I was in, and having not paid enough attention to those for quite awhile. And seeing that that was rapidly becoming a really big problem so, out of paying more attention to my emotional needs, this physical needs part tacked on with it. I mean there are things like – working out on a regular basis is both a physical and an emotional need for me, so there were things that I began to do to help satisfy what I needed emotionally that also then overlapped to the physical, and sort of as I was paying more attention to my emotions, suddenly realized that I was also paying more attention to my body, and that they were often related. So, sort of in some ways sort of accidental, but I think it probably would have happened anyway – just in being more aware of myself, I think that would have been a part of that.

So this is when you were in Maine?

Response 36. I was, which was for me was very isolating in a way. Small community, not so very functional relationship, and feeling cut off not only from old friends, but from groups of people that would be appealing to me as new friends. It was really hard to find social circles that I was interested in joining. Or the people that I did like, and did make connections with, were very different, were already in their forties, and just at a very different point in their life. Not to mention in terms of physical things, having six full months of winter where you can't do a whole lot outside - yes you can go skiing, you can go skating, but those are sort of limited time activities. It's hard to be outside a lot of the time in the winter in Maine and that physically is

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very hard, you know, coupled with a culture that is very sedentary – a lot of sitting around and smoking and drinking is sort of the cultural atmosphere up there. The people are economically not nearly as diverse as New York, and so all those factors coupled sort of make it worse in some ways, which then sort of pushed me to find ways to be in better touch with myself.

You were teaching up there?

Response 37. Initially I was working at a bank the first year, and then I was teaching the second year. I was – it was like a credit analyst, and it was a high stress job. It was not – it was not fun. I was dealing with people who were in financial trouble, which means that they're stressed, and angry, and to sort of deal with that all day, every day, and in an atmosphere that was not intellectually challenging, and I was underpaid, and watching the people around me – you know - unhappy and miserable – it wasn't very fun.

And as a teacher what were you doing?

Response 38. I was teaching 7th and 8th grade Humanities classes in a private school in rural Maine, and it was like kindergarten through 9th grade, and there were like fifty kids total. It was very liberal and very progressive. The kids were wonderful, and I had a lot of fun. I was learning from them as much as I was teaching them.

And what brought you to Maine?

Response 39. The relationship I was in. I couldn't find a job that would pay me enough to not live in a cardboard box after graduation, and I had been looking in Boston and wasn't happy with what I was finding, and then it just sort of happened that my girlfriend at that time was going to a program in Maine, and we happened to find an apartment – a house to rent that was a really good deal and between the two of us made a lot of sense, so I started looking for jobs up there, and

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found the job at the bank, and thought it would be very different than it ended up being, and so moved up there. I was up there for two years, and the year I was teaching I had already started to apply to graduate school and when the decisions came back I decided I would do it then. Come to New York and go back to school. And that was another result of that change and the way that I was looking at what I needed, rather than this relationship that I used to prioritize. So that was part of that decision. And it was hard at that point to leave a job that I loved, and a group of kids that were so much fun, and amazing, but it was one of those things I had to do. It was what I needed to do.

How did you feel in the relationship?

Response 40. Most of the time I felt pretty good. Meredith and I were very similar in our bodies – structures and shapes. Except I was always the one who was a little less heavy, was a little more shapely, was a little more -- had legs that were a little more defined. There's that sort of unwilling comparison of your own body to someone else's, and we both needed – we both used – we both needed each other for motivation for working out, and staying in shape, especially in Maine, and we did a lot of that together. But emotional problems became very interwoven into sort of physical closeness. She was some of that with stress and feeling any sort of emotional stress between the two of us – had no sexual appetite whatsoever, and had no interest in being physically close, and I'm someone that relates very much, and does a lot of healing and showing of emotion physically, and that was very hard for me to deal with. And she's done a lot of cutting herself off physically from relating to people and, going from a point in our relationship where she was always very open with me to a point where that wasn't the case anymore was part of the motivation for my own reassessment of what I was doing, and where I

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was pouring energy and why. So things happened together a lot – generally being depressed, and having our relationship not doing well, and gaining weight because I’m not working out as much – those things sort of happened together. And then being so miserable that I decided I needed to look at the whole picture, and being like, “This isn’t right, what am I going to do about this?” and then all three pieces of those began to change as I began to be more in touch with what I needed emotionally and physically - things began to change in my relationship with her, and the way I was dealing with that, and my general happiness level and – although it didn’t necessarily affect so much our physical closeness because obviously that’s a two person game and not something that I could really fix, it did affect my interest in it, and there I was – what I wanted from her like physically in terms of everything from just sitting and cuddling on the couch to making love – those feelings changed.

How did they change?

Response 41. We had gotten in sort of a big pattern of me doing a lot of taking care of her. We’d be sitting on the couch in the evening and talking or whatever and she’d fall asleep on me. Which was fine until it was time to go to bed, and I wanted to go upstairs and she was too tired to do anything. Too tired to get up, too tired to put her dishes away, too tired to do all these little naggy things, and I just wanted to go to sleep in my bed, not on the couch where I would wake up at three in the morning and be stiff all the next day. So moving from that aggravating kind of interaction, and not making love nearly as much as I wanted to – she’s never been good about being physically close to me even around people who knew that we were together and were very comfortable with it – never interested in public displays of affection, and sort of these things coming up in conversation all the time – me asking her for that, and her saying basically, “No.”

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So moving from fighting all those little battles to not fighting all those battles, and realizing that the larger issues were sort of preventing any sort of movement on smaller things like that, and that it wasn't making sense and it wasn't good for me. And so, at that point, sort of backing off. Not fighting those things, not looking to be physically close, in fact we spent a lot of time apart that last summer. I was on a two week trip separate from her, and then went on a three and a half week trip later and didn't see her a lot, and at the same time she was busy working two or three jobs, and that was sort of part of it too -I didn't want to be around her so much. We didn't officially break up until Thanksgiving but that was coming.

How long were you together?

Response 42. Four and a half years. So it was –

So you started dating in your junior year?

Response 43. Yeah, it was like the very end of my sophomore year, and there was – she's four years older than me so she had already graduated and was in the area near school. And we spent that first summer together - we lived together, and it was great - it was - that whole first year was wonderful. It was lot of fun. We really connected. We were both – you know, we found was - to manage stress in the relationship really well it became a sort of healthy nurturing thing for both of us. And then she was gone for a lot of the next year – she was in Nepal for six months. I joined her for a month and a half of it which was hard, but at the same time I was in school and needed to be doing my thing, and finishing that up, and she was busy working for this nonprofit...the problem was when she got back and I graduated it was sort of – she sort of made the decision that she was going to go to boat building school. And I didn't have a set plan so I followed a pattern that was pervasive throughout the entire relationship, which was that I would

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give up what I might want to do, to do what you need to do, so that's why I ended up in Maine.

When I probably should have moved to Boston where I had a bunch of friends and had been looking for a job.

Where did you grow up?

Response 44. I grew up north of Detroit. Sort of suburban Detroit. I'd never lived or even spent that much time on the east coast until I was looking at schools. But I love the east coast and New York, and have sort of decided that I'll be out here now.

Forgive me – I know we talked about your siblings in the first interview, and the sort of caretaking relationship, but let's talk about that a little more – tell me how many siblings you have and about your parents and...

Response 45. I have three younger sisters. Chrissy is three and a half years younger than me so she is 21 ½. Maggie and Beth are...sixteen and ½ - they're twins. My father is a pediatrician. My mother works...she started working about five years ago when I was in college – she's the office manager in our church. My parents are not divorced. Maggie and Beth obviously still live at home. Chrissy just graduated from the University of Michigan.

And you were raised Catholic?

Response 46. Actually my father is Catholic, and my mother is Dutch Reform. We were raised going to a United Church of Christ.

Did you go every Sunday?

Response 47. Oh yeah. That's not so much the pattern anymore. My parents go pretty regularly and I think they drag Maggie and Beth twice a month, but yeah. Absolutely.

Well I guess in the vein of talking about your family and your childhood, can you talk

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about feelings about your body as a kid?

Response 48. I was not only the oldest child in my family, but we lived on a court and our backyard bumped up against several others. There was sort of this large space, and there were probably fifteen or sixteen kids sort of all within two houses that were all running around, but I was the oldest of all of them. There were a couple that were a year or two younger than me who were my friends, but I was the oldest. And I was also the biggest – always. Some of the others were little skinny twiggy kids, but I was always the one who ate a little bit extra, and didn't run around as much as she should...I loved to read when I was little, and my Mom would kick me out of the house on nice days and we'd go and run around, because I would rather sit in a chair and curl up with a book. So that also meant things like I could pick up any of the little kids and sort of sling them around, or do big brother/big sister things. It never really bothered me though – it sort of fit into my "Big Sister," sort of the bossy first child kind of thing, and, you know, I did sports like crazy as a little kid – I played on t-ball teams, I played on soccer teams, I played on basketball teams, all that kind of stuff. I don't remember ever thinking too much about it – it wasn't really a preoccupation. If anything sort of triggered related to that it was, "I want to be able to kick the soccer ball farther," or "I want to be able to ride my bike up that hill without standing up to pump," not really about, "Oh my legs look like this," or, "Oh these shorts don't fit," or any of that. That didn't really happen until high school - earlier in high school when it was shopping for a formal dress and suddenly realizing that what was popular or what everyone was wearing didn't really fit because of my broad shoulders, or my pants were too long because I had to wear a wider waistband and my legs were sort of proportionately according to whatever department store, and that was the first time that sort of registered to me. But I didn't have a lot

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of access to pop culture stuff. We didn't watch too much TV, I didn't read any of those teen magazines, I didn't have any of that sort of being fed to me. My mom didn't even read those women's magazines, so I didn't have that message being sent my way. I think one of the earlier things I remember was my mom's best friend – I call her my other mother, their family is very close to ours, and I think I must have been like ten or eleven, and I remember her grabbing me here, the back of my arm, that little jiggly spot, and making some comment about that I needed to watch it or I would have like old lady jiggly arms. And she was just teasing, but I remember being like, "Oh my God," and sort of paying attention to that, and thinking, "Is the back of my arm jiggling like my grandma's does?" Which I had of course noticed and made fun of as a younger child, like, "Oh, look at grandma's arm." I remember thinking like, "What, I'm just a kid." Kid's don't worry about that stuff it's for old ladies to worry about. Sort of in a non gender way, like I also didn't worry about not having boobs or stuff, that stuff didn't happen until later. You could be a fat kid or a skinny kid; I didn't pay that much attention to specifics. And I remember being like, "I can't believe she said that," and feeling hurt, but also a little afraid and all of a sudden sort of thinking, "Oh, wow, maybe I should pay attention to that."

In terms of when you – it sounds like when you hit high school and became more aware of your body, not so much in it's ability to kick a ball, but in it's shape or form, in more of a gender way, as you put it, I guess I'm wondering what happened in high school, and how did you kind of sit with the experience you'd had of your body, and the new stuff you were being exposed to?

Response 49. It became more important for me to find an intermediate road between what I wanted to do and what I cared about and what was – not socially acceptable, but like, cool or

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what everyone else was doing, so I would sort of find like, in terms of clothing, wearing an outfit that I felt comfortable with and wasn't...for me I didn't want to wear girly clothes, like little tight things and things that I considered really feminine, but sort of finding a mix between that and what I might have chosen had I been free of high school and its sort of social demands. I would sort of find something in between. A lot of those issues were minimized, though, in that we wore uniforms every day. But that, too, being forced to wear a skirt every day meant that I was sort of more feminized than I wanted to be and – the joke was in our high school was you could always tell who the underclassmen were because they were still wearing make up. That by junior and senior year none of the girls cared. Freshman and sophomore year I felt that pressure and would put make up on and do my hair, and wear a necklace, and be less sloppy basically. And not do things like wear a t-shirt under the button up we had to wear. Things I would do later because it was comfortable, versus earlier when I would have it unbuttoned a little further. Be very concerned with the way I was sitting or...I was much more physically conscious of wearing a skirt during those years than when I got older and sort of reveled in being in control when I was at school, and found ways to be more comfortable, and didn't feel like I was wearing a skirt all the time. We did things like wearing shorts under the skirt all the time, or finding ways to be more comfortable in what was sort of outwardly a very feminine outfit. My closest friends were all jocks and you could tell by the way everyone walked that they wouldn't be wearing a skirt on a daily basis as soon a graduation came. I also sort of moved from only looking at my body in terms of what it could do, to looking carefully at my body in terms of what it looked like, but also needing it to fit into that sort of athletic category. You know, like in gym class, one of my friends and I had no problem literally running around like little kids and being all excited about

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what ever we were doing, playing dodgeball or whatever like full force, like absolutely you know, like very seriously playing hard and being like sweaty and disgusting for the next class - that didn't matter, that was ok. So walking this sort of strange line between athletic bodies and...I was suddenly aware that people looked at bodies in a certain way.

So when did you begin to identify yourself as – I'm not sure how you identify yourself - gay, or queer, or as a lesbian...

Response 50. I identified as a lesbian around Christmas of my senior year of high school, and did a lot of thinking and personal reflection triggered mostly by that first kiss experience, and went on to date that girl for the next six or seven months, and began exploring that identity at that point - at the end of high school - and that remained pretty much the same in terms of how I identified through college, and the next couple of years after college. In the past couple of years I have thought more about...I've contemplated my own identity – my sexual identity – and have thought a lot more about “queer” as maybe a more appropriate term but...depending on who I'm asking, and how much access I think they have to queer theory and queer thought – I'd like to identify as a queer lesbian, but often that just becomes lesbian. But it's something I'm still working on. I have had a lot of conflict recently about feeling like my politics and my practice are not in line with one another. That sort of politically and intellectually, theoretically I – the stuff that resonates with me is very radical lesbian writing. Separatist writing from the 1970's and much earlier theory than as of late, but a lot of the ideas that are pushed by radical lesbian separatists are not things that I feel okay with. Just because my transsexual friend used to have a penis doesn't mean I don't want to hang out with her. I can't put some of those things into practice quite simply. That's sort of my intellectual journey this spring.

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Let's change course a little bit. Tell me about your body during and after having sex with a woman for the first time. Tell me what it felt like.

Response 51. During...in a lot of ways I felt pretty numb. Not in a bad way but...I was I think I told you last time I was totally exhausted.

Was the first kiss the first time you had sex?

Response 52. I guess not technically but...the stuff I remember most specifically was that first night – the first kiss and – it sort of ended up being a long naked make out session. There was no actual sex. I was exhausted, but so totally wired. Sort of this weird mix between the two, and sort of feeling tingly and numb but mostly focused on – my blood was in my hands and my lips, that was where my nerve endings were focusing. Which is sort of interesting. That's not always the case now. But we were mostly focused on kissing one another, and touching one another, mostly above the waist. It was mostly kissing and looking in each other's eyes. We didn't – Hillary and I did not have very good sex. Um...she – we weren't very – we weren't any good at being with each other's bodies, mostly because we were both too young and had too little experience.

Did she ever bring you to orgasm?

Response 53. No, I never came with Hillary. Part of that was – I was never really that attracted to her, I was more attracted to the idea of being gay, like, "Oh, yes, this is right." And it didn't really matter that she wasn't a very nice person and I wasn't all that attracted to her. I don't know specifically when we sort of fingered each other for the first time or had sex for the first time because it wasn't that momentous. And our relationship was also more about me pleasing her than taking time out to do what I needed, or focusing on my body. So my body awareness

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was more focused on my hands on her, or my lips on her than anything else. It wasn't until later relationships that - when there was also an increased comfort level in terms of all body parts and spending a lot of time...it was also different in high school when you don't have a place to yourself, or there are time limits on everything - it's hard to have an open relaxed sexual relationship when you're parking or - it's very different when you're in college and you can blow off your class or do whatever you want all night with out someone walking in. Sort of, the first many times I had sex with a woman it was sort of an extension of hooking up - and by hooking up I mean things that you could do with your pants on. Kissing and touching and fondling. I never had the same feelings that I've had since then where there's a building sort of throughout - you start with one level of foreplay, and move on to another level, and then clothing comes off, and it's much more genital, and there's a lot more focus on an orgasm or on making each other happy, and playing close attention to what the other one's doing and feeling and needing, so I guess I see it in three stages. With Hillary in specific, but also in high school in general, it was mostly sort of blind fumbling. Like, in college it was very orgasm focused - a lot of that building, paying a lot more attention to the partner, and recently sort of within the last year sex has become a lot more about pleasure, and different ways in which to find that and experience that, and less orgasm focused I guess. Sort of a heightened awareness of my body and the other person's body and what - the smaller details of what's going on, and what feels good, and expanding definitions of what feels good. We talked a little bit last time about new explorations into SM and stuff, but the sexual side of that shift parallels my own shift in terms of paying attention to my body and being in touch with my body.

Can you tell me a little about the S and M - like what it feels like, what physically is going

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on?

Response 54. Um...it's pretty new for me. Um...I've found actually that I like things that echo sort of other pastimes of mine - like, for example, rugby. So like, hitting and pounding versus sharp isolated pain - that would be like pinching or biting. I like playing with - like with this specific partner - we play with bondage and we play with roles a lot and that's - I'm not sure how much of that is - is - specific to my relationship with her. The power structures that happen in that relationship are a part of that sexual tension. Um...fisting....

Being fisted or fisting?

Response 55. Both. I don't like anal sex in any form so - that's not very exciting for me. But um...yeah that's mostly it...um... (*Pause*)

And your parents? How are they?

Response 56. They were really unhappy the first year. I told them right before I went off to college. Mostly I think because I didn't want to deal with them. And I think they hated it initially because they hated Hillary. They hated my first girlfriend. They hated sort of who I was around her and the kind of person she was, and when I finally brought Meredith home a couple of years later, and they realized how much they liked her, and how much she was like me, then their attitudes really shifted. They're getting used to it. I mean they still have a lot of issues. I don't even want to have the discussion - there's sort of already the assumption made that I won't get married, I won't have children, I'll have to take care of myself. My parents have a lot of heterosexual assumptions about what happens with girls - you know that we would find a good husband and the husband would work and we would have little babies and all be happy and wonderful, and they don't always stop to think, and look at the person that I have been every

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day of my life until I told them I was gay, and they don't stop to look at that and see that I was independent, that I was smart, and that I was going to do what I wanted in my life, and that would have affected that image that they had whether I chose to be with men or with women, and sort of grouped me into that sort of stereotype that they had. I think now that they are doing much better with that, and they are very welcoming to my girlfriends and other gay friends. My younger sister Chrissy has been very good about pushing them to challenge their assumptions. She's been very supportive. And the other two are sort of like, "Whatever."

Have you ever been with a man?

Response 57. No I haven't. I've never been really interested. I kissed a couple of boys in high school. But I've never been interested. And even in looking back on crushes that I had, often they were really masking a crush that I had on a woman somehow. I had two best friends, one of which – we were very social and went out to movies or out to lunch in a big group, and my other best friend and I hung out together alone all the time and I clearly had a big crush on her. But we just had sort of a very different relationship than I had with any of my other friends and... You know, I had a crush on this one boy – or thought I did – but I really had a crush on his mom who was one of our teachers. These things are clearer when you sort of look back on them

I guess the last question is – and you may have already covered it – but was there ever a sexual experience – like kissing or – anything – was there ever a moment that had a profound affect on you?

Response 58. Well I have two – one that I'm not sure how well it fits with your question – so I'll start with that one. There was this one time when I was in college, I think probably sophomore year. I was hooking up - kissing for the first time someone that I ended up being

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with for a short time, and we were outside at what's called the Eden Club – basically it's like a huge fraternity/sorority combined – you know it was like a big party house. And we were in the back yard - it was like warm, and I had my back to the building – and you know there are like lights on the building, or out into the yard a little bit – and the girl I was kissing was one of the officers of the club, and all of the sudden some of the other officers who were guys were up on the balcony, sort of during a break from the band or whatever, and were being goofy and turned one of the lights on us and were like, “Ooh, who's that cute little boy Kate's kissing?” Her name was Kate. So I remember we sort of stopped, and were giggling, and that was kind of a gender thing – and I was like, “Oh I guess I do sort of look like a guy.” You know, I had shorter hair than I do now, and I was wearing black pants and a white t-shirt. So I kind of for the first time *liked* broad shoulders and, sort of the way that I was looking. The way that my body was – and I sort of thought that was kind of fun. And then of course we turned around and jaws dropped. But sort of much more sexual – you know this is kind of bad that I don't remember who this was with, but I do remember – maybe it was...I don't remember – I remember being in bed with someone in the morning. It was quite light out, and whatever she was saying sort of all of the sudden made me feel really beautiful. Instead of feeling like I had parts of me that I didn't like, that I was heavier here than I wanted to be or there, my stomach was better, but my thighs were whatever. That just the way that she was looking at me, and touching me, and talking to me in sort of a very gentle, very admiring way made me feel like I didn't ever want to look like supermodel X,Y, or Z, like in the magazines or on TV. That I didn't want to look like all the media images that were sort of the presenting force in high school or...yeah, that I for the first time valued not having a perfectly flat tummy, and being curvy, and having actual substance of

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weight to me instead of being, you know, so super skinny and perfect.

What does being beautiful feel like?

Response 59. It meant that my physical awareness moved from certain body parts to my whole body. Instead of focusing on sucking in my tummy, or not wanting to show or have a lot of attention given to my butt or my thighs, that I wanted to be really naked, wanted to be seen and be touched and...it sort of made me much more – horny – it made me much more wanting to be naked, and much more with her, and sort of a little bit greedy that I wanted her to keep saying what she was saying. Keep telling me these things that she was telling me that made me feel so good. Yeah, I guess that's the best way I can come up with of saying it – that it sort of moved from an isolated to a general awareness of...because I can't remember exactly who it was – that is so bad.

I think it's awesome. I think it's better than if you did

Response 60. Clearly I was in my own head and not – yeah, I think they were more or less just platitudes. “You look so beautiful right now, your skin is glowing...” That kind of stuff.

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Appendix G: Emilie's Interview Transcript

The following pages are typed transcripts of interviews with research participant Emilie.

Questions presented to Emilie are in **bold** for ease of identification. Emilie's responses are numbered in sequential order for ease of reference.

Okay – you're 28?

Response 1. 28.

And you identify as Queer?

Response 2. Yes.

How long have you been in New York?

Response 3. Almost five years. It will be five years in August. It was right after I graduated.

The first question is, can you tell me about your experience of your body?

Response 4. Experience in terms of like, what I think of my body, or...

Whatever it means to you.

Response 5. Okay. I feel like I've had a lot of transitions and in my life have experienced it in a few different ways. And at this point in my life, my experience of my body is a very positive one, and it – I guess I'm pretty lucky because I've never been too concerned about weight, or breast size, or body size, or anything like that, and it does have a strong connection to sexuality too, for me. And I went through a long period where I constantly felt negative about my body, and it was because of the relationship I was in. And I think somehow once I freed myself of that and I – I think my body – the experience of my body is connected to my mind now. They're so connected to me. Because when I'm happy I feel happy about my body also, and respecting myself I also respect my body, and I think they used to be separated.

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Was this relationship with a guy?

Response 6. It was. And I think it's more complicated than that. I wouldn't be someone to say, "Oh I'm going to blame it on men and now that I'm with women..." I've also been with some women where I don't feel comfortable. I don't think it's a man/woman thing. But definitely not understanding yourself, and being young, and not respecting or not understanding your sexuality, and letting someone else tell you when they don't know either what they think your body is about, or how something should work, or how sex works – it happens to lot of people, and I definitely got into that idea of, "Oh, this how it's supposed to work. This is how sex is supposed to work. This is what I'm supposed to look like and how I'm supposed to act." And I had to break free from that.

And how old were you?

Response 7. I was seventeen when it started. It ended when I was twenty-two. But during that time I had a lot of- I obviously came out in a lot of ways and had experiences with women during it. A little secret life. It definitely helped my growth and helped my understanding to then come to an ending. I don't know – it was really interesting, that time. Now that it's been a while I have more of a perspective on it, and can see where it fit in and how I've changed since then. I think that I'm so much stronger and really demanding of people's respect of me, in what I like and what I don't like in reference to sexuality, in reference to how people talk to me, and I have no qualms telling people that, or saying, "No, this is how it is." And I think I also realize just how sexuality is such a – sexuality and pain – they're so personal and yet no one really teaches you about it – there's no one right way. That's a really hard thing to realize, and when you've realized it, then it's like there's this whole world of freedom. But it's scary too. Just like

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normality and mainstream. When you live in New York, when you go to another country, and then you realize, “Wait – everything’s a choice.” We just buy into this idea of what mainstream is, and I think we do the same thing with sexuality, and sex in general.

Is there anything else that you want to tell me about your body?

Response 8. I guess – I want to know more specifically, is it a physical thing, or it’s like amore of an emotional thing or – which one are you more wanting to know – when you say experience, is it like a physical thing or like the way that you think of it?

What you’re asking about – I’ve had a number of people present the exact same question.

In a way that’s part of it – to see how you answer.

Response 9. I’ve often wondered what it feels like to have somebody else’s body, and, like I said, because of the society we live in, probably the reason why I don’t think about my body is because I’m small, and because people make me think about my body more than I think about it. People bring it up. People will say, “Oh, I wish I had a body like yours,” and I never look in the mirror and think, “Wow, I’m hot,” or something like that. I never really think of it more than as me, but I guess that’s really because I connect it with myself and I – it’s like, I’m left handed, and I think of it as part of myself, but people will always comment to me, “Wow, you’re left handed,” like it’s such a big deal, and to me it’s just part of who I am. But there’s little things that I notice and feel that since I have like confidence about it -- it would be an issue for other people. Like, I’m pretty hairy. I went through my initial relationship feeling bad about that and having to fix things or shave or whatever, and after that I was like, “You know what? Never again. I don’t care. This is who I am and I’m not going to put myself through pain to look like something else – I like how I look.” So, I think that was a negative experience in reference to

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my body at first, but like I said, during that transition where my mind/body connection - it was almost as if I was repairing that – that distinction that I made.

In what transition?

Response 10. I don't know exactly if I can describe it, but I think that when I broke up with my first boyfriend I felt like something had released from me physically, like a weight lifted off, and I felt connected to my body. It was as if I denied it for so long, and almost would talk about my body in the third person. And after that I got to repossess it in a way and – you know there's still so many things about the body which I don't understand, which I find fascinating. Like, I have this, I guess, morbid obsession with wanting to see a cadaver dissected. I just think – I don't want to kill someone to do it, I just want to see it. I want to see how everything fits together. Bodies are so constantly amazing to me – how it works. Just like, everyday I understand my body more, and I don't think that people think about it enough and investigate. It's so scary – my sister and I are very, very different. She's just starting to be able to talk about sexuality at all, which I had to blow out of the water when I finally came out to her. I'd been in a relationship with a woman for a year and I was finally like, "I can't lie anymore." And I just told her straight out in a really long letter, because it was bigger than sexuality and who I was dating. It was like an entire thought process with her disconnection with sexuality and sex and not wanting to think about it at all. So I can really bounce myself off of her to see, wow, how can she be like that, to never have looked at themselves in the mirror, don't want to think about it, don't want to know how the body works. I don't know if that's a guilt thing or a fear – I don't know what it is. But I do feel freer than that, because I know, and remember that thought – I also grew up Catholic, too, so it was never something that in our household got talked about, even your

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period or anything, more like, “Alright, just deal with that. We don’t wear tampons because only sluts can wear that,” so it’s been a long journey for me.

So, did you not wear tampons?

Response 11. Until I was eighteen, and I left home.

How Catholic?

Response 12. Catholic school for thirteen years.

Are you out to them?

Response 13. Yeah, but now that I’m not in a relationship she suddenly thinks I’m going to bounce back and get married. We had a really long fight about the relationship, and she would go back and forth – she started to get more accepting, and then she would get really angry. I mean, my mom’s pretty manic anyway, so it would kind of go back and forth, and each time I thought we were making strides she would say something really negative. But actually since I broke up with my ex-girlfriend she’s been pretty good about trying to make gender neutral statements, or to say, “You know, I realize that I was afraid and that’s why I treated you that way,” but I can still sense, you know, she’s already back into the swing of, “Okay, you’re going to get married now,” which is interesting. Does that answer the question?

Yeah, there’s no right or wrong. I’m not looking for anything in particular. I mean, there’s things I’ve thought about, but there’s really no right or wrong answer. So let’s move on to the next one – can you tell me what your body feels like?

Response 14. Like I’ve said already, I feel like I’ve had two different experiences with it. Now I feel really light and I guess it feels – I feel in control, which I think makes me feel excited about my body, and in control and strong even though I’m not very strong, but I feel comforted

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by my body – it might sound strange. And soft. And grounded. I have this funny story about my shoulder – I have a fuzzy shoulder, just kind of peach fuzz or something. And I started to realize that not everyone has a fuzzy shoulder. And there was this summer after I had broken up with the boyfriend and it was a really transformative summer, but I would go through these times almost every day where I just felt completely like, “Oh, my gosh, I have to re-make myself, I have to discover who I really am now, because this is the first time I’ve ever been alone, and I’ve left my family.” I had left with him – my home town – and went to college and had been away for several years and everything was new. And I would sit on my porch and put my head to my fuzzy shoulder, and it was like this strange sense of comfort, it’s really bizarre. And I think I’ve slept alone – I grew up with two brothers and a sister in a slightly impoverished environment and my brothers didn’t have a bed and they would sleep in sleeping bags for six years – but they were small, and so they would sleep with us – my sister and I had bunk beds – almost every night, like if they got cold or something. So I think I grew up used to sleeping with someone my whole life, and then I went straight into a relationship that was pretty committed, and then suddenly I was alone, and that was a different transition. And I feel like my body has come to a place where I feel comforted by it. But that was something that I had to get to. Even though - I’m sure this will come out somewhere in here- this has been a constant discussion with my friends – I don’t masturbate. It’s something that like, from Catholicism or something – it’s something I tried to work on and never got to a place where I was totally comfortable. But I don’t feel – like my friend will be like, “Oh, my gosh - ” We’ll have hour long discussions about – she’s like, “You’re so pent up, you’re always hyper and this is why.” But I don’t feel – I guess I just never got in the habit of it, so I don’t know what I’m missing in a sense. But I don’t know,

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I think my body has its own ways of coping with that. So I think that's kind of like a funny thing.

What ways does your body cope with that?

Response 15. That's another funny story. I think because of where my G-spot is or something, my body's really sensitive to like, if I have to go to the bathroom, or if there's any sort of pressure in my body, I can have an orgasm just anywhere. It's really bizarre- it doesn't happen all the time. I've talked to a few people who know what I'm talking about, but I think it's just the way that my engineering works or something. I always have funny stories. Because I can feel it – I'm assuming it's my G spot. I'm not sure. I can definitely find it from the outside. So I don't know. Like I said, I've never possessed anybody else's body, so it could be just something that nobody else ever talks about and I do, but it's a little bit odd.

(Inaudible)

Sometimes I wonder - I think of it akin to guys and wet dreams, and supposedly that still happens even when they're adults, like if they didn't have sex for a certain amount of time. But conversations I've had with guys, like if they didn't masturbate or whatever. I don't know for sure. So I think of that like women – there's this, what the body needs to have a release of some sort, and if you don't get the release, then there's this ultra-sensitivity. I don't know if that's true – I could be making this all up. Because I've had so much time now on the road – tour – by myself. I have long periods of time with no physical contact with another person. And I think it has something to do with that. Maybe not.

You were saying that you've had two very different experiences with your body, and you described now, and then we got into this stuff. But there was a transformative summer, so

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I guess if you could give me a description of that summer?

Response 16. And my body - besides the physical feeling of pain which was pretty constant, it also felt heavy and mysterious in a way. And – I went to see some doctors at my college about it once I had gotten over my squeamishness about asking questions and said, “I don’t understand, why do I have – why is it painful when I have sex? I don’t understand.” And they would say, “There’s nothing wrong with you. Are you sure you’re in love with this person?” Yes of course, it’s been five years. And there’s lots of things I’ve learned since then about sexuality and about how your body changes when you want to have sex and – supposedly - I heard this, I don’t know if I read about it or – your organs like, move when you want to have sex. And it like prepares your body and I thought wow, that’s completely fascinating. So that was my experience of my body and when I think about it, it didn’t feel connected to me it felt like something different.

(break)

I guess I want to hear what this transformative summer was. Could you tell me a little about what it was?

Response 17. The transformation?

Yeah.

Response 18. I think I had started earlier, but it became more real – in the last year of my relationship which - we had broken up kind of eight months prior to the real break up, and during that time a really good friend of mine who was married told me that she was bisexual, and we had this whole conversation, and developed this even stronger friendship which then kind of lead into a somewhat physical relationship, that was very minimal looking back on it in terms of anything actually happening physically, but it was such an emotional and supportive appreciation

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of each other – and we were friends, and would be together, and make dinner – I don't know. But it was such a positive transformation about myself and my body even though we weren't having sex.

What about kissing? Anything?

Response 19. Yeah, there was back massaging, holding each other, cuddling type of thing happening, but – yeah. And I just felt it was like I felt like a completely different person, but I still couldn't leave the relationship. It was like some kind of security or something – this is my future this is my life this is everything. You know? And when I realized I could leave, then I finally left that, and felt like, this weight had been lifted off of me as well as - I felt so powerful and in control of myself, because I didn't have to let anyone else know about my body. There was just me. I didn't have to worry about it. I didn't have to think about it in relation to anyone else. There was just me. Because I think for so many years I didn't think of my body in terms of me, I thought about it in terms of, "Oh, how am I feeling today? Do I think I can have sex today? Am I too tired, or am I in pain, do I need to have a shower, do I smell bad..." All of these things that weren't about how I felt about myself. I was like, living like my body was my own apartment, and I lived by myself now, and I could put the dishes wherever I want, and it just felt like this amazing thing. That seems so strange now, but looking back I was such a different person, and I was living in really stressed circumstances with my family, so I can understand why I did have those times and those thought about myself. And then I went out with a few different people that summer and one was a girl, and it was this amazing, kind of – not emotionally amazing because it was this horrible affair, and I didn't know she had a girlfriend and so on and so forth, but physically it was like a brand new thing for me and it was great to

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have that. And then I also kind of dated this guy for like two weeks and I just wasn't interested, and I felt completely in control, and like, "You know what? I don't want to do this, this isn't working out." Or like, "I'm not going to have sex with you tonight." And I had no qualms about stating how things were going to be with me. So that was a transition for me.

Can you tell me how you hold your body?

Response 20. The first thing that comes to mind is – well I guess – a lot of these questions can be answered in a few different ways. One is, I think of when I sleep at night, when I sleep by myself and I'm physically holding myself, like I have a little body pillow that I sleep with --

What do you mean?

Response 21. It's just like a long pillow. They call it a body pillow. And I feel like I'm encircling someone that's just actually me, and like I was saying previously about sleeping by myself, and how that's a comfort thing – but then I also think holding as in the way I carry myself, and that is something that kind of relates to the way that I experience my body. I feel like I carry myself pretty light and bouncy and moving forward.

Can you tell me about different parts of your body, and your response to them?

Response 22. Sure. I have really long fingers, I don't really have a like a negative or positive response to that. And I have pretty big ears which I always thought were – I've had like some jokingly negativity about it, but I've never felt self conscious about it. I've had people tell me and I never noticed before someone else pointed it out, and now of course – I don't really understand what it means, but I've had someone tell me I have a really long torso. What does that mean, that I have a really long torso? I think it means I have a long rib cage or something? So I think it's funny now, because now people will say it in relation to the way clothes fit or

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shirts are too short or something, and I never really understood that – I never really understood why clothes fit me a certain way. Except for like, “Oh right, my legs are short.” I’m starting to recognize it. And I’ve never been obsessed with trying to have a flat stomach or anything. I’m pretty small, but I’ve always had a soft belly. I’ve always had a pretty big butt. Or like, big. It’s not something I’ve had anyone really – I don’t feel negative about it but people have commented on it my whole life

It being big?

Response 23. Yeah, it’s pretty funny because I’m a small person, but it’s become a constant joke with my friends because I’m small and I have a big butt - I mean in proportion to my body. So I used to wear clothes that were baggy. And a lot of it was style, it was like, raver type 90’s - early 90’s, so I was like seventeen, eighteen, nineteen.

Can you tell me about your mouth?

Response 24. I think – I always thought that I had a pretty big mouth. Not just the fact that I talk a lot, but I don’t know - I always thought I had a big mouth, but every time I go to the dentist they can’t fit everything in, so it turns out I have a very small mouth, which I think is funny. I mean, that – most of my body is - I don’t think of myself as small, but I go to the gynecologist and they get the extra, extra small or whatever. I mean, it’s just a perception because I’ve never had anyone else’s body, and I see other people wear high heels and I never had the desire to – you know I never think that way like, “Oh, how tall are they or...” It just never crosses my mind. So that’s what I think when I think about my mouth. I have soft teeth so I always knew I had to floss a lot, and I can get cavities very easily. My teeth are soft. I don’t know exactly what that means. I get cold sores so sometimes I think of my mouth in reference

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to, “Oh, I have to take care of my mouth, and get some sleep because if my immune’s down I’ll get a sore.”

You’ve already talked about the next question – tell me about your breasts. Is there anything else that comes to mind?

Response 25. We went over some of it, and like, the growing phase of it. I know – I’ve already said that I don’t think of myself as masturbating, but I constantly hold my breasts, and I don’t think of it as anything sexual necessarily, but people will be like, “Why are you holding your breasts?” Like, if someone’s lying with me in bed. And I’ll be like, “What? This is a comfortable position.”

Are your hands like, moving as you’re holding them?

Response 26. No, they’re just – I feel like it’s totally common, but it’s another perception I have that I guess other people don’t have.

So you mainly do it in bed?

Response 27. I think I do it in other places, like in my living room or – maybe not. I mean, I think that I really like breasts – they’re really comforting, and in a sexual situation they’re probably the most exciting thing to me in both ways – other people and with me. Like getting attention to my breasts drives me crazy, and giving attention to other people’s breasts is really great. So it’s a really positive thing for me.

Other people’s breasts, not just your own?

Response 28. Yeah, just breasts in general. And also I think – I don’t know what my future holds, but if I had children I think about breasts in terms of that, too – it’s just like – life giving. It’s really interesting, and so fascinating in how they just start growing I guess. It’s fascinating

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to me.

What about it is so fascinating?

Response 29. I guess it's just like what I said about the body earlier – there's just so much about the body that just happens – when moms get pregnant, it's the number one time where you can specifically see it – the body reacting to what it needs to give life –

And I guess in terms of sex and how exciting breasts are, is there – what specifically do you find exciting that happens in terms of your breasts?

Response 30. I would say it's everything from like actually feeling each others to holding them, sucking on them – it's all exciting. Is that specific enough?

Yeah. Okay – and can you tell me about your vagina?

Response 31. I think this is another one where I would say that I have two experiences. One – in the beginning, again with puberty and adolescence it was a complete mystery. Even though I had sex education, it was a Catholic school, and it was very sterile, and – I didn't really understand, "Oh, wait, this is what's happening." It took a lot for me to understand what they described in the books and how I actually experienced it. I remember being like, twelve, and taking baths, and having this discharge come out, and being like, "Oh, my God, something's wrong," and not understanding that was part of like – I very specifically remember that. And then when my period started I tried to talk to my mom about it, and she was like okay, mark it on the calendar, take one of these and put it in your underwear, and that was it. I didn't understand – you know like, "Okay, you have to wear it at night and..." None of this made sense to me.

Did you go to sleep a couple of nights without using anything and then realize?

Response 32. No, I just worked up to ask a friend of mine about it who had already started.

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And I think that was the extent of my experience for a very long time, like in terms of my vagina. Not any source of sexuality for a very long time. I didn't kiss anyone until I was seventeen, nor did I allow myself to experience what everything meant.

Was that boyfriend the first person who –

Response 33. No, no there was a few other people before then, but it was all kind of within the six months that - I made out with people but nothing beyond that until him. And he was a very – I mean everything of course went awry in the first year that we were together, and the whole time he really wanted to be like a good lover, and he would read girls magazines, and he would want me to know about my body, and all of these things, like in theory, and so I really, I started to learn about myself and look at myself, and think about it and – but it was – when things didn't go as he thought they would, it didn't make sense to him. Like, “This is what I've read, this is what it's supposed to be like,” and really into like, “Oh, let's take nude pictures,” So everything came to be about beauty, and the looks of how things are supposed to be, and like, “Oh, I want to shave you, and we'll make it like a thing,” and, “Yeah, sure, you know I want to please you, I want to make you happy.” So that's when my body became for another person's experience as well as my own, and I felt disconnected to it because of that. To it, to my body. And also experienced other people's bodies as – their sexuality, their sexual organs as separate from their mind, and didn't see it as one thing. It was very alien. I was very scared of like, male body parts. It doesn't seem connected. And then when I started to get like, all of these infections, like consistently, like cervical infections, all of these things, then I became obsessed with my vagina and wanting to – looking at it, making sure like, “Okay, is it alright? What's wrong with it today? What's happening? What is this discharge? Is this red, or is this just flushed?” I

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became obsessed with ideas and symptoms and things, but not having a complete understanding of how the body works, and how the body reacts to sexuality and sex, like everything was confusing. Everything was, “Okay, am I in pain? What’s happening?” And then during the transformational summer, or during the time before with that woman when things started to reconnect, and even after that, it took a while. I don’t even think that summer, because it was so fast, and then I wasn’t with anyone for a really long time – after that I lived in London for three months and just had time to myself – I feel like it was – it has been a growing experience for the last few years. And then when I was in my steady relationship with my ex-girlfriend, and felt like I was able to experience another vagina that was so closely related to me in a sense, that I really felt like I was able to experience many more things about myself through an understanding of her.

Can you tell me about your clitoris?

Response 34. I – oh my gosh, it’s so interesting, because I never realize like, how much my – like, how diversified my experiences are, considering like, this long term relationship, and the rest of my life – maybe because he would always talk about sex so much – I don’t know, it’s interesting. He would talk about it, and maybe because that was my first experience, I think back and maybe I don’t realize how much that relationship formed my initial view of sexuality and my body, because I can remember him talking about my clitoris, talking about, “Oh, it doesn’t work the same way as most girls.” It was all about the dysfunction. Even though visually I knew about the clit, I didn’t really understand how it worked or how for me what worked about it, or how to make everything work together, but now I’ve – I can say that the clitoris is something that definitely has a big impact in my sexual experience in general, and when I have – when I’ve

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had intercourse with a guy in a good way, it's when it feels good because there is some sort of special attention paid to the clitoris, and with my relationship with my ex-girlfriend I felt like that was -- A big main focus was the clitoris, and finding different ways that we could both feel good at the same time, which was really fascinating to me because I didn't -- that was really something that we both discovered together. And that's something that's so interesting, I think, about female to female sex -- each body type is so different. Like I haven't been with that many girls, but each girl is so different. I don't know. It's really interesting to me.

Different how?

Response 35. Well, I think just the different -- Different in terms of the ways that you can move that can make someone feel good, in terms of pressure, or in terms of body weight, or body shape is going to affect -- which I guess with men I guess it would too, but it just seems -- I don't know. Maybe women are more perceptive. More willing to discover the differences instead of, "I have an idea of how things should go, and now we'll put you into that formula." No, I guess I have been with a couple of women that feel that way too, and it's like, "No, it's not working."

Can you tell me about your anus, or your asshole?

Response 36. Because I grew up Catholic, and we weren't supposed to have sex, my first boy was like, "Oh, we can have anal sex, that's different." So that was -- I didn't really -- I've never really had like full on anal sex, but it was always something that became like, almost there, and became this like goal or something, and I don't know if it's because of that, or because of my "big butt," as I put it in quotation marks, but I've always considered myself kind of a butt person. It's kind of exciting or interesting to me, but I think that's also because it has kind of a mysteriousness about it. So I guess my experiences have always been a pretty positive one, and

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fascination with other people, although there's always been an element of, more so that the rest of my body, feeling like I need to feel comfortable, and there's this idea of like, "Okay, I want to feel clean," and, be it as it may, if I want to take a shower or something because I want to feel relaxed and clean, because if someone touches my butt and I'm not, if I'm feeling like I've been sweating all day, or what have you then I feel really uncomfortable. More so than the rest of my body.

Does this play a regular role in your sex life?

Response 37. I wouldn't say that it's as regular as like, vaginal play, but I would say that it has kind of an additional role, but not with everybody. I think it's something that has like a beyond comfortability and relaxation. There's like a trust there.

Are there any other parts of your body that you feel are erotic that we haven't talked about?

Response 38. My neck is something has always been really sensitive and – I don't know, because I think for me, I'm someone that – I feel erotic and excited and turned on by small things, and I think my neck is something like that. If someone pays attention to your neck then your whole body – my whole body reacts to it and then it can move on from there, and someone who isn't really paying attention to you, whatever, they just kind of start attacking you, it's not exciting. And when I'm not excited they can do anything to my vagina or my clit and nothing's going to happen if I don't have that initial excitement.

What's the most powerful part of your body?

Response 39. I would say my mouth. Because of – I think of my mind and speaking as something that's really powerful, and also because of the power to say no, or yes, or to move

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forward.

Can you tell me about what an orgasm feels like to you, and where you would locate it in your body?

Response 40. It feels like going under water. In a good way. Almost like, in a bathtub. I would locate it in my chest – starting in my chest, and then all the way down and sometimes extending into the limbs.

Tell me more about the going under water.

Response 41. It feels like you're warm, and you're no longer thinking, and you're just completely relaxed, and the rest of the world is kind of quiet. Like you're kind of engrossed in this warmth and you can't hear anything. But you feel also protected by the warmth and the water.

(End of first session)

Is that mainly what you've been doing?

Response 42. Yeah, I've been focusing on that. My friend came out because he's doing the music for the show and working on the film. I've been in that world until Monday.

How did you get into this?

Response 43. Theatre? I guess my dad studied acting for a little while but ended up dropping out of school. So I've always really enjoyed it, since I was a kid. But my whole family's performative, but I was the only one who kept pursuing it. But it was pretty discouraged when I was in high school, going into college, because I was good at other subjects like science and math, and my mom didn't understand why I wanted to do theatre when I could do other things. So I almost decided to be lawyer or a physician, but then theatre kept gnawing at me so that was

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what came through I guess.

And your other siblings – did they go to college?

Response 44. Yeah, my sister is a kindergarten teacher, so she has a Masters in Education. My littlest brother has one year left at UC Santa Cruz in history, and my brother was going to college but when he had his psychotic breakdown he has not been able to go to school since then. That was five years ago. So he tries to take a class, but it's really hard to focus. He's had a few different diagnoses, but mainly paranoid schizophrenic and manic depressive. So that's been the kind of recurring diagnosis. But fortunately he hasn't been to the hospital in a couple of years now. Yeah, I've been in the process of trying to have little interventions to try and, "Yeah, okay, let's have goals here," because it's really difficult, I think, for schizophrenics to move forward because they feel so isolated.

Have you had any thoughts about the first part, and has anything occurred to you that you wanted to tell me about?

Response 45. Yeah, you know I really – I guess I didn't realize – I kept thinking the next few days after the interview really about how my self image or my mind/body connection has changed in the last five years, and how I've become so much of a stronger person in reference to my sexuality, and I haven't really thought about that in that particular way, or articulated that there was a big change, and when I talked to other people I realized that not everyone has had that transition, and some people have always felt connected to there bodies, and some people don't and they don't really want to. And when I talk about myself, or am being upfront about my body, or talking about it even in reference to reproductive things and sexual things people are a little bit taken aback being so upfront about things. So all those things I kind of started to think

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about after the interview. And also - I think I have it on my computer – I was going to bring in this monologue that I wrote that was really relating to the dichotomy that I talked to you about with when I was with my first boyfriend and then when I started to re-experience my body with that woman – I had written a monologue about that a year ago. I didn't bring a hard copy but I'm pretty sure I have it on my computer if you want me to read it. Would that be helpful at all?

How long is it?

Response 46. One page.

Oh – sure.

Response 47. Ok – we can keep talking while I find it. So those were –I don't know if I came up with any particular questions, but those were some thoughts that I had. Was there anything more specific?

No – that's exactly what – just thoughts that struck you, or anything that came up. Just wild thoughts about the last five years – being I guess different in a way, or different than before...

Response 48. Yeah, or just –

I want to hear more about this woman that – it sounds like from what you're saying that being with this woman had some role or some part, or maybe it's just coincidence time-wise, in this transformation. What role, if any, do you think she had? The relationship, feelings you had about your body...

Response 49. I think this will talk to it a little bit and then I can go into more detail.

“I want to kiss you right here. Oh my God, hearing those words I'm paralyzed. What the hell am I doing? But – I'm under that green blanket on your bed, having the best

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homemade cappuccino ever, thinking, “God. This is what it’s like to be a lesbian then.” My body is electric and we haven’t even kissed. But, oh my God, your Brian’s just in the other room, and he supposedly doesn’t care. I don’t know, maybe he’s listening at the door. My heart is beating so fast. ‘Uh, I think we should read another scene from the play, right? That is why I came over, right?’ It was legitimate. ‘Uh, I think it’s your turn and then I should probably go after that.’ Setting limits lessens the guilt. Freeway sounds whiz by. I don’t want to leave. Images of him waiting for me, in my bed, video game magazine in hand, requesting a jerk off session in a bunny pose of his choice while I lie listlessly counting items in my to-do list and lines I have to memorize for class. Forty-five minutes pass by and I really need to go. He may start to wonder where I am, although it doesn’t take much for him to believe whatever I say. ‘I have to go, I hope my car starts, yeah I guess it’s the transmission it won’t go in reverse, but it’s going to cost like \$1200 to get it fixed. I’m kind of like, why bother, so – yeah, it sucks. Um...thanks for the cappuccino.’ I get up slowly from under the green blanket. ‘See you in the morning – bye Brian.’ I race down the stairs and outside into the fall air. The smell of burning firewood embraces my senses and I feel satisfied yet nervous. My body is slowly returning from electric back to normal as I find my car and unlock the door. The car starts, and I’ve left a tape in. Culture Club is in and it blares Victims at full blast. Ironic. Whatever. I make it home and the ritual begins.”

I thought it was sort of fitting.

Yeah... So who was Brian?

Response 50. Her husband. We were working on a show together – we’d been friends for like a

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year and half, like pretty close friends. She was married the entire time I knew her. Then we were working on a show that was about – it wasn't really a coming-out story, but it was kind of about a family dealing with their daughter being a lesbian. I was the friend and she was playing the mom. We went out and had this lunch together where she was like, "I feel like I need to tell you that I'm bi-sexual, and I've never been with a woman, and I'm married, and I know you might think that's weird." And I was like, "No, I feel the same," even though I had been at that time with my ex-boyfriend – my entire sexual history was with him. So we had like this kinship, and we became closer and closer as friends, and I think I was the only one she felt comfortable talking about it with because everyone else kind of – and I mean it was kind of – even though it was Seattle the entire program felt a little bit straight, it felt a little bit claustrophobic. And then we just – I don't know – it was kind of – just like a friendship but it kind of progressed farther because we had – not like a secret, but we were trying to discover something together. And we would like whatever – rent lesbian movies, and read plays, and just be like really affectionate with each other, but it never really went completely sexual. Even though I think maybe she wanted, I still – I felt kind of guilty about my situation, and I didn't feel strong enough to leave it yet. I mean we had taken a break, but then – I was thinking maybe we would get back together – but it wasn't until then – it wasn't until I broke it off that I realized all these things. Because even when it wasn't working I wasn't thinking how destructive it was – I mean it was destructive for him as well, I'm sure, but specifically in terms of my self esteem and – specifically in reference to my body. It wasn't until I started to gain perspective on it.

How do you understand that – how do you – if you do have any thoughts about why – how did it work that the relationship was destructive specifically to your body?

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Response 51. Well, I think - I've thought about that too, and I think that because the beginning of our relationship – I was going to an all girls catholic high school, this was my first real boyfriend, and I had very rigid ideas of how life should be and how sex should be and that was basically that you shouldn't have sex. So I think the first part of our relationship was non-sexual, so we had like, the intellectual conversations, and the artistic ideas, and all of those things that go into a relationship, and we didn't really understand each other physically. And by the time that we're like okay, let's make this happen, we were mismatched. And he was a very different person in all aspects, and then in sexuality he was very different. He was very sweet and emotional, and sensitive person. But in sex it was like he was a different person. And I didn't really understand that.

So who do you – can you tell me about – the time – the first time that you kissed a woman, and were kissing a woman, and it was sexual?

Response 52. I would say that even though we did have sexual feelings – Katryn and I – it was – I would say there was a more prominent moment with this other woman who I had been watching – not watching like stalking, but she went to school with me and I'd always seen her and I always wanted to talk to her but I never had. And when Julie and I broke up we just happened to be at this party together, and we were having this great conversation, and so we decided let's hang out, so we went out a few times and we had like a really great time, and then I heard through the grapevine that she had a girlfriend and I was like, how can this be? So the next time I saw her I asked her about it and she said, "Who told you?" and I was like, "Well, I was kind of forming these feelings for you, but I still would like to be your friend," and she was really conflicted about things, and then her girlfriend went out of town, so then we met up and

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spent like the whole day together and ended up having this sexual tension leading into this – oh I remember I skipped a part of the story. So I found out that she had a girlfriend, and we were talking, and I brought up the fact that I had seen her like two years ago and had this crush on her, and then I found out that she felt the same way about me and we had this common meeting point of like two years ago – we’d both seen each other but both been too nervous, which is like the height of romantic crushes brought to life, and I was like, “Great. How am I going to give this up now?” And that day we spent all night until the morning - until the sun came up - just talking by the water, and that’s when I asked her, “Do you guys have an open relationship or something?” and she said, “No,” and I was like, “Well, is she going to get angry or something? It’s like six o’clock in the morning.” Even though we hadn’t done anything. So then her girlfriend goes out of town, and then we have this like amazing night of passion, and it was the most strangely like, bizarre and passionate thing. But then you know she felt guilty the next day and it was pretty horrific after that (*laughter*)

You said bizarre and passionate. What do you mean?

Response 53. I think it was bizarre because I didn’t – I think kissing a woman is different than kissing a man in relating to bodies, and just really with bodies in general, because it was a new thing for me to be with someone different and also to see how women – I don’t want to generalize, but to see how this woman did things, and it was just very different – just talking and bodies and understanding each other...Fascinating. It was one of those times where I’m like, “Oh, yeah, I have to remember everything.” (*laughter*) Which I often – like, “Mental recorder on.” There was something so strange – it was like out of control. we were walking through these woods, and she brings me to this hidden staircase and we’re like against these like, stone rocks

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and she's shaking, and I'm like, "Why are you shaking?" And she's like, "I'm so nervous," and we're – it felt strange to be – to have so much mutual control or something? Not control in a power sense, but to feel like everything I'm doing is because I want to do it and I don't feel like one of us has more control than the other one. Which I think was a new thing for me. But again, not to generalize – I would say that's what it means to be with a woman, you know, but definitely that was a shift.

So, how far did you guys go? Was it just kissing that night, or did you have sex that night or – One of my questions – I want you to tell me what it felt like the first time you kissed a woman, and the first time you had sex with a woman, and so if either of those events happened this night, please tell me.

Response 54. I wouldn't say that we had sex that night. We definitely kissed, we definitely made out and slept next to each other and kissed each other's breasts, and groped each other and cuddled, and then that's pretty much where it ended, and I don't know if maybe we both wanted to hold out and had second thoughts, or if I was just too nervous.

Can you tell me about that kiss?

Response 55. The first thing I remember is how soft her lips were, and small. Small and soft. And wet. It seemed that we just related to each other and there was no, kind of like, how do I do this? Or, is this the right way? Or, are we both enjoying this? It just felt like I didn't have to think about it.

Was there anyone between your ex-boyfriend, and Katryn, and this woman – it doesn't have to be greatly in depth, just give me an idea.

Response 56. Right. Well, right after Julie and I broke up, I – Katryn and I kind of decided –

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her mom was dying and she left town, so we didn't really see each other for awhile, and I went on a few dates with some random guy that I met at this club, and I realized, this is ridiculous, and I didn't really get into it, and after a few times I was like, this isn't going to work out. And then I met this other woman Laura, and then I went off to London and I came back and kind of for some strange reason thought – because my ex-boyfriend was obsessed with me the whole time I was in London, I was like well maybe this time I can make it work, maybe I've discovered enough about myself maybe we can make it work. I don't know where that came from. So when I came back like four months later we went out a couple of times but I was like, this is ridiculous. And I stayed single – I didn't date anyone, I think I might have hooked up with someone, but nothing – and then I moved to New York that August of '99, and I was really obsessed with finding a girlfriend, and I like, put out like, PlanetOut.com, those kind of things where you go out with a few people and then it's ridiculous. And I had done that in Seattle, like put an ad in like, some paper, and you meet these people that you're like, "Am I this desperate? What's happening? Who are these people, they're like social misfits or something." Not that I – I would do it again, it's kind of fun to like, put ads out, but I didn't really meet anyone that I was into, and then I met a guy who was actually in my show that was strangely effeminate, and we hung out as friends, and I was like, "Wow, he's kind of interesting," even though he knew all of my sexuality. And then we proceeded to have this eight month relationship that was strangely nonsexual, mainly for him more so than me, he was very wanting, you know, "Show me how a girl touches you," and all this stuff, and I was like, "Don't beat yourself up, I'm with you. I'm not with a woman so we don't need to belabor that point," but he had really strange issues about sexuality and intimacy in general, so that lasted for while, and then I broke up with him, and then

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met another strangely effeminate, nonsexual guy directly after that, and after like, two dates I was like, they need to meet and get together. And then I met my ex-girlfriend Laura.

And how long were you with her?

Response 57. Two years. We broke up almost a year ago. She's my last official relationship. She's really great, and when I first met her she was probably the first girl that wasn't like, straight, or calling herself straight, and wasn't in a relationship, so that was a little scary at first to be like, "Oh, she's cute and she's single," and I was a little nervous that this could really happen. And the first time we went out we talked for like, six hours, and she had come to see a show that I directed, and being the smart girl that she is she'd come to see it twice and had all these ideas, and we had this amazing conversation about my play, which was very impressive, and we found out all these things we had in common. And then we dated for like, three weeks, and then I got really scared – the show I was directing closed and I'd been working on it for a year, and it was really close to me – it was about my brother and I felt really – like I needed to be alone, and I told her that, and I was, "I don't know, this is all going so fast for me." It had gotten to the point where she was calling me her girlfriend and I was like, this is all so brand new. And then I went to visit my family, and on the way there September 11th happened, and I spent a week alone in an airport. And even though it was so scary in so many ways, it was also like a good – I'd never spent that much time by myself and couldn't do anything, so it was like this release of all these ideas and expectations and pressures, and when I came back home I just felt like, "Wow, why am I so worried about everything? I just need to take things one day at a time." So then we started dating seriously after that and it's pretty – I would say intense and focused – like, I never thought about anybody else, and I felt completely satisfied with her and our

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relationship for at least a year after that. And then certain things started to fall apart, and I started to leave, and she got really depressed, and things happened from there. It's probably the most functioning and healthy and stable relationship I've been in. Life-giving. Unlike some other relationships in the past, I always felt comfortable with telling her exactly how I felt – like if I felt like, oh I can't have sex tonight – anything. Anything I felt open to tell her. Even though she went through a depressed phase where she didn't want to have sex and that was a strange role reversal for me. Oh, ok she doesn't want to have sex again. It was very strange. But at the same time, because of my history I didn't get angry with her at all. I wanted to make sure that she felt comfortable and that she didn't have to do anything that she didn't want to do. Also it was so interesting because even though we were together for two years our sex life was very innocent in many ways. We didn't have any sex toys – in many ways we didn't go very far but we always felt very satisfied and inspired I think. And because I had only gone down on one other girl before her – it was like this really short fling that I had with a friend who ended up to be really straight and now likes to talk about – “Remember that one time? Everyone likes to hear about my gay experience.” And I'm like, “Oh, I'm so glad I can be your token experience. That's fine.” So that was a whole new thing for me, and amazing because I had never felt turned on by satisfying someone else before. I would say that the fling doesn't even – it never progressed enough that I felt completely comfortable, but with Laura it was always – it was an exciting thing to do anything to pleasure her. Which I never had that kind of reciprocal feelings with guys. I was like, “Oh, I'll do this for you.” So that was a strange turn of events – everything was something I looked forward to. There was nothing that was like, “Oh, yeah, I've got to do that.” And I felt so satisfied all the time, and it was so strange to have sex and not feel

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pain afterwards and not feel - I don't know - some kind of fear of my body, like, "Oh, is everything going to be ok? Do I have to take care of myself?" And to know that she cared about my body and cared about me it just made me relax.

Could you tell me a little bit about the first time you slept with a woman?

Response 58. I would say that - I mean, there were a lot of things that went through my mind like, "Oh, my gosh, am I doing this the right way?" But also feeling really comfortable. And also, the idea of like, a mirror body, and the idea that breast against breast was like, such an amazing feeling for me, and so interesting and to feel back some of the comments that people had made to me – like, "Wow, your skin's so soft, it's glistening." And just feeling a connection to someone and them being a woman, it made a lot more sense. It felt like I could relate to her in a different way than I could with men. But at the same time, I think because of the buildup to this and the situation I think I also was kind of concerned, and that's why I was in documentation mode. Like, "Wow, I can't believe this is really happening." And because of the – the taboo of it -even though with Katryn it had kind of begun to erase that, but with Laura it was still a little bit there. Like, "Wow, this is all of the ideas that I had, and the dreams," Because I always used to have these recurring dreams about having sex with women, but every time that we would get to actually have sex it wouldn't happen, so this time it actually happened, which is interesting. And since then I don't have those dreams anymore. And I think that what's also memorable is that the next day I could feel her body – going through the day. Just the sense memory of it was so strong. And it just made me feel really warm. (*laughter*).

We've talked about your body from high school on, and I want to go way back – to birth.

Tell me about your feelings about your body, and your thoughts about your body, and how

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that may have changed over the years.

Response 59. I don't have a lot of memories about my body when I was very small. They mostly start when I was an adolescent, like thirteen. And my being Catholic, and being that my mom was very closed off about – even though now it seems strange because she's very open, or more so now, and I think that I had to break that boundary or something. But she never would talk about our bodies, and I remember feeling – trying to intellectualize, “Okay, this is what's going to happen to my body, we learned this in health class,” or something, but at the same time was completely shocked when my body started to change. And thinking, “Oh my gosh, what is happening here?” And feeling really isolated and uncomfortable, with no one to ask questions to, and in this constant state of embarrassment. And when my period started, I did tell my mom, “Hey, I think my period started,” and she not believing me, thinking that I cut myself. Then she was like, “Okay, this is where you draw it on your calendar.” Things like that really, factual and I never – never was really obsessive about my body even though I grew up hating being so small – so tiny. And always being size 6x – I was never in a woman's size – always 6x.

How old were you?

Response 60. I was probably twelve or thirteen. And my sister was even more modest and closed off about her sexuality, so that was not someone I could talk to, but I remember my sister would get out of the shower and she'd have a towel on, and I remember looking to see how big her breasts were and if I could compare them to mine, you know, and “okay, we're about the same.” I remember wanting a bra and that whole thing, and getting a training bra in sixth grade or seventh grade. And I remember the first time that I shaved my legs, which my mom wouldn't let me do until I was in eighth grade, but at one point I had this band-aid on my knee, and I

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ripped it off, and all the hair around my knee came off, and I was so fascinated by the smooth skin. And then my mom decided that I could shave my legs, which was a really long process, because I had really long leg hairs. So it was the most fascinating thing ever, just rubbing my legs together when I was walking. And you know, I never really took the time to explore, look at my body in the mirror, anything like that. Even though some of the classes would suggest it. Until I got my first yeast infection, and then after that I started to try and really understand what I looked like when I was healthy, because that became a common occurrence starting when I was eighteen.

Was that after you started having sex?

Response 61. Yeah. Well, before sex, but after kind of like sexual things.

What were you physically like as a kid?

Response 62. I didn't even ride a bicycle except for one summer. I was always like, baking cookies, or choreographing little dances, but I never – because my mom was raising four kids she never had the time so that we could be involved in any kind of activities except for things that we did during school time. I've never been very coordinated except for kickball I think. Not even volleyball. I was horrible at it, so I was always reading or doing homework. But I remember I was allowed to take baths by myself, but my brothers and sisters would always turn the lights off, lock me in, those kinds of things, but that's one thing I remember is taking nightly baths. I came up with this song that I used to sing when I was twelve, about my body – something like: This is my body, it's not perfect, but it's who I am. I don't know where it came from but I used to sing it to myself in the bathtub. That's something very distinct that I remember. This is very strange.

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I presume in college you did shows, things like that, but as a kid, and through high school, are there any hobbies that you haven't mentioned?

Response 63. Once I was able to get my own license – like I had this whole plan, because my high school was very far from my home, and I knew when I started driving I'd be able to be involved in whatever I wanted. So, I was class president, and I ran the prom committee, I was in charge of Peace Week, and like, campus ministry, and drama club, and honor club, and – I was on the speech team. We did like these dramatic interpretations for like, speech contests. I was in the honors track so we got to have a lot of opportunities, like the anti-defamation conference – things like that. And then I would go to like, concerts. So as soon as I got my car I was super active and on the go. And I worked – basically from like twelve on I worked. I used to baby-sit, I worked with my dad on swimming pools, I would make things and sell them on the street, like little ornaments and stuff. I'd bake cookies and sell them on the street corner, and babysat a lot, and then I started working at the restaurant when I was fifteen, worked part to full time until I left home.

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Appendix H: Jan's Catalog of Components

[Component 1]: Tension Experienced Within the Self (Total = 6)

1. "almost touching, the almost there to be much more charged...closer and closer" (Jan, R. 17)
2. "...there's a building sort of throughout – you start with one level of foreplay and move on to another level...it's not here yet – it has that foreplay tension to it..." (Jan, R. 18 & 53)
3. "When I'm playing rugby there's an instant of bracing for contact. In an S&M setting you're able to totally sort of relax and not have that anticipatory preparation – not be tense or tighten waiting for something, just to receive it..." (Jan, R. 20)
4. When I first started having orgasms I felt like I was slowly walking up a big hill - sort of crawling up a big hill. The top was just in sight, and if only I could get there...The pressure was building up, and then all of the sudden I was racing down the other side. It's like being on a bike, or skis, or something and going down a major hill and then over these smaller hills, but sort of at a furious pace and - sort of the visualization was really important to me when I was first working on being aware of orgasm, and what was happening, and what I wanted to happen, and working on making it happen. And now if I had to put an image with it it's much more a focusing of color and light, like something was building, building, building inward, and now it sort of explodes outward. I think it's kind of like a firework image. And then like I feel sort of the echoing – the repercussions, the smaller hills for several minutes afterwards, and sometimes there's an automatic building up again...And to move on to your next question about where, it's always located very much in my clitoris until that split second before – like right before the explosion. All of the sudden it's everywhere.

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Like I can't feel local sensation anymore – it's like sort of the opposite of local and general anesthesia. It's like as if there was sort of local sensation and general sensation - all of the sudden the transfer is immediately – all the sensation going from local sensation to general sensation. And then the aftershocks are more localized, but not even so much in my clitoris anymore - and sort of in my general vaginal region. And in like all my muscles – like they're all relaxed for a second. The building is always the best – the tension right before you come for the first time is the best sensation – that sort of the culmination of all of that foreplay energy – the tension building up – it builds in my muscles, it builds in my thoughts and in my emotions, and then finally has its form of release. It doesn't mean that everything is sort of released at that point, but it's a major release. (Jan, R. 24)

5. "...casual eroticism ...not be super energetically aroused about, but as part of the building process...just something that's a level down in intensity. When that's going up and down and it's building – that would be down time – time spent hanging out there. Touching, kissing, licking, whatever." (Jan, R. 25)
6. "...it was pulling up, and it was tight against my crotch, and I sort of liked it. It sort of hurt, but I sort of liked it. ...and not knowing what was going on. I didn't know if it hurt or didn't. ...this is uncomfortable in a way...the heat that it produced – like, "Does this hurt? I'm not sure. This is making me uncomfortable but I kind of want to go across the monkey bars again, and it has nothing to do with the monkey bars." (Jan, R. 26-7)

[Component 2]: Rudiments of the Self Appreciated (Total = 11)

1. "...not only does it make me stronger, but it also breaks me...hurts me...bruises me, and I've had broke bones and serious injuries. So it's sort of both sides. But I like feeling strong. I

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- like feeling confident in my body and the way I look.” (Jan, R. 2)
2. “It’s feeling the way things work, and allowing...conscious thought to follow what’s an automatic movement, or an expression of energy, or an automatic response from your body. It’s sort of like paying attention to something that you do automatically... hyper-awareness of how your body is working...Instead of just putting an icepack on it - working a muscle out, or figuring out what it is that hurts and why.” (Jan, R. 3)
 3. “...connected in some spheres and at some times...relished the back and forth...both strong shoulders and soft tummy” (Jan, R. 9)
 4. “...much more sort of spiritual like floating kind of sensation to a very physical, very intimate, sort of back to my nerve endings.” (Jan, R. 16)
 5. “...a part of the whole package...” (Jan, R. 17)
 6. “Where shape is really defined...the level of definition that comes from various combinations of bone and muscle and flesh makes those spots sort of erotic spots for me. ...I like to trace lines and curves, and I think that plays into why I’m aware of the things I like on my body.” (Jan, R. 18)
 7. “...taking apart your body and putting it back together.” (Jan, R. 20)
 8. “...the visualization was really important to me when I was first working on being aware of orgasm, and what was happening, and what I wanted to happen, and working on making it happen...it’s always located very much in my clitoris until that split second before – like right before the explosion. All of the sudden it’s everywhere. Like I can’t feel local sensation anymore – it’s like sort of the opposite of local and general anesthesia. It’s like as if there was sort of local sensation and general sensation - all of the sudden the transfer is

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immediately – all the sensation going from local sensation to general sensation. And then the aftershocks are more localized, but not even so much in my clitoris anymore - and sort of in my general vaginal region. And in like all my muscles – like they're all relaxed for a second. The building is always the best – the tension right before you come for the first time is the best sensation – that sort of the culmination of all of that foreplay energy – the tension building up – it builds in my muscles, it builds in my thoughts and in my emotions, and then finally has its form of release. It doesn't mean that everything is sort of released at that point, but it's a major release.” (Jan, R. 24)

9. “...the crease between someone's torso and leg – like everyone has very soft skin there ...the ending of your butt and the beginnings of your legs and torso” (Jan, R. 25)
10. “...feeling tingly and numb but mostly focused on – my blood was in my hands and my lips, that was where my nerve endings were focusing.” (Jan, R. 52)
11. “...a heightened awareness of my body and the other person's body and what – the smaller details of what's going on, and what feels good and expanding definitions of what feels good.” (Jan, R. 53)

[Component 3]: Foul Parts of the Self Appreciated (Total = 2)

1. “...some of these can be covered in pubic hair, and some can not be” (Jan, R. 25)
2. “...like very seriously playing hard and being like sweaty and disgusting for class – that didn't matter, that was ok.” (Jan, R. 49)

[Component 4]: Heightened Affects Experienced (Total = 0)

None Reported

[Component 5]: Being Alone Experienced (Total = 1)

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1. "...to then take a step back and have a conversation with myself instead of with my friends.

To look at who I might be, and have a relationship ... with myself." (Jan, R. 28)

[Component 6]: Physical Actions Taken (Total = 9)

1. "...and then fine-tuning that...Instead of just putting an icepack on it - working a muscle out, or figuring out what it is that hurts and why." (Jan, R. 3)
2. "That's like the first grounding" (Jan, R. 12)
3. "my hip flexors there, my muscle starts to develop up and down my leg" (Jan, R. 18)
4. "Because you can manipulate someone's whole lower body by pushing on someone's hipbones." (Jan, R. 18)
5. "I don't get very tired...I like the fitness of my vagina...it's been on a treadmill like it's supposed to be." (Jan, R. 19)
6. "I do sort of associate it very much with its function. ...it becomes too goal focused – too focused, too oriented on getting somewhere... I do...associate it very much with its function. I have a hard time thinking about it outside of coming. Outside of what it can do for me." (Jan, R. 23)
7. "When I first started having orgasms I felt like I was slowly walking up a big hill - sort of crawling up a big hill. The top was just in sight, and if only I could get there...The pressure was building up, and then all of the sudden I was racing down the other side. It's like being on a bike, or skis, or something and going down a major hill and then over these smaller hills, but sort of at a furious pace and..." (Jan, R. 24)
8. "...literally running around like little kids and being excited about whatever we're doing... whatever like full force, like absolutely... like very seriously playing hard and being like

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sweaty and disgusting for class – that didn't matter, that was ok.” (Jan, R. 49)

9. “...hitting and pounding... bondage and we play with roles a lot ... fisting...” (Jan, R. 54)

[Component 7]: Wishes Actualized (Total = 0)

None Reported.

[Component 8]: Object Relations Dynamics (Total = 8)

1. “..I can see it in their eyes...a little bit of respect. ...excel at very specific things and have that recognized within a specific context. ...But I like being able to excel at very specific things and have that recognized within a specific context. ...I'm actually not very good at trying new things that I don't pick up quickly - I like to do things well, so my body very much relates to that...” (Jan, R. 5)
2. “I need to be able to be strong and powerful and solid and connected in some spheres and at some times, and soft and open and supple and relaxed in others. And I've found the best sort of physical relationships come with women who have appreciated that, and who have really relished the back and forth, and have been able to love both strong shoulders and soft tummy, and wouldn't want all one or all the other, and I think that in reality is what I look for too. “
(Jan, R. 9)
3. “I find them very attractive. Because you can manipulate someone's whole lower body by pushing on someone's hipbones.” (Jan, R. 17)
4. “It's hard because they're not the same spots on – I'm thinking about whether or not the spots on my body that are the most erotic are because I find them very attractive on other women, and that's not necessarily the case – because I don't like having my stomach kissed very much, probably because I don't like it very much, but I love the stomachs of certain

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women I've been with, so that doesn't fit there but...I like to trace lines and curves, and I think that plays into why I'm aware of the things I like on my body. Why I like my shoulders, why I like my legs, why I don't like my stomach, and why my breasts aren't so exciting and you can't see my butt so it doesn't matter. I don't know why I'm sort of going on here (laughter)." (Jan, R. 18)

5. "...my body being a willing and receptive partner in that exploration and in trying that – in trying new things. ...a willing and receptive partner in that exploration. When I'm playing rugby there's an instant of bracing for contact. In an S&M setting you're able to totally sort of relax and not have that anticipatory preparation – not be tense or tighten waiting for something, just to receive it..." (Jan, R. 20)
6. "It seems not very loving. It's hard to be involved with a person, instead of the person as an orifice... being able to be with someone in a way that's so comfortable..." (Jan, R. 25)
7. "...things that echo sort of other pastimes of mine - like, for example, rugby. So like, hitting and pounding versus sharp isolated pain – that would be like pinching or biting. I like playing with - like with this specific partner – we play with bondage and we play with roles a lot and that's – I'm not sure how much of that is – is – specific to my relationship with her. The power structures that happen in that relationship are a part of that sexual tension. Um...fisting.... Being fisted or fisting? Both." (Jan, R. 54)
8. "Ooh, who's that cute little boy Kate's kissing? ...I do sort of look like a guy." ...for the first time liked broad shoulders...the way that I was looking ...whatever she was saying made me feel really beautiful...just the way that she was looking at me, and touching me, and talking to me in sort of a very gentle, very admiring way made me feel...so good." (Jan, R. 58)

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Jan's Transformation Outcome: A Sense of Body/Self Coherence Experienced (Total = 1)

1. "...whatever she was saying made me feel really beautiful...just the way she was looking at me, touching me, and talking to me... made me feel really beautiful. Instead of feeling like I had parts of me that I didn't like... my physical awareness moved from certain body parts to my whole body... moved from an isolated to general awareness... that I wanted to be really naked, wanted to be seen and be touched and...it sort of made me much more – horny – it made me much more wanting to be naked, and much more with her." (Jan, R. 59)

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Appendix I: Emilie's Catalog of Components

[Component 1]: Tension Experienced Within the Self (Total = 5)

1. "I feel really light and I guess it feels – I feel in control, which I think makes me feel excited about my body, and in control and strong even though I'm not very strong, but I feel comforted by my body – it might sound strange. And soft. And grounded." (Emilie, R. 14)
2. "...if there's any sort of pressure in my body, I can have an orgasm just anywhere. It's really bizarre- it doesn't happen all the time. I've talked to a few people who know what I'm talking about, but I think it's just the way that my engineering works or something. I always have funny stories. Because I can feel it – I'm assuming it's my G-spot." (Emilie, R. 15)
3. "And when I realized I could leave. Then I finally left that. And felt like, this weight had been lifted off of me. ...I felt so powerful and in control of myself, because I didn't have to let anyone else know about my body." (Emilie, R. 19)
4. "I was a little nervous...it was so scary in so many ways, it was also... good – I'd never spent that much time by myself and couldn't do anything, so it was like this release of all these ideas and expectations and pressures, and when I came back... we started dating seriously...intense and focused... I felt completely satisfied..." (Emilie, R. 57)
5. "...because of the build-up to this and the situation, I think I also was kind of concerned. And that's why I was in documentation mode. Like, "Wow, I can't believe this is really happening." And because of the – the taboo of it - even though with Christine it had kind of begun to erase that, but with Sarah it was still a little bit there. Like, "Wow, this is all of the ideas that I had, and the dreams," because I always used to have these recurring dreams about having sex with women, but every time that we would get to actually have sex it wouldn't

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happen so this time it actually happened, which is interesting. And since then I don't have those dreams anymore." (Emilie, R. 58)

[Component 2]: Rudiments of the Self Appreciated (Total = 4)

1. "...when you say experience, is it like a physical thing or like the way that you think of it?" (Emilie, R. 8 & 12)
2. "I guess, morbid obsession with wanting to see a cadaver dissected. I just think – I don't want to kill someone to do it, I just want to see it. I want to see how everything fits together...Bodies are so constantly amazing to me – how it works. Just like, everyday I understand my body more..." (Emilie, R. 10)
3. "Even though visually I knew about the clit, I didn't really understand how it worked or how for me, what worked about it. Or how to make everything work together, but now I've – I can say that the clitoris is something that definitely has a big impact in my sexual experience in general, and when I have – when I've had intercourse with a guy in a good way, it's when it feels good because there is some sort of special attention paid to the clitoris. (Emilie, R. 34)
4. "...it was like out of control. We were walking through these woods, and she brings me to this hidden staircase and we're like against these like, stone rocks and she's shaking..." (Emilie, R. 53)

[Component 3]: Foul Parts of the Self Appreciated (Total = 0)

None Reported

[Component 4]: Heightened Affects Experienced (Total = 4)

1. "I guess, morbid obsession with wanting to see a cadaver dissected. I just think – I don't want to kill someone to do it, I just want to see it. I want to see how everything fits

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together...Bodies are so constantly amazing to me – how it works. Just like, everyday I understand my body more, and I don't think that people think about it enough and investigate. It's so scary – my sister and I are very, very different. She's just starting to be able to talk about sexuality at all, which I had to blow out of the water when I finally came out to her. I'd been in a relationship with a woman for a year and I was finally like, "I can't lie anymore." And I just told her straight out in a really long letter, because it was bigger than sexuality and who I was dating. It was like an entire thought process with her disconnection with sexuality and sex and not wanting to think about it at all. So I can really bounce myself off of her to see, wow, how can she be like that—to never have looked at themselves in the mirror, don't want to think about it, don't want to know how the body works. I don't know if that's a guilt thing or a fear – I don't know what it is. But I do feel freer..." (Emilie, R. 10)

2. "I – oh my gosh, it's so interesting, because I never realized like, how much my – like, how diversified my experiences are... Even though visually I knew about the clit, I didn't really understand how it worked or how for me, what worked about it. Or how to make everything work together, but now I've – I can say that the clitoris is something that definitely has a big impact in my sexual experience in general..." (Emilie, R. 34)
3. "There was a more prominent moment with this other woman who I had been watching – not watching like stalking... this whole night together and ending up having sexual tension...the height of romantic crushes brought to life. And I was like, "Great. How am I going to give this up now? ...amazing night of passion...the most strangely, like bizarre and passionate thing...she felt guilty... it was pretty horrific after that. ...everything I'm doing is because I

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want to do it...” (Emilie, R. 52)

4. “...a mirror body...that breast against breast was like, such an amazing feeling for me...”
(Emilie, R. 58)

[Component 5]: Being Alone Experienced (Total = 6)

1. “...A little secret life.” (Emilie, R. 7)
2. “...this is the first time I’m alone... I grew up used to sleeping with someone my whole life, and then I went straight into a relationship that was pretty committed, and then suddenly I was alone, and that was a different transition. And I feel like my body has come to a place where I feel comforted by it. But that was something that I had to get to. (Emilie, R. 14)
3. “...I felt like a completely different person, but I still couldn’t leave the relationship. It was like some kind of security or something – this is my future, this is my life, this is everything. You know? And when I realized I could leave. Then I finally left that. And felt like, this weight had been lifted off of me. ...I felt so powerful and in control of myself, because I didn’t have to let anyone else know about my body. There was just me... I didn’t have to worry about it. I didn’t have to think about it in relation to anyone else. There was just me... I was like, living like my body was my own apartment... I lived by myself now...” (Emilie, R. 19)
4. “...and then I wasn’t with anyone for a really long time – after that I lived in London for three months and just had time to myself – I feel like it was – it has been a growing experience for the last few years.” (Emilie, R. 33)
5. “It feels like going underwater. In a good way. Almost like, in a bathtub. I would locate it in my chest – starting in my chest, and then all the way down and sometimes extending into

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the limbs. ... It feels like you're warm and you're no longer thinking. And you're just completely relaxed and the rest of the world is kind of quiet. Like you're kind of engrossed in this warmth and you can't hear anything. But you feel also protected by the warmth and the water. (Emilie, R. 41)

6. I spent a week alone in an airport. And even though it was so scary in so many ways, it was also like a good – I'd never spent that much time by myself and couldn't do anything, so it was like this release of all these ideas and expectations and pressures, and when I came back home I just felt like, "Wow, why am I so worried about everything? I just need to take things one day at a time." So then we started dating seriously after that and it's pretty – I would say intense and focused – like, I never thought about anybody else, and I felt completely satisfied with her and our relationship for at least a year after that. (Emilie, R. 57)

[Component 6]: Physical Action Taken (Total = 0)

None Reported

[Component 7]: Wishes Actualized (Total = 3)

1. "...when you've realized it, then it's like there's this whole world of freedom. But it's scary too. Just like normality and mainstream. When you live in New York, when you go to another country, and then you realize, "Wait – everything's a choice." (Emilie, R. 7)
2. "...this whole night together and ending up having sexual tension...the height of romantic crushes brought to life. And I was like, "Great. How am I going to give this up now?" (Emilie, R. 52)
3. "Like, "Wow, I can't believe this is really happening." And because of the – the taboo of it - even though with Christine it had kind of begun to erase that, but with Sarah it was still a

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little bit there. Like, “Wow, this is all of the ideas that I had, and the dreams,” because I always used to have these recurring dreams about having sex with women, but every time that we would get to actually have sex it wouldn’t happen, so this time it actually happened, which is interesting. And since then I don’t have those dreams anymore. (Emilie, R. 58)

[Component 8]: Object Relations (Total = 4)

1. “And then when I was in my steady relationship with my ex-girlfriend, and felt like I was able to experience another vagina that was so closely related to me in a sense, that I really felt like I was able to experience many more things about myself through an understanding of her.” (Emilie, R. 33)
2. “...it felt strange to be – to have so much mutual control or something? Not control in a power sense, but to feel like I’m doing everything I’m doing because I want to do it and I don’t feel like one of us has more control than the other one.” (Emilie, R. 53)
3. “So that was a whole new thing for me, and amazing because I had never felt turned on by satisfying someone else before. I would say that the fling doesn’t even – it never progressed enough that I felt completely comfortable, but with Sarah it was always – it was an exciting thing to do. Anything to pleasure her. Which I never had that kind of reciprocal feelings with guys. I was like, “Oh, I’ll do this for you.” So that was a strange turn of events – everything was something I looked forward to... I felt so satisfied all the time... And to know that she cared about my body and cared about me, it just made me relax.” (Emilie, R. 57)
4. “...such an amazing feeling for me and so interesting. And to feel back some of the comments that people had made to me – like, “Wow, your skin’s so soft, it’s glistening.”

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And just feeling a connection to someone and them being a woman, it made a lot more sense.

It felt like I could relate to her in a different way than I could with men.” (Emilie, R. 58)

Emilie’s Transformation Outcome: A Sense of Body/Self Coherence Experienced

(Total = 2)

1. “...I felt like a completely different person, but I still couldn’t leave the relationship. It was like some kind of security or something – this is my future, this is my life, this is everything. You know? And when I realized I could leave. Then I finally left that. And felt like, this weight had been lifted off of me. ...I felt so powerful and in control of myself, because I didn’t have to let anyone else know about my body. There was just me... I didn’t have to worry about it. I didn’t have to think about it in relation to anyone else. There was just me. Because I think for so many years I didn’t think of my body in terms of me, I thought about it in terms of, “Oh, how am I feeling today? Do I think I can have sex today? Am I too tired, or am I in pain, do I need to have a shower, do I smell bad...” All of these things that weren’t about how I felt about myself. I was like, living like my body was my own apartment... I lived by myself now and I could put the dishes whenever I want... it just felt like this amazing thing.” (Emilie, R. 19)
2. “It feels like going underwater. In a good way. Almost like, in a bathtub. I would locate it in my chest – starting in my chest, and then all the way down and sometimes extending into the limbs. ...It feels like you’re warm and you’re no longer thinking. And you’re just completely relaxed and the rest of the world is kind of quiet. Like you’re kind of engrossed in this warmth and you can’t hear anything. But you feel also protected by the warmth and the water. (Emilie, R. 41)

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