Para Todes: Gender-Neutrality in the Portuguese Language

by

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Abstract

Portuguese, as a Romance language, has two linguistic genders: masculine and feminine. Although linguistic gender is separate from the social concept of gender, the two accord when one is talking about a person; feminine forms of address, nouns, and adjectives for a woman, and masculine forms for a man. This raises issues when one considers the rising number of people who identify outside of the gender binary, as well as an idea that is becoming increasingly prevalent – that an individual's gender cannot, and should not, be assumed when it is unknown. There are, therefore, movements that seek to adapt the language, led by gender-nonconforming, nonbinary and transgender individuals; to introduce a third, grammatically-neutral gender, to better suit the needs of the language's speakers. This thesis seeks to profile and examine the proposed changes to the Portuguese language, with reference to a number of case studies involving the use of the most common proposed practices and the resulting public and academic responses to each.

Keywords: Gender, grammar, gender nonconforming, Portuguese

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Para Todes: Gender-neutrality in the Portuguese language

“Language is not simply a neutral tool for the transmission of referential meaning: as an instrument of social practice it contributes to the communication, maintenance and change of ideologies, attitudes and stereotypes. Language is used to perform acts of inclusion and exclusion, and is therefore invested with the potential to protect or disrupt social relations. (Hellinger 2011: 565).”

The above excerpt, taken from Hellinger’s *Guidelines for non-discriminatory language use*, summarises three points explored therein; one, that language use is marked, and non-neutral, and therefore language choice can be used in such a way as to influence others; two, that language is used sociopolitically as an agent of change or to enforce existing societal power structures and imbalances, and three, that language use therebyhas the power to affect attitudes, opinions, and worldviews. It stands to reason that an idea that cannot be effectively articulated or expressed will have difficulty taking root, and this can be seen in, for instance, linguistic discourse of the 20th and early 21st century regarding gendered language and language equality. With the resulting shift towards gender-nonspecific language in English, it is of particular interest how languages in which gender plays a much bigger organising role are adapting to meet this increasing demand for gender-neutrality within language.

Over the course of this thesis, the aim is to identify and analyse existing practices within the Portuguese language that either promote the use of gender-neutral language, or allow ideas of gender to be subverted through the use of proposed new language tools. The focus will be on centering transgender experiences and viewpoints; as such, analysis of emerging linguistic practices intended to offer visibility and expression to such individuals shall apply concepts and models drawn from gender studies and queer theory. Thusly, this work shall begin with a brief explanation of and introduction to these concepts, the relevance of which will both be readily apparent and indicated throughout. The focus will then shift to outlining contemporary stancesregarding the idea of gender-neutrality, in which I shall argue the need for greater gender-neutrality within Portuguese and Spanish, with a greater eye towards Portuguese. Following that, the concept shall be discussed in terms of theory, centering on potential methods through which this neutrality could be achieved, following on to discuss contemporary practice. Finally, this thesis shall conclude with a series of case studies involving contemporary neutrality practices and public responses thereunto.

For some time, discourse centred on the topics of gender within society, and gender within language, has been phrased in highly political terms. As such, when discussing these topics, it is inevitable that the approach taken in doing so bears a political aspect. This work shall build upon a corpus of contribution that presupposes that moves towards inclusivity are a compelling political good; particular attention shall be paid to philosophical and moral discussions on the subject, such as the ideas of hermeneutical injustice and dissent, discussion of which shall follow later within this work. Following this, focus shall turn to introducing contemporary proposed practices regarding gender-neutrality, including a series of case studies intended to exemplify and evaluate each practice.

Important definitions

In order to discuss linguistic, political and social issues relating to gender, however, it is important to first define both what is meant by the term *gender* in a sociolinguistic context, and its significance - and, indeed, to acknowledge the lack of consistently-meaningful correspondence between the linguistic and sociocultural concepts of gender.

Grammatical Gender

A well-known definition of gender, in a purely grammatical sense, is by Corbett (1991):

“To understand what linguists mean by 'gender', a good starting point is Hockett's definition: 'Genders are classes of nouns reflected in the behavior of associated words' (1958: 231). A language may have two or more such classes of genders. The classification frequently corresponds to a real-world distinction of sex, at least in part, but often too it does not ('gender' derives etymologically from Latin genus, via Old French gendre, and originally meant 'kind' or 'sort'). The word 'gender' is not used for just a group of nouns but also for the whole category; thus we may say that a particular language has, say, three genders, masculine, feminine and neuter, and that the language has the category of gender.” (Corbett, 1991, p. 1)

Gender, in a grammatical sense, therefore, is “defined as a classificatory feature of all nouns of a language that is obligatorily signalled by agreement”, (cf. Corbett 1991: 4) and this position has been used to distinguish between the grammatical and social concepts of gender. However, Hellinger and Bußmann note, in *Gender Across Languages (2001)*, that “class membership is anything but arbitrary in the field of animate/personal reference”, explaining that “for a large number of personal nouns there is a correspondence between the “feminine” and “masculine” gender class and the

lexical specification of a noun as female-specific or male-specific"; a position shared by Motschenbacher (2013). It is important here to note, therefore, that this project will be concentrating on the use of personal nouns - these being pronouns associated with a particular grammatical person, such as *I* for first-person, *you* in second-person, or *he*, *she*, or *they* in third-person - and corresponding linguistic concordance of satellite elements - in the case of Portuguese, adjectives, articles, pronouns, numerals and prepositions.

It must be noted, however, that grammatical gender is only one of four linguistic concepts which may be referred to as gender, and it is therefore important to introduce the remaining three: lexical gender, social gender, and referential gender, my definitions of which draw heavily from Hellinger and Bußmann's work.

Lexical Gender

As opposed to grammatical gender, which is an inherent property of a noun that controls agreement between a noun and its satellite elements, lexical gender refers to an extra-linguistic quality of "femaleness" or "maleness" - typically the gender identity of the referent, and thus these words are seen as gender-specific. For example, English terms such as *mother, sister, son,* and *boy* are lexically specified as carrying the semantic property [female] or [male] respectively. Lexical gender as a property of nouns is significantly more common within grammatically-gendered languages, as the rate of incidence of epicene nouns - nouns that retain the same grammatical gender, regardless of the gender of the referent, such as the English *cashier* or the Portuguese *estudante* - is significantly lower in grammatically-gendered languages than natural-gender languages.

Social Gender

Social gender refers to the "semantic bias of an otherwise unspecified noun towards one or the other gender, e. g., nurse denoting stereotypically female persons and surgeon male ones" (Doleschal, 2015), and is heavily influenced by societal expectations and stereotypes regarding gender roles, gendered behaviour, and so forth. Social gender, by nature of its relation to nouns of otherwise unspecified gender is less present in languages with more common grammatical gender distinctions. This is due to it performing much the same role as lexical gender. Given the nature of social gender as explained here, only epicene nouns can be considered to carry social gender. As an

illustration, consider the English *nurse* in contrast to the Portuguese *enfermeiro*; the English term is grammatically-unspecified, and therefore has a *social* gender of feminine as per Doleschal's work; the Portuguese is grammatically-gendered and thus has a *social* gender of male. Interestingly, with the advent of terms such as *male nurse*, the differentiation between lexical and social gender is becoming somewhat blurred.

Referential Gender

Referential gender is defined as "relating linguistic expressions to non-linguistic reality" - that is to say, a typically-gendered expression such as the German "Mädchen für alles", "maid of all work", can be used to metaphorically or allegorically refer to a specific non-female referent, although Hellinger and Bußmann note that the gendered implication thereof still transmits derogatory connotations. An English example could be the derogatory "he's such a girl!" or similar.

Grammatically-gendered and natural-gender languages

Now that the concept of grammatical gender has been defined - grammatical gender being, once more, a system of noun classification within a language, which affects the subsequent behaviour of words associated with said nouns - we must define the terms "grammatically-gendered" and "natural-gender" with regards to language. For the purpose of this work, "natural-gender" shall be used to refer to languages where grammatical gender only applies in the personal case - to rephrase, when used to refer to a person - and otherwise a neutral gender is used, such as is the case within English and Swedish. To give an illustrative example, English qualifies as a natural-gender language as it only applies a grammatical gender in the personal case, and not the impersonal case - objects are exclusively referred to using *it* or *that*, for instance, whereas individuals are referred to exclusively using *she*, *he*, *they,* etcetera.

Conversely, "grammatically-gendered" shall be henceforth used to refer to those languages in which the opposite is true - where a system of noun classification exists but where the rules for gender classification do not differentiate between personal - i.e. human - and impersonal - i.e. nonhuman - referents. This is the case for many languages, those of most importance to this work being Spanish, Portuguese and Catalan, but also including languages such as German and French.

Gender and Gender Identity

Having defined gender within a linguistic context, it is now similarly important to summarise the ways in which the terms *gender* and *gender identity* are deployed within a sociological context. An easy starting point would be the definition used by the World Health Organisation: “"Gender refers to the socially constructed characteristics of women and men, such as norms, roles, and relationships of and between groups of women and men. It varies from society to society and can be changed." In short, gender is a series of external social expectations of how certain classes of people will behave. In her seminal work *Gender Trouble* (1999), Judith Butler defines gender identity as a “psychic sense of self” each person has, which designates them as belonging, or not belonging, to each of these social categories; Butler also notes that gender can be seen as a “cultural designation of self”, and that “the substantive effect of gender is performatively produced and compelled by the regulatory practices of gender coherence”. To phrase this otherwise, it is the Butlerian view that gender is perpetuated and brought into being by its own performance. Butler states here a Nietzchean corollary: “There is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very “expressions” that are said to be its results.” It is here posited that the idea of gender is brought into being by the exact socially-constructed roles intended to perpetuate it. This suggestion holds that gender is not, perhaps, something that one *is*, rather, that one *does*; that one’s psychic or cultural sense of self leads one to perform in such a way that one will be interpreted as gendered. Using this idea of a “psychic or cultural sense of self”, therefore: Gender can be said to be a series of social categories, while gender identity is a person’s identification as belonging, or not, to each category.

To put it otherwise, we look into the defining of the concept of identity. Simply put, “identity is the social positioning of self and other,” (Bucholtz and Hall, 2005). That is to say, a speaker uses similarity and difference to establish themselves within part of a collective, while differentiating themselves from other groups. In order to produce an identity, one finds similarity and commonality between oneself and the group with which one aligns, and differentiates oneself from groups to which one does not align. In its simplest form, that is to say that the base concept of “us versus them” contributes to the formation of identity through language use. Bucholtz and Hall also hold that, counter to Butler’s position, identity is a product of linguistics and language use, rather than Butler’s “psychic sense of self” or how an individual classifies themselves in their mind.

The question raised therein, perhaps, is which of these viewpoints can be considered accurate or true, if either: does identity arise through an instinctual, personal impulse, or as a group mentality based entirely upon adequation and distinction? In determining this, it is perhaps easiest to look towards queer identities and experiences, this being

the social group among which the question of identity is most prevalent; that is to say, the group among which “crises of identity” are perhaps more frequent. For the purpose of this thesis, it is necessary here to define what is understood by “queer”; Love (2014) describes queer as “meant to indicate a range of nonnormative sexual practices and gender identifications beyond gay and lesbian”; thusly, “queer” is here defined as “any identity outside of the cis-heteronormative hegemony”. It is important here to note that the earlier contention that linguistic inclusivity is politically beneficial remains valid regardless of which theory can be seen as more accurate. The question, however, muddies somewhat at this point: for Butler’s stance to be correct, one would have to deem oneself to be a member of a group _before_one knew of the group’s existence; for Bucholtz and Hall’s position to be correct, one could only align oneself with a group _after_ determining its existence. There is a clear problematising element here, which is to say that one cannot, naturally, identify oneself as something of which one has no concept; thusly, under the Bucholtzian model, it would be possible to argue that individuals lacking, or lacking access to, linguistic tools through which to communicate queerness could not, or would not be able to, construct a queer identity.. It is, however, in looking towards queer identities that this incompatibility can perhaps be resolved. It is common, in what is sometimes referred to as nascent queer identity - that is, individuals who only recently began to identify as queer, to hear something along the lines of “I finally found out there’s a word for people like me”; that is to say that they have only recently become aware of linguistic tools through which to express their identity. In the spirit of addressing the questions regarding the nature of identity, we now examine this idea somewhat more closely.

In short, Butler’s concept of identity is formed _before_ one becomes aware of a group with which to identify, whereas Bucholtz and Hall’s concept of identity is formed after one finds such a group. The question therefore becomes, “does the queer individual identify as queer before they have adequate tools through which to express their identity?” Once more, in addressing this question, we look towards the queer community, and to queer experiences - in this case, the term “queer” itself.

For the purposes of this exercise, we take “queer community” to mean “the collective in which the commonality and shared experience involves identification as a marginalised sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, including but not limited to lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender identities” - which until now has been termed “the queer community”, hereafter the “LGBT community” for reasons that shall become apparent. The term “queer”, itself, has been and remains a point of discussion within the LGBT community in terms of personal and collective identification; the term has seen widespread use as a slur or epithet, particularly during the 1970s and 1980s (Love,

2014), although many now consider it to have been reclaimed; Levy and Johnson (2012) discuss its adoption and reclamation by the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT-UP) upon the organisation's rebranding as Queer Nation in the early 1990s. However, its use as a slur has led to some people within the LGBT community - majoritively older individuals and those who had this slur most frequently levelled against them - being uncomfortable with its use due to their personal experiences, and therefore not identifying with the term, hence the use of the term "LGBT community" for the purposes of this discussion.

However, whether one terms the collective "the queer community" or "the LGBT community", the collective entity to which one refers, for the purpose of this thesis, is the same. This equation of terminology that can be divisive within the community is not intended to call into question the validity or nonvalidity of an individual's self-identification or otherwise with this term; rather, an individual's membership of this group regardless of terminological preference here raises an important point of discussion with regards to the Bucholtzian model. Thus arises the possibility of one who simultaneously identifies as part of this "LGBT/queer community" yet does not identify with the term "queer". Thus, these individuals can be said to have an identity predicated upon group membership - i.e. being part of this community that is here termed as queer - but whose identity is not predicated upon adoption of the language use deployed by the aforementioned group - i.e. non-identification with the specific term "queer". This would appear to stand in conflict with the Bucholtzian idea of identity - group membership formed through linguistics and language use.

Furthermore, returning to the discussion on nascent queer identity, there remains the question on at what point the queer individual's identity exists - upon the acquisition of appropriate language tools through which to express this identity, or predating the acquisition of such language tools. There exist certain relevant parallels here to the wider topic of conversation of this thesis - if queer identities are only generally seen as valid once they can be effectively communicated, such as under the Bucholtzian model, then how does effective communication take place among speakers of languages where no such tools currently exist, or where norms of language use inhibit or proscribe the communication of such identities?

It would be disingenuous - not to mention frankly disrespectful to innumerable queer-identified individuals - to suggest that, much as identity is formed through linguistics, language use and group identification as claimed by Bucholtz and Hall, it thus follows that such identities cannot be formed until adequate language tools are obtained. Such a claim would invalidate core aspects of many individuals' identities, as

well as introduce a grotesque sort of gatekeeping of queer identity and linguistic imperialism - if it were indeed the case that one could not, under such a supposition, identify as queer until one has the language to do so, then it would follow that only speakers of languages that have officially-accepted queer sociolects might identify as queer. Of particular note here is that English, with its vocabulary, neutral personal grammatical gender, and other linguistic tools with which to communicate queerness, is more and more becoming a language through which nonbinary individuals choose to communicate and express their identity. Such a viewpoint as postulated here would, through a process of reduction, be in danger of simplifying down to “only English speakers can identify as queer, as non-English languages lack the linguistic tools to engage with queer identity”.

Such implication, therefore, cannot in good faith be entertained; queer and nonbinary identity can be seen to have been established even before the individual gains the necessary linguistic tools to express such an identity - a sentiment expressed in the oft-heard idea of “finding out there’s a word for people like me”. It thus follows, therefore, that the queer identity exists prior to the acquisition of the language tools adequate to express it - a very quintessentially Butlerian view, in other words.

That is not to say, however, that language acquisition plays no role in the construction and expression of identity. Rather, again using the “word for people like me” idea, group affiliation and acquisition of language tools seems to present a new matrix through which the individual’s identity is considered, both by the individual themselves and others. Language thus performs an affirmatory role in the communication of identity; in *From gender dysphoria to gender euphoria: An assisted journey* (2010), Benestad, a sexologist and medical doctor specialised in the treatment of transgender individuals, writes, “Positive gender fulfillment is euphoric”. If one considers language a tool for the communication of ideas, then any single word effectively acts as a shorthand for the conveyance of an idea, and thus having language through which to communicate one’s identity serves not to determine one’s identity, but rather to facilitate the communication thereof. Perhaps language use, rather than determining identity, reaffirms and reinforces thoughts on identity; this possibility will be discussed in greater depth later in this paper.

Biological sex, birth designation, cisgender and transgender

Returning to the discussion on gender and definitions thereof, it is necessary, when discussing gender identity, to touch upon birth designation. Upon birth, a child is examined according to a set of criteria, and is then declared male or female according

to these criteria (including, for instance, the presence of external genitalia exceeding a certain size), and then raised in accordance with currently prevailing male or female gender norms. This physical, biological designation is termed ‘sex’ rather than ‘gender’, but the two are often conflated in common use. In recent years, however, there has been some controversy regarding both birth designation, as the designation is done primarily on genital inspection at birth, where there can easily be ambiguity and the idea of sex as a biological social factor - this idea of a *biological sex* is commonly used to undermine an individual’s gender identity, especially by those who oppose the concept of transgenderism, and against minority groups (such as cases where a transgender woman is told she is *biologically*, or “really,” a man). In cases of perceived gender ambiguity at birth, which are thought to occur in as many as 2% of births, immediate surgical intervention may be sought, to bring the newborn’s sex organs in line with what is expected of their genotype - often, there are no medical issues arising from this corporal variance, and the individual later goes through a standard puberty; Preves gives the example of a newborn whose clitoris was deemed “too large” and subsequently operated upon (Preves, 2003). There exist not only cases of visual ambiguity, but also of biological ambiguity - there are cases such as Klinefelter syndrome, where an individual possesses three sex chromosomes - XXY - rather than the XX of a “biological female” or the XX of a “biological male”, or CAIS, Complete Androgen Insensitivity Syndrome, where an individual appears phenotypically female, has the XY genotype, internal testes, and undergoes female puberty. Such individuals are referred to as *intersex*, and in the case of intersex individuals, medical professionals and the parents confer on how to raise the child, and what their birth designation aligns most closely to. In cases where an individual’s gender identity is in concordance with their designation at birth, they are cisgender; where not, the individual is transgender.

The term “cisgender” is considered to have originated from German sexologist Volkmar Sigusch’s coining of the German-language neologism “Zissexuell” in his 1991 article *Die Transsexuellen und unser nosomorpher Blick*, and relies upon the antonymic relationship between the Latin prefixes *cis-* and *trans-. Trans-* as a prefix carries the meaning “on the other side of” - this meaning can be seen in words such as *transatlantic (*on the other side of the Atlantic ocean) or *transalpine* (on the other side of the Alps with respect to Rome; thus, the north side). *Transgender* therefore uses this idea of geographical distance metaphorically, to suggest a difference between one’s gender identity and the biological sex one was assigned at birth. *Cisgender*, conversely, is a term that has been neologically formed by comparison to *transgender*, *cis-* as a prefix meaning “on the same side as”; for example, words such as *cisatlantic* (on this/the same side of the Atlantic ocean”) and *cisalpine* (on the same side of the Alps as Rome; thus, the south side) exist in English, although such words may not enjoy

frequent use. It is interesting to note, also, that the *cis-* and *trans-* prefixes also see use within the fields of organic and material chemistry, designating the location of certain compounds within a larger whole. *Cisgender*, therefore, uses this idea of geographical proximity to suggest an accordance between one's gender identity and biological sex as designated at birth. Considering the linguistic need for a term to signify non-transgender individuals that does not involve positioning one party as a linguistic other, it is perhaps not altogether surprising that the backformed neologism that arose was *cisgender.* The German "zissexuell" is admittedly a closer parallel to the English *cissexual* rather than *cisgender*, although *cisgender* is a closer oppositional parallel to *transgender*, the term *transsexual* having fallen out of use within the trans community at large, with medical professionals being advised against its contemporary use. (Fenway Health, 2010). The reason for this is that the term *transsexual* carries an inaccurate and misleading implication of sexuality, mirroring terms such as *heterosexual* or *homosexual*, whereas transgenderism is a matter of gender identity rather than sexuality. Thus, *transgender* has become the common-use term; thus, its oppositional pair, *cisgender*. Fenway Health notes: ""Transsexual" is considered by some to be a misnomer inasmuch as the underlying medical condition is related to gender identity and not sexuality."

It is important to introduce, at this point, a key tenet of gender studies and queer theory: the idea that the birth designation and concept of biological sex both present a false dichotomy of (either) male or female, in an oppositional binary, where one is either male or female, man or woman, where anyone who is not male is female, and anyone not female is male. This binary both leads to, and is perpetuated by, several other social concepts, such as compulsory heterosexuality - where sexual interest in women is considered a masculine trait, and sexual interest in men is regarded as a feminine trait, leading to familiar stereotypes such as the effeminate, camp gay man, or the masculine, "butch" lesbian - and thus under this model, gender is inherently linked to sexuality. This leads to an interesting social phenomenon where, given the aforementioned mental and conceptual link between gender and sexuality, any queer expression of gender, which is to say, any expression of gender that would question or challenge these values, is seen by cisgender heterosexual society as inherently sexual, or rather, inherently sexually-explicit. This has led to the emerging conservative viewpoint that any and all queer concepts, such as variant gender identities or sexualities, are inappropriate for children and minors to be exposed to, leading to feelings of isolation and unbelonging among queer youth. Preves (2003) gives further examples of these feelings of isolation in gender-ambiguous and intersex youths that result from the presumed inappropriacy of intersex identities: "I was just in agony trying to figure out who I was...And feeling like a freak, which is a very common story".

Nonbinary, gender-variant, and genderqueer identities

In fact, there are a number of gender identities outside of this male-female binary, some of which shall be briefly profiled here: “nonbinary”, “genderqueer”, and “gender non-conforming”. To start, it is fairly easy to understand a nonbinary identity once the male-female gender binary has been identified; a nonbinary identity is any gender identity outside of the binary, which is to say, the individual identifies as neither male nor female. Nonbinary is thus both a specific identity, and also a blanket term for any identity outside of the male-female binary, much like the similar use of “queer”; e.g. “Ariel identifies as nonbinary”, “the trans and nonbinary community”. Genderqueer is, in essence, similar to nonbinary in both its existence as a specific identity, and as a blanket identity outside of the male-female binary. There are discussions within the queer community regarding whether nonbinary and genderqueer are synonymous (Genderqueer and non-binary identities, 2011); some say that genderqueer incorporates genderfluid identities (individuals whose gender identities regularly change, depending on times and circumstances, which can include identifying as a binary gender at times) whereas nonbinary does not, although this is a point of contention, and is largely up to the individual’s personal preference. It is important to note at this point that gender identity, being a “psychic sense of self” as per Butler’s definition, is subject to personal interpretation; that is to say, it is difficult to define exhaustive characteristics that constitute what it is to be a woman, for instance. Corvino (2000) suggests that there may be a collection of properties and characteristics that plausibly constitute our concept of gender, without that concept being reducible to any single such characteristic. It is this observation which shall form the starting point for the deconstruction of the binary model of gender.

For example, it is not possible, under this view, to make sweeping generalisations such as *all women have [x characteristic]*, for example, nor does having x characteristic mean that someone is a woman, nor does it mean that non-women cannot have x characteristic. Under this Corvinian model, therefore, it becomes much more difficult to define the terms “woman” and “man” - for any given definition of “woman”, for instance, there will be a multitude of women for which those statements are untrue, or who do not meet the given criteria of “woman”; conversely, there may be men for whom a number of those statements are true, or who fulfil the given criteria. Once one begins to question the nature of the categories “man” and “woman” as oppositional binary counterparts, systems in place that rely on such an oppositional binary - such as the idea of gendered language - must also be examined in light of this.

As already noted, gender, as a social concept, is subject to the cultural norms of the participants of that culture; an individual may well be termed a woman in one culture, and other in another (such as the *hijra* of Indian society). It is not the aim of this thesis to argue nor define exhaustively the term *genderqueer* ; let it be enough, for the purposes of this thesis, that genderqueer identity constitutes “identity outside the hegemonic male-female oppositional gender binary, including cases of nonexhaustive or nonexclusive identification with either binary gender”. For such purposes, it is enough to understand that there exist what I shall term “binary gender identities” (i.e. male and female) and nonbinary identities (i.e. any and all genders otherwise than male and female). At this point, it is also perhaps beneficial to establish that nonbinary genders fall under the use of “transgender” as an umbrella term, as nonbinary individuals identify otherwise than their birth designation. As such, the term “transgender”, when used within this thesis, shall be understood to be inclusive of nonbinary and gender-variant identified unless specifically stated otherwise.

Gender non-conformity is similarly straightforward, once the above concepts have been explained; gender non-conformity refers simply to an individual’s behaviour as it relates to their gender’s prescribed role; for example, a woman’s refusal to shave or otherwise remove body hair, or a man’s use of makeup or other cosmetic products. Gender non-conformity is, while not a necessity for queer or trans identity, commonplace among those who identify as queer or trans, due to the fundamental questioning of binary gender paradigms as a concept that comes with such identities.

Alternatively, for ease of understanding, Cydney Adams of CBS News defines many common queer terms here: (2017)

Agender	A term for people whose gender identity and expression does not align with man, woman, or any other gender. A similar term used by some is gender-neutral.
Androgynous	Identifying and/or presenting as neither distinguishably masculine nor feminine.
Bigender	Someone whose gender identity encompasses both man and woman. Some may feel that one side or the other is stronger, but both sides are present.
Gender fluid (or genderfluid):	A person who does not identify with a

	single fixed gender, and expresses a fluid or unfixed gender identity...likely to shift and change depending on context.
Genderqueer:	A term for people who reject notions of static categories of gender and embrace a fluidity of gender identity and often, though not always, sexual orientation. People who identify as genderqueer may see themselves as being both male and female, neither male nor female or as falling completely outside these categories
Gender non-conforming	A broad term referring to people who do not behave in a way that conforms to the traditional expectations of their gender, or whose gender expression does not fit neatly into a category
Non-binary	Any gender that falls outside of the binary system of male/female or man/woman.
Queer	An umbrella term people often use to express fluid identities and orientations.
Transgender	An umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or expression is different from cultural and social expectations based on the sex they were assigned at birth

Discussion on the cis-trans divide

Interestingly, now that the subjects of gender non-conformity and the gender binary have been introduced, an avenue of discussion opens up. If the male-female gender binary is to be examined, what of the cisgender-transgender gender binary? The integral point to be made at the outset is that the male-female gender binary and the cis-trans gender binary are fundamentally different: the male-female binary is one where one class can be defined as X and the other defined as Y, where X and Y, or the constituent qualities thereof, are not mutually exclusive, whereas the cis-trans binary is one where one class is defined as X and the other as not-X, and therefore the two classifications are mutually-exclusive; to put it otherwise, it has been discussed above that there is no fixed definition of either “man” or “woman”, but “cisgender” and

“transgender” have been fairly well-defined. Following those definitions, to qualify outside of the cis-trans binary, one would have to simultaneously identify, and not identify, singularly as the biological sex they were assigned at birth. Therefore, the issues arising from the cis-trans binary arise not, necessarily, from its status as a binary, but rather from the classification of certain individuals as cisgender or transgender.

Some argue that as many nonbinary individuals have little or no desire to medically transition, they do not fit within the transgender label and rather under a third, separate category. This idea, however, can be reconciled with the definition of transgender as “identifying as a gender identity other than one’s sex designation at birth”; since no medical body pronounces a child “non-binary” at birth, non-binary identities thus fall under the umbrella term of transgender. Critically, the majority of nonbinary individuals also personally identify as transgender, for this reason among others such as identification as transgender suggesting a certain set of experiences or difficulties regarding one’s relationship with gender identity and gender expression - to put it in terms of the Corvinian concept of group identity as “us vs. them”, the “us” can be considered “those with experiences of gender similar to mine”; therefore, transgender individuals.

However, some argue that the hegemonic category of “cisgender” carries certain implications that are not only open to contestation, but also potentially unhelpful and exclusionary. Mimi Marinucci, a scholar within the fields of Women’s and Gender Studies, writes in her 2010 book *Feminism is queer* that some consider the cis-trans binary to be just as dangerous, or even as self-defeating, as the male-female binary. The case put forward for this stance is that with the classification as cisgender of those who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or otherwise queer but not as transgender, non-transgender queer people are considered part of the cisgender group that enacts heteronormativity and other such societal practices that marginalise transgender individuals. Additionally, categorising lesbian, gay and bisexual non-trans individuals together with heterosexual non-trans individuals may suggest that these queer individuals, unlike trans individuals, "experience no mismatch between their own gender identity and gender expression and cultural expectations regarding gender identity and expression" (Marinucci, 2010). To phrase this otherwise, Marinucci’s stance identifies a possible problematic element; the hegemonic classification of queer and non-queer cisgender individuals as cisgender may suggest, incorrectly, that queer cisgender individuals experience and perform gender in exactly the same manner as non-queer cisgender individuals.

Marinucci's position, however, is not itself free from problematic elements. The cisgender-transgender distinction evolved from a need to refer to non-transgender individuals in a way which did not position them as a linguistic other. Simply put, queer cisgender individuals are cisgender, as the transgender identity is built upon the idea of non-identification with one's birth designation. The identities of queer cisgender individuals intersect with those of transgender individuals upon the axis of queerness, rather than those of either personal relationships or the way in which one experiences gender. While it is quite correct to note that queer and gender-variant individuals may not enjoy the same relationship with gender as non-queer cisgender individuals, and may be less likely to enforce, knowingly or unknowingly, heteronormativity, cisnormativity or gender roles, it is quite incorrect to suggest that the cisgender-transgender divide would perhaps be better served by a queer-nonqueer divide.

Furthermore, the conflation of gender-nonconforming cisgender experiences with transgender experiences also brings with it unfortunate political implications; namely, it is the basis upon which the TERFist - an acronym for *trans-exclusionary radical feminist* - movement operates. TERFism holds that transgender identities are invalid, or lesser, than cisgender identities, and that social and medical transitions are nothing more than a grotesque and offensive parody of cisgender identities. Simply put, if one claims that a transgender woman, for instance, has the same experience of gender as a cisgender man, that equation can be seen to invalidate the transgender individual's gender identity and misgender her, and contributes to societal prejudice regarding transgender individuals and the authenticity and validity of their gender identity. Second-wave feminist author Germaine Greer, for instance, said of transgender individuals on a UK talk show in 2015: "Just because you lop off your [penis, expletive] and then wear a dress doesn't make you a [expletive] woman. I've asked my doctor to give me long ears and liver spots and I'm going to wear a brown coat, but that won't turn me into a [expletive] cocker spaniel." (The Independent, 2015).

Feminism and intersectionality

To better engage with this idea, we must explore the history of the feminist movement. Broadly speaking, the timeline of feminism can be thought of in four stages, or *waves*. *First-wave feminism* is broadly defined in the English-speaking world as the period between 1848 and 1920, these dates being important within US history for marking the Seneca Falls Convention, for the former, and the gaining of the vote for white women, for the latter. Although the time period of what is considered first-wave feminism is rooted in events and achievements within the United States, the feminist movements worldwide during this time were concerned with suffrage and increased legal rights and

protections for women. For instance, elementary schooling was made compulsory for all children in 1858 in Spain, and divorce was legalised in Portugal in 1910, both of which are considered first-wave feminist accomplisments due to their either improving girls' access to education, or improving the legal freedoms of married women.

Second-wave feminism is generally considered to refer to the movements that gained traction around the mid-to-late 1960s and lasted around two decades, with Marsha Weinman Lear coining the term in a *New York Times Magazine* article in 1960 (Henry, 2004). Within the same article, the term *first-wave feminism* was also coined; Lear used this distinction to position the feminist movements as different stages of the same overarching movement. Where first-wave feminism had focused on the gaining of suffrage and the addressing of legal inequality, second-wave feminism engaged primarily with the ideas of reproductive rights, and with the idea of women's sexual and bodily autonomy.

With feminism's second wave generally considered to have concluded sometime during the 1980s, the feminist movements of the 1990s and 2000s are considered *third-wave feminism*. Third-wave feminism, in contrast to its first- and second-wave counterparts, is somewhat harder to define, as there is generally not considered to be a singular, homogenous third-wave goal (Evans, 2015). Indeed, Evans claims, the polymorphic nature of third-wave feminism and its resistance to classification constitutes "a good thing"; third-wave feminism , essentially, engages with such a breadth of concepts that no singular approach can adequately summarise it in its entirety. However, it is generally agreed that third-wave feminism is notable for its engagement with intersectionality, a term coined by black feminist scholar Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw in 1989. Intersectionality is best described as an analytical framework that explores the manner in which different power systems and social stratifications intersect. The positioning here of Crenshaw as a "black feminist" is relevance; intersectionality emerged as a method of exploring the social and legal positioning of black women, alongside other women of colour, within both civil rights law and within civil rights movements (Cooper, 2016). In short, intersectionality holds that identity consists of multiple intersecting axes or aspects of identity, such as gender, sexuality, race and class, and that these axes of identity are interdependent and collectively determine an individual's social positioning; for example, an individual may be considered marginalised upon one axis and non-marginalised upon another. Thus, an individual's social positioning and experiences depend upon these axes; a black, cisgender woman would experience different systemic marginalisations than a white, transgender man, for instance. This intersectional approach shall inform this work, and reference shall be made to this concept at several points hereafter.

Fourth-wave feminism, generally categorised as starting in 2013, continues the third-wave focus on the concept of intersectionality, and Baer (2016) notes the distinguishing feature between the third and fourth waves as being the use of social media and online tools in order to both engage with a wider audience, and also the role of social media in providing a voice to marginalised groups who would otherwise be excluded from the conversation.

Here, we now relate the second-wave feminist approach back to the idea of the cis-trans divide, and the problematic nature of certain approaches thereof. Second-wave feminism, with its focus on reproductive rights and the female body, meant that such bodies became " not just a political issue, but a site of feminist politics in and of itself" (Hines, 2019). This led to the idea that one must possess a certain "womanhood" in order to engage with feminist discourse; and, given the corporeal and reproductive focus of the second wave, that such a "womanhood" necessarily carried with it certain biological truths and qualities, such as a uterus or the ability to bear a child. This insistence on the necessity of one having a certain manner of body to engage with feminism was originally employed to question and dispute the position of cisgender men within feminism, it has more recently been used to question the positioning of transgender individuals, especially transgender women, within the feminist movement (Hines, 2019). This idea - that a woman's body must possess certain characteristics relating to fertility and reproduction, and that any body possessing such characteristics is necessarily a woman's body - is known as *bioessentialism* or *gender essentialism* (Grosz, 1995). Bioessentialism shall be addressed below, but for the purposes of clarity, the current topic shall be explored to completion beforehand.
Under a bioessentialist metric, transgender women are necessarily denied the label "woman", because of their lack of reproductive viability, and transgender men are denied the label "man", being labelled instead as women for similar reasoning. In essence, under this school of thought, a transgender woman cannot engage with feminism, as she does not experience "womanhood" - i.e. she experiences gender as a man, rather than as a woman. Similarly, with the categorising of gender-nonconforming cisgender queer individuals as transgender as mentioned above, a transgender woman's experience of gender is conflated with that of cisgender men. In both cases, the transgender woman is denied her agency, and her identity is undermined.

This bioessentialist approach, Hines notes, has the additional effect of obscuring the accomplishments and contributions of transgender women within the feminist movement. Indeed, Williams (2016) notes that through this bioessentialism, we lose the

fact that the 1970s-era women's music movement was engineered by Sandy Stone of Olivia Records, a transgender woman.

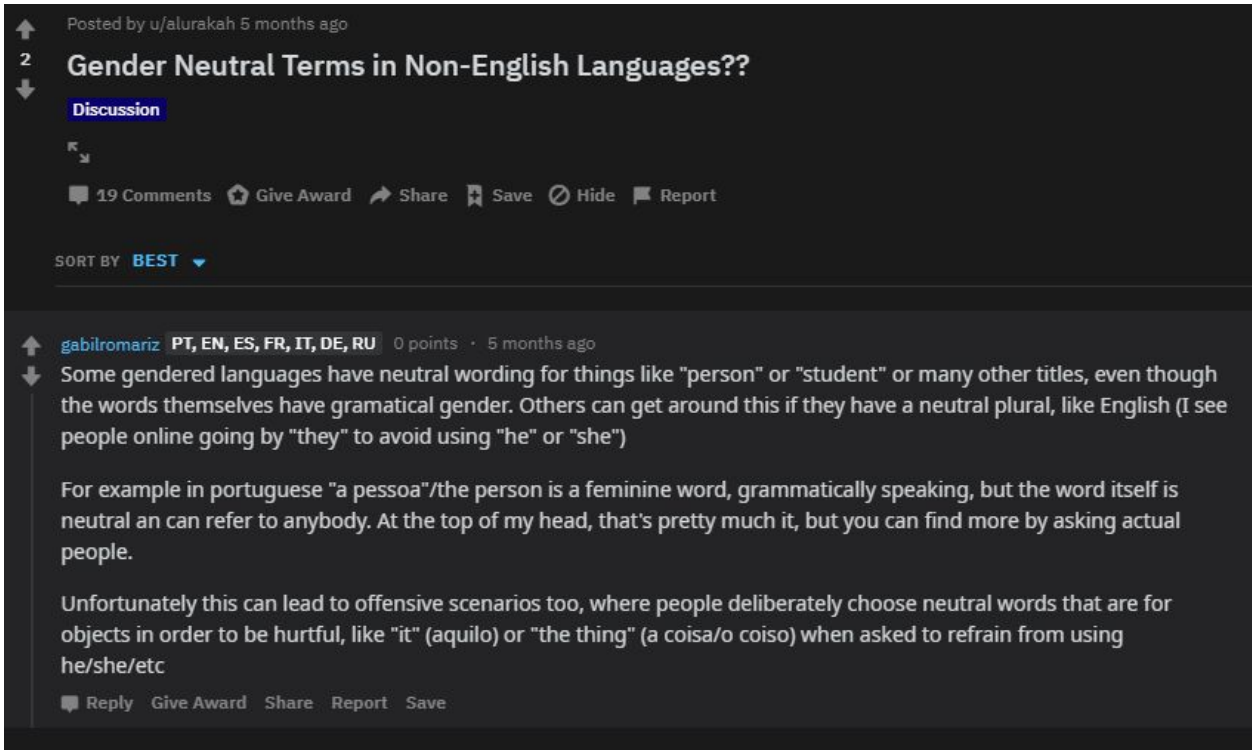
Unfortunately, this conflation of transgender women and cisgender men is commonplace, especially with regards to gender-nonconforming cisgender men. Transgender women often find themselves equated with contemporary drag queens: typically-cisgender men invoking a parodical performance of femininity, typically (although not always) for comedic effect. This "basic denial of authenticity" of transgender individuals has been critiqued as *misgendering* (Bettcher, 2013), a definition that shall become important throughout the body of this work. Bettcher criticises such contemporary views on transgenderism for their presupposition of the "dominant" meanings of *man* and *woman* while erasing resistant meanings; she thus argues that such views find themselves having to start in a position of "having to justify the view that trans people are who they say they are". As cisgender people do not find themselves having to justify their gender identities in the same way, this acceptance of asymmetry, Bettcher argues, is "to effectively yield political ground from the beginning". Indeed, Bettcher posits that the two main justifications for refuting the validity of transgender identities- what she terms the "wrong body argument" and the "beyond-the-binary argument" - a claim that transgender individuals who have medically transitioned are neither male nor female, but exist as some kind of third, trans biological sex - position transgender women as wilful deceivers or pretenders to the title of "woman", respectively. This work is based upon a presupposition of the validity of self-identification; as such, limited space here shall be dedicated to refuting the trans-exclusionary bioessentialist politic. However, it is of note that the idea of any "undeniable biological truth" of gender runs counter to the fundamental feminist ideal of refuting and challenging harmful gender norms and gender roles, and that "biological determinism is deeply fatalistic" (Lantz and Murphy, 1998).

Relating grammatical and cultural concepts of gender

Returning to the question of the relationship between grammatical and societal gender, it may not be immediately apparent what links the two until one realises: language is primarily a way through which information is conveyed, and when identity cannot be conveyed, or perhaps understood, through visual cues (such as gender-non-conformity, or nonbinary and trans identities), language is the primary way through which such individuals can easily express and make known their gender identity, important information that impacts their interactions. Additionally, gestic, sartorial and other visual means of expressing gender get translated into linguistic signs. Studies such as those

by Djehne, et al. (2006, 2011) have shown that in the treatment of gender dysphoria, it is extremely beneficial for the individual to be accepted as their preferred gender, with occurence rates of mental illness such as anxiety and depression reducing significantly in post-transition transgender individuals as compared to pre-transition transgender individuals. Gender-neutral language, especially gender-neutral pronouns, is a valuable way for genderqueer and nonbinary individuals to express and communicate their gender identity, and an easy way to have their identity communicated to others (for instance, in the case of making introductions, i.e. “This is my friend Ariel, I met *them* at university”). It is important to note, at this early stage, that it is possible to problematise the concept of gender-neutrality in terms of respecting trans and nonbinary identities: the English *they*, for instance, is used by some as a way of negating a trans person’s identity in a way that is seen as more socially-acceptable than others - for example, refusing to call a transgender woman *she* after her female identity and pronoun use has been made clear. Acclaimed transgender author Julia Serano criticises this practice in *Performance Piece* (2010), along with a criticism of the “beyond-the-binary” argument; Serano notes that people will refer to her using “labels like MTF, boy-girl, he-she, she-male, *ze* & *hir* - anything but simply female”, specifically calling out gender-neutral neo-pronouns coined by and used within queer communities - *ze* and *hir* - as a method of denying authenticity of binary transgender identities. Similarly, on the internet forum Reddit, in a thread titled “Gender Neutral Terms in Non-English Languages??”, Reddit user gabilromariz details their experience of what I shall here term “weaponised neutrality” in Portuguese:

“Some gendered languages have neutral wording for things like "person" or "student" or many other titles, even though the words themselves have gramatical gender. Others can get around this if they have a neutral plural, like English (I see people online going by "they" to avoid using "he" or "she")
For example in portuguese "a pessoa"/the person is a feminine word, grammatically speaking, but the word itself is neutral an can refer to anybody. At the top of my head, that's pretty much it, but you can find more by asking actual people.
Unfortunately this can lead to offensive scenarios too, where people deliberately choose neutral words that are for objects in order to be hurtful, like "it" (aquilo) or "the thing" (a coisa/o coiso) when asked to refrain from using he/she/etc”.



Source: https://www.reddit.com/r/languagelearning/comments/aqkwxr/gender_neutral_terms_in_nonenglish_languages/eggtphl/ (accessed 09 August 2019)

Here, user gabilromariz identifies a potential practice for gender-neutrality - using terms such as “a pessoa” to replace the referent; following such practice, since “a pessoa” uses the grammatical feminine, all satellite elements thereof would reflect the grammatical gender of that term rather than the gender identity of the referent. It is theorised that such a construction could serve in formal contexts, similar to the use of “o senhor/a senhora” (“the gentleman/the lady) in the second-person; see, for instance, waitstaff asking questions such as “O quê quer o senhor?” (“What can I get for the gentleman?), which could theoretically become “O quê quer a pessoa?” (what can I get for the person?) This approach to gender-neutrality shall be discussed below, under the heading “neutralisation”.

User gabilromariz here also touches upon their experience with misgendering within Portuguese, detailing the use of terms such as *aquilo* (that thing) or *a coisa* (the thing) as deliberate and malicious attempts at misgendering.

Misgendering - malicious and non-malicious

This practice - the deliberate use of language to invalidate, disregard or otherwise undermine an individual’s gender identity and gender expression, is known as

misgendering. It is important, however, not to discredit or discount gender-neutral practices on the grounds of their potential to be used to misgender trans people, as gender-neutral language is simply a linguistic tool, and enables its users to avoid misgendering before pronouns are made clear, and to eliminate linguistic bias - and, equally importantly, it is likely that those who would misgender trans or nonbinary individuals would continue to do so even were this specific linguistic tool unavailable to them.

Julia Kapusta (2016) writes that misgendering is an act of violence that consists of three categories of harm being done to the subject, those being psychological harm, moral wrongs, and political disadvantage. It will be advantageous at this point to review this idea in detail.

Psychological Harm

First, this thesis shall address the idea of psychological harms enacted through misgendering; in order to do so, we look towards the idea of microaggressions. A microaggression is characterized as follows: “Microaggressions are the everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs, or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to target persons based solely upon their marginalized group membership” (Sue, 2010,). Transgender persons are subject to microaggressions (Nordmarken, 2014). Contemporary research indicates that although microaggressions may appear to be trivial, they nonetheless have a powerful impact on the psychological health of disadvantaged groups, such as transgender people; Capodilupo, et al. (2010) discuss the specific psychological effects of gendered microaggressions. It is incontestible that transgender persons are subject to misgendering (Nordmarken, 2014), and that the act of misgendering, intentional or not, is often experienced as a microaggression. Therefore, as misgendering constitutes a microaggression, and microaggressions can be shown to cause psychological harm, the act of misgendering a transgender person can cause said person psychological harm. Studies by McLemore (2014) suggest that misgendering “plays a disruptive role in education and employment”, and that misgendering “may also disrupt transgender spectrum individuals’ full participation in society because of its impact on factors that contribute to their mental health (e.g., anxiety, felt authenticity)”.

Moral Wrongs

Fricker (2007) writes of hermeneutical injustice, defining the term as “when a gap in collective interpretive resources puts someone at an unfair disadvantage when it comes to making sense of their social experience”. The given example for this is the coining of the term *sexual harassment*; prior to the term’s coining by twentieth-century feminists, society’s collective understanding lacked the means by which to properly interpret such experiences, especially the wrongs perpetrated by the instigator. To phrase this another way, before women and other victims of sexual harassment were afforded the freedom to discuss, and to contribute to discussions regarding, sexual harassment, the concept of sexual harassment was, in fairly general terms, unintelligible - because these women were denied discursive recourse relating to their experiences, their experiences were seen to belong to the arcane, the unreal, the unintelligible, constituting a harm to these women. Goetze (2017) expands this idea of hermeneutical injustice to include contemporary discussions of gender, citing gender activist Tyler Ford in a newspaper column, talking about their experiences as an agender individual:

“People don’t know what to make of me when they see me, because they feel my features contradict one another. They see no room for the curve of my hips to coexist with my facial hair; they desperately want me to be someone they can easily categorise...Strangers are often desperate to figure out what genitalia I have, in the hope that my body holds the key to some great secret and unavoidable truth about myself and my gender. It doesn’t. My words hold my truth. My body is simply the vehicle that gives me the opportunity to express myself.” (Ford 2015)

Ford’s assertion here - “my words hold my truth” - evokes the above-mentioned feminist argument against gender fatalism, and mirrors a position held in this work defending the right of transgender individuals to self-identify and to determine their own gender identity. Ford also here comments on the false dichotomy of the gender binary: their features are seen as contradictory, as mutually exclusive, and yet they exist.

Goetze suggests that the historical exclusion of gender-variant and LGBTQ persons from what I shall term the “gender conversation” constitutes a hermeneutical injustice, albeit one in which the marginalised group has successfully produced a way of interpreting their experiences; Goetze terms cases such as this *hermeneutical dissent*. Goetze goes on to argue that despite the successful nature of hermeneutical dissent within the gender conversation, the previous exclusion of transgender individuals constitutes a hermeneutical injustice.

The question now, when considering a moral assessment of social and linguistic gender conventions, is to what extent a hermeneutical injustice constitutes a harm to the

marginalised party. Fricker defines the harm caused by hermeneutical injustice as a *situated hermeneutical inequality*:

“the concrete situation... such that the subject is rendered unable to make communicatively intelligible something which it is particularly in his or her [or their] interests to be able to render intelligible” (Fricker, 2007).

In other words, hermeneutical injustice is injust insofar as it limits, degrades or otherwise diminishes the affected party’s agency and ability to act within their own interest, often leaving their only recourse as having in ways that can often involve putting themselves at risk, such as a transgender person having to openly disclose their transgender status. It is important to note, also, that that which is rendered communicatively unintelligible in this case is the subject’s gender, something which forms a large part of the subject’s social identity; indeed, in the case of transgender and nonbinary persons, gender can be said to form a much larger part of their social identity than that of cisgender persons, precisely because it is a core value that so often goes challenged and disputed; in other words, having one’s gender affirmed is a badge hard-earned. It is precisely for this reason that the ability to correctly articulate and express one’s gender is of such importance - and why it is so egregious to deny a person of this right to self-identification. To phrase this otherwise, the gravity of the hermeneutical injustice of misgendering is routinely underestimated, as most cisgender individuals do not experience gender as such a core part of their social identity, nor do cisgender individuals - generally - routinely find themselves having to justify and defend their gender identity or their expression thereof.

Political Harms

In terms of political harm caused by misgendering, it is appropriate at this point to look towards gender as a legal classification. An individual’s legal gender is determined by their sexing at birth - this gender marker appears on one’s birth certificate, and on any number of important documents among which one counts passports, identification papers, and social security documentation. This legal classification also has implications that affect situations where groups are separated by sex - such as medical treatment wards, and prisons. In the latter case, it is important to acknowledge that transgender individuals who are sent to prisons corresponding to their legal or birth gender face astronomically higher risks to their safety, being subject to prejudice-motivated abuse, violence, and distressingly often, sexual assault, on a large scale. It is not just in these cases that legal classification marginalises and discriminates against transgender individuals, however: where it is difficult to change this marker through correct legal

process, or there are restrictive obstructions or barriers to doing so - for instance, in the United Kingdom, individuals wishing to amend their birth certificate must provide several medical reports from no fewer than two separate medical professionals - reports for which there is usually a considerable cost to have written - provide sufficient evidence that they have been living in their “acquired gender” for no less than two years, which places the individual at greater risk of discrimination when such legal classification undermines their right to self-identification; provide a statutory declaration witnessed and administered by a Justice of the Peace, for which there is again a significant cost associated; have undergone gender reassignment surgery, access to which is limited in the United Kingdom, with waiting lists exceeding three years at the time of writing this thesis; and pay a considerable application fee, after which the application will be reviewed by an independent adjudication panel, and either approved or denied. These barriers to amendment of their legal gender classification not only act as gatekeeping measures that exclude and further marginalise poor transgender individuals - as many cannot afford to follow this expensive and exhausting legal process to become “officially recognised” - but also place an additional burden on transgender individuals to explain and justify their gender identity in the face of medical staff, insurance officials, employers, police officers, and a plethora of other staff working in official capacities. Julia Kapusta summarises:

“If definitions of who a transgender woman is misgender her, so that she is a “man” in the eyes of the law and of the state, then she will be subject to additional burdens and discrimination to which citizens should not be subject, and she may have limited access to goods and services.”

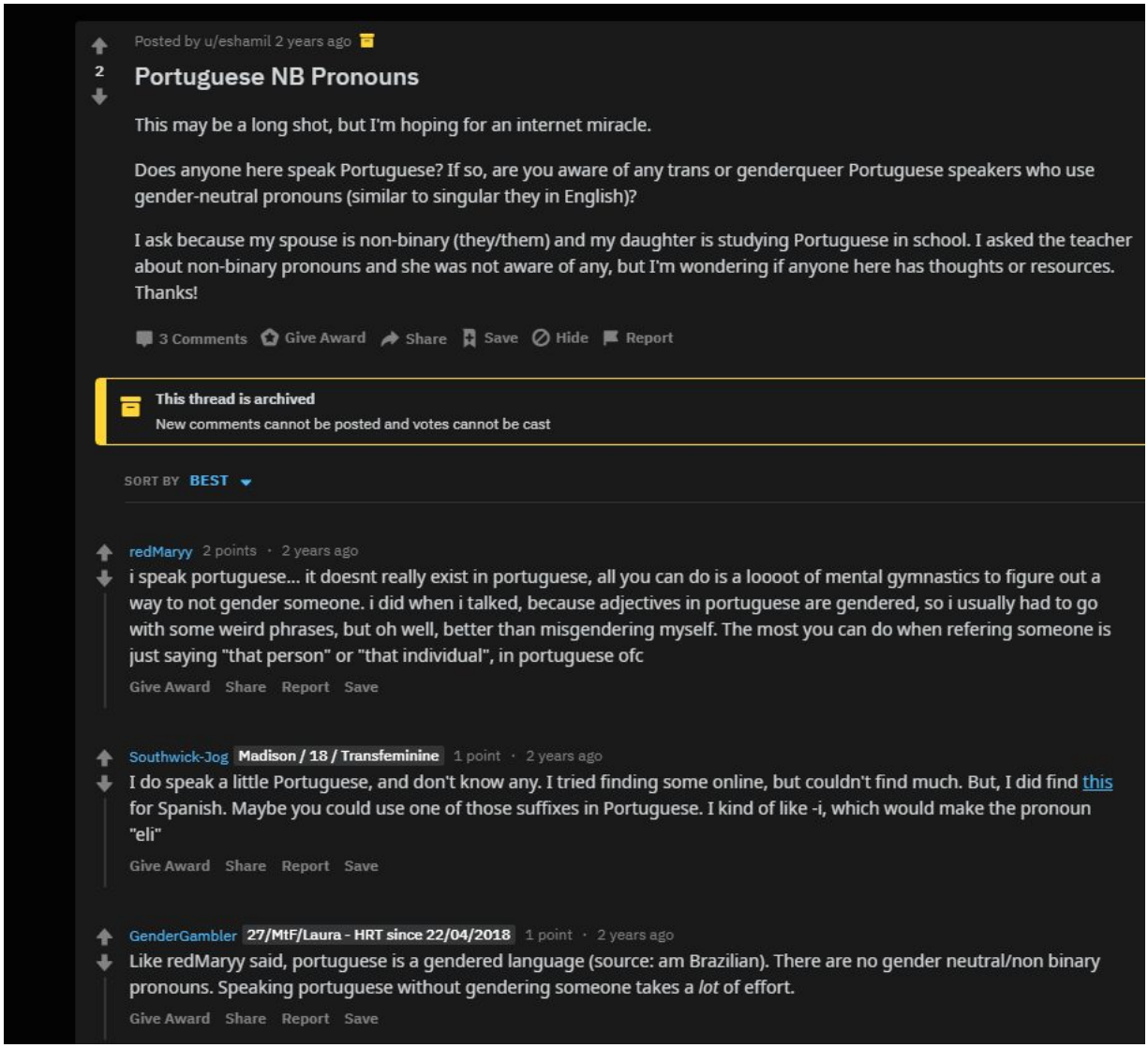
Although it could be reasonably claimed that the economic barrier to legal gender recognition constitutes an economic rather than political harm, it is important to acknowledge that this economic barrier limits and, in some cases, prevents, access to legal recognition, and thus constitutes a political harm for trans individuals to whom this barrier denies access to legal gender recognition.

It seems reasonable, therefore, to claim that political harm is done through the act of legal misgendering, as the subject is put at greater risk of discrimination, and has a great many unwelcome and harmful burdens placed upon them as a result of this difficult-to-change legal classification. Julia Kapusta’s assertion, thusly, seems to hold; misgendering a transgender individual can be reasonably said to cause certain psychological, moral, and political harms; as such, it can be claimed with little grounds for contestation that avoidance of misgendering, as and where possible, is desirable and beneficial.

The question this raises, therefore, is as follows: To what extent does the absence of a neutral gender within grammatically binary-gendered language constitute misgendering, in relation to those whose identities fall outside of this binary? In answering this question, we must first look to what resources exist within Portuguese for those who would express themselves in gender-neutral terms. In order to do so, it is important to center the experiences and needs of nonbinary speakers. On the internet forum Reddit, in a thread titled “Portuguese NB[1] pronouns”, user redMaryy writes:

“i speak portuguese... it doesnt really exist in portuguese, all you can do is a loooot of mental gymnastics to figure out a way to not gender someone. i did when i talked, because adjectives in portuguese are gendered, so i usually had to go with some weird phrases, but oh well, better than misgendering myself. The most you can do when refering someone is just saying "that person" or "that individual", in portuguese ofc”

[1] NB is a common shortening of “non-binary”; other such terms include “enby”, the transliteration of the spoken “NB”.

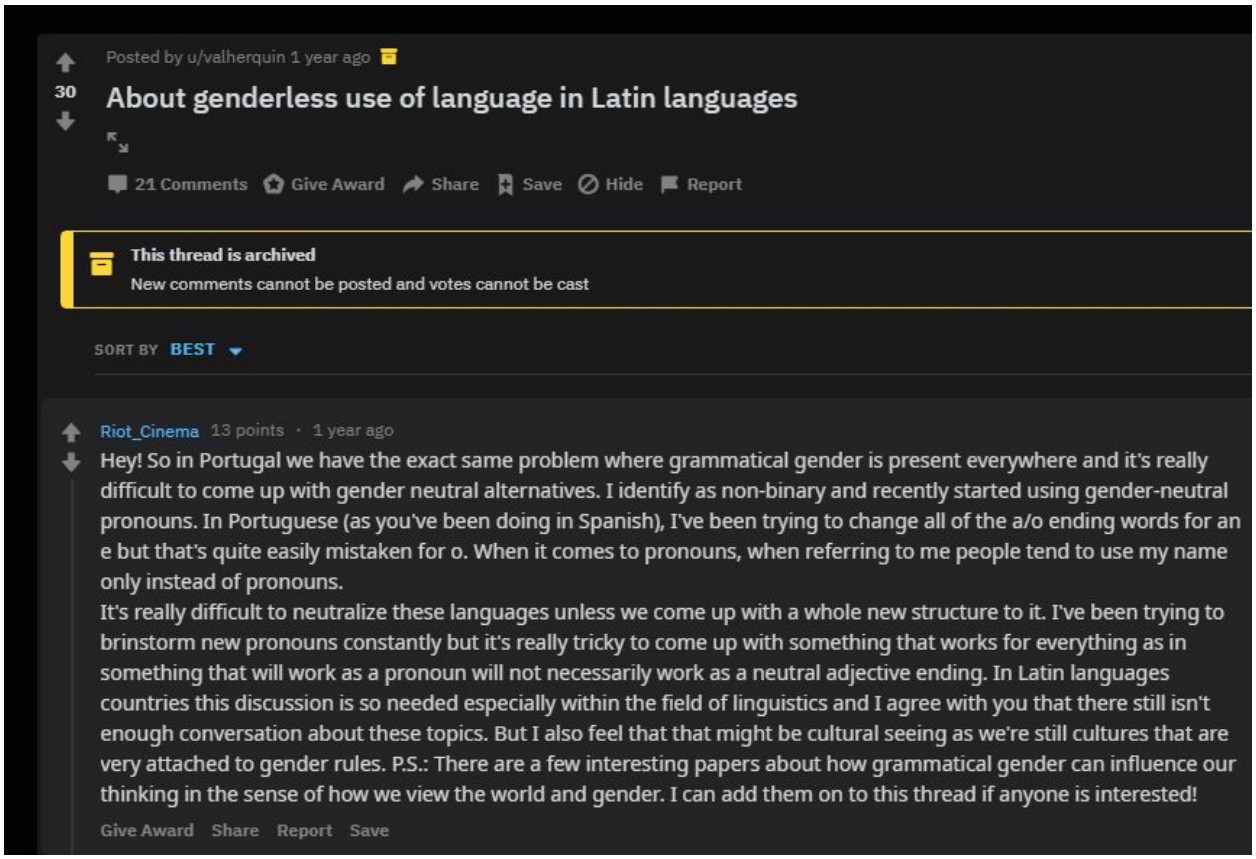


Source: https://www.reddit.com/r/asktransgender/comments/571hrs/portuguese_nb_pronouns/ (Accessed 09 August 2019)

Similarly, in a thread titled “About genderless use of language in Latin languages”, Reddit user Riot_Cinema writes:

“Hey! So in Portugal we have the exact same problem where grammatical gender is present everywhere and it's really difficult to come up with gender neutral alternatives. I identify as non-binary and recently started using gender-neutral pronouns. In Portuguese (as you've been doing in Spanish), I've been trying to change all of the a/o ending words for an e but that's quite easily mistaken for o. When it comes to pronouns, when referring to me people tend to use my name only instead of pronouns.
It's really difficult to neutralize these languages unless we come up with a whole new structure to it. I've been trying to brinstorm new pronouns constantly but it's really tricky

to come up with something that works for everything as in something that will work as a pronoun will not necessarily work as a neutral adjective ending. In Latin languages countries this discussion is so needed especially within the field of linguistics and I agree with you that there still isn't enough conversation about these topics. But I also feel that that might be cultural seeing as we're still cultures that are very attached to gender rules. P.S.: There are a few interesting papers about how grammatical gender can influence our thinking in the sense of how we view the world and gender. I can add them on to this thread if anyone is interested!"



Source: https://www.reddit.com/r/NonBinary/comments/7b5jmh/about_genderless_use_of_language_in_latin/dpfg46q/ (accessed 09 August 2019)

Indeed, internet searches for terms such as "nonbinary pronouns in Portuguese" return many similar results, the majority of them from subreddits (sub-sections of the Reddit forum) r/transgender, r/AskTransgender, and r/NonBinary. Approaches such as those mentioned by Reddit user Riot_Cinema shall be discussed in detail further on in this paper. At this early stage, however, it is enough to know that there exists an active demand for such language; that is to say, there exist language users whose needs would be served by the introduction of gender-neutral practice within Portuguese.

The above sources not only show, but state openly, the lack of recourse contemporary Portuguese has in regards to gender-neutrality, and how it fails to meet the needs of nonbinary language users in this regard. Given that as shown in redMaryy's comment - "I had to go with some weird phrases [in order to avoid gender], but oh well, better than misgendering myself" - the use of incorrect grammatical gender to refer to oneself or others can be seen or interpreted as misgendering, even when no alternatives exist, and even when a language user is made to apply this gender to themselves. In an episode of the talk-show podcast *Gender Reveal*, host Molly Woodstock receives the following letter from a listener:

"I was just listening to the episode with Kirby Conrod when you started talking about very gendered languages, I thought I would appear and maybe try to add a bit more to the conversation. I'm Brazilian, AFAB[2], bi, and it's been a year since I finally figured out I'm nonbinary but I'm very still much in the closet about it. I'm not a linguist or a sociologist, so everything I say comes from experience or observation. Also, besides Portuguese, I speak Italian and understand/read Spanish, and am super-curious about what mechanisms are being used to construct a more gender-neutral language."

Woodstock responds: "...a lot of nonbinary people around the globe are just using English and the social value of it to communicate queerness. Over this last year, I realised more and more, when I'm by myself, I will usually think in English, especially when I'm thinking about myself. And yeah, in one way it is pretty dope to think that there's one language which is becoming this way of communicating queerness, but in another, it pains me so much that my own mother tongue doesn't allow me to truly communicate myself. I see, time and time again, this, quote, "our pronouns have yet to be invented" idea around nonbinary online circles. But imagine lacking a whole lot more than just pronouns. No matter how, quote, "cool" English becoming a queer form of communication seems at first glance, it is honestly harmful AF[3] and I don't think we should be celebrating it that much! Every time I start thinking about coming out to someone, I realise that, honestly, I don't have the language in Portuguese to explain myself. But I also can't expect to only have gender conversations in English, nor do I want to, because that's not accessible either. And if we don't start to create ways to speak out about gender in non-English languages, we'll leave way too many folks out of the conversation." (Woodstock, 2019)

[2] AFAB is an acronym used to mean "assigned female at birth"; that is to say, that the user's birth designation is female.
[3] AF, "as f**k": a colloquial term meaning "very" or "extremely". Clarified here to avoid conflation with the above "AFAB".

Woodstock's stance here lends weight to the possible interpretation of the above comments, that while nonbinary identities remain largely incommunicable through standard Portuguese, it is important - and necessary - for users to actively create a method of communication for such identities. Their stance here also supports the interpretation of lacking correct language as equivalent to having to misgender oneself - describing this phenomenon as painful, and the language as wholly "lacking the language" to participate in these important gender conversations. This idea of "lacking the language" to participate in the gender conversation here mirrors the previously-mentioned idea of "finding out there's a word for people like me"; in contrast to the happiness and sense of belonging finding the language brings to its user, we here see the isolation and marginalisation caused by its lack. Woodstock here also confirms a point raised earlier within this work; these identities even in the absence of language tools allowing for their conveyance and expression, yet exist. We can consider "our pronouns have yet to be invented" the negative converse of "there being a word for people like me"; the language users find themselves in the same situation, only with one language allowing tools through which its users can express their queer identities, and others not.

Here, Woodstock touches on another important idea mentioned previously in this work: that of accessibility. Woodstock themself does not use the term, but their concerns regarding "[leaving] way too many folks out of the conversation" - "them" here being "nonbinary persons", and the conversation being the gender conversation - can be clearly read as relating to hermeneutical injustice. They talk about the importance of accessibility in a wider context, and point out, correctly, that limiting gender conversations to English and English-speakers only would deny an untold number of people participation in this conversation centred on their lives and experiences. Woodstock also corroborates here a claim made earlier in this work: that the inability of nonbinary and gender-variant speakers of Portuguese to properly express themselves and their gender identity; or indeed more correctly, the incapacity of the Portuguese language to allow its nonbinary and gender-variant speakers ample tools through which to express themselves and their gender identity, is a shared and well-known experience throughout Portuguese-speaking nonbinary culture. It is important, too, to note the specific phrasing used; it is not the *concept* of gender-variance or existence outside the binary that does not exist among speakers of Portuguese, but the possibility of its articulation, of any appropriate language for this purpose. Gender-variant speakers of Portuguese can be said, therefore, to be at a stage somewhere between suffering hermeneutical injustice and expressing hermeneutical dissent, subject to Goetze's definitions above. There is also a wealth of potential points of discussion regarding the "pretty dope" (Woodstock, 2019) concept of a queer language in and of itself; that the

language proposed for this is English, however, problematises this idea somewhat, given colonial history, and potentially it could lead to the further othering and marginalisation of non-English-speaking queer individuals and communities. Woodstock here describes this “queer necessity of English” as harmful - they talk of issues of inclusion, of accessibility, and of othering and exclusion, even for a person with access to at least one language in which their identity is communicable. These ideas shall be discussed in further depth below, as they are of particular relevance to one practice that shall be discussed later in this thesis. This idea of inclusivity and of accessibility, of nonexclusion from the gender conversation of any nonbinary or gender-variant speaker, shall inform the approach taken in this work towards the discussion and evaluation of common practice with regards to gender-neutral use of language.

It would be remiss, at this point, to not make a crucial distinction.Reference has been made, thus far within this work, to the *deliberate and malicious* act of misgendering; it is clear, however, that not every act of misgendering is either of those things. Indeed, such moral judgements and behaviours - deliberateness and maliciousness - cannot be attributed to language. What, therefore, of the non-deliberate acts of misgendering that occur, including those that come to pass through lack of linguistic recourse?

In order to address this question, we must look once again towards the effects that misgendering has upon transgender individuals. Before doing so, however, we must first look at the role language plays in the forming of opinions and biases; this discussion continues in the section marked **Linguistic relativity**, below.

With this in mind, therefore, focus shall progress onto current grammatical practice and grammatical theory.

Linguistic and Grammatical Gender Binaries

Moving on from the discussion of the gender binary within a social setting, it must then be discussed in terms of a linguistic setting. Motschenbacher (2013) briefly discusses the nature of the gender binary across the four linguistic gender categories, with lexical gender being the most strictly binary, grammatical gender allowing for some variation, and social gender coming closest to displaying a sort of “gender spectrum”, ranging from “more male” to “more female”. Referential gender, it is claimed, is potentially the most useful in the deconstruction of traditional linguistic gender structures, as it allows for both gender-neutral personal reference and instances of gender crossing. This gender crossing, however, is not without its own difficulties. It can be claimed that such gender crossing is only subversive in one direction; while the use of female and

feminine forms to refer to men can very well be called subversive, as it calls into question traditional views and ideas on masculinity and maleness, the use of male and masculine forms to refer to women mirror the traditional androcentric linguistic practices that it would aim to subvert; as an example of this, the use of the masculine false generic, or the use of the masculine as a neutral term to refer to a referent of unknown gender within Spanish and Portuguese. In the latter case of "masculine grammatical gender applied to women", therefore, gender crossing does nothing to question the traditional views and ideas. This leads to a situation where only the male gender category can be questioned or subverted, whereas the female category not only remains unquestioned, but has the male dominance discourses it is subjected to reinforced. This leads to the question, therefore, in what way, or rather to what degree, can it be considered subversive to reinforce existing structural power imbalance? It is also important to note that the practice of linguistic gender crossing has, historically, had pejorative or derogatory connotations, based primarily on traditional ideas regarding femininity - for example, "*he's such a girl!"* being used to call someone's character into question by ascribing to them the weakness and lack of bravery traditionally associated with femininity. There is also a discussion to be had regarding gender crossing and the earlier topic of misgendering; similarly to the points raised above on the unidirectional nature of subversion, the veracity and validity of transgender individuals' identities is something that is constantly under fire. Gender crossing, albeit potentially unintentionally, is another linguistic tool which has the potential to undermine or deny an individual's freedom and ability to govern their own identity. Particularly noteworthy is that it reinforces, rather than refutes or questions, the idea that transgender individuals are "really" the biological sex they were designated at birth, rather than that as which they identify. This leads to a similar difficulty as described above; gender crossing cannot be said to subvert linguistic dominance practices as they relate to marginalised groups, rather subverting only the practices as they relate to the dominant group and enforcing such practices as they relate to marginalised groups - groups which already suffer social consequences of such dominance practices. These issues relating to the practice of gender crossing as subversion will be discussed in more detail below, under the heading **Linguistic Relativity, or *the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis***.

This thesis will involve identifying current linguistic practice with regards to gender-neutrality and queerness in Portuguese, with a degree of evaluation; what the practices are, how they are used, and then a look at any criticisms that have been raised against these practices, any ways in which these practices perhaps may not suit their users' needs, and any difficulties within the realm of gender-neutrality that these practices do not address.

It has been suggested (Motschenbacher, 2013; Hornscheidt, 2011) that grammatically-gendered languages – which is to say, languages with a purely grammatical gender as well as a referential personal gender, such as Portuguese, Spanish, French and German – would be better served addressing gender neutrality through a process of *specification*, through making the non-"default" gender, the subordinate, explicitly visible – this would entail, for instance, in Portuguese, addressing a mixed-gender group with the feminine, rather than the masculine, as the language would normally prescribe. The argument here is that "natural-gender" languages – languages with a personal gender, but otherwise no grammatical gender, such as English or Swedish – will more readily accept the introduction of a new, explicitly-neutral third gender, a process termed *neutralisation*, such as the English *they* or the Swedish *hen*. This is theorised owing to the gender system in grammatically-gendered languages being much more integral, and centralised within the language; it logically follows that such languages thus would take substantially longer, and face considerably more resistance and logistical difficulties when introducing an explicitly-neutral third gender.

At this point, it is important to address the inevitable question: *why* address and rethink the idea of gendered language, and gender within language as a whole? Gendered languages have, after all, existed in such forms and functioned in this way for centuries, without apparent problem. To this, there are two immediate responses. The first is that, with the advent of fourth-wave feminism and its focus on personal identity and representation, the idea of inclusivity in language is being reassessed, and thus the reassessment of grammatical gender is unavoidable. Moreover, it is inevitable that when the *social* concept of gender is reassessed, so will the *grammatical* concept of gender. Although the queer and trans struggle is by no means a new phenomenon, it is at the very least gaining greater mainstream *attention* - and with more and more people becoming aware of the queer politic, more and more people move towards a critical view and understanding of the gender binary. This, in turn, leads to an increase in people publicly identifying as transgender, genderqueer, gender-non-conforming, or nonbinary, as they are afforded greater personal freedom - and fewer social consequences - for doing so. In this light, the answer to "*why* address and rethink the idea of gendered language?" would be "because the social concept of *gender* is being questioned, and as mentioned above, personal grammatical gender is inextricably linked to personal social gender", as per Hellinger and Bußmann above.

The second response involves the theory of linguistic relativity, or the *Sapir-Whorf hypothesis*.

Linguistic Relativity; or, the *Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis*

The theory of linguistic relativity, also termed the *Sapir-Whorf hypothesis*, holds that the structure of a language and the possibilities that said language permits can influence the ways in which its speakers perceive reality, and reinforce certain ideas and social structures (Penn, 1972). To relate this back to the idea of gendered language, therefore, it could be claimed that gendered language has an effect on the way in which its speakers perceive and experience gender. The theory of linguistic relativity, though previously disregarded, has very recently gained much support from research carried out in the field of psychology.

In a series of experiments carried out by Wasserman and Weseley (2009), for instance, participants were made to read passages of literature written in either English, a natural gender language, or French or Spanish, grammatically-gendered languages, and then shown a series of statements and asked to indicate their level of agreement with each. The study found that those who read a passage in a language with a masculine-feminine grammatical gender contrast - French and Spanish, in this case – generally reacted more positively to statements that advocated traditionally-misogynistic or gender-segregationist views, such as “women should not go where they are not wanted” immediately following their reading of the passage, as opposed to those who read the same passage in English. Interestingly, Hord (2016) found that bilinguals who spoke both a grammatically-gendered language and a natural-gender language were more likely to use gender-neutral language even in their grammatically-gendered language, lending credence to the idea that the structure of one’s language can influence the way in which one thinks and experiences reality. Motschenbacher (2013), Hornschiedt (2011), and Wasserman (2009) have all suggested that a masculine-feminine contrast in grammatically-gendered language may lead to what is termed *dominance thinking.* Dominance thinking refers to a system of binary oppositions, where both terms in each dyad are defined relationally In such a system, one referent is superior, and the other inferior or subordinate; in this case, the linguistic preference or privileging of the masculine is likely to both mirror and influence the societal views within speakers of that language. Wasserman and Weseley clearly linked the results of their study to dominance thinking:

“In constantly differentiating between the masculine and feminine, languages with masculine v. feminine grammatical gender may contribute to a more general belief that men and women are different. Furthermore, because women have traditionally been an oppressed group, this notion of difference may translate into a constant intimation that women are inferior and prime negative attitudes toward women’s pursuit of equal

opportunity." (Wasserman and Weseley 2009: 635). These findings create a powerful argument for why cisgender women, and the feminist movement as a whole, should support this move towards neutrality and non-gendered language: if a main aim of the feminist movement is to address and combat systemic gender inequality, and the use of gendered language can be shown to contribute to such an inequality, then it follows that neutral or non-gendered language, as a tool for avoiding such, is desirable and beneficial.

Further to this, a study carried out by Prewitt-Freilino, et al. (2012) examined the effect of the gender-relevant structure of a country's predominant language on the country's degree of gender equality. Even with other influential factors (such as religious tradition, political system, geographic region) accounted for, a relationship was found between the dominant language and social equality, with countries in which grammatically-gendered languages with a masculine-feminine contrast is predominant exhibited less gender equality, overall, than countries in which natural gender or genderless languages are more widely-spoken. This, again, is indicative of the detrimental effects that gender-binary structures can have on their speakers' perceptions. Similarly, a study carried out by Gustafsson Sendén et al (2015) further serves to illustrate the link between a language's stance towards gender and the corresponding social view. In this study, public opinions and attitudes towards gender-neutrality, as well as familiarity with, and the propensity towards using, gender-neutral language in Swedish. The study found that very quickly following the official adoption of a gender-neutral personal pronoun into the Swedish language, general public opinion very swiftly changed from one of opposition to one of support, with participants reporting both much greater familiarity with such language and also a much higher personal preference towards its use in the three years since its adoption into mainstream Swedish language. Change of opinion on this scale, as well as in such a short timescale (the study spanning three years immediately following the official adoption of the neutral pronoun into the language) is both very promising, and indicative of the degree to which language can shape both personal and public opinion.

Relating this back to the original question, therefore, of "*why* address and rethink the idea of gender within language", the second response would be "because there is significant support for the claim that gendered language impacts the way in which its users experience reality, and potentially influences the way its speakers act and think as a result". Having documented the effect language can have on the experiences and views of its speakers, it is now important to look into the different ways in which it has been proposed that a language may become more neutral, or adopt practices less likely to reinforce potentially-detrimental androcentric and binarist paradigms.

Earlier within this work, the topic of linguistic relativity was broached with regards to linguistic or non-intentional misgendering, and the harms it may unwittingly cause. If - as the theory of linguistic relativity and its related studies suggest - language use serves a role in forming and reinforcing certain ideas, and affects the manners in which its users experience reality, then it stands to reason that the lack of a truly neutral gender in a language may influence how users of that language experience gender. To phrase this otherwise, if as Wasserman and Weseley's 2009 study suggests, compulsory binarism within a language can contribute to the forming of gender-segregationist or bioessential opinions, then the lack of a neutral gender can be seen as a barrier to gender equality, especially with regards to non-binary individuals. Again, it is important to differentiate such from malicious misgendering - one cannot ascribe moral conscience nor responsibility to a language - but rather one must be mindful of the potential consequences of collective, as well as individual, language use.

Having touched upon the political aspect of language earlier in this thesis, it is important at this point to expand upon the ideas introduced therein. A common response to attempts at gender-neutrality within language is for opponents to accuse its users of attempting to politicise something otherwise entirely apolitical; this thesis holds that language use, especially its policing, has a political element, whether intentional or unintentional. The difficulty with language policing, for instance, is thus: how is it determined what *is* and *isn't* correct language practice, if such a thing exists; and furthermore, how is this correct and incorrect divide enforced? This leads into a rather more base question: if there are, indeed, *correct* and *incorrect* forms of language, then, further to the *how* above, *who* determines what is correct and incorrect - that is to say, who is it who has the power to control, determine and regulate language? How does, or would, such a regulatory body enact such control over a language? This question is important both on a theoretical and practical level - on a theoretical level, the question is more akin to asking who owns, or has the right to, a language, whereas on a practical level, the question is more about who is *able* to regulate and enforce such language use on any meaningful scale.

The second question therein, at least, has a readily-apparent answer: countries such as Portugal and Brazil indeed have language academies, governing bodies dedicated to precisely the regulation and diffusion of what they term *correct* Portuguese; the *Classe de Letras da Academia das Ciências de Lisboa* for Portugal, and the *Academia Brasileira de Letras* for Brazil. These academies are tasked with the "care of the

national language"; that is to say, they hold paramount authority over their respective language, determine how it "should" be used, and publish vocabularies; any word not included in an official vocabulary is effectively considered not to exist.

There have, however, been historical criticisms levelled against language academies in general, as well as against the specific practices of the *Academia Brasileira de Letras*. These criticisms include the idea that their policing of language is overly-strict, as most informal language and slang is considered "improper" Portuguese; following such ideas to their logical conclusion, if most informal Portuguese is incorrect, then the only correct Portuguese is Portuguese with a formal register. Paffey (2007) summarises this idea thusly: " As official discourse excludes non-standard language varieties as 'sub-standard', and even 'divisive', so dominant languages (and their associated cultures) spread, and dominated languages and identities are subordinated." There is an interesting political aspect to this, in addition, that must be discussed; as previously mentioned, there is language common among queer communities and queer politics that has not yet reached more mainstream use; this queer vernacular, as it will be termed, has thus not entered into official vocabularies despite its heavy use by these groups for well over half a century. In other words, this queer vernacular is considered "improper". Having examined the *Sapir-Whorf hypothesis* above, this begs the question; if it is impossible to discuss queer politic, queer issues, and queer experiences "properly", what impact will this have on the public view of these realities? Furthermore, if queer language is deemed improper, this cannot be seen as anything other than a value judgment: it is queer, which is to say not *standard*, and thus unacceptable - and it is thus the language academies' policing of language, rather than attempts at gender recognition or neutrality, that have brought a political aspect to the language debate.

It is also important to consider the idea of *contextual* appropriacy in light of this; what language can be considered "proper" and "improper" is situationally-dependent. Indeed, language can be seen to vary across social strata, as well as geographical region; these variances in language governed by membership of a social group have been termed *sociolects* (Durrell, 2004). While it may be considered *proper* Portuguese to refer to a genderqueer or non-binary individual in the grammatical masculine, given its role as a false generic, for instance, it would be more "*correct"* to use that individual's preferred choice of pronoun and linguistic gender, regardless of the current academy stance on the chosen form - indeed, in the queer sociolect as mentioned above, this would be considered "proper". This feeds interestingly into a school of thought in moral philosophy - the Kantian principle of "ought implies can". This holds that an agent, if morally obliged to perform a certain action, must logically be able to perform it: "For if the moral law commands that we ought to be better human beings now, it inescapably

follows that we must be capable of being better human beings." (Kant, 1793). How this relates to the neutralisation of gender is as follows: there is a collective moral obligation to respect each individual's gender identity - official literature released by the United Nations (2012) states that article 12 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is intended to be inclusive of transgender individuals' rights to freedom of expression, and thusly to protect transgender individuals against defamation of character based upon grounds of gender identity - and thus, it *must* be possible to do so. In essence, the necessity of doing so, it could be argued, takes precedence over what is considered *permissible* by language authorities. As such, until such a time as there is an *officially-sanctioned* way of discussing queer experiences and realities, it can be argued that all practiced ways of doing so must necessarily be "correct".

An important aspect of the Academies' power over language within those countries which have them is their role in determining educational syllabi. That is to say, language academies determine the manner in which language is taught, and what language is taught, and thus hold a great deal of power in terms of establishing words as common-use or otherwise. Sutton (1991) writes of social, academic and educational disadvantage being attached to what he terms "socioeconomic language variants", with such disadvantage particularly associated with sociolects, dialects and ethnolects that deviate from "received pronunciation and grammatical rules" - in other words, a "high" variant of the language that is "taught for formal, written educational use".

The aforementioned criticisms of the academies, incidentally, are relevant here. The *Academia Brasileira de Letras*, for instance, is widely considered (Jorge, 1999) by its critics to be a collective of conformists who, following their election into the *Academia*, stopped meaningfully contributing to the fields of language and literature, and the *Academia* has notably declined to appoint many notable writers and contributors to Brazilian language and literature, among them Nobel Prize nominees Jorge de Lima and Gerardo Melo Mourão. Similarly, seats have been held by inventor Santos Dumont and plastic surgeon Ivo Pitanguy. It is of little surprise, therefore, that the legitimacy of its governance over the Brazilian Portuguese language has been questioned. This begs the earlier question, once more, of " who is it who has the power to control, determine and regulate language?"

Moving past the immediate answer of "those who are appointed to do so," one school of thought holds that language is determined and regulated by common use and intelligibility, languages being organic and dynamic entities that cannot be effectively authoritatively policed or regulated - effectively, if something is being widely said, and understood, and conveys meaning, then it is a word; if it fails to convey meaning, or falls out of use to the point that it no longer does so, then it is not. This school of thought

holds interesting advantages over more traditional methods of language regulation: one, that it is much more easily-mutable and less concrete than the academy system, and two, that words are evaluated with regard to the context in which they are spoken, and thus their appropriacy is linked to the degree of success with which they perform their function, i.e. conveyance of information. Interestingly, this also accounts well for archaic terms: once a word reaches a point at which it is no longer considered to be understood by the average person, it is considered to be a word no longer. Paffey (2007) explores this idea of the impossibility of language policing by external authorities such as academies: " Defining 'standard language' as something coherent - a ''conceptual entity'' - is, at best, problematic, and it is better considered as an ideology." . Indeed, determining a "standard language" involves presenting such language as "socially-neutral, universally-available, natural and objective" (Woolard, 2005) - in other words, as "*the* language" of a neutral, homogenous general public. This act of presenting a certain kind or variant of language as standard has problematic implications; in order to do so, a language variant that sees contemporary use must be used, but in doing so, the users of that dialect or sociolect are privileged, and other language users presented as "incorrect" or "undesirable":

"…perhaps it is necessary to choose one social group to serve as a model. Perhaps there is even some rationale for choosing the ''educated'' as this group. But there is nothing objective about this practice. It is the ordering of social groups in terms of who has authority to determine how language is best used. " (Lippi-Green, 1997).

Paffey goes on to detail how language ideologies are rarely concerned solely with the issues of language; rather, that other social desiderata and objectives are concealed and propagated by these linguistic policies. These views and ideologies are then presented as representative of beliefs widely held by the general public, rather than being ''derived from, rooted in, reflective of, or responsive to the experience or interests of a particular social position." (Woolard, 1998). Such discrepancy between academies' linguistic ideology can be seen in the case of the *Acordo Ortográfico* of 1990, where the *Academia das Ciências de Lisboa* resulted in favour of the *Acordo*, despite Portuguese popular opinion strongly opposing the *Acordo*;see **The *Acordo Ortográfico da Lingua Portuguesa* (1990)***,* below.

In "Misgendering and its moral contestability", however, Julia Kapusta (2016) proposes the following thought experiment. Imagine, for instance, the character of Laura, a fictional 55-year-old woman, who began her transition late in life and therefore retains many typically-masculine features such as jawline, silhouette, and facial hair, and little to no breast development, who has been medically unable to undergo sex reassignment surgery (in this case, vaginoplasty). Laura regularly dresses in a "traditionally feminine"

manner - that is to say, wearing dresses or skirts. One question Julia Kapusta puts forward in determining the validity of Laura's claim to the term "woman" is as follows:

"Is Laura, in general and for the most part, called a "woman" by the competent users of the English language who encounter her? This is a question about the referents of the term "woman" according to a standard of linguistic use. The definition of "woman" is not descriptive but ostensive, and the approach is extensional."

A question pertinent here, therefore, would be to ask that in this appeal to authority of the appropriate linguistic community, which community might that be? Who are the "competent users of language"?

Imagine, by manner of response to these questions, the following two scenarios.

1) Laura has little to no involvement in the queer community, and most people she encounters automatically address her as "sir", and refer to her as a man and using "he" pronouns on account of her "masculine" physical characteristics, regardless of her gender expression, use of self-referential feminine language and manner of dress.

2) Laura is active in the queer community, and regularly attends a local transgender support group. Within that group - as would be the case in the majority of similar groups - Laura is referred to as a woman and with the pronoun "she", even on occasions when her gender expression is more traditionally masculine, such as when she has not, for whatever reason, removed her facial hair.

Julia Kapusta suggests that the same level of competency of language use can be assumed of the support group in 2), as can be assumed of the public in 1). Therefore, the dispute in this case is not a matter of linguistic competence, but rather of a philosophical bent as to what does, or does not, constitute "a woman". Should we, perhaps, follow majority rule in this case, and term Laura a man? Julia Kapusta holds that "it is morally problematic to claim that the transgender use of the term "woman" is incorrect or deviant, for it will be "incorrect" only with respect to a common and "natural" use that is a mechanism for diminishing Laura's self-respect and denying her basic rights.". In doing so, she quite reasonably posits that the implication of this claim that the transgender use of "woman" is incorrect is that transgender users are either deluding themselves or wilfully deceiving others, an implication that has historically placed transgender women at risk due to its defamatory nature. It can therefore be reasonably

understood from this thought experiment, that majority use of language is not immune to prejudice or bias, and majority-rule claims instead serve to strengthen existing power structures and hierarchical inequalities. Relating this back to the role of language academies, the vulnerability of majority language use to prejudice or bias would grant a great deal of power to such bodies - for as long as such linguistic bias is widely-taught, the bias will likely remain; to teach otherwise, however, would likely have a noticeable effect on public opinion regarding the issue (Gustafsson Sendén et al., 2015). Following on from the Swedish case as discussed in the study by Gustafsson Sendén et al., an officially-sanctioned neutral gender, alongside its introduction into the curriculum, would likely positively impact the popular opinion towards both gender-neutrality and those identifying outside of the gender binary.

It is prudent to consider, in which case, the reality of what meaningful change can be viably enacted, to what degree, and what degrees of success could be expected from such practices being introduced on a wide scale. In order to do so, it is perhaps most relevant to examine a recent case of such language implementation - the case of the official implementation of the Swedish third-person neutral personal pronoun *hen*, equivalent to the English *they*. To recap mention made to this case earlier in this work, *hen* is a third-person singular gender-neutral personal pronoun in Swedish, analogous to the English singular *they*, and intended as a neutral complement to the masculine *han* and feminine *hon*. Although it has been in reported use within queer and transgender Swedish communities since at least 1966, its use remained relatively confined to within those circles until its re-emergence in a newspaper article advocating its use in 1994, eventually entering the wider cultural zeitgeist in 2014, with its official adoption by the *Svenska Akademien*, the Swedish language academy and linguistic authority (Bäck et al., 2015). Interestingly, use of *hen* rose by over one thousand percent in 2012 compared to 2011, thanks in part to the ongoing linguistic debate in media involving its use. Ledin and Lyngfelt (2013) posit that *hen* cannot yet be considered to have been accepted fully within the language, as its impact within newspaper reporting and other published written media has been relatively slight. However, studies by Gustafsson Sendén, et al (2015) have shown a sharp increase in both public support for *hen* and frequency of use thereof, and so *hen* is expected to continue increasing in frequency of use as users' exposure increases and they become more comfortable with its use. Given the relative success of the Swedish case, although legislating for language use poses certain issues and difficulties, it is nonetheless possible to enact meaningful change both within a language and within the social consciousness of its speakers.

A point of contention, however, may be raised upon the consideration of mandated language change: to what degree can, not just a proposed neutral gender, but _any_ large-scale language change be reasonably expected to be immediately accepted by, language users unfamiliar with its use, and to what degree can legislating for its use succeed?

The *Acordo Ortográfico da Lingua Portuguesa* (1990)

To answer this, we must look towards previous large-scale language changes and their acceptance within Portuguese. Of these, one that stands out as being of immediate note is the *Acordo Ortográfico da Lingua Portuguesa* of 1990, enacted in 2008 in Portugal, an agreement which enacted spelling changes and standardisation across all Portuguese-speaking countries, based on negotiations between all Portuguese-speaking nations started in 1980 and concluding with the signing of the agreement in 1990. In keeping with this question, we shall look not at the methods taken by the *Acordo*, but rather at public responses to its implementation focusing upon those regarding intelligibility, and any criticisms levelled against the *Acordo* upon such grounds. It is important to note here that any and all such linguistic reform typically faces opposition from the general public (Pátková, 2011). Pátková here details popular opinion regarding the *Acordo*, counting among its opponents authors such as Mia Couto and Inês Pedrosa, citing Couto's public disapproval thereof:

"o acordo ortográfico tem tanta excepção, omissão e casos especiais que não traz qualquer mudança efectiva" (Pátková, 2011)

("The *Acordo Ortográfico* has so many exceptions, omissions, and special cases that it brings with it no meaningful changes").[4]

Public opinion in Portugal, similarly, seemed to oppose the *Acordo*: a survey carried out in March 2009 by the newspaper *Correio de Manhã* indicated that 57.3% of respondents opposed the changes proposed by the *Acordo*, and 66.3% indicated that they had no intention to change their manner of writing to fit the new orthography[5]. Conversely, Pátková claims, the *Acordo* faced much less resistance in Brazil; perhaps due to a combination of Brazilian Portuguese being less affected by the *Acordo* than European Portuguese (with 1.6% of words in PT-EU being affected, compared with 0.5% of words in PT-BR) and the most major change enacted by the *Acordo* - the deletion of unvoiced consonants, such as the *c* in *facto* (now *fato*, existing within PT-BR

[4] Translation mine.
[5] http://blogtailors.blogspot.com/2009/03/correio-da-manha-resultados-da-sondagem.html, accessed 13 September 2019.

as *fato* previously to the *Acordo)* - having already been in place within Brazilian Portuguese orthography since 1931 (Pátková, 2011). Moura (2008) considers the *Acordo* a great loss on the part of Portugal and African countries with Portuguese as a national language, going so far as to consider it a form of neocolonialism on the part of Brazil:

"A adopção do Acordo redundará em total benefício do Brasil. Os PALOP e Timor ficarão completamente dependentes da edição e das indústrias culturais brasileiras. E Portugal lá chegará. No resto do mundo, o Acordo não fará aumentar numa só página a quantidade de peças traduzidas, numa só pessoa o número de estudantes ou falantes da língua e num só forum internacional a utilização dela." (Moura 2008).

"The adoption of the *Acordo* will turn out entirely in Brazil's favour. PALOP countries and Timor will be completely reliant upon Brazilian editing and cultural industries. And Portugal will also reach that stage. In the rest of the world, the *Acordo* won't increase the number of translated works, the number of students or speakers of the language, or the use of the language in international forums, not even by one."[6]

Juxtaposing the Swedish case with that of the *Acordo Ortográfico*, two major complicating factors become apparent: the scale of the *Acordo* was much greater than the scale of the introduction of *hen*; Swedish is a natural-gender language, while Portuguese is a grammatically-gendered language; however, both complicating factors indicate that the introduction of a neutral gender in Portuguese may well be a more difficult task than in Swedish.

Returning to the idea of language policing, as well as the aforementioned "proper/improper" binary divide, another difficulty becomes apparent - if language is determined by an appointed committee, then its governance is inherently invested in preserving existing power structures. To phrase this otherwise, when the ruling body of a country also has the power to govern its language, it has a vested interest in delegitimising the language used by minority groups and political opponents. This further supports the earlier point that language is inherently political, linking back to the opening quote by Hellinger: "Language is used to perform acts of inclusion and exclusion, and is therefore invested with the potential to protect or disrupt social relations." Thus, when that power is in the hands of those invested in preserving existing power structures, such as a country's governing body, it becomes increasingly difficult for the individual to challenge those power structures. For this reason, the

[6] Translation mine.

legitimisation of gender-neutral Portuguese - linguistic practice associated primarily with queer and activist communities - is of great importance in the pursuit of social equality.

Specification

Accordingly, this thesis will look first at practices of gender specification within the Portuguese language, and then at practices of neutralisation. It is first important to define what is meant by gender specification: the use of specifically-gendered language, with the aims of raising the linguistic visibility of a group that is less visible within said language. In this sense, gender specification refers to the use of language that privileges and prioritises the feminine and female genders, in direct opposition the the historical privileging of the male and masculine genders within language. There has been much discussion on the traditional use of the masculine gender as a false generic; the most famous perhaps being Jakobson (1973), stipulating that a neutral gender signals asexuality, or a marked lack of gender, the feminine signals marked femininity, and the masculine, neither: "The masculine is a twice unmarked gender. Contrary to the neuter, it signals neither the asexual character of the entity named, nor, in contradistinction to the feminine, does it carry any specification of the sex". Under this structuralist view, the masculine is only gendered when it appears in oppositional contrast to the feminine, and otherwise carries no gendered implication. This differs from the feminist tradition, however, which finds that the masculine gender signifies male gender, with psycholinguistic evidence to support (Doleschal, 2015). Under this premise, the generic masculine can be explained as a sort of synecdoche, where a specific case (male) is used to represent the category in its entirety (human). This interpretation is also held by cognitivist and naturalist approaches to language; the masculine is used to represent the whole, and as such, the whole may be interpreted as masculine following this line of thinking. There are two main practices proposed, therefore, in the name of gender specification: one, to replace the use of generics with the explicit use of both the masculine and feminine genders alongside each other - e.g., *ladies and gentlemen*, *alunos e alunas* (male students and female students, in Portuguese); the second and more radical, to replace the use of the masculine generic with a feminine generic in an attempt to invert the power structure, both to cause female visibility but also male invisibility (Pusch, 1988). Both practices, interestingly, have had some degree of success among grammatically-gendered languages with a masculine-feminine contrast, with the University of Leipzig implementing this feminine generic, although with a footnote explaining that this generic does refer to all genders (Hord, 2016).

There are some problematic elements of gender-specification, however, which shall be briefly discussed here. As discussed above, studies have linked the use of gender-specific and gender-preferent language to dominance thinking, which has been in turn linked to discriminatory attitude and social inequality. It is also of importance to the current discussion that gender specification does little to challenge the presupposition of a male-female gender binary, something which queer linguistics historically has sought to challenge. Indeed, Motschenbacher (2013) calls attention to this idea, questioning whether a masculine generic is in fact less binary than the specification of two particular genders - but posits that gender difference is generally perceived as less harmful than male dominance, despite the connection between gender difference and dominance thinking. There is also an interesting perspective to be considered with regards to the masculine generic, in terms of the concept of misgendering, as explained above. Consider, for instance, a transgender woman, whose identity is regularly - and oftentimes maliciously - called into question by anti-trans individuals calling her a man; to what extent could it be reasonably claimed that addressing her, in a group alongside others, with a masculine generic serves to legitimise the act of misgendering her, as *this specific* masculine term **does** refer to her? And, indeed, on a broader scale, how can the masculine generic function as intended, when a woman is told that what is being said both is, and isn't, directed towards her? The masculine generic has been problematised throughout literature, as its essential message to women is "this language applies to you, unless it doesn't". This author would extend the concept slightly, in regards to masculine generics and transgender women: the use of the masculine generic is directly oppositional to gender-equality movements in this regard, as it effectively says to trans women, "people do not get to misgender you...except in these many, very common scenarios". This constitutes another such instance of what Bettcher (2013) terms "basic denial of authenticity" of trans identity; the masculine false generic, especially, provides those who would deliberately and maliciously misgender a trans woman or transfeminine nonbinary individual with a way to do so while maintaining plausible deniability, under the guise of "linguistic correctness"; such deniability also allows for such people to avoid any and all social consequences that may follow from such an attack on identity.

Semantic Derogation

Another interesting point to consider when discussing the use of gender-oppositional word pairs is that of semantic derogation; that is to say, cases in which the feminine form of a word carries an implication, usually if not always derogatory, that is not present for the masculine form. Instances of semantic derogation can go so far as to entirely change the meaning of a word; consider and contrast, for example, *homem público (*politician, lit. "public man") with *mulher pública* (female sex worker, lit."public

woman"). Other examples of this exist in pairs such as *tipo/tipa* ("guy; everyman (m) / ridiculous woman" (f)), *governante / governanta* ("sovereign, ruler (m) / housekeeper, domestic worker" (f)) . There are also instances where semantic derogation does not change the meaning, but there is nonetheless a negative connotation present in the feminine that does not exist within the masculine; examples include clearly negative connotations with *velha* and *gaja,* "old woman" and "young girl" respectively, where no such connotations exist for the masculine *velho* and *gajo*. Another example would be *rapariga,* "girl", which in Brazilian Portuguese can be used to mean "sex worker", whereas there is no equivalent sexualised reading of *rapaz,* "boy". This aspect of language can problematise the idea of gender-specification by the use of equivalent, contrastive terms; if the feminine form of a noun carries a different meaning to the masculine, there is an argument to be made for the terms being neither equal nor equivalent.

An interesting phenomenon involving the contrast of masculine generics and feminine specification is mentioned briefly in work by Endruschat (2015) - Occupational nouns featuring the suffix -ista, for example *dentista ,*"dentist" or *especialista*, "specialist", can indicate either a male or female referent and belong to a class of nouns Endruschat terms "double-gender nouns". However, as these nouns end in *-a*, a typical (but not absolute) marker of feminine gender in Portuguese, there is a noted tendency among speakers of Brazilian Portuguese to interpret these as feminine occupational nouns, leading to markedly-masculine derivatives such as *dentisto*, "male dentist". This has also led to the creation of masculine derivatives of other interpreted-as-feminine double-gender nouns: *crianço (m)*, from *criança (f),* "child"; *madrasto (m)* from *madrasta (f)*, "stepmother", and *caixo (m)*, from *caixa (f),* "cashier". Of particular note is the formation of *madrasto*, despite the prior existence within the language of a lexically-masculine oppositional term for *madrasta: padrasto,* "stepfather" This would seem to further support the above position held by feminist tradition; the feminine is marked as an "other", and the masculine normalised as a "default" state, from which any difference is marked as deviation; a lexically- and socially neutral term, and a referentially-variable one, was not sufficiently distinguished from the feminine concept, and thus new terms, more evocative of the masculine concept, have been coined. This could, not inaccurately, be termed a form of gender specification, albeit one which perhaps does not share the underlying aim of increasing female visibility within language.

It becomes clear, therefore, that gender specification is not necessarily as straightforward nor as elegant a solution as could be hoped; when viewed in this context, the derogatory implications of the feminine become clearer, both in contrast to

their masculine equivalents, for want of a better term, and in the social tendency to distance oneself from the feminine (as seen in the case of double-gender nouns). This, of course, does not necessarily mean that specification is a poor approach in terms of linguistic gender equality, but merely serves to highlight the problematic nature of some of its elements.

Neutralisation

Having now examined the idea of gender specification, it is important to examine the other proposed alternative: neutralisation. Neutralisation refers to the linguistic practice of avoiding the specification of gender, where possible, in order to avoid gender bias or unfortunate or potentially-sexist connotation. In contrast with gender specification - the attempt to increase the visibility of women within a language - Motschenbacher describes neutralisation as the process of "making men just as invisible as women". It is important to note, however, that grammatically-gendered language with no neutral gender, such as Portuguese, may have difficulty implementing this practice, due to the language's heavy reliance on masculine false generics. Even so, there have been recent guidelines such as the *Manual para o uso não sexista da linguagem* ("Manual for non-sexist language use") (Perusso, 2014) intended for use in education in Brazil, that innovate and propose practices to avoid the use of masculine generics, such as the use of specific epicenes and feminine generics, such as *as crianças* ("the children") rather than *os meninos* ("the [male] children"), *a cidadania* ("citizenship; the citizen body") rather than *"os cidadãos,* ("the [male] citizens"). The *Manual* also suggests practices such as the use of the gerund to avoid the generic: for example, *votando por esse partido ganharemos pouco* ("We have little to gain, voting for this party") in place of constructions such as *se as eleitores votarem por esse partido, ganharemos pouco* ("We have little to gain if the voters vote for this party"). In this way, it is possible to avoid using the masculine generic, as its referent can be eliminated from the sentence without impacting meaning. Another proposed method of accomplishing this is the increased use of reflexive or passive constructions, which rarely see use in contemporary Portuguese: for instance: *na costa, se come muito peixe* ("On the coast, much fish is eaten") in place of *os caiçaras comem muito peixe,* ("those [men] who live on the coast eat much fish"). This practice is particularly noteworthy here for its innovative nature: it involves the use of already-existing structures and practices within the language in order to circumvent the use of gender-specific phrasing, while neutralisation, as mentioned above, has been theorised to be difficult and highly-limited in grammatically-gendered languages such as Portuguese.

Neutralisation in grammatically-gendered languages is considered a difficult task – with critics such as Motschenbacher suggesting that such practices would not be feasible within the language, owing to the degree of change necessary, not only to vocabulary but to grammar and in some cases structure. It can be argued, however, that one could work within the existing language structure, to create a third, complementary neutral gender that conforms to the existing grammar of the language. Such ideas have already begun to gain traction: Simons (2006) discusses some of these suggestions in *Portugues com Inclusão de Gênero* ("Gender-Inclusive Portuguese; henceforth *PCIG*), discussed below.

Research methodology: Case Studies

With the importance of gendered language and gender-neutrality now well-established, it is relevant now to move onto how this thesis will address the question at hand. It is this researcher's opinion that the best way to do so is to first lay out what a neutral gender within Portuguese would need to do; that is to say, what would be reasonably expected of it: certain characteristics it would need to have, such as compatibility with the existing framework of the Portuguese language, intelligibility to speakers of the language who are unfamiliar with the practice, and so on. With that laid out, this research will then progress onto profiling the current suggested practices, with specific attention paid to the extent to which each proposal fulfils these criteria or addresses an area of concern. Following this, there will then be a number of case studies analysed, each corresponding to a proposal detailed here, with an eye towards how each case represents, follows, contests or challenges these assumptions, any issues with the proposal illuminated within the study, and how, where appropriate, the study is illustrative of how the proposal addresses any issues in a particularly interesting or appropriate way.

It is appropriate, therefore, to progress onto what this thesis expects of a theoretical neutral gender:

The proposed neutral gender must be distinct from the grammatical masculine or feminine, at least in cases where there is a grammatical gender distinction. This expectation precludes the existence of a gendered 'false generic' such as the existing practice of masculine-as-generic for reasons detailed above, but allows for the existence of dual-gender or epicene nouns, such as *estudante* ("student") or adjectives, such as *fervente* ("zealous"). Allowing for dual-gender and epicene nouns is important, as they can be said to be the closest to "true" gender-neutral terms within Portuguese,

and may well be used as a theoretical starting point for the implementation of a neutral gender and gender-neutral practice.

The proposed neutral gender must, where possible, conform with the existing grammar of the Portuguese language. Conformity with existing Portuguese is the easiest way to ensure its assimilation into the language, and to facilitate its adoption outside of marginalised communities and entry into mainstream use. . Acceptance into the mainstream is an important factor to be considered if a newly-introduced linguistic practice is to become commonplace, and involves such factors as ease of use, and ease of implementation, with the latter being what is relevant to this specific point.

The proposed neutral gender must be intelligible to speakers of Portuguese unfamiliar with its use. The proposed neutral genders have, for some time now, seen use within transgender and certain political-activist communities, but in order for the practices to become commonplace, they must be easily understood, and their meanings evident, to those outside of these communities. Acceptance into the mainstream is an important factor to be considered if an artificially-introduced linguistic practice is to become commonplace, and involves such factors as ease of use, and ease of implementation, with the former being what is relevant to this specific point.

The proposed neutral gender should mirror existing vocabulary and linguistic practice. Similar to the previous two criteria, this reduces the risk of the neutral-gendered language appearing “marked” or incongruous with current practice, and therefore removes or at least mitigates, again, one of the possible barriers to implementation into the Portuguese language.

The proposed neutral gender must function in terms of use as a singular, specific personal noun, alongside functioning as a more generalised group noun; this is to say, it must account for the existence of individuals outside the gender binary. Several current practices in Portuguese involve the construction of phrasing so as to omit personal gendered nouns, instead opting for use of a generalised group noun where appropriate, such as referring to a group of students as “o alumnado” (“the student body”) rather than “alunos e alunas” (“[male and female] students”). This practice, although important, does not allow for the existence of a singular personal noun outside of the male-female gender binary, and thus only partly addresses the issue. The proposed gender will, ideally, account for the existence of gender-neutral, non-binary and non-conforming individuals.

The proposed neutral gender must function in both written and spoken contexts. The majority of existing practices within Portuguese apply only to written Portuguese, and the importance of a written neutral gender should not be undermined. However, it is important to consider that gender-neutral language, especially that which pertains to the specific reality of certain individuals - namely gender non-conforming, genderqueer and non-binary individuals - must be a language that is capable of being spoken, as spoken language generally forms a much larger part of most people's everyday existence than written language.

Case Study: Portugues com Inclusão de gênero (PCIG)

In a collection of essays entitled *Números Polêmicos - a língua e o sexo*, Thomas M. Simons writes of grammatical gender within Portuguese, and its interactions with - and implications with regards to - the societal concept of gender. Simons, like many others, identifies an issue with androcentrism within the Portuguese language; using as an example, the masculine-dominant structure when addressing a mixed-gender group. One possible solution to this, it is suggested, is something Simons variably terms *concordância pela maioria,* or *uso majocrático da linguagem*: "majority-rule language use", in which the language used to refer to a group is in accordance with the most prevalent gender among members of that group. For instance, an example given in the PCIG:

"99 professoras e um professor são mesmo *umas privilegiadas*. *Elas* estão ganhando bem."

"99 [female] professors and one [male] professor are very lucky [fem.pl.]. They [fem.pl] are earning a lot of money."

In this example, Simons proposes the use of the feminine third-person plural to refer to this group of 99 women and one man, where traditional language use would call for the masculine. It is argued that this contextually-adaptive approach is egalitarian, raising the visibility and linguistic status of women, without disadvantaging nor disempowering those of men; that through this approach, there is neither a dominant nor a subordinate in this oppositional pair, rather that both can be said to be codominant. This approach presents some difficulties, however, as Simons rightly indicates. For example, how is one to determine the majority gender of the group they are addressing, in cases where it is not readily apparent? The suggestion, in this case, is to fall back on double-specification, but privileging the feminine; for example, addressing a crowd with *senhoras e senhores* ("ladies and gentlemen"). The second, and perhaps more

problematic, issue is that there are many cases in which majority-rule language use would provide a sort of defense for traditional androcentric language; in 2006, women formed 49.13% of the Brazilian population, and men 50.87%, census forms not allowing for third-gender or non-binary alternatives. In this case, majority-rule language could be used as a defense for masculine false generics, and so could be said to be largely unhelpful in combating linguistic androcentrism. This leads to the suggestion that, as dual- or multiple-specification is important, it is necessary to either find or establish a compact, straightforward, and inclusive way to do so. The following three methods are proposed:

The arroba: "*menin@s"*, (f/m pl.), "female/male children"
The slash: *"senhor/a"* (m/f sing.) "sir/madam"
The ligature: *"escritoræs"* (f/m pl.), "female/male writers".

These proposed forms will be briefly discussed below:

The Arroba (@)
With *-o* and *-a* as the typical gendered markers for masculine and feminine, respectively, it has been suggested that the two could be represented with a symbol that visually resembles a combination of the two – the arroba. Contextually, this would be read as an either/or, or "as applicable" statement – the reader would, in theory, see the arroba and automatically default, in their mind, to whichever option would be inclusive of the reader's gender. Thus, the act of gender specification here exists not in the writer's actions, syntax, or language used, but in the mind of the reader.
The use of the arroba has attracted an amount of criticism, however – there are some who object to the use of a non-letter as though it were a letter, citing reasons such as its inability to be vocalised or pronounced, or the use of a non-linguistic symbol in this context to be visually confusing or undesirable. It is also said that the use of the arroba is unintuitive, and reduces the ability of the text to be easily parsed – it is not always immediately obvious that the arroba is a substitute for a letter. These suggestions are, at least in part, addressed by the *PCIG*, which proposes that the arroba be pronounced as the phoneme [ɔ], an open mid-back rounded vowel sound between the [a] of nouns ending in *-a* and the [o] of nouns ending in *-o*.

An interesting typographical point is raised in the *PCIG,* whereby it notes that the majority of common typefaces size the arroba as they would an uppercase letter; for example, contrast *escritor@s* with *ESCRITOR@S*. It is therefore posited that the common arroba, typographically, would serve as the uppercase, and a smaller arroba, or *arrobinha* (lit., small arroba) would be needed for lower-case use, thereby addressing

some of the parsing-difficulty concerns raised. It is suggested that the arrobinha should be between 60% and 75% of the size of the arroba, depending on font. Interestingly, by 2013, an alpha version of a keyboard allowing for this had been developed and made available on *SourceForge,* a web-based open-source coding repository.

An interesting, though comparatively minor, additional criticism of the use of the arroba is the implication of gender hierarchy that it may carry. This is due to the design of the arroba - although it has been suggested that the arroba can be considered a sort of "halfway point" encompassing both the masculine *o* and the feminine *a*, the masculine *o* is in uppercase, and the feminine *a* in lowercase; such a design leads to a character in which the representation of the feminine is visually-subordinate to the representation of the masculine. While this is a relatively minor criticism in comparison to the logistical issues detailed above, it is nonetheless a criticism levelled against the *PCIG* proposal that calls into question the validity of the arroba as a tool of linguistic representation.

The Ligature (æ)

Similarly to the arroba above, the ligature links two typical gendered markers - in this case, the feminine *-a* and the context-dependent *-e; -e* being masculine in where *-or* nouns become pluralised, such as *cantor -> cantores* , and double-gender in the case of *-ante* nouns, such as *estudante*. The ligature, therefore, is proposed as a complement to the arroba, in cases such as the pluralisation of masculine *-or* nouns as a generic. *Senhoras e senhores*, the example given above for majority-rule language use, could therefore become *senhoræs* - a sort of written amalgamation of the two. Simons notes that, unlike the arroba, the ligature is a linguistic symbol, dating back to the Middle Ages in its use in latin, and existing in present-day Danish and Norwegian. The *PCIG* suggests, as a pronunciation guideline, pronouncing the ligature as the phoneme [ɛ], an open-mid front rounded vowel sound, between the [a] of nouns ending in *-a* and the [e] of nouns ending in *-e*.

The Slash (/)

Simons notes, however, that the ligature only functions in pluralised cases, and so an alternative approach is necessary for the singular case. In these cases, therefore, the slash is suggested, performing an either/or role in this context as it does in most others. It is suggested, even, that the slash could easily replace *ou* ("or"), in written language, and in turn be replaced by it in spoken language; thus, spoken language would use structures such as *senhor ou senhora*, and the written language, *senhor/a*.

There are concerns, however, among nonbinary and transgender speakers that the use of the arroba and ligature as an either-or option strictly reinforces the masculine-feminine gender binary within Portuguese, and thus their use does not address the language's need for a truly-neutral third gender – for instance, one could not in good faith use the arroba to refer to a person whose gender identity were something other than male or female.

With this said, it is important now to apply the framework discussed above to the proposals put forth by the *PCIG*. As the *PCIG* is not simply one proposed practice, but three, each of the proposals put forth must be considered on their individual merit, as well as in tandem*:*

The proposed neutral gender must be distinct from the grammatical masculine or feminine, at least in cases where there is a grammatical gender distinction.

Arroba: On a purely visual level, "menin@s" is distinct from both "meninos" and "meninas", and thus could be said to fulfil this criteria. It is important to note at this early point, however, that the proposals of the *PCIG* consider only written Portuguese, and therefore a visual distinction is all that can be expected of the *PCIG* on this point.

Ligature: The ligature, again, is visually distinct from its associated noun endings, "senhoræs" being distinct from both "senhores" and "senhoras".

Slash: The slash, however, is more difficult to evaluate on this point; rather than being visually distinct from its equivalents, it simply *is* both its equivalents, written in shorthand. On this point, therefore, it can be said that this aspect of the *PCIG* proposal falls short.

Interestingly, the *PCIG* provides no consideration for the satellite elements of the nouns its proposed practices would alter, in terms of ligature use; articles, for example, are left unaddressed in this case. The arroba's use as an article, at least, is straightforward - "@s menin@s" alongside "os meninos" and "as meninas", but no accompanying suggestion exists for the ligature. It can be theorised that the ligature would perform a similar role as an article, from which would arise "æs senhoræs", but this is not made clear.

The proposed neutral gender must, where possible, conform with the existing grammar of the Portuguese language.

On this count, neither the arroba nor the ligature hold up: neither character has seen previous use within the Portuguese use, and so their proposed use is seen as more obviously marked and artificial than simply the theoretical creation of alternative terms using characters common to Portuguese. As noted above, the use of the arroba in this way has drawn some criticism, although others have voiced their support for its use in this way, and ways have been devised to facilitate the symbol's linguistic use and minimise its disruptive presence.

The slash, conversely, conforms to existing practices, having existed previously as semi-informal shorthand, and an alternative to the use of "ou" ("or") alongside both possible genders.

The proposed neutral gender must be intelligible to speakers of Portuguese unfamiliar with its use.

Conversely to the above, however, uses of the arroba and ligature possess a unique strategic advantage: these symbols visually resemble both vowels they respectively represent, with @ resembling a combination of a lower-case a and upper-case O, and æ being physically a combination of the lower-case a and e. In this sense, they can be said to provide their own visual guide as to their interpretation, an aspect which provides no small aid to their intelligibility.

As above, the use of the slash is simply making official its existing use in shorthand writing, and no arguments against its use on grounds of intelligibility or clarity have been found.

The proposed neutral gender should mirror existing vocabulary and linguistic practice.

As has been touched on above, neither the use of the arroba nor ligature mirrors current linguistic practice, with neither symbol seeing use in this context in contemporary Portuguese. This leads to a certain initial sense of dissonance when seen in writing, as the practice is unfamiliar and alien. On a vocabular level, however, there is no such complaint - both the arroba and ligature are intended as a complement to existing practice, and thus act as simply a modifier of existing vocabulary, rather than involving the creation or introduction of new words into the common vernacular.

Interestingly, as noted above, the use of the arroba is also commonplace in Spanish-speaking countries. The Chilean government's *Guía de lenguaje inclusiva de género* (Guide to gender-inclusive language) (Gobierno de Chile, 2016) lays out guidelines thusly:

"El signo "@" no es lingüístico, rompe con las reglas gramaticales del idioma y es impronunciable por lo tanto su uso no es recomendable." ("The arroba (@) is not a linguistic symbol, it breaks the rules of the language's grammar, and is unpronounceable; as such, its use cannot be recommended").

The *Guía* also, interestingly, weighs in on the use of the slash, in an official capacity:

"Los primeros esfuerzos para hacer un uso incluyente del lenguaje implicaron la utilización de guiones, paréntesis y barras. Sin embargo no es recomendable porque en el texto resulta poco legible. Se recomienda utilizar solamente en formularios, solicitudes o cualquier otro documento en donde se cuenta con poco espacio." ("Initial efforts at creating a more inclusive language involved the use of hyphens, brackets, and the slash. However, this guide cannot recommend such a practice, as the resulting text will have legibility issues. Such practice can only be recommended in the case of forms, applications, and any other documents in which space is a concern").

It is, perhaps, telling that the role played by the arroba and slash in this capacity is important enough to have warranted mention in the *Guía*, but the difficulties associated with their use has led to their use being discouraged, rather than encouraged, in the official document. In place of this, the Chilean government advocates the use of inclusive longhand - i.e. using both masculine and feminine forms of appropriate nouns/adjectives, discussed as specification above, and the deliberate phrasing of sentences so as to eliminate the need for gendered language, discussed as neutralisation above. Importantly, however, this practice fails to adequately or fully address the needs of non-binary individuals.

The proposed gender must function in terms of use as a singular, specific personal noun, alongside functioning as a more generalised group noun; this is to say, it must account for the existence of individuals outside the gender binary.

On this count, no proposal of the *PCIG* succeeds; no practice therein involves the introduction of a neutral singular, rather proposing a manner in which language addressed towards mixed-gender or unknown-gender groups can be made more neutral, and a way to decentralise the linguistically-preferred masculine. That is to say,

the *PCIG* deals exclusively with mixed- and unknown-gender groups, and thus solely addresses issues caused by gendered language involving the collective rather than the individual.

The proposed neutral gender must function in both written and spoken contexts.

As mentioned above, the *PCIG* is intended primarily to engage with written language, and the concepts proposed therein struggle to translate to a spoken context, especially given the use of the arroba, a non-linguistic character. It must be noted, however, that there exists within the *PCIG* a potential pronunciation guide, with the arroba being vocalised as the phoneme [ɔ], an open mid-back rounded vowel sound between the [a] of nouns ending in *-a* and the [o] of nouns ending in *-o*., and the ligature as the phoneme [ɛ], an open-mid front rounded vowel sound, between the [a] of nouns ending in *-a* and the [e] of nouns ending in *-e*.

Evaluating the proposals of the *PCIG* against the above metric, therefore, would lead one to conclude that such proposals are insufficiently suited for mainstream use, and are unlikely to enjoy the breakout level of success that would be required to become accepted within mainstream, or common, Portuguese. It is important, however, to acknowledge the ways in which the *PCIG* proposals succeed, for doing so will give greater insight into what would be required of a proposed neutral gender. On these counts, the *PCIG* proposals shine in terms of mirroring existing vocabulary and immediate intelligibility to those unfamiliar with the practice, the importance of which cannot be understated. The *PCIG* proposals, furthermore, put forward certain uniquely interesting ideas: namely, the introduction of new characters into the Portuguese alphabet, alongside clearly-defined and understandable pronunciation guidelines. Such linguistic innovation is not unknown, as a similar practice led to the official adoption of the ñ into Spanish in the eighteenth century. The *PCIG* case, therefore, presents the idea that the proposed changes may not necessarily need to make use of existing tools within Portuguese, as long as proper consideration is given and any newly-synthesised tools be reasonably intuitive and intelligible in their use. The case of the ñ in Spanish, however, is not entirely analogous, as the ñ simply replaced written instances of “nn”, and the sound remained the same (Buitrago, et al., 1998); the ñ was thus an innovation of standardization of orthography rather than an attempt to facilitate fundamental change to the language.

Ultimately, however, the PCIG proposals fail to address the case of nonbinary and genderqueer individuals, and are intended primarily for use in a written context, and so alone would fail to address many of the reasons, and needs, for which a neutral

grammatical gender is needed within Portuguese. This is not to say that the practices and suggestions put forth by the *PCIG* do not have merit, merely that the PCIG proposals alone are insufficient to properly address what has been termed the “gender problem” within Portuguese.

With this in mind, many Portuguese speakers - especially those in queer communities - look to linguistic alternatives to the above that can allow and account for identities and experiences outside of the binary. Interestingly, many of these alternatives exist alongside similar practices in Spanish, and so their use in both languages will be discussed here, as it will provide some wider context and a greater idea of the scope of these changes. Given the similarity of the two languages, it is easiest to consider proposals that would function for both languages as the norm, indicating relevant exceptions to this rule, rather than treating both languages as entirely separate cases. Given the scope of this thesis, however, the practices will be evaluated solely with respect to their viability and utility within Portuguese.

The -X

One proposed alternative to the gendered markers is the use of the letter *x* as both a gendered marker and its respective definite article - to revisit an example given above, the accompanying neutral form of “os meninos/as meninas” following this proposal would be “xs meninxs”. An equivalent proposal exists in the Spanish language, giving constructions such as “lxs chicxs” to accompany “los chicos/las chicas”. Supporters of the use of the -*x* note that *x* has long been used in an algebraic context to signify an unknown, much as it does here. Those who oppose the change, however, raise concerns regarding the possible difficulties with legibility that this could raise, as well as the associated constructions having no clear pronunciation, similar to concerns raised above regarding the use of the arroba. Woodstock weighs in, during their segment on *Gender Reveal:*

"The first thing I should say is that use of the @ sign and x at the end of words to remove gender markers is something that we are trying to discontinue. Because not only is it hard - or impossible - to pronounce, it is also not an inclusive writing method, as it makes things harder for people with dyslexia to understand, as well as most text-readers used by low-visibility and blind people."

Continuing with their earlier comments on accessibility within both language and political movements, Woodstock raises the issue of accessibility once again, this time

with explicit reference to both the arroba proposal and the -X proposal. The idea of assistive technologies and text-readers having difficulty parsing the arroba and the -X is particularly notable here, for the potential dialogue and line of thought that comes from this. While it naturally follows that no matter the proposal or approach to gender-neutrality becomes implemented, any introduction of a new grammatical gender - and therefore uncountable instances of new terminology and vocabulary - will require a significant amount of work to be done to update the speech banks used by text-to-speech readers and other such assistive technologies, use of symbols such as the arroba shall remain problematic for such devices due to the use of those symbols in non-words such as email addresses - imagine, for instance, a text-to-speech reader that has been taught to pronounce the theoretical *menin@*, attempting to vocalise the theoretical email address, *menin@*****.com*. This is not, necessarily, to suggest that such difficulties could not be overcome, but rather to highlight the additional difficulties inherent in the use of non-linguistic symbols - difficulties that would require addressing, and that would serve to further disadvantage marginalised groups.

It has, however, been suggested that instances of -x be pronounced -*ex*, for instance "latinx" being pronounced *latinex* (de Onis, 2017). This suggestion has led to some raising concerns: Eric César Morales claims that since *latinx* and related terms do not correspond to Spanish syntax, Spanish-dominant people will be prevented from identifying with it. Additionally, César Morales goes on to raise issues of linguistic imperialism, calling it "incredibly condescending for an English speaker to tell recent immigrants that Spanish is a gendered and patriarchal language, but not to worry, because they can fix it with a term that does not conform to Spanish grammar" (de Onis, 2017). This view, although perhaps somewhat reductionist and limited in scope, holds a certain amount of merit; for reasons discussed earlier, it is important for these proposed changes to work within the existing grammar of the language, or at least complement it in such a way so as to be easily intelligible and accessible to speakers of, in this case, Spanish or Portuguese. It is important, also, to recognise that the introduction of the -x modifier and creation of terms such as Latinx is not, as César Morales implicates above, an imposition led by predominantly English-speakers, but rather an effort by Spanish and Portuguese-speaking (as appropriate) trans, gender non-conforming and nonbinary people to address an issue they face (de Onis, 2017). There is, as with all social groups, a degree of overlap between the two, but it is important not to discount the issue out-of-hand as simply another example of anglocentric linguistic imperialism. Particularly striking is the popularity of the use of the -x within the chicanx and Mexican-American community within the United States, as seen here in the use of the term *chicanx*. César Morales' concerns regarding the linguistic and logistical difficulties of the use of the -X ought not be discounted, but it is perhaps somewhat reductionist to

dismiss the issue and claim the use of the -X is a linguistically-imperial imposition, especially given the advocacy for its use within certain English-Spanish bilingual communities. César Morales' stance here also raises two important considerations: one regarding the disqualification of English-speakers from the conversation on the Spanish case, and one regarding recourse in cases where no suitable proposal perfectly conforms to Spanish grammar. These shall be discussed below, first separately, and then together, as discussion on one shall naturally inform discussion on the other.

The first of these considerations revolves around César Morales' effective exclusion of English-Spanish bilinguals from what I term the Spanish gender conversation. Previously within this work, discussion on English as what Woodstock has termed "a way of communicating queerness" establishes English as - in certain cases, and for certain speakers, it is important to qualify - a language of liberation for queer speakers. Particularly compelling is the exclusion of the chicanx community from the conversation on the use of the -X, as though having found a manner of linguistic expression invalidates their validity as language users.

The second of these considerations revolves around the viability of finding a potential grammatically-neutral gender that conforms perfectly to contemporary Spanish grammar. Following the manner in which Spanish grammar functions, there are few conforming options for a neutral marker outside of vowel alternatives to the masculine *o* and feminine *a*. These vowel alternatives shall be discussed later within this work, but it is important to note that they present other, non-grammatical linguistic difficulties, for example being difficult to distinguish from the masculine *o* when spoken, such in the case of a theoretical *u*. Conformance to the grammar of the language the proposal seeks to alter is an important factor in the linguistic viability of the implementation of a neutral gender, but is far from the only factor, and it could be that the few grammatically-conforming potential proposals meet with little success, for other, non-grammatical or otherwise logistical purposes. In such a case, for any neutral gender to be introduced, a nonconforming option would have to be used, and therefore the existing grammar of the language would have to be amended.

The intersection of the two concerns, however, carries with it unfortunate implications; if no conforming amendment is possible or preferable, then queer users of Spanish as a first language who have found a way of expression through other languages, and propose the amending of Spanish grammar to account for their needs as language users, are here being accused of linguistic imperialism - simply for having as a primary language one which in its current form fails to meet their needs. This observation is not intended to discount valid concerns of linguistic imperialism - but rather to address the

exclusion of bilingual language users from a conversation which has a very tangible real-world impact for them.

Roy Pérez notes, in a discussion contained within the same article, that the *-x* ought not be regarded as a replacement for the existing genders within the language, but rather as a supplement, one that allows users of the language to avoid the presupposition of gender, as well as permitting vulnerable or minority groups easier and greater freedom of expression. This contribution, and this manner of thinking, is valuable in evaluating the proposed linguistic practice, alongside addressing concerns regarding the amendment of a language's grammar: in doing so, nothing is actually lost. Rather, users of the language in question gain a new possible mode of expression, and the needs of those who the implementation of a neutral gender serves are met; the needs of those whose needs are already provisioned for within the grammar, similarly, are also met.

Following established practice, therefore, the use of the X as a gendered marker is to be evaluated against the framework introduced above. Although much of this section has concentrated on discussion regarding the -X practice within Spanish, these arguments will generally be considered to carry across into Portuguese, due to similarity between the languages as stated above, except where noted below.

The proposed neutral gender must be distinct from the grammatical masculine or feminine, at least in cases where there is a grammatical gender distinction.

The proposed -x marker is visually distinct from the existing -o and -a markers, and despite concerns regarding its phonological viability, its two most common pronunciations of "-e" and "-ex" will be evaluated here.

Pronunciation as "-e" lends the proposal a level of auditory similarity to double-gender and epicene nouns, such as "estudante"; of note here is that the [a] and [e] phonemes are sufficiently audibly distinct so as to see gendered use in Portuguese and Spanish, for example *presidente (m)* vs. *presidenta (f).*

Pronunciation as "-ex" similarly audibly distinguishes from words ending in both -o and -a, especially given the uncommonality of terms ending in "-ex" in either language.

The proposed neutral gender must, where possible, conform with the existing grammar of the Portuguese language.

On this count, the neutral -x proposal is seen to be lacking; not only does the -x render its altered words unpronounceable using standard Portuguese phonology, but there also does not seem to exist a consensus on the pluralisation of words ending in -x, as very few non-loan words appear to end in -x in contemporary Portuguese. For example, a great many words that would end in -ex in English or their original Latin instead end in *-ice* in Portuguese - *códice*, *vértice, arúspice* (Latin, *codex, vertex, haruspex*) - and so the few words ending in -x that survive within Portuguese seem to have variable pluralisation - for instance, *fênix (*"phoenix") can variably become *fênices* or *fênixes*. It is possible that when a consensus on pronunciation of the neutral -x is reached, then standard Portuguese grammar can be applied, and issues such as that of pluralisation and sound preservation can be more easily addressed - but until such a time, the proposal of the neutral -x will continue to suffer on this count.

The proposed neutral gender must be intelligible to speakers of Portuguese unfamiliar with its use.

As noted above, it is perhaps on this point that the proposed use of the -x is found to be lacking. Such use of the -x does not fit with Portuguese linguistic practice, since as per standard Portuguese linguistic practice, the -x in place of -o or -a would involve replacing a vowel phoneme with a consonant phoneme, in many cases leading to consonant clusters that do not exist within the rest of the Portuguese language. Given the previous nonexistence of the sounds this would create, the criticism levelled towards this practice on this point - that the practice would be unintelligible in spoken Portuguese - can be reasonably said to hold merit.

The proposed neutral gender should mirror existing vocabulary and linguistic practice.

As noted above, the use of the -x in this way is unlike any other practice within Portuguese, although it is lauded for its similarity to practices within the fields of algebra and programming (the former using *x* to represent an unknown variable, the latter using * as a wildcard, which is to say to represent one or more variable characters). There is a line of argument that holds that such practice is sufficiently well-known so as for the average speaker to be able to correctly interpret the use of the -x in written text, although the immediate counterpoint to this is that a language's ability to be understood should not be predicated upon the readers' and auditors' cross-disciplinary knowledge.

The proposed neutral gender must function in both written and spoken contexts.

As detailed several times above, there is an inherent difficulty with the use of -x, on grounds of pronunciation. What is yet to be discussed here at any length are the solutions that have come about as a result of the -x seeing common use in both Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking communities.
One such vocal workaround is pronouncing the -x as -ex; *latinx* thus being written as seen, but vocalised as *latinex*.

The second workaround involves pronouncing the -x as -e; *latinx* thus being written as seen, but vocalised as *latine.* This practice has one distinct advantage: there are a great few words ending in -x in Portuguese, the majority of which are loan words. There does not seem to be necessarily an accord on how such words are to be pluralised; *fênix*, for instance, is variably pluralised as *fênixes* and *fênices*. Vocalising the -x as -e, therefore, has the benefit of avoiding the difficulty of pluralisation of -x words in Portuguese.

There is, however, another difficulty that must be examined in light of this. The use of the -x in a written context, given the difficulty in pluralisation, would necessitate an accord on the pluralisation of such words, and cannot entirely function properly until such a time as that has been accomplished.

The proposed gender must function in terms of use as a singular, specific personal noun, alongside functioning as a more generalised group noun; this is to say, it must account for the existence of individuals outside the gender binary. Interestingly, given the above discussion regarding pluralisation of the -*x* and the difficulties inherent in such a practice , the -x is perhaps uniquely more suited to use in the singular, an interesting juxtaposition with the *PCIG* proposals, which function exclusively in the plural.

Evaluating the -x proposal against the above metric, therefore, highlights several important considerations to bear in mind. In contrast to the *PCIG* proposals, the proposed use of the -x centres and privileges nonbinary and transgender folk within the grammatical gender debate, something that no previous proposal has done. This is a point that, perhaps, merits some elaboration, and so the following paragraph or so shall invite discussion on this point.

The issue here is, broadly, one of generalisation versus specificity, much akin to the debate on strategies of generalisation versus those of specification within a language discussed above. For the purposes of this discussion, I posit the following:

1) Gender-neutrality in the general sense serves to address and eventually eliminate gender bias and social privileging of one gender group above others
2) Gender-neutrality in the specific sense serves to avoid misgendering; repeated misgendering has been shown to have repercussions for the mental health of the misgendered subject.

These ideas have previously been discussed within this work, and so I shall work to avoid reiterating those positions longhand. There is a new thought to be introduced here, however:

2a) Gender-neutrality in the specific sense serves not only to avoid misgendering through the avoidance of gendered implication, but also serves to avoid misgendering through _correctly_ gendering nonbinary and gender-variant individuals.

It is best, perhaps, that this claim be explained; to do so, I posit a thought experiment not unlike that posed by Julia Kapusta. Imagine Ariel, a 26-year-old individual who identifies as nonbinary. In English, they use “they” and “them” as pronouns, and object to being called “she”, “her”, “he” or “him”, because of the gendered connotations thereof; they are not male, nor are they female, and therefore any attempt to apply those words to them would be incorrect in a very base, factual sense of the word. Now, let us say that in addition to English, Ariel speaks Portuguese. The gendered implications of “he” or “she” still exist, but are much more pervasive and far-reaching, due to the nature of the Portuguese language. Regardless, it would be similarly incorrect in Portuguese to refer to them using *ele* or *ela*; factually incorrect, as Ariel is neither a man nor a woman. Rather, using *elx* (as the -x proposal suggests) avoids the incorrect gender connotations of both *ele* and *ela*, and is therefore the most *correct* manner of address. As Riot_Cinema details above, the same effect can be accomplished by referring to Ariel using their name, or by using *essa pessoa* (“that person”, grammatically feminine but not connotatively so). The establishing of a neutral gender form that specifically functions in the singular case, that can be specifically used by, and in reference to, nonbinary and gender-variant individuals constitutes something that such individuals have not previously had within Portuguese: linguistic representation; that is to say, representation within the language.

It is, perhaps, crucial here to note that this proposal of the neutral -x, which allows for nonbinary and gender-variant individuals, and allows them to take up linguistic “space”, so to speak, was indeed synthesised with the intent of greater linguistic visibility, and with political motivation (de Onis, 2017).

Case Study: The Swarthmore Phoenix and the use of the term "Latinx"

From this, we move to evaluate a case study involving the use of the -X, and more specifically the use of the term "Latinx": the case of the Swarthmore Phoenix student newspaper, and a discussion over the course of three published articles - one editorial, one op-ed, and an article detailing the language policy changes and stance of the newspaper in response to the discussion.

The Swarthmore Phoenix, the student-led newspaper of Swarthmore College, a liberal arts college in Philadelphia, USA, published an opinion piece in November 2015 entitled, *"The argument against the use of the term "Latinx""* (Guerra and Gorbea, 2015). This piece was also published online, and sparked heated discussion and debate in the comments section. The article invited discussion on the use of the term *latinx*, and more widely, the use of the -x as a neutral gender marker, while positioning itself firmly against the use of both the term and the linguistic innovation, for much the same reasons as posed by César Morales above; the opening paragraph even refers to the term *latinx* as "a buzzword that fails to address any of the problems within Spanish on a meaningful scale". *Latinx*, the article claims, represents a "misguided desire to forcibly change the language we and millions of people around the world speak, to the detriment of all", and "a blatant form of linguistic imperialism". This practice, according to the authors, "actually excludes more groups than it includes", rendering the language "laughably incomprehensible to any Spanish speaker without some fluency in English".

While, as above, the accusation of linguistic imperialism must be taken seriously, this initial article seems to either display a fundamental misunderstanding of the manner in which the neutral -x would work, or otherwise deliberately misrepresent the proposal, claiming that advocates of this practice would seek to change the sentence "Los niños fueron a la escuela a ver sus amigos" (*The [masculine false generic] children went to school to see their [masculine false generic] friends)* to ""Lxs niñxs fueron a lx escuelx a ver sus amigxs" (*The [neutral, gender non-specific] children went to [incomprehensible, grammatically incorrect] school to see their [neutral, gender non-specific] friends*) rather than "lxs niñxs fueron a la escuela a ver sus amigxs". The neutral -x does not seek to modify impersonal language such as *escuela* (school), but rather personal language in specific reference to either a nonbinary referent, a referent of unknown gender, or a group of referents of mixed or non-determined gender. It is this misunderstanding, perhaps, that leads the authors of this piece to take such a militant stance against the

use of the neutral -X: “If you advocate for the erasure of gender in Spanish, you then are advocating for the erasure of Spanish”.

What then, in the eyes of these student journalists, is the solution to gender-neutrality within grammatically-gendered Romance languages, specifically Spanish in this case? “It may surprise you to learn that a gender-neutral term to describe the Latin-American community already exists in Spanish. Ready for it? Here it is: Latino.”. The article advocates for the use of the masculine false generic over any other proposed innovation, discounting the legitimacy of complaints from women and nonbinary language users regarding the non-inclusivity of the masculine false generic while claiming such practices “respect those on the non-binary spectrum and respect the dignity of the Spanish language”, and once again excluding bilingual language users from the gender conversation through the inflammatory accusation of linguistic imperialism; the article ends with the claim that the use of the -x and other attempts at gender-neutrality are “clearly representative of...a lack of respect for the sovereignty of Spanish”.

The public response to this article, within the comments section, has been mixed. It is perhaps telling, however, that the overwhelming majority of comments that engage with the subject, or that contribute meaningfully to the discussion, are in favour of gender-neutrality, regardless of whether or not the -X proposal is the best way in which to achieve such. The most in-depth response comes from a commenter calling themselves *A*:

“the people using terms like “latinx” are the ones most often dealing with linguistic imperialism, by trying to maintain their culture and language in Anglo country, often having to choose between their queerness and their latinidad by one community or another.”

A here contributes a perspective on the bilingual exclusion issue that is yet to be discussed within this work, but fits neatly with the earlier discussions on intersectionality. This view positions queer Latin-American bilingual users of Spanish and English as potentially marginalised on the queer identity axis as well as the national identity axis, the intersection of which results in having one’s ability to express both their queer identity and their latinx identity impeded or problematised; this perspective illustrates the nuance possible within the intersectional framework discussed above, as it acknowledges such issues that arise uniquely from the intersection of multiple different axes of identity. This choice between queerness and latinidad, as *A* phrases it, is an experience unique to English-Spanish queer latinx individuals, as a result of these intersecting axes of identity; that is to say, non-queer latinx bilinguals would not

experience this specific difficulty in this way, nor would queer non-English-speaking Latinx individuals - although, again, this does not preclude their facing of related, but subly different, difficulties regarding the same issue.

A raises a second point within the same comment that is of particular interest here: “referring to queerness and gender non-conformity [as the article does] as “U.S. ideals” is a little bit baffling”. While the specific manner in which gender is performed varies depending on culture, it is disingenuous to suggest that non-adherence to a gender binary is a U.S. ideal - especially when one takes into account that the United States was founded upon the same, predominantly-Christian ideals that led to the strict enforcing of the gender binary throughout Latin America and Africa during the colonial period. *A* goes on to expand upon this: “we need to make these words our own to reflect the ways in which we perform queerness, but that doesn’t sound like what this article’s saying at all.”

The point is raised, similarly, that the proposal of the -X is not necessarily the end point, but rather part of an ongoing creative linguistic process on the part of queer language users to find a way to express queerness that suits their needs as language users; that perhaps the writers of this article are unfamiliar with the process of linguistic evolution much as they seem to be unfamiliar with the proposed -X practice they so staunchly oppose.

A response piece, “*A response to “The argument against the use of the term ‘Latinx’”,* authored by Jesus Hernandez and Brandon Torres, was published by the Swarthmore Phoenix in December 2015. The article focused mainly on correcting the fundamental misunderstandings of the initial article, but counterpoints very similar to those made above were also raised against the claims of linguistic imperialism and the suitability of the masculine false generic. The response cedes that “Latinx” and the neutral -X more generally are yet to be accepted by the *Real Academia Española*, as noted in the original article, but brings up a salient point that the term is most widely-used in the United States, outside of the linguistic jurisdiction of the *RAE.* The response also notes that in 2010, the *RAE* removed two letters from the Spanish alphabet - “ch” and “ll”, which had been previously considered letters since 1754 (*Real Academia Española, 2010).* Hernandez and Torres here establish that language is capable of change, rather than a static, fixed being as posited by the previous article - and that large-scale change in a language is indeed possible, should language users simply decide upon it. Further discussion on the *RAE* and of language academies above is of relevance here; Hernandez and Torres exemplify the deletion of these letters from the alphabet as an example of large-scale language change that does not harm anyone, claiming quite

reasonably that the introduction of a neutral “latinx” would fall under a similar category of “large-scale benign language change”.

Hernandez and Torres argue that the exclusion of the queer bilingual latinx community on grounds of being “not Spanish enough” in and of itself constitutes an act of linguistic imperialism, as, in doing so, the language of a subaltern group is deemed not sufficiently authentic - thereby denying the queer latinx community their identity, in the same way the commenter *A* in the previous article accused the authors of trying to make queer latinx individuals choose between their queerness and their *latinidad*.

The case concludes with a third article, published by the Swarthmore Phoenix in April 2016, entitled “ *Phoenix moves to “Latinx”*”, which details the decision taken by the Phoenix to move towards using “latinx” as the neutral case. “The terms “Latino” and “Latina” will be used when grammatical agreement is appropriate, and “Latinx” will be used as a gender-neutral term on all other occasions.”. In this concluding acknowledgement, the Phoenix notes that it shares the interpretation of linguistic imperialism with Hernandez and Torres - such being that refusal, rather than acceptance, of the term “latinx” would constitute an act of linguistic imperialism against those who consider themselves latinx.

It is at this point, therefore, that we must look to evaluate this case. Perhaps most interesting here is the alternative view on linguistic imperialism, positioning bilingual latinx individuals as part of the subaltern rather than as oppressors, as César Morales does above. Given that the most prevalent use of specifically the term “latinx” appears to be within the United States, it would not, perhaps, be incorrect to view the use of latinx as a manner of celebrating queer latinidad, as *A* comments above, rather than an US-centric attempt to erase binary latinidad, as César Morales and Guerra and Gorbea claim. This case also serves to exemplify, on a macrocosmic scale, the grassroots nature of most language change, and the manner in which public opinion and societal pressure lead to adoption of new language policies on a wider scale. Although legitimate and reasonable concerns regarding the use of the -x are raised, these concerns are addressed where possible, such as the pronunciation issue being given no fewer than three feasible solutions - these being pronouncing the -x as -e, -ex, or -u. Little space will be given at this point to the discussions on either the masculine false generic or the validity of nonbinary identities, these having been discussed at length earlier within this work.

The -E

Another alternative to the above, for the Portuguese language, is the establishing of -e as a neutral gendered marker, as a complement and contrast to the -o and -a. There are, however, several considerations to take into account with this proposal, as there are many instances in which this approach would either be confusing to a an audience, or in which this would fail to convey the desired neutrality. As an example of the former, “e” would not work contextually as a singular definite article in the same vein of the Portuguese “o” or “a”, as it means “and”, and such a duality would lead to unclear or confusing language use; as an example of the latter, “ele” is already the masculine third-person singular pronoun, contrasted with the feminine “ela”, and so in order to avoid a false masculine generic as outlined above, an alternative would be required. There are many such instances of the latter, both pronominal and prepositional alongside lexical or vocabular, issues for which there are various proposed solutions (Espectrometria não-binária, 2014), some of which are listed below:

- The proposed equivalents for “ele” and related prepositions (“dele”, “nele”, et al) include “elu”, the phoneme for [u] being partway between the latter [e] of “ele” and the [a] of “ela”, with the prepositional equivalents being formed in the same manner as their alternatives (“delu”, “nelu”, et al).
- The proposed equivalent definite article would be “le”, and thus following the examples throughout this work, the equivalent to “os meninos” or “as meninas” would be “les menines”.
- As suggested by previous proposals, this approach advocates the omission of definite personal articles, and thus the suggested equivalent to “pelo” or “pela” would be “por”, although there seems to be no clear consensus whether this approach is preferable to other existing suggestions of using “pele“ or “pelle”, corresponding with the above framework.
- Words ending in -ã or -ão, such as “irmã” or “ irmão” will have an equivalent of -ane, such as “irmane”, as the logical suggestion of -ãe presents some difficulties in its resemblance to “mãe”, meaning “mother”.
- Words ending in -go or -ga have their equivalent in -gue, such as “amigue” has the equivalent to “amigo” and “amiga”. Similarly, words ending in -co or -ca have their equivalent in -que, such as “técnique” for “técnico” and “técnica”.
- Words ending in -r in the masculine and -ra in the feminine have an equivalent in -re in the singular (“professor”, “professora”, “professore”) and -ries in the plural (“professories”). This is, again, to avoid the potential masculine false generic of -res (“professores”), and is based on the wide online use of the term

"não-binaries", used interchangeably with, and as a shorthand for, the term "gente não-binária"/"pessoas não-binárias".

- First-person singular possessives, "meu" / "meus" and "minha" / "minhas" have two proposed alternatives, "mi" / "mis" and "minhe" / "minhes", such as in the phrase "meu namorado" / "minha namorada" / "mi namorade" / "minhe namorade". There does not seem to be a general consensus on which is preferred, although both seem generally well-understood and well-received.
- Second-person singular possessives, "teu" / "teus" / "seu" / "seus" and "tua" / "tuas" / "sua" / "suas" will have similar equivalents in "tu" / "tus" / "su" / "sus" and "tue" / "tues" / "sue" / "sues", with the same general reception as the first-person possessives.

The proposed neutral gender must be distinct from the grammatical masculine or feminine, at least in cases where there is a grammatical gender distinction.
Of immediate note here is the comparison of proposed neutral words ending in -E with dual-gender epicene nouns, such as "estudante". This comparison will be of relevance throughout this evaluation, and so it is important to establish this similarity at this early point.

The use of the -E as a gendered marker is both audibly and visually distinguishable from the current grammatical masculine and feminine, and uniquely, does not suffer from the phonological difficulties encountered by other proposals detailed within this work.

The proposed neutral gender must, where possible, conform with the existing grammar of the Portuguese language.
The use of the -E conforms with existing grammar within the language, with established framework already existing in Portuguese to circumvent any difficulties that could be encountered, grammatically speaking, by this use. For example, use of the -E turns the masculine *amigo* into *amigue*, where the hard [g] sound is preserved by the addition of the u; similarly, *técnico* into *técnique, psicólogo* into *psicólogue*.

The proposed neutral gender must be intelligible to speakers of Portuguese unfamiliar with its use.
On this count, there is a lack of consensus regarding intelligibility. In the comment detailed above, Reddit user Riot_Cinema details their experiences with using the neutral -E; they have been understood, for the most part, but in spoken use, the neutral -E was often mistaken for the masculine -o. From this arise two questions:

One, if Riot_Cinema, here being used as a wider allegory for users of this gender-neutral Portguese, had their language use generally _understood_ but _misconstrued_, to what extent can it be said their language use was *intelligible*? If the neutral gender is misconstrued as the masculine, then does this proposition suffer from the same downsides as the use of the masculine as a false generic?

And two, to what degree _can_ any proposed neutral gender be reasonably expected to be immediately intelligible to language users unfamiliar with its use?

However, there also exists a line of argument to the contrary; the language used by Riot_Cinema seems to have been understood as referring in some capacity to their gender identity, which has led to the use of their name in place of a gendered third-person pronoun such as *ele* or *ela*; as such, it could be argued that their use of this neutral -E has served its functional purpose in both avoiding misgendering through use of the masculine or feminine, as well as communicating, if not their gender identity, then at least a preference for gender-neutral language which seems to have been generally recognised as a result.

The proposed neutral gender should mirror existing vocabulary and linguistic practice.

Of the proposals detailed here, the neutral -E is perhaps the practice that most mirrors existing grammar and linguistic practice, with rules already existing within Portuguese grammar to conserve sounds when vowel change would change phonemes (such as the aforementioned “go -> gue” change). It also best mirrors existing vocabulary, since alongside using word stems from pre-existing words within Portuguese, the majority of grammatically gender-neutral terms within Portuguese already end in -e; e.g. *estudante, ajudante*. This leads to a grammatically-neutral Portuguese that fits within the contemporary language while causing the least possible disruption.

The proposed neutral gender must function in terms of use as a singular, specific personal noun, alongside functioning as a more generalised group noun; this is to say, it must account for the existence of individuals outside the gender binary.

Similarly to the -x, use of the -e in the singular personal specific sense centres nonbinary and gender-variant language users, while eliminating gender bias when used in the plural.

The proposed neutral gender must function in both written and spoken contexts. Uniquely among the proposals discussed here, the neutral -E not only functions in both spoken and written contexts, but unlike the -x, is clear from its written form how it is intended to be pronounced, a fact which further normalises its use within regular (phonetic) Portuguese.

Evaluating the use of the -E against the above metric looks favourably upon the proposed use of the -E as a grammatically-neutral gender option; in contrast to the other proposals detailed here, the *PCIG* and the use of the -x, use of the -E carries many of the same benefits as use of the -x - those being the centering of transgender and nonbinary speakers, while notably not suffering from its weaknesses - its difficulty in spoken Portuguese, and its not being phonetic. In comparison to the *PCIG* proposals, use of the -E functions in the singular case, and therefore works to avoid the misgendering of nonbinary language users.

Case study: Avon Brasil's 2016 campaign "#SintaNaPele"

From this, we now move to look at a case study where the gender-neutral -e ending was employed. AVON Brasil, the Brazilian branch of the renowned cosmetics company AVON, launched an advertising campaign for the launch of their new product, *BB Cream Avon Color Trend* on the 28th June, 2016. The commercial for the product consists, in short, of several well-known public figures dancing a group choreography, as short descriptions of the product flash up on the screen. However, there are a great many aspects of this particular advertising campaign that could be considered noteworthy, and so the campaign merits further analysis.

Primarily, and perhaps of greatest relevance to this paper, is the use of the gender-neutral -e marker within the campaign. The product itself - a BB or "blemish balm" cream, an all-in-one combination of a range of products such as moisturising cream, primer, foundation, and concealer - is of a class of cosmetics that sees wide use among persons of all genders and gender expressions, rather than being seen as a "woman's thing", as makeup and cosmetic products so often are. AVON Brasil takes this concept of a unisex cosmetic and runs with it - the final phrase that flashes up on the screen during the commercial proclaims the product to be "para todes" - "for all", using the proposed gender-neutral -e, rather than the masculine and false-generic "para todos", or the feminine "para todas". Indeed, the typesetting used revels in and spectacularises this use - the "E" of "TODES" is coloured magenta, attention-grabbing and unignorable among the remainder of the word in white.

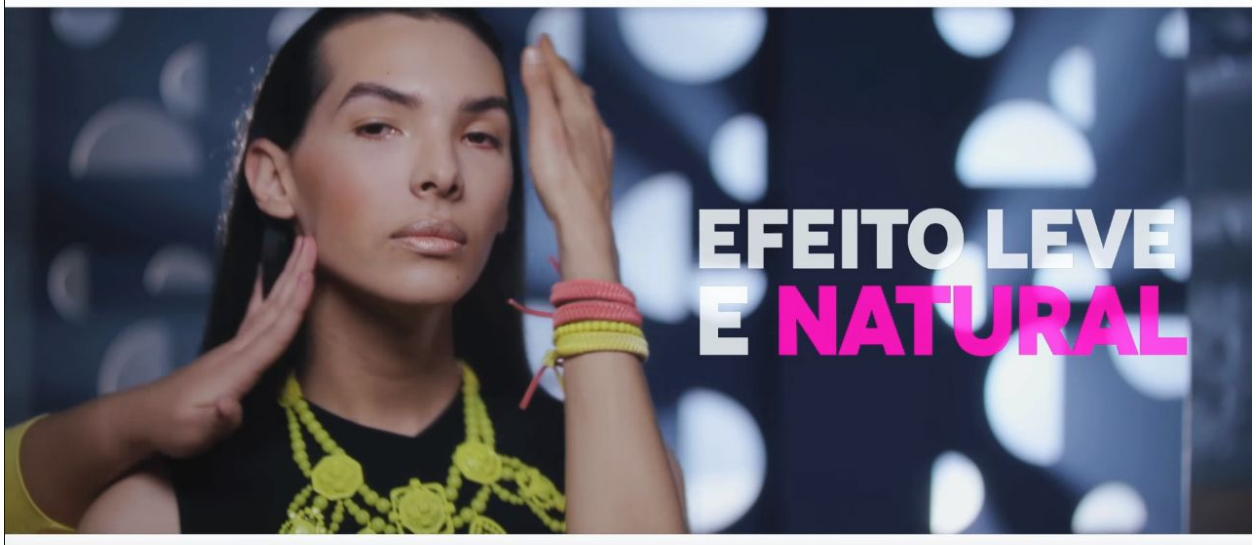
AvonBR, BB Cream Color Trend e a Democracia da Pele | Avon Apresenta. Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Imd5MyfGbo&feature=youtu.be . Accessed: 14th August 2019.

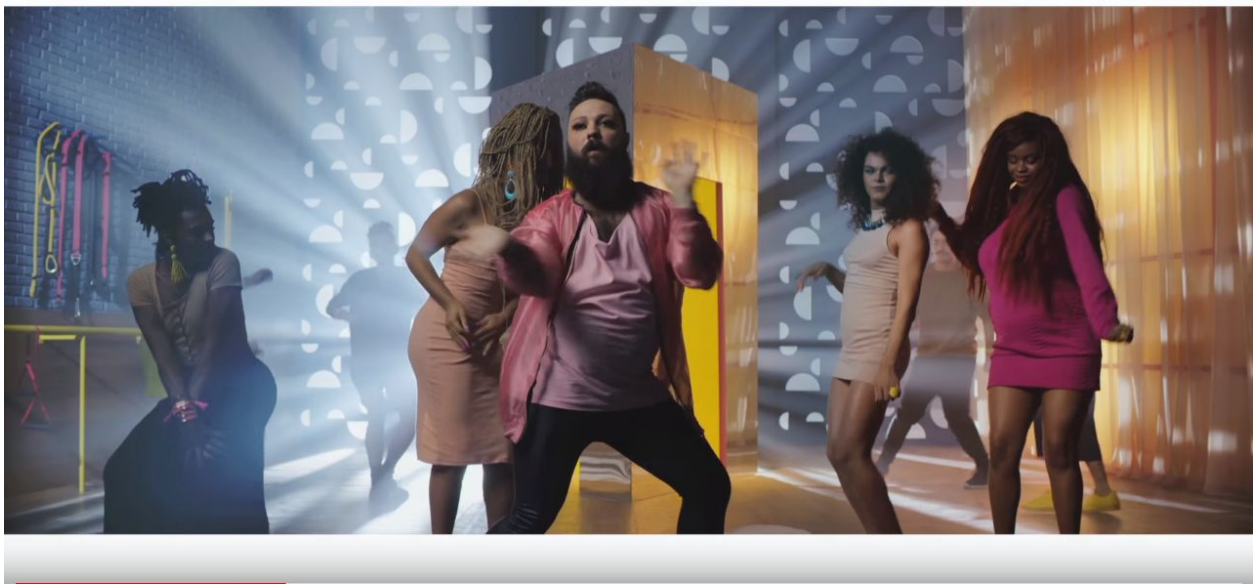
Immediately upon viewing this commercial, there is something made readily apparent, the importance of which cannot go unacknowledged. With this piece of advertising, AVON allies itself squarely with the queer community; the queer linguistic practice of "todEs" breaks into a more mainstream community, the public figures featured in the ad campaign - such as Jessica Tauane, Liniker, Assucena Assucena and Raquel Virgínia - are all well-known and active within the sphere of queer politics, and the video was posted on YouTube with the message "A pele não tem gênero nem preconceitos. Essa é o recado que o Novo BB Cream Matte Avon Color Trend tem para você." ("Skin has no gender, nor prejudice. That's the message that the new BB Cream Avon Color Trend has for you.")[7]

Avon's message of inclusivity in this campaign continues - not only are the public figures featured active within queer politics, many of them are transgender, genderqueer, or gender non-conforming. Indeed, the commercial serves well to forge a link in the viewer's mind between "todes", gender non-conformity and unisex:

[7] Translation mine.

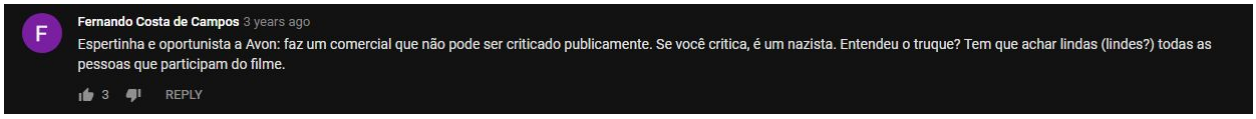

EFEITO
MATTE


EFEITO LEVE
E NATURAL



AvonBR, BB Cream Color Trend e a Democracia da Pele | Avon Apresenta. Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Imd5MyfGbo&feature=youtu.be . Accessed: 14th August 2019.

In its use of the neutral E, Avon therefore brings the concept to a wider audience, while making visibly clear its meaning as an all-encompassing neutral tool, and well-establishing its links to queer politics and the gender conversation. Even the launch date of the product seems to have been carefully curated in order to achieve this - 28th June, anniversary of the Stonewall riots, perhaps the most famous queer political protest, a protest with heavy involvement from transgender figures such as Marsha P. Johnson, Zazu Nova and Jackie Hormona (Carter, 2004). This begs the question, however: how did the general public respond to the use of the neutral -E? Was it understood, and what criticisms or opposition did it face? The comments on the Youtube video carry a range of responses, from users praising Avon for the campaign, to those complaining about the quality of the product. What is notably absent, however, is any complaint about the use of the word “todes”. The closest comment is below, by a user under the name of Fernando Costa de Campos:



“Espertinha e oportunista a Avon: faz um comercial que não pode ser criticado publicamente. Se você critica, é um nazista. Entendeu o truque? Tem que achar lindas (lindes?) todas as pessoas que participam do filme.”

“Very clever and opportunistic of Avon: making a commercial that cannot be openly criticised. If you criticise it, you’re a Nazi. You see the trick? You have to find all the participants in the film beautiful.”[8]

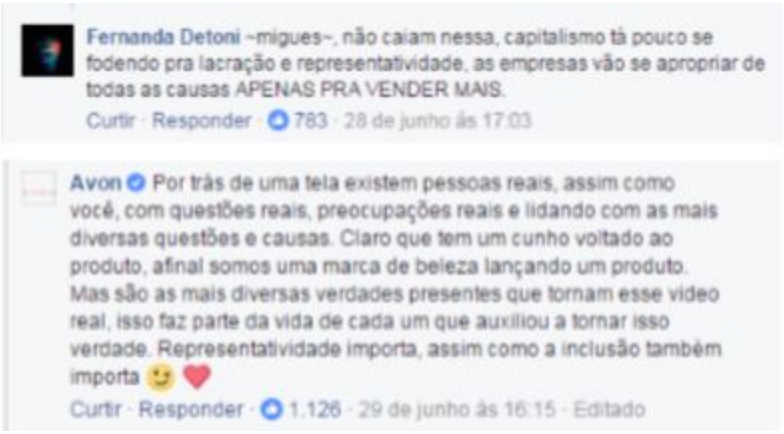
Campos here, while invoking Godwin’s Law[9], criticises the stance Avon takes in allying itself with the queer community; by pandering to a marginalised group, Campos claims, Avon renders itself immune to criticism on any ground - regardless of its legitimacy - because of the “protected political status” enjoyed by that group.

Distasteful historical comparisons aside, this interpretation - of Avon purely paying lip service to the queer community in order to sell cosmetics, of capitalising upon a social movement that is rapidly gaining traction, for reasons of financial gain rather than any genuine political stance - is seemingly widespread. There is an angle to be considered here, however, regarding the idea of media representation, especially within advertising, as a marker of social progress: Harms and Kellner (1991) note that through advertising campaigns, businesses seek to sell “socially-desirable ways of life”, more than any individual product. If we are to accept this premise, it must logically follow that Avon - a multinational and successful business enterprise - in looking to sell a product seemingly aimed at specifically the queer and gender-variant community, is presenting such as “socially-desirable”; the question that follows is what the implications of such a business decision may be. Avon is a business, and thus, as a business, aims to sell products - in this case, gender-neutral cosmetics - and to profit from doing so. Avon are looking to profit from gender-neutral cosmetics; thus, it can be reasonably surmised that Avon believe gender-neutrality to be a profitable concept. For a business to directly and explicitly engage with the gender conversation - a socially-divisive topic - it must follow that that business believes it to be in their best financial and/or social interest to do so; i.e that doing so will increase, rather than decrease, their customer base, as a business naturally does not want to alienate or risk losing either its clientele or its stakeholders. To phrase otherwise, a multinational business, generally speaking, would not involve itself with divisive political issues, unless they would stand to gain social or financial capital through doing so; ergo, Avon, by engaging with the gender conversation, must necessarily consider it “safe” to do so - that is to say, they must believe the majority of their customer base will support, or at least accept, their decision to do so. Through this

[8] Translation mine.
[9] An internet adage; "As an online discussion grows longer, the probability of a comparison involving Nazis or Hitler approaches 1".

line of thinking, it can be claimed that this marketing decision by Avon constitutes at least a tacit level of support for gender-neutrality, which is compounded by the explicit centering of transgender and gender-nonconforming individuals and use of concepts such as the neutral -E, “Para todes”. Thus, although claims of financial exploitation and insincerity may be levelled against companies engaging with political topics, as can be seen in De Campos’ comment as well as comments below, it can be argued that being deemed “profitable” by businesses may lend legitimacy to causes, due to the (sometimes explicit, sometimes tacit) support such advertising campaigns offer, and for the increased visibility this offers such causes.

Returning to criticisms of co-opting and exploiting political causes that have been levelled against Avon, the following comment was made on the official AVON Facebook page following the launch of the commercial:



AVON. Facebook. https://www.facebook.com/avonbr/videos/10154064384211195. Accessed on: 13 August 2019.

Fernanda Detoni: “~migues~, não caiam nessa, capitalismo tá pouco se fodendo pra lacração e representividade, as empresas vão se apropriar de todas as causas APENAS PRA VENDER MAIS.”

Avon: “Por trás de uma tela existem pessoas reais, assim como você, com questões reais, preocupações reais e lidando com os mais diversas questões e causas. Claro que tem um cunho voltado ao produto, afinal somos uma marca de beleza lançando um produto. Mas são as mais diversas verdades presentes que tornam esse video real, isso faz parte de cada um que auxiliou a tornar isso verdade. Representividade importa, assim como a inclusão também importa”

Fernanda Detoni: “~Friends~, don’t fall for it, capitalism is slowly falling victim to political correctness, businesses are going to take advantage of any and all causes JUST TO SELL MORE PRODUCTS.”

Avon: “Behind every brand there are real people, like you, with real difficulties, real worries, and dealing with many different problems and causes. Of course we have a vested interest in selling the product, at the end of the day we’re a cosmetics brand launching a product. But it’s those diverse realities that make the video real, it’s part of life for everyone who helped make this happen. Representation matters, just like how inclusivity matters too.”[10]

It is, of course, understandable why a person might hold this viewpoint, why they might be suspicious or sceptical of a business acting in this way. It is not, however, within the scope of this work to divine whether or not the aims of the Avon campaign are genuine or self-serving. Instead, perhaps, it may prove enlightening to discuss this marketing strategy in further depth. As discussed above, BB cream is seen as one of the more unisex cosmetic products - and in which case, it would be in the company’s best interests to actively market the cream to as many demographics as possible; not only this, but also to communicate to these demographics that the cream is for use by all. In doing so, it would make sense to use language that, at least in theory, all users would be able to identify with - hence the use of the neutral -e, which also grants the possibility of a political angle from which to market the product.

It has been suggested by socioeconomists that advertising campaigns aim to sell not only a product, but rather “socially desirable ways of life”,and that the unisex designation of products is perhaps a way of engaging the queer consumer demographic, while avoiding alienating, and minimising resistance from, more traditionalist or conservative stakeholders.

Of potential note, however, is the ease with which the neutral use of the -e is picked up, even by those who oppose the business practices of the company using it. Examples of this can be seen in the comments above - Detoni using “migues” - a shortened form of *amigues* - and De Campos using “lindes” to describe the video participants. The criticism within these comments appear to be levelled at Avon’s business practices, rather than their use of language - although there may be many reasons for this, and it must be noted that a lack of vocal dissent does not necessarily equal tacit acceptance.

[10] Translation mine.

Conclusion

In writing this thesis, I have endeavoured to provide an overview of contemporary linguistic practices within Portuguese - with appropriate comparative reference to Spanish for reasons of linguistic structural proximity - that have as an aim the increasing of gender-neutrality, and have endeavoured also to center the experiences and practices of transgender and nonbinary individuals. This thesis builds upon works by a number of gender and language scholars, who have investigated the psychological effects of gendered language and gendered generics, and the role this can play in the formation of views and opinions on both an individual and societal level (see Wasserman & Weseley, 2009; Prewitt-Freilino, et al., 2012). The justification for this study is evident in a number of first-hand transgender accounts regarding the role played by language in expression of gender and identity, as well as a comparative dearth of contemporary research regarding gender-neutral practices in non-English languages. The role played by English as a current “language of queer liberation” or as a language of “communicating queerness” should be acknowledged, but it is essential to not discount the experiences of non-speakers of English, nor to exclude them from the gender conversation. Hord (2016) writes of moving away from an anglocentric view on genderqueerness and gender expression, and part of doing so is to promote “context-specific activism...not just culturally, but linguistically”, involving facets including promoting greater understanding of how gender interacts with the grammatical systems of non-English languages, and centering the needs of transgender communities that speak languages other than English. It is my hope and intention that this thesis may contribute to a corpus of work on transgender and linguistic studies that involves greater inclusion of transgender and nonbinary users of non-English languages.

It is to be expected, as can be surmised from works such as those referenced above, that the Portuguese language’s status as a grammatically-gendered language problematises and complicates the introduction of linguistic practices that afford its users a greater degree of gender-neutrality. It is equally important to recognise, however, that this status does not preclude nor disqualify attempts at gender-neutrality, especially from grassroots movements led by those - in particular, queer, transgender and nonbinary individuals - who are most affected by the existing lack of gender-neutrality. Language is, after all, self-deterministic - its active use is what governs and determines its legitimacy. It is important to note, also, that the practices and proposals detailed and analysed within this work provide only a contemporary picture of gender-neutral queer linguistic practive within Portuguese - this work is by no means exhaustive, nor are the proposals detailed here necessarily the only options for gender-neutral linguistic practice. It can be expected that, as these proposals are

discussed, and further trialled and implemented, new methods and practices may be devised.

In addition to the findings of this thesis, there remains also a number of areas that would benefit from further inquiry. One potential area of continuation would be the analysis of these proposals and practices in juxtaposition with English neo-pronouns such as *ze* and *hir*; another would be to explore the stigmatising of gender-neutrality within grammatically-gendered languages, as seen above with the backformation of masculine nouns such as *dentisto* from neutral double-gender nouns such as *dentista*, touched upon briefly by scholars such as Endruschat (2015). These potential avenues of discussion are ones I hope to address in a subsequent PhD thesis.

Of the practices and proposals detailed within this thesis, the practice relating to the use of the neutral -E could perhaps be the one most likely to enter common practice, for the reasons discussed before regarding not only its ease of understanding and conformity to Portuguese grammar norms, but also - quite crucially - its emerging adoption outside of queer communities and circles, as shown here by its use within the #SintaNaPele advertising campaign by Avon Brasil. Regardless of whichever practice may become commonplace in the future, and whichever practice may, eventually, become officially accepted and acknowledged by the relevant language academies, these contemporary practices and proposals constitute an important and well-needed step towards the institution of greater gender-neutrality within the Portuguese language, to the great benefit of those who need it - and, especially, for transgender and nonbinary language users.

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