

**The Theatre of Life: Collective Narrative Practice with Trans
Young People in the Community**

DANE DUNCAN MILLS

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1. ABSTRACT

Although the body of literature exploring issues important for the lives of trans people has explored different forms of oppression, there is currently a paucity of research exploring responses to oppression specifically for young trans people. This research works with young trans people as ambassadors who contribute to the research design, analysis and procedure as participatory action researchers. Responses to oppression may be important to understand if we are to contribute to the changes needed at wider levels. For example community, institutional and social levels. The aims of this project are to join with young people who identify as trans, through meeting with them at a trans community interest group. By working in partnership with ambassadors we drew upon liberation psychology to guide the project and as a result we co-created and co-facilitated a group session. This session invited 5 other young trans people to talk about their lives. The research aim was to create a context to enable young people to tell stories of the everyday forms of resistance to oppression. This was done through the aid of a poster and by using the metaphor of a theatre stage to guide their story whilst also providing a safe position from which to tell it, and was named 'The Theatre of Life'.

These stories were analysed using a 'narrative analysis' where participants and ambassadors were involved in quality checks. The results found were primarily that the 'Theatre of Life' session can generate stories of resistance from young trans people. Their collective story of resistance was named 'A Chorus of Self-Love As a Radical Act'. It explores the importance of queer community, overshadowed aspects of identity, finding safety and inspiring others to initiate social change beyond the trans community. The results also identify relevant audience members with whom these stories will resonate in order to create social action (community, institutional and political), as well as for therapeutic use. The results also produce opportunities for sharing stories using the creative arts (e.g. theatre, performance, art, spoken word, poetry) for increased impact and wide reach.

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1. Conceptual Frameworks of Gender and Queer

In taking up the task of writing a thesis introduction on the topic of gender, it occurs to me that there have been times in my personal and professional life in which I have found the language and narratives associated with gender, biological sex and sexuality unclear, contradictory and limiting. In selecting helpful definitions for this study, I reflect how I have drawn upon a range of definitions which were available to me in my contexts. The term gender diversity is often used to encompass a wide range of gender identities not limited to the binaries of male and female. Often I have found definitions to be reductive or vague, and the narratives which are then produced, therefore limiting in some ways. I often ask, 'whose definition or narrative of gender is this?' or 'when and how was this able to come about?' and even 'where in the world might this definition be different?'.

A useful starting point in making sense of these questions is queer theory. Whilst queer theory can be used to describe a collection of theorists and research emerging since the 1980's and becoming established in the 1990's (most notably the work of Judith Butler, 1990) on the subject of sexual and gender diversity which resist the norm, queer theory it is not a static construct and has proved skilful in resisting a fixed definition. Indeed creating a definition for queer theory has explicitly been described as "a decidedly un-queer thing to do" (Sullivan, 2003, p.43). On the subject of defining queer theory Frasl (2013) summarises:

"...it is precisely the queer content or the "queerness" of queer which not only causes but necessitates its impreciseness, openness and changeability, thus making the attempt to pin it down not only notoriously difficult but also erroneous and contradictory to the queer academic project."

The word 'queer' itself has held multiple meanings in different historical and cultural contexts, poetically reflecting the power relationships between language and subjectivity. Queer as an identity descriptor can be used as an umbrella term to describe a sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression that does not conform to dominant societal norms (Frasl, 2013). Even the notion that queer has been reclaimed from abusive intent over time, is not true of all people in all places. Queer theorists are critical of binary concepts such as male and female, including how gender is shaped into a static and homogenous nature. The reason that queer theory can provide a useful scaffold when understanding these complexities and reading the literature on trans, is that it takes into account context, fluidity and relational constructions. These aspects of gender are helpful when considering the most useful direction for continuing the academic discourse. Queer theory may also be a helpful frame for reviewing the body of literature on gender diversity, and thinking about where to inquire further. Queer theory has been most helpful to me in completing this research since it accounts for important dilemmas and contradictions when considering gender and understanding the range of discourses on the topic of trans. These dilemmas often arise from static or fixed definitions of gender or gender diversity. Queer theory can be a force of movement for researchers because it is less limited to a fixed notion of identity and instead opens up new avenues of inquiry. Particularly useful are the notions of queer as a noun, adjective or verb (Giffney, 2009) which disrupt heteronormative frameworks and instead allow us to think about gender diversity in an expansive way which considers identity, action and processes. For example Galupo et al.'s (2016) study with trans adults found that gender and sexuality are often defined in research using heteronormative frameworks. Since queer theory reads gender as expansive, fluid and unique, it follows that different ways of being, are in a sense a form of resistance. Research into the resistance of heteronormative, hegemonic power and its productions of gendered subjects is particularly beneficial for social action.

Queer theory allows us to take a critical stance towards what might become of understanding gender diversity if notions of power, heterogeneity and context are not taken into consideration throughout the research process. In this way,

Foucault's (1977) ideas of power as a system of relationships may offer important questions when considering research with trans people, particularly young people who are often subject to multiple power relations within their systems. For instance: Who chooses the questions and categories into which participants belong or identify with, who defines the research aims and how were these derived? Where, within physical space, will the research take place? How will this affect aspects of difference and to what end will the research produce a knowledge which is useful if decontextualised from time, culture and place?

One of the most popular models of gender, the model of gendered performativity (Butler, 1990) sees gender not as essentialist or innate, but as constructed through recurrent social actions which 'congeal over time to produce the appearance of a natural sort of being' (1990, p 33). It follows then, that we should pay attention to situating the research on trans in relation the particular contexts of participants cultural and historical lives, to become curious about of how gender is being performed.

2.2. How are Trans and Cis Understood?

The words used to describe ourselves and others include not just names but also gender identity descriptors, pronouns, and words to describe our physical bodies. There is often a pressure put on people to describe their gender in a certain way and for this to remain static yet, especially for young people, part of the process of finding the correct and most comfortable language may involve trying new words out (Gendered Intelligence, 2017).

Whilst studies with adults who are gender diverse find they describe gender as coming about through communication and language rather than an innate quality (Claire & Alderson, 2013; Nagoshi et al., 2012) queer theory may suggest that this view may too change across time and not be true for every trans person. Young people who are making sense of themselves and the world may use a range of words or alternative creative ways of understanding

gender. Following consultation with young people and youth workers at the community interest group with which this study collaborated, the term 'trans' was recognised as a useful and inclusive term and was eloquently defined in the following way in the proceedings provided at the Trans Community Conference (2008):

“Trans is an umbrella term used to include all people whose sex which they were assigned at birth does not sit comfortably with their sense of self. It is derived from the terms ‘transsexual’ and ‘transgender’. The term transgender is often used with the same meaning, but it is not always preferred by those who identify as trans” (p.73).

Within the context of this thesis, 'trans' will be used in this way and will be used inclusive of non-binary and changing gender identities, whilst recognising that not all identify with this term. The words 'cis' and 'cisgender', are used in this thesis to refer to “individuals who have a match between the gender they were assigned at birth, their bodies, and their personal identity” (Schilt & Westbrook, 2009, p.461). It is worth noting that the word cis has sometimes been argued as less useful than 'non-trans' (Scott-Dixon, 2009) and trans and cis as binary constructs as read through queer theory, are critiqued by some for their dichotomous categorisation which may be limiting in a range of ways (Marinucci, 2010).

Normative ways of understanding what it means to self-identify as and be understood by others as a particular gender have caused heated debates. As Marshal (2014) articulates “someone may simultaneously identify as a man and a transman, having perhaps identified otherwise at different moments in their life, without contradiction” (para. 9). These ideas have resulted in debates in feminism (Goldberg, 2014; Genfield, 2014) particularly in regard to who has the power to define trans-womens identity, status as a legitimate woman, and what this affords. Within the sphere of feminism, some have used the ideas of intersectionality. Intersectionality can be defined as the overlap of identities, to describe how one person may simultaneously be acting out of a range of social contexts. For example someone who identifies

as a lesbian, monogamous, black, trans, woman; or someone who is described by others as a bisexual, polyamorous, white, cis, man. Other feminist writers, most recently Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, have expressed that the language of intersectionality and neologisms coined with the intention to create equality within language (such as 'cis') is obtrusive and overly academic (Smith, 2017).

In placing trans phenomena within a historical context, Stewart (2015) notes that there have been two dominant discourses within trans collectives, namely between how trans is understood in relation to either maintaining or challenging hegemonic 'gender norms'. Prosser (1998) reflects that the descriptor 'transsexual' often has been used within the notion of an essentialised, authentic position of male or female. On the other hand, many people question such binary definitions, and self-define their gender diversity. In the aforementioned Trans Community Conference, 137 attendees disclosed their gender identity descriptors using their own words (Stewart, 2008). In an analysis aiming to include the diversity of gender identities within the trans community, six main categories were identified: 'Transwoman', 'woman/female', 'transman', 'man/male', 'trans', and 'genderqueer'. Similarly, 'Genderqueer' was found to be the most commonly used identity from a United States online study (Kuper et al., 2012). However some descriptions were uniquely uncategorisable for instance: "temporary trans-woman soon to become woman; ex-trans woman; unusually gendered female; constantly changing; human; male-to-unknown" (Stewart, 2008, p.11). These are some useful examples of how the diversity of gender identity can operate as a discourse in challenging the essentialised, static pattern of categorisation (Bullough & Bullough 1993; Bornstein, 1994; Garber, 1992). Within some of these self-definitions, apparent limitations of language can be noticed. For instance how to reflect the fluidity, ('ex-trans' / 'temporary') and uncertainty of gender identity ('unknown'), and further, the sense of gender existence, importance ('human') and singularity. Neither a polarising pattern, nor a 'tick box' categorisation pattern easily reflect important contextual factors needed for providing a base for research.

Trans identity has been explored for clinical purposes, leading to some clinical practice frameworks such as Lev's (2004; 2007) model of transgender emergence, which is a linear stage model, and more recently developmental models (Bockting & Coleman, 2007; Bockting, 2014). Trans young people have been found to face challenges developing a positive identity in society (Monro, 2006). As a response to the lack of curiosity in terms of positive aspects associated with trans identities, Riggle et al. (2011) worked with trans adults' themes including "personal growth and resiliency; living beyond the sex binary; increased activism; and connection to the LGBT [lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans] communities" (p.147) which has implications for using strengths-based approaches to research with young trans people.

Efforts to think about how to hold onto inclusivity whilst addressing specific aspects of marginality, have been relatively few in the realms of therapeutic practice but virtually non-existent in the realm of research. It is worth noting that the term 'Trans*' (with an asterisk) for instance used by Wren (2016) as an umbrella term, has seen a significant change of use. This term caused debate within the community and as Diamond and Erlick (2017), describe, the asterisk application was felt to be problematic since it may be open to misinterpretation or used to delegitimise a person's gender identity. It may also be experienced as 'othering' of those deemed 'not trans enough', in a context where they may already be 'othered' in many aspects of their lives.

Stryker, (2008) traces Trans history reflecting that two key academic discourses emerged from a 'rupture between modern and postmodern epistemic contexts for understanding' (2006, p. 12). The first of these, was from within the medical literature and dominant psychological literature where the phenomena of trans was primarily known to be 'a personal and pathological deviation from social norms of healthy gender expressions' (Stryker, 2008, p.2). Splitting away from this, was a new discourse from a combination of academic trans allies and trans academics speaking from their perspectives. This was the beginning of a power shift whereby a new kind of conversation could emerge.

Stewart (2016, p.242), the co-founder of the community group alongside which the author collaborated, described this continuous and specific meaning-making as 'trans knowledge'. Stewart (2015) writes that, 'trans knowledge, is the space between definitions and knowledge products; a becoming knowledge achieved through and across subjects, which are also forming and becoming through, a being between knowledge products' (p. 249). Halberstam (2011) likens this relationship to trans knowledge as 'a kind of conversation between fields, disciplines, public spheres and knowledge products' (p.12). In my joining with the conversation, I have become aware of my own relationship to the discourse and reflective regarding the relationship with which readers may engage with the narratives which I echo in my writing production. Stewart (2016) writes that trans knowledge can be described as "Hegelian in form, flowing and becoming, and it operates through a throughness." (p.249).

2.3. Situating Myself In Relation to the Topic

It is important for me to place myself in relation to this piece of research (Elliott, Fischer, & Rennie, 1999) particularly as a trans ally (Reynolds; 2010, 2011). Rather than neutral, I see myself as acting out of intersectional contexts. Due to the usefulness of transparency, disclosure and reflexivity in qualitative work (Barker & Pistrang, 2005), and to avoid oppressive or colonising practices, I have developed a detailed first person narrative piece of reflexive writing to be transparent about my subjectivity (see Appendix A, p.153.)

In relation to my own understanding of gender and trans, my worldview is aligned with Doan (2010) who writes:

"There is a wide diversity in our understanding of what gender is and how it should be displayed. Gender is not a dichotomy but a splendid array of diverse experiences and performances" (p.638).

2.2. The Oppression of Young Trans People

2.2.1. Integrative Framework of Oppression

In structuring the literature on the oppression of young trans people, I have integrated Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory to expand upon theories on the 'impress of power' (Hagan & Smail, 1997, p.262) in order to formulate oppression at different levels. This framework can be useful in accounting for the need to have an 'outsight' (as an alternative to gaining 'insight'), which is defined as the process of understanding the causes of distress as located outside of the person and therefore the location of individual responsibility is moved from changing the self to the need to collectively 'push back' from higher levels (Smail, 2005).

2.2.2. Literature Search Strategy

A five-stage systematic search strategy framework as outlined by Booth et al. (2016) was carried out in order to narrow down the literature used for this review. Due to the large number of studies which were obtained by databases through the literature search, a narrative review was completed using a PICOC assessment (Booth et al., 2016) to consider the specificity of population, intervention, comparison, outcomes and context. Studies which considered the population of young people under the age of twenty one, and young trans people were deemed most useful. Particular attention was also paid to studies which had taken a narrative or community psychology framework to research with oppressed groups including but not limited to trans people, or where outcomes included life stories, personal accounts or self-description. The abstracts of studies were reviewed manually to ensure that studies were relevant according to the assessment criteria. As a means of verification I did a bibliography search of key papers (e.g. Kosciw et al., 2015; Breslow et al. 2015; Wernick, Kulick and Woodford, 2014). I also reviewed the grey literature for example articles from LGBT and community psychology websites or blog articles (e.g. Goldberg, 2014; Genfield, 2014) and unpublished literature (e.g. Hughes and Kaur, in press). Studies deemed

most pertinent to the present narrative review focus were those which were able to specifically comment on issues pertinent to trans people and young trans people; those which added to the discourse of oppression at multiple levels (including wider social and political levels, policy level or human rights based studies) and studies carried out most recently in the last ten years. Detail and documentation of the search stages including search terms, rationale for specific databases and exclusion criteria or limiters can be found in Appendix B (p.160).

Relevant articles The full text of articles that were deemed to be relevant were obtained. The reference list of all full text articles were also manually reviewed to find any further relevant articles.

2.2.3. Proximal Levels

There are a range of forms of oppression for young trans people at the proximal level, namely the most immediate world such as home and family, social, personal and material resources (Hagan & Smail, 1997) which I will now outline. I will first take into consideration the individual distress of this population and then address the areas of concern within relational spaces such as families and friends including what is known about the online community. I will then go onto consider media representations of this population and the impact of these.

2.3.3.1. Individual Distress

Studies into the mental wellbeing and distress of young trans people has taken place but historically such studies have been constrained to participants with a 'gender identity disorder' diagnosis (Reisner et al., 2015). This arguably perpetuates the medicalisation of gender diversity in the sphere of research, and neglects forms of research in relation to trans people who do not seek a psychiatric diagnosis.

In a recent rigorous review of journals published in the last five years, Connolly et al. (2016) found that young trans people 'show higher rates of

depression, suicidality, self-harm and eating disorders' (p.489) when compared to their cisgender counterparts. This includes 'internalised transphobia', which can be thought of as the inclusion of society's transphobic stories into a trans person and their identity (Breslow et al. 2015; Hendricks & Testa, 2012; Testa et al., 2012). The disproportionate rates of distress reported (Budge et al. 2013) are astonishingly high. Young trans people were found to be three times more at risk of suicidal ideation and self-harm (Reisner et al.; 2015) and at increased risk of substance misuse (Brennan et al., 2012). In a recent study by Appleby et al. (2017) investigating a sample of 922 suicides by under 25's between 2014 and 2015 in England and Wales, 5% were reported to be LGBT, equivalent to 18 deaths per year, yet statistics specific to those who identified as gender diverse were not reported since, perhaps reflecting how this information is not always known by coroners, professionals or families.

In a sample of 90 young trans people in the United States in 2016, 30% reported attempted suicide and 41% self-injurious behaviour. In a UK based LGBT study exploring risk and resilience, young trans people were found to be 26 times more likely to attempt suicide, with 48% reporting making at least one attempt in their lives, compared with cisgender counterparts (Nodin et al. 2015). In a recent school based study, more than four in five trans young people, 84%, were found to have self-harmed and more than two in five trans young people, 45%, had attempted to take their own life (Bradlow et al., 2017). Similar figures have also been found for trans adults with 41% reporting suicide attempts, (Grant et al., 2017).

These studies recommended that future research needs to be inclusive of the diversity of trans identities beyond psychiatric diagnostic labelling. They also advocate for exploration into the aspects of oppression from social and relational levels which contribute to distress. These recommendations begin the conversation about what it takes to change the factors contributing to the distress and helplessness of young trans people by pointing beyond the individual level, and towards the people, messages and systems in young trans people's lives.

Some studies have placed trans mental health in a minority stress theory, framework. Minority stress theory is defined as the understanding by which social stigma contributes to psychological distress for marginalised groups and contributes to an increased likelihood of developing maladaptive coping strategies (Brooks, 1981; Meyer, 1995; 2003; Hatzenbuehler, 2009).

As a response, Breslow et al. (2015) has looked specifically at proximal level factors associated with minority stress on adult trans people in a large scale quantitative study (n = 552). Factors associated with minority stress at proximal levels included anti-transgender discrimination, stigma awareness, and internalised transphobia. This study highlighted the problem with individual level resiliency within contexts of oppression and recommended the importance of considering relationships, “group resilience” (p.262) and creating structures of social support such as community involvement. It is worth noting that these aspects of resilience appear more orientated towards a position of changing oppressive social influences in unity and collaboration, as opposed to only exploring how individuals withstand the impact on their own.

2.3.3.2. Relationships and Community

It is important to point out that for intersectional identities there will also be multiple systems of oppression which has been found within some communities. For example, for Black trans people, there will also be racism in the LGBT community (Afuape, 2012; Opoku-Gyimah & Willacy, 2017). Similarly, LGBT participants in Higa et al.’s (2014) study, felt that ‘religion was a source of negativity in their lives, preventing them from accessing places of worship, people, their communities, and from members of their family’ (p.19). In the Metro Youth Chances Report (2016) young trans people felt ‘substantially less accepted in their local community than their cisgender counterparts particularly in religious organisations and sport’ (p.4)

As a response to the problematic discourse on trans people ‘passing’ as the gender they identify, there has been a shift to the more inclusive notion of

'visibility', which can be defined as how visible trans people are as perceived by others individually based on aspects of their identity which are visual such as their physical body and clothing; as well as more generally how trans people are visible collectively within society. Green (2006) coins the term "visibility dilemma" (p.499) which is a term that captures some of the challenges faced by trans people when navigating competing aspects of their social world. Cromwell (1999) describes how trans visibility is "context-sensitive and a relative state as well as an ongoing process" (p.14). However, some studies view trans visibility in terms of 'outness' whereby a persons trans identity exists as either 'out or in', or 'disclosed or non-disclosed'. Marshal (2014) describes how visibility and invisibility are not always a choice of the individual, and will affect the social context of the person when imposed either through good or transphobic intentions.

Kahn (2014) describes how trans young people state that they require strategies to navigate discrimination, yet little is known about how friends, family or chosen family members, can help to share this task. Young trans people are at greater risk of victimisation (Russell et al., 2014; Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network, 2009) yet many lose the support of family and friends as they transition (Singh & Burnes, 2009). Navigating identity labels can be complex (Kahn, 2014), particularly since many identify as LGB in the first instance (Wilber, et al., 2006).

Psychiatric diagnostic labels such as transsexualism (ICD-10, World Health Organisation, 2004) and Gender Dysphoria (DSM-V, American Psychiatric Association, 2003) have implicit medicalised notions of a lifelong problematic illness attached to them. These labels may be unhelpful in the context of stigma, transphobia and discrimination (Weiss, 2004; Nadal et al., 2012).

Little is known about how family networks can be supportive for young trans people, yet we know that they are, perhaps unsurprisingly, at greater risk of family estrangement (Levitt & Ippolito, 2014). Nevertheless McConnell et al., (2016) highlight the importance of family support for young trans people, and

found that where family support is lacking other forms of relational support helps to decrease psychological distress.

A young trans participant in Asakura and Craig's (2014) study with LGBT young people talked about leaving their hostile home environment, a story which was within a major theme of young people leaving hostile social environments often by sacrificing important opportunities in order to gain access to safer spaces. These findings make sense in relation to the Metro Youth Chances Report (2016) which spoke to a large number of young trans people (n = 956) and who found that approximately 50% had 'not told parents or siblings that they are trans and 28% have not told anybody' (p.1.).

2.3.3.3. Online Community

Although interest in the topic of gender diversity within the online community has increased substantially in recent years (Kanamori & White, 2016; McInroy & Craig, 2015), relatively little has been researched addressing the relationship between the online community and young trans people. Higa et al. (2014) found that as a response to alienation from organisations and families, the online community was a useful resource. Alienation can be defined as the existence of obstacles in the way of some groups preventing them from fulfilling life at an individual, interpersonal and psychosocial levels (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010).

In a recent study investigating the risks in the online community for LGB young people exploring their sexuality, trans people were excluded regardless of their identified sexuality (Ybarra & Mitchell, 2016). This exclusion was not fully explained and speaks of assumptions within the sphere of research, and outside of it. These assumptions raise several queries: Do young people feel safe enough to disclose their gender identity? Why are trans people's sexualities seen as 'other' within research yet seen as 'inclusive' within the LGBT community? Conversely, Green et al. (2015) looked at how users of the online video website 'YouTube' engaged with 'LGBT bullying', however, neither trans people, gender based cyberbullying, trans based cyberbullying or indeed gender identity were explicitly raised in the study in any way.

The online community can have both useful and damaging aspects for young trans people. For instance McInroy and Craig (2015) found that young trans people felt transphobia was more explicit online due to user anonymity, yet the internet was also a source of sharing high quality resources including valuable real life experiences from other young trans people including discussing their 'coming out' (Alexander & Losh, 2010) and sharing transition progress (McInroy & Craig, 2015). Craig and McInroy (2014) found that the online community enabled young trans participants to 'access resources, explore identity, find likeness, and digitally engage in coming out, which expanded into offline lives' (p.95).

Some recent studies also highlight that 'new media' provide opportunities for support for trans people through dialogue (Alexander & Losh, 2010; Bond et al., 2009; Hillier & Harrison, 2007; Pascoe, 2011). In contexts where accurate trans role models are incredibly rare, the online community is especially valuable (Ghazali & Nor, 2012; Davis, 2009).

2.3.3.4. Media Representations

I will first assess what the media representations of young people are, before going on to consider the potential impact of such available representations.

Although research looking at media representations has a narrow base, it has consistently found that young trans people are exposed to limiting representations of trans personhood (Davis, 2008; Padva, 2008; Raley & Lucas, 2006).

Representations are often described as misinformed and heterogeneous, often relying on stereotypical tropes. For example, in a content analysis of documentary films, Johnson (2016) describes the notion of 'transnormativity' existing in trans narratives where trans personhood is limited by the 'medical transition' narrative. Transnormativity, is defined as a 'hegemonic ideology' that structures trans experience and identification and may also best describe how trans women are represented stereotypically; trans men and non-binary

people are underrepresented and most of the actors portraying trans characters are largely enacted by cisgender people (McInroy & Craig, 2015; Sandercock, 2015; Boddington, 2016). Similarly, in western medical and fictional literature trans identity has been associated with 'rage, sorrow, wishfulness, denial' often using 'disturbed, erratic, or unstable' characteristics (Keegan, 2013, p.3). These stereotypes lend themselves to the common transnormative trope of 'the moving body', whereby trans people are storied as moving into a more celebrated context, often neglecting the importance of material inequalities and social support. This trope disguises the social and economic contexts by which trans people 'cannot or do not wish to medically transition' (Johnson, 2016, p.465).

In a rare study seeking young trans people perspectives on such media representations, McInroy and Craig's (2015) reported that they were often transphobic, oversimplified and cisnormative. Nevertheless, young trans people did speak about some media representations which were 'more positive, diverse, accessible, integrated, representative, and less tokenistic or menacing' (McInroy & Craig, 2015, p.614). Unfortunately, the impact and meaning of these less common but seemingly more useful representations was not captured in the research. However, the impact of less useful representations may be profound; misrepresentations and underrepresentations may cause a sense of fear in the general population, as well as shame in young trans people (Ringo, 2002), which could be felt at a collective level. Since both online and offline media may help young trans people to rehearse and negotiate their identities (Ghazali & Nor, 2012), current media misrepresentations in the large part might be seen as oppressive at the community level. In a study seeking the views of non-binary young people in London, Boddington (2016) suggests that the implication of misrepresentation and underrepresentation including how trans characters have historically been played by cisgender actors, may mean that there is a crucial 'lack of awareness and acceptance of other genders within society' (p.52).

Given the context of misrepresentation, it may be useful to explore the different types of media available to young trans people, and consider the opportunities these open up or close down. McInroy and Craig (2016) found that traditional media such as television, created opportunities to construct a common discourse about trans narratives, however, this is uni-directional and, therefore, misrepresentation of subgroups, transnormativity or alternative narratives could not be interacted with easily. Conversely, 'new media' such as communication platforms on internet-based devices enables dialogue, responses or counter-narratives to occur. Within the discourse is an emerging description of the types of representations forming within the media, but paradoxically what is not described is the types of discourses which wish to be seen by young trans people. Similarly, within the realm of research there also seems to be a failure in creating opportunities for young trans participants to take a participatory role, which may be symbolic of how trans people have been represented in other social spaces. As a result, I am curious about the ways in which young trans people might have resisted such profound community level oppression and engaged in attempts to contribute to more diverse and useful representations, which is a current research gap.

In reviewing the themes, narrative tropes and representations, it has been striking how neatly they fit into the neoliberal context from which they arise, positioning individuals as responsible for taking a particular type of transition, and equally responsible for their own distress.

2.3.4. Distal Level

In addressing the oppression of young trans people at distal levels, I will outline what is known about the relationship between young trans people and educational systems, mental health services, and the criminal justice system which are worth noting in order to understand the scale of the problem and how these systems are addressing issues of importance in relation to this population. I will then go onto exploring recommendations of change for the socio-political and policy levels.

2.3.4.1. Mental Health Services and Professionals

Oppression on organisational level may be understood as resulting from cisnormativity, namely that services are designed by and focused on cisgender people (Johnson, 2016). It is widely recognised that for professionals of different disciplines working with young trans people to raise their understanding, knowledge and confidence within their practice and design of services (Riley, 2012; Riley et al. 2013; Snelgrove et al., 2012).

Historically mental health and medical professionals have held discriminating beliefs about trans people, and although this has improved steadily over the last 30 years, in a recent large scale study, astonishingly, 8-10% of professionals were found to view trans peoples as ‘morally depraved’ (Kanamori & Cornelius-White, 2016). Another study with professionals likely to be supporting young trans people, found that they report ‘a lack of confidence in their ability to provide care to this vulnerable population’ (Vance, et al., 2015, p. 252). Worryingly, their study also highlighted that despite the dominant diagnostic system in which mental health experts are positioned as gatekeepers to medical support, there was a significant lack of available mental health providers. A lack of confidence, training, resources and general provision has also been discussed in relation to mental health professionals embedded within educational institutions (Beemyn, 2012; Johnston, 2016). In terms of specialist and mainstream services, Nodin et al. (2015) in their large scale ‘risk and resilience research report’ assert that:

“Developing more responsive mainstream services for LGB&T people should be a priority for all NHS [...] We also believe there will continue to be a need for LGB&T-specific services provided by and within LGB&T organisations, even when the mainstream sector can honestly demonstrate it is meeting LGB&T people’s needs.”

The relationship between services and trans people is a growing area of importance in light of the rapid increase of referrals to a national gender identity service in the UK (Di Ceglie, 2014). Referrals to Englands only gender identity clinic, The Tavvistock Clinic, began to see a sharp rise from 2009 to

2013 with referrals increasing fivefold (Harvey & Smedley, 2015; McKenzie, 2016) and in 2016, referrals doubled (Lyons, 2016).

Such an increase may be a result of the gradual increase of mainstream media representations, and use of social media which create spaces for sharing experiences (Boddington, 2016). With the rise of social media and a steady rise in trans representations in the media may come an increased awareness of how to navigate referrals to gender identity services, how to broach gender identity experiences with others and also what medical interventions may be in reach by accessing such services. Young trans people are also using online video websites to share their transition progress. Another hypothesis may be that as a result of these conversations more young trans people are seeing the benefits of using hormone replacement therapy to delay the onset of puberty and therefore taking action sooner, as well as the importance of understanding gender identity being self-defined and therefore using identity clinics as a means to access medical resources and specialist therapeutic interventions. Yet there are very few studies addressing the views of trans people in relation to the mental health services they may use (Collins & Sheehan, 2004; Grant & Mottet, 2011). A recent qualitative study aiming to address this gap asked young trans people who specifically identified as non-binary about their experiences of mental health services (Boddington, 2016). Participants described often being pathologised, labelled, and positioned as being in need of support from services. Participants drew attention to how trans people sometimes experience distress for instance with their bodies or identity but this is not true for all trans people.

Until recently, the research discourse has orientated around a pathologising 'disorder' focused psychiatric diagnoses. Unsurprisingly, services also organise themselves toward this ontology, such as 'gender identity disorder services' (Reisner et al., 2015). Indeed young trans service users found that the journey through such gender identity services resulted in distress, misgendering (Hagen & Galupo, 2014) and even self-harm (McNeil et al. (2012).

2.3.4.2. Education Systems

The following studies have begun to address hostile school environments for LGBT young people generally, yet the specific implications for young trans people has only recently begun to be recommended as an area of useful inquiry, which I will go on to outline.

In terms of hostile school environments, The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (2013) conducted an online LGBT survey across 28 countries. They found 80% of LGBT young people had experienced bullying in education settings and a large majority attempted to 'conceal their gender identity' until leaving school. Johnston (2016) reflects on how some trans students specifically describe campus spaces as violent and hostile. Yet Kosciw et al. (2015) highlight how young trans people may be 'outed' in schools without their permission or have their identity labelled by others based on assumptions.

The hostility faced, does not just come from the direction of peers. Greytak et al. (2009) found striking findings that more than 90% of trans students reported hearing derogatory remarks, and 39% hearing negative comments from school staff about gender identity. Even more worrisome, more than half had experienced physical violence. They highlight that trans students' unique challenges may include 'difficulty accessing gender-segregated areas, including bathrooms and locker rooms' (p.9). In a key annual survey in the United States, 'The Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network' (GLSEN, 2015) found 85% of LGBT students had heard negative remarks especially about transgender people that also found that trans people faced more hostile school environments than their LGB and cisgender counterparts. They also looked at school policies, finding 50% of trans students had been prevented by policy from using their preferred name or pronoun and 60% had been required to use the bathroom of their 'legal sex' (GLSEN, 2015, p. 5).

Russell et al. (2014) looked at young people who were described as 'out as LGBT' in general, finding there are actually positive outcomes for identity

development. The growing body on research of hostile school environments has implications for changes needing to occur to reduce prejudice and discrimination at the school structural and policy levels instead of recommendations being put upon trans individuals to be 'out', 'visible' or 'invisible'. The notion of being 'trans out' may fail to capture the complexity of navigating trans visibility. The complex relationship between trans visibility and safe school spaces is not straightforward, or easily comparable to LGB 'outness'. Young trans people will move through year groups and between different social spaces in their daily lives as they transition. A broader, social level sense of safety may be needed before visible and invisible trans students feel safe in their schools.

Although schools remain hostile environments for many LGBT young people, increased resources may be improving the situation, yet there is a recognition that this will be different in different places (GLSEN, 2015; Kosciw et al. 2015). Johnston's (2016) trans student participants specifically described inadequate facilities and a lack of supportive resources. In the UK, Metro Youth Chances Report (2016) interviewed young trans people (n = 956) finding that 94% reported not learning about 'trans issues' and schools scored low in terms of having access to books, posters support groups including little awareness of community based organisations. Russell et al. (2014) urged for preventative measures and consideration of the importance of peer support groups.

The impact of school environments and lack of resources, is profound and long-term. In UK schools this is reported as leading to trans young people "missing lessons, achieving lower grades, feeling isolated and left out and having to move schools" (Metro Youth Chances Report, 2016, p.2.) Kosciw et al. (2009) found that LGBT students were three times more likely to miss class due to feeling unsafe. In a school based study, Huebner et al. (2014) found a relationship between 'anti-LGBT victimisation' and hate crimes within schools, and young trans people's substance misuse. This will no doubt have an effect on employment and access to material resources in young trans

people's futures making them more vulnerable to entering the criminal justice system.

2.3.4.3. Criminal Justice System

The anti LGBT-violence charity 'Galop' reported that transphobic hate crimes, abuse and harassment are under-reported whilst frontline workers in the criminal justice system are reported as managing victims of transphobic hate crime inappropriately (Noone, 2016). In the same report Galop suggest that trans people appear to face disproportionate levels of 'stop and search' by police although there is as yet no data on this (Noone, 2016). In a study addressing the prevalence of LGBT people within young people's criminal justice systems in the United States, Irvine (2010) assessed national survey data finding that 15% of the young people were LGBT. This study points to forms of structural inequalities which are putting young LGBT people at a greater risk of offending, whilst also identifying challenges in the equitable treatment of young trans people within the criminal justice system.

According to Peek (2004) an estimated 30% of trans people are imprisoned in the United States. Trans people in different parts of the world are affected by prison policies which categorise them according to their genitalia, leading to increased risk of sexual assault and transphobic violence.

Nylund and Waddle (2016) describe how clinicians working with trans inmates need to address organisational policies. They also recommend that work needs to better position inmates as more conscious of their social context as structured by systems of oppression, and thereby position them as more politicised and able to advocate for change.

2.3.4.4. Socio-Political and Policy Levels

Whilst the aforementioned research identifies clear problems and has implications for what needs to change within communities, organisations and the media, relatively little is known about how these changes are to come about for this population. The issue of social stigma has been recognised as marginalising trans people (Kelleher, 2009) at all levels (Institute of Medicine,

2011), yet there remains a research focus on the biological and psychological aspects whilst the social aspects are neglected.

In terms of services, the Metro Youth Chances Report (2016) commissioners indicated “local leadership, young people’s involvement and the implementation of diligent commissioning processes” as the key drivers for improving policy (p.3). Young trans participants envisioned interventions were needed at a socio-political level, in order to address the problems within mental health services and allow these to be places which are inclusive of all trans identities (such as non-binary identities), stigma and discrimination, as echoed by Boddington (2016):

“The distress/problem may be located with society itself and expressed through these young people as they try to find their place within a society that is dominated by the gender binary” (p.77).

Similarly, in addressing how to overcome transphobic school bullying, Kull et al. (2015) highlight that interventions are needed at the macro level both locally and nationally. They highlight important advances and recommendations in the United States context, and advise that there is an “urgent need to continue increasing and improving state and local efforts to provide formal anti-bullying protections for students” (p.83). They recognise that there may be ‘structural barriers’ preventing these efforts and propose that future research should explore what efforts to overcoming such barriers might be. Further, Cornu (2016) reviewed global literature on transphobic and homophobic bullying in educational institutions. They concluded that the scale of the problem is widespread, global and ‘an obstacle to the right to education, one of the basic universal human rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and various United Nations Conventions’ (p.6).

The question becomes how can researcher find out more about overcoming such structural barriers, and inquire into not the deficits, but the strengths and resources of the trans community? This type of research would be useful in considering socio-political influences and for determining implications for the

change processes needed at the broader socio-political and policy levels. On the subject of such ambitious tasks, Harper (2016) writes:

“...calls for change in mental health are often blunted by a lack of ambition. We often lack a vision of how we would really want things to be because we are surrounded by so many givens – the legacy of the history of society’s attempts to address psychological distress” (p.7).

2.3. Resistance to Oppression

To reflect on the body of trans literature I have outlined, there is an understandable leaning towards richly describing the oppression of trans people. However, this dominant discourse having a quality of hopelessness in some regards perhaps explains why the academic conversation has not yet turned to the next logical step, which is to think in similar depth and breadth about what has been or is to be done about such oppression, and where to start. The prospect of seeking to change oppressive contexts may seem like a Sisyphean task, one which is insurmountable, however, researchers such as myself may need to invoke research as a form of enacted hope, to ‘do hope as a collective responsibility’ (Weingarten, 2000, p.402). As such, perhaps the first important step is to resist what Freire (1970) referred to as ‘neoliberal fatalism’ in which those in privileged positions ‘look for answers in the wrong places before concluding that broader social change is not possible’, (Denborough, 2008). A clinical psychologist’s ethical response towards such oppression within the field of research would be to take a collective interest and political stance towards informing change.

With this in mind, solutions to questions of trans oppression may be aided by looking at how to understand, resist and overcome oppression. Prilleltensky (2003) has worked to expand various aspects which may provide a way forward for oppressed groups by considering the characteristics of not just the sources or consequences of oppression but also ‘actions towards liberation’, such as social action, resisting dominant theory; ‘voices and expressions of oppression and resistance’, such as hopelessness or expressions of

solidarity; as well as the 'domains and values of liberation', from the personal to the relational and the collective (p.196).

Different descriptions of resistance have been proposed (Todd & Wade, 2003). "Creative resistance" Afuape, (2016, p.33) has been used to describe resistance which is expansive and opens up new opportunities and possibilities. Afuape (2016) recognises that resistance may indeed also be destructive and restrictive by reinforcing other forms of oppression. Some have placed the emphasis on the collective *processes* needed at a combination of levels, coining the term 'transformative resistance' (Cammarota & Fine, 2008; Solarzano & Delgado-Bernal, 2011). A key concept in the resistance discourse is that each community reacts differently to its own oppression (Prilleltensky, 2003), and increasingly these reactions are being thought of as valuable to learn from. In the sphere of clinical psychology, learning from acts of trans creative resistance would inform the different roles out of which professionals act at different levels, from the micro to the macro, for instance, as therapists, researchers, consultants, advocates and activists (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2002). Considering the increased emphasis on leadership and partnership in the future of clinical psychology, specifically 'embodying an ethical stance towards integrating different disciplines' (Onyett, 2012, p.16), acts of creative resistance would be vital for knowing how the systems around the individual can change structurally and holistically to meet their needs. Unique forms of creative resistance can also help groups to organise community action projects.

2.3.1. Trans Resistance

Although the notion of creative resistance is relatively new, researchers working with marginalised populations have long shown an interest in 'resilience', 'strength' and 'empowerment'. Limited research has taken place exploring the resilience of the LGBT population (Asakura & Craig, 2014; Russell, 2005; Kosciw, et al. 2015; Riggle et al. 2011) and very little is known about the resilience of young trans people and their communities. Furthermore, the areas to focus upon are often defined by researchers, and

are seemingly limited to an individualised and decontextualized repertoire for social change. A resilience focus does acknowledge adversities (Luthar, 2006) and, whilst in some ways does open up possibilities to metaphorically 'weather the storm' of oppression, it is limited in regards to 'transforming the climate', 'strength' and 'empowerment' of the oppressed individuals alone. However, resilience research can be read through a social ecology lens, as Ungar (2012) describes:

“Where there is potential for exposure to significant adversity, resilience is both the capacity of individuals to navigate their way to the psychological, social, cultural, and physical resources that build and sustain their well-being, and their individual and collective capacity to negotiate for these resources to be provided and experienced in culturally meaningful ways.” (p. 17)

Hartling (2004) also provides a theoretical framework for considering “relational resilience”, (p. 341). Relational resilience for LGBT people has mostly been investigated in relation to 'outness'. In a review of studies into LGBT people described as 'out', McCann and Sharek (2014) found resilience included “enhanced coping skills, acceptance of diversity, creation of families of choice, and flexibility in gender roles” (p.526). For trans people, resilience associated with being 'visible' has been found to include increased confidence, better quality relationships and a sense of community and belonging (McNeil et al., 2012).

In their study of risk resilience Nodin et al. (2015) found that in terms of resilience factors, support and understanding from family members and significant others helped to develop self-worth as well as “connection to other LGB&T people and communities create a sense of belonging, which helps build resilience” (p.6).

Other studies have built upon the idea of 'relational resilience' with this population, extending this into community and collective action. For example, Johnston (2016) drew attention to 'the activist and resilient roles trans young

people undertake in order to make campus space safer and more gender-inclusive' (p.143). Singh and McKleroy (2011) explored the resilience of trans people of colour (adults) in a community-based project in the United States. Their research found themes of participants having a pride in their gender, race and ethnicity, whilst they recognised the multiple forms of oppression upon them. They concluded that practitioners need to explore strength-based approaches, specifically those which actively seek opportunities to reduce systemic oppression and foster hope for the future. Higa et al. (2014) found young LGBT people highlighted the importance of fostering their own community networks, or finding safe community events in other group spaces which were welcoming and supportive of diversity such as creative writing communities. Testa et al. (2014) reviewed survey data from 3,087 adult trans people, and found that being connected to a trans community was a key aspect of resilience. In a rare qualitative study on resilience with trans adults, Singh et al. (2011) found key themes of "awareness of oppression; connection with a supportive community, and cultivating hope for the future" (p. 20). These themes connect with the ideas of Freire (1970) and the importance of gaining 'critical consciousness'. Wernick et al. (2014) takes this idea and very much sees the importance of a shared and multi-level understanding of 'empowerment' when working with LGBT youth:

"...empowerment is an individual and collective process wherein marginalised groups build power to achieve shared social change goals, which develops through the iterative processes of building critical consciousness and the skills and confidence to translate consciousness to action as well as taking action itself" (p.840).

In examining the dominant discourses at a community level on queer 'visibility' as a form of 'empowerment' itself, Chancellor (2012) looks at large scale media projects seeking to increase visibility in the United States. They problematised the discourses of saviourism, whereby people are positioned as needing rescuing by others outside of their contexts in an oppressive and undermining manner. These discourses were critiqued for their 'narrow versions of individualism, which are often indistinct from, and/or aligned with,

neoliberal ideologies that render *invisible* the material social differences and inequalities that shape the lives of many young people.’ (p. 2). These theoretical and research implications point towards a nuanced position for supporting trans young people, namely the usefulness of community and collective support which does not overshadow the wider responsibility for social change. This is reinforced by Asakura and Craig’s (2014) study about ‘how’ young LGBT people’s lives ‘get better’. They urge that future action-orientated research should “(1) incorporate stories on how LGBTQ people’s lives are getting better and (2) focus on how we as a society can make it better for today’s LGBTQ youths” (p. 265).

The research points towards future directions which consider creative resistance in order to take into account the importance of hope, community and how to build networks of ‘relational resilience’. This leads to an increasing curiosity towards the aspects of creative resistance which are pertinent to the lives of young trans people. Therefore, the question becomes how to connect these specific aspects of resistance, with hopefulness about what is known already and what can be known, regarding creative change at the wider community, policy and socio-political levels; a subject to which I now turn.

2.4. A Collective and Community Level Focus

The review of the literature points towards a rationale for working with community groups and using data to initiate collective action. There are clearly valuable, trans specific aspects of community resistance taking place which would be valuable for journalists, institutions, policy makers, and so on to use as a means of reducing oppression and supporting young trans people. This is in contrast to an individual focus which assumes individuals have an ability to identify and change social deficits regardless of their positions in society, a notion which Smail (2005) terms “magical voluntarism” (p.38). Hagan and Smail (1997) reflect on the importance of “obtaining power” collectively in order to ‘push back’ against distal and proximal influences, or the “impress of power” upon the individual (p.262). As Albee (1999)

articulates, “No mass disorder has ever been eliminated by treating one person at a time” (p.133). The clinical implications that research which considers resistance to social oppression may open opportunities for therapy that does not focus on “the individual at the exclusion of acting on social structures and systems” (Afuape, 2011, p.11).

2.4.1. Community and Participatory Action Research

Community and participatory action research is an approach to research which is useful for being sensitive to the needs of participants and is often used for projects which hope to share available resources (and as such is often used with young people wishing to develop new skills), acknowledge existing expertise within communities and participants lives, and thereby ensure that results are accessible and meaningful. Murray and Ozanne (1991) describe the advantages and disadvantages of such approaches. There are opportunities of locating the change focus within the community and individuals within community projects where the nature of causality is seen as critical reflection aimed at radical social changes as well as small, local, and adaptive change. Some disadvantages and obstacles of community and participatory action research projects include the conceptualisation of ‘community’ for instance where community is seen as univocal or where the macro level or indeed multi-level approaches which take into consideration power relations to change are ignored.

If the present research study is to take into account the marginalization of young trans voices, inviting young trans people to participate in the research as a form of social action would be appropriate. Research which heeds the messages of meaningful involvement and does not overshadow the social and material barriers to resisting oppression would be valuable. This type of research would be best placed within a trans community context. An advantage of community and participatory action research, is that it can allow for the involvement of a trans community and young trans people alongside myself in the design of the research. Freire (1970) describes how conscientización is understanding the world with ‘praxis’, a combination of

reflection and action which allows for transformation. Murray and Ozanne (1991) note that in order to initiate action the use of praxis would be important for community and participatory action research.

Some successful projects can be seen from the work of Wang et al. (1996) who used a methodology called 'Photovoice' which combines photography with dialogue and can be used as a means of communicating messages with stakeholders. With queer young people, Chancellor (2012) writes that the 'Photovoice' method could be useful in order to ask how, given the tools, would queer young people visualise themselves and their communities. This example of research could be a source of inspiration for similar collaboration and working with the trans community through design and implementation (Ozanne & Saatcioglu, 2008) in identifying both problems and resistance as a means of sharing stories with stakeholders in a dialogical process.

2.4.2. Liberation Psychology

Liberation psychology can provide a helpful set of guiding aims and ethics, rather than a blueprint of action. These work towards a process of liberation from oppression through what Freire (1970) termed 'conscientização' which can be defined as a process to overcome alienation (Martin-Baró, 1996). In seemingly impossible situations, Afuape (2014) defines how conscientização is a collective process of making possible, and therefore ultimately a form of creativity. Freire inspired Martin-Baró's notion of 'de-ideologizing' reality, or gaining critical self-awareness of one's position in society, which in turn allows for counter-narratives to be constructed (Montero & Sonn, 2009). A counter-narrative can help to shift the ideological hegemony (Broderick & Nee'man, 2008) and arguably allowing oppressed groups to be more politicised in their life (Molloy & Vasil, 2002).

Within the sphere of community and participatory action research, these ideas may mean working alongside 'organically forming' community groups (Montero, 1998). My role would be to act as an 'external catalytic agent' (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010) by joining with young trans people, in order to

combine researcher's knowledge with participants' expertise into a 'third, enriched form of knowledge' (Orford, 2008; Montero, 1998). The goal is orientated towards 'utilizing the virtues of the people' (Martin-Baró, 1996; Barratt, 2011) in order to build existing capacities, shift resources and enable communities to put their skills into practice (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010). The knowledge produced ultimately connects personal narratives with the political (Moane, 2003).

2.4.3. Narrative Approaches to Liberation

Postmodern movements such as the narrative psychology framework (White & Epston, 1990; White & Morgan, 2006; White, 2007) connect in many ways with liberation psychology principles. They provide tools to deconstruct taken for granted knowledge through a focus on social, historical and cultural specificity, which can be useful for research with young trans people, since there is a need to understand more about the subjugated stories of resilience (Hartling, 2004; Singh & McKleroy, 2011) and less problem-saturated stories of trans identity (Lev, 2004; Korell & Lorah, 2007; Brill & Pepper, 2013). The Narrative Framework is useful in hearing exceptions, known as 'unique outcomes', and positioning the problem as separate from the person in order to 'externalise the problem' and allow for the individual to have an increased agency over the problem, and view the problem as products of culture and history (White, 2000; Carey & Russell, 2002). These ideas may help where internalised transphobia (Breslow et al., 2015) may be a barrier. From a narrative perspective, "liberation might be viewed as the ability to move on in a preferred direction towards a preferred goal, identity or way of living based on the client's values" (Afuape, 2011, p.78).

2.4.4. Collective Narrative Practices

Collective narrative practice has sprung forth from a branch of therapy called narrative therapy, a relatively young form of therapy which recognises the power of a person becoming the author of their own life story (Morgan, 2000).

Some practitioners have noticed that when people come together, collectively, and create spaces to tell stories of hardship and survival in ways which make them stronger, this can open up new possibilities in their relationships and communities.

Collective narrative practices involve creating a shared context for stories of strength and resilience to be expressed in a group. Whilst collective narrative practices are techniques from narrative therapy rather than narrative approaches to research it may be useful to adapt these therapeutic 'techniques' and ethos for research purposes. Adapting narrative therapy into the sphere of research has seen some recent developments and is an emerging field of interest (Castro Romero et al., 2016).

In defining narrative therapy White (2005) talks about how 'single-storied' accounts of suffering, whereby people are invited to speak only about difficulties, may be 're-traumatising'. Further, it can be assumed that implicit in peoples responses to oppression are initiatives to "reduce or redress the harm and/or to care for and protect others" (Denborough, 2008, p. 198). Collective narrative practices seek to capture 'double-stories', where the story at once tells a story of difficulty and also one of overcoming. Used within a group setting, this method also has the potential to weave individual and collective voices to allow a safe space for similar but also diverse experiences to be recorded together into a 'master' document.

This approach has been used to document the skills and knowledge of survivors of bullying, worry and misery (Lowell, 2008). Creating a safe position to tell such stories has been noticed as very important. A metaphor can help create a protected position for participants to 'stand' before reflecting, such as the useful 'riverbank' position (Kaseke, 2010). It can also provide a less direct medium through which to tell stories, creating 'an alternative territory of identity' (White, 2005) to help explore problems and solutions. Examples of using collective metaphors include Ncube (2006), who developed the successful 'Tree of Life' in Africa with child survivors of grief. This method has been used with success in other projects, including 'Team of Life'

(Denborough, 2008); 'Recipes of Life' (Wood, 2012) and 'The Beads of Life' (Portnoy et al., 2015).

In contrast to a safe position, clinics can be felt as unsafe and stigmatised places for young trans people. As such, there can be a usefulness in moving to preferred physical settings, as Hughes and Kaur (in press) found in their collective narrative project with young refugees. They reflect on how a football stadium 'invited pride, excitement and connections to achievement' which made a safe space for talking with friends (p.12). Whilst a safe space may never fully be arrived at, a *safer space* chosen by a trans community may be useful in this regard for community and participatory action research.

For minority communities, the collective voice can be particularly important in constructing the collective self (Gal et al., 2015) due to barriers of oppression which have been "left out of the privileges of dominant culture, those bodies without voice in the political sense" (Langellier, 1999, p. 129).

2.4.5. Theatre and Performance

Within the report from the Trans Community Conference (Stewart, 2008), delegates advocated for the importance of "using art, writing, theatre, performance, film and oral history to discuss gender diversity in our communities" (p.33). Theatre spaces may have possibilities for providing safe settings for young trans people, whilst also providing a forum for community dialogue.

Theatre as a medium of performance fits well with Judith Butler's ideas on the performativity of gendered subjectivity and some theatre practitioners have therefore used performance to tell autobiographically inspired stories of trans lives which 'resist the heteronormative' (Farrier & McNamara, 2013). Theatre also holds possibilities for performing research outcomes in plays which can be created collaboratively with participants and performed for communities and schools in ways which "resist the hegemony of the written word" (Futch & Fine, 2014, p.42).

Since narration is in a sense a performative act (Langellier, 1999) it is unsurprising that historically, theatre has been a platform for social change. The transformative potential of theatre and theatrical devices in public spaces, has been used in the form of 'Political theatre' emerging from the work of critical playwright Bertolt Brecht (1964); and in similar terrain, 'Forum theatre' is a form of 'Theatre of the oppressed' by Augusto Boal (2002) who brought the philosophy of Paulo Freire into theatre for a 'means of transforming society'. Theatre of the oppressed was defined by Boal (2002) as theatre which "[has the] objective is to encourage autonomous activity, to set a process in motion, to stimulate transformative creativity, to change spectators into protagonists" (p. 245). Spectators were positioned as active participants known as 'spect-actors' actively improvising a new story ending (Schaedler, 2010), which then extended into their everyday lives (Hughes et al., 2016).

Theatre has been recognised within research for its potential as a medium by which, when used in specific ways, it can create social change for oppressed groups (Boehm & Boehm, 2003; Howard, 2004; Sanders, 2004; Hammock, 2011). Ehrensaft-Hawley (2010) found that theatre can be used with young people to create macro level change, however only tiny a sphere of research has inquired into the use of theatre for LGBT young people generally. In a gleaming example of qualitative, community psychology research in this area, Wernick et al. (2014) found that an LGBT theatre group in the United States used theatre to 'create community, build critical consciousness and effect community change'.

2.5. Gaps, Aims and Research Question

The aims and research questions were influenced by the above review of the literature. They were also arrived at collectively with young trans people attending a community interest group called Gendered Intelligence (GI) through a series of consultation sessions which explored the following key gaps and issues in the research. As a side note, the process of engaging with

this community group will be discussed in greater detail in the preceding methodology section of this thesis.

There are several concerns emerging from the literature review which invite present and future researchers to address. Firstly there is little research seeking the views of trans people themselves particularly concerning given what we already know about discrimination with this population, and as such further qualitative research which seeks to know more about the lives of trans people would be extremely valuable. This would be particularly useful given the rise in referrals in the aforementioned clinical populations. Studies which specifically seek the views of trans populations as well as further developing methodologies which seek to reduce the barriers towards trans people participating in research would also address this important issue. For example, the majority of research on the topic area has been quantitative and a problem with such methods brought to my attention by Gendered Intelligence may be that trans people are given a large amount of problem saturated questionnaires and forms in the services which they attend which may be akin to being asked arguably intrusive or inappropriate questions about private aspects of their personhood (such as queries about their genitalia, puberty, clothing choices or gender dysphoria). A methodology which is child friendly, fun and engaging would be useful in this regard.

The literature review has highlighted studies which claim to use samples of LGBT populations, which on further inspection have seemingly conflated sexual diversity with gender diversity, (i.e. in fact used LGB populations) or where specific implications for trans people have not been made clear.

Key gaps in the research include research which is inclusive of the diversity of trans identities beyond psychiatric diagnostic labelling. There is also a paucity in research about the positive aspects of trans personhood, which is surprising given what is already known about bullying, specifically homophobia, biphobia and transphobia. On the topic of positive aspects of trans lives, it seems very little is known about what young trans people have found to be helpful, supportive or effective in their communities, institutions

and families in order to help them and those around them to navigate a world arguably set up without them in mind. There is also a question of where to begin in approaching what level of support (from the individual level to the political level) is most important to seek information about, and who decides this is arguably a question of power. It was also striking that no studies involved trans people or indeed trans young people as participatory action researchers, or as consultants in order to help to begin addressing such issues. Stories which seek to hear about resistance, resilience, overcoming, withstanding or responding creatively to oppression (i.e. creative resistance) have not been explicitly sought from young trans people. This may be due to the priority that cisgender researchers have given to the use of quantitative methods. It could be said that the body of research has become problem saturated, and that in order to begin a process of change it is important for researchers to also become trans allies and to seek solutions. In terms of problem saturated places, the literature highlights how 'safe spaces' are found to be valuable, and yet the importance of physical space seems to have been neglected in research. Gender disorder clinics or hospitals as research settings could be felt as unsafe and stigmatised places for young trans people who often have to navigate complex referral systems and medical interventions. Research which recognises the potential for positive and safe physical space may allow for richer data gathering to take place and reduce barriers to accessing research for this population.

Another key gap in the research has been the individualisation of gender diversity within research, despite the known importance of collective identity and groups with which trans people seemingly connect. This includes the importance of queer or chosen family in trans lives, given the aforementioned knowledge in relation to biological family and peer rejection and homelessness. Studies which seek stories of collectives and deal with the balance between group identity and individual diversity have not been found. Such studies may open up opportunities for collective action within trans communities.

Throughout the literature review a common thread has been the lack of accurately represented life narratives within various spheres (clinical, academic, media and new media). A far reaching implication of constructing narratives of 'LGBT people' in general is that trans becomes constructed as a singular, homogenous and static category. The preferred personal or indeed collective narratives of trans people which may begin a process of informing available trans narratives, have simply not been sought.

In light of the gaps of research aiming to address an owned, collective, resistance and narrative focus within young trans peoples participatory action research, the following aims and research questions, were arrived at:

The main two research aims are:

- To hear the preferred personal or collective narratives of creative resistance of young trans people.
- To work with a young trans community group, and invite members as participatory action co-researchers.

A larger research aim is:

- To co-construct a methodology which creates a safe context for expressing and telling the personal or collective narratives of young trans people which can be taken forward by the trans community by ambassadors and youth workers.

The two research questions are:

- What kind of stories of creative resistance do young trans people tell?
- What kind of stories of personal or collective identity do young trans people tell?

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Epistemology

3.1.1. Social Constructionist Position

In light of these research aims, the present study takes a social constructionist epistemology. Narrative approaches hold social constructionist principles (Harper & Spellman, 2014) and take the position that identity “is negotiated within social institutions and within communities of people, and shaped by historical and cultural forces” (White, 2000, p. 62).

This epistemological position affords a consideration of the socio-historical conditions (Bentall & Pilgrim, 1999) of the trans community which is useful to take into account when considering what is able to be performed through narration. Having a theory of knowledge which has a socio-cultural specificity, is located in time and place, will be important for working within the topic area of trans, an area seeing a relatively fast shift in its representation within culture, community and media. A social constructionist stance offers useful tools by which to think about gender and identity in a way in which is contextualised particularly within systems of oppression. Placing particular significance upon language may be useful for understanding identity descriptors (for example trans community based colloquialisms), and what such descriptors allow for in the social world since language is seen as constitutive rather than merely descriptive (Burr, 2003). A social constructionist stance affords for a questioning approach towards taken for granted knowledge (Gergen, 1985) which can help to understand dominant or essentialist notions of the gender binary. It also accounts for multiple perspectives which fits well with the trans community, Gendered Intelligence and their approach to young people’s emerging and diverse perspectives in relation to themselves and the world.

Where creative resistance is concerned, a social constructionist stance allows for a focus on the process of constructing a knowledge which is bound with social action. Forms of resistance can also be understood within the contexts which they occur, which may allow for an understanding the of the multiple networks of power. This can be helpful in understanding what is permissible for knowledge to be sustained and power networks to be disrupted and therefore allow for wider social change to occur. Considering the current and future socio-political context will be particularly helpful when considering the usefulness of this research for clinical and community psychologists.

3.1.2. Collective Narrative Methodology

The methodology of the research project was heavily guided by collective narrative approaches to therapeutic work. This approach has been used to document the skills and knowledge of survivors of bullying, worry and misery (Lowell, 2008). I drew guidance from Denborough's (2008) 'Ten Themes & Dreams' for collective narrative practice, which sees the process of co-creating a group space for constructing stories as gradual and context-specific. The emphasis is first to create a context for telling in a group and, second, to make space for otherwise overshadowed aspects of strength and resilience to be expressed safely. Additionally, it separates speaking and listening positions in a natural manner in order to give more consideration to the therapeutic aspect of telling and hearing stories within a collective context.

A collective narrative methodology is respectful of the broad array of language used to narrate trans people's lives, and the understanding that narratives have an impact on what opportunities are opened up or closed down. This can be seen as a question of ethics and values as Tseëlon (1991) maintains:

“[all methods are] ideological ... a choice of method is neither a technical neutral move, nor a choice between more or less truthful accounts of reality; rather it is a commitment to a particular metaphor ... not a question of accuracy but a question of values” (p.313).

3.2. Procedure

3.2.1. Sampling, Recruitment and Participants

Recruitment of participants took place through a regular GI youth group. Sampling was done in line with the methodological approach since GI youth groups which sampled their attendees had the same criteria as the sampling for this research. Inclusion criteria, included all self-identifying trans identities, specifying 'trans, non-binary and gender diverse' identity descriptors. The youth group carefully thought about these terms and advertised their groups for all these identity descriptors. Exclusion criteria included under 8 year olds and over 21 year olds and participants whose level of spoken English was a barrier to taking part in the group since interpreters were not available through the group.

Sampling was done with the help of GI who advertise youth group dates, times and locations on their website and social media pages, as well as through word-of-mouth. The youth group has regular attendance of twenty to thirty young trans people, who meet to take part in different activities located within a performing arts centre. At the start of the youth group and in keeping with GI's invitation style, they are read a 'menu' of the various activities taking place.

I aimed to have three to six participants present at the session, which felt appropriate to ensure adequate material was generated for analysis. Also community psychology guiding principles suggest working with groups' existing resources and, therefore, this number would allow for an adequate amount of time for each participant's telling with breaks included, during the three-hour-long session.

Five young people chose to take part in the Theatre of Life session. Participants' chosen pseudonyms, pronouns and ages are presented in table 1.

<u>Chosen Pseudonym</u>	<u>Self-Disclosed / Self-Described Biographical Details</u>	<u>Gender Assigned At Birth</u>	<u>Preferred Pronouns Used</u>	<u>Age</u>
Freddie	Mixed race. Trans man. Attends a 'same sex' school (Whilst Freddie identifies as male he is currently attending an "all girls" same sex school). Moving to university. Stealth online. First time at GI.	Assigned female at birth.	He/Him/His	18
Zach	Welsh. Binary male. Trans man. Panromantic grey-asexual (Panromantic refers to being romantically attracted to individuals regardless of sex or gender identity; Asexuality is a sexual orientation description which refers to a lack of sexual attraction to others; whilst grey-asexual, is used to describe the grey area of the spectrum between asexuality and sexuality) / Queer yet also describes self as Gay for ease (Gay refers to sexual attraction to males and refers to participants currently assigned gender). Polyamorous. 'Generally open' about trans identity. Attending a specialist autism school following leaving mainstream school. Attends GI.	Assigned female at birth.	He/Him/His	15
Steve	Christian. Trans man. Panromantic (romantically attracted to individuals regardless of sex or gender identity) / Gay (Gay refers to sexual attraction to males and refers to participants currently assigned gender). Trans-out at school. Attends GI.	Assigned female at birth.	He/Him/His	14
Kian	Italian. Trans man. Attends a same sex school (Whilst Kian identifies as male he is	Assigned female at birth.	He/Him/His	14

	currently attending an “all girls” same sex school). Attends GI.			
Lore	Trans woman. Left mainstream school to do training. Currently has two boyfriends. Attends GI.	Assigned male at birth.	She/Her/Hers	16

Table 1. Participant Demographics

As recommended by Elliott, Fischer and Rennie (1999) a brief biography has been written to provide context to participants’ stories (Appendix G, p.173).

Participants met once together in a group format with myself to first create a poster, and then take turns in talking about their poster in a ‘show and tell’ like format. As well as the five participants there was also one ambassador present and one cisgender GI volunteer. A combination of another GI project taking place on the day, and the exam period meant that other ambassadors were unavailable. The recording of the group discussion formed the data for the analysis (rather than the posters themselves).

3.2.2. Phase 1: ‘Backstage’

3.2.2.1. *Gatekeepers and Gendered Intelligence*

Following Montero’s (1998) recommendation to seek organically forming groups within communities, I found Gendered Intelligence (GI), a not-for-profit community-interest group established in 2008. Their mission is to increase understandings of gender diversity through creative methods. They offer training, consultancy, public events, professional services and work in education. An off-shoot of their project is a growing number of creative resources for young trans people, their families and those who work with them, organised by youth workers and volunteers who for in the most part, identify as trans; part of this work includes youth groups for young trans people aged up to twenty-one.

I offered a brief outline to GI gatekeepers about how collective narrative practice might create a useful session for the youth groups. I was graciously invited into a relationship with GI youth trans workers in thinking together about opportunities for a project to run as part of their monthly youth group related to transphobia and mental health.

3.2.2.2. Theatre As A Metaphor and Safe Setting

A strong resource of GI is that youth groups which take place in a theatre, have become co-created safer spaces specifically for trans people. GI use theatre in their creative projects. Therefore, the community worker involved in youth groups and I chose the theatre as the setting for this piece of research, as well as to form a basis of a metaphor for storying creative resistance, with a view to seek young people's perspectives, to which they were keen to contribute.

3.2.3. Phase 2: Ambassadors 'Directing and Producing'

3.2.3.1. Enriching Knowledge with Ambassadors

As part of the participatory aims of the research, the youth worker at GI and I worked carefully to think about involving some GI members in the project from the start. Twelve young people were invited to be 'ambassadors', a term which was coined by the GI youth worker and myself. It is important to note that ambassadors were not participants, but instead were longer-term members of GI who were at the higher age range who had expertise about GI and who wished to develop their skills in social activism, research and group facilitation.

The ambassadors took different roles at different stages of the project and were each involved to varying degrees depending on their attendance and availability. Ambassadors largely took a role in 'directing' the work whilst not taking part in the research themselves as participants. Their expertise included knowledge about what worked well about engaging with young trans people in the past and what the youth groups were currently focusing on in their community. Some ambassadors took part in creative workshops to

consult, design and test out ideas. Other Ambassadors were interested in taking part in discussions about the current gaps in research and what narrative therapy was and how it may be useful in enriching subjugated stories. Two ambassadors took more of a lead role in relation to proof reading the material used to present at the ethics committee, and developing their research skills including skills in facilitating groups to be used at future 'Theatre of Life' sessions, whilst another ambassador took a lead role in creative design aspects of the materials. Each were shown hospitality, thanked and given a certificate of involvement (Appendix C, p.168). The ambassadors attended sessions before the research took place.

At an initial session, ambassadors tried out telling life stories in different ways to see what most fit with their expertise. We also looked at methods of capturing and recording stories, for example, trying out a session in which a collective poster was drawn on a single reel of blank wallpaper which was felt to be impractical for less able bodied people. Ambassadors gave detailed feedback and I kept a note of their perspectives which can be seen in Appendix D, (p.169). At a subsequent session, ambassadors and I created a group dialogical process aided by various stimuli.

Ambassadors and I explored the epistemology of narrative therapy by looking at some quotations by narrative therapists, and wondered what a trans narrative therapist might have to say. It was noteworthy to mention that the social action orientation of GI was already well aligned to addressing key research gaps, in particular the misrepresentation of trans voices, which spoke greatly of GI's social and political responsiveness. We consulted one another in regard to the research aims and questions, to see how these could best fit with GI's values (which can be seen in figure 1). The use of flip charts, photographs of theatre stages, printouts of past GI projects, and paper and pen exercises, was useful because these were flexible methods to create and record our dialogue. Some questions included, '*What do we need to know about that would be helpful to the lives of young trans people?*' and '*How could the recording of stories occur in a comfortable and safe way?*'.

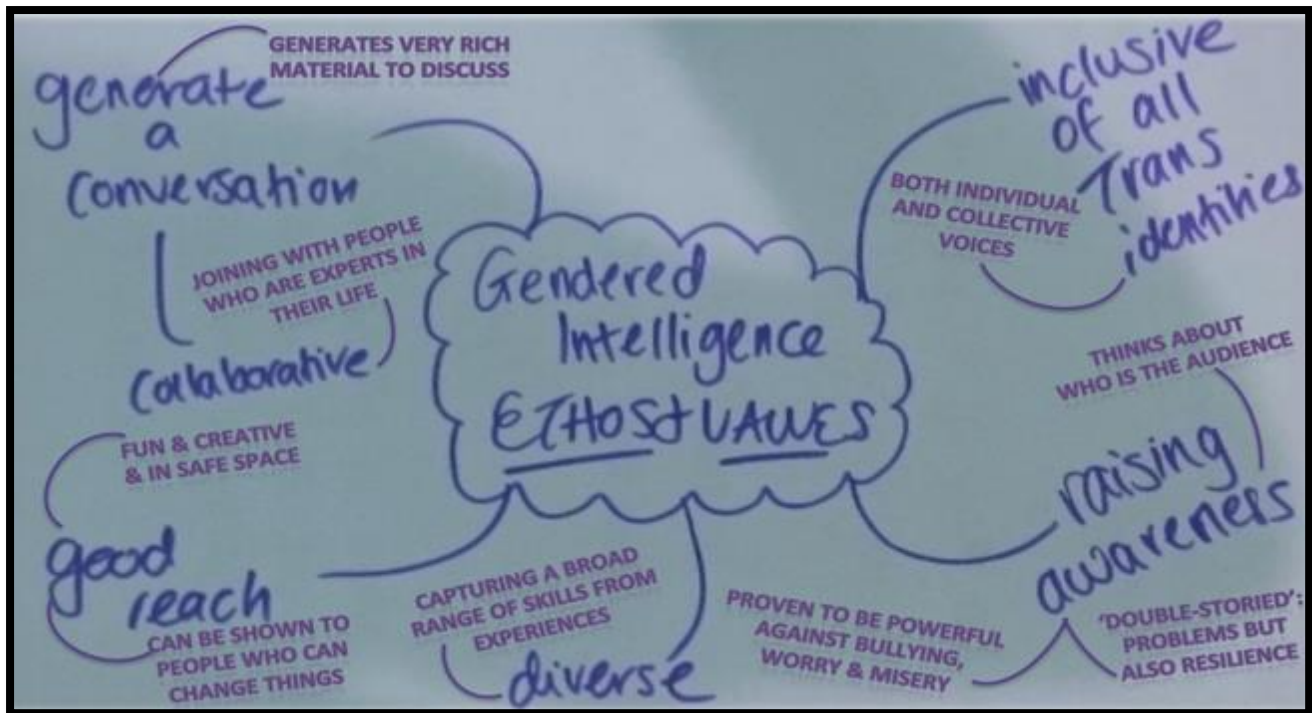


Figure1. GI Values-Project Values Fit.

Denborough (2005) found creative mediums more appropriate where it was important to be informed by local forms of expression. Ambassadors created a poster template based on a universal 'stage design' template used in theatre settings. Each part of the template represents a different part of a person's life. Broad guiding questions were formulated and placed around the template to help participants in their safe exploration of the poster. This allowed for guiding prompts to come from ambassadors as much as possible. An ambassador created a hand drawn 'example poster' to show participants how a finished poster could potentially look (Appendix E, p.170). A digital version of the template with guiding questions was produced by one of the ambassadors as a helpful guide (figure 2).

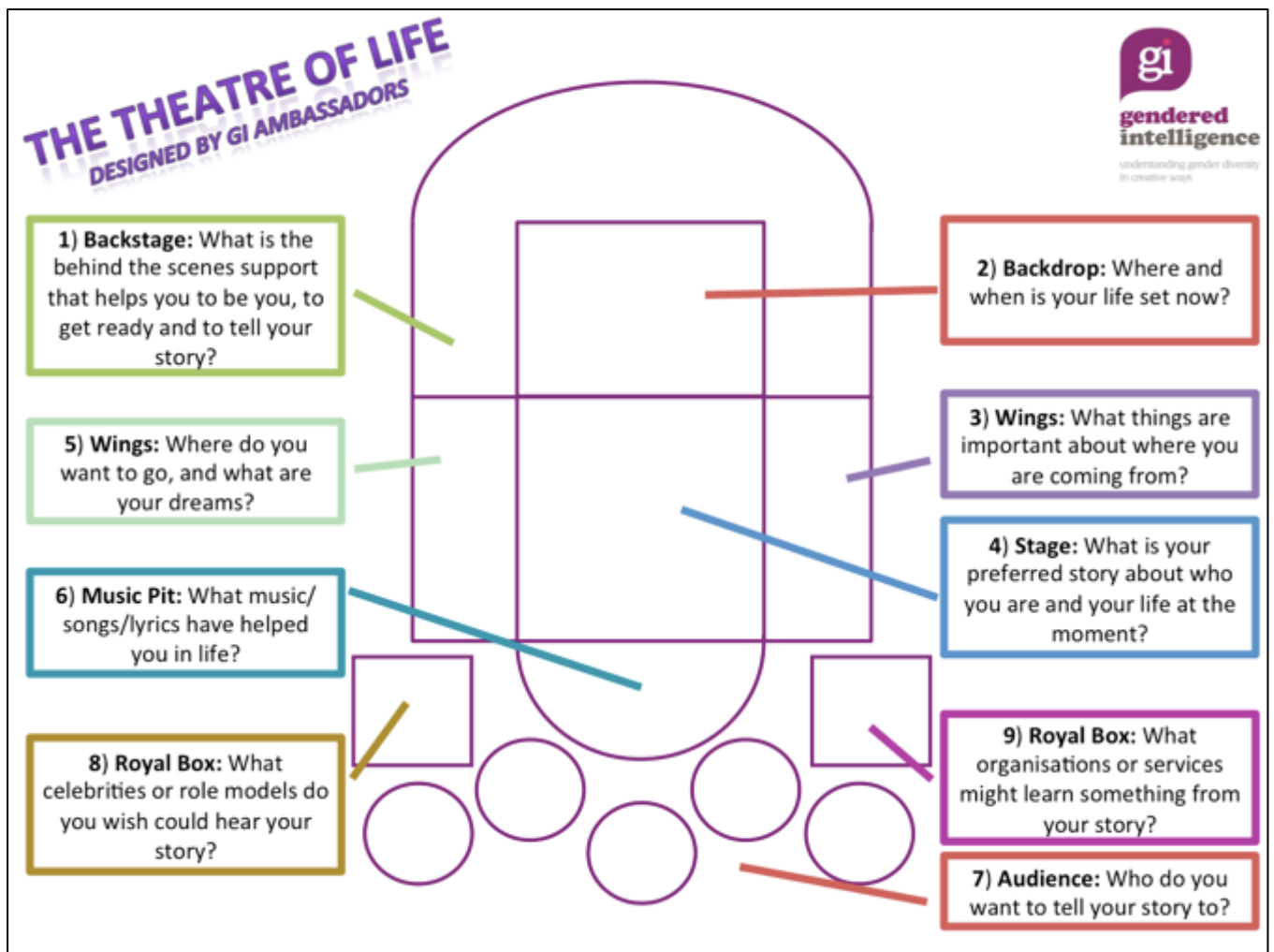


Figure 2. Digital Theatre of Life Template and Guiding Questions.

The template was made into six colours (figure 3) which ambassadors felt was an important aspect of choice for young trans people. They also decided that A3 size printouts for each would be most useful.

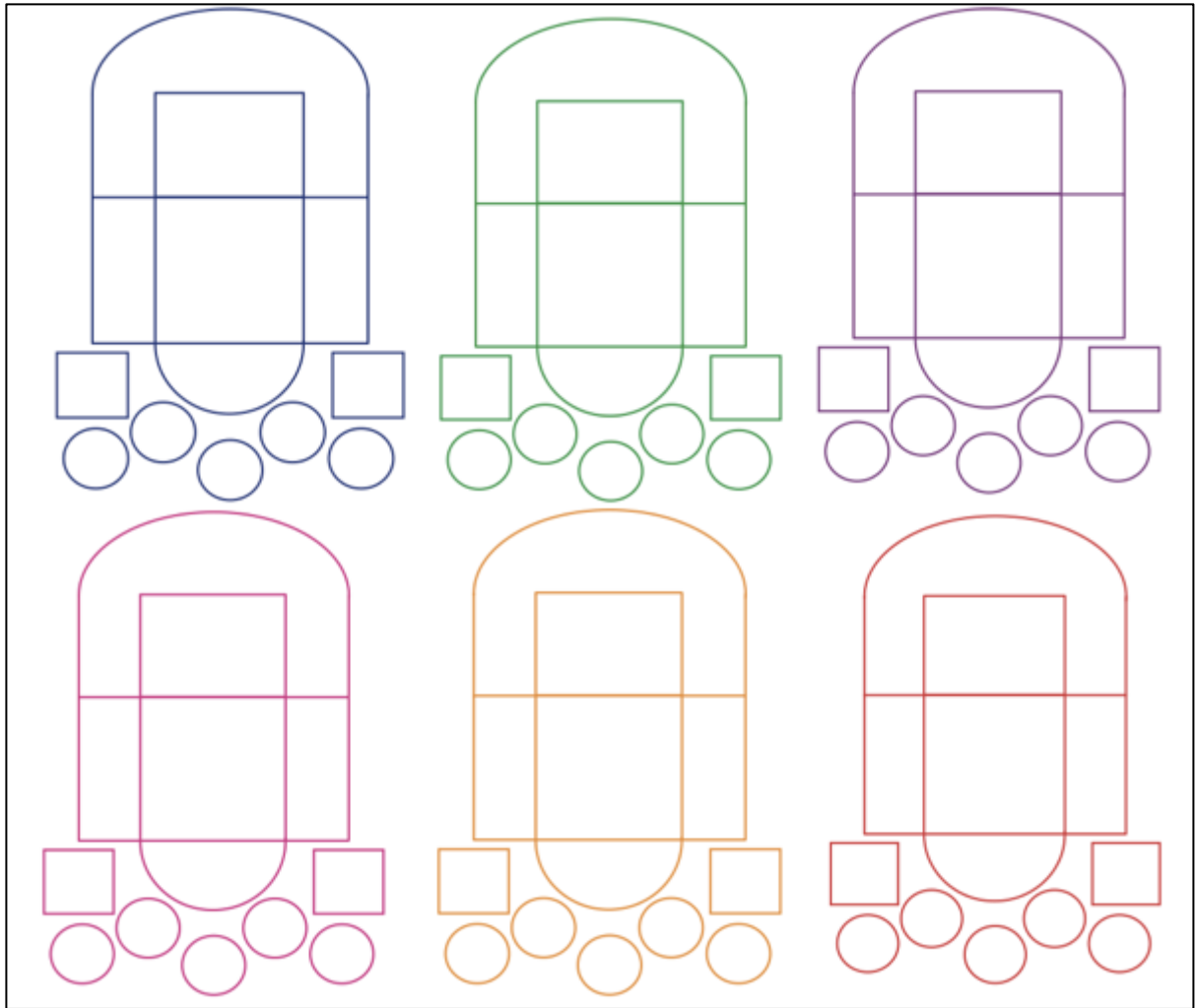


Figure 3. Digital coloured Theatre of Life templates.

At the final ambassador session, we considered the drafts of the written materials and our roles, and what kind of language had been used in previous projects which connected well with GI attendees. Ambassadors contributed to shaping the language in the information sheet for the informed consent. Ambassadors listed helpful resources for the de-brief sheet based on what they had found to be useful services in the community.

In discussing our roles, ambassadors described themselves as ‘directors’ and myself as ‘producer’. Ambassadors and the youth worker recommended that I voice my own cisgender identity and aspects of my intersectionality to attendees in order to reduce uncertainty. Due to ambassadors’ participatory involvement in the project within a Narrative Framework perspective they were co-authors to the narratives at the data-collection session, with the role

to co-facilitate this, however, I led the first session at their request to allow them to gain confidence in running future sessions. To summarise the involvement process ambassadors and I co-wrote a short summary called 'Backstage: The Story of the Project' (Appendix F, p.171).

3.2.4. Phase 3: The Performance.

3.2.4.1. *Session Part One*

The first part of the session involved an 'opening circle' whereby participants shared their names. We also did a 'pronoun around' which is a standard practice at GI whereby attendees say their preferred pronoun.

We co-created a 'working agreement' for a safer space, and provided the opportunity to ask questions about the session or research. The ambassador then displayed a blank template of the Theatre of Life on a blank poster, before showing a completed Theatre of Life poster, as a visual example of how it might look. Participants were then invited to take a coloured template of their choice and fill in their own poster. The ambassador, volunteer and I co-facilitated the group whilst they completed their poster using coloured pens and pencils.

3.2.4.2. *Session Part Two*

Participants took turns to be in A) audience position, listening to a speaker and asking occasional questions, and B) speaker position, presenting each part of their poster and associated preferred life stories. The order of stories told was as follows:

7. Zach
8. Lore
9. Steve
10. Kian
11. Freddie

3.2.4.3. Data Collection

Participants' audio-recorded stories provided a source of data. The posters helped as a context for guiding story structure. Additionally, the digital photographs of each participant's poster provided data through imagery, written and spoken word. The aspects of data collection are distinguished in table 2.

Data Generation	Visual: Written word, drawing and symbols on poster.
	Audio: Life stories guided by the poster.
Data Sources	Audio: Spoken word life stories to group.
	Visual: Poster as context and visual stimuli only, not as data.
Data Recordings	Audio: Voice recorder.
	Visual: Digital photograph of poster.

Table 2. Data Collection

Participants were then invited into a 'closing circle' and were given debrief sheets to take home (see Appendix O. p, 191).

3.2.5. Phase 4: Interpretation

3.2.5.1. *Transcription*

The digital audio-recordings of life stories shared by participants in part two of the session were transcribed verbatim and transcription conventions outlined by Parker (2005) were used (for further detail see Appendix H, p.174).

Transcribing the data allowed me to form a relationship with the stories and make preliminary notes, as recommended by Bird (2005). The transcript was first quality checked by the ambassador present and then by participants. An excerpt of the transcript can be seen in Appendix I, (p.157).

3.2.5.2. *Method of Data Analysis*

Narrative Analysis was chosen as a method of data analysis as it fits with the overall Narrative Framework and social constructionist epistemology. Within the context of this thesis, 'narrative' is defined as "perceived by the speaker as important ... selected, organized, connected and evaluated as meaningful for a particular audience" (Riessman, 2008, p.3).

Narrative analysis can be completed well with data from five participants (and less). Narrative analysis is a flexible and creative approach of analysis which allows for flexibility in working within a community psychology approach and also within a community setting where resources may be scarce. Such flexibility is useful when working with young people since it allows a degree of freedom of expression pertinent for this group. Importantly, it makes steps to "restore *agency* to the author of a narrative" (Parker, 2015, p72) which is particularly vital for participants with under-represented and mis-represented narratives about their identities. Thus, it would give young people collective ownership of stories, through a process of checking back with them repeatedly. Furthermore, narrative analysis considers context as important for understanding meaning (Emerson & Frosh, 2009) and, as such, does not neglect the theatre and youth group setting or the audience, as well as the social, political and historical context. As Coffey and Atkinson (1996) describe there is no blueprint for the best way to carry out a narrative analysis, nonetheless "one of the strengths of thinking about our data as narrative is that this opens up the possibilities for a variety of analytic strategies. [...] the analysis of narratives can provide a critical way of examining not only the key actors and events but also cultural conventions and social norms" (p.80). For transparency, visual maps which aided the analysis process, with analysis excerpts can be seen in Appendix J (p.176) and reflective diary notes in Appendix K (p. 180).

3.2.5.3. *Individual Level*

The first narrative analysis of the transcript was done through a 'performativity' lens on the individual level. The rationale for this is that individual narratives are seen as performative acts, including the importance

of 'audience'. A performativity focus benefits the research question which is concerned with individual identity, since narratives are a means of constructing a social reality, as Rosenwald and Ochsberg (1992) recognise "Personal stories are not merely a way of telling someone (or oneself) about one's life; they are the means by which identities may be fashioned" (p.1).

To highlight each individual narrative involves considering what Phoenix (2008) describes as 'key narratives'. In doing so, as Riessman (1993) recommends, I attempted to recognise individuals' genres of narrative, which have 'distinctive styles and structures, using different modes of representation that tellers chose and listeners expect' (p.18) and it is important to consider these within the data.

3.2.5.4. Collective Level

A second narrative analysis of the transcript took a 'polyphonic' reading of the collective level. The five stories were read consecutively in order to become familiar with the whole group session data. Notations were made at the side of the text in order to bring out a richness of perspectives and ensure that these were attended to in the analysis. Since narrative analysis is focused on language, a polyphonic reading of the data is interesting in shared language being used and how this helps to shape a collective identity, more specifically the relational self and the construction of collective trans identify. A polyphonic reading also pays attention to the contexts in which the story is being constructed, including the group relationships and relational aspects which may be important to take account of. Notes, quotations and connections were made which were arranged into a structure to help in considering the overall shape of the collective story. A summary statement of each narrative section aided this process and an overall summary and title were arrived at, which can be seen in Appendix J (p.176).

Bakhtin's (1973) concept of polyphony in linguistics considered the weaving together of multiple voices. This includes 'vertically', across the group and 'horizontally', in recognition of multiple parts of the author which may be produced from intersectional contexts. As such, particular attention was paid

to where one voices narration was similar or different to other voices and where possible this was noted. Particular attention was paid to characters in a narrators story such as friends, family and professionals and their multiple perspectives unfolding within the story. In the analysis, I also looked closely for parts of the narrators own perspectives which may be acting out of different contexts for example where there were views had changed over time or where there were different ways of narrating the story.

Polyphony takes the position that “multiple voices and authors are always present, not just the spoken and silent ones of the in-person participants but others as well” (Anderson, 2013, p.67). In the case of this analysis this aspect was really important since not all ambassadors were present at the data collection session, yet they had shaped the template and the guiding questions and as such were co-authors in the construction of the stories being told. As such the analysis considered the ambassadors and youth worker who shaped the Theatre of Life template as ‘silent voices’ in this way.

The ideas of polyphony connect with the ‘Open Dialogue Approach’ as Seikkula and Trimble (2005) articulate in their useful description of how meaning is made through multiple voices:

“Meaning is constantly generated and transformed by the intrinsically unpredictable process of response, response to response, followed by further response, in a process that may be interrupted but can never be concluded” (p. 465)

Meanings and identity are seen as “sustained in conversations occurring between people” (Sampson, 1993, p. 99). Thinking about an approach to analysis which considers multiple voices “flips learning *about* to learning *with*.” Anderson, 2013, p.70). The collaborative approach fits well with participatory action values of being alongside co-researchers.

4. ETHICS

4.1. Informed Consent

Ethical approval was granted from the school of Psychology Research Ethics Committee at the University of East London (Appendix L, p.183). Participants and parents/carers were given an information sheet informing them about the research in two formats: an adult version and a child-friendly-version (Appendix M, p.185). Participants and parents/guardians were given time to read the information sheet and ask questions or raise concerns about the research. It contained information about the nature of the research, including research aims and contribution. It outlined the steps that were taken in ensuring confidentiality and protection of the identity of participants. It also made clear that data will be kept for five years, in accordance to the Data Protection Act (Parliament, 1998) for subsequent publication of the project, after which time all data will be destroyed.

Ethical issues arising from the nature of narrative analysis are also worth noting. The stories told by participants are intended to be owned by participants in their authorship. There is no doubt the potential to perpetuate the misrepresentation of trans narratives, and this is hoped to be mitigated through the involvement of ambassadors in the design of the procedure, and the involvement of both ambassadors and participants in the stage of analysis. Care has been taken in the research for narratives not to be exploited or sought as static or universal truths. . There could sometimes be challenges in a group setting where inevitable power dynamics and inequalities might mean some narratives (e.g. counter-narratives) are silenced. Particularly important for GI, the intended audience of the stories will be made explicit from the beginning of the data collection session, with the assumption that stories are always shaped by their listeners.

Ambassadors and I co-created two consent sheets, an adult version and a child-friendly version (Appendix N, p.189). Fully informed written and verbal

consent was received from all participants. Adult (parental/carer) informed written consent was also received for participants aged 16 or under. Participants were provided a chance to ask further questions about the session or research.

4.2. Ensuring Confidentiality

Since young trans people are trying out new names, which may or may not be gendered, ambassadors advised that it was important for each participant to their pseudonym for the purposes of the data analysis and participatory action.

Names and contact details of participants were stored by myself on an encrypted electronic file, password protected and kept separate from the data gathered; only the researcher had access to this information.

As the data collection took place in a group format, there was a limit to confidentiality and it was made clear that absolute confidentiality could not be fully guaranteed for this reason. However, all GI attendees are routinely asked to keep the group confidential, including within the realm of online social media, which was reiterated at the start and end of the research.

4.3. Protection of Participants

Participants were informed about my cisgender identity by the group's youth worker, prior to attending the session. At the start of the session a 'working agreement' was made to help create a respectful and safe atmosphere.

Right to withdraw without any repercussions was clear to participants in their written information sheet and verbally before data collection. It was made clear that "withdrawal" meant the right not to participate in the research and the opportunity to have the data destroyed up until August 2016 when the data gathering phase would have ended and the analysis and write up phase started. If participants wished to discuss potentially distressing or sensitive

information about their experiences, GI were well placed as a support system.

4.3. Debriefing Participants

Participants, parents and carers were given time at the end of the research to ask questions or raise concerns. They were also given a de-brief sheet at the end of the data collection (Appendix O, p.191), thanking them, reminding them about the nature of the research, and providing the names and contact details of appropriate local support organisations.

5. ANALYSIS, RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this section, I will integrate the analysis of the results with discussion in order to attend closely to participants' contexts whilst bringing in the academic discourses part of the wider contexts.

I will present the results in two main ways, first considering the collective story taking place. It will look at similar and different meaning within the whole transcript, and also at context. I will present this in the form of a prologue, which sets the context for the reader. I will then go on to present individual (or 'small' stories, Phoenix, 2008). The five narrators at the session co-construct their stories by taking turns to take centre-stage. Taking inspiration from Brechtian political theatre which popularised the theatrical device of producing 'small plays within a large play', allowing for the audience to take a more critical viewpoint towards the political messages being presented, the small stories will be seen as short plays within the larger play framework. Each participant takes turns to take a centre-stage position to tell their unique testimony of their life story including aspects they chose to narrate. This is interpreted as part of the whole unfolding sequence. It should be noted that at times each play adds and builds upon the plays which they have followed, including at times the audience being invited to participate in a manner akin to the aforementioned ideas of 'spect-actors' Boal (2002). In this way the narrators are given the chance to shape the unfolding collective story being told.

5.1. Collective Level, A Prologue: A Chorus of Self-Love As a Radical Act

5.1.1. Harmonising Within A Trans Community and Queer Family

Although the collective voice within this story moves towards a message that 'it gets better', there is a rich narration of oppression vertically across the group. This is particularly narrated at institutional levels such as within schools

and clinics. School is unanimously narrated by the collective voices as a place where bullying, discrimination, lack of understanding and distressing misgendering was experienced by them. Narrators describe either moving, leaving or advocating for change:

[307–308] ZACH: ...schools can be really transphobic sometimes.

[563] LORE: It's slightly less shitty because I stopped going to school and that was like hell.

[1233-1234] STEVE: I hate things like in PSHE [Personal Social Health Education] and school generally, like they briefly mentioned the topic of being gay and lesbian, like a tiny bit like scratch the surface.

A polyphonic analysis afforded for hearing similar threads within the collective story. Four narrators' voices also narrate how Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) could learn from their stories in order to improve their services, with the fifth narrator describing her loss of faith in the general NHS. Nevertheless, some participants remarkably narrate supportive aspects within these institutions [141, 291, 1337] as characterised by Steve: [1065-1066] "school helps me and then destroys me, which is completely irrational and but it, it can be really helpful and it can be bad". This account of mental health institutions being associated with such ambivalence may reflect the narrators vision that they have the potential to be organised in consultation with young trans people. McNeil et al. (2012) found that gender identity services actually added extreme distress in service users' lives at times. Kosciw et al. (2009) also found LGBT young people were three times more likely to miss classes due to unsafe school environments. Asakura and Craig (2014), found that general LGBT young people left hostile school environments before transforming challenges into opportunities, and in this collective story tells a similar story specifically for trans young people. The collective story is a UK example of what Cornu (2016) assessed to be global and widespread transphobic school environments, which they framed explicitly as a human rights issue, "an obstacle to the right to education" (p.6).

The account of oppressive contexts, trans people and the GI community are narrated as creating a supportive and safer space. Although some studies (McConnell et al. 2016; Levitt & Ippolito, 2014) note the importance of family support or relational support in place of birth families which can be less supportive, GI is storied as a queer family with special qualities such as mutual understandings and a sense of normality:

[115-117] ZACH: GI friends, because they kind of understand the trans thing. I would say more important because they count as two of my friends.

[586-587] LORE: I have friends since I found this group which is good. You're good.

[1523-1524] FREDDIE: ...the community there is really good about like trans stuff because everyone there is like gay so it's really good.

[1252-1253] STEVE: all the minority groups which aren't really a minority, like they're not, okay the massive norm, but here being trans is the norm, like... like binding [laugh].

[1416-1417] KIAN: obviously my trans friends are the only ones who can really understand like the whole Trans thing.

The analysis of the collective story notes the use of a shared language used by the multiple narrators. The polyphonic analysis highlighted words 'stealth'¹ and 'cis' in particular are used frequently and these are seemingly constructed as useful descriptors within a GI context. There were also shared meanings, reminiscent of the way in which the word 'queer' has been reclaimed for example, the phrase 'so gay' seemed also to be positively denoted. A

¹ 'Stealth' means to pass as non-trans without revealing your trans status" (Trans Community Conference (2008, p74).

polyphonic analysis of the collective narrative highlights the importance of shared language within the trans community. Shared language may be useful within communities given what we know about the importance of the collective voice for minority communities in constructing the collective self (Gal et al., 2015). Part of the collective identity is interpreted as 'not cis' and 'still diverse' and 'still human' as well as mutually constructing creative response to the privileges in cisnormative and heteronormative culture. The way in which trans collective identity is narrated as 'diverse and human' is an important assertion. Indeed marginalised people have been described as "bodies needing political voice" as by Langellier (1999, p.129). The collective story suggests that trans people are not homogenous beings and that they have an array of identities beyond that of gender.

In the context of transphobia and lack of understanding, it is unsurprising that 'cis people', particularly peers, are narrated by most voices with some degree of trepidation, whilst other voices humorously reinforce the message that 'they can be alright'. The polyphonic analysis picks up on how some voices narrate cis people as lacking understanding of gender and thereby unsupportive or difficult to understand in some ways, whilst other voices also introduce exceptions to this shared understanding. This may be a marker of hope and progress towards peers being more supportive to a degree in this geographical and historical context, following on from the study by Singh and Burnes (2009) who reported many trans people losing peer support when visible. Most voices across the group narrate 'understanding trans' and being 'trans friendly' without being trans as uncommon, yet seemingly possible to a limited degree:

[1652-1654] FREDDIE: I love my friends, they're all cis, but I love them because they're good to me.

[806] LORE: ...he's cis, but I can still like talk to him about stuff because he wasn't shit.

[1323-1324] KIAN: ...luckily I've got pretty cool cis friends, like who knew that cis people can be alright?

The collective telling happens within a safe community space and the kindness and support is part of both the content and the process of the story. This means that the some voices in the group express appreciation and moments of mutual inspiration:

[1207-1210] STEVE: I have no experience and I'm asking a million questions about everything because...

ZACH: We've all got to start somewhere.

[880] STEVE: You should be a comedian!

[1624] STEVE: I think I'm going to do spoken word now!

[1641-1643] ZACH: I've had loads of growth spurts and then they said '5-3 is the tallest you'll be'.

FREDDIE: It's okay, you can wear platform boots, that's what I've been doing...

[1225-1228] STEVE: ...he [Zach] told me about binders ²and helped me buy the right one and gave me his old one and stuff.

ZACH: I didn't give you my old one, Ben gave you his old one...

[897] STEVE: Thank you. It was very clever and moving.

[1717-1727] ZACH: Yeah. I just want to say thanks for other people for talking because it's really helpful and yeah...

KIAN: Good vibes, lots of musical love [...]

FREDDIE: Yeah, this was my first ever Gendered Intelligence thing.

² Breast / chest binding is the act of flattening breasts by the use of constrictive material known as 'binders'.

11.1.1. The Responsibility of Enriching Stories

Narrators positioned the responsibility of enriching subjugated stories of identity in different places throughout their story. Some narrators particularly highlighted aspects of identity which could be overshadowed by gender identity, such as sexuality, religion and ethnicity. Yet at other times there seemed to be other self-parts which placed young trans people's own role in such construction at the forefront. This included but was not limited to gender:

[403-406] ZACH: the first day of school was just me telling everyone I was gay and the next month was just every single day me telling everyone I was gay and strictly I'm panromantic grey-aseexual³ polyamorous, but gay is fine.

[1307-1308] STEVE: I wanna er, I don't know, in a way promote Christianity that we're not all idiots and be like horribly evangelical and stuff, it's just part of me...

[1508-1510] FREDDIE: I just feel kind of strongly about Vietnam because a lot of people just associate it with the Vietnam war and nobody really knows much about it as a country and so I'm very interested in trying to yeah, I don't know, stop that.

[1323-1324] KIAN: I have a great family, it's Italian so it's good food and we're all fricking crazy so that's great.

Here Zach's voice takes the responsibility of enriching some stories of sexuality where they are not known, whilst Steve, Freddie and Kian similarly take the role of enriching subjugated stories associated with their religion,

³ The terms panromantic are used here to describe being romantically attracted to individuals regardless of sex or gender identity. Asexuality is a sexual orientation description which refers to a lack of sexual attraction to others or a low or absent sexual desire for sexual activity; whilst 'grey-aseexual' (also known as grey-a), is used to describe the grey area of the spectrum between asexuality and sexuality.

ethnicity and culture (e.g. Freddie who is Vietnamese). Whereas some studies on community (Higa et al., 2014; Metro Youth Chances Report, 2016; Opoku-Gyimah & Willacy, 2017) found that religion, ethnicity and culture were sources of negativity or oppression for young people leading them to avoid these contexts, the collective story narrates a “creative resistance” (Afuape, 2016, p.33) in the voice of young trans people creating discourse and changing assumptions associated with dominant discourses they are aware of, whilst holding onto these aspects of identity. Creating change in this way has also been termed as a ‘transformative’ aspect of resistance (Cammarota & Fine, 2008; Solarzano & Delgado-Bernal, 2011). The polyphonic voices in this story bring to life the interplay between social contexts and gender identity, as the Trans Community Conference (2008) noted, ‘including the person’s ethnic group, religion or irreligion and family’ (p.73).

Most voices in the group narrated wider social structures and those in positions of power at distal levels as best placed to learn from and make use of trans life narratives, for example:

[1270-1281] STEVE: Parliament, right, like general politicians think it’s really important that they know that trans is a thing [...] you need to make sure they realise that and when they’re talking about toilets and they’re talking about schools because [...] there are going to be loads of young people, who are trans, and they need to consider that not just think of the, the norm of male and female and I think they really need to consider [...] I just feel really strongly about that and most people think politicians are crap and I’m sort of that opinion, [...] and I think the reason why they’re like that is because they don’t see the people and how different they are

The thread of narrating responsibility in such a way resonates with Austin (2016), who found a theme of ‘explaining work’ defined as “the burden of explaining one’s transgender or non-conforming identity, needs and experiences to others across life domains” (p.219). The ‘work’ aspect of the responsibility is constructed within this collective story differently by various

voices. Some voices narrate a position of unwanted labour yet other voices build upon this to describe a future ambition to do the role of explaining work later in life. As such, it may be that the present study differentiates between the 'burden of unappreciated explaining work' and the 'gracious creative opportunities for explaining when this is appreciated'.

11.1.2. From 'Being Moved' to 'Moving' Others

A concluding part of the collective story was the thread of who 'would learn from this story' and 'what they would learn'. Narrators build a specificity to what Wernick et al. (2014) describes empowerment for LGBT youth to be, namely being shared, collaborative and through dialogue (p. 840). Most voices extended an invitation for the wider population to take inspiration from the story, whilst acknowledging the heterogeneity within the trans community:

[334-339] ZACH: ...how do I explain this...queer trans people, because I am a queer trans person, mentally ill trans people, because I am a mentally ill trans person, autistic trans people, because [laughs] I'm an autistic trans person [...] young questioning Trans people, er because young questioning trans people might benefit from hearing a trans person's story.

[1658-1660] FREDDIE: The Cis people who don't know anything about Trans experience, yet! See I want to teach them about how to not be shitty people!

[1255-1256] STEVE: ...as many people as possible to learn about trans issues.

Here Zach picks out many identity descriptors which are similar to himself, whilst Freddie identifies cis people and Steve sees the importance of far reach. The story takes what Austin (2016, p.219) identified as the theme of "recognising oneself in others" in the process of forming trans identity further, since it takes into account the current context of insufficient awareness and

possible isolation felt by young trans people who may not have access to trans communities.

The polyphonic analysis picked up on how all voices seem to narrate cis people as invited to hear trans life stories to enrich their understanding of oppression and also their acts of resistance. Following the ambassador's recommendations, at the start of the session I disclosed my gender identity (cis) and sexuality (gay) to which Zach asked that the room give me a round of applause for coming out as cis. As a means of narrating my ally identity, I shared a quote by Martin Luther King Jr. (1967) which had helped me to make sense of my ally status: "In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends". Although gaining understanding was an important thread, the closely linked notions of breaking silence or inaction through solidarity were also echoed in the collective story:

[708 - 727] LORE: ...I do actually have a point from down here about friends, what was your wording earlier when you said something about why you were here and stuff? It was the quote...

STEVE: Martin Luther King.

DANE: The quote that I used erm was that "in the end it's not the" erm "the words of our enemies", no, "...the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends" - that we remember?

LORE: Yes! That one! Because I have a friend who I've had like forever, [...] he goes to an all boy school [...] he has some kind of gross friends which he... that despite the fact they've said awful offensive things to me, he still plays with them and stuff...

In terms of what they would learn, the strong message echoed by most voices is that 'it gets better' and that this message is most valuable when delivered by a person with shared experiences. Perhaps the need to suffix the potential cliché reflects the context of mis-representation within the community. This message is included for everyone, again repositioning the responsibility to share this with the people in the lives of young trans people, where there may be fear and confusion about their futures:

[385-387] ZACH: ...people kind of find it a bit cheesy saying like it gets better but it does, it... there are times when you think it can't possibly, think that it might last for years and years and years, but if you stick with it, it does.

[1432-1433] KIAN: I know it's been repeated and it sounds cheesy but everything does get better so, that's something I just wanted to let everyone know.

The message that 'it gets better' is something of a dominant discourse within queer communities, following the online 'It gets better' LGBT video project by Dan Savage (Hartlaub, 2010). As Asakura and Craig (2014) point out, the success of the project may lend itself to messages of hope being shared directly by LGBT people and allies (including the then President Barack Obama), with the added layer of non-verbal and emotional material being expressed. In studies assessing LGBT collective identity, the online nature of the campaign has been critiqued for leading to privileged positions being over represented (Goltz, 2013), particularly by white cis males (Gal et al. 2015). The theme of "cultivating hope for the future" (p.20) and was a theme of Singh et al.'s (2011) study with young trans people, and here although all voices in this collective story narrate the message 'it gets better' not all voices narrate a sense of satisfaction, rather, the story does however communicate a message of shared hope for the future.

I will now present the individual life stories as plays in order of how they were told at the session. Each play has been named using each participants own language.

5.2. Individual Level: Five Plays

5.2.1 Play 1, Zach: A Wonderful Change, 'Suddenly I Just Found People Worth Living For'.

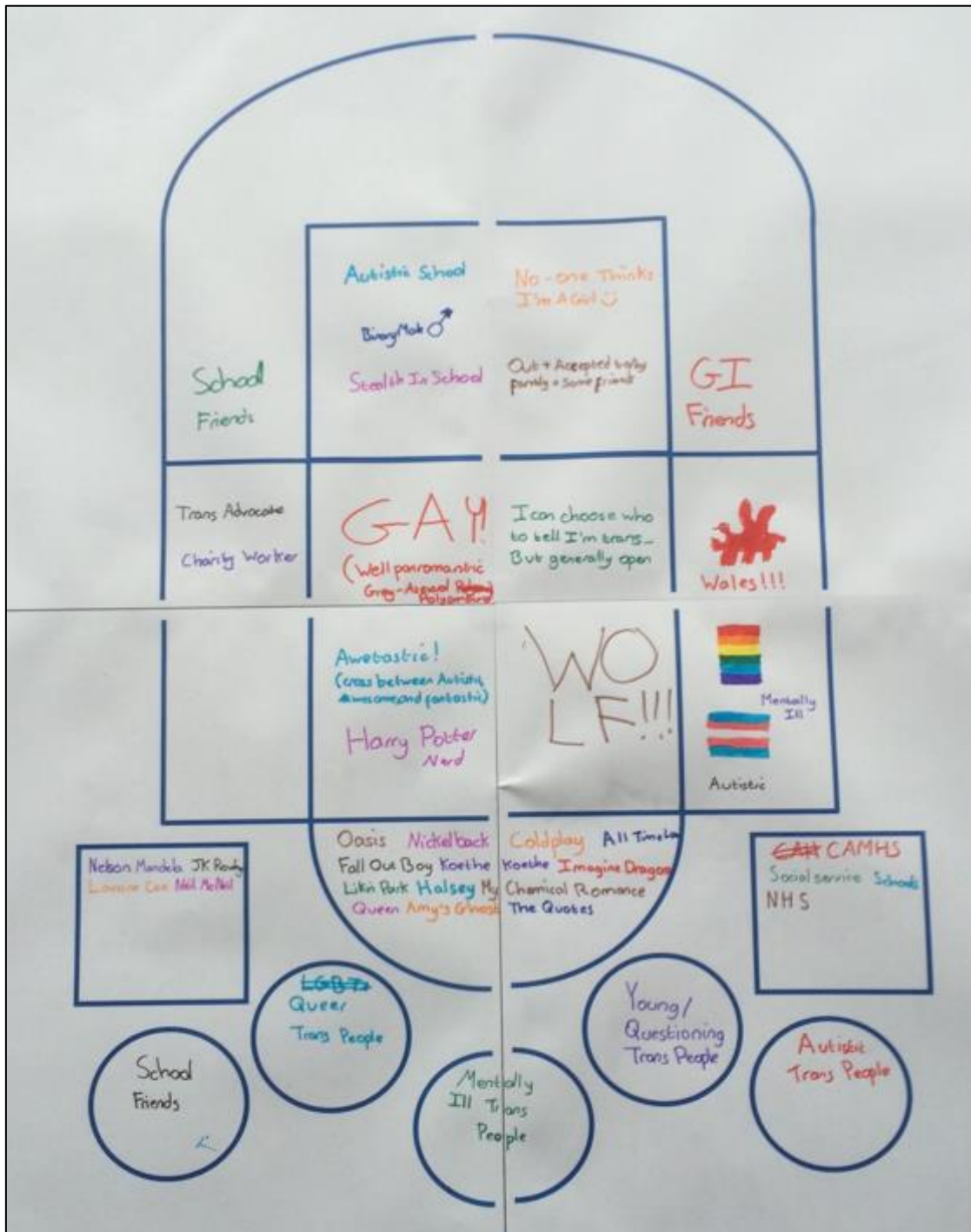


Figure. 4: Zach's Theatre Of Life Poster

When referencing the 'music pit' on his poster, Zach begins speaking about particular popular songs in a slightly hesitant way, recognising how they may be seen in popular culture, before he describes how they are songs from his father's CD which helped him 'trying to deal with the pressures' [237] during 'really bad times' [235]. A narrative segment then introduces an implicit notion that there was a time in his life that he had lost faith in humanity:

[242 - 255] 'Amy's Ghost' is kind of really important to me and 'The Quotes', [...] I met the lead singer Amy, and she, and she gave her drum to hit, because she had a little drum set, and then I met her the next time a few months' later and she remembered me and she signed my like little autograph book and was like 'Thank you for playing my drums so well!' and she got me up on stage at one point to get me to play the drum [...] 'The Quotes', you know I was really into the songs, they were rocky and I just really liked it and then at the end, erm the lead singer's girlfriend, er had got me a shirt which cost £15 and she got one to sign it and gave it to me for free, [...] and that kind of helped restore my faith in like humanity that people do, do good things for no reason and a year later at their last ever performance, erm the lead singer recognised me and actually fought his way to get to me to say I recognise you, it's really good that you're still with us and I was like [gasps].

This manner of narration focuses on the kindness and compliments Zach was shown during live music encounters with the local musicians. There seems to be a thread connecting small gestures which have a personal resonance that Zach appreciates. Similarly, Zach seemed surprised and grateful to be recognised and appreciated as being alive and present, as he goes on to further narrate what 'really bad times' mean. In this segment in which Zach narrates his role models, he gives a 'trigger warning' in advance of speaking about suicide, as a means of preparing the audience who may share experiences of suicide:

[264 - 275] There was actually erm - a trigger warning for like suicide but, well when I was a child, well not a child, early teens, like 11, yeah I was 11, I was reading the Harry Potter books and I was also really depressed because like puberty had started, and I didn't want puberty and I'd just started secondary school and everything was really, really really awful, those were the worst years in my life, and there was a time when I was actually... at the train station, and I was going to jump in front of a train because I was at that point in my life when I was like 'I can't take this or do anything to end it', and as the train was coming I thought I can't do it, I haven't finished the Harry Potter series, and it sounds really stupid but, it meant so much to me that I just couldn't... couldn't do it, I had to finish it. So I would say that JK Rowling saved my life kind of indirectly. So I kind of really I want to tell her that, you know, not even about the Trans thing just that, you know, your books have saved my life and I think that, you see I'd really like her to know that story, to know how much she's helped me to get through things and saved my life I guess.

Wilber, et al., (2006) found that many trans young people identify as LGB before identifying as trans. However, here Zach describes that for him, identifying as 'gay' [403] came as a result of his identity as a trans man. Zach also clarifies that 'gay' is a shorthand term for his sexual and romantic orientation. For young people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual (Russell & Joyner, 2001) and trans (Huebner et al., 2004), of which Zach is at the intersection, there are increased suicide risks (Nodin et al. 2015) as a result of failing systems around the individual. In relation to Giffney (2009) who talks about meanings of queer, Zach uses the word 'queer' [334] as an adjective and noun. Echoing the perceived insignificance of musicians and songs, Zach anticipates how some people may find finishing the Harry Potter books "really stupid" suggesting this may not be fully understandable to others. He breaks through this dominant perception in his telling. He positions himself as being able to live despite the uncontrollable contexts of school and puberty, and hints at a sense of personal responsibility when he recalls to us that "I can't

take this or do anything to end it". Zach narrates finding his own support through reading. Chancellor (2012) troubled the neoliberal rhetoric of empowerment associated with at risk LGBTQ youth, and although Zach may have found a means of surviving on his own, he describes how his empowerment came about through resources and he narrates his gratitude to JK Rowling in being a person who indirectly saved his life, noting how books "teach people great things"[420].

[317 -381] ...I came to GI and just suddenly just the love and the support I, I no longer wanted to die, it was the biggest change in my life and for the first time in my life I've actually wanted to live and that has been such a massive change because when I was a child I didn't want to grow up, because I thought I'm going to have to be forced to be a girl forever, I don't want that, I don't want, I can't live with this, sorry... I just wanted to never grow up and the way to do that was to kill myself and it was, it was a very hard time me growing up but suddenly I just, I found people worth living for and...it's...been such a wonderful change that I'm such a better person now, and I'm actually happy [laughs]! I find it's, you know, it does get better I honestly don't believe I'd be alive if it wasn't for GI and the people here and I'm so grateful for that and... yeah... so...sorry I'm being quite emotional now.

Zach is emotional in his telling of finding the GI community (who are also the audience) as his most significant change and reason for living. Owning his position as a queer person, Zach performs hope to the audience from an account of when he had no hope, and is a demonstration of hope as an action (Weingarten, 2000). The theme of connecting with a community as a context for cultivating hope for the future, was found by Singh et al.'s (2011) study however more specifically Zach's narration seems to be a form of extending a lifeline to others in a heartfelt manner, to save lives in his testimony of isolation and oppression. Zach seems to have lost one potential source of support before finding the GI community and indeed Testa et al. (2014) found that community was a key aspect of resilience for young trans people. Although Russell et al.'s (2014) study found the strong emphasis on peer

support groups being available for young trans people, Zach's story describes how perhaps such peer support groups can be organically formed as a response to such loss of mainstream support, and further, that these groups have a family quality to them rather than merely a space for 'peers' to group.

In Zach's testimony of institutional transphobia in mainstream school, Zach tells a story of school contexts which encouraged him to be 'stealth' [150] thereby positioning him as safe, yet silenced and, therefore, limited in agency to challenge heteronormative lessons, language and assumptions. The findings from Levitt and Ippolito (214) described how trans adults (with a mean age of 47) take on responsibility of their visibility in order to strike a balance between "authentic self-presentation [and] very real dangers in different contexts" (p. 46). Zach narrates how as a young person, his decision making in this process was taken away from him. Young trans people with less power than trans adults may therefore be subject to cis adults decision making. Zach's testimony tells us of how professionals in his life contributed heavily to important decision processes:

[308-321] My last school er, the head teacher was like, we came out to her, well when my parents like told her [...] she was like '*you can't use the boys you have to use the gender neutral toilets and you can't tell anyone*'. And all I want is to stand up in front of the class at form time and just explain what trans is, and it was like '*well we can't do that until every single teacher in the school is trained in trans things*', so okay '*but can't I just do this and can't you train a few*', so that was like '*oh well no*' [...] '*and so if you have to you can tell your closest three friends, but that's it.*' [...] I was like 'I can't live with another year of this' so I left.

This narrative segment portrays a current UK example of what Cornu (2016) deemed a global problem and "an obstacle to the right to education" (p.6). Johnston (2016) found in their Canadian school study which proposed for "a need to have more readily available staff members educated on trans needs and human rights" (p.143) and in this segment Zach's testimony is an account

of the impact of not having readily available staff members, impacting upon him leaving school, becoming isolated from peers and seemingly contributing to his story of suicidality.

Zach looks for the advantages of being stealth at school (i.e. undercover as a trans person, so to speak) and narrates it as advantageous, to an extent, to an authentic gender identity as a man. Nevertheless, in describing his future, he paints a dream of being “trans out”, suggesting he will feel safer and more able to navigate the power processes within his life:

[210-226] ...my dream would be like, to be trans out and being able to like talk about trans things and get help, help get trans people's rights and be better and work for charities and charity and like slash organisations like GI and stuff, so erm I really want that to help people because that's what [...] the who I am is like the where I come from, [...] Erm I might be stealth at school but it doesn't mean I'm not proud, you know.

5.1.2. Play 2, Lore: Getting Out of Hell, One Circle at a Time - Tragicomedy Tales.

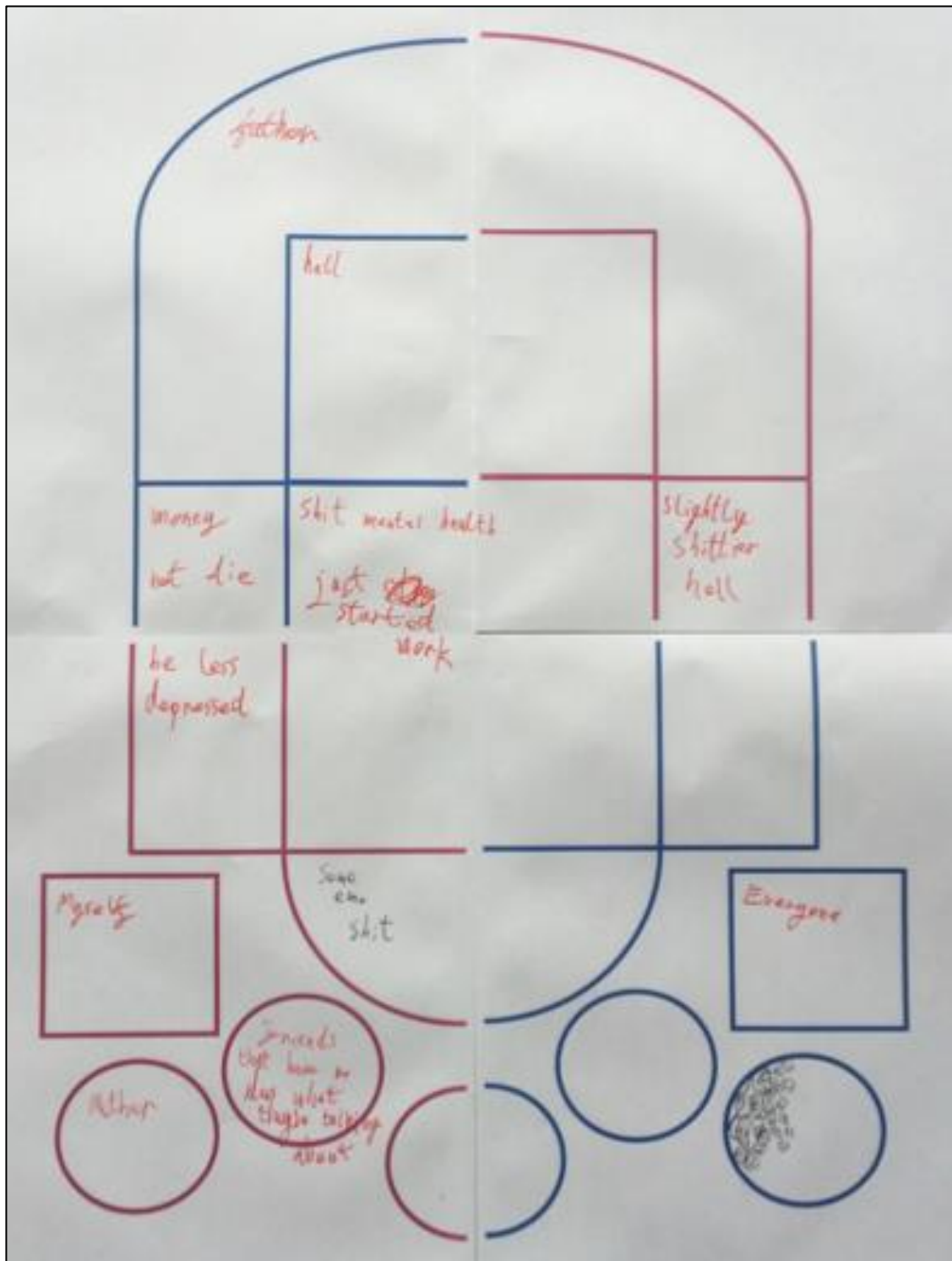


Figure 5. Lore's Theatre Of Life Poster

Lore narrates her story with a comedy and sincerity on difficult subject matters which lends itself to a tragicomedy genre. Lore repeats a motif of 'herself as the greatest' whilst describing difficult experiences, with frequent use of hyperbole and sarcasm with comic timing, moving the audience to laughter. At the end of her story, Steve declares "You should be a comedian!" [880] in praise of her style but also seemingly to offer genuine reassurance in the context of her self-depreciating undertone.

Lore re-defined the poster as a piece of artwork, mimicking an expert who is interpreting artistic meaning, Lore's style parallels a theatrical device common in Brechtian theatre. The device, *verfremdungseffekt*, has a distancing effect and can be useful in performances to allow the audience to take an objective position towards the story and, therefore, uncover the socio-political messages present within sometimes emotional and individual level content.

I understand both the gallows humour genre and her use of distancing to be a sophisticated expression of both modesty and "victory" [774], which makes light of the small acts of resistance hidden in a great struggle to move from one "circle of hell"[lines] to the next. Her poster also depicts relatively minimal yet seemingly heavy content and style (e.g. "Hell"; "Not die"; "Be less depressed"). The overall effect allows for clearer socio-political points to be exemplified ("this reinforces my point" [531]). Zhou (2006) explores the function of gallows humour suggesting that it has the effect of strengthening the oppressed in overcoming the oppressor (p.132):

[590 - 609] I'm also working or whatever, my father gave me a job, he's been the most helpful and supportive person, my father. He brought me here today, he's cool. [...] especially compared to my mother because she like broke down crying and it was all very annoying and she wouldn't shut up, but my father actually like listening and started using the right pronouns straightaway and correcting my mother who'd already known for like a week or two and, erm he brought me here today, he's given me a job and I work in his office. Erm and he actually

listens to me and I think actually knows more than fuck all about mental health, which is quite significantly helpful.

Lore tells us her hopes for the future are to write as well as “be less oppressed and not die” [571]. She alludes to possible effects of such oppression (e.g. “weird phase”, “sitting in bed”) at times hindering her writing, yet also perhaps creating raw material to build upon:

[609 – 630] ...but mostly I actually want to be a writer, so I am working on stories and I write a lot. [...] But I also don't really get much done because my main past-time is erm...sitting in bed and doing fuck all. [...] I've been working on the story for a few years, I'm trying to kind of rewrite it and kind of remake it now because when I originally made it, it was like shit and I was like at the peak of my weird phase and all the characters' names were just random Japanese words, so I'm working on improving the story now [...] hopefully like to remake it and then do some more planning and actually start writing properly and stuff, build some short stories around it...

Throughout her story, Lore uses an extended metaphor of ‘circles of hell’ which serves the function of a spectrum or scale. The use of this image skilfully counteracts possible invalidation, or the abandoning of support associated with narrating a story of ‘improvement’. She contextualises the “seventh shittiest circle of hell” [671] within the life chapter of when she attended school, noting a sense of isolation and significant people there as “basically Nazis” [583]:

[670 - 681] Yeah, so if you have the different levels of hell so when I'm, like in the seventh shittiest circle of hell while I'm in there feeling shit and lying sitting in bed doing fuck all and wanting to die I have ‘Fall Out Boy’ which I listen to [...] So that brings me up to slight less shitty hell to focus on the music. So I still don't really feel anything apart from bad, that it's like bad instead of wanting to die, so that's like, that has a lower shittiness level...

On hearing this segment within Lore's story, I was reminded of the moral of the Greek myth of Icarus and Daedalus whereby to escape a labyrinth there is a moral to be cautious, to be balanced and to avoid extremes. Here, Lore's story of creative resistance is aligned to individually reaching 'resources that build and sustain well-being in a culturally meaningful way' (Ungar, 2012, p. 17). She listens to music and then narrates movement ("brings me up to slightly less shitty hell" [677]) with nuance and degrees of similar feelings in a transparent manner. She may also be portraying a sense that 'emo shit' [640] (as a genre of music which is associated with a subculture deriving from the word 'emotional') reflects how she identifies during these moments and as such hints that 'emo shit' echoes her feelings of self-depreciation.

With the context of reaching a point of 'wanting to die' being given, (as well as hearing other narrators story school as a place of difficulty) Lore tells us of the 'victories' of resistance from when she attended school:

[773- 782] there was a thing with my tie, which is my first victory, erm... all I remember about that is kind of a sense of achievement every time I ignored a more important teacher, so at first it's the one in the hall way, then it's the form teacher, then it's the head master, erm so I just felt a sense of achievement at just walking past and ignoring him 3 times. Erm, and also actually because there was a rule where we had to tie our hair up, but like if my hair's not in my face covering my eyesight as it is pretty much most of the time it's like that, I feel like I have short hair again or something so I really don't like it, so I just ignored them when they told me to sign my hair up, and I think that's great because I walked by the headmaster's office window every single day not wearing a tie and with my hair down which really shows that *'myself'* is the great role model.

Lore's story relates to the critique of neoliberal empowerment laid out by Chancellor (2012) whereby individual empowerment can make invisible social deficits and social responsibility in that she seeks to make visible the

oppression within the school, and resist this. More specifically Lore seems aware of the invitation to take up the task of empowerment and describes that she does not wish to take on the empowered responsibility to change social deficits herself at this point in time, perhaps due to unsafe contexts she has described. Lore's 'victory' is reminiscent of "everyday resistance" to oppression (Wade, 1997, p.24). Lore seems to narrate a resistance to the oppression which accumulated over time at the school, particularly resisting the "explaining work" (Austin, 2016, p.219) associated with trans identity which is often left to the young person to do. Although unclear due to her use of humour, I could interpret that Lore is sincere in storying herself as a 'role model' to other trans people, by staying true to her apparent values of self-compassion.

5.1.3. Play 3, Steve: 'The Light at the End of the Tunnel' – What Can't Be Said Can Be Sung.

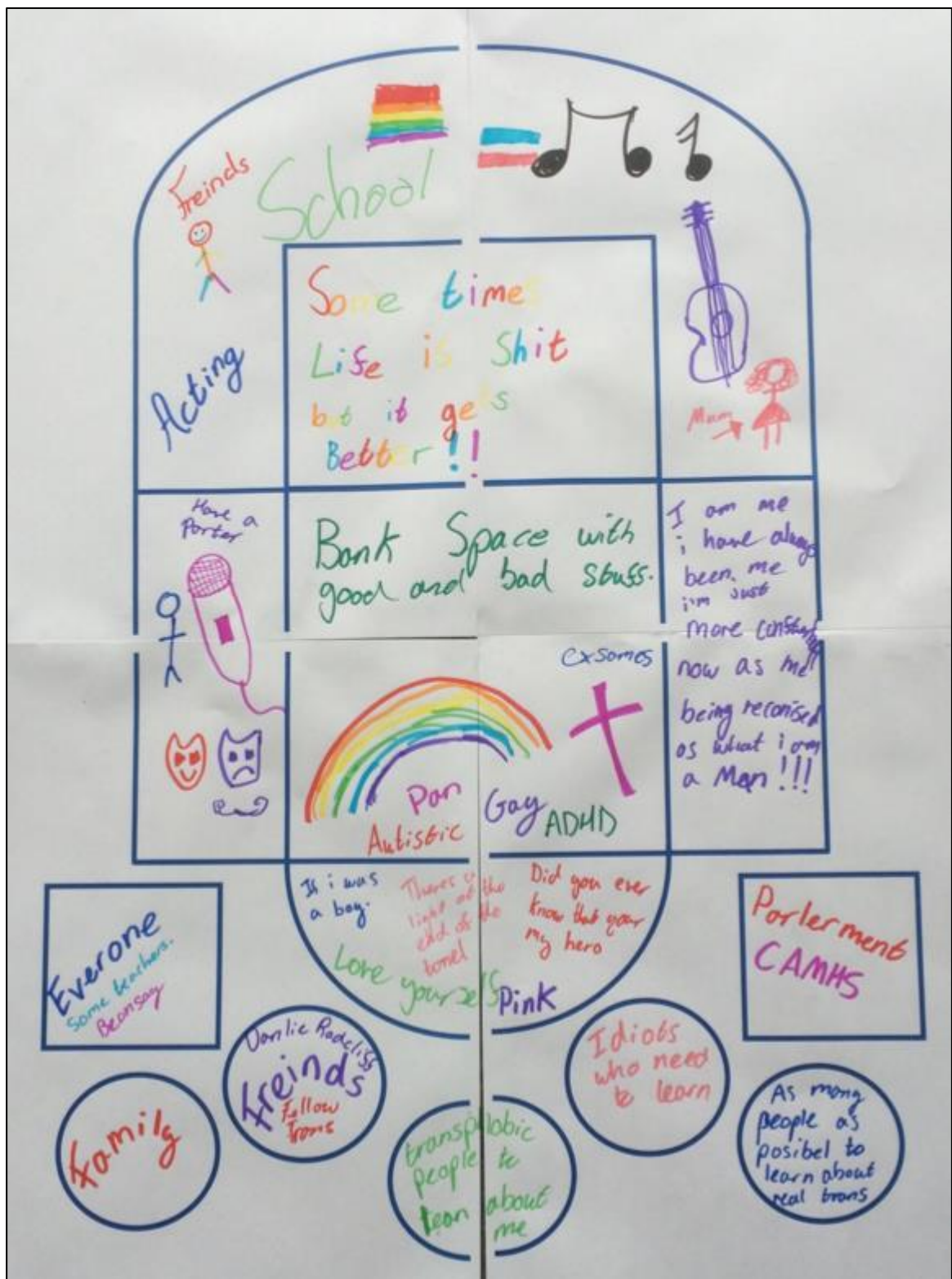


Figure. 6 Steve's Theatre Of Life Poster

Steve, a classmate and friend of Zach, seemed to connect closely with Zach's story. Steve was included as a person who Zach narrates as 'worth living for'. Steve begins his story in a particularly slow and sombre tone in contrast to the delivery of Lore's story. As Steve's story progresses he becomes increasingly animated and detailed in his expression. Steve largely uses his story to co-construct nuances associated with the complexity of his sense of identity (e.g. 'complete contradictions' [1123]) with a view of this 'helping people':

[1206-1213] Erm for the trans people, I'd love to be able to help people, I'm not sure how able I am to do that because I have no experience and I'm asking a million questions about everything [...] I don't know the technical terms [...] but I can tell my story and say stuff that would help people, I would really like to do that...

He refers to a community level process of becoming aware of 'technical' discourses, cultural artefacts and resources (e.g. how to choose a binder) which became available to him over time. Steve's identity is being constructed through a process similar to that described by Lev (2007) in "seeking information, disclosure and exploration" (p.148). However, rather than having clear terms Steve holds onto his story as a means of helping others, and he holds onto the uncertainty of terms. Whilst Stewart's (2015) describes the idea of 'trans knowledge [as] a becoming knowledge' (p. 249) in the domain of academia, Steve describes his understanding of trans in the domain of community as unfolding and uncertain and therefore describes how trans can be understood by hearing his life story and his journey towards understanding. Steve tells us how he uses the community and creativity specifically, in establishing an identity:

[1094 - 1102] Yeah, I want to be an actor when I'm older but, like performing arts I do at school and it just helps me be me and I can be me and I love acting, I can be different characters and explore and nobody recognises that I'm exploring stuff but I can, yeah...yeah and it's just enjoyment and when stuff's really bad I can really enjoy that so it uplifts me.

In the fourth stage of Lev's (2007) clinical framework for understanding trans the theme of 'emergent identities' is described, and Steve specifically describes the ways in which his identity is emerging through the use of drama as a way to explore different characters which also helps Steve to counteract difficult feelings and oppressive contexts. Although Steve seeks technical language and information to foster support and explores identity through acting, this is not linear. Steve's ability to speak about identity with uncertainty seems to allow for his communication to be spontaneous, generative and creative (Anderson & Gehart, 2012). The more recursive developmental model described by Bockting (2014) takes into account the complexities of navigating internal and external worlds, of which Steve continues to narrate:

[1066-1068] I drew the rainbow flag because it just helps me to be able to be me, like without the concept of being gay, like I don't know, I just wouldn't be able to do it and the same with trans.

Steve tells this part of the story passionately and inspires a vision of how things could be different through use of clear examples from his own life:

[1257 - 1266] ...I think if I knew about the concept, I knew about the concept of trans because I was, when I was quite young but I didn't know it was a thing, I thought it was...I thought it was an issue with depression or not feeling good about myself which is basically depression, no self-esteem stuff. But I reckon if I knew from a bit younger I would have been able to come out as younger and it would have been a lot easier because erm...like I started becoming a teenager as a girl and going through the wrong puberty is awful and people just push that to being depression and people are like generally your life is shit as a teenager which it is, but when you've got all those issues on top [...] it's just hell! [...] if I knew earlier and could have come out earlier [...] people might have been able to help me more...

Through his story Steve is providing 'trans as a concept' to others, where it was not available to him. He tells the audience that knowing earlier is better, and hints at the lengthy process and the low level of help he received. Strikingly, he stories how others constructed stories which conflated common teenage experiences, distress and his gender identity with one another as a result of the general lack of knowledge about trans in society. Whereas Austin (2016) found a theme of how individuals identity involves a "moving from uncertainty to knowing" (p.219), for Steve this was held in relational space and included the adults around him. He also stories intersectionality (being gay, and 'autism') as overwhelming and isolating in relation to having a, perhaps vague, conceptual understanding of gender identity.

His interaction with these discourses is not passive, since he also authors his own sense making through creative mediums in an attempt to express his story to others. In acts of creative resistance Steve poetically describes how relating to, writing and performing songs allows him to transform the effects of oppression, to construct meaning and express that which can be limited by spontaneous speech. This is a response to the testimony of a lack of representative songs available to him, and thus is a story of the usefulness of 'using art, writing, theatre, performance, [...] to discuss gender diversity in our communities' (Trans Community Conference, 2008, p.33).

[1149 - 1160] STEVE: ...the songs and stuff that's helped me. Er, I don't have good taste in music but you know, er there's a Beyoncé song "If I was a boy", yeah it just ... I don't, it just helped me because, because I totally related to it and because I knew I was a boy and it wasn't like 'if I was a boy, because I know I was, but as more people saw me as [...] Yeah and erm, those are like quote from a song, "there's a light at the end of the tunnel" yeah...

DANE: What song does that come from?

STEVE: Sort of from one that I wrote...

The story narrates an account of the complexities within the process which Austin (2016) termed "recognising oneself in others" (p.219) due to the

testimony of having limited access to trans role models and trans celebrities for young people. Two ideas seem connected in Steve's story of music, that of being seen as a boy, and that of aspiring to not 'really care' about other people's perceptions. Steve notes that he is recently 'out' as trans but describes being 'more than his gender'. His narration tends to reference and move between multiple conceptualisations of gender, from essentialist to social constructionist perspectives. He stories music as potentially more useful than "technical terms" [1212]. Nagoshi et al. (2012) found that socially constructed frameworks for gender were used by trans adults, yet Steve's story places more importance on the absent but implicit notions associated with being trans.

[1193 -1196] STEVE: I want them to understand my life choices, it's not even a choice, it's the completely wrong word to use because it's not a choice to be trans, erm you are trans, [...] to understand 'me' [...] I want them to see the logic behind the madness. Erm which is sometimes my life, madness

In this quotation, there was a frustrated aspect to his narrative performance as words were unavailable to express his meaning, resulting in a poetic description. It may be that Steve is describing *being* trans, *doing* trans and even *becoming* trans as understood through a queer theory framework (Giffney, 2009; Butler, 1990), as although he narrates his gender identity as not being a choice, there is a hint that others may not currently understand the process of him breaking heteronormative ways of living.

Steve tells his story of identity poetically, describing self as a continuation, being 'at heart' and 'deep down' the same person before and after being recognised as a man, but makes the distinction that this may not be true for every trans person. He describes the gender expansive notion of himself as being able to *do* masculine, feminine or androgynistic activities. He notes a sense of uncomfortableness at times of his life which he has been identified as either of the binary genders. In this way, Steve constructs a sense of his

identity which is not limited by either his gender or the gender assigned to him by others, but rather on the 'interests, likes and doing':

[1120-1129] I just wrote this "I'm me and always have been me, I'm just more comfortable now as me being recognised as what I am, a man", and that but I don't know it just felt important to say because sometimes I'm not comfortable as me which is a complete contradiction but I don't know, it's... it's just because people identified me as a girl didn't mean that I was being a different person. I think that's important for people to understand and realise that you may change pronouns and your name and stuff but at heart you're still the same, for most people, I know some people completely changed because they're like hiding stuff. I think deep down for me there's still the same person and the same interests and likes and I'll still do the same stuff whether it's a masculine activity or a feminine activity, or androgynistic.

Steve constructs a gender expansive notion of maleness, as articulated by Marshal (2014) "someone may simultaneously identify as a man and a transman, having perhaps identified otherwise at different moments in their life, without contradiction" (para. 9). Yet Steve also troubles the usefulness of gender descriptors. Steve's story can be understood as influenced by the social constructionist theory of gendered performativity whereby gender actions "congeal over time to produce the appearance of a natural sort of being" (Butler, 1990, p 33). His description of identity as seen by others partially connected to me as a gay man, and reminded me of how a common discourse in the LGBT community is how an aspect of identity can lead to stereotypical assumptions about identity (Heinze & Horn, 2014). Steve narrates a story of resisting stereotypes associated with being gay, trans and male, entering a similar territory to Austin's (2016), who described young trans people's task of "overcoming of external pressures to consistently share the importance of living authentically" (p.225).

In spite of stereotypes, Steve describes how other people largely centre his identity upon his gender, and the dominant story of being a different gender to

the gender he was assigned at birth. In another form of breaking away from language, Steve twice refers to a rainbow flag drawing [1066; 1295] as a framework to seemingly positively connote the preferred grey areas in his life. A study into trans identity by Riggle et al. (2011) looked at growth, highlighting a theme of “courage to stand up for oneself” (p.217), and Steve’s story sheds light on the relational processes involved in this including how a subjugated story can be richly described with important aspects of his identity and values and become a thicker story in order to make him proud, bring courage and with it a sense of being a better person.

Play 4, Kian: A Great Message – ‘It’s Just all About the Inspiration’.

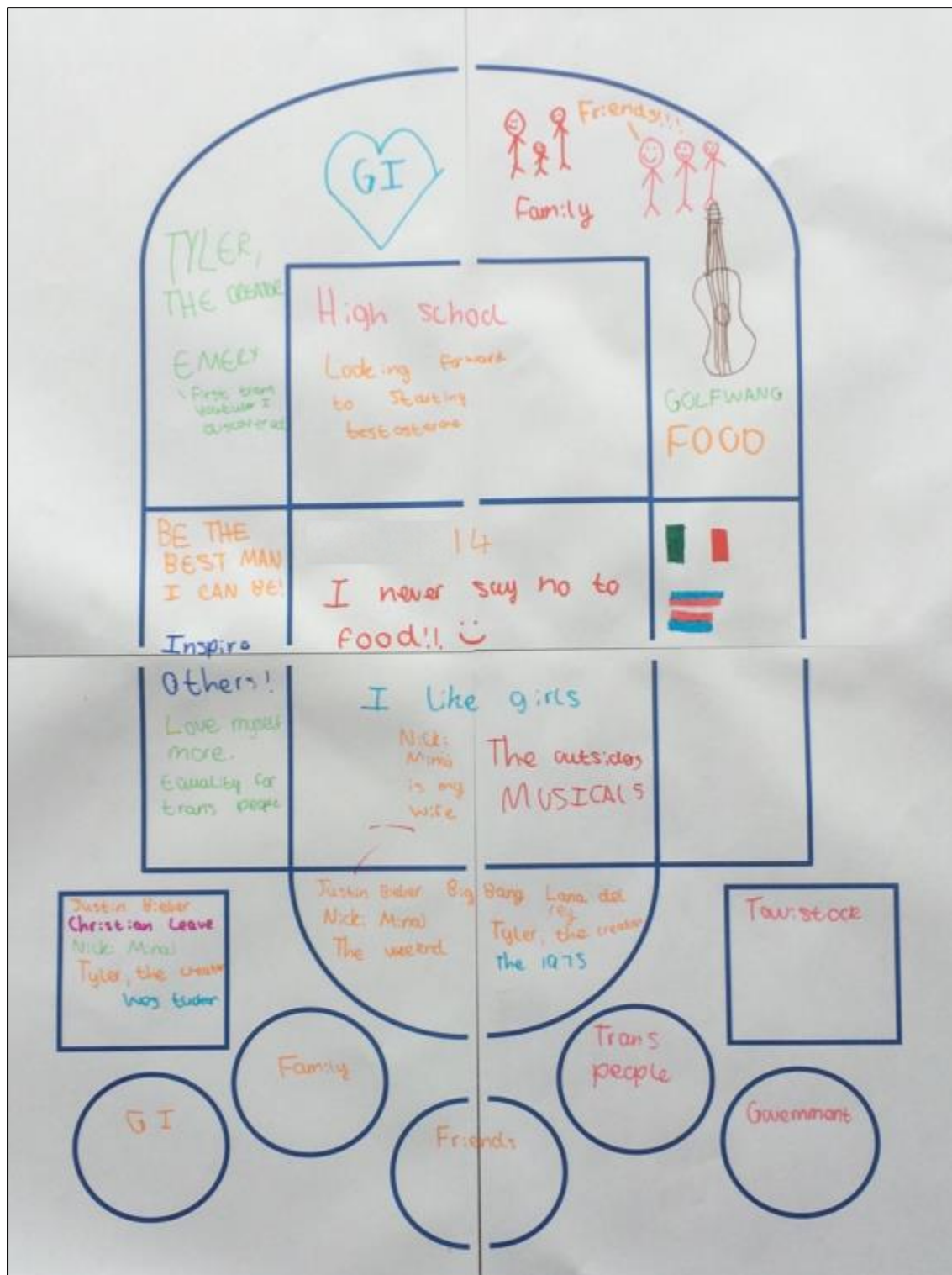


Figure 7. Kian's Theatre Of Life Poster

In my analysis of Kian's story I was struck by his rhythmic pace and 'owning' of his perspective, which afforded a focus on subjugated narrative without diluting the key messages he wanted to bring forth. In the excerpt below, Kian describes being bullied at the 'all-girls school' which he still attends. He does not narrate the reasons for remaining at this school, which seems to lead to frequent misgendering of his identity. His remaining at this school however makes more sense when he positions himself as 'lucky' in relation to other schools since he is aware of negative school stories told by other young trans people, and he shows an awareness of the difficult school stories which had preceded his story in the session. I understood that Kian in his family context, feels less able to move to a mixed gender school as a result of dominant stories of transphobia, at the expense of the misgendering of his identity at his present school.

[1336 - 1339] High school, I think I was pretty lucky, they were pretty much all on board. I did get bullied for like a year by one girl because she was stupid, but, hey, we've sorted it out now, but I had a pretty good experience at school. I had [someone who works for] GI come in and do like an assembly...

[1436 – 1443] ...I go to an all girl's school which obviously proves challenges because all the teachers are used to saying girls and ladies, but which is really difficult and I have been to...I am usually complaining about it and I'm like I did get quite angry at my maths teacher for saying girls after... and I usually go through this thing where they constantly apologise and then go and do it again which is really just like 'why, why are you doing that?'. So erm, yeah that's something that's sucky but I think I'm really blessed when it comes to school because I've heard other stories and it sounds really bad, so I think I'm quite lucky when it comes to the whole school thing.

Kian narrates his high school narrative segment in the past tense when reflecting on school life before the GI trans assembly, before going on to narrate himself 'usually complaining' in the present. He hints at an

improvement in agency to initiate change within the school culture perhaps suggesting that the GI assembly helped to legitimise his complaints. (2016), reflected upon “the activist and resilient roles some trans students undertake to make campuses a safer and more gender-inclusive space for trans and cisgender communities” (p.143). Whereas Savin-Williams (2005) described many young trans people as ‘well adjusted’, perhaps in an attempt to counter the negative cultural stereotype of misery, Kian is able to describe being blessed, thereby placing his story in relation to stories of oppression in his life and in present company. I interpret Kian's story as a form of defiance against transphobic bullying but also of resistance to stereotypes associated with trans peoples’ oppression, particularly those seen within the media. Kian focuses on the alternative, overcoming oppression story of what it means to be trans in school:

[1343 - 1347] ...‘where do you want to go and what are your dreams’. I want to be the best man I can be, and I want to inspire others, so like other trans people, like anybody to be honest and I want to love myself more, I think that’s such an important goal. It should be for everyone like, you know, you can’t love anyone else before you start loving yourself, you’ve got to put yourself first sometimes and equality for all trans people.

Austin (2016) found a theme of “evolving self-acceptance” (p.215) in young trans peoples identities. In describing his dream to be the best man he can be, Kian narrates himself as a person who 'does man' on his terms. He paints a picture of an aspiring role to reach a goal of self-love (in the context of a dream of equality) and inspiring others to self-love, both as altruistic acts.

In the context of life now, Kian seems passionate about sharing the ‘great message’ within a film. Although Kian does not unpack the meaning of ‘great message’ he insists the audience ‘watch it!’, and notes the point of view of the young character and a theme of social inequality. I found this use of signposting stories within his story a demonstration of finding voice through

accessible cultural references felt to be more appropriate for young trans people:

[1363-1375] 'The outsiders' I've mentioned this before, if you have like any time I will lend you my copy of the book, okay I'm literally going around telling people read this, watch the movie it's all up on YouTube, it's got a great message, great cast. [...] it was actually written by the author when she was 17 which is pretty cool and it's all about this like, it's told from the point of view of a 14 year old boy called Ponyboy, yes, that is his real name, and erm it's all about, I think it's set in the 50s or the 60s there were like two sort of gangs, or like types of people, so you had the 'Greasers' who were like guys who would wear leather jackets and who would like gel their hair a lot and they were sort of more of the less privileged, and then you had the 'Socs', or the Socials, like the 'Socs' is the abbreviation, and they were more well off but they were both really quite bad and lots of shit happens, watch it!

Kian recommends other cultural references (celebrities, rappers, fashion designers and 'YouTubers'), sharing some of his appreciation of how these significant people helped him and extending this to other audience members who may also benefit from their role modelling, videos, clothes, and music. Kian's story lends itself to the literature exploring the usefulness of 'new media' which has the possibility of creating a dialogue directly between young people (Heinz, 2012; Boddington, 2016), and here Kian tells us of how an online blogger resisted the online community's expectation to talk about being trans, yet communicated through visual imagery:

[1407 – 1410] Wes Tucker, he's a trans guy. He erm, he wasn't very out about being trans, like people discovered it but he wouldn't really talk about it, but recently he posted pictures, topless pictures which showed like his top surgery scars so I know that might have been very difficult for him, so I felt quite glad at him for doing that.

Kian's narration adds understanding to how trans young people may engage with the online community and navigate visibility, in a way in which general LBG studies (Alexander & Losh, 2010) did not account for. Although some studies found some trans people may wish to share their transition stories (McInroy, & Craig, 2015; Craig, & McInroy, 2014). Kian's story suggests it may also be meaningful to simply be visible or invisible as trans on one's own terms. Also Kian suggests raising an awareness that others can impose visibility on a young person in the online community.

Kian's draws inspiration from creative mediums and ends by recognising his own story as being a source of inspiration, as a vehicle for change on community, political and institutional levels:

[1411 – 1424] ...so I want to tell my story to GI, so like to other trans people to try and inspire them. Tell them that it gets better and everything else. My family so it's like my family they come from Italy, and Italy they're not very good at this type of stuff, they're still really sexist and homophobic but they're really behind, but my family's great but I think it would great if they could know a little bit more. [...] you know it's just all about that inspiration. The Government, because they're pretty important, I mean they make all the laws and I'm sure you guys have heard about the North Carolina bathroom law⁴ which is really shitty, it should not ever have happened, and I really don't want anything like that to ever happen here, so I think it would be good for the government to understand. Er, the Tavistock is quite an important service for most trans people, erm I myself attend the Tavistock, I'm sure some of you guys do too, and yeah I think to tell the Tavistock

⁴ The North Carolina bathroom law, was a USA state bill signed in March 2016, stating that in government buildings individuals may only use bathrooms that correspond to the sex identified on their birth certificates, whilst trans people may only change their birth certificates if they undergo sex reassignment surgery.

would be good so they can help like the psychologist, they can help their patients and stuff.

Kian seems to emphasise the trans community as a useful way to build collective inspiration and further inspire political levels, whilst placing these within cultural (North Carolina, Italy) and historical (“really behind” [1414]) contexts. Testa et al.’s (2014) found a direct link between community engagement and positive wellbeing for trans people, due to aspects such as collective advocacy, which Kian narrates as a key component to how change can be promoted for the GI community but also including the online community and people in the audience.

5.1.4. Play 5, Freddie: The Creative Process of “Tri-Top Chest Binder, Size Medium - A Love Story”.

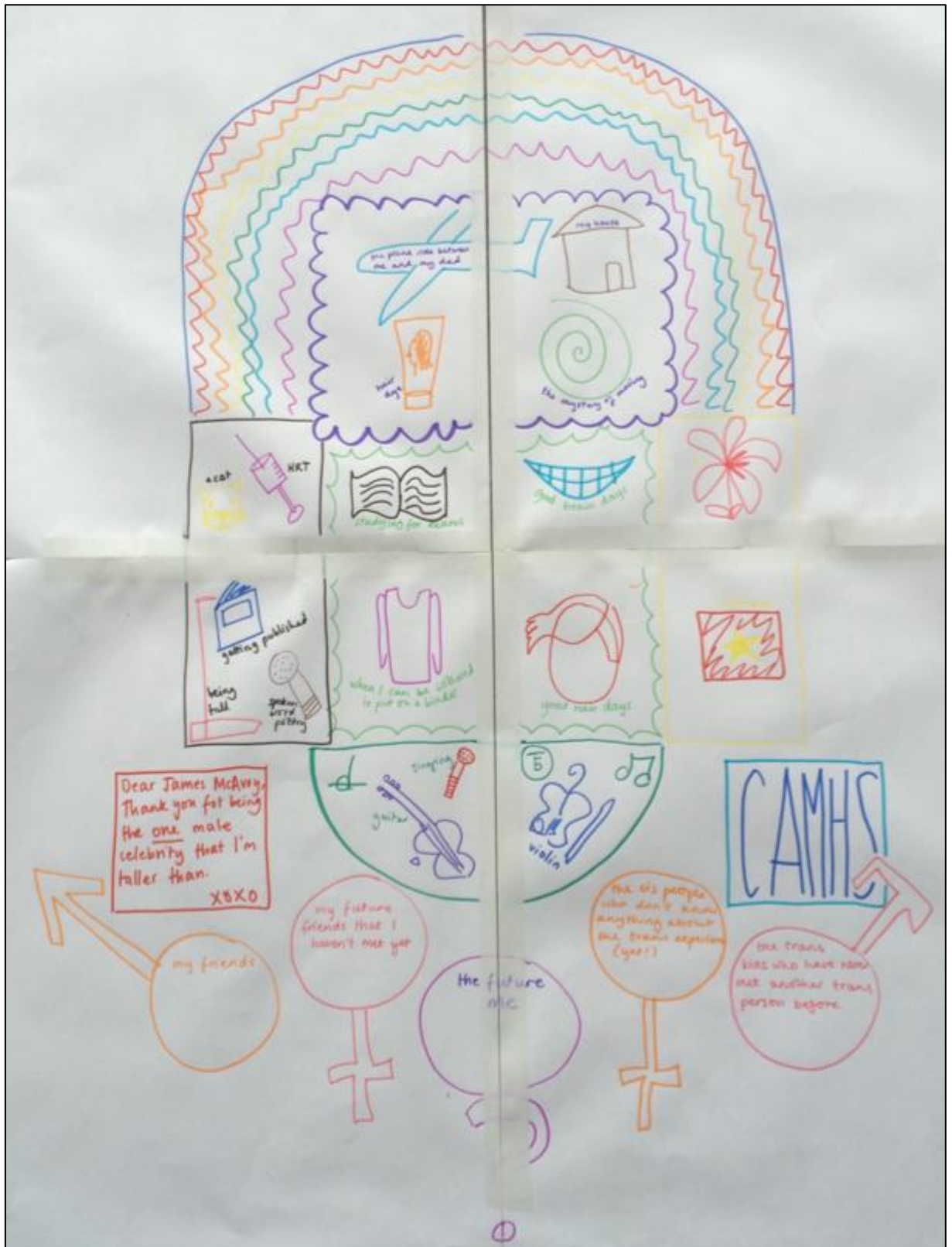


Figure 8. Freddie’s Theatre Of Life Poster

In the following narrative segment, Freddie navigates markers of cultural and gender identity through physical and online space. This links with Cromwell (1999) who noted that disclosing gender identity is ongoing and context sensitive process, and here Freddie describes how some contexts (such as the online world and a new university) can be in conflict with one another causing complexity. Freddie reflects on his self-construct seemingly holding both his own and other people's multiple perspectives, in relation to the social space in which they exist:

[1482 – 1511] I'm going to university in America next year. [...] It's really exciting and kind of scary and I guess I'm kind of being like 'stealth' on the university Facebook group because like my name on there is like Freddie and you know I've got all my Facebook pronouns and everything and everyone assumes that I'm just like a cis guy because all the pictures of me are like kind of far away and you can't really see me so I'm just going to show up on campus and it's going to be like 'oh hi guys' and they're going to be like 'who are you?', so that's going to be fun. [...] my mum's Vietnamese and I have a lot of like you know feelings about Vietnam. [...] my middle name means [Type of flower] in Vietnamese and it is like a girl's name but even when I change my name I kind of want to keep it just because I like, I don't know, that part of my heritage and also because like if I hang around in America and the UK nobody's going to know if it's a girl's name or not, they're just going to think my middle name is cute so it's pretty great. [...] Erm, okay so *this* is my future. So that's a syringe for HRT...

Marshal (2014) provided an explanation of visibility and invisibility being more complex than a choice, for example peers within a person's social world may disclose another person's trans status. Freddie's story highlights the dilemmas of the online world as well as transitioning between spaces. He hints at the assumptions that his online contacts may be making based on the markers he put in place to manage his online identity, and suggests that when meeting face-to-face he may be unrecognisable. Implicit in Freddie's story is trans as a subjugated identity, and at times needing vocalising with words

rather than mere physical presence. I interpret his narrative performance as both a recognition of the added complexities that being trans between spaces may involve, whilst a light-hearted manner functions to proclaim a sense of self-reassurance. Freddie narrates a degree of agency over his own perception and others' perception of his names and their connections to cultural and gender identity. Freddie's story is one of pride in regards to his heritage. Singh and McKleroy (2011) in their study with trans people of colour found that pride in heritage was an aspect of resistance, and yet interestingly here Freddie talks about how gender and ethnicity as two levels of context could potentially become in conflict with one another since his Vietnamese name is gendered, in an example of navigating intersectional trans identity. It is evident that peer perceptions of his cultural and gender identity are important to him. Not only does Freddie self-monitor how others will make sense of his heritage and gender, he describes the personal responsibility to re-assess possible assumptions made about him when negotiating a coherent self-construct, at the intersection between multiple spaces (online and non-Vietnamese speaking spaces) and time points (start of university, plan for hormone replacement therapy and puberty). Freddie builds a picture of the non-linear stages of the 'coming out process' as described by Bockting and Coleman's (2007) developmental model.

Freddie tells a particularly detailed narrative beginning with how particular lyrics from a musician resonated with him when he felt 'depressed' [1540] which inspired him to write, sing and create art. Despite narrating performance as a means of managing these feelings, Freddie describes institutional level invalidation of his gender identity on multiple occasions in the context of a school musical theatre setting which led to "the most upsetting time of my life" [1578]. He begins by setting the scene, and tells the story in an animated way, enacting characters' tones of voice. He tells us of a long series of attempts at creative resistance, beginning with finding 'the good thing' about attending an 'all-girls school', based on the hidden opportunities available to him:

[1548 – 1577] Yeah, it's kind of hard because, well I've got a fun story to tell you. [...] I go to an all girls' school right, like Kian, I know it's like the worst, anyway but I was like you know what the good thing about going to an all girls' school is that I will always get like male parts, you know, because there aren't any like boys to take the place, but then that's what I thought right, [...] But anyway so I went to talk to them and they were like 'well you know ... Danny Zuko can't really be played by a girl pretending to be a boy can he?'

ALL: [Gasps]

FREDDIE: and I was like 'oh my god', it was literally the worst thing in my life, I cried so much on the way home, it was like miserable, and she was like 'yeah it would just be as bad as if you got a white guy to play Othello' and I was like 'What!', it was just oh my god, I couldn't believe and then I couldn't even think about Grease and all my, all my friends who were in the theatre, we're all theatre kids you know and they were all going to like rehearsals and stuff and talking about how much fun it was and how hot the guy who was playing Danny was and I was just like, it was the most upsetting time of my life.

This led to Freddie drawing on creative outlets to write a 'really angry poem about it' [1587], and find a more accepting spoken word poetry community to perform in a 'non-gendered setting' [1582]. Freddie shows resilience in committing to live by his values, despite being discriminated against on the basis of the gender assigned to him by 'the Director':

[1523 - 1527] Yeah, and the community there is really good about like trans stuff because everyone there is like gay so it's really good. So it's just basically a bunch of people in a basement in [specific part of] London like talking about how gay they are it's like really good.

[1603 - 1627] Zip me back into my skull, be the muzzle on my muffled heart as I stand in hot - oh in cold silence in a hot lit theatre and hear them tell me Danny Zuko cannot possibly be played by a girl pretending to be a boy. Well I am sick to my chest with pretence of girls

pretending to be boys, and boys pretending to be girls pretending to be boys, and words pretending to mean more than warm pennies weighing me down by the palms of my hands. All I ever wanted was to act and all they had ever given me was pretence. My mother does not know my name. We sit at the breakfast table together like children at school desks and I pray she does not hear the dry coughs of the daughter's ghost condensing at the base of my throat like stolen cologne from my father's medicine cabinet. She is my Prometheus. She sits perched on my lower left rib having called shotgun on my body 17 years ago, but you, you are my car crash strap, you can wrap an elastic band around the half second lag between the mirror and me and you can trap me in your hard white shell of stillness so I can finally breathe in, breathe in, breathe in. [...] Yeah, the name of poem is erm, wait... 'Tri-Top Chest Binder, size medium - a love story'.

The poem uses intricate references and strong imagery. The use of similes and metaphor help describe the daughter and her actions as a fading spirit within the body. This is contrasted with the chest-binder described in metaphorical terms as safe, solid and perhaps calming. The poem was well received by the audience who clap and give appreciation. Freddie's narration of navigating school and social life, is an example of different forms of discrimination based on gender identity. Austin's (2016) termed a common struggle in trans lives to be the 'struggle for authenticity'. Here Freddie seemingly uses poetry as a form of creative resistance in making sense of an authentic identity by separating this from his own clear understanding and the account of being unable to be known not only his gender identify but also the markers of his identity afforded to cisnormative people in positions of power. In summary, it could be interpreted that the struggle of authenticity does not lie with Freddie, but instead with those around him. Although studies such as Greytak et al. (2009) found 39% of trans students reported hearing negative comments about gender identity from school staff, Freddie's story highlights something of the institutional level processes which can create devastating and insidious forms of discrimination which seem to require changes at the level of policy.

Freddie tells us about who he would like to hear his story, noting Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), sparking an anecdote about his Psychiatrist who questioned Freddie's gender identity based on gender limiting notions of masculinity. Freddie tells this alongside a reference to 'cis friends':

[1650 - 1656] Erm 'CAMHS', when I told my Psychiatrist that I was trans he was like 'but you don't really dress like a boy', and I was like 'oh dear'... because it's like sometimes I wear skirts because my legs look real good in skirts but you know it's like that doesn't mean I'm not a guy like... [...] Erm, I had to cut one friend out of my life because she wouldn't call me Freddie but you know, 'Byee-ee!'

Freddie narration portrays a sense of lethargy or understandable refusal to validate why he uses his pronouns, wears particular clothes and uses a chosen name to peers and professionals. Austin's (2016) description of the burden of explaining trans in a context of trans invisibility as "awkward, emotionally exhausting, and often painful" (p.223) yet Freddie's story more specifically describes the testimony of a 'visibility dilemma' (Green, 2006) in how there are advantages and disadvantages for him to weigh up in regards to increasing the limited agency he has as an individual over his trans visibility. Freddie here seemingly refuses to take up the task of describing gender variant behaviour. Singh and Burnes (2009) found that young people often lose the support of their friends when they transition, but here Freddie also talks about the support from a professional. As such, Freddie develops the construction into a broader task, and implicit within his story is the sense that he views trans invisibility as a problem at institutional and societal levels. Particularly in the context of a GI audience (albeit with myself present), Freddie is freed from the need to give a detailed explanation. However, where access to resources (services, rights to take part, support networks) are concerned, the story paints a picture of the dilemma of taking up the gauntlet where perhaps others, particularly cis others, have not supported him.

6. FURTHER DISCUSSION

In summary of the findings from the present study I refer to the research aims and questions. Firstly, a key aim was to hear the preferred personal or collective narratives of creative resistance of young trans people, which has not previously been known in the area of research. Rather than seeking generalisable, static, global or disembodied truths about gender, trans personhood, cis personhood, collective narrative practice or oppression instead we asked: 'What kind of stories of creative resistance do young trans people tell?' and also 'What kind of stories of personal or collective identity do young trans people tell?' since such stories had yet to be constructed in the body of reviewed literature.

To summarise the answer to these questions, the preferred personal and collective narratives which were constructed and told, were that of young trans people being inspired to resist oppression and subjugation through acts of creative resistance by first recognising how they had been marginalised and then collectively uniting to form trans and queer families before later extending beyond these contexts with an added sense of collective strength and belonging. Participants narrated gender identity in a positive, non-disordered language. The use of preferred pronouns and preferred names was an important aspect of this process. Less emphasis was placed on notions such as biological sex or essentialist gender and instead the more inclusive notion of gender assigned at birth and trans visibility were commonly used. Testimonies told included constructing cis people as not always understanding trans personhood yet this beginning to change, by finding exceptions to this in cis allies who use their understanding to reduce oppression in young trans people's lives.

Another form of resistance told in the story was that of preventing the overshadowing of broader aspects of young trans people's identities, beyond gender and trans. For instance, enriching the audience's understanding of changing notions of sexuality through self-descriptions, spiritual identity and cultural identity by ensuring that stereotypical assumptions are not made

about these. The story considered where the responsibility for enriching such stories of identity was located, and when this may change across time, with some voices noting that they as young people resisted by taking responsibility in their current lives despite unsafe contexts, whilst others saw this as a future responsibility of theirs when safety was increased, as well as a possible shared responsibility for cis allies, institutions and policy makers. Another form of resistance was acknowledging that young trans life can indeed be incredibly difficult at times, yet despite this there was an importance of sending a compassionate message of hope and reassurance (which seemingly needed to come from trans young people themselves in order to break through misrepresentation) in order to exemplify the notion that 'life does get better', thereby building upon existing initiatives in the community such as the 'it gets better' project. Creative resistance also was extended in the form of an invitation for those outside of the trans community to resist oppression through a process of motivation and inspiration.

Other broader research aims were: 'To work with a young trans community group, and invite members as participatory action co-researchers' and 'To co-construct a methodology which creates a safe context for expressing and telling the personal or collective narratives of young trans people which can be taken forward by the trans community by ambassadors and youth workers'.

The research did arrive at these aims, and through partnership with the Gendered Intelligence community group, young ambassadors were involved as participatory action co-researchers in setting up a safer space and producing a 'Theatre of Life' template. The research session was successful in allowing for group members to take turns to be in an audience position, and narrator position, in a 'show and tell' style format. The methodology did indeed strike a balance between bearing witness to stories of hardship, without neglecting the often subjugated stories of how people challenged, resisted, overcame or ultimately survived. Most importantly, a safer space was created for co-authoring five individual trans narratives. In addition, a story of collective identity has been constructed and documented. The method was

useful in allowing for a diverse array of ideas, language and identities to come together, weaving a patchwork quilt of trans personhood, one which has the potential to grow continuously. Allowing participants to feel prepared at different stages was another unique feature of the research. For example, creating a poster in the first instance allowed for participants to reflect on what felt comfortable enough to go on to share with words. Painting a 'backdrop' of life, allowed for young people to place their life story in a historical and political context, whilst the 'orchestra pit' invited participants to share soundtracks of life, lyrics and describe how we can sing what sometimes words fail to say. Having participants take charge of their preferred audience, depicted in the 'audience' section of their poster, was a surprising finding of the session. Common preferred audience members included young trans and queer people who may be isolated from community but also transphobic people, or non-allies who saw trans issues as irrelevant. In the 'royal box' participants invoked the broader institutional and political audience such as CAMHS, Schools, Gender Clinics, and Politicians. This can help in the process of considering who to contact in order to share these stories with, in order to honour the young people's words. The physical setting used was also a remarkable learning point. This safer space invited pride, joy and connected to the many creative arts projects which the group had produced in the past. Whilst the project has not yet fully been taken forward in the trans community by ambassadors and youth workers, there are increased opportunities for this to take place in the near future through the use of theatre, spoken word, poetry and a 'Zine which details the stories and posters created in the session.

6.1. Critical Review and Limitations

6.1.1. Methodological Limitations and Epistemological Reflexivity

There were some limitations of the methodology of a collective narrative practice, including the social constructionist epistemological position.

There were limitations of being alongside participants during the session. Barker and Pistrang (2005) describe how building “collaborative relationships between researchers and participants” (p. 205) is a community psychology value. The ambassador present at the session did not participate in making a ‘Theatre of Life’ poster with participants, since he had already made a poster in practice sessions and was focusing on building skills to co-facilitate future sessions. Although I did create my own poster with ambassadors in co-research consultation sessions, I did not create a poster at the data gathering session. My intention for doing this was to ensure participants’ narratives and creative ideas were centred, without diluting the message that the session was co-created by GI ambassadors. Had more ambassadors been present to create a poster alongside me, I would have felt more comfortable participating by creating a poster. Nevertheless, by not participating there may have been a sense of the ambassador and I being separate, which may have contributed to an imbalanced and less reciprocal atmosphere than would have been ideal.

In addition, whilst the social constructionist position is useful in making sense of how participants may construct a preferred reality through narrative, there remains perhaps a tension between social constructionist positions on social activism and the oppressive contexts within the social world. Furthermore, the narratives produced in this research are tied to historical and geographical specificity and as such they are not generalisable.

6.1.2. Limitations of Sampling Strategy

Whilst there were advantages of using a sampling strategy which was closely linked to how GI seek attendees to their youth groups, there were also limitations. For instance since GI were operationally involved in the advertising of the session this was in some ways convenient, yet at times required a level of checking and communication to ensure research boundaries were maintained. The timing of the sampling was also at the discretion of the community group, which particularly for a doctorate trainee working within competing deadlines meant that the group needed to take place at a time that could have been problematic without an additional level of

planning. Similar planning was required in regard to the physical location of the sampling which whilst also convenient, also had limitations in relation to the time in which we were able to remain in the theatre setting. A larger sample size could have resulted in participants having less time in which to tell their stories, however time restrictions were managed well within the group.

The diversity of the sample is also worth considering, and indeed a focal point Barker and Pistrang (2005) raise for 'community psychology relevant research' is 'respect for diversity'. In terms of demographics, I am aware that there was only one participant who identified as female, and one participant who was slightly older at age 18; this have made for a setting where it was less comfortable in some ways to share stories. In retrospect, it may have been useful to work with GI and ambassadors to gain a sense of who would be attending in advance, to ensure there were representative and diverse voices present. It is difficult to anticipate who will attend the GI groups, which are also open to newcomers, hence, it is not straightforward to ensure a range of representative voices are present due to the nature of queer, changing and uncertain identities. Nonetheless, GI youth groups focus on providing an atmosphere of respect in regards to race, culture, sexuality, ethnicity, as well as gender or non-gender and, thus, the youth group felt ideally placed for ensuring this community psychology principle.

6.1.3. Ensuring Confidentiality

A particular area of this research which needed careful consideration was the process of ensuring confidentiality. The poster design allows participants a degree of creative freedom. It was important to ensure posters were also anonymised.

Since the project explored identity through narratives, participants were detailed about aspects of their identity and what contributes to this (gender, sexuality, ethnicity, ability). Ambassadors and I reminded participants before the session to consider if including names or identifiable information on the

poster could be avoided. Ambassadors and I then thoroughly reviewed drawings and writing to ensure anonymity. These added steps may have contributed to the way in which verbal narratives were given, for instance if a specific name on the poster prompted an important story to be told. Future sessions which may wish to use this methodology for therapeutic purposes may allow an extra degree of freedom. However, future research exploring identity in this way may need to be particularly careful to look at the story on the whole to ensure anonymity is maintained.

6.1.4. Reflections on Advocacy and Research Roles

Whilst there was a role of social advocate, which promoted narratives to be co-constructed and enriched and the research role which promoted engagement, there were sometimes some tensions. For example whilst community psychology research might seek to promote empowerment, those in advocacy roles might have a more a critical perspective on this notion. The research with participants hoped to increase their “influence over decisions that affect their lives” (Rappaport, 1990, p. 52). The present research does indeed make steps toward this. Another key role of community research, which this study has hopefully achieved was to “enable the voices of oppressed or marginalised social groups to be heard” (Barker & Pistrang, 2005, p. 206).

The participatory action side of this research with ambassadors and youth workers has also attempted to follow through on what Albee (1986) highlights as a marker of quality, namely, for studies to ensure that usefulness goes beyond the individual level towards promoting social justice.

It is important to take a critical stance towards the potential of this research in raising the visibility of trans people. Following the first ‘International Transgender Day of Visibility’ in 2009, increasing trans visibility has been a key and complex aspect of trans activism.

GI take a nuanced perspective in regard to increasing trans visibility. Their activism acknowledges that trans people have diverse views in relation to increasing trans visibility in a social context where being visible can be unsafe for trans people, and they seek to raise awareness of both the challenges and opportunities from young trans peoples perspectives.

From a social action research perspective, given that trans people may be visible and unsafe, it is particularly important to consider how participants (and the wider audience members such as 'zine readers) are 'witness' to each other's stories. An aware and empowered position would arguably be the most useful position for participants to generate hope (Kotzé et al. 2013).

However, since young people themselves may not be safe enough, or be in positions of power, this may not always be possible. As discussed elsewhere in this study, empowerment discourses may also render invisible the social and material inequalities of LGBT populations (Chancellor, 2012). This research serves to make visible both the oppressive forces upon trans people and also their narratives as sources of creative resistance. This study takes a critical view of the notion of empowerment which is decontextualized and individualised. Empowerment is more useful within the context of a collective community and inclusive of stakeholders as agents of change at broader institutional, policy and socio-political levels.

6.1.5. Community Psychology Limitations

Managing the balance between community psychology values and university requirements has at times been challenging. For instance, the session was best suited to GI's agenda at a time which was very soon after I had gained ethical approval. Managing the additional time demands needed to maintain a good working relationship with a community interest group, alongside university deadlines has been both worthwhile and challenging.

Freire (1970, p.27) describes how "true generosity consists precisely in fighting to destroy the causes which nourish false charity". True generosity

was an important value when working with GI youth workers and potential ambassadors. Due to the assumptions often made about psychologists as experts, and since the research project is social action orientated, the youth worker ensured young people knew I had been working closely with him, that this was a joint invitation which was fitting with GI's agenda.

Sharing expertise at the participatory action consultation sessions with young ambassadors had some learning points. It was a challenge when producing what Montero (1998, p.x) describes as a "third enriched knowledge form", since it was important to provide a balance of giving ambassadors some theoretical information about narrative therapy in an accessible way whilst inviting their creative input. This led me to bring materials with me, such as questions in the form of mind maps; images of GI events; quotations from narrative therapists of different genders; and photographs of theatre stages to stimulate a dialogue.

6.1.6. Use of Template and Posters as Discursive Tools

Another critical reflection is of the poster template and its range of uses. The poster provided a useful tool for working narratively with young people, since it provides a loose guide for rich story development. Futch and Fine (2014), explore the usefulness of visual maps for their "many representations and visualizations of what space can mean to personal identity and experience" (p.54). The 'Theatre of Life' poster provides flexibility of structure with minimal input from researchers. Most participants followed a pattern which actually broke free from the plot order proposed by ambassadors (by ending with 'the present moment' rather than 'the dreams for the future'). In designing the template with ambassadors, a key aspect of the feedback was the difficulty in exploring 'past, present and future' due to the complexity of considering trans lives on a timeline. For instance, queer pasts may be confusing; putting words to a questioning identity in the present was highlighted by one GI member as overwhelming and queer futures, which are generally less richly described in the mainstream representations, where breaking heteronormative life cycles, such as marriage and children, may be a longer process of discovery. On the

topic of temporality Riessman (1993) notes how Western researchers may not be accustomed to plots which are less temporally arranged and more episodically arranged. This feedback resulted in the more fluid design of the template, which gave helpful pointers from ambassadors in the form of questions (e.g. “what things are important about where you are coming from?”).

6.1.7. Use of The Poster as An Analytic Tool

Futch and Fine (2014) explore how visual maps can provide an analytic tool to provide “additional opportunities for the voices of participants to enter the analysis” (p.55). Similarly, Weatherhead (2011) reflects on narrative analysis researchers who have arranged their transcript in different ways (e.g. as poetic stanzas) in order to gain a ‘deeper exploration of the metaphoric threads which organise the narrative’ (p.49). Other researchers (Segalo 2011; Rogers 2006) noted how visual images may be useful to convey the unsayable or perhaps cultural meanings which are difficult to translate into English. Indeed, Freddie’s poster included a colourful array of gender symbols.

During the analysis, I noted which aspects of the plot sequence participants were narrating and at which points they moved to another, this allowed me to notice the relationship between narrative transitions during the analysis. I also referred to the posters heavily throughout the analysis to connect narratives.

Future studies using similar methods could use the potential of the visual representations as more of a discursive tool; future researchers may feel more encouraged to express more curiosity in the visual representations as a primary data source in an analytic manner with the participant.

Presenting the digital photograph of the Theatre of Life poster before each narrative allows the reader to have an overview of some aspects of the participants’ identity in a way which ‘centres’ what is important to them and ‘decentres’ the researcher, akin to a decentred yet influential position (White,

1997) in narrative therapeutic work. Yet future studies may find it useful to consider drawing on Reavey (2012) for a framework for producing a visual analysis of the poster.

6.2. Quality Criteria Applicable to Narrative and Community Research

I have drawn on the quality criteria described by Riessman (1993) and Lieblich et al. (1998) to consider evaluative aspects applicable to narrative research.

6.2.1. Reliability

The present research has sought to be especially transparent in describing the methodological and interpretative steps in the process of engaging with a community group, participating with ambassadors as action researchers to unpack the data and presenting richness in layers of collective and individual meaning (Weatherhead, 2011).

On critically reviewing the analysis process, I reflected on the challenge of choosing parts of participants narrative on their behalf. This was helped along by the poster, which allowed me to see what participants had included as part of their pre-decided narrative in the poster design part of the session. I also looked for clues, in the verbal account, of participants wanting to prioritise aspects of their story. For instance, at times participants placed particular emphasis or detail on certain narrative segments, or at other times returned to the same aspect of the story.

6.2.2. Grounding Interpretations

In order to ground interpretations in the data I have aimed to provide sufficient and rich examples of quotations, as well as an excerpt of analysis. Perhaps particularly important in narrative analysis is providing participants' own narration to allow their story to be re-authored to the reader. Often a participants' own narration has to me been "the most powerful aspects of the

report.” (Barker & Pistrang, 2005, p. 208).

6.2.3. Testimonial Validity

There are a number of credibility checks that were considered for the present study to build on the trustworthiness of conclusions (Schwandt, 1997), including the correspondence between my understanding and those of the participants. Three available participants read the analysis, and had the opportunity to remove or rephrase any aspects they felt did not fit. They agreed with the analysis and commented that this was an accurate representation of what was discussed.

One ambassador checked the written transcript for accuracy. He read the choice of quotations and analysis of the data, and agreed with the analysis. This was particularly helpful since, as Barker and Pistrang (2005) point out, there are inevitable power imbalances between myself and participants, which may get in the way of being able to question aspects of the analysis.

6.2.4. Feedback on The Session

Following all GI sessions, attendees were asked for their feedback on the sessions and this session was no different. Participants highlighted how they found hearing other people’s stories helpful, which echoed the ambassadors’ and youth workers original reflections about what they had most found useful when growing up as a trans person (Appendix P, p.192).

6.2.5. Persuasiveness

Riessman (1993) writes that “persuasiveness is greatest when theoretical claims are supported with evidence and alternative interpretations of the data are considered” (p.65). This was an advantage of having two levels of analysis, since this afforded two interpretations of the data. A polyphonic level of analysis also hopefully allowed me to think of multiple voices within my own self, such as tentative, curious alternative descriptions. I have used richly told

quotations from participants and attempted to interweave these closely with a discussion in order to strike a balance between a comprehensiveness of evidence and parsimony (Lieblich et al., 1998).

6.2.6. Coherence

I have presented the narratives in a sequence which follows a theatre metaphor in order to create a coherence. I have made attempts to account for global, local and themal coherence (Riessman, 1993, p.67). I have continuously modified my hypotheses about narrators' values and meaning (global coherence) based on the structure of narrative segments which I identified in the transcript (local coherence) and connected these in the form of the plays or prologue (themal coherence). I made use of a narrative analysis group supervision group to revise and explore coherence in these ways.

6.3. Implications of the Study

When considering the implications of this study and in the interest of collective action, I have drawn on a range of theoretical frameworks to provide a map to guide my suggestions and assist the reader to consider what steps they may be able to take forward in their contexts.

Since the task to push back on the impress of power upon the person (Hagan & Smail, 1997) can seem at times insurmountable, it may be useful to raise awareness of the existing acts of creative resistance taking place, in order to know what is possible and to build upon this. This may help groups of people to hold onto hope and join together and to consider where the most influential areas for change may be, echoing Weingarten (2000), who writes that we "do hope as a collective responsibility" (p.402).

Nelson and Prilleltensky (2002) helpfully outline the different roles psychologists take up, as we increasingly are required to move away from individual level work into activist, advocate, consultant positions. Another

helpful framework that can be integrated well is proposed by Covey (1989), who recommends that within our different roles we all have a circle of concern which can become demoralising but, more usefully, we also have a circle of influence where change is possible and, thus, avoid the trap of becoming a 'hero-innovator' (Georgiades & Phillimore, 1975). This idea is helped along by Harper (2016), who suggests "we need a vision of what changes we'd like to see and a plan of how we're going to achieve them" (p.147), and advises that visions of the future should be broken into short to long term goals.

6.3.1. Individual Level

Whilst arguably the least influential level for creating significant changes for the lives of trans people there may be implications for clinicians. For instance, it may be useful to take an 'informed not-knowing position' (Laird, 1998, p.30) when working with this population. Some descriptions of this come from Dean (2001) who describes "being interested and open, but always tentative about what we understand" (p.629) and also from Afuape (2016) who talks about resisting being taken over by problem-saturated referrals by "trusting uncertainty and trying not to know too soon" (p.38). The collective story constructed 'a chorus of self-love as a radical act' and therefore strengths based approaches to working with this population, particularly in ways which involve others, may be extremely valuable since strength and solidarity may not always be present in other areas of their lives. This would help to share the burden of ,what the collective story narrated as 'the responsibility of enriching stories'. An *informed* yet curious approach shows an awareness that there may be a felt expectation for young people to explain the complexities associated with gender identity and sexuality, which at times is a form of oppression and may be difficult due to the limited discourses available.

It would also be useful for clinicians to note the importance of trans people in finding trans communities and constructing chosen or queer families in forming an identity, as reported within the collective story. Individual level tasks may include advocating for trans rights to strengthen the often subjugated voices of young trans people, moving towards positions of

solidarity, or as collectively narrated “a chorus of self-love”. Weingarten (2007) states “Hopeless, we must resist isolation. Witness to despair, we must refuse indifference. Neither is easy.” (p.15), which leads onto implications for sustaining hope at wider levels.

6.3.2. Community Level

Community level implications may come from reflecting on the accessibility of the collective narrative practice methodology. This has been a useful way to engage a diverse range of young people, reaching those who may not have access to the internet but do have access to attending a group. The Theatre of Life methodology may be a useful resource following critiques that the ‘It gets better’ project (Hartlaub, 2010) constructed a collective identity which was not inclusive of diverse LGBT identities (Goltz, 2013).

A medium term implication has been my continued involvement with GI in the prospect of running more Theatre of Life sessions for therapeutic purposes, whilst scaffolding ambassadors’ skills and abilities with these collective practices. This has been discussed with GI and there are potential opportunities for sessions to be run in Leeds and Bristol, whilst I take a consultation or supervisory role. A long term vision would be for ambassadors at GI to run these independently, in order for increased sustainability, in the interest of “giving psychology away” (Miller, 1969, p.1071), using existing capacities, and enable communities to put their skills into practice (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010).

Immediate advocacy implications of the project include sharing narratives in the trans community (for excerpts see Appendix Q, p.193). Firstly, one ambassador created a ‘zine (short magazine) which can be extended for reach through the community. Secondly, a collective poem was also made through discussion with a participant and ambassador as a response to the participant’s interest in the spoken word and creative writing. Finally, a description was made about the project for the GI website.

Ambassadors proposed longer term mediums including using the stories as material for a theatre play or art gallery for display. Participants suggested that audience members (as included in the 'audience' section of their posters) could include other young trans and queer people, cis young people, education professionals, NHS Stakeholders, CAMHS clinics, the Gender Identity Service at the Tavistock Clinic in London, politicians and policy makers.

6.3.3. Institutional Level

Although very few studies have sought the views of young trans people accessing mental health services (Collins & Sheehan 2004; Grant & Mottet 2011), this study, as well as my observations during the course of engaging with ambassadors and GI, highlights both the mistrust in services and the potential for breaking patterns of mistrust. Allowing young trans people to use experience-near accounts of identity and life stories, described by (Geertz, 1986) as "a person's effortless definitions" (p.124) allows a story to be more richly told with context, strengths and resources. Working at an institutional level may help towards breaking the perpetuation of unhelpful patterns of interaction between young trans people and professionals, perhaps comparable to the 'circles of fear' described by Keating and Robertson (2002) in their formulation of institutional racism.

The collective and individual narratives built upon what Austin (2016) termed the 'explaining work' associated with trans identity, and the collective narrative took a nuanced perspective in storying it as a form of oppression yet also a dream for institutions to share the task through engaging with trans people who feel able to advocate for change. As such, a short term implication of this study is for services to consider the importance of service user participation projects in the services used by trans people. A longer term vision may be to consult with young trans people on a group or community level in order for their 'explaining work' to be shared and embedded within a supportive context.

Participants also spoke about the importance of the online community, as a medium for hearing perspectives from peers and role models. Services such as CAMHS may be interested in seriously considering the power of user voices being made accessible through online platforms. A long term goal may be to think about how to re-tell stories of young trans people's experiences through the internet in a safe or creative way, perhaps via working with role models, actors or sharing photographed posters made by young people.

A medium term vision for psychologists in therapist roles may be to use more voices of other young trans people in their therapeutic work. For example, aspects of participants' narratives from this study (including the 'zine or collective poem) may be useful as a resource in outsider witnessing sessions (White, 2007; Walther & Fox, 2012) where family members, queer family members, friends or colleagues could be invited to reflect on how the narratives have impacted their thinking on visibility.

A key task for professionals is to build on the work of Hartling (2004), who provides a framework for building "relational resilience", (p. 341) in relation to trans visibility (McNeil et al., 2012). In queering the notion of individual agency when thinking of trans outness it may be the task of a psychologist working within families to be aware of the "visibility dilemma" (Green, 2006, p.499). Visibility has been thought about in terms of aspects of social and personal difference in systemic theory by Burnham (2012), yet rather than viewing trans on "dimensions of visible-invisible and voiced-unvoiced" (Burnham, 2012, p.139) or on on a binary spectrum, it is more useful to consider the context of shifting lenses through physical space and time (Marshall, 2014).

Another role of psychologists may be to advocate and consult for schools to train educational professionals in a way which does not send a message of needing an expert, since this can become a barrier to generally treating young people with respect in regard to their personhood and gender identity. We heard Zach's narrative of a wish for a short term vision to "stand up in front of the class at form time and just explain what trans is" in a school, where the head teacher felt that this was not allowed before a long term vision of

specialist teacher training was realised, causing Zach to leave school and become isolated. An advocacy and consultant role would allow for trans voices to be heard, but also for educational professionals to assume that there may already be trans students within the school. These long term tasks map onto Johnston's (2016) study with two adult trans students who found that they appreciated university campuses taking steps towards facilitating "social networking, community building, and activism amongst the trans, queer, and gender-variant community" (p.155), whilst recognising that resources and training were gaining momentum.

The aforementioned transformative potential for theatre as a medium for sharing narratives is well suited to school settings, which often have theatre resources. This corresponds with Kian's narrative, as he saw an improvement in bullying following a school assembly by workers at GI.

A long term vision for psychology would be for more clinical psychology training programmes to ensure that teaching is provided on working with communities -- for example, teaching on community and liberation psychology approaches. Training programmes may also consider adapting general LGBT training to meet the specific needs of trans people of all ages and consider the integration of queer theory, given the sharp rise in referrals of young trans people (Di Ceglie, 2014) and the collective story of mistrust in psychological services. Such steps may encourage and enable trans and queer people to access clinical psychology training programmes to increase the presence of trans people within the field of clinical psychology.

6.3.4. Socio-Political Level

Although there was a reiteration of the notion that 'it gets better', I feel that it is important to consider the possible socio-political contexts of this message. A recent example might be the 147% rise in homophobic hate crimes in the three months following the Brexit referendum (Antjoule, 2016). The study has made steps towards positioning participants and their community peers as more politicised in their life (Molloy & Vasil, 2002). One narration in this study

helpfully provided a metaphor for ensuring that support was associated with narrating a story of 'better', namely, a cautious story of building on small movements in society whilst acknowledging there is still progress to be made (e.g., in regard to high levels of transphobia and hate crime).

The study has medium term implications for providing a framework to hear subjugated narratives which can more accurately inform media representations. These representations need not be confined to traditional media, since the importance of dialogue in producing discourses within new media is useful, particularly given that new media and social media allow for creative modes of communication to 'move others' and express that which cannot easily be said with words.

In terms of long term activism, the 'zine and theatre production could contribute to developing narratives in accessible formats which may be shared via media statements or by inviting politicians and stakeholders. The research takes a political position in relation to supporting trans young people, as articulated by Freire (1985), who stated that "washing one's hands of the conflict between the powerful and the powerless means to side with the powerful, not to be neutral" (p.122). As such, the research aims and findings deny the ability to be neutral, and the ethical responsibilities associated with such claims. Indeed, a long term advocacy implication would be for psychologists to take a politicised stance and hold their representative bodies, such as the British Psychological Society, accountable for attempts at political neutrality. This may mean being inspired by groups such as 'Psychologists Against Racism' (Fleming & Daiches, 2005); 'Psychologists Against Austerity' (2005) and 'Citizen Therapists' (Doherty, 2016), by campaigning for trans rights and working more within the level of community as a means of supporting creative forms of resistance.

6.3.5. Policy Level

In terms of policy level implications, the research adds weight (through direct UK based examples) to Cornu's (2016) human rights based work, in view of putting the issue of transphobia and gender-based violence, which are barriers to the right of education, higher on the agenda at national and global scales. As well as GI, other organisations such as Stonewall and GIRES advocate for trans inclusivity in services, business and schools, and view the law in relation to trans as originating in an outdated historical context (Hall, 2015; GIRES, 2010). They provide useful resources for trans inclusion which advocate for updating policies in relation to issues such as uniforms, gender neutral toilets, transphobic bullying and harassment, and service delivery for trans service users. This study advocates that schools have a duty to protect trans young people from harm caused by transphobic bullying in accordance with the Education and Inspections Act (2006). Whilst The Equality Act (2010) protects young people in the process of gender reassignment, this study advocates for the inclusion of trans young people who take social steps towards this such as changing their name, pronouns as highlighted by Hall (2015). Whilst there are currently recommendations for creating 'transitioning at work policies', there may need to be further social action towards creating recommendations for 'transitioning at school policies' to protect trans young people's rights to education.

6.4. Dissemination

A version of the project was presented at the 'Fourth European Conference of Narrative Therapy and Community Work' (Castro Romero et al., 2016) which provided an opportunity for delegates interested in narrative research to think about future developments in this emerging field. I will also publish an article about the work which has been requested as part of a special edition on working with trans and queer people for the systemic therapy magazine 'Context', which will feed into training for therapists for trans people running in

collaboration with GI. The project will also be presented at the 'Trans-Tasman Community Psychology Conference'.

6.5. Future Directions

There are many possibilities for future directions following on from the present research with trans populations, clinically, in research and consultation.

In terms of implications for research, future studies may wish to explore what gatekeepers of community groups or charities find helpful in regards to research proposals and community action projects. Research may be particularly useful in regard to exploring opportunities of cis and trans people working together in research. Conversely, carrying out the research-based group session in a trans exclusive space would build upon the foundation which this participatory action research provides, by supporting trans ambassadors to take more of a facilitative role in a research-based session and thereby pave new directions. Furthermore, an analysis of data elicited from trans-only safer space could be more heavily carried out with participatory researchers or indeed trans researchers, to more fully "utilizing the people's virtues" (Martin-Baró, 1994, p.31). Other research aims may include how best to repair the relationship to help young trans people have in relation to accessing different services, (Reder & Fredman, 1996) particularly those raised by participants, such as the Tavistock Gender Identity Disorder Service and general CAMHS clinics. Finally, research which takes more of an explicit human rights based approach in relation to the rights of young people in contexts of oppression.

In terms of implications for practice, clinical and community based work with community groups which tailor activities for specific groups of young trans people would be highly valuable. For example, GI sessions for trans women of colour, non-binary identities and trans masculine young people. It might also be useful to focus on how those who are subjugated in relation to intersectional aspects of their identity, including trans adults and elders, story creative resistance (rather than solely storying their oppression). The collective

story presented in the discussion has the potential to provide a context to be built upon with other stories from the trans community, in an evolving 'patchwork-quilt like' manner. The theatre metaphor used in the present project has the potential to be further developed for therapeutic practice. For example, extending the metaphor to think about 'props' and 'scenes' within a person's play. The theatre metaphor may also be developed to consider enacting story telling after rehearsing life story performances and building upon these, perhaps involving multiple characters and use of theatrical devices including participatory drama using the 'Boal method for theatre and therapy' (Boal, 2002). The 'Theatre of Life' poster template may also be useful for other groups, particularly groups who may find it useful to place an emphasis on knowing who the intended chosen audience will be or those hoping to change stereotypes. For example for populations of different ages who wish to create more accurate narratives in relation to sexual diversity, queer identity, polyamory, questioning identity status, intersectionality or intersex people. This may be particularly useful for raising visibility for fluid identities or identities deemed less visible such as asexualities, bisexuality (including bi-invisibility with the context of relationships) or pansexuality. The approach may also be useful for those at risk of internalising oppression. Therapeutic work might usefully explore the importance of physical space, and transitioning between space, as a context for the production of narratives, given the relationship between space and identity. This could be facilitated, by holding Theatre of Life sessions in other queer spaces such as those formed during celebratory and social activist based pride events; rural and suburban spaces or even holding groups within different cities and towns. Finally, a clinical implication based on my reflections would be to further develop the guidelines for "navigating the ethics of multiple relationships within trans communities", (Everett, et al., 2013, p.14) in relation to the sphere of research. The aim here would be to more fully engage marginalised trans co-researchers into collaborative research relationships , including, for example with clinical psychology trainees .

7. CONCLUSION

This community and participatory action research produced a narrative analysis of a community level collective narrative practice session. This project joined with young people who identify as trans, and co-created a context to enable young people to tell stories of creative resistance, producing 'The Theatre of Life'.

Young people narrated particularly strong acts of creative resistance within their community group but also within their everyday lives despite contexts of oppression.

The shared hopes of the project are to make use of the collective and individual narratives which were constructed through a collective poem, 'zine and opportunities for a play and art exhibition for increased impact and reach at levels identified by participants in their theatre 'audience' (community, institutional and political), as well as for therapeutic use in outsider witnessing and definitional ceremonies, in keeping with the narrative psychology and community psychology framework.

It is recommended that the narratives of young trans people and their allies continue to be told and re-told:

“Our struggle today does not mean that we will necessarily achieve change but, without our struggle today, perhaps future generations would have to struggle much more. History does not finish with us it goes beyond.” (Freire, 1999, p39).

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9. APPENDICES

Appendix A. First Person Self Reflexivity Account

The following piece of writing details aspects of my professional journey, family scripts and experiences of oppression, including how I have made sense of my identity and connections with the LGB, trans and queer community in relation to the study.

I have taken trans ally reflexivity questions from Reynolds (2010, 2011) to reflective spaces, to consider questions such as ‘*Who have been my allies in spaces where I am oppressed or subject to structural power?*’ and ‘*What differences might a rich critique of gender, and a philosophical stance of gender as fluid and performative, bring to your work’s relationship with ethics and justice?*’. As a result of reflexive practice I have resisted being located within the ‘normalising centre of identity’ (Reynolds, 2011), specifically in relation to gender, and instead locate myself within my intersectionalities, ethically resisting the construction of people from marginalised identities as “serviceable others” (Sampson, 1993, p.4).

My Journey with People I Have Worked Alongside

I first became interested in the topic of gender at collage (A Level) when I was studying in the North of England. I remember that this was not a topic I considered to be directly relevant to my own life story at the time. This

curiosity stayed with me, but in some ways I felt unable to engage with the topic for some time.

I have worked with young people for nine years in some of the UK's most socially deprived and culturally diverse contexts (e.g. Salford, Newham). This was mainly on a group level with young people of shared age ranges, including parents and siblings. Through reflection on my work with young people on the autism spectrum it occurred to me that groups may benefit from opportunities to come together and reclaim narratives, forms of resistance and create broader change. I have a strong interest in community psychology, stemming from seeing first hand its usefulness during my time working with unaccompanied minors in a Young Peoples Refugee Charity in East London which used psychosocial work and drew heavily on community psychology values. During this time I worked with collective narrative practice alongside interpreters for example using 'The Martial Arts Of Life' as a metaphor for working with young male refugees and their networks. These values led me to seek Clinical Psychology Training at The University of East London whose ethos of training fit well with my post structuralist passions.

I have noticed a particular pattern of concern when working with issues of social difference which may, as Burnham (2011) describes, be on invisible-visible and voiced-unvoiced dimensions. As a person who has experienced oppression as a result of the dominant discourses about sexuality and heterosexism, reflecting these nuances has led me to ask questions about the alienation of groups of people with invisible or unvoiced social differences.

I am very motivated by systemic and narrative approaches. They fit my world view and the clients I have worked with in these ways have given encouraging feedback on the sense making we made together. I get excited by their potential to have reach in communities, rather than in a bubble of psychology which sometimes feels inaccessible.

My Family Scripts And Experiences Of Oppression

I grew up with a lot of strong feminine role models throughout my life. Other child and teenage personal histories also have relevant connections to the work I have carried out. My experiences of oppression include encountering power being exerted over me by others in a range of unacceptable ways.

These experiences contributed towards an experience of feeling 'in-between' in terms of my identity. I am aware that not everybody who identifies as LGB or trans have had these experiences, and there is a broad range of experiences in relation to understanding, acceptance, validation and belonging.

How I Make Sense of My Identity: Gender, Sexuality, Culture and Queer

I am a white British person who has lived in different parts of the UK, and although I identify with my Northern roots and the culture that comes with this, I feel transient in terms of home. There have been parts of the UK in which I have lived which I have had uncomfortable embodied experiences within, which are difficult to put into words at times. In search of a word which constructs these life stories clearly, I describe myself at times with the words *gypsy*, *inbetweenner* or even the Sanskrit word *Antevasin* which means to live on the boarder, one who has left to search for a spiritual home.

I grew up in a strictly Roman Catholic household, and attended Church weekly in my childhood, before being confirmed as Catholic. However, I lost my personal faith in my teenage years. In my adult years, I stumbled upon a Buddhist Centre and visited this weekly for three years. I have been on several Buddhist retreats and am often part of the Buddhist community in London when I am able to be, and describe myself as *doing* Buddhism, and more Buddhist than not. Buddhism felt like a home coming to many of the values I already held, and a context to live by these in a collective. I have taught meditation classes to CAMHS staff and my cohort at university in an attempt to share the things I was taught.

Looking back at my life, I have often struggled to make clear sense of my gender identity and sexuality and I have noticed how they have been

impacted by different spiritual and geographical spaces. One thing has been constant, and this is that my identity is not fixed. Another reflection point is that identity descriptors have been very useful at some times and in some places, but irrelevant at other times or places.

In terms of gender, I agree with Kate Bornstein who said that gender is like one of those foot holds or hand holds in rock climbing, just as you get comfortable you have to move on; gender is always changing. As a rock climber this metaphor I particularly liked this!

I identify with the gender assigned to me at birth. Right now, I would describe my own gender as gender expansive in that I do connect with some fixed/hegemonic notions of masculinity in many ways, some of which are linked closely to a Northern and Rugby cultural identity. However, I do have (what some may describe as) feminine and androgynous qualities at other times (as well as being a feminist). I relate to expansive notions of masculinity sometimes offered by less available language explorations. For example I connect with the word 'Courage' from the French word Coeur, or 'with heart'. The context specificity of my identity in some ways echoes what Jamison Green calls the 'visibility dilemma' in relation to trans peoples shifting navigation of 'visibility' across time and space. I often dress in a masculine way (Ruby shirts, sport clothes) and at other times feel comfortable in minimal clothes (layers, greys, blacks) which may be considered gender neutral by other people. I have not always fit in with LGBT culture, for instance the type of music I enjoy, such as heavy metal, is not stereotypically associated with LGBT culture. For example I consider myself as competitive but only really with myself. I enjoy gender neutral sports such as rock climbing and martial arts. I have encountered situations in which I have been purposefully misgendered which was uncomfortable and I remember these clearly, they stayed with me in some surprisingly vivid ways. However, these were not frequent occasions and I find it difficult to imagine the effect of frequent misgendering of trans people.

In my personal therapy, I reflect heavily on the intersectionality between aspects of gender, culture, spirituality and sexuality. I felt discouraged from engaging with the LGBT community in research in some ways since I initially felt that a vague sense that the role of change agents should be in the 'space between' members of the LGBT community and those who are more privileged and in positions of power. I have highly valued LGBT people whose voices have been subjugated in an increasingly 'homonormative' society, in making way for the vast heterogeneity within the LGBT community which is often overshadowed by the potentially isolating stereotypes, tropes and social inequalities. It has been a process of navigating these various discourses to make sense of where my role best lay.

It is perhaps a combination of my 'in-between' identity which has meant that I have found a usefulness in identifying as 'queer' increasingly over time. Queer, is politically charged, and breaks free from binaries such as male-female, cis-trans and so on and is much more heavily context dependant. This for me explains many aspects of my confusions, particularly as a person who lives in-between spaces (with a birth family, partner family and chosen family each in different contexts). Queer considers changes and contexts in a way which maps onto my clinical and research interests (e.g. in narrative practice, polyphony, diverse voices, collective practices and collective identity) which felt of use to others in view of working as an ally to the trans community as a psychologist.

My Connections with LGB, Trans and Queer Community

Forming a chosen family for me has been a huge part of my life. In my clinical work, I have often felt frustrated by heteronormative models of therapy and research alike which do not fully account for chosen families (e.g. the heteronormative limitations of a genogram).

When forming a working relationship with Gender Intelligence and meeting young people at the youth groups, I had an experience of being in a minority which felt unusual for me. Particularly with young people, I was reminded how

important it is to bare in mind the diverse range of understandings in relation to gender identity.

I noticed how I did not mind being referred to as cis or cisgender in GI context, and also at different times noticed how some (not all) of my heterosexual counterparts did feel uncomfortable at the idea of being labelled such. At times I wished to add uncertainty to the term cis by querying if this is a term I will always identify with across time and physical space, but did not voice this as it felt a less than straightforward explanation. Whatsmore I remember feeling very positive towards the trans exclusive safer spaces which I was not permitted to attend, since particularly growing up I have noticed the importance of physical spaces and how they can create a sense of safety or danger within the body and particularly in the context of relationships. At different times of my life I have been more or less connected with LGBT cultural spaces and in the most part I have been 'on the edge' of these in that I have not always found accessible spaces which feel comfortable or easy to locate. Whilst I have had experiences of some LGBT spaces which were safe, I also recall historical homophobia, biphobia and ageism in LGBT spaces in the past, including a sense of feeling objectified. I now know that in the present time, where I live, there are in fact more accessible spaces which are more inclusive of diversity. I am also aware that this is not true of everybody and many people have different experiences of LGBT spaces.

In meeting with Gatekeepers at GI, there has been a value of reflexive practice and transparency (of identity, capacity and research aims or values) when engaging in a working relationship. Gatekeepers are often in a position of power and communication in relation to potential participants and participatory action researchers. Many gatekeepers may indeed have a relationship to researchers from more common epistemological approaches which mean that there is a challenge in forming an initial relationship. I found it useful to be open and honest about the flexibility and remits of a thesis, as well as thinking carefully about what I could be of use to the GI group with. This meant volunteering at GI youth groups to set up food and snacks, place signs up, welcome members, and join meetings in order to begin to share

resources and skills with the group. It also meant sharing ideas with Gatekeeper's in a variety of ways which were approved ethically.

In meeting young people at GI I made notes of their feedback where possible. I shared with them lyrics from a song which had particularly connected with me by a gay artist John Grant:

“This pain, it is a Glacier moving through you, carving out deep valleys and creating spectacular landscapes, nourishing the group with precious minerals and other stuff, so don't you become paralysed with fear, when things seem particularly rough.”

I have been overwhelmed by the creativity in the GI community, and learning the ways in which creative arts communicate rich messages and connect people together. Ambassadors have been very warm and kind in regards to me working alongside the community group. I was applauded as being 'brave' for being 'out as cis' which I experienced as compassionate and also a huge privilege. Ambassadors and youth workers have shown gratitude to me and I to them and the strong working relationship has been a worthwhile experience. I look forward to becoming more involved with the GI community, and undertaking training to become registered through GI as therapist for working with trans people.

Appendix B: Search Strategy

The following strategy follows the five-stage systematic search strategy framework outlined by Booth et al., (2016).

Following a scoping search, I conducted a systematic search which asked *'What is available on appropriate databases on the topic of young people who are trans, if I am to look broadly?'* I used the framework PICOC (population, intervention, comparison, outcomes, context) to help me to narrow the search. These were filtered down to 154 articles. Since qualitative and strength based studies on the topic of young trans people were stringent, in the subsequent stages, I derived more search terms from the Cochrane Library thesaurus. A broad range of (70) search terms on 'trans' were produced, which were too large for some databases, and as such a narrative review was more useful. This asked *'What qualitative, narrative or liberation approaches can I find on the topic of trans?'* To aid this stage I applied narrative approach search terms in key journals (e.g. The International Journal of Transgenderism).

In the final stage as a means of verification I then did a bibliography search of key papers (e.g. Kosciw et al., 2014; Breslow et al. 2015; Wernick, Kulick and Woodford, 2014) and reviewed the grey literature for example articles from

LGBT and community psychology websites and unpublished literature (e.g. Hughes and Kaur, in press).

Stage 1: Scoping Search

PICOC Assessment

P - Population: Young people / Under 21's / Children / Teenagers / Young Adults / CYP / Children and Young People / Young adults of school age

I - Intervention: Narrative therapy / Collective Narrative Practice

C - Comparison: N/A

O - Outcomes: Stories / Narratives / Life Story / Life Stories / Narrative Analysis / Self-description / Personal Discourses

C - Context: Transgender / Community / Primarily UK but international studies will be considered / Last 10 years Primarily

Database Selection

Databases Included		Databases Excluded	
<u>Name of Database</u>	<u>Rationale</u>	<u>Name of Database</u>	<u>Rationale</u>
✓ Academic Search complete (EBSCO)	Subjects include psychology.	Web of science.	Unable to access from UEL.
✓ Child development and adolescent studies (EBSCO)	Subjects include psychology. Young people focus.		
✓ Psych Info (EBSCO)	Subjects include psychology.		
✓ Science Direct	Subjects include psychology.		
✓ Applied Social Sciences Index and Abstracts (ASSIA)	Abstracts include psychology,		

	Dissertations and Theses.		
✓ The Cochrane Library - for the Database of Systematic Reviews (CDSR)	Review based database.		
✓ Scopus	Citation searches.		

Search question 1

'What is generally out there on the topic of Transgender, in relevant fields, and what words are used to describe this that can help my search?'

Search terms

Trans OR Transgender

Date searched

26/09/2016 – 27/09/2016

Stage 2: Systematic Search

The following three search questions were asked. The journals were manually filtered down to 154 articles.

Search question 1: Trans

'What is available on appropriate databases on the topic of young people who are trans, if I am to look broadly?'

Search terms & Boolean logic

Trans OR Transgender OR Transsexual OR Transvestite OR "Gender Non-Binary" OR Transsexual OR "Gender Identity" OR "Gender Expression"

Date searched

17/01/2017

Limits

Date range: 2007 - 2017,

Humanities, Psychology and Social Journals.

Topics, "behavioral science, behavior, adolescent, woman, public health, gender, sexual, adolescent health"

Filters

Journals, "Social and Behavioral Sciences, Journal of Adolescent Health, Social Science & Medicine"

Exclusions

Medical journals, Geography

Date searched

26/09/2016 – 27/09/2016

Total returned by databases

1,586

Search question 2: Trans & Young People

'What is out there on the topic of young people who are transgender, if I am to look broadly?'

Search terms & Boolean logic

("Transgender*" OR "Gender Non-Binary" OR "Trans") AND ("Teenage" OR "Adolescent" OR "Child" OR "Young Person")

Limits

Date range: 2007 - 2017,

Humanities, Psychology and Social Journals.

Topics, "behavioral science, behavior, adolescent, woman, public health, gender, sexual, adolescent health"

Filters

Journals, "Social and Behavioral Sciences, Journal of Adolescent Health, Social Science & Medicine"

Exclusions

Medical journals, Geography

Total returned by databases

2, 027

Search question 3: Trans & Young People & Narrative

'What can I find on the topic of young people who are trans, and narrative or liberation approaches?'

Date searched

17/01/2017

Search terms & Boolean logic

("Transgender" OR "Gender Non-Binary" OR "Gender Identity" OR "Gender Expression") AND ("Teenage" OR "Adolescent" OR "Child" OR "Young Person") AND ("Teenage" OR "Adolescent" OR "Child" OR "Young Person") AND ("Stories" OR "Narrative*" OR "Life Story" OR "Collective Narrative" OR "Collective" OR "Collective Narrative Therapy" OR "Collective narrative*" OR "Collective*" OR "Community Psychology" OR "Liberation Psychology")

Limits

Date range: 2007 - 2017,

Humanities, Psychology and Social Journals.

Topics, "behavioral science, behavior, adolescent, woman, public health, gender, sexual, adolescent health"

Filters

Journals, "Social and Behavioral Sciences, Journal of Adolescent Health, Social Science & Medicine"

Exclusions

Medical journals, Geography

Total returned by databases

412

Stage 3: Bibliography Search

- If useful paper then searched for citations on Scopus
- If frequent author name search by name
- Reference lists of key papers
- If frequent journal search the journal itself
- Looked via publisher websites

Key Authors

- Kosciw et al. (2014)
- Greytak et al., (2009)
- Kosciw, Greytak, Diaz. (2000)
- Wernick, Kulick and Woodford, (2014)

Key Journals

- The International Journal of Transgenderism
- Journal of community psychology
- American journal of community psychology
- Journal of LGBT youth

Key Websites

- *Transforming spaces:* <https://transformationsuk.wordpress.com/80-2/>
- *Gendered Intelligence:* <http://genderedintelligence.co.uk>
- *Galop:* <http://www.galop.org.uk>
- *The Dulwich Centre:* <http://dulwichcentre.com.au>

Stage 4: Verification & Narrative Review

Revised search terms

Keywords derived from Websites on Trans & Thesaurus (MEDLINE & Cochrane Library: MeSH) were used in a narrative review using the databases, and these were recorded on a spreadsheet.

Trans	Genderqueer
Transgender	Queer
Trans Gender	Gender Variant
Trans-gender	Sex Change
Transsexual	LGBT
Trans-sexual	GLBT
Transvestite	Gender Diversity
Trans-vestite	Trans*
Gender non-conforming	Cisgender
Gender non conforming	Non Cisgender
Gender Nonconforming	Non Cis
Gender Non-Binary	Transgender Boy
Gender non binary	Transgender Girl
Non-binary Gender	Trans Boy
Non binary gender	Trans Grl
Gender Fluid	Demi gender
Gender neutral	Demigirl
Gender Dysphoria	Demiboy
Transgenderism	Deminonbinary
Intersex	Demifluid
Intersex Person	Demiflux
Intersex Persons	Agender
Transgender Person	Intergender
Transgender Persons	Neutrois
Transgendered	Genderfluid
Transgendered Person	Genderless

Transgendered Persons	Poligender
Transsexual	Pangender
Transsexual Person	Third Gender
Transsexual Persons	Androgyne
Gender Identity Disorder	Young Transgender man
Transvestism	Young Transgender woman
Gender Identity	Transphobia
Transsexualism	Trans macroaggressions
Androgyny	Gender Expression

Stage 5: Documentation

The sources; Search strategies used; Number of references found; The date searches were conducted. (See example of documentation below).

The Sources	The date searches were conducted	Initial Search Findings	Limits	Filters	Exclusion	Number of Results Removed	Number of Results to hand sort
Academic Search Complete (EBSCO Host)	26/09/2016	134,104	2007 - 2017, English	Academic Journals Only, Peer Reviewed	Medical Science Journals	133,644	460
Child development and adolescent studies (EBSCO Host)	26/09/2016	1,079	2007 - 2017, English	Academic Journals Only	Publications: annals of the new york academy of sciences; american journal of preventive medicine; addictive behaviors; prevention researcher; archives of disease in childhood; journal of autism & developmental disorders; harvard educational review	802	277
Psych Info (EBSCO Host)	26/09/2016	32,983	2007 - 2017, English	Academic Journals Only, Peer Reviewed	Animal Population. Subject major heading: sexual orientation, lesbianism; sexual orientation, bisexuality, male homosexuality, homosexuality, sexuality, heterosexuality, proteins, epidemiology. Medical Journals.	32,844	139
Science Direct	26/09/2016	1,466,161	2007 - 2017, English	Journals, Social and Behavioral Sciences Publications Only. Topic: Gender.		1,466,148	13
Applied Social Sciences Index and Abstracts (ASSIA)	26/09/2016	511,013	2007 - 2017, English	Scholarly Journals, Peer Reviewed, International Bibliography of the Social Sciences (IBSS). Social Sciences publications only.	Business Studies and Trade Journals. Subject: Sexual Orientation.	510,870	143
The Cochrane Library - for the Database of Systematic Reviews (CDSR)	27/09/2016	15	2007 - 2017	Reviews Only	Protocol Studies	3	12
Scopus	27/09/2016	580,244	2007 - 2017, English, Journals. Keyword Limiters to include: "Gender Identity" OR "Gender" OR "Transgender" OR "Gender Role" OR "Identity"	Articles, Reviews. Health Professions, Psychology, Social Sciences.	Medical Science Journals, Neuroscience	579,702	542

Appendix C. Ambassadors Certificate of involvement



Appendix D. Ambassadors Feedback

Summary of key points:

- Wariness of a session being solely delivered by cisgender person, given experiences of putting "life in their hands".
- Ownership of the session as being “designed by young trans people, for young trans people” with a view for it to be also delivered by young trans people.
- With consent, some session material could be useful for a creative medium such as poetry, spoken word or an art exhibition.
- Reflecting on ‘the past’ is potentially very complex for young trans people (in a past, present, future linear way) and more creative invitations are needed, including the option to stay in the ‘here and now’.
- The importance of knowing clearly, fully and at the very start where any information was going to go and who was going to see it.
- In the informed consent, making explicit the message that any reflection on strength and resilience is not communicating trans people need to “put up with” oppression, rather what needs to happen to support them in the system around the person through lived experience of what ‘has been, is currently, or would be’ helpful in the life of the person.
- Making explicit the invitation to draw symbols or drawings which do not have to be elaborated on with spoken words should the participant not wish to.
- The session would be a good opportunity for GI attendees to co-facilitate and learn new skills from ‘less mainstream’ psychological approaches.
- The importance of a medium which was accessible for physically less able-bodied young people to participate.

Youth Ambassadors: *Testing Out Ideas*



Ambassadors met at a taster sessions to share ideas about what would be helpful for other GI members. The following example of a 'Theatre of Life' poster was created by one of the Youth Ambassadors. It shows the people, places, and things that have helped him in his life.



Appendix F. 'Backstage: The Story of the Project'

Backstage - The Story Of The Project ***(Written by Ambassadors)***

ABOUT THE PROJECT

Some members of GI youth group have become Ambassadors, and have designed a session for GI. This session helps people to express everyday ways of resisting oppression, in a safe way.

We drew on 'narrative psychology' to help our ideas to come together. This session will be run with some of the Ambassadors who designed it. The end result was a session *made by young trans people, for young trans people.* It is called **The Theatre of Life.**

This session hopes to explore creative resistance (forms of strength, support and resources) by thinking about different parts of our lives in a safe, creative way.

We will guide people through making a special poster about their life using the metaphor of a theatre stage. This is your poster so only you decide what you think is useful to share as much or as little as you like. We would like to record the audio of the sessions for a write up of the project to help with remembering the important things that we talk about. Everything discussed will be kept confidential, names and identifiable information will be changed and we will only record with your written consent.

SHARING OUR STORIES WITH A ZINE

We hope to put some of the posters and stories into a Zine booklet to give to others to inspire them to resist inequality and oppression.

The Zine will reach others who live too far away to attend the GI events. It will also reach organisations which need to listen to our words and make changes such as the NHS, Schools and businesses.

ABOUT CREATIVE RESISTANCE

We live in a society where is inequality. People always respond to this and to resist this oppression, even in small everyday ways. The term 'creative resistance' describes this.

A lot of projects focus on individual change and ignore social, community or organisational change. We believe that it would be useful for society, communities and organisations to support trans people, by supporting the things they have found to be useful already, making their resources even stronger! This might mean funding organisations like GI or other safer spaces, changing school or work policies to support them, or simply raising awareness.

BEING THE AUTHOR OF YOUR OWN LIFE

The stories of our lives are rich with acts of creative resistance.

Many stories are told about young trans people in the media. However they are not often accurate representations. The stories are often not told by trans people. They do not express our diversity. GI have worked hard at giving trans people a voice again.

When we have inaccurate stories told about the groups we belong to, it can cause us problems. Thinking about this can sometimes be hard, so there needs to be a way to *safely think about what parts of our life, we wish to be known*. That is why we need a way to construct and reclaim our narratives!

Appendix G. Participant Biographies

Zach:

He/Him/His pronouns. Aged 15.

Binary male. Panromantic / Gay. Proudly welsh. 'Generally open' about trans identity. Attending a specialist autism school following leaving mainstream school. Attends GI.

Lore:

She/Her/Hers pronouns. Aged 16.

Left mainstream school to do training. Attends GI.

Steve:

He/Him/His pronouns. Aged 14.

Christian. Panromantic / Gay. Attends GI.

Kian:

He/Him/His pronouns. Aged 14.

Italian. Attends a 'same sex' school. Attends GI.

Freddie:

He/Him/His pronouns. Aged 18.

Mixed race. Attends a 'same sex' school, moving to university.

Describes himself as 'kind of stealth' online. First time at GI.

Appendix H. Transcription Conventions

Transcription conventions were adapted from the recommendations outlined by Parker (2005) and were adapted for the use with narrative analysis.

- Parker, I. (2005). *Qualitative psychology: Introducing radical research*. Berkshire, England: Open University Press.

Transcription Convention	Representation
Inaudible point on recording	[unclear 0.26.20],
Descriptors of pointing, volume or noise	Square brackets e.g. [shouting], [sigh], [laughter], [loud laughing], [gasp], [clapping]
Long pause	...
Emphasis on word or phrase	<i>Italic</i>
Quotation	“ ”
Reference to a title / artist / phrase	‘ ’
Narrative segment (key sub-story)	<p>Boxed segment of text: E.g.</p> <p>Main story text...</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin: 10px auto; width: fit-content;"> <p>...sub-story text ...sub-story text ...sub-story text</p> </div> <p>...main story text.</p>
Start or end of narrator's story	<p>Line, labeled: e.g.</p> <hr style="border: 0.5px solid blue;"/> <p>Freddie's story begins:</p> <p>Main story text... Main story text...</p> <p>Freddie's story ends:</p> <hr style="border: 0.5px solid blue;"/>

Appendix I. Transcript Excerpt

223. better person, it made me more understanding and I'm actually quite glad that I was
224. mentally ill and I think that's an important part of my life. Erm, I'll do the stage last
225. because [laughter], so here are some gay bands [laughs], they're not even gay but I'm gay
226. so ...

227.

228. FREDDIE: Halsey is bi.

229.

230. ZACH: ...yeah! Halsey is bi, and yeah, yeah some people are, very few, yeah, Oasis,
231. Nickelback and Coldplay, please don't hate me for liking Nickelback, [laughs] erm but these
232. three were the first three because when I was a child there were, there was a like mmm a
233. compilation CD, that my Father used to do and I got it and there were three songs and the
234. first one was by Oasis and the second by Nickelback, the third by Coldplay, and 'Little by
235. Little', 'How You Remind Me' and 'In My Place', and those three things I'd listen on repeat
236. when I was depressed and they kind of helped me get through those really bad times and
237. so that's why I put them first is because they kind of really helped me when I was a child
238. trying to deal with the pressures and so on. Erm, the others I'm not going to read them all
239. out, some of them are really little like 'Koethe Koethe' and 'Amy's Ghost' but these are
240. people like, like bands that at one point in my life I had to listen to the album, like one
241. album on repeat and that helped me through, you know whatever time, apart from 'My
242. Chemical Romance' which I was listening to and then my Grandmother got cancer and died
243. and I was like the song's about cancer and death, [laughs] it wasn't very good for that
244. particular time but yeah, I still like them, er, the songs anyway. Erm, but 'Amy's Ghost' is
245. kind of really important to me and 'The Quotes', because they're local bands and I met
246. them at a like festival and they were in the small stage and er, well 'The Amy's' were the
247. session before and I met the lead singer Amy and she, and she gave her drum to hit,
248. because she had a little drum set, and then I met her the next time a few months' later and
249. she remembered me and she signed my like little autograph book and was like 'Thank you
250. for playing my drums so well!' and she got me up on stage at one point to get me to play
251. the drum it was really great, she was just really nice and 'The Quotes', you know I was
252. really into the songs, they were rocky and I just really liked it and then at the end erm the
253. lead singer's girlfriend er had got me a shirt which cost £15 and she got one to sign it and
254. gave it to me for free, because she said like this would be good and that kind of help restore
255. my faith in like humanity that people do do good things for no reason and a year later at
256. their last ever performance erm the lead singer recognised me and actually fought his way
257. to get to me to say I recognise you, it's really good that you're still with us and I was like
258. [gasps] but we were both really awkward, so those kind of mean a lot to me, erm yeah...

259.

260. DANE: Yeah! That's amazing.

261.

262. ZACH: So 'the people', I, I don't really understand [inaudible], but erm [laughs], the
263. people that I want to see my story is Nelson Mandela, I know he's dead, that's heartbreak...

Appendix J. Individual and Collective Level Analysis Visual Map and Excerpt

Individual Level

Excerpt

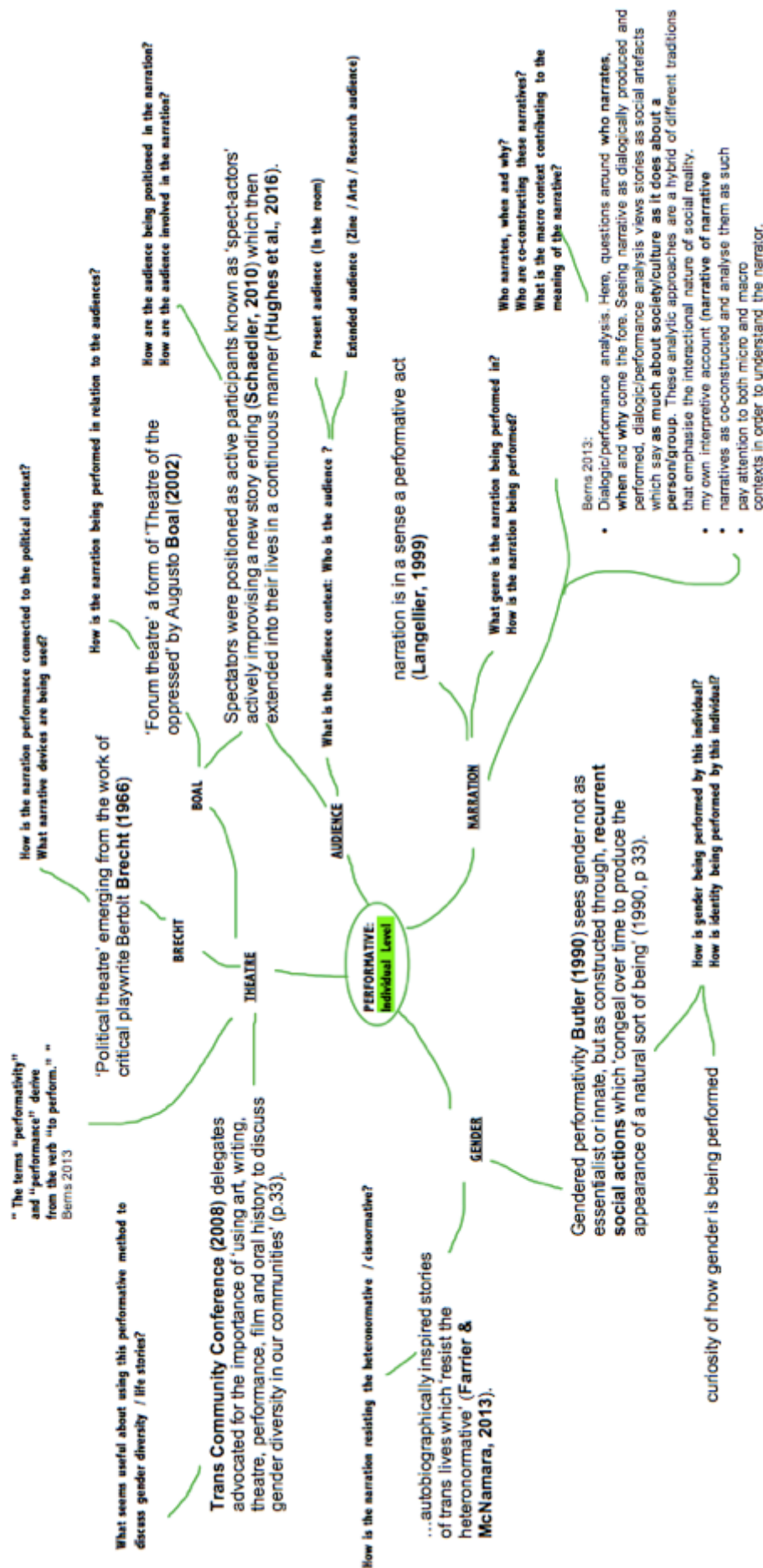
KEY

- Star bullet points indicate sections which were used in analysis write up.
- Purple text focuses on how participant is performing the narration.
- Blue text focuses on meaning of what the participant is narrating.

1049.	STEVE: Okay. Well I will just start by introducing myself, I'm Steve, trans and gay, it's sort of like Zach, in that I'm pan, but I just say I'm gay because it's just easier. Erm. I don't know where to start.	Steve's story begins
1050.		
1051.		
1052.	ZACH: Start from the top.	
1053.		
1054.	STEVE: Okay. So this was, well do you have the sheet that I can look at what this actually means?	Steve uses the ambassadors template to help him know what each section means. Steve starts with the 'backstage'.
1055.		
1056.	DANE: Yes.	
1057.		
1058.	STEVE: The top bit, [referring to top of poster]. Oh 'what's important to you and helps you'? Erm, acting I like drama, I just love it and it gives me strength to do stuff, my friends, they really help me, especially particular people and do you know, I've a friend, I prefer the rainbow colours because it's awesome...	Steve notes that acting and drama give him strength to live. Steve refers to a 'stick person' drawing on his poster made with rainbow colours. Steve hints at 'particular friends' as maybe meaning friends who are also LGBT/queer.
1059.		
1060.		
1061.		
1062.	ZACH: His friends are gay [laughs].	★ Zach and Steve are friends and so Zach adds to the narration by specifying that Steve's friends are gay. Also seems as though Zach's narration of 'gay' spoken in a proud manner is a form of 'reclaiming' the meaning of 'gay' from historical/colloquial pejorative use: i.e. a form of saying "his friends are great".
1063.		
1064.	STEVE: Er yeah, school helps me and then destroys me, which is completely irrational and but it, it can be really helpful and it can be bad. Erm, I don't know, I drew the rainbow flag because it just helps me to be able to be able to be me, like without the concept of being gay, like I don't know, I just wouldn't be able to do it and the same with trans, and music is like a massive part of me. I love music, I love listening, I love playing. Yeah.	★ Steve stories school as a contrasting aspects of support and oppression. Steve is poetic here in his telling of school as 'irrational': paints a picture of deconstruction needed to construct: as seen in creative resistance. Similar to a metaphor of building muscle by breaking the muscle down before re-growth. A really clear example of socially constructing ways of being 'gay' through language. The rainbow flag and trans flags to him mean a conceptual possibility to be able to live out. Something about how this would be less possible alone.
1065.		
1066.	DANE: You play?	
1067.		
1068.	STEVE: Yeah, badly...	
1069.		
1070.	ZACH: No you don't...	Steve stories how listening to music is a love of his. Steve talked about how he likes singing. Song writing helps Steve to manage 'big' emotions.
1071.		
1072.	STEVE: I like singing and stuff and like song writing helps me to deal with emotions which are too big.	★ Steve poetically describes how song writing helps him to express emotions (implying that Steve feels 'big' emotions). Steve again implies that he has found a way of constructing a language beyond what was previously available to him: 1) The trans and rainbow flag conceptual meaning allowing him to live out these ways of being and 2) Constructing meaning through song writing, to express through music that which he 'can not say'.
1073.		
1074.	DANE: Do you write your own songs or...	Steve includes his Mum as a person who helped and supported him in the context of others who have not been supportive, hinting at the connection between support and trans/gay/pansexual identity. Potentially, the invitation by ambassadors to story 'people who have supported you' opens up a new level of appreciation for loved ones. Would this be absent / less true for heteronormative young people?
1075.		
1076.	STEVE: Yeah, erm... They're not any good, but they help me to express emotions. Yeah, they can say stuff that I can't say, and they can help feed me and just repetition and stuff and yeah that's why the guitar is there [refers to poster]. Er and 'people who help me', my Mum who's been really supportive when other people haven't been and I just wanted to put her there.	
1077.		
1078.	DANE: In the back stage?	
1079.		
1080.		
1081.		
1082.		
1083.		
1084.		
1085.		
1086.		

Performative Narrative Analysis

Monday, 20 March 2017 10:44



Collective Level

Excerpt

KEY

- Star bullet points indicate sections which were used in analysis write up.

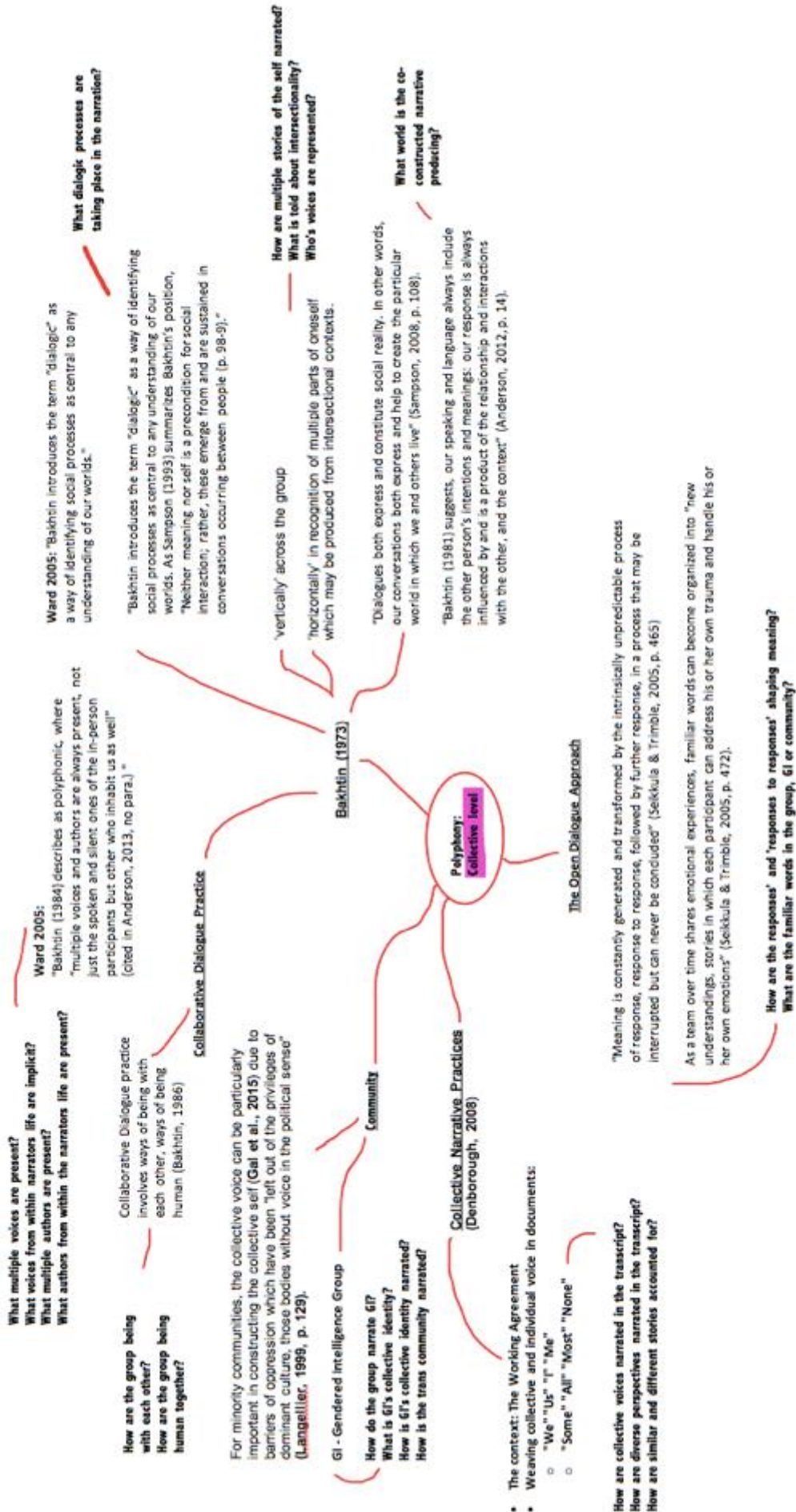
1428.	KIAN: I think one of the most important things that I wanted to mention is whenever I get like really bad days and I'm really sad I seem to get like really frustrated at myself	★ Kian notes this as one of the most important messages: to be kind/patient/accepting(?) to yourself when unhappy and 'it's okay to not be okay'.
1429.	because I'm always like 'oh why aren't you happy' you know and I used to scold myself for not being happy, but I just want everyone to know that it's okay to not be okay. Like we all	
1431.	have our days and I know it's been repeated and it sounds cheesy but everything does get better so, that's something I just wanted to let everyone know.	Kian connects this important message to the grand 'cheesy'/cliché that 'it does get better' here this seems to mean his story vouches for this message despite the sentiment getting lost through over-usage?
1432.		
1433.		
1434.	DANE: Mhm.	
1435.		★ Kian describes some challenges of attending an all girls school as a trans guy in the universal pronouns and gendered language. Kian stories himself as 'blessed' and 'lucky' in relation to other peoples stories.
1436.	KIAN: I think there's some stuff that I go into more detail in, erm I go to an all girl's school which obviously proves challenges because all the teachers are used to saying girls	
1437.	and ladies, but which is really difficult and I have been to... I am usually complaining about it and I'm like I did get quite angry at my maths teacher for saying girls after... and I usually	
1438.	go through this thing where they constantly apologise and then go and do it again which is really just like 'why, why are you doing that?'. So erm, yeah that's something that's sucky	
1439.	but I think I'm really blessed when it comes to school because I've heard other stories and it sounds really bad, so I think I'm quite lucky when it comes to the whole school thing.	Kian recognises his story is 'really short' in comparison to the ones before his and he asks if people have questions but they do not offer questions up.
1440.	Yeah, I think mine is really short compared to everyone else, I don't know if anyone has any questions. No?	
1441.		
1442.		
1443.		
1444.		
1445.		
1446.	DANE: Thank you so much. That's really amazing	
1447.		
1448.	ALL: [clapping]	End of Kian's story
1449.		
1450.	STEVE: Zach you're sitting on the schedule!	Slight pause as narrators switch places

- Notes to help with the structuring of the collective story:

A Chorus of Self-Love As a Radical Act.	
Summary: Collective story of being inspired to resist oppression and subjugation before collectively uniting, from trans & queer families to beyond.	
STRUCTURE	NOTES, QUOTES & CONNECTIONS
Cis not understanding oppression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1442 - 1443 I'm really blessed when it comes to school because I've heard other stories and it sounds really bad, so I think I'm quite lucky when it comes to the whole school thing. • 3 out of 4 put CAMHS in the royal box • Hell / bullying / misgendered / not listening
Subjugated stories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • like who knew that Cis people can be alright, (Kian) • Lore (cis... friends) • Zach: count as two friends • Freddie: Gay spoken word community
Personal responsibility at different times	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lore very much focusing on oneself in context of oppression. • Zach moving through this, being stealth-silenced and dreaming of making changes later.
Joining queer family / community / it gets better	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language: Gay / Cis / Stealth / Queer • Support: • 1220 - Steve saying him and Zach spoke about coming out • ZACH: We've all got to start somewhere. • Steve: You should be a comedian
Inspiring resistance together, to allow it to get better	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lore involving me with the MLK quote • I think 99% of people need to know more about trans issues and not even just trans issues, but LGBTQ plus, just people need to be more aware and less like transphobic, homophobic, just more loving and accepting and less discriminatory and horrible.

Polyphonic Narrative Analysis

Monday, 20 March 2017 10:44



Appendix K. Reflective Notes on Ambassador and Participant Sessions

Pre-Participatory Consultation Session Reflections

Working in solidarity without inadvertently oppressing this group presents a challenge to me as a person who does not identify as trans. I was encouraged by a quote from Martin Luther King Jr.:

"In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends" (King, 1967).

I am feeling some uncertainty about striking the balance between 1) being containing and structured in the ambassador session and 2) asking for creative ideas and showing we can be flexible to an extent and with the possibility of the ideas I could go into the session tomorrow with.

Ambassador Session Planning

I have been unable to locate narrative therapy quotes from a trans or gender expansive person at short notice however here are some other quotes, what might connect / not connect with you?

Sharing Narrative Psychology Quotes From Women

Problems develop when people internalize conversations that restrain them to a narrow description of self. These stories are experienced as oppressive because they limit the perception of available choices.

– Kathleen S.G. Skott- Myhre

the map of verbal description does not fully represent the territory of lived experience, including the richness of visual symbolic processes, feelings, emotions, and sensations.

-Jennifer Freeman et. al.

..there are both obvious and subtle differences in the power individuals and particular interest groups possess to ensure that particular narratives will prevail in family, group, and national life. Not all stories are equal.

– Joan Laird

As we become aware of ourselves as storytellers we realize we can use our stories to heal and make ourselves whole.

– Susan Wittig Albert

Sharing Narrative Psychology Quotes From Men

The problem is the problem, the person is not the problem.

– Michael White and David Epston

The most powerful therapeutic process I know is to contribute to rich story development.

—Michael White

Some Ideas taking on board feedback

Wings instead could be about intersectionality. Props representing the

GRACIES:

- Culture
- Sexuality
- Religion
- Culture Groups e.g. fashion / other
- Identity
- Race
- Ethnicity
- Spirituality
- Places of importance
- People of importance

E.g. Muslim and Gay and Trans

Design #1

Plan to discuss the following design further and develop this with ambassadors.



Appendix L. Ethical Approval Letter

School of Psychology Research Ethics Committee

NOTICE OF ETHICS REVIEW DECISION

For research involving human participants
BSc/MSc/MA/Professional Doctorates in Clinical, Counselling and Educational Psychology

REVIEWER: Nicholas Wood

SUPERVISOR: Maria Castro

COURSE: Professional Doctorate in Clinical Psychology

STUDENT: Dane Duncan Mills

TITLE OF PROPOSED STUDY: The Theatre of Life: A Collective Narrative Project with Trans* Young People in the Community.

DECISION OPTIONS:

- 1. APPROVED:** Ethics approval for the above named research study has been granted from the date of approval (see end of this notice) to the date it is submitted for assessment/examination.
- 2. APPROVED, BUT MINOR AMENDMENTS ARE REQUIRED BEFORE THE RESEARCH COMMENCES** (see Minor Amendments box below): In this circumstance, re-submission of an ethics application is not required but the student must confirm with their supervisor that all minor amendments have been made before the research commences. Students are to do this by filling in the confirmation box below when all amendments have been attended to and emailing a copy of this decision notice to her/his supervisor for their records. The supervisor will then forward the student's confirmation to the School for its records.
- 3. NOT APPROVED, MAJOR AMENDMENTS AND RE-SUBMISSION REQUIRED** (see Major Amendments box below): In this circumstance, a revised ethics application must be submitted and approved before any research takes place. The revised application will be reviewed by the same reviewer. If in doubt, students should ask their supervisor for support in revising their ethics application.

DECISION ON THE ABOVE-NAMED PROPOSED RESEARCH STUDY

(Please indicate the decision according to one of the 3 options above)

1. APPROVED

Minor amendments required *(for reviewer):*

Major amendments required (for reviewer):

ASSESSMENT OF RISK TO RESEACHER (for reviewer)

If the proposed research could expose the researcher to any of kind of emotional, physical or health and safety hazard? Please rate the degree of risk:

- HIGH
- MEDIUM
- LOW

Reviewer comments in relation to researcher risk (if any):

Reviewer *Nicholas Wood*

Date: 11th March 2016

This reviewer has assessed the ethics application for the named research study on behalf of the School of Psychology Research Ethics Committee

Confirmation of making the above minor amendments (for students):

I have noted and made all the required minor amendments, as stated above, before starting my research and collecting data.

Student's name (*Typed name to act as signature*):

Student number:

Date:

*For the researcher and participants involved in the above named study to be covered by UEL's insurance and indemnity policy, prior ethics approval from the School of Psychology (acting on behalf of the UEL Research Ethics Committee), and confirmation from students where minor amendments were required, must be obtained before any research takes place.

*For the researcher and participants involved in the above named study to be covered by UEL's insurance and indemnity policy, travel approval from UEL (not the School of Psychology) must be gained if a researcher intends to travel overseas to collect data, even if this involves the researcher travelling to his/her home country to conduct the research. Application details can be found here: <http://www.uel.ac.uk/gradschool/ethics/fieldwork/>

Appendix M. Information Sheets

YOUNG PEOPLES INFORMATION SHEET



WHO DESIGNED THE 'THEATRE OF LIFE' SESSION?

My name is Dane Mills. I am a Trainee Clinical Psychologist. I am a cisgender man. I have worked with young people for 8 years and I am passionate about equality. Young trans* people from GI and myself have designed a poster and discussion session for GI about strength and resources. It will be ran by the young people who designed it. I hope to do a piece of research with those who take part.



WHY DO RESEARCH ABOUT STRENGTH & RESOURCES?

We know that young trans* people live in a society where there are many forms of inequality. This thesis research hopes to help change that. The session hopes to think about strength and resources in a safe, confidential, creative way. This may be useful to help make positive changes in society. For example school and workplace policies.



WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF I TAKE PART?

At the session everyone will be invited to make a poster, share it with the group and to talk about it. If you would like to take part I will ask your permission to take a digital photograph of your poster at the end. I will also ask if it is ok to record your story being told. This is only to help me to remember the important things you said. I could record it by audio or video, whichever you prefer.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO THE DATA?

The digital photograph of the poster and the recording will be kept completely confidential. Your identity will be protected. All names of places and people will be taken out and changed. They will be password protected and deleted when the thesis write up is submitted.



DO I HAVE TO TAKE PART?

No. Taking part in the research is completely voluntary. You can still take part in the poster session if you chose not to take part in the research.



CAN I CHANGE MY MIND?

Yes. If you do choose to take part in the research you have the right to withdraw at any time. You don't have to say why. You can also withdraw your data from the research after the workshop at any time up until the data analysis, by contacting me on the information below.



CAN I GET MORE INFO IF I NEED IT?

Yes. If you have any questions or concerns about this research, please feel free to get in touch with myself or my supervisor. Our details are below.



THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME!

MY NAME:

Dane Duncan Mills (Trainee Clinical Psychologist)

MY SUPERVISOR:

Dr. Maria Castro Romero (Senior Lecturer)

OUR E-MAIL ADDRESS:

u1438312@uel.ac.uk, m.castro@uel.ac.uk,

OUR TELEPHONE NUMBERS:

XXXXXXXXXX, XXXXXXXXXXX



PARENT / CARER INFORMATION SHEET



ABOUT ME

My name is Dane Duncan Mills and I have worked with young people for over 8 years. I currently am completing my training as a Clinical Psychologist at the University of East London. I am passionate about working to improve equality. I am supervised by Dr. Maria Castro (Senior Lecturer) and Dr. Neil Rees (Clinical Director) at the university who have experience in working in removing barriers to equality and diversity. I have also been working closely with Finn Greig and Sasha Padziarei who are youth workers at Gendered Intelligence since summer 2015.

ABOUT THE PROJECT

I would like invite your child to take part in a research project which aims to help equality for young trans* people at Gendered Intelligence. The project has been fully approved by the psychology research Ethics committee. I have been working with young trans* 'ambassadors' at Gendered Intelligence, to help them to design a session, by young people, for young people.

There has been a lot of work already done on the ways in which trans* people are oppressed and discriminated against in different ways within society. However, in comparison not much is known about what can be done to change things for the better at organisational and community levels. For instance school or workplace policies. This project hopes to help with that. It hopes to explore what is already helpful for young people, and what matters to them. It aims to learn about what kind of stories of strength, resilience and healing are told by young people. This information would be extremely helpful in contributing to policy changes. For instance training including anti-bullying and anti-stigma campaigns. It will also be useful to reflect on how best to work with young people in this innovative and creative way which moves away from traditional methods of research such as interviews and questionnaires, where questions are pre-decided by researchers.

PROJECT WORKING TITLE:

The Theatre of Life: A Collective Narrative Project with young transgender people in the community.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN

The session hopes to be a fun and creative experience. As such there will be no interviews or questionnaires involved. The project involves taking part in a poster and discussion session at Gendered Intelligence which has been designed by young people. Attendees are invited to design a poster to help them to get in touch with the stories in their life and the things they find helpful in their life, and to talk about the poster.



All those invited to the session are invited to take part in the research. They will be given a child friendly information sheet beforehand informing them about the

research and why the research will be useful. They do not have to take part in the research and they do not have to give a reason.

If your child would like to take part in the research I will ask permission to take a digital photograph of their poster at the end. I will also ask permission to record their poster discussion. This can be done either by audio recorder or video recorder, whichever is most comfortable and preferred by them. The recording is for the sole purpose of data analysis and write up.

All participants will be given a de-brief sheet at the end. This will contain the contact details of myself and my supervisor as well as information about useful supportive agencies and organisations.

TIME COMMITMENT

The session will be the usual length of the activities that run at Gendered Intelligence, and is not taxing. There will be a break and refreshments provided.

PARTICIPANTS' RIGHTS

You may decide to stop your child's participation at any time. You have the right to ask that any data supplied to that point be withdrawn / destroyed.

We will ask your child's permission before we begin the project, and they can stop at any point.

Please feel free to ask questions at any point by contacting me on the details below.

ARE THERE ANY RISKS

As will any group, there is a possibility that attendees may discuss potentially upsetting experiences. At the start of the session some 'ground rules' will be made to help create a respectful and safe atmosphere. There will be youth workers available outside of the room if young people wish to leave the room, which they are very welcome to do. At the end of the session I will provide a debrief sheet to participants which will contain the names and contact details of appropriate support organisations and agencies. Gendered Intelligence group itself is a source of support for the young people and are well placed as support as the young people have existing relationships with the groups youth workers and the social support of the youth group members.

CONFIDENTIALITY AND ANONYMITY

Confidentiality and anonymity is an important part of this project. Your child's individual data will not be identifiable. Real names and identifying references will be omitted from the reporting of the data, the posters and the transcripts and pseudonyms will be used. Anonymised data will be used for the purposes of the write up and possible academic presentations. Anonymised data will be kept for 5 years in accordance to the 1998 Data Protection Act, in case of subsequent publication of the project, after which time all data will be destroyed.

Should we need to contact you, your contact details will be stored by myself on

an encrypted electronic file which will be password protected and kept separate from the data gathered. Only the researcher will have access to this protected information.

As the data collection will take place in a group format, there will be a limit to confidentiality and it will be made clear that absolute confidentiality can not be fully guaranteed for this reason. However, all people present at the group will be asked at the beginning and reminded at the end to keep the group confidential, including in the realm of online social media. It will be made clear that this means not discussing participants personal information outside of the session to anybody else.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Please feel free to contact myself or my supervisor should you have any further questions or concerns.

<i>My Name:</i>	<i>Dane Duncan Mills (Trainee Clinical Psychologist)</i>
<i>My Supervisor:</i>	<i>Dr. Maria Castro Romero (Senior Lecturer)</i>
<i>Our E-mail Address:</i>	<i>u1438312@uel.ac.uk, m.castro@uel.ac.uk,</i>
<i>Our Telephone Numbers:</i>	<i>07805562027, 020 8223 4422</i>

Appendix N. Adult & Young Person Consent Sheets

PARENT / CARER CONSENT FORM

Project: The Theatre of Life: A Collective Narrative Project with young transgender people in the community.

By signing below, you are agreeing that: (1) you have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet, (2) questions about your child's participation in this study have been answered satisfactorily, and (3) you are willing for your child to take part in this voluntary research project.

**Participants wishing to preserve some degree of anonymity may use their initials.*

Caregiver's Name (Printed)*

Child's name(s) (Print)*

Caregiver's signature*

Child's Date of Birth

Today's Date

Name of person obtaining consent (Printed)
consent

Signature of person obtaining
consent

*I appreciate your time in answering these question.
Many thanks.*

YOUNG PEOPLES CONSENT FORM



By signing this consent form, I agree to take part in this research project.

Yes No

1. I have read and understand the information sheet. I have been given a copy to keep. I have had the opportunity to ask questions.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. I understand my participation in this project is voluntary and that I can ask questions at any time. I am aware I can withdraw at any point without giving a reason and without consequence.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. If I choose to take part, I agree to the digital audio / video recording to help with the analysis of the data.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. If I chose to take part, I agree to a digital photograph of my poster to be taken to help with the analysis of the data.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. I understand that my data and identity will be anonymous. I understand the anonymous data will be deleted when the thesis is submitted and the thesis may be used for future presentations, reports and journal articles.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. I know how to contact the person doing the project if I need to.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Participant's Name: _____

Signature: _____

Project Lead:

Signature:

Dane Duncan Mills (Trainee Clinical Psychologist)

Date:

THANK YOU FOR TAKING THE TIME TO COMPLETE THESE QUESTIONS.



Appendix O. Debrief Sheet

YOUNG PEOPLES DE-BREIF SHEET

WHY WAS THIS RESEARCH DONE?

This research was interested in the strengths and resources in your life. We know that young trans* people live in a society where there many forms of inequality. This research hopes to help to begin to change that. The session, designed by young people, for young people is a way to share experiences in a creative and fun way. The posters you make will also hold a special kind of knowledge. This may be useful to help make positive changes in society. For example improvements to school and workplace policies.



WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO THE DATA?

The digital photograph of the poster and the audio / video recording will be kept completely confidential. Your identity will be protected. All names of places and people will be taken out and changed. They will be password protected. All data will be deleted when the thesis is submitted, in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998).



CAN I CHANGE MY MIND?

Yes. You can withdraw your data from the research after the session at any time up until the point of data analysis, by contacting me on the information below.



CAN I GET MORE INFO IF I NEED IT?

Yes. If you have any questions or concerns about this research, please feel free to get in touch with myself or my supervisor. Our details are below.



WHAT SUPPORT CAN I GET IF I NEED IT?

<u>Support Service</u>	<u>About</u>	<u>Contact details</u>
Gendered Intelligence	GI's is always available! GI's mission is to increase understandings of gender diversity through creative ways.	www.genderedintelligence.co.uk Twitter: @GIyouthgroup
Press for Change	Press for Change provide legal advice, training, and research to trans people, their representatives, and public and private bodies	www.pfc.org.uk 008448708165 office@pfc.org.uk
Mermaids	Mermaids is an organisation which supports trans children and their families up to age 19, with no lower age limit.	www.mermaidsuk.org.uk
Galop	Galop gives advice and support to people who have experienced biphobia, homophobia, transphobia, sexual violence or domestic abuse.	www.galop.org.uk 020 7704 2040

THANK YOU FOR TAKING PART IN THIS RESEARCH!

MY NAME:

Dane Duncan Mills (Trainee Clinical Psychologist)

MY SUPERVISOR:

Dr. Maria Castro Romero (Senior Lecturer)

OUR E-MAIL ADDRESS:

u1438312@uel.ac.uk, m.castro@uel.ac.uk,

OUR TELEPHONE NUMBERS:

XXXXXXXXXXXXX, XXXXXXXXXXXXX



Appendix P. Feedback on Session

Participant Feedback (Given Verbally At End of Session)

- “I really enjoyed the freedom to say as much or as little as we wanted to in what we made and what we shared. Also it was good to hear other people’s story’s and that reminded me that other people are going through similar things.”
- “It was nice to have the time and the space to record some of my life in a creative way. I'm going to keep the zine and look back upon it.”
- “I liked it a lot! The most important bit to me was hearing about other people's stories and learning more about my friends.”
- “I just want to say thanks for other people for talking because it’s really helpful.”
- “Good vibes, lots of musical love.”

Appendix Q. Collective Poem, Zine and Website Blurb

Sharing Stories 1: Zine

The 'zine was made using the images of the posters made by ambassadors and participants and narratives from the transcript. It contains 'the story of the project' and support networks featured in the debrief sheets. The 'zine has been shared with ambassadors and participants, some of whom have contributed to its development. A suggestion has been made to make the 'zine available through the GI website or mailing lists in order to reach young trans people outside of London, who may be unable to make it to GI youth events.

Sharing Stories 2: Collective Poem

The following poem may be useful in Outsider Witnessing practices, events and social media. The poem features one line from each Theatre of Life section alongside one another to form nine stanzas. Arrangements to put the poem on the GI website are underway, and some stanzas have been shared through GI's social media outlets (see overleaf).

Theatre Of Life Collective Poem / Spoken Word

- **Zach's Story**
- **Lore's Story**
- **Steve's Story**
- **Kian's Story**
- **Freddie's Story**

BACKSTAGE

- People understand each other and they're there for each other and you know even if it's like a problem that's not related to being trans, you know people are just there, you know like the family.
- My father gave me a job, he's been the most helpful and supportive person, my father.
- I like singing and stuff and like song writing helps me to deal with emotions which are too big.
- I've been playing guitar since I was 8 years old.
- I just did a rainbow because rainbows are cool.

BACKDROP

- No, no this is wrong, this is all wrong and I tried telling my psychology teacher no this is wrong, this is really bad and all,
- It's slightly less shitty because I stopped going to school and that was like hell.
- Something I wanted to write because other people need to realise that "sometimes life is shit, but it gets better"
- I'm looking forward to starting testosterone and growing a beard.
- There's also hair dye because I dye my hair like 6 times a year.

PAST WINGS

- Being mentally ill has made me who I am and it was, as horrible as it was it made me a better person, it made me more understanding and I'm actually quite glad that I was mentally ill and I think that's an important part of my life.
- So you can see before is slightly shittier hell and now is slightly less shitty hell, so by the fact that it's slightly less shitty, it's an improvement overall.
- I just wrote this "I'm me and always have been me, I'm just more comfortable now as me being recognised as what I am, a man"
- I have a great family, it's Italian so it's good food and we're all fricking crazy so that's great.
- Yeah, I don't know I just feel kind of strongly about Vietnam because a lot of people just associate it with the Vietnam war and nobody really knows much about it as a country and so I'm very interested in trying to yeah, I don't know, stop that.

STAGE

- I'm gay and very proud, I tell everyone, the first day of school was just me telling everyone I was gay and the next month was just every single day me telling everyone I was gay and strictly I'm pan-romantic grey-asexual polyamorous, but gay is fine.
- I've been working on the story for a few years, I'm trying to kind of rewrite it and kind of remake it now because when I originally made it, it was like shit and I was like at the peak of my weird phase and all the characters' names were just random Japanese words, so I'm working on improving the story now.
- Bank space with good and bad stuff
- 'The outsiders' I've mentioned this before, if you have like any time I will lend you my copy of the book, okay I'm literally going around telling people read this, watch the movie it's all up on YouTube, it's got a great message, great cast.
- I think getting out of bed and showering would be a 'good brain day' to me. So today's a 'good brain day', so yeah... ta-da...!

FUTURE WINGS

- My dream would be like, to be trans out and being able to like talk about trans things and get help, help get trans people's rights and be better and work for charities and charity and like slash organisations like GI and stuff.
- I've started working and stuff, so that's my hope for the future that like I'll keep doing that, it will go well and I will have made money
- I want to be an actor and to see my name in lights and stuff.
- I want to love myself more, I think that's such an important goal. It should be for everyone like you know you can't love anyone else before you start loving yourself, you've got to put yourself first sometimes
- This is my future. So that's a syringe for HRT, this is a cat, because I really like cats and I want to have one. I really want to get published like yeah, yeah... I want to start my own 'zine that would be really cool

MUSIC PIT

- She remembered me and she signed my like little autograph book and was like ‘Thank you for playing my drums so well!’ and she got me up on stage at one point to get me to play the drum it was really great, she was just really nice.
- But I also sang ‘Centuries’ in front of a crowd. And it was shit but I guess that they have really shit music taste because they thought it was good so I was glad that everyone in my school doesn’t know fuck all about music.
- Yeah and erm, there’s a, like quote from a song, “there’s a light at the end of the tunnel”... Sort of from one that I wrote but... I’m not trying to like boast about it...
- Wes Tucker, he’s a Trans guy. He erm, he wasn’t very out about being Trans, like people discovered it but he wouldn’t really talk about it, but recently he posted pictures, topless pictures which showed like his top surgery scars so I know that might have been very difficult for him, so I felt quite glad at him for doing that.
- So I want to like write songs and stuff and ‘The Front Bottoms’ have really resonated with me because like a few years ago or something I was like really depressed and I was listening to it, and there was just one song where he’s like screeching about, “and that was this summer I was taking steroids” and it was like oh man, me too,

ROYAL BOX 1

- My therapist sent me to Tavistock, he had already seen a Trans person and... but I just think you know, I don’t know just they should learn more.
- Especially the NHS because I hate the NHS, erm ... because they’re shit.
- And school generally like they briefly mentioned the topic of being gay and lesbian, like a tiny bit like scratch the surface but I think people need to know about trans issues and there are people who are trans, like get over it, and make it more normal, normal in society and stuff.
- The Government, because they’re pretty important, I mean they make all the laws and I’m sure you guys have heard about the North Carolina bathroom law which is really shitty, it should not ever have happened, and I really don’t want anything like that to ever happen here, so I think it would be good for the government to understand.
- CAMHS when I told my Psychiatrist that I was trans he was like ‘but you don’t really dress like a boy’, and I was like ‘oh dear’... because it’s like sometimes I wear skirts because my legs look real good in skirts but you know it’s like that doesn’t mean I’m not a guy like...

ROYAL BOX 2

- At the train station, and I was going to jump in front of a train because I was at that point in my life when I was like I can’t take this or do anything to end it, and as the train was coming I thought I can’t do it, I haven’t finished the Harry Potter series, and it sounds really stupid but, it meant so much to me that I just couldn’t... couldn’t do it, I had to finish it. So I would say that JK Rowling saved my life kind of indirectly.
- I think that’s great because I walked by the headmaster’s office window every single day not wearing a tie and with my hair down which really shows that myself is the great role model.
- Parliament, right, like general politicians think it’s really important that they know that trans is a thing, like they probably do know it but you need to make sure they realise that and when they’re talking about toilets and they’re talking about schools because young people, there are going to be loads of young people, who are trans, and they need to consider that.
- Christian Leave, he’s a YouTuber, he’s just a really cool guy, if you’re into like positivity and good vibes, he, I feel like you can’t watch one of his videos without being happy so I suggest if you’re ever sad watch one of his videos.
- It’s okay, you can wear platform boots, that’s what I’ve been doing, anyway so he just like helps me with my life, also Sadiq Khan is like 5-6, so I’m taller than the Mayor of London.

AUDIENCE

- Suddenly I just, I found people worth living for and... it’s... been such a wonderful change that I’m such a better person now, and I’m actually happy.
- So I don’t really actually want to talk to anyone, and I generally don’t when stuff happens.
- I don’t like CAMHS and stuff because they weren’t able to help me because they weren’t, they’re not trying to listen, they’re trying to tick the boxes which they have to do and I think it’s really important that they try and help the person, not their statuses and targets and money.
- I want to tell my story to GI, so like to other Trans people to try and inspire them. Tell them that it gets better and everything else.
- The trans kids who have never met another trans person before, and this is so sad that like there are some trans people who have never met a trans person in real life like, that’s so sad, you need to find friends somehow... Yeah I’ll be your friends.

The Theatre of Life is a session made by young trans people, for young trans people. It draws on 'narrative psychology' ideas which see people as experts in their own life story. It involves creative art expression, through writing and drawing a poster using the metaphor of theatre. GI Ambassadors who help run the session, designed a special poster template.

The session hopes to explore 'creative resistance'. These are forms of strength, support and resources. For example, films, books, relationships, music, groups, animals, spoken word, poems, fashion, and allies. As well as being a fun experience, the session can be very powerful in weaving hope and resilience. One participant said:

"I really enjoyed the freedom to say as much or as little as we wanted to in what we made and what we shared. Also it was good to hear other people's story's and that reminded me that other people are going through similar things. It was nice to have the time and the space to record some of my life in a creative way. I'm going to keep the zine and look back upon it."

We have put some of the posters and (anonymised) stories into a Zine booklet to give to others to inspire them to resist inequality and oppression. The Zine will reach friends, families and allies. It will reach those who live too far away to attend the GI events. It will also reach organisations which need to listen to our words and make changes such as the NHS, Schools and businesses.

Many stories are told about young trans people in the media, or from institutions such as the NHS. However they are not often accurate representations. The stories are often not told by trans people. They do not express our diversity. GI have worked hard at giving trans people a voice again. That is why we need a safe way to construct and reclaim our narratives!

Because the creative arts can reach a diverse audience, we wish to take the project further into other forms of creative arts. This might include an poster art gallery event, or theatre production – watch this space!