

THE UNIVERSITY OF HULL

To what extent can drama, and especially verbatim theatre techniques, be used to (re) present intergenerational transgender identities in the North East of England?

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines how verbatim techniques can be used to (re) present an intergenerational participatory group of trans individuals in Newcastle upon Tyne. The representation of trans people from the cis-lens will be examined, as well as the increase in transphobia, social injustice (Busby, 2021), and hate crimes across the UK, especially the North East of England. An online questionnaire and subsequent follow-up interviews saw internal 'pockets of prejudice' within the city's LGBTQ+ 'scene' identified, and the lack of position of trans people was evident. The need to have accurate and trans-collaboration within the media and arts was also identified as vital as most peoples 'preconceptions about trans people' (Faye, 2022: 17) are based upon what they are shown. Yet these come from a cisgender agenda, perception, research, and representation that is 'dominated by voices without significant lived experience of gender diversity' (Rosenberg and Tilley, 2020: 2). By considering verbatim techniques and the use of these to provide the opportunity for an intergenerational group of five trans people to share their lived experiences and to co-create a performance piece, the *my-identity* play allows for the 'resisting and dismantling inequalities' (Vincent, 2018: 105) with each trans person being able to open up a dialogue with their words, rather than being spoken *about* or spoken *to*. As a result, the *my-identity* project has produced a Queer cis-led trans-collaborative project that allows for as high a level of trans authorship and ownership as possible, as well as the (re) presentation of the self that is not an 'impersonation' of the trans person (Paget, 1987), but an 'individual self-identity that characterises modern life' (Little, 2002: 7) for each trans participant. This has created a toolkit of considered approaches to the use of verbatim techniques allowing other researchers and theatre-makers to consider this approach in the future.

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Introduction

As I write this introduction in 2024, I can look back on my research and verbatim project, *my-identity* (2022), and reflect upon the development of my own thinking and practice as a qualitative researcher. When beginning this research in 2012, I had just graduated from the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama (University of London) with an MA in Applied Theatre (Drama in the Community and Drama Education) with the naïve belief that Applied Theatre was solely the opportunity of giving a voice to those who did not have one and that verbatim theatre practice provided a 'promise of a totalized, objective truth' (Fisher, 2011: 122). Ambitious is an understatement as neither applied theatre nor verbatim theatre are able to wholly represent everyone or change participants or society. Instead, over the years of my research and the development of my own practice I have come to realize that applied theatre does not have a 'one size fits all' approach or outcome. The hope of applied theatre practice (Busby, 2021) is that it is able to facilitate 'a realm that provides communication context to encourage audiences (and performers) to change attitudes or practices' (Kerr, 2009: 177), whilst still recognizing the 'ethical dilemmas, especially in the contact between facilitators and audiences' (Kerr, 2009: 177) and the need to 'critique the limitations of theatre in the creation of social change' (Snyder-Young, 2013: 2). As such, my research project allows me to consider, as a theatre-maker, how I am able to use applied theatre, especially verbatim techniques, to:

... strengthen communities, transform specific groups, and give participants the chance to find their individual and collective 'voices.'

(Snyder-Young, 2013: 9)

This approach of participants finding voices became paramount during the research design of my verbatim project as I wanted to explore not only 'what people say but how they say it' (Megson, 2018: 224) to provide a platform for voices to be heard in an authentic way. I had begun the research process believing that verbatim techniques would create a fixed truth to the theatre piece I was writing without the consideration of authenticity, truth and what these might be. In my beliefs at the start of my research the words of my participants would be authentic narratives based on their lived experiences rather than a universal truth. In practice, what this means is that there needs to be a consideration on how verbatim theatre 'places great pressure on such literal construal's of truth and authenticity' as 'the 'truth' of the [traumatic] event is arguably not transparent' (Fisher, 2011: 112). Verbatim theatre does not attempt to be a forensic process, rather it provides members of often marginalised communities the opportunity to put forward their varied perspectives on critical issues. Indeed, what is truth for one person is fiction to another as it is not a shared experience and as such is the recall of another person. Yet, I would argue that despite this, theatre can be used to raise 'awareness and provoke [ing] people to action' (Snyder-Young, 2013: 2) within an understanding that 'verbatim dramas are theatrical constructions, characters rather than 'real' people' (Heddon, 2008: 134). This understanding allows for a 'nuanced articulation of truth grasped as 'authenticity' (Fisher, 2011: 112). As such, I was able to create a piece of verbatim theatre that became *my-identity* in 2022 allowing me to formulate my own approach to this practice (of applied theatre and verbatim) that was appropriate for the participatory group I had worked with, that was ethical, and which acknowledged the limitations of both applied theatre and verbatim. Thus, resulting in:

... a lens through which individuals and groups can process and reflect on their lived experiences of the world and offer a means of understanding and articulating complexities that surround us both implicitly and explicitly.

(Busby, 2021: 9)

It was this sense of affecting change for social justice, from varied perspectives, and non-unified voices (Busby, 2021), and my considerations of verbatim limitations that allowed me to adopt an approach similar to that of the verbatim theatre-maker

Alecky Blythe:

... the work should be ethical and, obviously, there's a huge responsibility to the people you interview but, artistically, you can create your own rules in terms of what serves the piece.

(Megson, 2018: 230)

Throughout the design and execution of my research project, my perspective shifted as I realized that each applied theatre and verbatim theatre project is unique, and as such requires an individual approach and set of rules appropriate to it, on its own merits, rather than merely one approach to theatre-making as a practitioner. As Busby (2021) asserts:

I make no assertions about the correct way to work with integrity alongside communities, but I do explore what works for me, why it does so and how I believe making theatre can be an asset for those seeking social justice.

(Busby, 2021: 2)

Chapter Four further develops my decisions to utilize applied theatre, and verbatim techniques in particular, and to evaluate to what extent I managed to produce this lens through the steps I took in my research process and the intergenerational participatory group of trans people involvement in the final production-ready project.

This thesis is based on this exploration of the processes that work best for me to support the care of the trans participants' interests and needs, as well as the

consideration and observations of the lack of position of inclusion and equity of trans people in Newcastle upon Tyne. The city is located in the North East of England and is approximately three hours away from London and ninety minutes away from Edinburgh by train. The city council states in the *Annual Equality Report 2020/2021* that the estimated population is:

The latest ONS population estimates (2019) suggest there are approximately 300,820 people currently living in Newcastle, compared to 289,800 five years ago in 2014. We expect the population of Newcastle to increase over the foreseeable future. ONS population projections suggest this might increase to 310,906 by 2030, rising to 315,038 by 2040.

(Newcastle City Council *Annual Equality Report, 2020/21: 3*)

Having been introduced to social injustice towards trans people through the research and practice of Catherine McNamara and Jay Stewart (of Gendered Intelligence) whilst studying at the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama (2009-2011), I decided to research the position of trans people in my own locality and city. As a result, I was able to analyse existing datasets, both qualitative and quantitative, around transphobia from cisgender people in the UK, and specifically Newcastle upon Tyne. I then explored what I have termed the 'pockets of prejudice' within those identifying as LGBTQ+ within the Newcastle upon Tyne 'scene' towards trans people on a localised level. As a drama practitioner and theatre-maker, I wanted to explore the use of drama (and especially verbatim techniques) in the (re) presentation of my intergenerational participatory group of trans people in the city. As asserted by Bottoms (2017):

Community resilience to challenging conditions will depend on a sense of belonging within a local geographic context, and place-making is certainly one area in which performance can make a positive contribution.

(Bottoms in Harpin and Nicholson, 2017: 186)

This allowed my trans participants to share their lived experiences and narrative within their localised area, and to a potential audience geographically positioned in the same place allows for this sense of authenticity to be supported due to the common factor of the city. Narratives found within the monologues of my own *my-identity* verbatim piece allow for a localised audience to understand better the societal tensions surrounding the trans participant as the actual audience members are part of this tension themselves; the hope is that this might affect change as ‘they feel a strong enough attachment to their community to care about it and the people within it’ (Busby, 2021: 5). I decided to use the approach of monologues within *my-identity* to articulate the individual voice of each trans participant with the intimacy of this direct address to the audience through the monologues that ‘solicits the active and careful listening of the viewer’ (Megson, 2018: 551), within a society that is ‘dominated by voices without significant lived experience of gender diversity’ (Rosenberg and Tilley, 2020: 2). It was also an attempt to ensure that trans people had a high degree of authorship within the piece, as well as ensuring the opportunity for ‘their own lived experiences as part of a creative process’ (McNamara, 2018: 130).

This thesis seeks to outline research conducted in regard to trans identities and positionality within UK society, the arts, Applied Theatre practice and verbatim techniques, and the media, as well as the lack of dialogue with trans people about their lived experiences. As a result, the research questions I developed were:

- What is community – how can this be considered in a city where there is fragmentation of equality, equity and opportunity within what is perceived as an LGBTQ+ ‘community’?

- What is the position of trans people today (in 2024), how has it changed, and do trans people need their own 'Stonewall moment'?
- How has applied theatre practice, and specifically verbatim techniques, been used by other practitioners in similar contexts and how might this overarching approach to theatre-making be used to provide opportunity to identify the position of trans people today?
- What are the ethical considerations of verbatim techniques, and how might these provide the opportunity for trans people across different generations in Newcastle upon Tyne to (re) present their lived experiences and share with other trans and non-trans people the day-to-day experience of being trans today in the North East of England?
- How is this research important and needed based on research into, and the examination of data around hate crimes and transphobia locally and nationally?

These questions are addressed within the six chapters of this thesis which:

- Reflect on my own positionality as a cisgender qualitative practice researcher in Newcastle upon Tyne (Chapter One)
- Explore trans people's identity, cisgender perception and (re) presentation in the UK (Chapter Two)
- Examine hate crime statistics and identification of the previously discussed 'pockets of prejudice' within Newcastle upon Tyne and the position of trans people within the city (Chapter Three)

- Critically analyse the aims and limitations of applied theatre and verbatim techniques and the subsequent development of my verbatim project, together with the ethical approach and co-creation with my trans participants (Chapter Four)
- Evaluate my own practice, for the benefit of my own future research, as well as that of other researchers and theatre-makers (Chapter Six).

The practice-based element of the thesis, my verbatim project titled *my-identity*, can be found as a production-ready play and installation (Chapter Five).

My positionality within my research in Newcastle upon Tyne is examined in Chapter One, which frames critically an exploration of my role as a member of the LGBTQ+ community and 'scene' within Newcastle. As such, I am a participant of the 'pockets of prejudice' within the city 'scene' as a cisgender gay man. I am also a member of the audience in a way, as I do frequent the venues within the 'scene,' and I am able to observe and form opinions and narratives about individuals, groups, and incidents I witness. I formulate my own internal prejudices and make comments, quips and opinions based purely on what I witness, rather than what I experience or know anything about. Yet, in saying this, I am able to acknowledge injustices and prejudice against members of the 'scene' community. As such, as a researcher, I am positioned both inside the LGBTQ+ community in Newcastle upon Tyne (as a gay cisgender man), whilst remaining outside of the transgender community and lived experiences, and as such I am looking into the scene and where the trans role/identity is positioned within this. The intention of this position is to pose the hypothesis of what might be done to encourage and affect social justice (Busby, 2021) in some form of societal advocacy of transgender people, identities, and their lived experiences (McNamara, 2018). This is based on the trust I gained from the

trans participants within my intergenerational verbatim project, which are discussed in Chapter Four. Vincent (2018) makes a solid consideration of how the building of trust and rapport is of vital importance with participants in a trans research project, and Chapters Three and Four explain the process used for engaging participants and of the collaborative and co-creation process within my own work. Transparency is key to the ethics of applied theatre work, as well as to offer reassurance of the intent of the project to 'whether a given project will have an explicit, positive impact on trans lives' (Vincent, 2018: 104). My own research project is based on a personal desire for this co-creation with trans-creativity as part of my 'clear goal of what they (I) wish to achieve and how, to the benefit of (at least part of) the trans population' (Vincent, 2018: 105). Rosenberg and Tilley (2020) consider the role of the insider/outsider position with trans-led research and the need for trans involvement in research to:

... empower [ing] and concretise [ing] the importance of relative insiders, who are often marginalized and deprioritized, so that they form a part of broader reflexive, collaborative IO or entirely insider research projects.

(Rosenberg and Tilley, 2020: 6)

and that, 'ultimately, trans voices must be given priority in conducting trans research' (Rosenberg and Tilley, 2020: 12). Rosenberg and Tilley (2020) consider the need to increase the usage of an insider-outsider IO process, placing the trans participant at the centre of research to allow for their position to move from 'no involvement to full leadership' (Rosenberg and Tilley, 2020: 1). They state that this research approach allows for 'elevating and empowering trans people to consult in, conduct, and lead trans research' (Rosenberg and Tilley, 2020: 1) that leads to 'more constructive rapport with community members, and produces more effective research than the norm of purely outsider research in the field' (Rosenberg and Tilley, 2020: 1).

Chapter Four allows for the critical consideration of the extent to which my research project allowed the trans participants a priority within my research. Each participant was able to be consulted in, and conduct (to a point) research and the creation of the verbatim material in the final project, *my-identity*. However, as the outsider researcher I was in a leadership position as I recruited the participants, formulated the interview questions, and made the final decision in relation to the structure of the production-ready final project. This will analyse their individual involvement and will consider the extent to which my research project accommodated this, and what processes I might have included to allow for a higher level of the trans participants leading the research. This is something that is informing my future research methodologies and approaches, as I continue to research trans inclusion and social injustice. Although I believed when starting this thesis that I would be able to produce a research project allowing for an Insider/Outsider (IO) approach, having critically considered my research method I now see this as a tension to be considered in the future. I have discussed this in relation to my positionality within the research in Chapter One and my place as a qualitative researcher and theatre-maker within Newcastle upon Tyne. Rosenberg and Tilley (2020) do note:

... at times, cisgender researchers are crucial to the conduct of a trans study. While trans-led research does require trans voices involved throughout the research process, that does not necessarily mean that trans people must be at the front of every single task in the process.

(Rosenberg and Tilley, 2020: 6)

and as such, Chapters Four and Six will examine how my research might be crucial in the awareness raising of the social injustice towards trans people with the participants' trans voices being involved throughout the project without overall leadership. The examination of the use of drama practice and verbatim techniques

discussed within this thesis will allow me to evidence the opportunity for Queer cis-led and trans-collaborative practice within a peer ethnographical research model to address my research questions discussed earlier, as well as to reflect upon how far this can give trans voices priority in conducting this type of research as discussed by Rosenberg and Tilley (2020).

Newcastle upon Tyne is not that different from other major cities in the UK that has an LGBTQ+ 'scene,' however is an under-researched city, county, or area (the North East). As such, it is difficult to compare the lived experiences with others as there is nothing fully comparable to formulate an opinion. There are comparisons that can be drawn from other contexts of trans experiences and of social injustice (Busby, 2021), but may not be exact or perfect. For example, a researcher might very well look at a city like Manchester, Leeds, or Liverpool and use this as a rough guide of what they might expect to see in Newcastle upon Tyne. As I live in the city, I can look at the lived experiences of living here as a member of the umbrella LGBTQ+ community. In the following chapter I will address the analysis of my positionality within my research, where trans identities are placed within the Newcastle upon Tyne 'scene,' and the approach I will take as a qualitative practice-based cisgender researcher.

Chapter One: Positionality in the Newcastle upon Tyne ‘Scene’

The introduction to this thesis allowed me to discuss my intention of including within my research design an arts-based intervention by creating a piece of applied theatre (with the use of verbatim techniques) with Newcastle-based trans people as my intergenerational participatory group. As will later be discussed in Chapters Two and Three, transphobia and social injustice is still a daily experience for trans people, and it is hoped that this arts-based intervention can provide the opportunity to allow for a (re) presentation of the lived experiences of these trans participants, and that this may result in a ‘drive for change’ (Abraham in Prentki and Abraham, 2021: 265). Chapter Two is the examination of trans people in society and Newcastle upon Tyne specifically as an important consideration of:

In denying trans as a lived experience, one denies trans people their sense of self and thus the theoretical conceits become difficult to engage with productively.

(McNamara, 2012: 6)

and the discussion of the ‘injustice or unfairness’ (Busby, 2021: 3) experienced by trans people and how my research project aims to raise the awareness of the audience of the ‘wider patterns of injustice, discrimination and oppression’ (Busby, 2021: 3). As asserted by Busby (2021), claims of theatre resulting in social or personal change are problematic and difficult to evaluate, and ‘social changes are hard to make’ (Snyder-Young, 2013: 7) by theatre. However, Snyder-Young does consider that ‘theatre can help build and/or critique dominant cultural myths’ (Snyder-Young, 2013: 7) as well as focussing on the connections between people in sub-cultures of society (Megson, 2018) and the audience caring about the narratives in front of them through connection and empathy (Snyder-Young, 2013). A drive for change as identified by Abraham (Prentki and Abraham, 2021) is not asserting that

this change will happen but is more the opportunity to affect change that Busby (2021) also sees as a potential result of an applied theatre project. This is not about creating a utopian ideology or result from a piece of theatre, but the possibility of affecting change on some level; even on a personal level for the trans participants engaged in my Queer cis-led trans-collaborative project.

I had decided on verbatim techniques to provide a platform for the trans participants to have the opportunity to share their lived experiences. This creates several challenges to the approach of theatre-making around ethics, bias, representation, and authorship; as well as 'complexities of narrating the self' (McNamara, 2012: 3). This narration of the self is fundamental to verbatim theatre as it is the personal story of the participant following an event, situation, or experience. The participant's narrative is their past being discussed within the environment of an interview in their present, which becomes the participant's past to the audience (once again, performed in a theatrical present). Also, personal narratives and memories can be problematic to prove as true or authentic as 'there is a valid distinction in memory between a person 'remembering' and 'knowing' something' (Foster, 2009: 45). Yet verbatim does provide the space for theatre to:

... ensure that this culture [transgender] or a history of this cultural practice is strengthened and not constrained by the law, and moreover, to ensure that people's own stories and histories are expressed, recorded and archived in ways that respect the full range and nuances of individuals' lived experience.

(McNamara, 2012: 14)

This (re) presentation of the trans participants' lived experiences allows for transparency within my research project to be shared from the outset, and throughout. This was an aspect that I clearly identified when recruiting the intergenerational participatory group of trans participants. My verbatim piece was to

be as positive a research experience as possible for the trans participants as I aimed 'to achieve and how, to the benefit of (or at least part of) the trans population' (Vincent, 2018: 105). I also wanted to involve them as co-authors of the final verbatim play with 'the re-framing of participants as co-producers of knowledge' (Vincent, 2018: 112) and the intent of supporting the framing of my work with their knowledge as well as opening what I, as a researcher, 'can potentially learn' (Vincent, 2018: 112). The research objective was for transferral of knowledge aimed to share with the audience my research project design to raise 'questions rather than giving answers' (Megson, 2018: 49) as audience members are encouraged to consider 'the questions we need to ask' (Megson, 2018: 49). Knowledge is fundamental in the connections made between audience members and the narratives being shared on the stage. This sense of knowledge is important as this leads to the questions needed of a cisgender person on how equity and equality can be generated and instigated as a social norm, as well as the need 'for individuals to participate in social protest, they have to identify with the maligned group' (Snyder-Young, 2013: 87).

The decision to use verbatim theatre-making techniques was also made to support the language within the *my-identity* project to be authentic, respectful, and ethical. I aimed to explore how my verbatim project might support the 'creation of community cohesion ... to generate discussion and debate' (McNamara, 2018: 315) as an intervention within 'this broken world' (Snyder-Young, 2013: 15). Theatre of course is not a real experience or event (Snyder-Young, 2013) as:

Participants in theatre and drama pretend to be people they are not, perform shared fantasies and fears, and enact actions they might not take in their real lives with real consequences.

(Snyder-Young, 2013: 12)

however, theatre is effective to 'give faces and voices to the unseen and unheard who need our compassion' (Jeffers in Forsyth and Megson, 2011: 95), as well as being 'the potential for a construct to shift, a behaviour to change and a solution to be sought' (Abraham in Prentki and Abraham, 2021: 73).

I will discuss in this chapter my positionality as a cisgender researcher and my acceptance that I do not have the shared experience of trans people and as such, needed to gain an understanding and authentic awareness of their lived experience with their contribution and collaboration to offer 'a public debate that draws on multiple perspectives on an issue of national concern' (Megson, 2018: 45). In turn, the hope as presented by Busby (2021) might allow for change to be affected with these 'specific communities of participants or audience' (Snyder-Young, 2013: 5), whilst still accepting that 'I cannot pretend to be unbiased' (Snyder-Young, 2013: 99). I examine this conscious and unconscious bias within Chapter Four as I examine applied theatre and verbatim techniques within my project, and the steps I put into place to minimise this bias as a cisgender gay man.

I wanted to specifically focus on Newcastle upon Tyne, where I have lived and worked since 2008 and to examine 'the relationship between the location of the project and the experience of participants who are involved in it' (Mackey and Fisher, 2011: 358). As a member of the wider LGBTQ+ community in Newcastle upon Tyne, I identify as a cisgender gay male and as such wanted to consider the question of community through ethnographic and auto-ethnographic research approaches. I am able to look within the inside of this community to see its lived experiences and positionality towards me on a personal level, as well as from the outside/in of this sub-culture (transgender) in Newcastle upon Tyne. The cisgender lens can be argued by some to be inadequate in understanding trans experiences and this can

lead to inaccurate representation (Rosenberg and Tilley, 2020). I would argue that my personal lens (and my lens as a researcher) is derived from my positionality as part of the wider community of shared experience (being LGBTQ+ in Newcastle upon Tyne), whilst simultaneously not sharing this (i.e. trans) specific part of the wider Newcastle upon Tyne LGBTQ+ community identity. This results in me partially being inside and partially outside the research. I wanted to encourage as high a level of co-authorship of the final verbatim piece as possible as:

The performance of lived experiences and autobiography is a popular and familiar form for trans people who choose to tell their stories and talk about non-normative identities.

(McNamara, 2012: 20)

as well as allowing for 'critical thinking, practical achievable alternatives and more equity in terms of special and social justice' (Busby, 2021: 200).

From a methodological approach, I had considered, but quickly dismissed my research allowing me to become an ethnographical participant-observer able to map the terrain of the wider LGBTQ+ community and the positionality of transgender people within this. However, this approach adopts the actions of going into a community being researched, taking the information and data the researcher is looking for, and then leaving with no thought for the aftermath of the research or consequences of this interaction or research output on that community. As stressed by Busby (2021), 'Applied Theatre can also be disempowering, exploitative, manipulating and artist-serving rather than beneficial to the community' (Busby, 2021: 17) and this extractive research approach results in this disempowerment due to a lack of the participants being 'considered an equal partner from the project's inception' (Busby, 2021: 15). Verbatim theatre-maker Alecky Blythe is discussed in more detail in Chapter Four; however, her approach is not being extractive, but more

inclusive with her maintaining contact with them in the weeks following the initial research, right to the performance of the final piece. Blythe has the ethical approach to ensure participants are aware of their involvement from the outset to avoid any comeback. She states that:

... you [they] need to know that everyone is on board with it and you're not suddenly going to get someone coming out of the woodwork and saying, "I had no idea I was in your show." You've always got to be very upfront.

(Megson, 2018: 227)

This sense of being upfront, as mentioned by Blythe in conversation with Megson (2018), informed my own project process and design as I wanted to ensure that my own trans participants were fully aware that the project was intended to create a verbatim piece of theatre around the (re) presentation of intergenerational narratives in the North East. There would be no extractive approach as their involvement in my research and qualitative-based theatre project was from recruitment to the writing of the final production-ready play. Chapter Four sees my critical analysis of the creative process and of the ethics of this approach. I realised that I would be accountable to this community (of the LGBTQ+ wider community in Newcastle upon Tyne and of the trans community) and my research and needed to examine how my academic stewardship was being demonstrated, as well as my duty of care to members of my participatory group. There are ethical considerations of working with members of the trans community regarding any harm that might result from the research. This may include reliving moments of their history, speaking about their experiences, or the possibility of anonymity being removed, and the person being attacked in some way if identified. However, the need to support trans voices and the active participation of trans people within research projects is identified by Rosenberg and Tilley (2020) as they state that trans people:

... remain largely excluded from involvement and leadership in the research conducted with their communities. As a result, few trans insiders (i.e. trans people who are researchers) are ever in the position of designing, conducting, and disseminating knowledge from trans research.

(Rosenberg and Tilley, 2020: 1)

Although my trans participants are not researchers themselves, Chapter Four explores their collaboration in the design and layout of the *my-identity* project with the selection of their words from the interview transcripts, as well as the design of the installation within the front of house area with exhibition boards and memory boxes. This allowed for their engagement with the design and dissemination of my research project as I had aimed to give these ‘trans people control over their narratives’ (Rosenberg and Tilley, 2020: 12) in an attempt to ‘facilitate their social inclusion, empowerment, and self-determination’ (Rosenberg and Tilley, 2020: 12). As a result of my research process and design (as well as the final verbatim project) I came to conclude that it is not actually possible to give trans people the full extent of control over their narratives that Rosenberg and Tilley (2020) are calling for within the framework of a PhD thesis. This is because of the constraints that this academic process itself imposes on my research. My research had to result in a thesis about a project that was designed and led by myself as a PhD candidate, as well as a qualitative-practice researcher and theatre-maker. I came to realise that as an early-career researcher, academics are often in a position where they have to critique the limitations of academic institutions as structures for transformative work that we might want to do. I also concluded that this linked well to limitations within verbatim techniques and the difficulty in fully evaluating social change as a result of an applied theatre project (Busby, 2021). Despite this, I needed to evaluate my role as a cisgender gay man researching trans people (Valentine, 2020) and the ethical and

political considerations (Grant and Woodford, 2019) of my research design and the position within it of my trans participants. My position in my research on trans experiences was that of an outsider observing and interpreting their narratives whilst needing to constantly consider my own status, power, privilege, and representation as a cisgender gay man and not a trans person (Seelman and Pettitt, 2019).

There is the consideration of the approach to using verbatim techniques in Chapters Four and Six to further examine this. The researcher of any project needs to establish clear parameters of the research, how it will be used, what the agenda behind the work is, and the acceptance of their accountability to the participants and the outcomes of the work. This includes the individuals interviewed for the examination of the LGBTQ+ 'scene' for Chapter Three and how their words will be used and quoted, as well as the accountability of what position I as the researcher will be placing them in as a result. I am also accountable to the Newcastle upon Tyne 'scene' as I am examining and commenting on the people and venues which form this area of the city. The questionnaire conducted for Chapter Three does ask about the perception of the venues, as well as any prejudice seen and experienced. As such, I have the ethical consideration of what I am commenting on, and the opinions I am formulating from my own experiences and knowledge, as well as that acquired from research and interviews. As a member of the wider LGBTQ+ community in Newcastle upon Tyne (as a gay cisgender male), and simultaneously not part of its trans community, I am still a subject of this research as I contribute to the development, maintenance, and daily existence of what this is. What biases do I have? What personal prejudices and opinion do I have, and how will this affect my output tone and content? And how will my verbatim research project allow the audience to see that the social injustices faced by trans people are also their issues

in some way (Snyder-Young, 2013) whilst being able to 'explore a specific topic or theme such as the history of the local community' (McNamara, 2018: 127)?

Trans people in Newcastle upon Tyne

A key precedent for my research aims and design was the work of Professor Catherine McNamara. McNamara is discussed in Chapter Two, and this includes consideration of her extensive experience working within drama education and applied theatre settings, and especially her work with trans people. She is currently Head of Guildford School of Acting and has conducted renowned research in the use of voice for trans people, an intergenerational arts project, the *TransActing* project in conjunction with the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama (University of London) and is co-founder of Gendered Intelligence (a charity to raise awareness of gender diversity and trans rights). McNamara (2012) considers that:

The term [transgender] can be used to describe a wide range of gender expressions, which are variations from the normative though the term itself is not universally accepted as appropriate by all those who may be described by it: it is a complex category.

(McNamara, 2012: 5)

This use of *category* informed the design of my interview questions for the trans participants to ensure I was observing the range of its use within the individuals I was interviewing. I aimed for my research to 'create and communicate meaning' (McNamara, 2012: 5) whilst the trans participants with their positionality within the project made creative decisions in *my-identity* to 'co-construct their own understandings' (Snyder-Young, 2013: 104) of their lived experiences and the social injustice they had encountered. This understanding also included moments of joy and celebration within the presented narratives to avoid the sense of inaccuracy to trans research as examined by Rosenberg and Tilley (2020) as they assert that

'academic narratives of trans experiences are often inaccurate, incomplete, and at times wholly incorrect' (Rosenberg and Tilley, 2020: 2). There is the need to allow for these positive moments to be shared with the audience (Snyder-Young, 2013) to show balance and the actual lived moments of trans participants. As a result, allowing research work to 'highlight the unique contributions of self-determined trans people within a field of research' (Rosenberg and Tilley, 2020: 2).

Historically, much of the research produced on transgender issues had been produced from the cisgender perspective, and as such, could this really take into account the acceptance and sense of self that transgender individuals experience. Throughout the course of my research, I have seen more and more research being produced from trans perspectives which have framed my research in an interesting, and at times challenging context and contributed to my research design and thesis. This earlier research had established what is *meant* by gender and the behaviours *accepted* within the traditional binary definition. This binary approach and avoidance of grey areas or a sense of *otherness*, has globally established an acceptance of prejudice and rejection of anything that falls out of the socially perceived norm. In turn this creates a sense of fear and rejection of anything society does not understand. As such, trans experiences are a result of these structures created by society and culture, and we need to continue to examine and redefine these if we are to be able to combat these barriers faced on a daily basis. These structures are established in my own locality, and as such this thesis will focus specifically on Newcastle upon Tyne to examine the need for change, equity, and acceptance.

Newcastle upon Tyne is my cultural and societal reference point, and my opportunity to contribute to the wider global consideration of these issues. The research experience in the city will have some similarities to other areas in the UK, however

these are outnumbered with differences because of a range of regional cultural issues. In Chapter Three of this thesis, I analyse the research reports of Stonewall, Galop and Newcastle City Council in relation to rates and types of transphobias. This analysis considers trends and statistics across England with the surveys and presented results of the major research of Stonewall and Galop, and the localised focus on Newcastle upon Tyne with the analysis of the research findings presented in the city council annual equality reports. Chapter Three also considers the rise in transphobia and the previously mentioned 'pockets of prejudice' within Newcastle upon Tyne. The interviews and survey that are discussed in Chapter Three provide reflection on the growth of the LGBTQ+ scene in Newcastle upon Tyne, as well as the lack of opportunity for the representation of trans in the city. This, when paired with the verbatim interviews in Chapter Five, provides an overarching view of the trans narrative from individuals living, dressing, and working in the city. One of the participants was in their 50s when they came out, compared to one who knew they were trans from a young age in the 1980s, and their narratives provide examples of the barriers faced both socially and personally. As a result, the intergenerational experience within the city discusses considerations of how the wider social climate has changed and developed, the promotion of resilience and self-advocacy (Muraco and Fredriksen-Goldsen, 2019), and how inequality needs to be addressed today.

The research based in Newcastle upon Tyne

At the start of the research process, I had transgender friends who had recently come out who avoided me as they believed they would become a 'subject' of my research, rather than remaining as my friend with our history and shared narratives. This is telling evidence of how much mistrust there is from the trans community towards cisgender people as researchers and is something I further discuss in

Chapter Two. The reality of this sense of fatigue and the avoidance of communication from these individuals, allowed me to reconsider my research agenda. What did I want to achieve with the research project? I wanted to consider the lived experiences of the transgender history and narrative in Newcastle upon Tyne where I have lived and worked for over 15 years and observed transphobia and the lack of equity on the Newcastle upon Tyne 'scene' was of paramount importance. There was a need to collaborate with the transgender individuals who would participate in my research project, allowing for the research to be documented *with* them and their experiences, rather than *about* them. This would avoid the cisgender lens and perception being applied to the study and the performance material created (Vincent, 2018). Indeed, as Faye (2022) comments on, becoming an example of how:

The media agenda with respect to 'the transgender issue' is often cynical and unhelpful to the cause of trans justice and liberation. Media coverage of the trans community rarely seems to be driven by a desire to inform and educate the public about the actual issues and challenges.

(Faye, 2022: 8)

Chapter Three of this thesis considers the 'Pockets of Prejudice' evident in Newcastle upon Tyne between LGBTQ+ individuals and the internal phobias about one another. The key findings from the chapter considers the increase in transphobia (especially in the North East of England), the internal isolation within the 'scene' for trans individuals, the lack of trans identity within the city, and the need for education to allow trans voices to represent themselves, rather than be represented from an 'about' agenda. Chapter Five is the performance project entitled *my-identity* written through collaboration with my intergenerational participatory group of transgender individuals who engaged in interviews to create a verbatim piece. The need to avoid the writing *about* these individuals, and the need to educate and be a cisgender

advocate for these participants, would allow me to avoid the previous academic pitfall that ‘... there is also no doubt that we’ve been having – and are having – the wrong conversation’ (Faye, 2022: 8) about the transgender experience. The conversations that took place with the trans participants were the right conversations for them in that snapshot of their history, allowing the collaboration and co-creation of a performance piece *from* them and their unique individual narratives, and was *about* their lived experiences in Newcastle upon Tyne, rather than being my opinions and perception of what these *were* and *are*. This was so important as a researcher, who is a member of the wider LGBTQ+ community and user of the venues within the ‘scene,’ allowing me to immerse myself in the considerations of these ‘pockets of prejudice,’ as well as looking from the outside-in to the experiences of the trans individual. In turn, this examines how verbatim techniques and applied theatre approaches can be used as a vehicle in the (re) presentation of the intergenerational transgender identities in the North East, and to allow the participants to present their lived experiences and narratives; as I (re) present the trans experience to raise awareness; educate cisgender audiences on the true, individual lived experiences - and aim to begin the journey to alleviate injustice and lack of social equity and opportunity for trans individuals. The hope of encouraging as many transgender individuals to ‘live’ their lives as they want as possible, rather than merely ‘exist’ in their biological sex became high on my research agenda after interviewing the trans individuals for the performance project. As a society, we need to avoid any trans individuals from feeling:

The fear of being ridiculed, stigmatized, or discriminated against, as well as my own early uncertainty about how I would act on my transgender feelings, [which] led me to hide them from absolutely everybody.

(Stryker, 2017: x)

and the transcripts that have created the performance project in Chapter Five shows the intergenerational ages and experiences of coming out, and the need to have an authenticity about their gender within the narratives included. My verbatim play also explores 'solutions to the problems that they face and help build resilience in order that they can better navigate their social world' (McNamara, 2018: 319).

Why this research in 2024?

As explained in the introduction, this thesis is a result of over ten years of research, thinking and creative work. Therefore, there is the need to step back and consider where trans identities are placed in society today compared to ten years ago. In 2022, the Scottish Parliament passed a piece of legislation allowing a self-identification system for individuals making gender transitions easier. However, this was subsequently blocked by the Westminster government as having the potential of a country-wide impact on equality law under section 35 of the Equality Act 2010. Nicola Sturgeon (former First Minister for Scotland) had proposed such legislation in 2016 which might allow the consideration that this level of equity of personal experiences was coming to the forefront of legal and societal discussions. However, upon the Westminster government blocking this, Sturgeon did not defend this as having an impact on trans identities, but more an attack on the power of the Scottish government, as such, are trans people being used as political pawns in the power games between nations? Indeed, Keir Starmer (leader of the Labour Party) himself said in 2022 that sixteen-year-olds should be legally allowed to change their gender. However, government continues to create backward steps for trans rights in the most public of eyes, and as such is a current reflection of the power of media and the arts as discussed in Chapter Two. If the politicians that have been voted in and followed by society are backing these injustices, what can we really expect to change for the

positive to support and protect trans individuals? What rights are being taken away and denied, rather than being granted and allowed for inclusion and equity? This is examined most recently within the recent report by the United Nations Independent Expert on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity after his visit to the UK in May 2023 that states:

... the Independent Expert stands in awe of the courage, resilience, resourcefulness and joy that he witnessed in his exchanges with lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse persons, LGBT-led and LGBT-serving organizations, all of whom carry out their lives and their work in the United Kingdom under the extreme pressure and hostility of a public debate which, today, questions rights that are directly connected with their dignity and, in some cases, their very existence.

(United Nations, 2023: 18)

The report concludes that there are 1.7 million people in the UK identifying as LGBTQ+ in 2023, with between 250,000 and 500,000 identifying as gender diverse (United Nations, 2023: 1). The Office for National Statistics analysed the responses to the 2020 Census and reported that the UK population at the time (2020) was 67.1 million people. I refer to this report to support my opinion of the backsliding of trans rights as it examines concerns around human rights protection frameworks, political toxicity, government and public policy, concerns around healthcare, access to education, and employment tensions (United Nations, 2023). The themes of continued social injustice and reduction of trans rights are discussed within my thesis and used as the basis for the conclusion of the need for my research and production-ready play, *my-identity*. It is not just my opinion of this increase in social injustice (Busby, 2021) towards trans people, but also that of the United Nations Independent Expert whose final comments states:

It is telling that, during the visit, the current environment was uniformly described as toxic by stakeholders across the board, without exception, all of

those who he met declared themselves unable to suggest a winning formula for making inroads in a situation that has been driven to a state of such acrimony.

(United Nations, 2023: 18)

The harsh reality of global reductions in trans rights can also be seen every day in the media and especially on social media, with rights being removed on a far too regular basis globally. Indeed, transphobia and hate crimes against trans people continue to be on the increase, and this was seen in February 2023 with the murder of the sixteen-year-old teenager from Warrington, Brianna Ghey. This incident led to two sixteen-year-olds being convicted of murder in December 2023. If our younger generation are continuing with this level of hatred, what hope can there be for the future of trans rights? Just as Busby (2021) and Snyder-Young (2013) consider the limitations of theatre, my research and my verbatim *my-identity* project is not intended to be the solution to these issues, but to highlight the social injustices faced by the five trans participants within my research project.

Chapter Two of this thesis examines the wider positionality of trans people in England with the analysis of the datasets presented by Stonewall and Galop. These reports were able to provide quantitative results on transphobia, hate crime, the mental health of trans people, and the cisgender perception of what trans *is*. I will use these research results to consider the wider trends in England before focussing on Newcastle upon Tyne and the experiences of trans people, specifically in this city. This allows me to consider how the concerns and lack of equity identified by Stonewall and Galop are evident in Newcastle upon Tyne and what needs there are in the city for my research project. The chapter also allows me to explore trans representation in the arts and media, as well as the cisgender perception and injustice evident today in sports, politics, and government agenda.

Chapter Two: Transgender in society and Newcastle-upon-Tyne

Transgender (re) presentation in the arts and society

This chapter will examine the positionality of trans people in regard to their inclusion, equity, and notions of social injustice as a result of (re) presentation and misrepresentation. Within my research design, the context of modern-day experiences as a trans person needed to be considered as a means to explore where the umbrella term of transgender came from, what historical accounts and references there were prior to the coining of this phrase in the 1990s, and how this had informed my own research. I also wanted to include case studies of other researchers looking at transgender issues of inequality and what projects they had run. This included the work on the gendering of toilets and gender feminism and transmisogyny as considered in the work of Jen Slater and Charlotte Jones, the use of applied theatre and verbatim techniques within workshops and theatre-making, the performance work of trans performer Kate O'Donnell, and the work with trans people of Catherine McNamara and her involvement with the organisation *Gendered Intelligence*.

Lafleur, et al. (2021) discuss the complexities of transgender history and academic thinking due to 'the movement for trans recognition is a development of the last century or so' (Lafleur, et al., 2021: 4) and that 'some scholars have argued, and still do argue, that prior to the coinage of the term, transgender experience did not exist' (Lafleur, et al., 2021: 4). However, there is reference made of gender non-conforming and transgender people seen 'consistently in fiction, religious texts, church and court records, and even in texts authored by trans people themselves from antiquity onward' (Lafleur, et al., 2021: 4). Whilst with the lack of the term transgender to frame and categorise the experiences of historical trans people 'their

stories can and should be united under the mantle of transgender past' (Lafleur, et al., 2021: 4). This considers the hypothesis that something has not 'existed' prior to it being given a label or point of reference. Another example of this is the term homosexuality that was coined in the Victorian era from around 1892 (Brady, 2009), however there have been references made to same sex relations as far back as the bible and within antiquity. Brady highlights that:

[David] Halperin acknowledges that sex between men pre-existed 1892, but argues that before the scientific construction of the word 'homosexuality', there was, in English, 'no conceptual apparatus available for identifying a person's fixed and determinate sexual orientation.'

(Brady, 2009: 11)

In relation to transgender identity, Blakemore (2022) discusses within an article for *National Geographic* the historical context of transgender with the examples given:

... *gala* and *galli*, priests assigned male at birth who crossed gender boundaries in their worship of a variety of goddesses in ancient Sumer, Akkadia, Greece and Rome.

(Blakemore, 2022)

as well as cultures acknowledging a third gender, including 'spirit people within Indigenous communities and Hijra, non-binary people who inhabit ritual roles in South Asia' (Blakemore, 2022). Indeed, Blakemore discusses the range of historical accounts of trans individuals from the Roman emperor Elagabalus who ruled between C.E. 218 and 222, who wore feminine dress and 'requested to be referred to as "she," and expressed a desire for genital removal surgery' (Blakemore, 2022); to the 19th century Union Army soldier, Albert Cashier, who fought in over 40 battles and was 'one of at least 250 people who, though assigned a female sex at birth, fought in the army as men' (Blakemore, 2022); to the more modern medical advances of the 20th century that allowed for medical interventions with the Institute

for Sexual Research in Germany (founded in 1919) that 'changed trans people's lives and public conception of gender' (Blakemore, 2022). Blakemore considers the gender reassignment surgeries of former U.S Army Veteran, Christine Jorgenson in 1952 in Denmark, and how she was able to inform her family that:

"I have changed very much," she told her family, enclosing a few photos. "But I want you to know that I am an extremely happy person...Nature made a mistake, which I have corrected, and I am now your daughter."

(Blakemore, 2022)

and that as a result of being the first American to have this medical intervention of hormones and surgery 'she became the public face of transgender identity around the world' (Blakemore, 2022). Although the term transgender was used medically from the 1960s, it was not until the 1990s that it began to have 'widespread use' (Blakemore, 2022).

Having decided within my research design to examine the lived experiences of trans people, there was the need to examine how trans identities are (re) presented socially, as well as in the arts and media. As Stryker (2017) asserts:

Transgender is a word that has come into widespread use only in the past couple of decades.

(Stryker, 2017: 1)

and that the stigma and exclusion of trans people prevent 'access to social, economic, and political power' (King, et al., 2020); and the need for cisgender people to realise the impact their norms have on the shaping of trans people's lived experiences. It was important to explore the sense of newness of the word transgender and how it has been used over the last thirty years or so – what does it (re) present, how and what does it define, and how is the word used more widely.

There needed to be a broader consideration of the positionality of trans identities in the UK, as well as to evaluate the need for my research project that would focus on trans people. Anderson (2022) examined definitions of trans people and the relationship between this and the social attitudes towards them, and asserts that:

Terms used to refer to people who are not cisgender, or people who do not identify with the gender assigned at birth, are constantly evolving. Older terms such as transvestite and transsexual are considered derogatory by many, but not all, trans and binary individuals.

(Anderson, 2022: 2)

and it is this sense of terminology evolving that requires the need for these to be discussed and introduced to create a common sense and definition. This sense of terms evolving can also be seen in the work of McNamara (2018) who asserts:

Not all non-binary identified people would identify as trans, and, as an umbrella term, trans does not suit all people in the same way.

(McNamara, 2018: 314)

Indeed, Anderson identifies that the term transgender 'obscures the diversity of gender identities such as agender, bigender, genderqueer, trans masculine, trans feminine, nonbinary, and gender fluid, just to name a few' (Anderson, 2022: 2). This creates the tension of those not identifying as cisgender to want to establish a more coherent acknowledgement of this diversity. As a cisgender gay man, who wanted to consider how my own norms and actions impact trans experiences, I found that gender and transgender proved to be interesting research areas to consider:

Gender is not the same as sex, though the two terms are often used interchangeably, even in technical or scholarly literature, which can lead to a great deal of confusion ... *Gender* is derived from the Latin word *genus*, meaning "kind" or "type." Gender is the social organization of bodies into different categories of people.

(Stryker, 2017: 14-15)

As such, I needed to consider if this sub-culture within the LGBTQ+ wider community needed a drama project to raise awareness on potential social injustice and lack of equity, and whether a verbatim-based qualitative research project was the best vehicle for this:

Trans issues touch on existential questions about what it means to be alive and take us into areas that we rarely consciously consider with any degree of care ... gender and identity, like gravity and breathing, are really complicated phenomena when you start taking them apart and breaking them down.

(Stryker, 2017: 10)

This would allow me to align my research back to the research questions posed and my hypothesis of the use of applied theatre, and especially verbatim techniques to (re) present trans identities in Newcastle upon Tyne. Verbatim theatre-making techniques are examined in more detail in Chapter Four, however, to introduce this:

The term 'verbatim theatre' was first established within contemporary theatre scholarship in the late 1980s when Derek Paget described the emergence of a new form of theatre making.

(Fisher, 2020: 4)

and that the approach to verbatim was to record participants, as they recalled their experiences around a specific subject resulting 'in verbatim plays that celebrated local stories and effectively captured the 'vernacular speech' of the region' (Fisher, 2020: 5). As I discuss within this chapter and in Chapter Four, verbatim does come under ethical scrutiny in regard to the selection of participants, the curation of the verbatim interview narratives, and the shaping of the final text. Fisher herself considers:

Verbatim theatre is no stranger to controversy. While its popularity has grown over the past twenty-five years so had the number of its critics, it stands accused of manipulating or misleading audiences, of possessing a 'duplicitous nature' ... and being a dangerously appropriative art form.

(Fisher, 2020: 7)

My research design was to place myself within the wider LGBTQ+ 'scene' within the city, and to initially consider what role and identity I had within this, as well as within the observations of the experiences of trans people. Alecky Blythe, verbatim theatre-maker, is acclaimed by Megson (2018) as a forerunner in verbatim theatre:

The extraordinary ascendancy of verbatim theatre-making in the UK over the past decade and a half is due in large part to Blythe's innovation and influence.

(Megson, 2018: 220)

and she herself states about her work *Come Out Eli* (2003), 'I couldn't just go in without an identity' (Megson, 2018: 230) and I wanted to define what my identity was within my own research. This would in turn allow me to consider my ethical working practices, and how to (re) present the trans people I was working with. I also needed to consider what type of drama vehicle would be best placed for the project. Would this be an intergenerational project with trans people that would allow the sharing of experiences that would 'contribute to the creation of community cohesion and strength' (McNamara, 2018: 125); a play researching trans experiences and cis-written; or the consideration of verbatim techniques allowing for 'creating pathos by 'channelling' one person's voice and experience through another's body' (McNamara, 2018: 135). My verbatim play does (re) present an intergenerational participatory group of trans people and their individual experiences, however the play does not benefit from the bringing 'older and younger LGBTQ people together' (McNamara, 2018: 135), nor was it able to offer:

... opportunities for older and younger LGBTQ people to talk about and share their lived experiences as LGBTQ people, and to bring forth the complex range of experiences of gender, age and sexuality among the group.

(McNamara, 2018: 138)

Instead, my project was a verbatim play creating five monologues that provide the audience with the lived experiences of these five participants. I had included in my research design from an early stage that I was considering that the play would be a verbatim piece, and this notion of bringing participants together might have created a different tone and content to the final *my-identity* play as it would have allowed for collaboration and the invitation of 'stories from all participants and facilitating creative engagement with everyone' (McNamara, 2018: 138). However, due to the Covid-19 pandemic in the UK (2020-2022) and my need to apply for ethics approval during this time, I had to re-consider the access to these narratives, as well as how these might be presented. During the initial lockdowns between March 2020 and June 2021 theatres were closed in the UK and as a result I was unable to create something that allowed for collaboration, meeting in-person, or the potential for this work being performed. As such, I interviewed my participants on Zoom. Although, I would have enjoyed bringing these participants together to share their narratives and 'the creation of culture and exchange of history' (McNamara, 2018: 126), I was unable to do that. In Chapter Four I fully examine my approach to the creation of my verbatim piece, and how this was influenced by current practice and considerations of limitation of this style of theatre-making.

My research project never had the aim or intention to define transgender identities or experiences, but to consider how trans people can (re) present their own lived experiences. As Stryker (2017) discusses:

Being trans is like being gay: some people are just "that way," though most people aren't. We can be curious about why some people are gay or trans, and we can propose all kinds of theories or tell interesting stories about how it's possible to be trans or gay, but ultimately we simply need to accept that

some minor fraction of the population (perhaps including ourselves) simply is “that way.”

(Stryker, 2017: 7)

As a cisgender gay man, I wanted to examine the social framing of transgender and how trans people are perceived:

I had lived in the world being perceived as a well-educated, able-bodied, cisgender, heterosexual white man before coming out as the woman I felt myself to be, I have a very clear measuring stick for gauging various kinds of oppression related to embodiment, gender and sexuality.

(Stryker, 2017: xi)

and it was my research around trans experiences and rights that allowed me to begin to consider the social injustice and lack of equity for trans people more widely, outside of my own location and experience:

Being perceived or “passed” as a gender-normative cisgender person grants you a kind of access to the world that is often blocked by being perceived as trans or labelled as such.

(Stryker, 2017: xi)

I do want to note that Stryker’s opinion is based on their own lived experiences, and as such the opinion is more generalised and not shared by all trans people. Reiman, et al. (2023) conducted a study in the U.S to consider how the term transgender has been created by cisgender people and how this is associated with their perceptions and attitudes towards trans people. One argument Reiman, et al. consider is that:

Cisgender people’s anti-transgender attitudes can therefore be rooted in the perception that transgender people threaten conventional gender categories, insofar as transgender people are perceived as not conforming to the binary view of gender that is essential to gender essentialist beliefs.

(Reinman, et al., 2023: 992)

It is this very non-binary conforming diversity that is under the word transgender, with the broad range of identities, identities, and experiences.

Over the past twenty to thirty years (Faye, 2021), there has been an emerging trend of the use of the arts and media as a microscope *onto* the transgender community, concept, and sense of self – as well as the cisgender perception of the transgender experience. This is a contrast to the previous clinical and voyeuristic studies around transgender individuals:

Most research on transgender people conducted before the 1990s was by clinical researchers – often medical practitioners with little research training, who accessed their participants through their patient cohorts, when trans people sought access to gender affirming medical interventions.

(Vincent, 2018: 104)

This allows for the participants to be engaged with a sense of self-development and gain from their involvement with the researcher. It also allows for a number of concerns to be addressed around the approach to drama creation with participants.

As discussed by Megson (2006) there is need for the consideration of:

The differing purposes and functions of verbatim theatre in the current political climate, the divergent conceptions of the role of the actor and writer in this work, and the attendant ethical questions that arise when collecting, editing and performing personal testimony.

(Megson, 2006: 530)

In Chapter Four I will be discussing the ethics and limitations of verbatim techniques more as verbatim can ‘struggle [s] to take into account of other ‘truths’.’ (Fisher, 2011: 113).

As mentioned earlier in this chapter McNamara (2018) asserts that transgender is an umbrella term that may not be an acceptable label for all, and, as a result, any

reference to trans or transgender within my own research and thesis relates directly to those who identify as this specifically. As Joyce (2022) discusses, 'people should count as men or women according to how they feel and what they declare, instead of their biology' (Joyce, 2022: 1) and it was this potential opportunity for trans people to share these declarations that became of interest to me.

Within my own research project, I wanted to invite participants to be central to the creative decisions and authorship process of a performance piece as 'the invitation to participate and encourage critical debate is [another] central theme of applied theatre' (Abraham in Prentki and Abraham, 2021: 5), whilst still maintaining an ethical process that supported the opinion that 'applied theatre practitioners have a duty of care to consider the contradictions inherent in their practice' (Abraham in Prentki and Abraham, 2021: 8). In turn, this would allow for a stronger sense of equity in the (re) presentation of trans people supporting the consideration that:

Meaningful trans involvement in research provides more in-depth data, builds more constructive rapport with community members, and produces more effective research than the norm of purely outsider [the cisgender researcher] research in the field.

(Rosenberg and Tilley, 2020: 1)

With my incorporating this sense of equity within research planning and the consideration of a performance output to share qualitative research findings, it becomes possible to 'facilitate and articulate a broader range of facets of personhood' (McNamara, 2012: 15). As discussed by Vincent (2018), transgender people had been alienated from research and these attempts of representation due to the clinical, medical and sexological approach in the past. There has been increased interest in academic research over the past 20 years and Vincent asserts that 'much of the mid-twentieth-century literature comprised of highly pathologising

and voyeuristic studies within clinical medicine and sexology' (Vincent, 2018; 102). This is alongside their marginalised and inaccurate and under-represented history based on their individual situations and life narratives, rather than the cisgender perception of the transgender condition:

... the problematic history of trans research and the marginalised status of trans communities worldwide ... Older medical studies have alienated some trans community members from research through objectification and delegitimisation.

(Vincent, 2018: 1)

and also, the media (re) presentation of trans people revolving around the opinion of Faye (2022) that 'when the media want to talk about trans issues, it means they want to talk about *their* issues with *us*, not the challenges *facing us*' (Faye, 2022: 9).

McNamara (2012) also considers that 'trans performance work is still largely absent from academic discourse' (McNamara, 2012: 20). As part of my own research project, I wanted to see why this might be the case and this chapter will consider the (re) presentation of trans people socially (and especially in the media and the arts), as well as examining the continued social injustice evident against these individuals. The development of my own verbatim research project would also allow the narratives of the trans participants to 'tell their stories and talk about non-normative identities' (McNamara, 2012: 20); as well as allowing an audience to focus on the liveness of the words being presented:

The reality of setting and watching, of being together in the same room can provide an opportunity to engage audience members in the process of thinking about the events occurring onstage.

(Snyder-Young, 2013: 12)

As a term, transgender and transgender studies have only really been used since the 1990s:

Transgender studies emerged in the late 1990s as a loosely defined academic field of study, arising from the desire of academics studying transgenderism to be heard, as well as to engage with the diverse voices of trans people.

(Sanger in Hines and Sanger, 2010: 261)

and the opinion of Stryker (2017) that:

Transgender entered widespread use in the early 1990s, although the word has a longer history that stretches back to the mid-1960s and has meant many contradictory things at different times.

(Stryker, 2017: 36)

It was not until the 2010s that transgender individuals were being represented by the cisgender writers of newspaper and magazine articles, fiction and non-fiction work, and the arts (Faye, 2022). Indeed, at this point in gender, and especially transgender history:

By the end of the 2010s, trans people weren't the occasional freak show in the pages of the red-top tabloid. Rather, we were in the headlines of almost every major newspaper every single day. We were no longer portrayed as the ridiculous but unthreatening mechanic who was having a 'sex swap;' now, we were depicted as the proponents of a powerful new 'ideology' that was capturing institutions and dominating public life. No longer something to be jeered at, we were instead something to be feared.

(Faye 2022: 5)

It needs to be noted that the suggestion that trans people were in the headlines of every newspaper, every day may well be an exaggeration based on their own opinion and potential lived experience. This is not the case today, when trans people and the social injustice faced by them needs to be included in the headlines of major newspapers. Instead, there are limited newspaper discussions around these injustices, with the most recent being in *The Evening Standard* on 6 October 2023 discussing the UK Prime Minister, Rishi Sunak, and comments made at the Conservative Party Conference on 4 October 2023 about:

“We shouldn’t get bullied into believing that people can be any sex they want to be. They can’t, a man is a man and a woman is a woman. That’s just common sense.”

(Grace, 2023)

This recent political comment potentially supports Faye’s opinion of the trans individual becoming ‘feared’ by society, yet how can this truly be considered an improvement on the previous ‘freak show’? If the cisgender writer or artist is to (re) present with authenticity an individual trans narrative, there needs to be some equal playing ground utilised to ensure the voices of trans people have equal resonance and individual truth and accuracy, rather than the perceptions and agenda of the cisgender writer. This concept of the individual trans narrative is based on the notion that just as the cisgender population are individuals in their own rights, so are the transgender population (Fogg Davis, 2017). Each individual coming from their own past, their own unique experiences, their own transition journey, and their own grasp of the politics and prejudice around them. This needs to be shared and given the platform for trans experiences to be heard to:

... generate discussion and debate around gender, inequality rooted in gender, misogyny, misandry and sexism.

(McNamara, 2018: 125)

as without these discussions and experiences based on social injustice being shared, change cannot be affected – socially or artistically.

Faye (2022) does consider the many dichotomies and prejudice surrounding the transgender population, and the ineffective attempts of the media and the arts to represent them fully and strive for equity and equality. Indeed, she considers the fact that in 2022, the UK was ‘immersed in a deafening conversation about trans people’ (Faye, 2022: 8). The key word in this is the use of ‘about.’ Again, this might be seen

as emotive and exaggerated language from Faye based on their experiences, however it does need to be considered that these conversations are indeed not *with*, or *for* trans people, but rather *about* them. The need for scholarly research is seen as identifying that:

The representation of both fictional transgender people and the real-life experiences of transgender people should be a continued area of emphasis for producers, creators, actors, and audiences alike. Academics and critical thinkers should be mindful of whether or not this move toward positive and complex representation continues.

(McLaren, et al., 2021: 190)

If we are continuing with the opening-up of the consideration of this introduction to have a microscope on the transgender community, what do we want to see? As considered by Sanger (2010) 'as trans identities are becoming more visible in society, there is a need for a sociology to engage with trans narratives' (Sanger in Hines and Sanger, 2010: 259); as well as the need to acknowledge trans peoples lived experiences to attempt to alleviate social injustice and political comments like those made by Sunak. Indeed, as commented on by McNamara:

In denying trans as a lived experience, one denies trans people their sense of self and thus the theoretical conceits become difficult to engage with productively.

(McNamara, 2012: 6)

These considerations of social injustice might then affect the possibility of social change, and theatre can support this due to:

An acknowledgement that 'change' is an ongoing, unstoppable process, coupled with the radical hope that the theatre can nudge the direction of this change just a little towards social justice.

(Snyder-Young, 2013: 10)

As a cisgender researcher, why should I want to prove anything by writing *about* trans people; what type of performance material do I want to *write about* trans people; what do I want to *prove about* trans people? These are key considerations within my own research project, especially around my positionality and *right* to use my research to produce material *about* the trans individual and narrative. If the research was to merely do this, it would fall into the inaccurate and unacceptable approach as considered by Vincent (2018):

Older medical studies have alienated some trans community members from research through objectification and delegitimization. Intensive research can confirm suspicions of an out-of-touch scholastic enterprise, more concerned with publication and career progression than with participant well-being ... transgender communities that feel 'research participation fatigue.'

(Vincent, 2018: 103)

as well as the need to consider the 'dynamics of privileged facilitators and less privileged participants' (Snyder-Young, 2013: 13). This might support that within my research verbatim piece I am focussing in on 'how I [they] am [are] using theatre's unique features to perform specific social interventions' (Snyder-Young, 2013: 136) to demonstrate how I am not only acknowledging the limitations of applied theatre whilst still being able to produce work within these (Snyder-Young, 2013):

... audience members need to be open to challenges to the status quo in order to accept the messages artists attempt to communicate ...

(Snyder-Young, 2013: 136)

This is true that audiences need to be open to challenge what they see before them as Busby (2021) asserts that:

Theatre-making with aims of social justice enables people to find new ways of communicating their views, their discontent and their wishes.

(Busby, 2021: 9)

My research methods and ethical consideration of applied theatre practice and verbatim techniques might allow for my research project to demonstrate 'applied theatre as a radical theatre of cultural intervention' (Snyder-Young, 2013: 10); as well as allowing the use of verbatim techniques to 'enable participants 'to be seen' ... they know they have the audience's attention' (Snyder-Young, 2013: 11). When considering my verbatim project later in this thesis I will specifically be considering if this goal of some form of social change within a theatre-based project is the best 'intervention my [their] circumstances and goals require' (Snyder-Young, 2013: 139). I had selected verbatim considering this as a way to use trans narratives to create a piece of theatre practice that might allow for:

The performance of lived experience and autobiography ... as a key tool in reclaiming the voice previously discredited by the medical and academic establishments.

(McNamara, 2012: 20)

as well as verbatim becoming a mechanism allowing for:

Analysing and documenting transgender identities in performance and the social contexts within which those performances take place, provides a depth and a level of detail involved in the interactions that create performance experiences, as well as merely taking into account of individual perspectives on gender.

(McNamara, 2012: 22)

However, there is the need to consider the limitations and criticism of verbatim theatre techniques which include Fisher (2011) considering that:

Audiences are persuaded or perhaps, as some might argue, even manipulated (see Bottoms 2006) into believing that a documentary or verbatim play is more truthful or more insightful than fictive counterparts because the material it contains was appropriated from actual court inquests, real personal statements or interviews.

(Fisher, 2011: 194)

as well as questions around ethics and accountability of working with community or vulnerable groups where 'verbatim theatre becomes yet another means of exploiting the marginalized and the vulnerable, leading, in effect, to further disempowerment' (Fisher, 2011: 195). In Chapter Four I will further discuss verbatim as there needs to be a full consideration of whether the practitioner is an editor of the words of others, a dramaturg, or an interpreter of the experiences of other people. As well as the verbatim play being a dramatic vehicle with a theme and planned plot, even though the words of real people have been used, Blythe does state in conversation with Chris Megson that:

... it *is* them but it's *not* them. It's been edited, it's been shaped, for *London Road* there's singing, it's been lit, it's put in a theatre, and, yes, I hope there is truth in it, it's taken from the real, but it hopefully becomes something else. It's not the picture of them – as in a photograph – it's a painting of them. It lives in a slightly different space.

(Megson, 2018: 232)

It is this sense of editing and shaping that will be more fully considered in Chapter Four as I examine the influence of applied theatre and verbatim techniques upon my practice, and what the research design was for my own verbatim work produced.

As well as cisgender practitioners conducting research and a range of projects to support trans people, there have been a number of trans performers who have created work to (re) present themselves and trans identities. The next section is a case study discussing this practice, and their approaches to telling their own lived narratives and experiences.

Kate O'Donnell and *You've Changed* (2017)

Kate O'Donnell is an award-winning transgender artist who writes and performs her own work, as well as being an established performer in a range of productions and

projects. She is also the Artistic Director for Trans Creative in Manchester (founded in February 2017), which is a transgender led theatre company whose aims are to raise the visibility of transgender individuals and their experiences:

Trans Creative was founded as a response to a growing demand for creative trans work with the goal of increasing trans representation and participation in the arts, creating trans-led projects with trans-told narratives. In a culture in which it is commonplace for transgender stories to be written and performed by cisgender artists, the company strives to be Trans-Led.

(Northern Stage, *You've Changed* programme)

This notion and need for the presentation of these narratives to be trans-led, allowed me to make the firm decision to include in my research plan a verbatim performance piece to (re) present the narrative and voices of intergenerational trans individuals interviewed in Newcastle upon Tyne. There would be a collaborative approach taken with each participant co-creating the material used in the final text contributing to the need for this type of work to be trans-led, as identified by Trans Creative. The research design for my verbatim project, as previously discussed, was affected by the UK lockdowns during the Covid-19 pandemic. However, I wanted to have this co-creation and sense of co-authorship with my research participants. The *my-identity* play took over 18 months to write as a result of the creative freedom of writing a piece of theatre for a PhD thesis with no parameters of performance expectations and timelines during the pandemic. As will be discussed in Chapter Four more fully, I conducted the interviews with the participants in November 2020 and following those I wrote the transcripts for their approval. I used recorded delivery methods as used by Alecky Blythe with the inclusion of every pause, correction, stutter, slang word and other personal vocal delivery means. This allowed for the text to show the audience or reader that 'this is real and this is what people said ... This is what happened and this is how she said it' (Megson, 2018: 226). It also allowed each

participant to 'reflect on their lived experiences of the world and offer a means of understanding and articulating the complexities' (Busby, 2021: 9) of their own trans identity and lived experiences. Each trans person is different, and this allowed me to show this diversity and uniqueness rather than placing the label of trans onto all of their stories. Once the participants approved these, there were two methods of selection of material for inclusion in the final text. At the same time both myself and the individual participants read their transcript and highlighted key words, key themes, and key comments that interested, challenged, excited, saddened, or excited us. We had agreed a deadline date to share this document with each other to ensure we were not seeing the sections selected by the other person until our selections had taken place. Upon sharing these each participant was able to understand what was found as being of interest to me as a cisgender researcher, just as I was able to see what was important for them to be included in their narratives presented to the audience or reader. There was a period of discussion with follow-up Zoom calls and sharing of emails until the final monologue content was agreed by all parties. As the *my-identity* project developed from a play text to an installation, the participants also solely selected the contents of the memory boxes and the quotes used on the exhibition boards in the front of house. They also self-identified themselves for the purpose of the script that included their identified gender identity, age, and sexuality. Therefore, there was co-authorship within the project. Yet, this could have been more fully developed with the participants alone selecting the material for me to then place into an anthology of narratives becoming a verbatim play, rather than something of my own design. I also needed to remember in the project that the participants were part of my research rather than co-investigators as I had identified them as such in my ethics application. I had

formulated the interview questions, I had set up the Zoom calls throughout the project, and I had framed the project with my research and analysis of the Newcastle upon Tyne 'scene,' responses to my questionnaire, and my own research interests. In hindsight, and moving forward, I will include this co-investigation within ethics applications to alleviate the tension of primary investigator and co-investigator, as well as the power and status considerations this place on the relationships. For the *my-identity* project, there was a sense of co-authorship and participant position in the research and the final creative output, however the participants were ultimately research subjects and the narratives they gave provided me as the researcher with qualitative data to interpret and use to answer my research questions. This was able to add to the originality and hybrid approach to the research, as a cisgender researcher wanting to (re) present the intergenerational trans identities in Newcastle upon Tyne and the authorship of the narratives from each individual. I accept that I might still receive criticism that I have acted as a ventriloquist (Fisher, 2011) due to the way a verbatim piece is constructed. There is an ideological act of authorship, and as such cannot be neutral. What I did put into place to address this was the use of the participants in the co-selection of the material. At no point did I put into place a dramatic structure of where I wanted the narratives to take the audience or reader, I did not question how these sat 'in the theatrical canon' (Megson, 2018: 222), and I had not merely selected an interesting subject to merely write something around (Megson, 2018). Instead, I wanted to create something that resulted in 'a kaleidoscope of stories rather than something with a narrative' (Megson, 2018: 223), as it is this kaleidoscope that allows the diversity of trans people and their identities to be shown. As such, a research project can be partially trans-led on the

development of the output and artefact, even though the overall project may be cis-led.

Had the Covid-19 pandemic not happened, and I had been able to obtain research ethics for a live performance project, the artists would have been trans people as well to contribute further to the ethos of it being trans-led rather than cis-led as far as possible within the constraints of a PhD thesis. Indeed, there has been many comments about cisgender artists playing transgender roles, and I would have avoided this to contribute to the accuracy and advocacy the project aims to achieve. There has also been discussion over the last 10 years in regard to casting of roles in projects on both stage and screen and whether only transgender performers should be cast to play trans roles. The argument here is interesting in regard to the difference of the considerations of the individual best suited for the role and the need for rounded representation of minority groups on the stage and screen. It is true that we all like to see people we can relate to and are like us, therefore should the role go to a trans performer based on their experience that can give accuracy and credibility to characters, the dramatic context and the tone being created for the audience. Indeed, in 2020 the actor Halle Berry rejected a trans male role based on these arguments of representation and inclusivity. Speaking to Jordan Moreau of *Variety* in 2020, Berry was quoted as explaining that this role was:

“[It’s] a character where the woman is a trans character, so she’s a woman that transitioned into a man. She’s a character in a project that I might be doing,” Berry had said. She added that she wanted to “deep dive” into “that world,” likely referring to the trans community.

(Moreau, 2020)

it was as a result of the misgendering of this character that led to Berry facing an online backlash, and subsequently announcing she had declined the role. Lyn Gross

of *Forbes* highlighted that Berry had stated on her Twitter feed that “the transgender community should undeniably have the opportunity to tell their own stories” (Gross, 2020), that Berry ‘... said she vowed “to be an ally”, and that Berry wanted to use her “voice to promote better representation on-screen, both in front of and behind the camera” (Gross, 2020). Berry was also quoted in *Variety* as saying “I am grateful for the guidance and critical conversation over the past few days and will continue to listen, educate, and learn from this mistake.” (Moreau, 2020). And Malbon of *Cosmopolitan* asserted that ‘Halle has misgendered the character more than once in the interview, saying: “Who this woman was is so interesting to me, and that will probably be my next project” (Malbon, 2020). Lyn Gross (2020) also commented that:

The controversy about cisgender people playing transgender people in the movies has gone on for decades – notable actors and actresses who have played transgender people include John Lithgow, Hillary Swank, Felicity Huffman, Sofia Vergara and Glenn Close.

(Gross, 2020)

The BBC reported in 2021 online that Eddie Redmayne commented that the role he played in *The Danish Girl* (2015) was a mistake, and that:

“No, I wouldn’t take it on now. I made that film with the best intentions, but I think it was a mistake,” he said. “The bigger discussion about the frustrations around casting is because many people don’t have a chair at the table,” Redmayne told *The Sunday Times*. “There must be a levelling, otherwise we are going to carry on having these debates.”

(BBC, 2021)

It is important to note that *The Danish Girl* was released closely after Redmayne had won the Oscar for Best Actor in the film *The Theory of Everything* (2014). Was this casting on the back of the hype and success of the earlier film with producers hoping

Redmayne's reviews and success would guarantee a box office hit for them?

However, he did comment that:

... there had been “years of cisgender success on the back of trans stories” and said he hoped more trans actors could play trans parts in the future. But he added that any actor “should be able to play any sort of part if one plays it with a sense of integrity and responsibility.”

(BBC, 2021)

Despite this contradiction in casting, he did comment on Tweets of J.K. Rowling saying “I disagree with Jo's comments. Trans women are women, trans men are men and non-binary identities are valid,” the actor said in a statement.” (BBC, 2020).

However, later said he was ‘alarmed by the “vitriol” aimed at Rowling’ (BBC, 2020).

Although, Redmayne made some attempt at opening up the much-needed conversation of the casting of trans characters, some other actors have not been quite so welcoming of opening up the debate:

After Scarlett Johansson was cast as a transgender person in the film *Rug and Tug* in 2018 the casting decision was met with intense criticism. At first, Johansson defended her position by pointing out that other cisgender actors and actresses who played transgender people.

(Gross, 2020)

and although Johansson later declined the role, she had supported the call for the equality of casting for cisgender actors and actresses, rather than those of their transgender colleagues. There is a wider question here in regard to why trans performers may not be cast and why cis performers are. Is this based on lack of opportunity, lack of understanding, lack of advocacy, or is it based on the best suited performer for the role regardless of their gender? In some contexts, trans performers have had to create their own material to present themselves with this opportunity, with the examples of Rebecca Root and her self-penned television programme *Boy*

Meets Girl (2015) and Kate O'Donnell and her autobiographical *You've Changed* (2017). My project is not the place to answer these questions of casting as there are many layers to the issues and problems around this. However, this is something that will need some further research; as well as consideration by actors, casting directors and producers who work within theatre and the media to ensure we are accurately representing the full spectrum of society in a transparent, fair, and just way. As well as supporting social justice and equitable opportunity for all. In 2023, we are beginning to see positive moves in trans casting due to:

From "Euphoria" to "Pose," transgender actors are more visible and celebrated today than ever before. Still, the road to representation hasn't been easy, and these performers face a unique set of challenges in the industry.

(Davenport, 2023)

and although this is a good start to casting inclusivity and social justice, there is still a lack of support identified by Davenport:

Many trans actors experience a lack of much-needed professional support. Trans actor Michaela Jae Rodriguez, who won a Golden Globe for her performance in "Pose," told Today that she hasn't always found support in the industry. "There were times where I would sit and just overthink about how someone would assess me in the world," she said. "I had family members who loved and adored me, so that was the easiest part, right? I had a pillar and a foundation. But outside, in the world, you just never know what's going to come your way.

(Davenport, 2023)

Indeed, Kate O'Donnell herself withdrew from a major musical production due to the lead trans female character being cast with a cisgender male. Brown discusses that:

The casting of cis men and women in trans roles is a contentious issue. In 2018 Scarlett Johansson withdrew from her role as a transgender man in the film *Rub & Tug* after a backlash. Eddie Redmayne, Oscar-nominated for his role as a transgender pioneer in 2015 film *The Danish Girl*, has in interviews acknowledged "years of cisgender success on the back of trans stories". He

said: “I hope there’s a day when there are more trans actors and trans actresses playing trans parts, but as cisgender parts.”

(Brown, 2020)

with O’Donnell herself commenting:

“It would be really nice if trans people got the right attention. Not being a debate, not being at the centre of something, not being outed ... that is what I’m sad about. I’m sad about the state of the industry. I’m sad that I didn’t have my time on the stage in the West End. I’m a 55-year-old trans person, my options are quite limited.”

(Brown, 2020)

These comments and considerations, continued to support my decision to have the *my-identity* project as trans-collaborative as possible to allow for (re) presentation of the different narratives, allowing trans people and artists to relay trans narratives without a cis-lens influencing interpretation and representation through performance as discussed earlier in this chapter. Yet, there are areas with the act of editing, collaging, and writing within verbatim that I needed to address.

O’Donnell’s 2017 tour of *You’ve Changed* allowed her to perform an autobiographical telling of her 10-year transition from male to female. As a piece of work this is an oral history as it is based around her own experiences and provides her journey, as well as life experiences during a ten-year period. The play revolves around her personal change, as well as changes to societal perceptions of what it means to be transgender. As a piece of theatre, it was constructed around the movement and transition from male to female, through the use of costume, and personal testimony and opinion. The 1930s was used as the backdrop for the piece, with the costumes moving from Fred Astaire to Ginger Rogers to represent the gender journey and personal transition of O’Donnell. This was also reflected in the choice of music which was used as interludes between scenes, and the approach of

the choreography. Yet, this decision also highlights the societal perception of being transgender in 2003 when O'Donnell began her transition. Today, we still have prejudice and misperceptions of transgender people (as discussed in the next chapter), and O'Donnell considers the opinions of society in 2003 to be comparable to those in the 1930s. Indeed, in the programme for the production it is mentioned that:

The show looks at how transitioning in 2003 felt more like the 1930s... as basically no one had a clue. In 2003 you were either a man or a woman and you didn't want to be transgender! With this show, we aim to chart a slice of trans history through Kate's personal story, shining a light on the ins, outs, ups & downs of transitioning.

(Northern Stage, *You've Changed* programme)

Only O'Donnell and her lived experience could accurately portray her own words within her dramaturgical script preparation. Indeed, her own experiences and oral history is given to the audience, which when I saw it at the Northern Stage in Newcastle upon Tyne in October 2017, was a range of gender identities and sexualities. Her story spoke on many different levels with the consideration that some audience members might either relate to her experience, them being an advocate for trans rights, or as someone who had entered the performance with no idea what to expect and being given questions and a different perspective to think about. Indeed, at one point in the performance, O'Donnell stood behind a screen with an opening to reveal her face, and a second to reveal her vagina. She had given a member of the audience on the front row a list of questions she is asked on a regular basis. We believed these questions to be to her, however she highlighted the fact that in her experience, people are more interested in what is in between her legs rather than what is in her mind or emotions. As such, these questions were asked to

her vagina as a symbol of the societal need to know what anatomical parts are there. This was a powerful scene within the play, and O'Donnell truly exposed her inner (and outer) most experiences of lack of equity as a woman, as well as the amusement of people as to what she is.

The transgina dialogue is genius: who will forget that surreal, vulnerable, funny conversation or any of the accurate, essential information that it conveyed? And that's exactly the point: we should not forget. Society is transitioning, but this is not the destination. In no way have we arrived. It's time to reframe the transgender narrative, to transform it from being the 'in thing,' into something altogether more respectful and kind, less intrusive and insensitive.

(Redfern, 2017)

Although this might be considered shocking by some readers and audience members, what was more shocking was the process of transition she went through. She provided the audience a copy of a list she had been given by a friend who recognised her wish to transition, and this can be found in appendix C.

You will see from this document that it follows:

1. GP Private – go to point 2
NHS – would lead to seeing a psychiatrist, then NHS GIC referrals – got to point 4

Start Intense Pulsed Light for facial hair (IPL)

2. Psychiatrist
3. Prescribed hormones (by a private psychiatrist) on an NHS prescription
4. Speech Therapy? This might be a GP or psychiatrist referral
5. Regular blood tests and health checks with GP
 - Liver function
 - Testosterone levels
 - Blood pressure
6. Name change documentation – Deed Poll (Get letter from private psychiatrist from DVLA for drivers' licence and for Passport Office)
7. Decide on Op – where, who and when

Counselling throughout stages 1 to 7

(Northern Stage, *You've Changed* programme)

This list resonated with the narratives and some of the responses by my participants within my research verbatim interviews in regard to the extensive length of time it takes for anything to happen, as well as the intricate and exhaustive list of process points. As a theatre-maker and qualitative practice researcher, I would merely have created my own perception based on research and my own cisgender lens, whereas O'Donnell is able to be true to her experience and journey and this will be different for others. We are told of her challenging operations that took place in Thailand, the lack of support from family and friends, and her day-to-day transition into becoming Kate. Critically, the production was applauded for its honesty and accuracy, and seen as a much-needed theme to be addressed in a real manner, rather than based on ridicule, amusement or mis-placed perception and opinion. The critics addressed that O'Donnell's approach to performance is much needed, as the audience is never really sure what to expect from her work and performance. Yet, it is her honesty that draws the audience in as they enter into an emotional connection with her through the narrations of her own lived narrative:

Kate O'Donnell: *You've Changed* is an interesting play and offers a deep insight into the struggles of transgenders who still find it difficult to openly be themselves.

(Assogna, 2017)

Although the show itself is only an hour long, there isn't a topic left untouched in this unapologetic story of what being transgender and transitioning is really like.

(Hyland, 2017)

As such, this consideration of presenting the lived experiences of being transgender and transitioning became the key rationale for the verbatim technique to be adopted. However, remember the need to ensure a singular approach was not being taking as

there is a diverse range of trans people, trans experiences, and trans identities. The audience or reader do not want to be presented with my cis-idea and cis-perception, but rather the personality and lived experiences of the trans verbatim participant. Indeed, with the notion of curating the artefact produced through verbatim techniques following my being able to curate their personalities and their lived experiences to an audience.

... it is O'Donnell's dazzling personality and humour that is the real heart of the show. She holds the audience in the palm of her hand, keeping you on the verge of tears or uncontrollable laughter at any given moment.

(Hyland, 2017)

It is this connection to the narratives that my research project sought to find, achieve, and articulate. These are not my personal stories or experiences, and to allow them to talk to, and engage an audience, these need to be real narratives from real people. The joy of theatre and verbatim, is the ability to share these without the need for the participant to be exposed or named, allowing them safety and security from prejudice or attack (verbal, physical or emotional), whilst still having the vehicle to share, inform, engage, and educate.

The gender of toilets and accessibility

As discussed by McNamara (2012) in relation to the political agenda change of trans accessibility of toilets in Brazil, here in the UK Jones and Slater (2020) considered the accessibility of the gendered approach to toilets, and as a result the binary approach evident in most venues. As toilets are mainly still seen as Male and Female, this also has an impact on who is accepted by society. As a society, we do not really consider the importance of the toilet environment and how this defines and accepts gender; however, the signs and labels for these spaces have a sociological and political impact on allowing or forbidding access. This is not just confined to

discrimination against the transgender community, as the binary approach affects the queer community, but also access and availability of these spaces to those with accessibility needs. There is an important question of how these spaces might be seen to identify and confirm gender. As such, these spaces might be perceived as being unsafe with the potential for abuse, threats, or intimidation. In general, most cities saw the closure of public toilets during the Covid-19 lockdowns between 2020 and 2022, and a situation in which individuals were required to request or queue for access to these facilities in hospitality venues. Therefore, lockdown restrictions affected everyone's access to the most basic of human needs. However, the cisgender, able-bodied community were able to access some alternatives, despite the transgender community having lost that right. Also, when venues were able to be open around lockdown restrictions, there were staff ensuring safe practice of the maximum number of people in the toilet spaces at any one time, therefore reading gender and allowing access to the perceived gender toilets. With the Government Road Map to exit social distancing requirements and legislations in 2021, there had been improvements made as toilets and facilities were re-opened to 'normal' access. Indeed, some of the venues on the Newcastle upon Tyne 'scene' are now (in 2024) considering gender neutral toilets to support fuller access for all. This being based on the experiences and exclusions during 2020 and 2022, as well as a considered approach to improved inclusivity and access for all. There have been some disagreements with this based on the relationship between heterosexual women and trans women, as well as the worry of gay men that if they enter this area, they may be criticised by straight women for doing so. Yet, this is a double standard as women do use male gender toilets if there are queues for the female ones. Slater also discussed an increase nationally in transphobia since 2014. This was fully explored

with the consideration of 'trans-exclusionary and trans-hostile narratives of toilet spaces' (Jones and Slater, 2020: 834) with the examination of the attitudes of cisgender women towards trans women. Jones and Slater produced results highlighting that cisgender women consider that allowing trans women to use these spaces was 'an issue of cisgender women's rights' (Jones and Slater, 2020: 838).

This in turn is another example that:

Trans people have been cast as 'subjects' of these debates, often without invitation to comment or share their viewpoints or experiences.

(Jones and Slater, 2020: 835)

and without this open dialogue with trans people, injustice continues to thrive as:

... the fight is not so much 'about toilets' but about the contested boundaries of womanhood, tightening the reins on gender, and making trans lives impossible.

(Jones and Slater, 2020: 847)

Indeed, I have witnessed cisgender females in conflict with trans females using the toilets as they consider this as there being a 'man' in the female toilets. On the other side, trans males using the male toilets do not have access to sanitary products. Therefore, a space that should be safe, and a way of getting away, a place of solitude, is being explicitly denied to members of the transgender community. As such, where is *safe* for the transgender individual? This lack of safer environments due to the Covid-19 pandemic added to the negative balance of the mental health of trans people unable to access venues to go to as a release of expression of their identified gender, and potentially living alone and feeling the effects of isolation or living in an environment where they are unable to present as their identified gender. Depending on their personal situation, they might have been unable to conceal their identity, and feel a lack of space to dress as they would like to. A transgender

individual may have felt a sense of being trapped and unable to be their true self within a global pandemic, therefore there needs to be continued studies in regard to the additional negative impact. There would have been a sense of isolation for some older people who relied on social interactions for company. However, lockdown provided some positive experiences for some individuals. Those who lived alone may have been able to live and dress more freely within the safety of their home; compared to tensions of work, social life, or education. The younger generation, being more technologically aware, were able to live in their virtual worlds due to lockdowns and might have allowed for them to see gender identities that they could relate to but had not considered as being a possibility for them to explore or express. These periods of lockdown removed support structures, health treatment and seeing friends who acknowledge and support their identified gender. There were financial implications of lockdown which resulted in some individuals being furloughed and all forms of social life and human contact removed. Looking through the Newcastle City Council *Annual Equality Report 2019-20*, there is a small section on the impact of Covid-19, however no reference to the impact on the transgender community specifically, merely reference made to race and language barriers. Since the relaxation on lockdown regulations within the Government Road Map of 2021, access to public facilities had been re-introduced, however not all at the same times, or with the same notion of freedom as pre-Covid. Pubs were not able to allow customers inside until July 2021, meaning that access to toilets was only allowed for a controlled number of people and as entry to the interior was purely for this use almost shone a spotlight and highlighted this. This resulted in the time needed for an individual to change their clothes, or apply their make-up still being denied them as

the use of toilet facilities was time sensitive and numbers allowed access to be still hyper-controlled.

Is there a simple answer to the gender of toilets? Potentially more gender-neutral facilities and the design of these facilities might alleviate these issues:

By changing how bathrooms are laid out, it's possible to create safety and privacy without relying on sex segregation.

(Stryker, 2017: 229)

Also, as another observation, the 'scene' is probably more frequented by heterosexual customers than pre-Covid, again taking away the protection and sense of awareness and understanding from the transgender individual. These hetero-normative customers are able to hold hands, kiss and show affection to one another in everyday life, and appear more than ever to be displaying these behaviours on the 'scene.' Indeed, recently I was in one of the venues and went to kiss my husband, and this led to giggles, pointing and comments within a venue where there should be comfort, openness, and inclusivity.

Trans trends in the arts and sport

What has been described as an emerging trend can be short lived and is there as a reaction to what has come before, with the knowledge it will be replaced by something more contemporary and sought after. This can be seen in the introduction within the second decade of the twenty-first century (Stryker, 2017) of transgender individuals, celebrities and characters in television shows and films. We have seen the highly publicised transition of Caitlyn Jenner in 2015, 'the former Olympic athlete, Kardashian clan member, and reality television star' (Stryker, 2017: 197), and the emergence of TV programmes like *Sense8* (2015-2018), *Orange is the New Black*

(2013-2019), and *Transparent* (2014-2019). As well as the visibility of trans celebrities on the cover pages of globally circulate publications to increase trans visibility:

Time magazine heralded a 'Transgender Tipping Point' in 2014. A year later, 2015 was declared the 'Year of Transgender' by media sources (BBC News, CNN News) in both Britain and the USA.

(Hines, 2018: 127)

However, where are these today in 2024? We have the television shows, films, and cover stories as artefacts, yet what did they achieve? What legacy have they left behind? There was a lot of celebratory writing about this in the mid-2010s in academic and journalistic publications, yet we are now where we are. Although Hines (2018) believes that:

... issues of equality for gender-diverse people have emerged on the political agenda in many countries, and recent years have witnessed greater legal protection for their rights.

(Hines, 2018: 128)

With this in mind it is necessary to ask is enough being done for trans people. Indeed, the USA under the governance of Donald Trump saw a turnaround to trans rights:

With Trump's unexpected victory in the 2016 presidential election, the movement for transgender rights experienced a set-back of such proportions that it threatens to utterly wipe out the remarkable gains of the preceding eight years. Trump nominated, and Congress approved, staunch opponents of trans rights to important cabinet positions, including Jeff Sessions as attorney general and Betsy DeVos as secretary of education.

(Stryker, 2017: 230)

In the UK, the campaign in 2022 for the new Conservative leader in England saw candidates making trans-phobic comments and overseeing trans rights:

Conservative leadership candidates slammed for 'transphobic dogwhistles' by top LGBT groups.

(Garton-Crosbie, 2022)

Britain's Conservative party leadership race is turning into a transphobic spectacle.

(John, 2022)

The Tory leadership contest is becoming a transphobia contest.

(Pritilata, 2022)

as well as sports personalities still being of the opinion that transgender athletes should not compete with cisgender athletes due to the unfair balance of power, stamina, and strength:

It is a sensitive topic, which poses some difficult questions about how gender is seen in sport, and some "dangerous" ones - according to transgender handball player Hannah Mouncey - about the fundamental right of athletes to participate in sport.

(Magowan, 2018)

continues to show that trans injustice is clearly evident (if not getting worse), and trans rights are not improving. Even LGBTQ+ advocates and those identifying as such have made comments against trans inclusion in sports:

... even Navratilova is called a bigot for recognising male sporting advantage... 'You can't just proclaim yourself a female and be able to compete against women' she tweeted. 'There must be some standards, and having a penis and competing as a woman would not fit that standard' ... Startled by the vitriolic response, Navratilova apologised, deleted the tweet and agreed to do some research ... 'If anything, my views have strengthened,' she wrote in the *Sunday Times* a couple of days later, describing self-ID in sport as 'insane' and 'cheating'. That made her persona non grata with LGBT groups that had regarded her as a heroine ever since she came out in 1981.

(Joyce, 2022: 198)

On 25 July 2022, Sharron Davies was reported in *The Express* newspaper as:

Sharron also claims that she has received “bullying” from “vicious trans activists” after she called for all sports to ban transgender athletes in female competitions. In a new interview, Sharron said: “There has been so much hate and bullying. It’s been very hard”. “Charities I’ve worked with for 30 years have dropped me, agents I’ve worked with for 30 or 40 years don’t use me anymore”. “The trans activists can be so vicious and malicious. They go after your work, after your brand, they attack everything.”

(Stanfield, 2022)

which can be argued is another ‘wrong conversation,’ as discussed by Faye (2022), as Davies is not the victim in the case where she made transphobic comments about sports participation. When scrolling down on the reactions of Davies’s original comments and the article mentioned above, the level of transphobia and trans injustice is even more evident in cis responses to the words of a public figure. This again, highlights the power of the media and the ability of this to mould and drive response and reactions. As such, the exploration of the barriers and prejudice faced by trans individuals should not be perceived as a quick fix or a short-term consideration, but more the need to consider what this microscopic view can highlight and show as being the barriers and social inequalities needing to be alleviated. This consideration will be different across the globe, and indeed within countries, villages, towns, cities and socio-political-religious environments and communities. Yet, applied theatre has the potential to allow for personal and social change due to its powerful ability to inspire its participants and audiences to address these inequalities. Catherine McNamara (Head of Guildford School of Acting) has conducted a range of research and performance projects with trans individuals and has been able to show the benefits of this inclusive approach since 2003. The *TransActing project* (2015) allowed her to collaborate with the founders of *My Genderation* to consider how research projects might ‘celebrate trans lives and trans experiences’ (McNamara in Prentki and Abraham, 2021: 252), and incorporate the

working practices of *Gendered Intelligence* to 'increase the quality of young trans people's lives and to raise awareness of their needs' (McNamara in Prentki and Abraham, 2021: 253). *My Generation* began as a film project following the appearance of its founders Fox Fisher and Lewis Hancox on the Channel 4 programme *My Transsexual Summer* (2011) and their desire to see accurate and reliable representations of trans people in the media and arts; and *Gendered Intelligence* being a charity established in 2008 to improve understanding and awareness of gender diversity and the approach that 'gender is a construct and not a natural phenomenon. It is a system which presents challenges' (McNamara in Prentki and Abraham, 2021: 253). McNamara explains that 'the aims of GI are to increase the quality of trans young people's lives and to raise awareness of their needs across the UK and beyond' (McNamara, 2018: 315) as well as to generate 'discussion and debate around gender, inequality rooted in gender, misogyny, misandry and sexism' (McNamara, 2018: 315). *TransActing* was a response to the need for an inclusive approach to performer training to support the skills and knowledge development (as well as practical experience) of trans performers.

McNamara considered that:

Experimenting with and training the body and the voice directly involves cultural realities or lived experiences that are bound up with gender and gendered expressions, and people who do not 'fit' with or into gender norms potentially feel they do not 'fit' [this] training. A trans or non-binary person may feel under scrutiny from a cisnormative social context.

(McNamara in Prentki and Abraham, 2021: 254)

The project allowed for a trans only, safe, and creative space for participants with the intent for them to take refuge in the sessions allowing them to 'take respect for granted and know they would be free from negative judgement on the basis of their gender' (McNamara in Prentki and Abraham, 2021: 255). This training included

acting for camera, movement, voice techniques, and the opportunity for the participants to network with industry professionals they may not have met before, within a respected safe practice and environment. This is a beacon of hope (Faye, 2021) that social change might begin to alleviate social injustice (Busby, 2021). The success of this project is evident in the summation of McNamara in that:

By 2018 approximately 300 people had participated in TransActing workshops in the UK.

(McNamara in Prentki and Abraham, 2021: 257)

McNamara and the *TransActing project* were invited to participate in the *TransArte* Festival in Rio de Janeiro in 2018 which brought together trans people and allies from across the globe to share practice, ideas and collaborate at a time in Brazil where:

Jair Bolsonaro was elected president in October 2018 and took office in January 2019. Since then, the Ministry of Women, Family and Human Rights has chosen not to include LGBT people as a legally protected group. Some politicians are pushing for a ban on talking about gender diversity and sexual orientation in schools. Bathroom laws pertaining to which toilet facilities trans people are allowed to use and bills defining what constitutes a family are under threat.

(McNamara in Prentki and Abraham, 2021: 257)

This highlights the continued social injustice of trans people globally discussed within this chapter, as well as the gendering of toilet facilities as discussed earlier in this chapter from a UK perspective. Despite this political atmosphere, the *TransArte* Festival had 'values that underpin the *TransArte* festival are respect for differences, non-violence, access to cultural activity, equal rights and freedom of expression' (McNamara in Prentki and Abraham, 2021: 258), that resulted in a sense of togetherness and solidarity to resist social injustice. In a 2019 article in *The*

Conversation, McNamara adds that the festival was a form of resistance to the political agenda and government of Brazil, as well as:

Working with the TransArte festival team in Rio have shown me the value of safe places free from judgement and hostility. The people we worked with told us that being there in solidarity with trans communities of Rio felt like a powerful action in itself, resisting the culture of violence that thrives in Bolsonaro's Brazil.

(McNamara, 2019)

Although this is a public engagement article in *The Conversation* and does not have the rigour of being peer reviewed or within published academic scholarship, it does provide a personal response to her experience.

It is this sense of solidarity that has informed my positionality within my own research as a cisgender researcher looking to find platforms where trans people's lived experiences can be heard, which they may have been denied access to in the past. McNamara has been involved in a number of projects with trans people and has acknowledged that 'there are more groups with a specific remit for working with trans young people, and many LGBT groups have developed more inclusive practice for a full range of young people' (McNamara, 2018: 317). Indeed, she was a key facilitator for an intergenerational project between 2010 and 2011 that was titled the *INTERArts* project that aimed to:

... contribute to the creation of community cohesion and strength across the whole trans community throughout the UK and to generate discussion and debate around gender.

(McNamara, 2018: 125)

The intergenerational approach was adopted to consider:

... a strong emphasis on differing lived experiences on the basis of age, and the idea that people from one generation or distinct age group, be that

younger or older people, tend to have reduced contact of those at the opposite point of the age scale.

(McNamara, 2018: 126)

It was this consideration of a range of intergenerational lived narratives that informed my research design around the participants who would be invited to participate in my own research project with the intention of exploring any similarities and differences of intergenerational trans experiences in Newcastle upon Tyne. Due to the lockdowns as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic in the UK between 2020 and 2022, I did not engage in an intergenerational project such as McNamara's as my participants were unable to meet and, as such, I was able to avoid 'challenges of working with such a diversity of identities' (McNamara, 2018: 126). However, similar to the project of McNamara, mine was able to see the engagement 'in some kind of joint activity' (McNamara, 2018: 126) as my participants were aware of their narratives forming an intergenerational consideration of the experiences of trans people. As such, I was able to focus on 'the 'matrix of identities' at the centre' (McNamara, 2018: 126) of my research project, just as McNamara had done. Although I was unable to directly facilitate intergenerational exchanges, my verbatim project stages intergenerational dialogue allowing me to apply the premise of McNamara's project as much as I could within the practicalities of the pandemic restrictions. As the participants in my own research shared the same interview questions as part of the research design for the verbatim performance project, so we (the participants and myself as co-authors of the final performance project) were able to 'explore a specific topic or theme' (McNamara, 2018: 127) which revolved around their own lived experiences as trans people. As discussed earlier in this thesis, I had been concerned that my own research project was becoming a hybrid oral history/production-ready verbatim performance piece due to applying for ethics approval at a time when theatre venues

were closed due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the subsequent lockdowns in the UK (and no consideration at that time of if/when venues may re-open), I was reassured by McNamara's discussion around:

History Alive (Generating Community) is an example of an intergenerational project that aimed to create cross-generational and cross-cultural connections in Brooklyn, 'using oral history as a basis for artistic expression that brings healing not only for the individual, but for society as a whole' (Perlstein and Bliss, 1994, p.5). the project sought to engage younger and older participants in 'interdisciplinary and curriculum-based analysis that enriches their social consciousness and their capacity for creative expression (ESTA, 2016).

(McNamara, 2018: 128)

The key difference between the project led by McNamara and my own was the individual nature of the interviews and co-authorship of each individual monologue, rather than the sharing of experiences for the greater creative good:

... the project team report that both older and younger generations enjoyed contact with the other age group, young and older participants experienced increased personal and creative confidence, and older people felt a decreased sense of isolation and a greater sense of well-being.

(McNamara, 2018: 129)

In retrospect, my own participants may well have benefitted from sensing commonality (as well as difference) in their lived experiences to allow for a sense of community and connection through shared lived experiences. However, my project did not have the aim or intention to develop this shared contact and sharing of experiences but was focussed on the individual narratives of each participant, allowing them to enjoy a platform to share these and to have their voice heard (Busby, 2021). My own project is unique as a result of this and due to it being based specifically in Newcastle upon Tyne, however I did need to acknowledge that there have been other intergenerational projects like McNamara's who herself mentioned that:

At the time the *INTERarts project* took place (2010), there were no other intergenerational projects that involved LGBTQ participants of which the project team and the external evaluation team were aware.

(McNamara, 2018: 129)

allowing the opportunity to consider the originality and contribution to research of her project, as well as allowing me to examine any similar projects to my own in the North East. McNamara does mention that:

I came to learn about *Bridging the Gap*, an intergenerational LGBTQ theatre project in New York City that sought to counter the splintering of LGBTQ people into age-segregated micro-communities which deprive them 'of opportunities to weave a common history and share strategies that community members have used to survive and thrive.'

(McNamara, 2018: 129)

which in turn allowed me to include in my own verbatim project the sharing of coping and survival mechanisms of each trans person interviewed. These would be included to support any trans people in the audience for my verbatim piece, as well as allow trans people in the audience to see and appreciate shared experiences, thoughts, and emotions for their own personal resilience. I included in my own verbatim design a similar approach to McNamara where both projects used interviews to 'gather and record personal histories' (McNamara, 2018: 129). In comparison, the project of McNamara saw these interviews being conducted by younger participants, whereas all of my interviews were conducted by myself. *INTERarts* was concerned with the sharing of experiences and younger participants examining the narratives of older participants, whereas my own project was to create a body of transcript memories for the trans participants to co-select what they wanted to share and be articulated in 2022 to a wider audience. Both projects had a similar aim of sharing of narratives in the hope of improving:

... understanding between younger and older LGBT people, and to foster mutual support, thereby reducing social isolation and celebrating LGBT heritage.

(McNamara, 2018: 130)

along with my own research project wanting to extend this improved understanding to heterosexual cisgender people as well. This allowing for 'their own lived experiences as part of a creative process' (McNamara, 2018: 130) as a result of the peer-ethnography approach, co-authorship and co-ownership of their narrative being shared as discussed earlier in this chapter. In fact, both projects (McNamara's and my own) allowed for pockets of prejudice, lack of awareness and understanding, and isolation to be identified and the projects used as a bridge to these gaps within the LGBTQ community and the hetero-normative expectations of wider society:

A key aim of the *INTERarts project* also connected with the idea of the micro-communities within what may be thought of as a bigger, broader LGBT community. The aim was to improve understanding and relationships.

(McNamara, 2018: 132)

As such, I was able to use my project and research approach with my participants to 'stimulate creative work and bring new insights into another person's subject position' (McNamara, 2018: 133) as well as allowing each individual narrative to allow each participant to 'express very different lived experiences' (McNamara, 2018: 134) to highlight the fact that there is no *one* trans voice, but individual voices and narratives hoping to be given the platform to be heard in some way. This aligns well to one of the core principles of *Gendered Intelligence* in that participants are:

Living lives and much as they face barriers and challenges, their collective experience of navigating the social world and finding solutions to problems is a valuable resource.

(McNamara, 2018: 318)

with a focus on younger trans people for McNamara and *Gendered Intelligence*, and a wider age group within society for my own research.

Trans narratives in media and literature

Transgender representation has predominately been one of ridicule and incredulity that highlighted the *otherness* of the individual, rather than the commonalities as human beings.

Trans people have been dehumanized, reduced to a talking point or conceptual problem: an 'issue' to be discussed and debated endlessly. It turns out that when the media want to talk about trans issues, it means they want to talk about *their* issues with us, not the challenges *facing us*.

(Faye, 2022: 9)

These were used as medical case studies, as well as psychological examination of an unhealthy mind and range of conditions and negative states of mental health. Representation was also comedic in tone where humour was used to further establish the social and cultural frameworks of inequalities. McLaren, et al. (2021) examine this negative approach to representation and highlight that 'historically, transgender people have largely been represented on screen in negative and/or stereotypical ways' (McLaren, et.al., 2021: 172), as well as determining the relationship between societal perception and media representation:

Billard (2016) importantly notes the "cycle of ignorance and hatred towards transgender individuals that is reflected in mainstream media representations of societal attitudes towards, and public policy regarding transgenderism."

(McLaren, et al., 2021: 172)

and without a switch in cisgender normative perceptions of transgender people, how can this be improved, and change seen in relation to casting and avoidance of stereotypical characters. Indeed, how can transgender roles be equal to others when

the film industry continues to work in the binary approach of male and female with no position for the trans character within this. The medicalisation versus personal narrative is highlighted more in the characters presented as:

Surgical and medical procedures to “re-align” people’s bodies with their internal sense of gender often appear as part of the narrative.

(McLaren, et al., 2021: 172)

and this creates trans representation that is ‘overly simplistic and lacking nuance’ (McLaren, et al., 2021: 173). McLaren, et al. consider that some media representations see transgender as a problem requiring a cure or an intervention as a result of this approach and assert that:

In most transgender representation, there is a transnormative theme influenced by a medical framework that sees surgery as necessary to fixing transness and thus falsely characterizing it as a “problem” that requires a solution (medical or otherwise).

(McLaren, et al., 2021: 173)

It is this trend of under-representation of transgender characters and the focus on intervention to fix the problem of being trans that needs to be addressed to allow for social justice (Busby, 2021). There will be further consideration of representation in the Chapters Three and Four that considers the intergenerational experience in Newcastle, and comparisons are made between the artistic presentation and the actual lived experiences; as well as the contribution this artistic (mis) representation had on the latter.

The lack of positive representation being said, there have been a number of transgender characters, cross-dressers, and characters who dress as a professional performance choice that have been presented. These have appeared in children’s books including those written by S. Bear Bergman, Jennifer Carr, Amy Fabrikant and

Wallace Wong; short stories including The Rikki Swin collection which is part of The Transgender Archives at the University of Victoria; material written by Sara Ryan and Randy Powell; *Trev* (2009) by Jacqueline Woodson. In television programmes including Alexis Meade in *Ugly Betty* (2006-2010); Hayley Cropper in *Coronation Street* (1960-); Sophia Burset in *Orange is the New Black* (2013-2019); Sally St Clair in *Hollyoaks* (1995-). In comics; manga; video games; and in films including *I Was a Male War Bride* (1949); *Some Like It Hot* (1959); *Psycho* (1960); *The Crying Game* (1992); *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* (1994); *Boys Don't Cry* (1999); *Transamerica* (2005); and *Dallas Buyers Club* (2013). You will note that these examples are global (USA, Canada, Australia, and the UK) and not based solely in the UK, which is another reason for placing the research project in Newcastle upon Tyne – my community, and the opportunity to examine representation in a contained and focused area.

Within the performing arts and media there is the ongoing politics and tensions of transgender actor casting as seen with O'Donnell, and which is discussed in this section of the chapter. In film, there have been a range of gender non-conforming characters and some transgender roles. These have included cross-dressers, transsexuals, transvestites, non-binary, and transgender people. Despite the influx of major feature films providing this range of characters, in many of these the transgender (using the umbrella term) character is often seen as a comedic role (with the dichotomy of laughing *at*, not *with*, the character) with films like *Some Like It Hot* as the audience can watch the transition into the female personas of Tony Curtis and Jack Lemmon and their attempts to maintain their disguise. Of course, this looks at cross-dressing and transvestism (which fall under the umbrella term of transgender), which have also been considered in films such as *The Bird Cage*

(1996), *To Wong Foo, Thanks for Everything Julie Newmar* (1995), and *Priscilla Queen of the Desert* (1994). However, the premise in *Some Like It Hot* is the male characters dressing as females are to avoid being murdered and is therefore a true disguise, yet still moments of humour around a man in a dress. Nathan Lane and Robin Williams in *The Birdcage* see the comedy value being around the effeminate characters, and the social and political need to hide the truth of the gay couple from the senator and his wife, and the comedic exit from the club with the characters dressing as drag queens to hide their identity. The audience reaction to seeing Patrick Swayze and Wesley Snipes in a dress, rather than their usual Hollywood hero or romantic lead role was also a consideration of difference and humour, rather than the realities of the characters they were portraying. *Priscilla* does include the character of Bernadette Bassenger (played by Terence Stamp) who is considered to be a transgender woman in the film's world of drag queens and transvestites, and of being judged as one of them. The film itself does not actually explore her role as a trans woman which on one hand allows her to be seen as a woman and not a trans woman, however the film only dilutes this 'normalness' in this colourful world of drag and the quest to cross the Australian outback. Gender politics is also considered in the film *Tootsie* (1982) with Dustin Hoffman playing a cross-dressing male actor whose purpose for dressing is to gain employment. At the time, this also highlighted the inequality of working conditions for females and had a strong feminist opinion of the role of women in the film industry. There is power in this piece which allows for drama and comedy, however, is more feminist in tone, and is not about gender identity as Hoffman plays a male actor comfortable in his gender identity but needs to enter into this disguise to earn money. This is similar to *Some Like It Hot* in regard to males dressing as women, but for different motives.

On the other hand, a film that wanted to be a serious and endearing rite of passage was *Transamerica*, however at times this became insulting as Bree's transition and body changes were comedic, almost as though playing for laughter or shock value. The film makers and Felicity Huffman embarked on extensive work to consider her physicalisation of the character creating more male and manly mannerisms, gestures and walk; as well as working vocally on lowering Huffman's vocal range to create more chest resonance and use of lower cadences in an attempt for this similar 'male' sound to be created. This film can be kind and caring at time as the audience can see Bree's plight and struggle to be accepted by society including her family and her son. Indeed, the final scene sees her comfortably at home simply living. As such, the film can highlight the pressures of the transgender individual needing to present on a daily basis. This sense of presenting is obviously because of social expectations of what is accepted as male and female, from clothing, to voice, to physical movements and gestures, and socially accepted behaviour and presentation. This allows for the normalising of trans characters (Pinto, 2018) as a means to raise awareness of trans people's experiences and rights.

Gender identity may indeed be constructed through social/cultural behaviours that are repeated by the individual until these become social and personal 'norms,' indeed Butler (1999) when considering a performative sense of gender considers that these repeated actions and behaviours are:

... a regulated process of repetition that both conceals itself and enforces its rules precisely through the production of substantializing effects.

(Butler 1999: 185)

Society ignores that fact that the transgender individual can acknowledge the existence of their birth gender behaviours, yet do not accept these repetitions

expected of them. Is this need to reject these repetitions and to not allow these to be 'concealed' as Butler (1999) considered what allows them to suffer and have an impact on their mental well-being and health. Indeed, for the individual it is the unlearning of these learned actions and behaviours that might be seen in their need to 'pass' and to live as their identified gender. In their later work, Butler emphasised the importance of acknowledging and respecting the diversity of experiences and identities within the wider trans community. In *Undoing Gender* (2004), Butler argues that gender is not only performative, but also material and embodied, and that it is important to recognise the ways in which gender intersects with other forms of identity, status, and power. This might explain the expressions of some transgender individuals that their birth gender felt 'uncomfortable' as these expectations of expected male and female behaviours and traits were not natural for them. As such, the exploration of the sense of self will allow me to consider what this means, as well as formulate my own hypothesis leading to the safe creative space to place my theory and research position into practice.

Albeit a little dated for 2024, Schechner (1985) expressed the opinion that performance could be transportive and transformative, with the sense of transformation being:

Clearly evidenced in initiation rites, whose very purpose it is to transform people from one status or social identity to another.

(Schechner, 1985: 127)

and transportation having a different result where the performer travels through a narrative to be 'returned' unchanged.

Transportation because during the performance the performers are "taken somewhere" but at the end, often assisted by others, they are "cooled down" and re-enter ordinary life just about where they went in.

(Schechner, 1985: 125)

With their shift of social norms and 'allowed' narratives to be shared, the transgender 'self' can transform their own narrative into a shared environment that questions and changes, allowing for transformation too. Theatre as a safe creative space could also be used in this sense as the transgender individual who does not feel the need to 'transform' to adapt and accept other social norms outside of the labelling of the trans- or cis-led narratives and accepted social norms. This safe creative space also needs to consider the individual's needs, as well as the community and cultural bias, so that this is not imposed upon them or seen as 'needed' as it is not the researcher's place to tell an oppressed or socially excluded group what they need as this might be 'regarded as an unwelcome intrusion' (Nicholson, 2005: 160), which in turn raises the question that there are times when you are unable to give voice to a group you are not a part of as you are making pre-conceived and naïve deductions. There is no one approach to creating theatre that might affect change, and my initial research had a positivistic tone as I initially believed that Applied Theatre was the one answer to my research questions. Chapter Four will discuss this in more detail as I came to the understanding through my research and amended research design that:

Applied Theatre is not a single approach, a toolkit or even several different toolkits all ready and waiting to be literally applied to different groups of people, with differing aims and in different contexts.

(Busby, 2021: 15)

resulting in the need for me to consider the positionality of the transgender participants I wanted to work with within the *my-identity* project, as well as my ethical and practical research design and approach. I also needed to consider the limitations of verbatim theatre-making and examine the balance between drama and

authenticity. As discussed by Blythe on the selection of interview material within her editing process 'it allows you to go "Oh gosh, I'm going to have to cut that completely" if it doesn't keep moving the drama forward' (Megson, 2018: 232), I needed to establish my own approach to selection and rejection, and there is a full review of the writing process adopted for my own research project with an examination of how decisions were made in relation to what parts of the narratives were used, and which were not in Chapter Four. This was a key consideration to attempt to address the avoidance of ventriloquism (Fisher, 2011), and to allow my research design to include the trans participants with the understanding that 'the agency of participation is [as] an embodied practice rather than a thing that is done to, or by, others' (Harpin and Nicholson, 2017: 3). The process of their participation needed to have personal value for each trans participant, as well as exploring how theatre-making can address social injustice and affect some form of change (Busby, 2021), as well as producing a final research output of worth to the process of participation, and to the (re) representation of the individual narratives discovered from the interviews with my participants. As Jeffers asserts:

Participation in arts activities may be 'fun', may add to an individual's skills and may open doors to other activities, but on its own, without questioning ideas of authority and authorship, it is a pale imitation of any activity that is likely to induce change at a more fundamental level.

(Jeffers in Harpin and Nicholson, 2017: 210)

whilst also ensuring this sense of transformation as discussed earlier has intent and gain:

Selves are relational and narrative forms. The process of telling the story is a transformative event. It is not a process of relating a static set of truths to the audience.

(Conroy in Harpin and Nicholson, 2017: 100)

This allowed me to reflect on how to keep an audience interested, whilst allowing for authenticity and authorship to be shared:

Authoring in an obvious way might gesture towards the writing of a play but *authorship* is a much more far-reaching term which involves 'naming, describing and affecting the world around us' and claiming 'the right to participate meaningfully in the making and defining of culture' (Morgan 1995: 26). In emphasising authorship, community artists are concerned to delve back into questions of authority: who sets up the apparently immutable status of experts, and in whose interests is this perpetuated?

(Jeffers in Harpin and Nicholson, 2017: 216-217)

and as previously discussed in this chapter, I wanted the trans participants to be at the centre of my verbatim material. Each participant, and trans person across the world, has the right to participate and to affect society around them. However, this chapter and the 'pockets of prejudice' as discussed in Chapter Three highlights the lack of opportunity for this participation to occur. There is a need for this opportunity to happen as these narratives, these lived experiences were what I wanted to understand, hear, and include in my verbatim research project placing the trans participants 'in the *centre* and as the *starting point* of understanding' (Inchley and Baker in Busby et al. ed., 2022: 273)

This in turn will allow for a connection between cis- and transgender participants (and their narratives and understanding of social norms) in order to understand their own individual, community, and cultural legacies, to celebrate diversity and to create a shared narrative of inclusivity with the avoidance of labels and hierarchical cultural and social sub-groups.

The idea that drama can take people beyond themselves and into the world of others is deeply rooted in the values of applied theatre and this chimes particularly well with a vision of social citizenship as a collective and communitarian undertaking.

(Nicholson, 2005: 24)

Chapter Six allows me to evaluate the *my-identity* project, and as such will allow me to consider this question of collectiveness or isolation. That chapter will also allow me to consider the significance of a cisgender gay male as the final curator and author of the remediated experience of my research participants, as opposed to fully realised community authored process. This would allow for the individual exploration of identity, community, and social and cultural perspectives which they are a part of. All participants are able to consider and express their own narratives to articulate their views and 'self' in a wider context without fear of consequence. This in turn links well to Taylor (2004) and the considered praxis between action – reflection – transformation:

... how people can live and work together, while valuing the difference between people and accounting for justice in society.

(Reed, 1993: 2)

By placing each trans participant at the centre of the creative process and being an active co-author, this will support the validity and accuracy of the experience and creative output allowing for the self-narrative to be explored and evidenced. However, there should also be the question of what is 'right' for the participants? There is a need to consider that a transformative outcome might be unnecessary and have a negative outcome as it takes the individual from their personal values and social acceptability, placing them in the unknown (and potentially unwanted or unneeded) which could result in isolation and their own oppression by the researcher. The creative process needs to be collaborative, for the outcome to be considered and agreed rather than imposed or forced. If the performance, narrative, and safe creative space I am creating is to have this result should this be to transport or to transform – the first allowing for the participant to experience and explore, being transported back to their real lives; compared to them being transformed and

emerging with a different individual and social reality and identity. This provision of opportunity to be transported into a reality for their true self to be able to exist in a new reality might allow for personal consideration, decision making and the expression of who they would like to be. Might it be considered that this will allow the individual to experience the life of the self they identify as, thus crossing the divide from the unordinary of their normal life to the ordinary behaviours, acts and expression of their gender identity? Although I am not a therapist and would never want a participant to feel they were in therapy, there is a therapeutic use of applied theatre techniques in this understanding and development of the self in different environments, arming the individual with examples of life experiences during transition and the newness of the expression of the person living on the inside. This environment allows for the sense of play and trying things out with no comeback or social reaction or rejection. This sense of a shared experience will also allow for the sharing of personal narratives:

Sociological approaches offer the possibility of engaging with the lived experiences of trans people and bringing these experiences to bear on social theory, rather than working from an existing template of scientific norms.

(Sanger in Hines and Sanger, 2010: 269)

Theatre can be seen as a vehicle to affect social change and 'can serve as a 'crucible' to make citizens want to take action' (Snyder-Young, 2013: 3). This action can be small and personal, as well as a larger trend within social change. There does need to be the consideration of the limitations of theatre and the need for practice-based researchers to 'design 'explorative' research projects engaging with the complexity of the ways the arts do *and do not* impact society' (Snyder-Young, 2010: 6). This is based on the fact that drama and theatrical events are not real, but a fictionalised version of a reality framed in a narrative context. In Chapter Four I

examine the use of verbatim techniques in relation to creating some accuracy and reality of lived experiences of the participants engaged in the process of creating my verbatim piece for performance. I will consider how 'social changes are hard to make' (Snyder-Young, 2010: 7) and examine how 'applied theatre practitioners have moved away from wanting to prove that theatre makes social change' (Snyder-Young, 2010: 7). My research design has considered more that:

... 'change' is an ongoing, unstoppable process, coupled with a radical hope that the theatre can nudge the direction of this change just a little towards social justice.

(Snyder-Young, 2010: 10)

As such, these nudges might allow social injustice (Busby, 2021) to be focussed on and rectified in some form. Again, this might be personal and individual as the narratives shared might allow personal change to be possible, as well as allowing participants to feel they are seen as 'theatre enables participants 'to be seen'; when onstage, they know they have the audience's attention' (Snyder-Young, 2010: 11) and that:

... the reality of sitting and watching, of being together in the same room can provide an opportunity to engage audience members in a process of thinking about the events occurring onstage.

(Snyder-Young, 2010: 12)

Therefore, my research project is not merely about affecting change, but the opportunity to engage in the lack of equity for trans people today and to act more as an intervention in the 'broken world' (Snyder-Young, 2010: 15) that trans people have to experience every day. Indeed, as Snyder-Young (2010) discusses:

Guglielmo Schinina suggests, 'the value of theatre does not lie in its capacity to emphasize what unifies human beings, but rather in its potential to emphasize their differences and to create bridges between them'. As the performance highlights the 'realness' of performers and their stories, when

audience members experience moments in which their differences from the performers are emphasized.

(Snyder-Young, 2010: 101)

It is this creation of bridges that may well alleviate sociological tensions for trans people, in the hope of taking the first steps in addressing transphobia and lack of parity of opportunity and acceptance. Indeed, 'because the story is framed as 'real,' these details *do matter*' (Snyder-Young, 2010: 101). There is the need for *my-identity* to matter as these narratives need a platform to present them as 'people today have a strong sense of what is wrong but not how to put it right' (Megson, 2018: 47).

Where are we in 2024?

The next chapter, entitled 'Pockets of Prejudice' will examine where trans people are placed in regard to social perception and equality today. As a result of the research and findings of this chapter, it was clear that I needed to analyse national and local data in the findings of the national and localised reports in relation to trans experiences. This would allow me to render a more nuanced and ethically awareness of my position as a cisgender qualitative practice researcher in this field, and to inform the next stages of my research design. The next chapter of this thesis considers national surveys and results conducted by Stonewall and Galop, as well as localised consideration of equality from Newcastle City Council; and Chapter Four will allow me to fully develop the use of applied theatre and verbatim techniques, as well as consider the limitations these might pose. The analysis of data sets found in the reports considered in Chapter Three will home in on trends and statistical results that impact trans lives today, as well as considering how transphobia and misperception has developed in the UK and Newcastle upon Tyne specifically between 2017 and 2024.

Chapter Three: The Newcastle 'Pockets of Prejudice'

As part of the research design for the PhD performance project called *my-identity*, I had considered my positionality as a qualitative practice researcher within the selected geographical location of Newcastle upon Tyne. As discussed in the Introduction and Chapter One, this was a result of this being where I am located, work and socialise within the same LGBTQ+ 'scene' I wanted to investigate (Mackey and Fisher, 2011). This initial research plan and decision then allowed for the examination of transgender social injustice (Faye, 2021), cisgender perception and notions of equity and inclusion to be explored within Chapter Two. As a cisgender researcher, I have established from the outset my research methods as being those as a co-author of a verbatim PhD research project (Nelson, 2012), as well as trying to establish a sense of peer-ethnography in the research methods and design (Megson, 2018). This chapter allows me to present the development of the research design based on national surveys and reports produced by Stonewall and Galop between 2017 and 2022 in relation to cisgender perception of transgender people, trans lived experiences, and areas of transphobia and hate crime. These quantitative research projects were conducted on a national level to produce insightful and statistically important results to identify major trends and shifts in transphobia and the placement of trans individuals in the wider LGBTQ+ national identity (Gilbert and Stoneman, 2016). This was an important area of the research development as it not only allowed me to analyse the data sets, findings, and recommendations of these; but also highlighted the requirement for my overall research project. I was able to then move my focus from the national landscape to a localised one with the review and analysis of the Newcastle City Council Equality reports between 2019 and 2021. These highlighted some data anomalies which will be discussed further in this

chapter. These continued to focus on the social injustice and lack of inclusion or acceptance of trans people in the city. As a result of my identifying this local issue, I was then able to use qualitative methods with a specifically identified group of participants whose lived experiences were fundamental to the development and creation of this research performance project (Barrett and Bolt, 2019). I then undertook my own online Questionnaire and subsequent Interviews (Cresswell and Poth, 2018) to determine if my proposed verbatim project was valuable and needed. This allowed me to funnel down to the key areas for (re) presentation within the *my-identity* project.

As a preparatory step to the fieldwork research for my PhD *my-identity* project, there was a need to consider the experiences of transgender individuals within the United Kingdom to contextualise demand for a performance project aimed at (re) presenting trans lived experiences in the North East of England. As such, the published datasets of Stonewall and Galop were reviewed with analysis of a range of surveys and reports conducted over the last 5 years. Stonewall is a UK charity that provides information, guidance, and support for LGBTQ+ individuals as they strive for social inclusion and equity; and Galop is a UK anti-abuse charity. This existing research from these national charities produced data sets of major statistical impact considering a larger sub-section of UK society, producing a 'systematic collection of data from a survey population' (Hammond, 2021: 170) as well as presenting results that were 'representative of the broader population' (Gilbert and Stoneman, 2016: 242). These reports provided major, UK-level statistical considerations of the lived experiences of the LGBTQ+ community nationally to make recommendations of social and political considerations to improve any social injustice or lack of equity

(Busby, 2021). This academic insight allowed me to consider whether the situation was similar in Newcastle upon Tyne and if there was a need to develop a performance project to address this lack of equity. My research methods allowed me to analyse the findings of both Stonewall and Galop to draw insights as a qualitative researcher to understand the national picture of LGBTQ+ (and especially trans people) to help me to consider the unique aspects of LGBTQ+ lived experiences in the city of Newcastle upon Tyne as a means to:

The rigours of sustained academic research are driven by a desire to address a problem, find things out, establish new insights.

(Nelson, 2013: 3)

It was this section of the research design for the project that allowed me to establish if there was a problem, and what this might actually be. As I will demonstrate in this chapter, it became obvious from these national reports that there was a continued lack of parity of rights and social perceptions of transgender individuals. This consideration of national statistical data led to the analysis of the experiences of transgender individuals in the city that was the focus of my own study and performance project. There was some conflicting opinion and data between the national reports (of Stonewall and Galop) and Newcastle City Council's data sets around the rates of transphobia hate crimes that resulted in the clear identification of the need for me to 'engage in conceptual debate' (Nelson, 2013: 31) around this prejudice and lack of opportunity. The results from these allowed me to 'sketch the intellectual and practical context in which [...my] work [was] undertaken' (Nelson, 2013: 99) and led me to design a smaller scale questionnaire for members of the local LGBTQ+ community and its allies. I was able to use existing *quantitative* data results from the surveys and reports of Stonewall, Galop and Newcastle City Council

(all of which had large scale sample sizes) to inform a qualitative approach in my own questionnaire with a focus on one specific group within the city to gain a more personal set of responses of any common lived experiences to inform the direction of the research project of creating a piece of applied theatre work to (re) present trans individuals in Newcastle. My reason for this approach of qualitative research was that my own practice, the theatrical installation, and performance script found in Chapter Five of this dissertation, was in its nature a form of qualitative research. I therefore needed reliable qualitative data from a small sample of research participants (Walliman, 2018) from which to produce my own verbatim script, visual and auditory installation, and relevant artefacts to 'engage audiences emotionally and communally' (Saldana in Denzin and Lincoln, 2018: 378). In undertaking this, I was guided by the fact that:

It is not just the representation of the community voice that shares common ground with applied theatre, but also the importance of inclusion and participation in an event that was created with, for and by the community.

(Abraham in Prentki and Abraham, 2021: 4)

As a member of the wider LGBTQ+ community myself, this would allow for the ethnographical approach of looking inside and almost 'around' the community being examined. In response to survey data from Stonewall and Galop in particular, I devised 5 research questions:

- What is community – how can this be considered in a city where there is fragmentation of equality, equity and opportunity within what is perceived as an LGBTQ+ 'community'?
- What is the position of trans people today (in 2024), how has it changed, and do trans people need their own 'Stonewall moment'?

- How has applied theatre practice, and specifically verbatim techniques, been used by other practitioners in similar contexts and how might this overarching approach to theatre-making be used to provide opportunity to identify the position of trans people today?
- What are the ethical considerations of verbatim techniques, and how might these provide the opportunity for trans people across different generations in Newcastle upon Tyne to (re) present their lived experiences and share with other trans and non-trans people the day-to-day experience of being trans today in the North East of England?
- How is this research important and needed based on research into, and the examination of data around hate crimes and transphobia locally and nationally?

The results of Stonewall and Galop led me to consider how their data analysis reflect upon the city of Newcastle upon Tyne and to what extent the social injustice towards trans individuals was present. As such, I devised a questionnaire and conducted subsequent interviews to establish if there was a need for my verbatim theatre project of intergenerational trans voices, as well as allowing for an investigation *with* those who might normally *be* investigated (Barrett and Bolt, 2019: 11). Interviews are useful in the production of qualitative data and responses as they allow you to become 'knowledgeable about the most important people and their ideas' (Walliman, 2018: 43) and allow me to consider specific people in social groups and as individuals (Walliman, 2018). The final PhD *my-identity* play is a continuation of the presentation of the qualitative analysis from the research and results found. This was not about producing a piece of verbatim work that might be considered 'an act of

ventriloquism' (Fisher, 2011: 194), but a verbatim piece that might act as a 'means of education and as a means to effect change' (Busby, 2021: 1). Indeed, I wanted to create a piece of theatre that would allow for co-authorship with the trans participants and allow for an approach discussed earlier of peer-ethnography with the *my-identity* text as an 'economically viable artefact' with 'the potential for changing social and cultural discourses and practices' (Barrett and Bolt, 2019: 11); as well as an applied theatre approach of working with, rather than writing about these trans lived experiences through narrative analysis creating:

...themes, structures, interactions and performances from stories and accounts that people use to explain their past, their present situation or their interpretation of events.

(Walliman, 2018: 162)

The work of Stonewall and Galop allowed me to progress to the next stage of my research design with the consideration of the originality of the research project to ensure this resulted in an original contribution to this field of research, and 'to explore whether our [my] research question (s) has been asked before' (Gilbert and Stoneman, 2016: 246); and to produce a verbatim piece that would be 'unlikely to be derived, copied, imitated or translated from anything else' (Silverman, 2017: 89). The data sets recorded from the national surveys would help me to develop the research project into a more localised performance needed to record lived experiences around social injustice. To which end, I devised a set of qualitative research questions for my own local-to-Newcastle questionnaire and interviews:

Qualitative research questions are open-ended, evolving and non-directional. They restate the purpose of the study in more specific terms and typically start with a word such as what or how rather than why in order to explore a central phenomenon.

(Cresswell and Poth, 2018: 137)

Stonewall

Between 2017 and 2022 Stonewall commissioned a range of research projects to consider the lived experiences of those who identify as LGBTQ+ in the UK. As Ruth Hunt (Stonewall Chief Executive 2014-2019) comments in the foreword to the report of Bachmann and Gooch (2017) these new projects were a result of:

In 2013, our research clearly demonstrated the scale and seriousness of the problem. Since then, the prevalence of hate crime towards LGBT people has increased significantly, and underreporting remains a major issue. This report demonstrates just how much work remains to be done.

(Bachmann and Gooch, 2017: 4)

and that a need had been identified to analyse the lived experiences of LGBTQ+ lives, and especially those of trans people. With its research project, Stonewall was able to produce reports of significance, making pertinent recommendations to attempt to alleviate inequality and lack of equitable rights and to 'establish new knowledge' (Nelson, 2013: 25) for wider consideration. Stonewall's Chaka L Bachmann worked with Becca Gooch from YouGov to produce the Stonewall report, *LGBT in Britain: Hate Crime and Discrimination* in 2017. As a foreword to the report, Ruth Hunt also discusses that:

Based on YouGov polling of more than 5,000 LGBT people in Britain, it reveals LGBT people's experiences of hate crime and discrimination in Britain today. The findings are stark. LGBT people continue to face abhorrent levels of abuse, harassment and discrimination on a daily basis: one in five have experienced a hate crime or incident related to their sexual orientation or gender identity in the last 12 months, and four in five victims have not reported it to the police, many because they feared that it would not be taken seriously. For trans people, the findings are particularly alarming: two in five trans people have experienced a hate crime or incident based on their gender identity in the last 12 months.

(Bachmann and Gooch, 2017: 4)

and the report clearly identifies the extent of these hate crimes based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

The research of Bachmann and Gooch was conducted over a 3-month period in 2017 in the form of an online survey conducted by YouGov on behalf of Stonewall. Bachmann and Gooch comment on their methodology that there were 5,375 individuals from across the UK LGBTQ+ community who completed this survey to comment about their 'life in Britain today' (Bachmann and Gooch, 2017: 32). As a national research survey, Bachmann and Gooch had a range of respondents and a considered approach applied to the project, as well as an analysis of the climate around transphobia and social injustice (Busby, 2021). With a strong and rigorous participation rate, this study was able to produce data of statistical importance with a reliable quantitative sample size:

It is generally accepted that conclusions reached from the study of a large sample are more convincing than those from a small one.

(Walliman, 2018: 108)

The sample (more than 5,000 lesbian, gay, bi, and trans (LGBT) people across England, Scotland, and Wales) of Bachmann and Gooch was made up of:

- 53 per cent of respondents from England
- 24 per cent are from Wales
- 23 per cent are from Scotland.

(Bachmann and Gooch, 2017:32)

allowing for a consideration of the issues across the United Kingdom to provide comparative data. There was a good gender representation with 50% male, 41% female and 8% who described 'their gender in a different way' (Bachmann and Gooch, 2017: 32) and that these included the respondents describing this as

Different terms that respondents used to describe their gender identity include 'non-binary,' 'genderfluid' and 'genderqueer.' People who used a different term to describe their gender identity are referred to as 'non-binary people' throughout the report.

(Bachmann and Gooch, 2017: 32)

Sexual orientation was also represented across the spectrum with 58% identifying as gay or lesbian, 30% as bisexual, and 9% deciding to use a different term for their sexuality identity with:

Different terms that respondents used to describe their sexual orientation include 'pansexual' and 'queer.' 14 per cent of respondents said they identify as trans and another four per cent said they are unsure of whether they are trans or are questioning their gender identity.

(Bachmann and Gooch, 2017: 32)

Bachmann and Gooch also confirmed that:

The figures have been weighted by region and age. All differences reported in the survey are statistically significant. All names in quotes have been changed for anonymity and ages have been assigned from within age bands.

(Bachmann and Gooch, 2017: 32)

This methodology of Bachmann and Gooch was rigorous and transparent and allowed the respondents to be assured of confidentiality with the protection of anonymity. The report of Bachmann and Gooch provides the overarching data results that:

- **One in five** LGBT people (21%) have experienced a hate crime or incident due to their sexual orientation and/or gender identity in the last 12 months
- **Two in five** trans people (41%) have experienced a hate crime or incident because of their gender identity in the last 12 months and **one in six** LGB people, who aren't trans (16%), have experienced a hate crime or incident due to their sexual orientation in the same period.
- **Four in five** LGBT people (81%) who experienced a hate crime or incident didn't report it to the police.
- **Three in ten** LGBT people (29%) avoid certain streets because they do not feel safe there as an LGBT person.
- **One in ten** LGBT people (10%) have experienced homophobic, biphobic or transphobic abuse online directed towards them personally in the last month.

This number increases to **one in four** for trans people (26%) directly experiencing transphobic abuse online in the last month.

- **One in four** Black, Asian and minority ethnic LGBT people (24%) accessing social services in the last year have been discriminated against because of their sexual orientation
- **One in ten** LGBT people (10%) who attended a live sporting event in the last year experienced discrimination because of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

(Bachmann and Gooch, 2017: 6)

The report of Bachmann and Gooch was also able to consider the number of LGBT (the acronym used by Bachmann and Gooch) people who had experienced a hate crime or incident due to being LGBT in the past 12 months:

Table 3.1: LGBT people who have experienced a hate crime or incident due to being LGBT in the past 12 months – Bachmann and Gooch (2017)

Area of the UK	Those who experienced a hate crime
North East	35%
London	25%
Wales	23%
West Midlands	22%
Scotland	20%
East Midlands	19%
East of England	19%
South East	19%
North West	18%
Yorkshire and the Humber	18%
South West	18%

(Bachmann and Gooch, 2017: 9)

As mentioned earlier, a data anomaly was presented with this figure as Bachmann and Gooch identify high levels of hate crime in the North East (35%), whereas Newcastle City Council see homophobia and transphobia account for 13.6% (2017-18), 14.7% (2018-19) and 19.1% (2019-20) of hate crimes in the city. Obviously, Newcastle upon Tyne is not the only city classed as being in the North East area,

however do these figures highlight the high levels of hate crime in the city? If there is this extent of hate crimes in the city, how do members of the Newcastle 'scene' support each another? And indeed, do they? This was a key consideration of both the questionnaire and interviews I subsequently designed as part of my own PhD research process, where these internal pockets of prejudice were identified and commented upon qualitatively by respondents and interviewees.

Prior to Covid-19 (2020), Stonewall again commissioned Bachmann and Gooch to write a report entitled *LGBT in Britain: Health Report in 2018* to examine the negative effects of discrimination and hate crimes. Again, Ruth Hunt wrote in the foreword that:

In the last year alone, half of LGBT people have experienced depression and three in five have suffered from anxiety, far exceeding estimates for the general population. And our findings show that poor mental health is also higher among LGBT people who are young, Black, Asian or minority ethnic, disabled or from a socio-economically deprived background. It's a shocking picture, that must serve as a wakeup call for healthcare providers across the sector ... The persistence of these inequalities calls for leadership from the very top and action at all levels. The UK, Scottish and Welsh Governments must play an important role in this. For example, the UK Government implementing the commitments it made in the LGBT Action Plan, including ensuring that the National Adviser for LGBT healthcare in England has the remit and resources to drive change.

(Bachmann and Gooch, 2018: 3)

which highlighted the continued injustice and lack of equity, and the effect these have on individuals who identify as LGBTQ+.

The headline data from Bachmann and Gooch included:

- Half of LGBT people (52%) said they've experienced depression in the last year.
- One in eight LGBT people aged 18-24 (13%) said they've attempted to take their own life in the last year.

- Almost half of trans people (46%) have thought about taking their own life in the last year, 31% of LGB people who aren't trans said the same.
- Forty-one per cent of non-binary people said they harmed themselves in the last year compared to 20% of LGBT women and 12% of GBM men.
- One in six LGBT people (16%) said they drank alcohol almost every day over the last year.
- One in eight LGBT people aged 18-24 (13%) took drugs at least once a month.
- One in eight LGBT people (13%) have experienced some form of unequal treatment from healthcare staff because they're LGBT.
- Almost one in four LGBT people (23%) have witnessed discriminatory or negative remarks against LGBT people by healthcare staff. In the last year alone, six per cent of LGBT people – including 20% of trans people – have witnessed these remarks.
- One in twenty LGBT people (five per cent) have been pressured to access services to question or change their sexual orientation when accessing healthcare services.
- One in five LGBT people (19%) aren't out to any healthcare professional about their sexual orientation when seeking general medical care. This number rises to 40% of bi men and 29% of bi women.
- One in seven LGBT people (14%) have avoided treatment for fear of discrimination because they're LGBT.

(Bachmann and Gooch, 2018: 5)

which evidenced negative impact on the mental health of those within the LGBTQ+ community prior to the global pandemic due to this research being conducted in 2017. It is important to note that this was pre-pandemic (pre-2020), and the mental health was not a result of lived experiences during Covid-19 but based on social injustice and lack of equity prior to these conditions.

Following this, Stonewell worked with Opinionium and published their *Take Pride Report* (2022), with writers Nancy Kelley and Robbie de Santos marking the 50th anniversary of the first Pride walk and to ascertain the perception of the public on LGBTQ+ people today (Kelley and de Santos, 2022: 2). Kelley and de Santos refer to their methodology within the report and highlight that '2000 adults living across the

UK [were asked] how they feel about lesbian, gay, bi and trans people' (Kelley and de Santos, 2022: 2). Each respondent was able to tick as many options of their responses as they wanted to with these being considerations of 'respect, admiration, pity, disgust, resentment, fear, and envy, as well as 'we can't choose' and 'prefer not to say'" (Kelley and de Santos, 2022: 2) and that these questions were:

Based on a question about public sentiment towards trans people that was tested and used in the British Social Attitudes Survey of 2019, as part of a piece of work commissioned by the Equalities and Human Rights Commission.

(Kelley and de Santos, 2022: 2)

Interestingly, Kelley and de Santos are positive about social change and societal perception of LGBTQ+ and believe there is an improved sense of acceptance in the UK, whilst still highlighted some continued social injustice and lack of equity for trans individuals (Busby, 2021):

Our findings paint a picture of growing acceptance: a society beginning to truly take pride in LGBTQ+ people as neighbours, colleagues, friends and family. But the findings also show a small minority of people who are still holding on tight to the feelings of disgust and fear that drive homophobia, biphobia and transphobia. Feelings that were all too common when we first marched for our rights though London fifty years ago.

(Kelley and de Santos, 2022: 2)

Although it is difficult to compare the 2017 and 2022 reports, the latter can represent the opinion of its respondents on their perception and feelings towards trans people. Indeed, Kelley and de Santos can prove the hypothesis that there is still transphobia in 2022 seen in the participant responses; and this is clearly seen in the previously discussed Tory leadership campaign, trans participation in sporting events and activities, and even to trans casting in the arts. Although Kelley and de Santos state that there is a 'growing acceptance,' this is only the 'society beginning' which needs

to be continued. The report by Kelley and de Santos does highlight the general societal feelings towards trans people based on respect, admiration, disgust, pity, fear, resentment, and envy (Kelley and de Santos, 2022). Kelley and de Santos provided some interesting data regarding the split of these feelings to lesbians, gay men, bi people, and trans people; and the reduction in negative opinion of trans people compared to others within the survey and presented data.

People were more likely to say they felt respect for lesbian and gay people (38% and 37%) than for bi and trans people (32% and 31%).

(Kelley and de Santos, 2022: 3)

which emphasises that trans people remain at the bottom of the LGBTQ+ hierarchal order. The report by Kelley and de Santos then breaks down the other emotional responses for each:

Table 3.2: Public feelings of admiration towards LGBT people – Kelley and de Santos (2022)

		Lesbian	Gay	Bi	Trans
Admiration		19%	19%	16%	21%

(Kelley and de Santos, 2022: 4)

and the 21% admiration towards trans people is a reassuring sign that the societal perception may well be beginning to change and allow trans identities to be valued and an awareness of the journey needed to be travelled for each one. Indeed, 'feelings of admiration are highest for trans people, perhaps reflecting public acknowledgement of the challenges faced by trans people living in the UK today' (Kelley and de Santos, 2022: 4). These challenges are discussed by the intergenerational group of trans participants in my own PhD *my-identity* project as they openly share their lived experiences and hopes for the future. If perception is

shifting (albeit slowly), now is the time for projects like this to continue to evidence to cis people the lived experiences and the need for equity. In their report Kelley and de Santos used the methodology of asking 'just over 200 adults living across the UK how they feel about lesbian, gay, bi and trans people' (Kelley and de Santos, 2022: 2), however this data from Kelley and de Santos may well be skewed as it does not state if any of the respondents identified as being LGBTQ+. There is the potential need for a second report of respondents within LGBTQ+ to see how they emotionally perceive and react to the other people within this umbrella term – might this identify continuing or further pockets of prejudice? Also, the report does not look at the geographical positionality of the respondents, and as such is unable to consider the relationship between geography, identity, perception, and acceptance. Again, this would be an interesting follow-up to this *Take Pride Report (2022)* to fully consider if the UK does have this sense of pride in LGBTQ+ people living there. Yet, I do need to consider that although it might have been useful to have the prevalence of anti-LGBTQ+ sentiment in different regions to allow for a comparison between Stonewall and Newcastle City Council data sets, this may not have been necessary for their research, or not a requirement of the funding agenda behind their work.

My own questionnaire and interviews conducted for my research and performance project were able to look at the depth and detail of this geographical and internal perception of LGBTQ+ people on Others in the Newcastle 'scene' and identify the need for trans (re) presentation, awareness raising and equity within the city and its 'scene'. As such, the narratives can allow the intergenerational group of trans participants to do that, to (re) present themselves. This allows them to speak for themselves, rather than to be spoken about or pitied. In the following chapter I will examine the ethical use and process of verbatim techniques as the project attempts

to establish an 'ethical contract with those offering up their life experiences' (Fisher, 2011: 197) and an avoidance of:

... the people represented in verbatim dramas are theatrical constructions, characters rather than 'real' people.

(Heddon, 2008: 134)

with the intention that my selected research and creative processes might allow the *my-identity* project to be able to:

... open up the possibility for an authentic reflection on how the resonance of trauma has transformed the life of the individual who has lived through it.

(Fisher, 2011: 119)

My practice needed to ensure that my approach to applied theatre work is supportive of the participants and realistic with the limitations of this type of work:

[Some] describe applied theatre practitioners as 'social elastoplasts', noting the danger that if we take this position towards intending for change and 'fixing problems' we may be approaching our practice and participants from a 'deficit perspective'... This raises important points about the ethics of practice intending to 'create change'.

(Abraham in Prentki and Abraham, 2021: 264)

and to ensure that the final performance text also allowed for 'joy in communities who face complex and devastating contexts' (Abraham in Prentki and Abraham, 2021: 265).

Table 3.3: Public feelings of pity towards LGBT people – Kelley and de Santos (2022)

	Lesbian	Gay	Bi	Trans
Pity	7%	7%	7%	15%

(Kelley and de Santos, 2022: 4)

It was not surprising, based on the research throughout this chapter, that trans people had the highest emotional response of pity from the respondents. However, as Kelley and de Santos have based this report and survey on emotional responses, it is not transparent as to why respondents who replied saying that they pitied trans individuals responded in that way. As Kelley and de Santos observe:

It's worth noting that pity is ambiguous ... Put simply, the comparatively high levels of pity for trans people might be driven by transphobia and/or concern about the impact of transphobia on trans people.

(Kelley and de Santos, 2022: 4)

Transphobia is the key word used by Kelley and de Santos in this data, and this is of paramount importance as it is based on hate crimes in two ways. On one hand, those people in society who have transphobic thoughts and opinions, and on the other those who witness transphobia and may not do anything about it. There is a need here for the data reported by Kelley and de Santos to be drilled down to see what this sense of pity is based on, and geographically if there are comparisons to be made here.

Table 3.4: Public feelings of disgust towards LGBT people – Kelley and de Santos (2022)

	Lesbian	Gay	Bi	Trans
Disgust	7%	9%	8%	8%

(Kelley and de Santos, 2022: 4)

Disgust is a strong reaction towards another person and these figures are still high and unacceptable in our modern society. Again, there is no geographical context of the responses. This geography of response and emotional connection would be

highly interesting as it would allow researchers to examine areas of acceptance, and areas of continuing phobia. Kelley and de Santos do highlight some of the areas of potential disgust that is commonplace against trans people:

... it is commonplace to hear stories about trans people, and in particular trans people's bodies, that are steeped in disgust. This is often reflected in media discourse about trans people and their rights.

(Kelley and de Santos, 2022: 4-5)

We continue to see transphobic comments made in politics in the UK, about participation in competitive sporting events, lack of access to NHS provision, the dichotomy around trans women being able to attend female only colleges; and these are all escalated in the media and the tabloids with there being no conversation *with* trans people, but rather judging and commenting *about* or *for* them. Fisher (2011) discussed the need to consider this as a theatre-maker as 'how can we speak for her or him in a way that is empowering and ethical' (Fisher, 2011: 195). Applied theatre practitioners need to constantly consider that 'it is important to remember there are communities impacted by these [their creative] choices' (Abraham in Prentki and Abraham, 2021: 265), and in particular for those working within verbatim and how they care for the participant's words and narratives. As discussed by verbatim playwright Alecky Blythe in conversation with Chris Megson:

It's verbatim so therefore you're dealing with real people and you have to respect them, and you can't play around with it too much.

(Megson, 2018: 223)

Therefore, I needed to not write *for* or *about* trans lived experiences, as how can I as a cis writer believe to understand the trans identity and can (re) present them but more so *with*. However, the *for* might be as an advocate or ally who is trying to deconstruct inaccuracies of societal perception and to open up dialogue and positive

conversations for trans people to be able to enter into. These conversations were identified and discussed by Faye (2022), and she states that it is her ‘hope’ for change that motivated her to conduct and present her research, and that:

Hope is part of the human condition and trans people’s hope is our proof that we are fully human. We are not an ‘issue’ to be debated and derided. We are symbols of hope for many non-trans people, too, who see in our lives the possibility of living more fully and freely. This is why some people hate us: they are frightened by the gleaming opulence of our freedom.

(Faye, 2022: 268)

Table 3.5: Public feelings of resentment towards LGBT people – Kelley and de Santos (2022)

	Lesbian	Gay	Bi	Trans
Resentment	4%	3%	4%	4%

Table 3.6: Public feelings of envy towards LGBT people – Kelley and de Santos (2022)

	Lesbian	Gay	Bi	Trans
Envy	2%	3%	3%	2%

(Kelley and de Santos, 2022: 5)

Again, resentment and envy can be difficult emotional responses to fully understand the respondent’s connection to these words. Is this based on resentment of cis women against trans women as discussed throughout this research, or the envy of the glamorous feel created by programmes like *RuPaul’s Drag Race* (2009-) or drag performers? There have been several of the drag queens on *RuPaul’s Drag Race* who have identified as trans or non-binary and they too have begun to open up the discussion about the actual challenges and issues faced by trans people. However,

this programme has also received negative responses from some fans around this, as well as the casting of the first cis female drag queen on *RuPaul’s Drag Race UK* (2019-) with Veronica Scone in Series Three that was aired on UK television in 2021. It was not within the remit of Kelley and de Santos’ study to gather open-field responses or to undertake qualitative data analysis; however, the inclusion of qualitative analysis could have understood this more fully, rather than producing a report based purely on quantitative data, which are results fixed in their findings, without allowing for interpretation or further work to be considered. Indeed, they comment on these two emotional responses as:

Feelings of resentment, and feelings of envy are even less common, and consistent across all of our communities.

(Kelley and de Santos, 2022: 5)

There needs to be a consideration of why, and how these emotional responses might manifest themselves and what potential outcomes and actions might be.

Table 3.7: Public feelings of fear towards LGBT people – Kelley and de Santos (2022)

	Lesbian	Gay	Bi	Trans
Fear	4%	4%	3%	4%

(Kelley and de Santos, 2022: 5)

Similar to the data around responses of disgust, and although the above data evidence low percentages, why do LGBTQ+ people continue to be feared based on their gender identity or sexuality? Again, it would have been interesting to see if there were any geographical differences in the respondents to try to understand what this fear is – fear of the unknown, fear that an LGBTQ+ person will ‘turn’ them, or

fear based on a lack of tolerance? Although there were no focussed geographical locations considered, the report does provide a country focussed split across England, Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland with the following identified:

Table 3.8: Feelings about trans people in England, Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland - Kelley and de Santos (2022)

	England	Wales	Scotland	Northern Ireland
BASE: all respondents	1,682	96	168	55
Respect	32%	37%	32%	24%
	536	36	54	13
Admiration	16%	28%	21%	20%
	266	27	35	11
Pity	9%	20%	13%	24%
	146	19	22	13
Disgust	7%	5%	7%	18%
	116	5	12	10
Resentment	4%	1%	5%	0%
	73	1	8	0
Fear	4%	3%	2%	8%
	60	3	4	4
Envy	3%	1%	1%	2%
	52	1	2	1

(Kelley and de Santos, 2022: 27)

and although this provides data on the nations within the UK, further examination of regional areas might have provided an insight into whether sentiments and emotional responses were affected by the respondent being in a city or rural location; or if they were in or near LGBTQ+ hubs within the country. The report by Kelley and de Santos does suggest that although there is improved positive sentiment towards LGBTQ+ people, the fact that there are still negative responses (albeit decreasing) needs to be a consideration for social equity. Indeed, are some of these emotional connections based around the inaccurate representation of trans people in the media, politics, and the news? Might it be based on respondents having not knowingly met a trans person and having no framework to base their experiences or responses on? This further highlights the importance of theatre and verbatim as a way of getting trans voices heard by people who may not normally hear or want to hear them. This links to the consideration of Busby (2021) and the need for voices to feel that they have been heard; as well as the need to constantly self-evaluate your verbatim process to ensure bias is avoided as much as possible:

The representation of narratives, communities, experiences and challenges through applied theatre is a crucial part of practice to be considered throughout the entire process of a project.

(Abraham in Prentki and Abraham, 2021: 71)

The reports produced by Stonewall evidenced the continuing social injustice and lack of equity for transgender individuals in the UK. As a result, this informed the research design of my own research project to home in on Newcastle upon Tyne to unearth personal narratives of lived experiences. Although the questionnaire I created for my research project was not designed to have any statistical significance, it would be used to find the voices of an intergenerational participatory group of trans individuals to provide an ear for their words as 'people need to feel that they have a 'voice' in

their communities, but more than this, that this voice will be heard' (Busby, 2021: 5), whilst the use of applied theatre approaches still allows for a 'theatre created *by* and *with* community groups' (Busby, 2021: 17) with the 're-framing of participants as co-producers of knowledge' (Vincent, 2018: 112). This was the approach I took within the process of researching and creating the *my-identity* project which will be discussed more fully in Chapters Four and Six.

Galop

On their website, Galop state that:

We use what we learn through working on the frontlines with clients to work on national and local policy change, to improve outcomes for LGBT+ victims and survivors of abuse and violence. We build evidence through key pieces of research around LGBT+ people's experiences of abuse and violence. We push for legislative change, improved statutory guidance for victims, and better understanding of the needs of LGBT+ people around the country.

(www.galop.org.uk/about/)

Because of their objectives, mental health and hate crimes were further examined in the Galop *Transphobic Hate Crime Report 2020* written by Dr Cerys Bradley (2020).

This report confirmed the extent of transphobic hate crime nationally and the impact of this on individuals. Within the foreword of the report the Chief Executive, Leni Morris, of Galop comments that:

LGBT+ hate crime is disproportionately on the rise in the UK ... Recorded transphobic hate crime has doubled in the last three years – and we know from this report that only 1 in 7 trans people are reporting their experiences.

(Bradley, 2020: 2)

The data set from the research of Bradley shows a marked increase in the lack of support or understanding of the transgender experience, which can only be improved with education, understanding and better support structures. Bradley's report was

the result of a survey completed by 227 participants following two focus groups, who 'shared their experiences of transphobia, how they had been impacted and the ways they had responded to their experiences.' (Bradley, 2020: 3). The survey conducted as part of the research of Bradley was held on the Galop Twitter and Facebook pages for 5 weeks over October and November 2019. There had been 401 responses, with 241 completed survey responses. Whilst not all respondents provided information on their location, there were 136 who did with 83% in England, 15% in Scotland and 2% in Wales (Bradley, 2020: 47). Bradley also confirmed that:

151 respondents recorded their gender. 49% female/women/femme; 27% male/men/masc; 24% non-binary/gender queer/gender fluid/agender.

(Bradley, 2020: 47)

This allowed for a good range of gender identities to be contained within the sample data of Bradley. There was also a well distributed age range of respondents to allow for different perspectives and different socio-economic periods considered:

150 respondents recorded their age. 12% 18 or under; 20% 18-24; 19% 25-34; 17% 35-44; 20% 45-54; 11% 50 or older.

(Bradley, 2020: 47)

Bradley does consider the limitations of the survey and data produced due to the sample size. There was consideration of the number of respondents who completed all questions, the dominance of White responders, and as such 'the findings of this report, therefore, do not provide a complete picture of trans experiences in the UK' (Bradley, 2020: 47). Despite these limitations, the report by Bradley does provide useful data sets and consideration of lived experiences of those living with social injustice, and without fair equity or opportunity. It also allows for the 'discovery of facts and the analysis of these' (Gilbert and Stoneman, 2016: 242).

There is a lack of understanding of transgender, and this is seen on the Newcastle upon Tyne ‘scene,’ as well as further evidenced in the Galop report. Bradley’s report is comprehensive and allows for the examination of experiences of transphobia, impacts of transphobia on the individual (indirect and direct), responding to transphobia and recommendations of improvements to be considered.

The key findings of Bradley came as no surprise following the Stonewall and Newcastle City Council (discussed later in this chapter) reports; however, the key findings were that:

Table 3.9: Key Findings: Scale and Nature - Bradley (2020)

<u>Scale and Nature</u>	<u>What</u>	<u>Where</u>	<u>Who</u>
	4 in 5 respondents had experienced a form of transphobic hate crime	6 in 10 respondents had experienced transphobia online	More than 5 in 10 respondents had received transphobic abuse from a stranger
	1 in 4 had experienced transphobic physical assault or the threat of physical assault	5 in 10 had experienced transphobia in the street	Nearly 5 in 10 had received transphobic abuse from a transphobic ‘activist’, and 2 in 10 had been targeted by a coordinated group
	Nearly 1 in 5 had experienced transphobic sexual assault or the threat of sexual assault	3 in 10 had experienced transphobia at work	4 in 10 had received transphobic abuse from a relative
		1 in 4 had experienced transphobia at home	Nearly 4 in 10 had received transphobic abuse from someone in the LGBTQI+ community

(Bradley, 2020: 3-4)

and the results of transphobic abuse had seen 70% of respondents seeing a negative impact on their mental health, 50% self-harming, 50% feeling less able to leave their homes, and 90% stating that seeing transphobic abuse happening to someone else made them more worried that they would experience it themselves in time. The effects are of paramount importance and need to be supported, as Bradley then states that only '1 in 7 respondents reported their experience to the police' and '7 in 10 feel that the police could not help them' (Bradley, 2020: 4). This transphobia took many guises, however the most common were invasive questions, being deadnamed and verbal assault to those who reported direct behaviours; and online transphobia, deadnaming, verbal abuse, discrimination, and invasive questioning to those who had witnessed abusive behaviours. Other key factors reported included:

Table 3.10: Number of Experiences - Bradley (2020)

Number of experiences in a 12-month period	Percentage of respondents
1	7%
2-5	31%
6-10	21%
11-20	14%
21-50	13%
51-100	7%
101+	8%

(Bradley, 2020: 7)

Table 3.11: Location of incident - Bradley (2020)

Location of transphobic incidents	Number of respondents
Online	124
On the street	109
In a public building	69
At work	62
On public transport	58

In a shop, café, or restaurant	57
In a school, college, etc	56
In a medical establishment	55
At your home	50
In a public toilet	33
Other	26

(Bradley, 2020: 11)

Table 3.12: In the past 12 months, have you experienced any of the following? - Bradley (2020)

Types of transphobic abuse experienced	Number of respondents
Invasive Questions	152
Deadnaming	124
Verbal Abuse	124
Online harassment	103
Discrimination	98
Being treated as 'diseased'	84
Outing	63
Threat of physical assault	47
Offline harassment	46
Threat of outing	39
Threat of sexual assault	28
Death threats	25
Doxxing	23
Threat of doxxing	23
Physical assault	16
Sexual assault	14
Damage to property	9
Blackmail	8
Other	35

(Bradley, 2020: 8)

Despite the small minority who made a report to the police, they were able to comment around their reasons for doing so:

Table 3.13: If you reported an incident to the police, what motivated you to do so? - Bradley (2020)

What motivated you to report to the police	Number of respondents
I felt that it was important	21
To stop it happening to someone else	18
To bring offenders to justice	17
To stop it happening again	10
Report needed for insurance	2
Other	3
I have not reported it to the police	94

(Bradley, 2020: 39)

and although there were mixed responses to the effectiveness of the police report, it was clear that this experience was unsuccessful and left the individual feeling that the police were just not able to help them. Bradley's report makes the recommendations for funding for specialist support for victims of transphobia, improvements to relationships between the trans communities and the police to report crimes and feel supported, a reduction in NHS waiting times for health care for trans individuals, and the need for transphobia to be challenged in whatever form in which it is seen.

Although the Stonewall report (2022) looked at the positives and was based on Pride and 'Public sentiment towards lesbian, gay, bi and trans people in the UK' (Kelley and de Santos, 2022: 1), Galop produced the extensive report entitled *Hate Crime Report 2021: Supporting LGBTQ+ victims of hate crime in 2021* which highlighted the continued transphobia evident in the UK. The foreword from Leni Morris (Chief Executive) introduced the context of the survey and Galop's identified need for this data set as:

LGBT+ hate crime is disproportionately on the rise in the UK, and this report shows that the majority of victims are not being given the help and support that they need. We know, from working with LGBT+ victims of hate crime every day, how profound the effects of suffering abuse and violence based on who you are can be.

(Hubbard, 2021: 4)

and that 'we hope the findings and recommendations of this report will act as a springboard for action' (Hubbard, 2021: 4). This links well to Busby (2021) and the aim for applied theatre projects to 'contribute to participants' visions of the future which are different to the present' (Busby, 2021: 200). Hubbard confirms that the report is a result of an 'online community survey of 1166 LGBT+ people, and 15 interviews, which both asked about experiences of hate crime and interactions with services' (Hubbard, 2021: 5), and that:

The results presented here suggest that homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, acephobia and intersexphobia remain a substantial part of the lives of LGBT+ people, which can have significant consequences for those targeted. Despite high levels of support need, many LGBT+ individuals face a number of barriers to accessing a range of support services, meaning that they are unable to access or obtain the support that they need to help them overcome the effects and impact of their victimisation.

(Hubbard, 2021: 5)

Hubbard considers their methodology and discusses that:

The survey was live for 4 months from the start of April through to the end of July. It received 1123 responses. However, only 723 had been a victim of anti-LGBT+ violence or abuse and were therefore eligible to complete the remainder of the survey. A further 200 respondents did not reach the end of the survey, resulting in 523 complete responses. In addition to the survey, 15 qualitative interviews were conducted with victims of anti-LGBT+ violence and abuse, who were recruited via Galop's social media accounts. There were also a number of qualitative questions on the survey.

(Hubbard, 2021: 62)

There was a good age distribution of the participants in Hubbard's research with 14% being under 18; 19% 18-24; 20% 25-34; 12% 35-44; 18% 45-54; 13% 55-64; and 4% 65+. However, this range is not a reliable consideration of the overall sample as only 367 respondents reported their age (Hubbard, 2021: 63). Out of the 362 respondents who reported their gender identity, 33% were Trans; 58% Cisgender;

and 9% were Unsure. It is good to see a solid percentage of trans participants, however the number of respondents reporting this may have skewed the balance due to low numbers (Hubbard, 2021: 63). However, 365 respondents did confirm their gender as being 37% Male; 38% Female; 8% Non-Binary; 2% Gender Queer 2%; 4% Unsure/Questioning; 1% Agender; and 10% Self-described. And there was a good range of sexual orientation identities reported by 367 of the respondents with 29% identifying as Gay; 23% as Lesbian; 16% as Bisexual; 11% as Pansexual; 4% as Asexual; 8% as Queer; 4% as Heterosexual; and 6% as Self-described (Hubbard, 2021: 63)

Hubbard’s report focussed on the hate crimes and trauma created, as well as the individual response to this based on:

... a large proportion of LGBT+ individuals have experienced hate crime, with many experiencing this on a regular and repeated basis ... Respondents also reported changing their appearance and rarely leaving the house as a way of reducing their risk of further victimisation.

(Hubbard, 2021: 2)

The key findings of Hubbard’s report highlighted that:

Table 3.14: Key Findings – Hubbard (2021)

Prevalence	Two-thirds of respondents had experienced anti LGBT+ violence or abuse
Impact	The impacts and consequences experienced were wide-ranging and included physical injuries, emotional and psychological impacts, financial costs, and behaviour changes

Support Needs	Only 1 in 3 respondents who wanted or needed support were able to access it
Reporting	<p>Only 1 in 8 respondents reported their experiences to the police</p> <p>Less than half of the respondents who reported to the police were satisfied with the response they received</p> <p>Fewer than 1 in 10 respondents reported to additional services such as local authorities, housing providers, and medical services</p>

(Hubbard, 2021: 7-8)

Hubbard’s report does not focus only on trans people; however, it does continue to show the extent of hate crimes towards people who are LGBTQ+. It provides an overarching data set about this and the impact it has on these individuals.

Table 3.15: What types of anti-LGBT+ violence or abuse have you experienced? – Hubbard (2021)

Verbal abuse	92%
Online abuse	60%
Harassment	59%
Physical violence	29%
Outing/Doxing	28%
Sexual Violence	17%
Damage to property	13%

Other	10%
Blackmail	8%
Theft	6%

This data illustrates that the most commonly experienced forms of abuse experienced by LGBT+ individuals are verbal acts which are intended to humiliate, intimidate, demean or frighten someone (e.g., abuse and harassment), rather than physical acts (e.g., violence).

(Hubbard, 2021: 12)

This is important to note that anti-LGBTQ+ violence appears to be lower than that of verbal abuse, online abuse, and harassment; however there needs to be so much more work done within society to eradicate these hate crimes all together. There is some comparison to be made to the data gathered from the online survey around:

Table 3.16: Question 21: Have you ever felt unsafe in the Newcastle ‘scene’? – Newcastle LGBTQ+ Community Questionnaire (2020)

Question	Yes	No	Prefer not to say
Have you felt unsafe in the Newcastle ‘Scene’	43.8%	54.7%	1.6%

Table 3.17: Question 23: Have you been victim to any of the following? – Newcastle LGBTQ+ Community Questionnaire (2020)

Action	Respondent percentage
Verbal abuse	64.4%
Name calling	62.2%
Inappropriate touching	60%
Physical assault	33.3%
Verbal threats	28.9%
Prefer not to say	4.4%

(Newcastle LGBTQ+ Community Questionnaire, 2020)

The above shows high levels of feeling unsafe (43.8%) and a split between non-physical and violent acts.

Hubbard does go on to provide a number of qualitative data sets from each of the identified areas with the report and those that identify as trans include:

Me and my (trans) child were threatened, humiliated, and verbally abused by male drinkers outside a busy pub on the main street.

(Hubbard, 2021: 13)

I was at a conference about the Gender Recognition Act when a group of people, who were upset about the proposed changes, turned up to disrupt the conference. They took photos of us to try and out people on social media and [took] our names and car details [which were on our parking permits].

(Hubbard, 2021: 13)

I have gender dysphoria and the attacks have made it much worse. Sometimes I can't get it out of my head for days.

(Hubbard, 2021: 18)

I have had numerous people come up to me, threatening to 'kick my face in' if they see me out again. These incidents have severely damaged my confidence in public.

(Hubbard, 2021: 21)

I've been dealing with people harassing me about being trans for 10 years now. When I say it doesn't affect me that much it's because I've become mostly numb to it.

(Hubbard, 2021: 22)

and all of these continue to evidence the extent of transphobia and hate crimes against trans people, and no-one should be victimised in such a way; or feel they are unable to leave their homes or socialise; or fear being 'outed' in such a public way as through social media; or have worries about damage to their homes and property.

This remains unacceptable for anyone and as such further research and positive (re) presentation of trans people needs to continue to raise awareness and

understanding. Hubbard's report goes on to discuss the need and access to support, as well as interactions with the police, which again shows the continuing negative treatment of trans people. Hubbard makes the recommendations for increased access to LGBTQ+ specific services and support mechanisms; raising of awareness of these specific services and support structures; review to the process, and subsequent improvements of police interactions, responses, and investigations; consideration of the barriers to LGBTQ+ people in accessing services from authorities. However, there was no mention of raising awareness and understanding of the lived experiences and daily challenges and injustices faced by LGBTQ+ people; or the need for inclusion and equity of these people living in their communities. This does not really answer the problem of hate crime or social injustice and there needs to be more recommendations about this and how this might be achieved. Instead, reports of this nature concentrate on the negative cause, rather than looking to solutions. However, this lack of solutions or impact on education and effect of change links to the consideration that:

Applied Theatre research and practice are qualitative in nature and thus do not produce hard evidence of improvement.

(Busby, 2021: 8)

and that solutions or change cannot be guaranteed, but rather the opportunity to highlight social injustice and lack of equity created.

Newcastle City Council

Stonewall and Galop analysed the harsh reality of transphobia across the UK and made several recommendations to effect change. This allowed me to clearly identify the need for a research project that might consider lived experiences of transgender

individuals living the life that these reports had analysed, and to give them the opportunity for their voices to be heard:

An ethics of practice for verbatim theatre should always begin with a process questioning about why we are doing what we are doing and how we think it will benefit the participants.

(Fisher, 2011: 207)

and this process questioning needed to begin with a deeper understanding of Newcastle upon Tyne and trans experiences in the city.

Newcastle City Council produced their *Annual Equality Report 2019/20* with a consideration of the rates of hate crimes in the city that were based on sexual orientation and gender identity. This report also identified a national rise in hate crimes, however a decrease in hate crimes reported within Newcastle:

Table 3.18: Objective 1: Work with communities to tackle hate crime and encourage reporting: What we know – Newcastle City Council Annual Equality Report (2020)

Incident Type	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Homophobia	10.7%	11.9%	16.4%
Transphobia	2.9%	2.8%	2.7%

(Newcastle City Council *Annual Equality Report 2019/20*)

This was the anomaly identified earlier in this chapter and the lack of parity in national and local data being reported by Stonewall and Galop. This continued to inform the need to look at the trans community in the city, as well as the surrounding sub-cultures within LGBTQ+. This was not aimed to ‘...’change’ participants’ (Busby, 2021: 2), but rather to consider if applied theatre and verbatim techniques might ‘foster new perspectives that place the human subject at the centre of the theatrical experience’ (Megson, 2006: 531) with the ‘potential of ‘theatre of actuality’ (Megson,

2006: 532), with the placement of the participant at the centre of the performance as they are able to reclaim their narratives and experiences. There was the question regarding how placing my own research project within Newcastle upon Tyne and trans individuals living within the city might in some way allow those individuals to 'reclaim the spaces, leading to a shifted perception of their locus' (Mackey and Fisher, 2011: 360).

In comparison, the Newcastle City Council *Annual Equality Report 2020/21* highlighted a 5.5% increase in their figures from the previous year for racial hate crimes with a rise from 69.6% (2019/2020) to 72.4% (2020/21). They negate this to:

... an escalation of community tensions with an increase of hate crimes as a result. For example, the murder of George Floyd led to significant extremist activity and reaction by the extreme far right provided an atmosphere with an increase in race hate.

(Newcastle City Council *Annual Equality Report 2020/21*)

which potentially might be an explanation in part, however they also identify a reduction in Faith-based hate crimes (-0.8%), Homophobia (-0.5%), Transphobia (-0.9%) and Disability-based hate crimes (-0.5%). Indeed, the overall four-year cycle of reporting was shown as being:

Table 3.19: Objective 1: Work with communities to tackle hate crime and encourage reporting: What we know – Newcastle City Council Annual Equality Report (2021)

Incident Type	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-2021
Homophobia	10.7%	11.9%	16.4%	15.9%
Transphobia	2.9%	2.8%	2.7%	1.8%

(Newcastle City Council *Annual Equality Report 2020/21*)

Although this table showed the increase in homophobic hate crimes between the Newcastle City Council reports of 2017-2018 and 2019-2020 (with a decrease in the

report of 2020-2021); they had identified a decrease from 2017-2018 to 2020-2021 of 1.1% of transphobic hate crimes and incidents. Again, these figures might be contested as they do not match the data as presented by other sources, some that especially represent the LGBTQ+ communities. The City Council does have a Newcastle Hate Crime and Community Tensions Monitoring Group to work with stakeholders across the city with the aim to minimise hate crimes through awareness building and the sharing of good practices; as well as to 'advance equality of opportunity between people who share a characteristic and those who don't' (*Newcastle City Council Annual Equality Report 2020/21*) in relation to employment, education, health, and wellbeing across the city. The Newcastle City Council was also named best employer in the country for LGBTQ+ staff by Stonewall in 2020. However, there is no trans-focussed work being conducted or public awareness raising, which is of paramount importance globally, but especially here in Newcastle upon Tyne. As a result, I designed a questionnaire for my own research project to allow individual trans voices to be heard, concentrating on their lived experiences with the intention to consider if the next stage of the research project design might allow for a verbatim piece to:

... investigate a particular facet of the human condition for purposes of adapting these observations and insights into a performance medium.

(Saldana in Denzin and Lincoln, 2018: 377)

To conclude, I was able to consider the quantitative national and local (Newcastle) data to progress to the next stage within my research design to begin to focus on Newcastle upon Tyne and the lived experiences of individuals within the wider LGBTQ+ 'scene.' At this point I made the decision to create a questionnaire to create

a qualitative data set to inform of any requirement to develop the idea of a verbatim piece concentrating on intergenerational trans narratives in the city.

Newcastle LGBTQ+ Community Questionnaire

Following on from the data contained in the major surveys analysed, I progressed the research design by considering the local experience of transgender individuals. I selected a qualitative approach in the form of my own research questionnaire with a focus on this specific group within the city to gain a more personal set of responses of common lived experiences to inform the direction of the research project. This was also framed with the overarching consideration of the Newcastle upon Tyne 'scene' from personal experience and narrative from the wider LGBTQ+ community and allies. My questionnaire was designed to allow participants to provide a 'better insight into the social conditions of their lives' (Crouch and McKenzie, 2006: 487). The intent was never to produce any significant statistical data for a population, but more so to encourage open dialogue and the possibility of developing the research further with some form of ethnodrama project to offer a:

Significant selections of narrative collected from interview transcripts, participant observation field notes, journal entries, personal memories/experiences.

(Saldana in Denzin and Lincoln, 2018: 377)

with ethnodrama being the joining of ethnography and theatre-making to represent the lived experiences of a project's participants. This is a useful area to consider due to this integration of approaches.

My questionnaire recruited participants via LGBTQ+ Facebook and Twitter groups, as well as the social media platforms for local LGBTQ+ venues within the Newcastle upon Tyne 'scene.' The total number of participants was 66 with an overall response

rate of 44%. As such, my questionnaire was made up of a total of 41 questions across whether there is an LGBTQ+ community in Newcastle upon Tyne; equity across the sub-cultures of those identifying as LGBTQ+; opinion of the 'scene' and the available venues and facilities; sense of safety and experiences of hate crimes; perception and experience of Newcastle Pride; and the position of transgender individuals on the Newcastle upon Tyne 'scene'. 24 of the questions allowed for free text responses, and this high percentage was included to produce rich qualitative responses. In turn, this allowed me to produce qualitative analysis of the data and to provide data for the creation of the verbatim script *my-identity*. My questionnaire was purely focussed on a specific small community group to examine the lived experiences within Newcastle. As well as these 66 questionnaire participants, there were 10 follow-up interviews conducted to invite more personal narrative and opinion around trans experiences and inclusion. When considering sample sizes, there is the argument that these need to be high numbers to promote a confidence level in the data produced (Gilbert and Stoneman, 2016). This is of importance for research activities aimed at producing statistical impact on a selected population. Hammond (2021) considers the wider importance of major surveys as:

Surveys represent a powerful means of generating data in their own right but might be considered as part of a mixed methods strategy. The survey typically goes wide while interview data goes deep.

(Hammond, 2021: 174)

which aligned with my research method with the subsequent interviews, however neither the questionnaire nor interviews had the intention of going wide as Hammond discusses but being specific and personal. This focus on a specific group in Newcastle upon Tyne allowed for a more detailed study to inform my research design (Walliman, 2018). When analysing my questionnaire responses and data, the

results were potentially skewed due to the low sample size as 'it appears to be widely held that only sizeable samples can hold promise of validity' (Crouch and McKenzie, 2006: 484), however these were never to be impactful or significant as I wanted to:

Be immersed in the research field, to establish continuing, fruitful relationships with respondents and through theoretical contemplation to address the research problem in depth.

(Crouch and McKenzie, 2006: 483)

The research design was to have this depth of personal experience and response to allow for 'questions of impact, effect and sustainability' (Mackey and Fisher, 2011: 359) for the proposed verbatim project. Indeed, Crouch and McKenzie (2006) consider that interviews 'target the respondents' perceptions and feelings rather than the social conditions surrounding those experiences' (Crouch and McKenzie, 2006: 485), supporting the focused and localised intent of my questionnaire and interviews rather than these intending to generate any statistical impact. I wanted to understand individual stories and responses to these methods of research to evaluate if there were intergenerational trans narratives to be shared, and if a verbatim approach would 'generate new knowledge, or at least understanding, for the respondents' (Crouch and McKenzie, 2006: 487). This understanding of the individual might allow for a peer-ethnography approach to the design and content of the performance piece due to the fact that 'the director, facilitator or artist of theatrical intervention is, of course, only ever a co-creator with the participants in a joint creative venture' (Mackey and Fisher, 2011: 359) and the opportunity for the verbatim participants to 'have the opportunity to contribute constructively to their society' (Busby, 2021: 5) with authorship and ownership of the narratives being told. Although Crouch and McKenzie consider the 'problems associated with the interactive aspect of the

interviewing process' (Crouch and McKenzie, 2006: 486) as including interviewer bias, the varying levels of rapport between interviewer and interviewee, and the issue of interpreting the participant material; they do highlight that the respondents are 'encouraged freely to "tell their story", because the story might not have been told' (Crouch and McKenzie, 2006: 486). The size of the sample reducing in importance in this situation with the consideration that 'if anything is being "sampled," it is not so much individual persons "of a kind," but rather variants of a particular social setting' (Crouch and McKenzie, 2006: 493). Therefore, allowing for the rich qualitative and personal responses providing a depth of meaning rather than social impact, allowing for:

The research to be intensive, and thus persuasive at the conceptual level, rather than aim to be extensive with intent to be convincing.

(Crouch and McKenzie, 2006: 494)

With these convincing and honest narratives being used in the next stage of my research design to evidence 'theatre's ability to generate meaningful and powerful insights into human experience' (Gilbert and Stoneman, 2016: 393).

My questionnaire allowed for anonymity as no names or personal data was included in the responses. As such, when quoting free text responses there is no way to identify these individuals. Therefore, these will appear as stand-alone comments and not aligned to a coding of the respondent as it would be impossible to ensure Respondent A had made subsequent comments. My interview responses are cited with the coding of their identity as Interviewee 1. This still allows for anonymity as any details within the quotes that may lead to identification have been removed. My questionnaire conducted for my research project identified that hate crimes are

prevalent on the Newcastle upon Tyne ‘scene’ which questions why these are not being reported.

Table 3.20: Question 21: Have you ever felt unsafe in the Newcastle ‘scene’? – Newcastle LGBTQ+ Community Questionnaire (2020)

Question	Yes	No	Prefer not to say
Have you felt unsafe in the Newcastle ‘Scene’	28 responses	35 responses	1 response

(Newcastle LGBTQ+ Community Questionnaire, 2020)

This might be due to not being out, worries about employment security or a transgender individual coming to terms with their identified gender alone.

Respondents said in my questionnaire that these hate crimes were in a variety of locations that included within bars, walking between the bars, in takeaways close to the venues, outside the toilets of a venue, attending Pride events and one cited when being outed as transgender by a drag queen in one of the venues. These hate crimes came in many forms, with the majority being verbal abuse, name calling and inappropriate touching:

Table 3.21: Question 23: Have you ever been victim to any of the following? – Newcastle LGBTQ+ Community Questionnaire (2020)

Action	Responses
Verbal abuse	29
Name calling	28
Inappropriate touching	27
Physical assault	15
Verbal threats	13
Prefer not to say	2

(Newcastle LGBTQ+ Community Questionnaire, 2020)

Even in 2024 (with the recent homophobic stabbings outside The Two Brewers, Clapham) hate crimes need to be addressed, with different initiatives and deterrents introduced. The transgender community is clearly behind in social understanding and acceptance than that of the L, G and B. What can be done to raise awareness, in a safe environment, to inform the cisgender community of what it is like to be trans, the prejudices faced, and what being part of the LGBTQ+ and cisgender community means to them? This is clearly seen as an important step within the LGBTQ+ community of Newcastle, as 21 out of 54 responses in my research questionnaire identified transgender individuals as the least represented, with places like community centres, inclusive venues, a women's bar that is a safe space for trans women, more education, and acceptance as much needed. However, the negativity to the need for a sense of inclusivity was also seen in these responses with comments like "Maybe we should try avoiding an all-inclusive LGBTQ+ approach", "I don't want it changed" and "There are groups which are pushing inclusivity, but I don't think the trans community will equal the treatment of the LGB community in my lifetime".

My research questionnaire was launched on 18 August 2020 on Jisc Online Surveys and remained open until 20 November 2020 and proved a good research mode for anonymity, as well as a safe approach during Covid-19 and lockdown restrictions. As discussed earlier the low number of responses evident in one light have skewed the analysis of these findings as a 10% difference is merely 6.6 respondents which has limitations to any grand hypothesis from these results. However, as discussed earlier a smaller sample size can be just as important and reliable as it created an individual nature to the data set, as well as informing the next stage of my research project with the creating of an incisive arts intervention – the *my-identity* verbatim project. My

research questionnaire and subsequent interviews allowed for a qualitative interpretation of the aims of my research project, as well as establishing from the individuals experiencing a range of social injustices on a daily basis that there was almost a requirement for this verbatim play to be written.

These results are the basis of how 'we' see our wider LGBTQ+ community in the city, as well as the hierarchical nature of this. This was a key consideration with the development of this thesis and the *my-identity* project. Indeed, responses were slow despite a range of promotional methods across social media platforms and in close working with venue owners and management. However, as a result of lockdown and restrictions, with venues being closed and the country encouraged to stay at home, the engagement levels were better than anticipated. There was a good range of respondents allowing for a rounded consideration of the Newcastle upon Tyne 'scene.' The gender split was balanced with 35 respondents identifying as male, 28 as female, 1 as non-binary, 1 as non-gender conforming, and 1 preferring not to say. On first glance this looks like a good range, however there is an under representation of the trans community as 61 respondents stated they identified as the gender assigned at birth, with 3 respondents saying 'no' and 2 preferring 'not to say'. This will, none the less, provide opinion of the Newcastle upon Tyne 'scene' that will underpin the need for further support for the trans community and the design of the next stages of the research.

My questionnaire also evidenced the range of age groups completing it, and using (or having used) the 'scene':

Table 3.22: Question 3: Which age bracket are you in? – Newcastle LGBTQ+ Community Questionnaire (2020)

Age Range	Responses
18-21	5
22-25	5
26-30	7
31-35	5
36-40	11
41-45	6
46-50	8
51-55	10
56-60	3
61-65	2
66-70	2
70+	2

(Newcastle LGBTQ+ Community Questionnaire, 2020)

Today there is no real venue for members of the lesbian community, and it is obvious to note that older lesbians are not visiting the 'scene' anymore. There were free text responses found within my questionnaire that said:

- 'Every lesbian bar that used to exist has now been closed'
- 'The scene is mainly there for the under 30's'
- 'Geared for younger gay people'
- 'Less lesbians on the scene'

(Newcastle LGBTQ+ Community Questionnaire, 2020)

This results in a lack of representation of this group, and it is interesting to ask the question of 'where do they go?' One of the questions included in my research questionnaire asked what was missing from the Newcastle upon Tyne 'scene,' and responses included:

- 'A lesbian bar/club'
- 'Spaces for queer women'
- 'For us older members'
- 'Bars for the older generation i.e., 50 plus'
- 'A bar for the older generation – i.e., 40 plus'
- 'Women's spaces, but this has been an issue for many years now'

(Newcastle LGBTQ+ Community Questionnaire, 2020)

When speaking to one of my interview participants they discussed the fact that this demographical group no longer feel welcomed into venues and expect some form of inter-community prejudice or awkwardness:

A lot of the older lesbians have simply fled the scene.

(Interviewee 1, 2020)

The image, style, approach, and promotion of the venues is predominately targeting gay men with images of buffed male physiques on marketing materials. Recent comments made to older members of the lesbian community that I was made aware of in these interviews ranged from being compared to a 'drag king', stereotypical views of being butch and un-womanly, being confused and how a 'proper man' would satisfy them; to jibes and inappropriate jokes, comments, and labels from other sub-groups within the community. There has been a movement from the LGBTQ+ 'scene' which was 'hetero-friendly' to encourage and support advocacy and is now an area of the city reduced in size and more 'queer-friendly.' It has almost become a victim of its own wish for advocacy when venues are now filled with stag and hen parties, and large groups following major sporting events. As venues have closed, they have not been replaced and as such the 'scene' is now a combination of empty buildings, and venues who have not moved into the last couple of decades. The décor has rarely changed, entertainment has all but disappeared, and trends in available drinks are not being following up and not current. One of the interviewees commented that some glittery wallpaper or a faux grass wall feature in a couple of the venues was not modernisation or enough to bring in and sustain new customers. When asked in the survey if there was a LGBTQ+ community in Newcastle upon Tyne, there were the following responses:

Table 3.23: Question 5: Do you think there is an LGBTQ+ community in Newcastle? – Newcastle LGBTQ+ Community Questionnaire (2020)

Answer	Responses
Yes	46
No	3
Unsure	8
Maybe	0
At times	9

(Newcastle LGBTQ+ Community Questionnaire, 2020)

However, when asked the reason for the respondent thinking this there were far more negative responses than positives:

Table 3.24: Question 6: Why do you think this? – Newcastle LGBTQ+ Community Questionnaire (2020)

Positive comments	Negative comments
“It is well advertised”	“There is a scene, but I don’t feel there is a community as such despite people trying”
“Events, locations, overlapping crowds, organisations.... there has always been a large and related network”	“No real sense of community, no base really, and the only events are commercial”
“Lots of venues, student societies, etc for LGBTQ+ people, good pride events”	“Lots of cliques, so if you are not a regular or young, you’re made to feel a little isolated”
“There is a diverse community of people if only a small one”	“Scene too small, and no community spirit – No solidarity between LGBT”
“The scene is really lively and there seems to be good scene stretching across the centre”	“Our scene has become a tourist attraction full of stag and hen parties who cause havoc”
“Big city, night life, saunas, jobs for non-conforming people”	“There are gay people, I wouldn’t say it was a community”
“I hear about plenty of LGBT groups”	“There no longer feels a central geographical area for all LGBTQ communities”

(Newcastle LGBTQ+ Community Questionnaire, 2020)

and a couple of free text comments provided the opinions of “I’ve not lived here long enough, but my partner say’s it’s become more ‘straight’” and “The best clubs are turned straight, and it’s been forced to move around. The pubs and clubs aren’t what they were.” The community now appears to be centred around ‘queer-friendly’ bars and nowhere to share the history or shared experiences. These bars are filled with loud music and drinking, with limited non-alcohol options or quiet space to meet and talk. My research questionnaire asked the respondents to comment on ‘what do you think is missing from the ‘scene’’, and these included:

- “For us older members”
- “A lesbian bar/club”
- “A real centre, a real focus”
- “Traditional pubs, community centre, women’s spaces, places for older people”
- “Spaces for queer women”
- “Probably bars where you can sit and chat”
- “Venues that welcome all ages. It’s a scene for young queers”
- “Entertainment”
- “So much. There needs to be space for non-alcohol-based activities. Daytime spaces. Centres for supporting people with their real lives and the challenges we face. Places for questioning teens to come (and questioning grownups)”
- “Community, inclusion, safety, money put into the community. Unity.”

(Newcastle LGBTQ+ Community Questionnaire, 2020)

This clearly identifies that something is missing and as such it is difficult to feel part of a wider community. Indeed, my questionnaire clearly saw that 41 respondents having seen a change in the Newcastle upon Tyne ‘scene’ in the last 20 years. There are currently 14 venues (bars, clubs, and saunas) within the ‘scene’ with a range of responses as to their use and popularity:

Table 3.25: Question 14: Where do you go, and prefer not to go to on the Newcastle ‘scene’? – Newcastle LGBTQ+ Community Questionnaire (2020)

Venue	Go to	Prefer not to go	Not heard of
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Blonde Barrel	22	17	19
Bottoms Up	7	16	29
Boulevard	30	14	10
Central/Queens	12	23	13
Eazy Street	22	24	9
No. 52	11	14	30
Powerhouse	20	33	0
Rusty's	40	12	4
Secrets	12	15	25
Switch	32	18	5
The Bank	27	14	17
The Eagle	21	22	14
The Pink Room	19	12	24
The Yard	34	9	11

(Newcastle LGBTQ+ Community Questionnaire, 2020)

It is interesting to note that Boulevard, Rusty's, and Switch are predominantly 'queer friendly' with a large heterosexual customer base; The Yard was established nearly 40 years ago and is seen as a stalwart within the 'scene' (yet still dated décor, limited entertainment and in need of a refurbishment). Also, from these venues only one was focussed on the lesbian community (Secrets), which is no longer in operation (as of 2018). As such, there is a clear lack of representation for the L and the T in LGBTQ+, with no venues promoted for them. With the lack of engagement in some of the venues, my research questionnaire respondents were able to provide some examples of their 'best memory whilst out on the Newcastle upon Tyne 'scene':

- "Many years ago, going out regularly with a group of friends"
- "Back in the 1990's, Thursday Night Student Night, in the old Powerhouse"
- "Meeting my husband"
- "Meeting people who became friends"
- "Seeing the regulars who frequented there for years before it became a heterosexual's side show"
- "Just great times with friends, freedom of expression"

(Newcastle LGBTQ+ Community Questionnaire, 2020)

however, out of 51 free text responses, there were only two references to the transgender community:

- “A trans social that was organised in The Yard, about 40-50 people turned up I think!”
- “Organising a trans social night to bring the community together, and then taking over the whole scene. That night everywhere you looked was people proud to be trans.”

(Newcastle LGBTQ+ Community Questionnaire, 2020)

This does show that small steps are being made for the transgender community, however there is the need to do more.

The range of sexual preference was seen with representation (although small for some) from the across the community included:

Table 3.26: Question 4: What sexual preference do you identify as? – Newcastle LGBTQ+ Community Questionnaire (2020)

Sexual Orientation	Responses
Gay	30
Lesbian	17
Bisexual	6
Heterosexual	6
Prefer not to say	1
Other	5

(Newcastle LGBTQ+ Community Questionnaire, 2020)

As can be seen, the main split was between gay and lesbian participants which throughout the survey responses has allowed for the different experiences on the ‘scene’ from these groups to be considered. There were 4 respondents who identified as pansexual in the open text option in this question as well. There is a representation of the bisexual community, however again relatively small in relation

to those identifying as gay or lesbian. The responses from these participants does highlight the split in opinion of the 'scene' in Newcastle upon Tyne regarding acceptance of bisexuals over the last 15 years or so. One interview participant discussed that on the 'scene' in the 1980s and 1990s individuals would be denied access to venues if they did not 'look gay enough'.

When asked if there is an LGBTQ+ community in Newcastle upon Tyne, 46 respondents agreed, 3 said not, 8 said they were unsure if there was, and 9 expressed their opinion that there is a community at times. Some participants felt though that there is a 'scene' but not necessarily a community. One commented that the 'scene' and Pride were very community driven and attended, however with outdated venues this community feel is missing as people stopped going as there were better venues off the scene. They also shared their opinion that Pride was now commercialised and encourages segregation with different tents. Although this is a good consideration in one thought, some of these community groups were not as prominent or well located on Newcastle's Town Moor as others. It was felt by one respondent that 'no real sense of community, no base really, and the only events are commercial' (Newcastle LGBTQ+ Community Questionnaire, 2020). There were also more positive opinions to strengthen the notion of a community with comments about there being a diverse community although small; that Newcastle upon Tyne has a rich history of members of the community joining to party, protest and live their lives; the fact that there are theatre companies who are advocates with a range of representational festivals and work produced; and one respondent saying that since moving South they can now see with more certainty the distinct community in Newcastle upon Tyne. Therefore, there are some conflicting opinions on whether there is an LGBTQ+ community within the city and what this might look like. When

asked if there was an equal level of opportunity and support of the L, the G, the B, the T, the Q and the + (categories that participants self-defined into), there was clear evidence of these pockets of prejudice especially towards trans and + individuals:

Table 3.27: Question 8: Do you think there is equal opportunity and support across the L, the G, the B, the T, the Q, and the + in the Newcastle LGBTQ+ community? – Newcastle LGBTQ+ Community Questionnaire (2020)

Sexual Orientation	Response of Yes	Response of No
Lesbian	40	19
Gay	55	5
Bisexual	30	30
Transgender	19	38
Queer	25	32
+	15	40

(Newcastle LGBTQ+ Community Questionnaire, 2020)

It might be interpreted that gay men feel more accepted on the ‘scene’ than other sub-groups. Is this based on the ‘scene’ being specifically designed for gay men? Is this a result that following Stonewall and subsequent campaigns and struggles the G is further forward than other sub-groups? These statistics also explain the numbers lowering of lesbians on the scene, as well as the lack of trans specific venues. There was a section within my questionnaire to encourage opinion from the respondents of Newcastle Pride. A total of 46 respondents had attended a Pride event within Newcastle upon Tyne, and they were able to note the range of activities that Pride has run over the last 26 years. They believed Pride had become more commercialised and controlled by sponsorship agendas, rather than being about the community itself. My research questionnaire asked the respondents if Newcastle/Northern Pride had ‘changed over time’ and the free text responses mentioned that it had become larger, more commercialised, more corporate, no longer about what Pride means and stands for, and that it ‘... hasn’t got soul, just ...

Money making' (Newcastle LGBTQ+ Community Questionnaire, 2020). Responses were also able to express a range of negative changes to Newcastle/Northern Pride over recent years:

- 'Less family friendly, less community orientated, and more exclusive'
- 'More commercial and male dominated'
- 'lost its diversity'
- 'It was smaller, and more community focussed when I first went, which was better, but it was also less inclusive and there was openly biphobic and transphobic comments made on stage'
- 'It's become commercialised and trendy!'
- 'No longer feels community focussed'
- 'Bigger. More visible. But now more straight people yet again'
- 'too many straights'
- 'Nothing about community and protesting equality and equity of all rights'
- 'It's so expensive now compared to the first time I went'
- 'Bigger venues, more outdoors, mixed crowd, etc. But less community feel'
- 'Again, a tourist attraction as opposed to a celebration of our community'

(Newcastle LGBTQ+ Community Questionnaire, 2020)

Other free text responses included 'I have only been once since they got rid of the women's area. Which I feel was a direct consequence of a male dominated committee' and 'So, it's like they took all the, quote/unquote, boring stuff in a corner' (Newcastle LGBTQ+ Community Questionnaire, 2020). This links to the 'scene' being aimed more to younger gay males as highlighted earlier and the free comments from the survey respondents evidence the need for more diversity and inclusivity when asked what changes might be made:

- 'greater diversity'
- 'All-inclusive events that celebrate love and acceptance'
- 'Women's space and events, family space and events. Committee should be more representative and inclusive'
- 'It should be all inclusive'
- 'Education, community events, get rid of wasting money in fairgrounds and concentrate on the community'

(Newcastle LGBTQ+ Community Questionnaire, 2020)

In November 2020, my research interviews were conducted with a range of interviewees to allow for more open discussion and creation of qualitative data on the perception of the 'scene' and community, what was missing and whether there were these pockets of prejudice identified in the online questionnaire. Participants ranged from venue managers, university lecturers, drag performers, and advocates of the wider LGBTQ+ community. Each type of participant provided a common theme regarding the dated feel of the scene, and the lack of parity of support across the community. These interviews opened up opinion that the 'scene' is aimed at, and marketed for, gay men between the ages of 18 and 35. A specific range of interviewees were selected to be involved which included heterosexual women, gay men that use the 'scene', gay men that prefer not to visit the 'scene', a bisexual man, and gay men/drag queens that work within the venues on the 'scene'. The heterosexual women were able to provide their perceptions of the 'scene' and LGBTQ+ community based on their friendships with those who identify as part of that wider community. There was a range of responses to these pockets of prejudice and there was only some limited understanding of the hate crimes and -phobias evident in venues. There was a much greater understanding of trans-phobia and abuse towards trans women as this was seen as being comparable to their own sexist and misogynistic experiences. They did not have an issue with trans women using the toilet facilities in the venues and their experience had been that of not being aware they were trans, or simply 'seeing beyond' this as this was not a major worry or consideration. When asked about opinions towards lesbian women, there was a mixture of opinion with '... it's OK', '... each to their own', and '... we all need to find love'; to '... so long as she doesn't make a move' and '... at least we have cubicles in the toilets, so nothing can happen to me'. The last comment resonated with me as

the heterosexual woman was placing herself into the role of 'potential victim' and turning the tables of the sense of safety and acceptance away from members of the community the venues are aimed for. These considerations of the gendering of toilets and access for transgender women were discussed in the previous chapter in the discussion of the research of Slater and McNamara and are clearly still perceptions for some people in the city.

One interviewee identifies as a bisexual male and he was able to discuss that the 'scene' had grown smaller over the last twenty years and originally was seen as the 'diamond strip, the pink triangle' that was very much a gay venue-based area of the city. Now, this area has fewer venues, a smaller range of target audiences of the venues available and is much more frequented by members of the heterosexual community and used for stag and hen parties, as well as for cheaper drink promotions. As a forty-something male he believes the 'scene' is aimed at a much younger demographic, which is reflected in the design and layout of the venues that:

I think there's nothing for bisexuality and there hasn't been any nights, and when there is a night in SR44 where bisexuals may feel a little bit more comfortable, it ends up being a fetish thing, or it's attacking hyper sexualisation of bisexual people as sort of swingers basically.

(Interviewee 1, 2020)

The twink generation appears to be slowly forcing the older, bear and lesbian community members out. Where there are older generations, or the thirty plus group (if that is older) these place themselves in specific spaces in the venues which are stereotypical of their age bracket – at the ends of the bar, smaller tables, away from the DJ booths and dance floors, away from the drag queen hosts to avoid comments. Bisexual people are still a sub-culture in Newcastle, and indeed globally, that continue to be stereotyped and judged as being 'greedy':

This feeds into that narrative of bi people's being greedy, you know, hyper-sexual.

(Interviewee 1, 2020)

The interviewee was able to discuss this lens placed upon them where gay men will criticise them if they are with a female or be judged and ridiculed if with a man by both heterosexuals and gay men. He discussed openly many comments made to him over his life and the fact that the LGB community of twenty years ago, has very much become a GQ+ community with little, if any, consideration for the L, B, or the T. Yet, one drag queen interviewee was of the opinion that there is a community and that this is a '... gathering space for the LGBTQ+ community to come together and feel safe.' However, are they able to do this? Feel safe? When introduced to the notion of pockets of prejudice they were able to agree that there are undeniably these internal prejudices and that the 'scene' is without doubt dominated by the G. One of their comments summed the 'scene' up perfectly:

There is a pecking order at play in Newcastle and although we try to preach about love, acceptance, and inclusivity, I think everyone is sort of aware of this and doesn't feel it's an issue because "what can we do."

(Interviewee 2, 2020)

The drag queens are an interesting professional and social group within the Newcastle upon Tyne 'scene' and can appear fierce initially, with their acidic wit and quick comments and humour. Their ability, and almost audience expectation, to be rude and 'close to the knuckle' allows them to comment on heterosexual and LGBTQ+ actions and behaviours. They comment on the appearance of women and their behaviours (especially when drunk), as well as comment on the sexiness of a handsome gay or straight man. The queens do have their own 'royal courts' and

cliques which, when one is accepted into, allows for a relaxed and protected sense of community.

The interviews also allowed the examination of Newcastle/Northern Pride, providing more oversight of the range of opinions about the events. The workers from the venues on the Newcastle upon Tyne 'scene' expressed the need for them to be informed and included in the planning of the event to ensure there was a more community feel and link up. Newcastle upon Tyne, as a city, also needs to see what it can do to contribute to the funding of the events to increase the range of opportunity, as well as keep it a free event with lower prices across the board, which in turn might alleviate the increased prices in the venues on the 'scene', and that 'there's no money being pumped into Newcastle at all' (Newcastle LGBTQ+ Community Questionnaire, 2020). There were small glimpses of hope in relation to advocacy as interviewees also commented on:

- 'You know, between 2010 and 2020, you know, we've had a real revolution in terms of acceptance towards queer people.'

(Interviewee 5, 2020)

- 'I'm seeing a lot of younger people who clearly had a more healthy experience at schools or colleges or even in coming out and accepting themselves.'

(Interviewee 8, 2020)

and interviewees working on the 'scene' love being there and the community they feel is being born in the venues they work in.

'It makes me feel superior to be in this community as a queer person, surrounded by other queer people, having a bloody good time. It makes me feel like I'm having an experience that a lot of other people never will.'

(Interviewee 4, 2020)

Yet, a lack of transparent transgender identity on the 'scene' was highlighted by every person interviewed:

‘the strongest voices within the communities need to be raising awareness for our Trans family’

‘they are attacked within the community such as LGB Alliance, who are attempting to erase the existence of our Trans family by systematically shutting down their voices’

‘but I think the trans community have a lot longer to go and I think the non-binary community in particular have a lot longer to go for recognition’

‘trans awareness ... would be really helpful in getting the community together and talking a little better, even if we may not like what the community has to say, it’s just a starting ground, isn’t it’

This need for awareness and conversation; of sharing experiences and fears; of having safe places to share stories and advocate for equity within our own LGBTQ+ community; is the very reason for my own research project.

The *my-identity* Project

What became clear from the research conducted in Newcastle upon Tyne was the need to raise awareness of trans identities in the ‘decimated Newcastle ‘scene’ (Interviewee 1, 2020), to alleviate the ‘cliqueness that exists around the scene, where you will be bitched about and dog-eyed’ (Interviewee 5, 2020); combined with the ‘hope’ (Faye, 2022) that projects like this might continue to see the emergence and use of the ‘scene’ as ‘a lot more people living a trans existence [are seen] openly as well’ (Interviewee 9, 2020). With participants able to (re) present themselves as trans individuals and not the ‘issue’ that Faye comments on, with peer group ethnographic approach to research and co-creation and trans-collaboration, it is my ‘hope’ that (re) presentation can be ‘precious and powerful’ (Faye, 2022: 268).

Busby (2021) discusses her approach to theatre-making as not being based on an explicit agenda, but rather a freer ethos of hope for the future of her participants, and her practice with Applied Theatre ‘as part of a search – or, rather, a demand – for

social justice and equity' (Busby, 2021: 2). In agreement with Busby, the intention of the *my-identity* project is not to "change' participants' (Busby, 2021: 2), but to provide a platform for their voice to be heard. This will allow for the presentation of 'personal perspectives and life experiences contained within and performed by the verbatim text that are evidential in and of themselves' (Fisher, 2011: 197), with the intention to allow for this 'communication context to encourage audiences (and performers) to change attitudes or practices' (Kerr, 2009: 177). This results in the social situation potentially having some change affected rather than the participants needing to have their lives and identity changed, and the opportunity that the small number of verbatim-based technique interviews might have material where 'respondents embody and represent meaningful experience' (Crouch and McKenzie, 2006: 493).

Applied Theatre and verbatim techniques will be examined in the following chapter as these are explored to select processes and principles suitable for this participatory group and material to be developed. There are ethical and process considerations to be evaluated, and the fields of applied theatre and verbatim theatre-making to be contextualised in 2024. The creative approach can then be selected in the creation of the *my-identity* project that might:

... invite the general public, public institutions and policy makers to experience the harm that inequality, social exclusion, discrimination, and lack of respect and dignity have on both individuals and society as a whole.

(Busby, 2021: 6)

This chapter has tracked the development of the research design for my research project regarding the analysis of the national surveys and reports of Stonewall and Galop and the examination of the social injustice faced by LGBTQ+ people, and especially trans individuals. This overarching sense of transphobia and need for change to create inclusion and equity, was then compared to the data set of

Newcastle upon Tyne and the City Council's local consideration of trans experiences. As discussed, I then wanted to home in on qualitative data analysis of the individual experience of hate crimes, transphobia, and social injustice, to inform me, and to allow me to ascertain whether a verbatim project was a useful creative practice to allow trans voices to be heard. Two of my research questions have been supported and explored within this chapter as it has presented research data and results for:

- What is community – how can this be considered in a city where there is fragmentation of equality, equity and opportunity within what is perceived as an LGBTQ+ 'community'?
- What is the position of trans people today (in 2024), how has it changed, and do trans people need their own 'Stonewall moment'?
- How is this research important and needed based on research into, and the examination of data around hate crimes and transphobia locally and nationally?

The following chapter is a consideration of applied theatre contexts and the ethical use of verbatim techniques that have influenced the research design to my practice in the development of the *my-identity* project, as well as the discussion of my research questions:

- How has applied theatre practice, and specifically verbatim techniques, been used by other practitioners in similar contexts and how might this overarching approach to theatre-making be used to provide opportunity to identify the position of trans people today?

- What are the ethical considerations of verbatim techniques, and how might these provide the opportunity for trans people across different generations in Newcastle upon Tyne to (re) present their lived experiences and share with other trans and non-trans people the day-to-day experience of being trans today in the North East of England?

Chapter Four: Applied Theatre, verbatim techniques and the *my-identity* Toolkit

As discussed in the introduction, I have come to realise that applied theatre is not the ultimate vehicle to create social change; but is more an opportunity of hope that the production material might affect this (Busby, 2021). Theatre-makers are able to examine and deconstruct socially and politically challenging themes to encourage their audience to witness lived experiences and events as they consider themes of concern and injustice (Rae, 2009). This aspect of theatrical presentation, which involves audiences investing in people who are radically different from themselves allows writers (potentially) to (re) present the lived experiences of trans people, and for social injustice and continued transphobia and lack of equity to be presented to an audience for them to question and consider within themselves and socially. As discussed by Rosenberg and Tilley (2021) there needs to be a stronger position and presence of trans voices and active participation presented of these rather than just that of the cisgender-lens and standpoint (Vincent, 2018). Rae (2009) focuses on the ability of theatre to denounce the violations of human rights across a range of social and political agendas and considers the power of theatre to support the importance of the awareness of violations of human rights for the raised awareness and potential for action of the audience – who may themselves be part of the oppressed, or indeed an oppressor. The fundamental assertion here is not one of evidenced social change but of awareness raising of the audience and the *potential* for social activism and action. With hindsight, my initial opinion of applied theatre was based on my Masters journey at the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama (University of London) and my simplifying the objectives of applied theatre into a romantic ‘intention to change’ (Busby, 2021: 2) participants, audience, and society rather than ‘a demand – for social justice and equity’ (Busby, 2021: 2). The practice of applied theatre is

'experienced both as a participant and as audience' (Snyder-Young, 2013: 2) with the intention that the production work presented will 'make some difference to the way in which people interact with each other' (Snyder-Young, 2013: 2). This need for interaction became a focus of the research design for the practice adopted for the *my-identity* project whilst negotiating the ethics of 'making theatre out of real people's stories and experiences' (Fisher, 2020: 3). However, in a bid to avoid the use of verbatim techniques becoming a form of ventriloquism (Fisher, 2020) of the trans voices used to create the *my-identity* project, I constantly reviewed my practice with the assertion of Heddon (2009) around:

... ethical and political questions about 'whose voice is spoken in verbatim procedures and with what other potential effects?

(Heddon, 2009: 116)

This approach to my practice was using every opportunity to counter inevitable unconscious bias and to allow as high a level of trans leadership of the project development as possible (Rosenberg and Tilley, 2021). As an approach to theatre-making, verbatim has no one approach or set of rules except those implemented by the writer - Alecky Blythe, a verbatim playwright, who herself states that:

People will sometimes say, "What are the rules? Are we allowed to do this?" and I say, "I have certain rules but I break them all the time." I think your work should be ethical and, obviously, there's a huge responsibility to the people you interview but, artistically, you can create your own rules in terms of what serves the piece.

(Megson, 2018: 230)

This consideration of artistic integrity and authorship reinforces the position of the participants within the development of the material whilst still allowing for the audience to be engaged and interested. Blythe discusses this with Chris Megson in an interview conducted in 2018 and the need for 'trusting that the story and the work

is enough' (Megson, 2018: 225), whilst avoiding any 'potential veering towards ridicule' (Megson, 2018: 224). This allowed me to formulate a practical process with my trans participants to be active participants within my Queer cis-led project that allowed for trans-collaboration to as high a degree as possible within the institutional (a UK University) limitations and confines of writing a PhD thesis. This allowed for a level of the *my-identity* project to be a 'political statement about the area [of trans lived experiences]' (Megson, 2018: 224), whilst allowing the five monologues the opportunity of articulating the trans voices to demonstrate that they were all 'living through this and had their own side of the story to talk about' (Megson, 2018: 224).

It should state here that in the light of these theoretical readings in democratic and pluralistic research processes, that I had moved from the consideration of one trans voice to the realisation that there are many trans voices with their own stories to talk about (Megson, 2018). I wanted the trans participants to have as positive and engaged a role as possible to avoid my own unconscious bias and dramatisation of their stories whilst still being able to have a final production-ready piece that would engage and interest the audience. This engagement is key for the interaction between audience and participants (Snyder-Young, 2013) for questions to be raised and considered whilst still allowing for:

... keeping the audience excited and compelled by the story, and [avoiding the fact that] sometimes, if it's too journalistic, just going with the facts, they might all fall asleep.

(Megson, 2018: 223)

However, keeping the audience excited should not come at the cost of the authentic words of the real trans people to allow for the fact that:

... certain truths are asserted through the dramaturgical structure of the play, and its construction of character and dialogue, implying some theatrical

narratives and approaches are more 'truthful' and more 'authentic' than others.

(Fisher, 2020: 8)

With the trans-collaborative approach to the design of the *my-identity* project, the words could be legitimately described as truthful and authentic as they are the verbatim text of trans participants, incorporated into the structure of a verbatim play with as high a level of co-authorship as possible for the project.

I did not want to consider the practice, as discussed by Fisher (2020), of Australian verbatim practitioner Alana Valentine who uses:

... blended research approaches when creating verbatim dramas, drawing together interviews with real people and incorporating this within fictionalised scenes to tell real stories about real issues.

(Fisher, 2020: 12-13)

I will, later in this chapter, explain my research aims, questions, and model of practice. However, from the outset, I would like to state that I did not want to create a piece of fiction but wanted to maintain the truth and authenticity of the trans narratives to address any potential 'truth claims' (Fisher, 2020: 13) and to avoid a 'promise of truthfulness and authenticity' (Fisher, 2020: 13). I wanted to create a play text that would allow for this notion of truthfulness and authenticity without playing 'around with it [the narratives] too much' (Megson, 2018: 223) whilst still allowing the audience to remain interested in the trans voices (re) presented with the understanding and promise that (although remediated) 'this is real' (Megson, 2018: 226). With the level of trans-collaboration, I wanted to avoid the 'blending together of documentary fact and testimonial text' to negate any 'troubling promises of truth telling' (Fisher, 2020: 15). This in turn would frame the (re) presenting of these trans narratives as the final *my-identity* text, as Heddon (2009) asserts it will:

... 'give those unheard voices a public place' potentially 'rewriting the dominant narratives in the process (narratives of history, social policy, community).'

(Heddon, 2009: 116)

The creation of this public place for my trans participants to communicate their lived experiences allowed for as high a level of truthfulness as possible, as they were co-editors and co-authors of their words in the design of the final play text within the confines of a PhD study. This was the attempt to counter any opposition to the trans-collaborative process as I was not the sole writer of the material. Their involvement, as discussed by Fisher (2020), was my opportunity to avoid a sense of the material being written **about** the participants:

... contemporary verbatim plays are rarely constructed through a democratised dramaturgical process and are far more likely to be constructed and/or written by a singular playwright than a collective...

(Fisher, 2020: 9)

but written with them. I do need to note that this was still a Queer cis-led project with the main purpose of being included as part of my submission for my PhD. However, by responding to Rosenberg and Tilley (2018) and placing my trans participants as central as possible within the research design and development, I was able to ensure the *my-identity* script was not written by myself as a sole cisgender playwright (Fisher, 2020). *my-identity* is instead a verbatim play that is truthful, authentic, and authorised by the trans participants as it (re) presents real people and is based on the 'reiteration of personal narrative, acts of witnessing and testimonial accounts of lived experience' (Fisher, 2020: 10). From the trans participant's interviews to the transcription of these words, I had ensured that these were reproduced faithfully and agreed by the participants as their own words and phrasing (Fisher, 2020). The audience will not know the creative process and research design I used (outside of

this thesis) to frame the sense of truthfulness and authenticity, however I had adopted this approach with the trans-collaboration to create as high a level of alignment with the voices of trans participants as was possible within a cis-led project. Fisher (2020) explores this lack of audience awareness of the level of authenticity:

... audiences of this kind of verbatim theatre have no access to the editorial process that selected certain interviewees and certain elements of the recorded text.

(Fisher, 2020: 12)

This chapter allows me to critically analyse the research design and creative processes I used as a Queer cisgender theatre-maker to navigate the tensions around ownership of words and selection of material for the final script.

Evaluation of impact of applied theatre work

Applied theatre is difficult to evaluate and evidence the impact of the work produced.

Snyder-Young (2013) states that:

... theatre projects cannot, generally stop wars, start revolutions, prevent the rise of regimes, stop the proliferation of nuclear arms, or put an end to global warming.

(Snyder-Young, 2013: 17)

and raises the consideration of whether 'theatre is indeed the intervention needed to make the change' (Snyder-Young, 2013: 17) and that there is limitation found within the audience as they need to be motivated and engaged to 'take action to make change outside of the theatre' (Snyder-Young, 2013: 16). Applied theatre does have a focus on 'collaborative, artistic intervention' (Snyder-Young, 2013: 4) as it can allow for 'live, performative, storytelling' (Snyder-Young, 2013: 4). The balance of the power of theatre and the limitations of applied theatre was a key consideration for my

own research design and I wanted to develop a theatre-making process that would allow for collaboration and be a Queer cis-led project with the role of the trans participant to be as central as possible. I did not want to write about trans experiences, but wanted to approach the creation of *my-identity* to ensure it was a piece of verbatim theatre that was 'made with a community, theatre made by a community, and theatre made for a community' (Snyder-Young, 2013: 5) to 'generate positive effects for participants who have been marginalised' (Busby, 2021: 6). Although difficult to evaluate fully examples of applied theatre work, Busby (2021) asserts that although difficult to evidence shifts to self- and group-identity as a result of theatre interventions, critical responses to this work should not underestimate 'the potential of theatre to contribute to this complicated process' (Busby, 2021: 7). However, theatre can only have the potential of social change if there is an audience. Snyder-Young (2013) considers that:

Theatre cannot respond instantly to contemporary events as they unfold and it cannot reach mass audiences. It requires audience members to leave their homes, often to purchase a ticket in advance, and to attend a scheduled event.

(Snyder-Young, 2013: 112)

Therefore, theatre needs to be current and to offer consideration of contemporary issues and tensions, even if they are social problems that people generally 'do not like to think about' (Snyder-Young, 2013: 112). Theatre is live, with words and actions (re) presented in that moment, and the audience need to be engaged with the production to continue to question and consider their position on social issues, and it does need to be remembered that 'when the audience leaves, so does the moment' (Snyder-Young, 2013: 139). As theatre-makers we need to ensure the audience leave with something from the theatrical moment. It is these questions that

remain in the mind of the audience that holds the hope of small changes. Snyder-Young (2013) considers this as pivotal in relation to how the moments shared in performance can change lives:

We have no proof that these disappearing moments lead participants and audiences to take action in the world outside of the theatre. These 'little changes,' when experienced on a small scale, do not appear to impact culture on a large scale. What remains are questions.

(Snyder-Young, 2013: 139)

It is these questions and the engagement with theatre and the (re) presentation of the lives of other people that might produce effective results:

Sometimes, theatre's liveness, its balance between intimacy and distance, its poeticism, and its playful collaboration are just the things a project needs. And sometimes, alternate methods might produce more effective results.

(Snyder-Young, 2013: 139)

my-identity offers narratives that have gone unheard and consider joy and trauma of the experiences of the individual trans participant. There is a place for social commentary in theatre, and Snyder-Young (2013) asserts that:

Many theatre projects responding to real world events look to use theatres' long form and theatre audiences' expectations and desire to grapple with complexity to tell a deeper story.

(Snyder-Young, 2013: 118)

Fisher (2020) considers the importance of continuing to hope for theatre to affect social change (Busby, 2021) as it:

... offers theatre makers an important range of strategies that can lay the groundwork for critical forms of ethico-political resistance and solidarity with others.

(Fisher, 2020: 185)

and for me, it is the level of solidarity as a result of a piece of applied theatre work that leads to an evaluation. The trans voices (re) presented in *my-identity* are intended to create some level of solidarity and understanding from members of the wider LGBTQ+ community in Newcastle upon Tyne. My research project is aimed to address misrepresentation, and as stated by Fisher (2020) to lead to this intended solidarity:

By drawing out misrepresented narratives and highlighting lived experiences that are erased or silenced by the populist ideologies of the time, testimonial performance can expose injustices and lay the groundwork for moments of potential alliance and *communitas* that are configured around newly forged acts of solidarity.

(Fisher, 2020: 183)

By centring the trans participant in the research design, their narratives are no longer silenced as each trans participant has the opportunity to tell their stories and share their voice in the way they want to. The role of each trans participant in the research as co-author and collaborator (to as high a degree as is possible in a Queer cis-led PhD project) addresses the promise of truth (Fisher, 2020) as ‘the use of testimony and witnessing as [is] a form of authorisation and veracity’ (Fisher, 2020: 16). As Snyder-Young (2013) discusses:

It can be easier and safer to do things that feel like interventions, mobilisations, and action but, in reality, provide more catharsis for those participating than actual change in the real world.

(Snyder-Young, 2013: 135)

It can be argued that verbatim theatre work is simply the narrative or account of something that has actually happened in life, and the commitment of the verbatim practitioner to place these words and stories upon the stage (Brown, 2010). Brown

begins a consideration of verbatim theatre and agrees with this difficulty in tying a definition down to be one thing, as there needs to be fluidity and openness to the use of these techniques depending on the community group being worked with. Indeed, he discussed that Derek Paget (1987) in the *New Theatre Quarterly* did not want to 'tightly restrict the meaning of 'verbatim theatre' (Brown, 2010: 3), seeing verbatim as:

A form of theatre firmly predicated upon the taping and subsequent transcription of interviews with 'ordinary' people, done in the context of research into a particular region, subject area, issue, event, or combination of these things.

(Brown, 2010: 4)

In *The Stage* newspaper dated 7 October 2021, Lynn Garner wrote an article about the use of documentary theatre and verbatim plays as '...campaigning on social issues or amplifying unheard voices...' (Gardner, 2021: 12). This article in *The Stage* newspaper allowed a range of practitioners to consider their own models of practice and approaches as theatre-makers. These included verbatim practitioners who are also interviewed by Hammond and Steward (2008) to allow for consideration of how their models of practice and ethics developed over time. Billy Bennett, co-founder of Breach Theatre Company, considered his approach as rather journalistic whilst going beyond the words of a journalist as verbatim allows for 'sometimes we operate like journalists, but we can tell stories that reach people on an emotional, not just factual level.' and that this technique is exciting as it allows him 'to tell big political stories from a personal and human angle in a way that might help bring about change.' (Gardner, 2021: 7). As discussed earlier in this chapter, truth is the key component as these are the real memories and experiences of real people. In the same article by Gardner (2021), Robin Soans expresses his opinion that 'the

audience for a verbatim play will enter the theatre with the understanding that they are not going to be lied to', whereas playwright Lucy Prebble makes the contradictory comment that 'as soon as one begins telling a story, one begins telling a lie. That's what makes the representation of true events on stage so problematic' (Gardner, 2021:7). The balance here is that the audience do know a verbatim play is based on lived experiences by real people and as such is factual. Alecky Blythe in the same article makes the observation that 'the kernel of truth at the centre is the words and how they were said' (Gardner, 2021: 7). This places the truth within the words themselves and the memory of the individual saying them. Summerskill (2021) examines where verbatim came from, and the different approaches to theatre-making. In the chapter entitled, 'What is Verbatim Theatre?' (Summerskill, 2021: 8-22) she is able to discuss that verbatim as a technique was introduced to the UK in the late 1960s and early 1970s as a means to 'convey spoken testimonies in dramatic form' and that this approach is seen by many as 'a related term for productions created from interview material (which) is 'documentary theatre'' (Summerskill, 2021: 8). The researcher and theatre practitioner wanting to work in verbatim needs to understand the differences between the use of this interview material, and the intent behind the play being written. Summerskill (2021) considers documentary theatre as being a non-fiction-based technique using documents and real artefacts that evidence the event, with the playwright having constructed the dramatic framework and story they wish to tell and how they will use, edit, and dramatise these artefacts. On the other hand, verbatim relies on the transcribed interviews or diary extracts. This form of theatre began in 1925 in Germany with the work of Edwin Piscator where he used 'interviews, recorded speeches, newsreel footage, filmed sequences, and montages' to create his work (Summerskill, 2021: 9).

In *Verbatim Verbatim* (ed. Hammond and Steward, 2008) verbatim practitioners were interviewed to describe their approach to creating verbatim work. Robin Soans considers the priority of verbatim to create questions for change, rather than proving the answers which agrees with Summerskill and creating new understanding and points of discussion. Soans also acknowledges the audience's expectation of the political nature of a verbatim play and that the material might be 'contentious and to challenge their opinions' (Soans in Hammond and Steward ed., 2008: 19). The pockets of prejudice found within the Newcastle 'scene' discussed in Chapter Three needs just an approach with the challenging of opinions, reflection on what the community looks like and the fluidity of it, the place of transgender individuals within the 'scene', and the need to open-up truthful points of discussion of what can be done, as well as raise awareness. Indeed, Soans sees the role of the audience as 'an active rather than passive role' (Soans in Hammond and Steward ed., 2008: 23) with the need for questions to be asked, and the hope for social change to be introduced (Busby, 2021). Soans does acknowledge that their approach is to edit the transcribed interview material to fit the story he wants to tell and as such 'I attempt to edit in order to enlighten and intrigue, and therefore to broaden our knowledge' (Soans in Hammond and Steward ed., 2008: 35). Soans does identify that a criticism of verbatim is that this might be exploitative as it is founded on real lived experiences and impacts, however framed by a third party. This links to Vincent (2018) when the transparency and relevance of a research project must be considered and fully realized. This transparency is needed to alleviate the suspicion of the trans participant when looking at historical studies as discussed in the introduction, as well as the need for the researcher to remember:

Researchers should be aware that when making requests of trans individuals or groups for engagement with a project, this is a request for intellectual and emotional labour.

(Vincent, 2018: 104)

There is a need to remember that a trans response is based on their lived experiences and as such will have some impact (positive or negative; or even both) on their psychological, intellectual, and emotional states. As such it is vital to consider this from the outset of a research project. When formulating questions for the questionnaire, interviews, and verbatim interviews, I took advice from my supervisor to ensure these were clear, non-leading, and had a reduced opportunity to cause threat (intellectual and emotional) to the respondents and interviewees. Indeed, the verbatim interviewees received the questions before the interview and were advised that they could respond with any concerns or issues prior to this taking place, as well as advising they did not need to answer any question they did not want to. This was as an ethical stance to ensure that each participant felt comfortable, respected, and fully aware of what was being asked of them, and how this would be used:

Transparent research practice ultimately begins prior to the conception of the research questions, as the researcher (or research team) should be pre-empting the possible question ‘why is this study being done?’ – and recognize that answers which may satisfy ethical review or funding allocators may not be adequate for participants.

(Vincent, 2018: 104)

As such, the participants were aware that the responses to the questions, and the subsequent transcript remained their intellectual property as they would be collaborating with me to create the performance piece. They were asked to provide approval of materials and final use of their words throughout the process and were able to withdraw their interviews up to six months prior to the submission of the

thesis. Alecky Blythe in the same publication states that ‘the people I interview are not naïve, innocent’ (Blythe in Hammond and Steward ed., 2008: 83), but are passionately connected to the material and its reception by the audience. In the chapter where she is interviewed, Blythe acknowledges the influence of the American actress Anna Deavere-Smith (1950-) and her approach of making audio recordings of interviews and then ‘learn them word-for-word, appropriating the speakers’ cadences and speech patterns in very fine detail’ (Blythe in Hammond and Steward ed., 2008: 80) by using headphones to listen to these words. Some performances have the recordings used, again accessed through headphones, whilst others rely solely on the accurate learning of these words. This approach allowed Deavere-Smith to clearly state that ‘by copying their speech-patterns with such precision, the real person behind the performance shone through’ (Blythe in Hammond and Steward ed., 2008: 80). Some of the work of Blythe does not rely on this, for example *London Road* (2011) where the headphones interfered with the technical equipment in the production resulting in feedback from the radio microphones. Therefore, the decision was taken to not use headphones, however, Blythe policed the performances to ensure the interviews did not become any less accurate or precise. Blythe is also of the opinion that:

The audience has a right to know where the material comes from. To counteract this, at the beginning of the performance, the audience is able to hear the recorded material over the theatre’s PA system at the same time as the actors are listening to it through their earphones. For the first few seconds, the recorded voices overlap with the actors,’ before gradually fading out and leaving only the voices of the actors, who continue to hear it through their earphones.

(Blythe in Hammond and Steward ed., 2008: 100)

There is still a consideration with Blythe of whether she is a playwright or an editor as she says, 'I am more interested in drama than journalism, and the dramatic thrust of a play will often displace precise factual representation' (Blythe in Hammond and Steward ed., 2008: 101). Although it may be argued that Blythe creates drama framed in the narrative and tone she wants to tell, she does hold the interview words carefully and will always check with a participant if she thinks the words of the interview are contentious or may result in personal criticism. Blythe is very aware of this and actively informs the participants within the interviews of her approach:

Although they do not have final approval over what is used and what is cut, I try to explain to my interviewees that the recordings will be edited, that they are being used to create a piece of drama, not their biography, and I try to keep them informed of any significant changes that I am making to the material. No matter how much I have prepared them, though, I am always nervous about their reaction when they come to see a show, and I can tell when I have pushed the edit too far, as I tend to break out in a cold sweat.

(Blythe in Hammond and Steward ed.,
2008: 94-95)

As a result, she is admitting that editing will occur, that she will be the 'selector' of the dramatic narrative and structure, however, to allow an ethical approach she does consider them during the editing process. As such she is taking 'reality' and using it as the vehicle for drama. For *London Road*, Blythe did go back to one of the participants who had said in their interview that they would thank the serial killer and asked if they were still happy for these words to be used. Therefore, the participant does have to be supported to stop them from becoming exploited.

The ethics of applied theatre and verbatim is a key consideration, and David Kerr in his article *Ethics of Applied Theatre* (Kerr, 2009: 117) states that these techniques encourage the change of social interactions, social perceptions, behaviours, attitudes, and practices. He also considers the intellectual property of work created in

this manner, in regard to who owns the words, who is responsible for the words, and how the words are being used. Although applied theatre and verbatim is political at the centre of the material produced, Kerr does question misplaced radicalism and the need to ensure participants are granted anonymity if wanted, and that their words and participation does not put them in any harm:

If Applied Theatre is not radical it serves no useful purpose, only creating a form of developmental public relations. Applied Theatre has to challenge those attitudes, authorities or practices, which impede community growth or human rights.....Ethical decision-making depends upon facilitators pushing cultural norms beyond the acceptance of reactionary attitudes or oppressive practices, but to do so in ways which carry the community with them, and without putting community members into unnecessary danger.

(Kerr, 2009: 180)

This ethical approach has been a key consideration of my own research project allowing the identity of all participants to be anonymised for their protection, especially if they go to venues being referred to in the body of this thesis. Kerr also supported my approach of not being the specialist on transgender issues or the lived experience of being transgender but allowing the collaborative approach to the development of the project, working alongside my participants, and having them involved from pre-interview to submission of this thesis.

To balance individual and community rights ... For facilitators, managers, and project designers not to assume the role of gurus, but to be always open to the persuasive power of collective intelligence.

(Kerr, 2009: 86)

I developed a range of research ethics forms to evidence the permissions of the trans participants in the accuracy of the verbatim material. This strict control and open dialogue allowed me to advocate despite our two community worlds being in different contexts and social positions and to underpin my Queer cis-led trans-collaborative research project.

At the start of the application for ethics approval and the need to re-consider the final research project, I was introduced to Summerskill through her work with Schweitzer, and as a playwright herself. I was aware of the (re) presentation of marginalised groups that she encouraged and produced, and as such she became a key case study around how oral histories and verbatim theatre may relate to one another. Summerskill presented at the Performing Oral History Symposium with the University of Greenwich on Tuesday 12th April 2022. Summerskill examined her use of verbatim techniques for her 2016 play *Rights of Passage*. *Rights of Passage* was an ethically related project to my own research project due to it being about the shared experiences of LGBTQ+ asylum seekers arriving in the UK. There were five years of research for the play, as well as Summerskill having attended protests to immerse herself in the shared experience of asylum-seeking. It needs to be noted that there is a tension here as Summerskill is a UK citizen, and as such was under no threat of being deported. She was only able to position herself as an outsider within the experience of these protests as a researcher observing them. Summerskill conducted a large number of interviews to begin her creative process and informed all the participants that these were part of the research period and that not all interviews would be used in the final product. As she reviewed the interview materials, she became interested in three interviewees, and made the decision to focus purely on their experiences. This choice allowed her to concentrate on the narratives of persecution in the seeking of asylum/refugee status and opportunities. Character one is a lesbian, forced into an abusive marriage, who comes to the UK to see her brother at university. Her scenes allow the audience to see the cultural differences of being gay and the persecution in her home country of Uganda. She is able to express her experiences as a lesbian, the expectations of her family and

society, and her introduction to social and personal freedom with the level of acceptance of the LGBTQ+ individual in the UK:

And here I was, in the bar, with the word G-A-Y, and I was watching this intimate couple, kissing, touching, you know, being free? Not looking behind their back to see if anybody is coming to attack you, and I think that was the turning point for me, and then I started thinking, "I'm not going back." I wanted to live my life as I wanted it. I wanted to be myself, because I'd been in hiding all this time. I didn't want to be like that anymore. I didn't want to go back to the marriage – I wanted to be free.

(Summerskill, 2016: 33-34)

Summerskill based her work on the testimonies of awful situations in an attempt to inform a wider public of an under-reported situation around asylum-seeking.

Summerskill selected the three characters to create a dramatised narrative, whereas my own research project avoids this dramatisation approach with a series of questions that opened up conversation with subsequent trans collaboration in the formulation of the final product. Summerskill comments that:

I hope that this play, created from their own words, as well as from interview extracts with others who work with and for LGBT asylum seekers, will go some way towards demonstrating my utmost respect and admiration for the contributors.

(Summerskill, 2016: 5)

Introduction to Applied Theatre Practice Case Studies

As my performance project developed, I was able to examine the practice of other researchers and theatre-makers who had an impact on my research design. These case studies not only allowed me to consider the effective use (and limitations) of applied theatre but also to review my own research and theatre-making processes. My opinions became more realistic and positively influenced on the success of applied theatre. This allowed my pre-conceived notion that this approach to theatre-

making would lead to immediate and quantifiable social change and equality of experience and opportunity for trans people to become framed by academic thinking and the project work of a range of practitioners who influenced my own research design and practice. The work of these practitioners also developed my project design and writing and introduced me to stylistic approaches to my work. The development of *my-identity* took place during the numerous lockdowns due to Covid-19 between 2020 and 2022, and as my ethics approval was granted only for a written piece of theatre, there was the need for me to critically consider how I could make this production-ready rather than becoming an oral history to be archived. These included the work of Pam Schweitzer and my introduction to memory boxes; the work of Helen Nicholson within applied drama and her practice of applied drama; and the intergenerational project facilitated by Catherine McNamara as discussed in Chapters One and Two. These allowed me to critically analyse the approach of applied theatre, as well as evaluate my own practice and areas for consideration and development.

Applied Theatre Case Study One: Reminiscence Theatre

Reminiscence Theatre was a practice I had been aware of whilst studying at the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama (University of London) between 2009 and 2011. I had always considered it to be based on the oral histories of older generations and as a historical attempt at documenting events through those who had seen or experienced them. As such, this was part of applied theatre, however as a theatre-maker I had limited experience in working with older generations. Having attended the *Performing Oral History Symposium* with the University of Greenwich on Tuesday 12th April 2022, there was an interesting presentation on Reminiscence Theatre from Pam Schweitzer, coordinator for the European Reminiscence Network

which aims to highlight good practice within theatre making, and especially reminiscence theatre. The network's website articulates its aims to increase the profile of reminiscence work throughout Europe; share best practices in reminiscence work and to exchange skills across national boundaries; organise conferences, seminars and festivals to share work and exchange ideas; undertake collaborative action-research projects in reminiscence with practitioners in different European countries; develop and encourage trans-national projects which actively involve older people in creative reminiscence-based activities; provide educational workshops, training courses and practical support for people wishing to develop and deliver reminiscence projects in different European countries (The European Reminiscence Network, 2019). The key influence on my own research project was around the network approach to:

- Reinforce the importance of valuing older people's memories and life experience
- To improve the quality of care for dependent older people by encouraging staff to develop reminiscence skills that personalise care in homes, hospitals and in the community
- To develop projects which maximise the life experience of older people from migrant and ethnic minority groups, and to encourage the recording and dissemination of their reminiscences to the wider community
- To facilitate collaborative reminiscence work across different fields, such as health, social services, education, arts, and cultural work
- To publish and disseminate the results of our projects

(The European Reminiscence Network, 2019)

Although my own project was not working specifically with participants from older generations or their level of care and support, there was a distinct similarity with the desire to value the transgender narrative and to evidence the lived experiences across the intergenerational group of participants. A key point for the network revolves around the recording and dissemination of narratives to the wider community, which was of paramount importance with the sharing of the lived transgender experiences to the wider community to inform, educate and ask questions – socially, politically, and personally. As the pockets of prejudice discussion in Chapter Three examines, there is a lack of knowledge and understanding about trans individuals, and only through research projects like my own can the truth and experience of a trans individual be shared in the context of a theatrical performance. I did not want to write a performance project based on my own cis-influenced perceptions of trans experiences, but rather considered reminiscence theatre and how this encourages discussion and sharing of lived experiences from those who have lived that moment.

Schweitzer discussed how the initial performance work created with her company called the Age Exchange Theatre Trust (1983-2005) revolved around the collection of stories with actors then improvising around these to develop the final performance material. This was useful for this fledgling company and allowed for the development of a creative process for the company, however, for my project I decided that improvisation would not be good practice as it could easily allow for the accuracy of the narrative to be diluted, as well as the focus of the content being positioned elsewhere than on the participant's lived experiences behind their words. Schweitzer acknowledged the influence of David Thacker (theatre director, writer, and academic professor) and his use of verbatim techniques which were integrated into her

company to give further life to the participant's original stories. Rather than having a list of questions for the participants within her projects, she would record individual and group discussions around a specific theme to allow them to feed one another with responses and memories of their own experiences. A difference between the recorded delivery approach to the *my-identity* project is that Schweitzer would create the final script based on incorporating these recorded interviews with the creative exploration of the cast to develop these further to create a dramatic premise and story for the play, whilst still allowing the conventional rehearsal period to have input from the original storytellers. At the symposium, there were exhibition stands to evidence the companies' productions and it was the inclusion of these that influenced my own decision to include exhibition boards as part of my own installation of the front-of-house areas for *my-identity*. Schweitzer also discussed another of her projects entitled *Making Memories Matter* involving artists working with individual older people to create 'Life Portraits' or 'Memory Boxes' around their life experiences, which allowed their lives and personal journeys to be shared with the audience looking at their artefact based on their life. Artists worked with participants across the globe to create these memory boxes. When seeing these at the symposium, this allowed me to consider the use of something similar for my own project as another opportunity to share the words and lived experiences of the trans participants in a different format. These memory boxes allow for interaction between the audience and the material, and the hoped consideration of the audience of the trans experience from a more pictorial and physical stance rather than purely based on spoken or written words. The project was going to look at an installation approach with multimedia considerations and content, and these memory boxes appeared to offer an opportunity of sharing the participant's lives with the audience. As memories

are shared, so conversations can take place, as well as this approach to include younger audience members as the material contained in each memory box shares the individual life of the participant in an accessible manner and approach. This in turn will allow the heterosexual and cisgender audience member to have an insight into the reality of living as a trans person, as well as considering the pockets of prejudice within the city discussed earlier allowing for members of the LGBTQ+ wider community and 'scene' to have the opportunity to hear the voices of lived experiences and to understand different perspectives and personal norms.

Applied Theatre Case Study Two: Applied Drama and Helen Nicholson

Applied Theatre is a long-established tradition, and this case study allows me to reflect on the influences of early applied theatre practitioners who have influenced the work of today's theatre-makers. Throughout the thesis I have included reference to a range of practitioners who influenced my methodology, creative process, and design of my own final verbatim performance piece. Nicholson's *Applied Drama: The Gift of Theatre* (2005) pulled together a range of theories and considerations of theatre making and the considerations of my research design including storytelling, authorship, intervention, self (re) presentation by individuals within research projects, and the need for there to be some basis of personal benefit for participants within research projects and outputs (Vincent, 2018). Nicholson discussed applied theatre as an umbrella term with a range of 'theories, debates, and highly specialised practices' (Nicholson 2005: 2) and as such is a field aiming to constantly create hybrid artefacts and to create performance of intersectionality and interdisciplinary approaches and theatrical modes. I made the decision prior to my own 2020 questionnaire or interviews to consider the identities of trans people here in

Newcastle upon Tyne as I was aware of the social injustices (Busby, 2021) and prejudice within the city and the 'scene'. Chapter Two allowed me to critically evaluate the number of trans characters being introduced in the media and performing arts which did not resonate with trans experiences and were more vehicles of speaking *about* or *for* trans people, rather than *with* them. This linked well to the description Nicholson offers for applied drama and applied theatre and drama departments delivering programmes of study on these areas:

... describes the practice of applied theatre as 'intervention, communication, development, empowerment and expression when working with individuals or specific communities.'

(Nicholson, 2005: 3)

... further emphasis on the politics of space and dispossession in their commitment to apply theatre to 'non-traditional spaces and marginalised communities.'

(Nicholson, 2005: 3)

Chapter Three and the 'pockets of prejudice' discussed the distinct hierarchy in the Newcastle 'scene' and the lack of position or visibility of trans people. With my research design and focus on a trans collaborative approach (Rosenberg and Tilley, 2021) this sense of a theatre intervention (Fisher, 2020) is the opportunity for each trans participant to share the narrative they want to, in their own words, forming a sense of communication to the audience they may not have been able to access before. Nicholson (2005) discusses the work of Judith Ackroyd and the aspiration of applied theatre practitioners to 'use drama to improve the lives of individuals and create better societies' (Nicholson 2005: 3). I do still hold onto the approaches of Busby (2021) and Fisher (2020) in regard to what change is possible through applied theatre work, and the value of small changes as identified by Snyder-Young (2013) as being a form of improvement for the trans participants. There is always the consideration that 'what works for one group may be a disaster with another' (Busby,

2021: 15) and this sense of improvement needs to be on the terms of the participants themselves. As Fisher (2020) considers:

When these 'real' stories address moments of violence, disempowerment and the lived experiences of injustice, the performance of testimony can enact a mode of speaking truth to power, grounded in an appeal for the testimony of the witness to be listened to and approved in some way by the audience.

(Fisher, 2020: 18-19)

By deciding to use the approach to the transcription of my verbatim interviews (with all vocal slips, pauses, and full accuracy of the delivery) as established by Anna Deavere-Smith and Alecky Blythe, as well as the trans-collaborative approach to the writing of the piece, the ethics of verbatim are considered:

The process of editing and adapting the material into theatre form presented particular challenges. How are conversations interpreted? Whose stories are chosen for development in drama? Who controls the texts? Do the actors have the authority to fictionalise the stories? How are the narratives shaped? How is the work presented and received?

(Nicholson, 2005: 89)

because the individual participant has been involved throughout and co-created the work to as high a degree as possible (Rosenberg and Tilley, 2021). They have been interviewee and theatre-makers; editors and writers; they have interpreted their own words and selected those to (re) present themselves; and they have shaped their own narrative for what is to be presented to the audience. Nicholson allowed me to consider the range of options available to me as an applied drama/theatre practitioner, but most of all to refine the research question and methodology for the research project by linking identity to location, considering the creative process, and involvement of both participants and audience members.

Applied Theatre Case Study Three: Catherine McNamara and the INTERarts project.

As discussed in Chapter Two, Catherine McNamara was a pivotal influence on the development of my research design and model of practice. McNamara co-facilitated the INTERarts project between 2010 and 2011 as a collaborative intergenerational project with LGBTQ people between the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama and Gendered Intelligence. As an intergenerational project, McNamara was able to consider the 'matrix of identities' (McNamara, 2018: 126) of a range of people who were invited to participate and engage in a range of joint activities. McNamara (2018) considers intergenerational practice to offer:

... a strong emphasis on differing lived experiences on the basis of age, and the idea that people from one generation or distinct age group, be that younger or older people, tend to have reduced contact with those at the opposite point of the age scale.

(McNamara, 2018: 126)

and that this would:

... improve understanding between younger and older LGBT people, and to foster mutual support, thereby reducing social isolation and celebrating LGBT heritage.

(McNamara, 2018: 130)

McNamara's project offered the opportunity for age groups to mix and share their narratives whilst participating in activities that resulted in an exhibition of their work including 'live performance, installation art, photography, poster art and film' (McNamara, 2018: 130) using 'their own lived experiences as part of a creative process' (McNamara, 2018: 130). My research project also allowed my trans participants to share their lived experiences within their verbatim interviews. As a result of the national lockdowns during the Covid-19 pandemic (2020-2022) I was

unable to conduct a physical research project and as such there was no opportunity for the sharing of narratives or a mutual celebration of LGBTQ+ heritage (McNamara, 2018). This exchange within McNamara's INTERarts project allowed for 'enjoyable exchanges that would stimulate creative work and bring new insights into another person's subject position' (McNamara, 2018: 133). Despite McNamara identifying 'challenges of working with such a diversity of identities' (McNamara, 2018: 126), it allowed for a practice that provided 'space for all participants to collaborate and create art in ways that suited them' (McNamara, 2018: 138) with McNamara stating that:

Over one-third of participants (9 of the 26 who participated) reported and improvement in the way they mixed in social situations, which suggests that the project did successfully foster social relations for many involved.

(McNamara, 2018: 137)

This integration and collaboration between the specific age groups is a model of practice that I would like to consider for future research projects. It was not an option during the Covid-19 pandemic, and my ethics approval for my research was based on remote interviews and the writing of a production-ready verbatim play. My own intergenerational group of trans participants did not meet one another and were not involved in any sharing of their lived experiences and narratives. When reflecting on my own research design, the practice I followed was suitable for the *my-identity* project as it allowed me to record personal words to (re) present a range of trans identities in Newcastle upon Tyne. I do think, upon reflection, that having some engagement with my own participants, this might have allowed the 'idea of the micro-communities within what may be thought of as a bigger, broader LGBT community' (McNamara, 2018: 132). This being my position as a gay cisgender male within the wider LGBTQ+ community within Newcastle upon Tyne, researching the sub-culture

of trans identities and lived experiences in the city. The challenges as identified by McNamara of the 'inclusion of all of those identity categories within a group of project participants is not straightforward' (McNamara, 2018: 131) and including interactions within my own research practice might have created a similar set of tensions due to the age range and different identities. This is evident in the *my-identity* text as the monologues of the narratives of the trans lived experiences show the different ideas about things that would be contentious within the trans community, e.g. ways in which they would describe their own identity that others might not use, or their perceptions about trans people of different generations. The structure of my verbatim piece presents these tensions in a way that an attentive listener could pick up, without them causing tension between participants directly. I do need to remember that my research project and verbatim interviews were at a time of lockdown and social isolation for some people and that although I was welcomed into the personal space (home) of each trans participant, they may not have welcomed the other participants to enter this. I was transparent with the information I shared within the recruitment of my participants concerning what was expected and what the project would involve, and McNamara identifies the need for this transparency as she considers:

We were conscious that not everybody would be interested in working in mixed groups, but by explaining the benefits as we saw them, we were seeking to be transparent while people were forming their expectations of the project.

(McNamara, 2018: 133)

and McNamara reflects on the adjustments that were required within the model of practice used to encourage interactions and working between specific identity groups:

We were advised by the project worker that we should plan men-only sessions and women-only sessions within our project to accommodate what was described as the preferences of the group members. This notion of working in discrete groups was at odds with the fundamental approach we had planned to adopt with this project, which was to bring people with different lived experiences together to work collaboratively.

(McNamara, 2018: 133)

The collaboration I wanted to be evident in my own research was between myself and each trans participant as we co-edited their interview transcripts and co-authored the installation and script for *my-identity* as far as a Queer cis-led project allowed there to be trans-collaboration. McNamara's INTERacts project allowed for the promotion of 'solidarity' (McNamara, 2018: 129) between the generations, and I question how far my research project has created this sense of solidarity. I must remember that the solidarity I wanted is born from the individual narratives and (re) presentation of each trans person and how they identify themselves. *my-identity* and the five monologues found within it can also be seen as:

... developing one person's understanding of another person and cultivating one's relationship with someone with a different set of experiences.

(McNamara, 2018: 134)

The consideration of the work of McNamara allowed me to consider my own model of practice and approach to a verbatim project with trans people. Her research as an academic and as a theatre-maker provides reference points to ethical working methods to frame my own research methods to contribute to 'the constitution of the practice of queer as a lived experience' (McNamara, 2012: 3).

In comparison to McNamara, Inchley and Baker (2022) facilitated a project entitled *The Verbatim Formula* with care-experienced young people. This allowed the participants to be 'co-researchers' (Inchley and Baker in Busby et al. ed., 2022: 262) and seen as an 'expert in their experience of care' (Inchley and Baker in Busby et al.

ed., 2022: 262). This project asked for the care system to examine the 'inequalities that young people in care suffer' (Inchley and Baker in Busby et al. ed., 2022: 262).

Inchley and Baker (2022) assert that:

...we must all consider how we contribute to an understanding of care that causes it to be shameful, and how changing this could lead to better experiences.

(Inchley and Baker in Busby et al. ed., 2022: 265)

My own research project places each trans participant in the role of expert, and they are also reflecting on their own lived experiences, and as such are reliable sources of research. The use of the young people by Inchley and Baker as co-researchers is an interesting option and something that I would like to consider for future research projects as I try to see how far I can increase the amount of trans leadership within what began as a cis-led project. The work of Inchley and Baker make the evaluation that this project took 'on a performative quality, able to move audience members, and in the process generate more affect' (Inchley and Baker in Busby et al. ed., 2022: 267). This supports the notion of small changes and continuing questions to support the affect of change of Snyder-Young (2013) and the opportunity for applied theatre projects to document social injustice (Busby, 2021) and as Busby herself states:

The idea of inequity, as existing both implicitly and explicitly, underpins my interest in making theatre and researching questions that disrupt power structures on both the micro and macro levels. The micro level involves challenging the internalised negative identities that are created for individuals, identities which impede their potential and aspirational thinking.

(Busby, 2021: 6)

and for me, it is the opportunity to disrupt identities being created for trans people by cisgender individuals in an attempt to affect social change and encourage personal

potential as a trans person that excites my own research, theatre-making, and posing of research questions.

The model of practice for the *my-identity* research project

As a result of the identified 'pockets of prejudice' within the research (and as examined in Chapter Three), it became clear there was the need to support the (re) presentation of trans identities in Newcastle upon Tyne. This was as a result of the ethnographical approach to data collection through the use of an anonymised online questionnaire to reach a wide range of individuals who frequent the Newcastle upon Tyne LGBTQ+ 'scene.' I had decided that this would create my own collection of responses to work alongside the national surveys and reports critically analysed in Chapter Three by Galop, Stonewall, and the Newcastle City Council. I wanted to build upon the limited qualitative responses found from my online questionnaire with follow-up interviews, to examine the lived experiences in the Newcastle upon Tyne LGBTQ+ 'scene', its changes over the last fifteen years, and what is missing to provide a more inclusive and equitable environment for everyone in the wider LGBTQ+ community population in the city, and those who go to the 'scene'. These interviews created a substantial amount of qualitative responses in regard to these 'pockets of prejudice' and the need to raise awareness and education. The questions used for these interviews can be found in Appendix A. The responses proved to be interesting as a member of the Newcastle upon Tyne 'scene' myself, as well as posing further potential questions for future research projects. When asked if they thought there was an LGBTQ+ community in Newcastle upon Tyne, answers included:

Yes, of sorts. It's..I think that there's obviously a commercial LGBT scene which has been in existence now for decades. I think most of the LGBT

community exists outside of the scene.....the scene in recent years has declined so much in what it used to offer....it seems to have got smaller and smaller.....now the straight community seems to be going there to the hen and stag parties.

(Interviewee 1, 2020)

which supports the opinions shared in Chapter Three that the 'scene' has become more gay-friendly and straight-centric rather than gay-centric and straight-friendly with the lack of investment or current identity of the venues and options available to all of the LGBTQ+ identifying individuals in the city who frequent them. The sense of the 'scene' being dated and not having this sense of currency was also expressed with comments including:

And now I feel that a lot of the bars are simply a drag queen DJ.

(Interviewee 1, 2020)

There's no money being pumped into Newcastle at all because it's ... and it's not just the business owner, but the council doesn't want to acknowledge our existence ... I don't want to walk into somewhere covered in tacky glittery wallpaper.

(Interviewee 8, 2020)

as well as supporting my hypothesis that the Newcastle upon Tyne 'scene' is predominantly for younger gay men:

There are undeniably pockets of prejudice, and the community is without a doubt dominated by the G, the gay men ...The majority of the queer community in Newcastle are white cisgender gay men ... so, there definitely is a hierarchy.

(Interviewee 8, 2020)

I think as so often happens within gay communities, the G is the top of the hierarchy, and then the rest are often overshadowed ...There is an obvious hierarchy that promotes gay men and drag queens. There is a distinct and palpable lack of people of colour or alternatively abled people.

(Interviewee 9, 2020)

I think there's a hierarchy of power, and with some hiding under the assumption that oppressed groups don't oppress other groups, and they do ... I've noticed that a lot of the older lesbians have simply fled the scene ... actually there's a real issue there, and they're not going to the scene, the scene seems no longer to be welcoming them.

(Interviewee 1, 2020)

There is a subtle layer of prejudice towards lesbian, bisexual, and trans women.

(Interviewee 10, 2020)

I think the people who attend the scene are some of the most judgemental I have ever met. If they have a perceived notion of someone then they will struggle to change it.

(Interviewee 5, 2020)

therefore, considering the prominence of the cisgender white gay male on the 'scene' and the questionable equity of the different sub-cultures within the city, including lack of representation of a range of marginalised groups. Racism was seen as another major issue within the Newcastle upon Tyne 'scene' with one interviewee mentioning that:

A lot of my friends are Arab, and also either Black or Hispanic and they've suffered a lot of racism on the Newcastle scene. And one of my friends is Portuguese and he walked out of the toilet in The Eagle and was called 'terrorist' by a guy.

(Interviewee 1, 2020)

The 'pockets of prejudice' also included a sense of straight phobia within the Newcastle upon Tyne 'scene':

Although the scene is a great place for both gay and straight people to drink and socialise, it's probably one of the most judgemental ... I have never walked into a bar where someone has said 'Here comes the gays,' whereas more often than I'd like, you would hear on the scene 'Here comes the straights.'

(Interviewee 5, 2020)

The interview responses then included comments about the position of trans people in the city, as well as hate crimes and transphobia in particular:

There's a trans customer, clearly a trans customer, and you know sometimes they don't want to necessarily fully, they're not necessarily going to pass ... and another customer I believe was trying to take pictures of them across the bar, and then when the other customer noticed they became quite sad and upset, and so I got on the microphone and shut it down. Immediately said 'Don't you dare do that in here.'

(Interviewee 8, 2020)

I think there's still a lot of, still a lot of internalised homophobia among some people that comes out. There's a lot of transphobia to people and I myself have faced a lot of phobia ... I think at the minute it, to some extent, trans people are having their own Stonewall moment and I think they've been largely ignored ... but it's very slow, the T is definitely behind.

(Interviewee 1, 2020)

The strongest voices within the communities need to be raising awareness for our trans family... We need to work on being seen to do the right thing, not just being trans supportive, but fighting verbally for them ... Socially, trans women are viewed as 'other.' Who cares what bathroom they are using, I certainly don't!

(Interviewee 9, 2020)

This highlighted the need for this media hype to be pulled away and for trans people to have the opportunity to (re) present themselves and their own narratives in the way they want to. There was clearly a need to work with trans people as established in Chapters One and Two, and to evaluate how their experiences might be shared. The conversations required with trans people as identified in the Introduction were also identified by interviewee 1 from the research interviews with them stating:

... trans awareness ... non-binary awareness would be really helpful in getting the community together and talking a little better, even if we may not like what the community has to say. It is just starting ground, isn't it?

(Interviewee 1, 2020)

Conversations can be difficult, and we might be told the trans narrative that makes us question our own ethics and unconscious bias. Harpin and Nicholson (2017) discuss the change in drama discourse and the participatory role of the audience member by considering the contemporary theatre-maker and how they position audience members in their work and that 'the twenty-first century is redefining the political relationship between performance and participation' (Harpin and Nicholson 2017: 2) as well as applied theatre using participation to affect social change (Busby, 2021), awareness raising and education. The intergenerational participatory group of trans people involved in this project were placed as close to the centre of the project design (Rosenberg and Tilley, 2021) as was possible within the limitations of a PhD thesis. They were involved in every stage of the research design from checking the transcripts of the verbatim interviews, selection of sections of their narratives to be included in the final play text, selection of the materials for the memory boxes and quotes for the exhibition boards, to their gender identification for their monologues.

As examined in Chapter Two, there has been an increase in transgender characters in the media and the arts, as well as a range of trans-identifying celebrities and sports personalities. Trans people have been spoken and written *about* rather than *with* or *for* them. McLaren et al. (2021) discuss that 'historically, transgender people have largely been represented on screen in negative and/or stereotypical ways' (McLaren et al., 2021: 172) resulting in 'overly simplistic' (McLaren et al., 2021: 173) narratives of the lived experiences of trans people. My desire to conduct a research project that was Queer cis-led with trans-collaboration is at the forefront of my model of practice and continues to be a major consideration for my future research. With has high a level of co-creation, the (re) presented trans voices and identities is much

more powerful and relevant as it has come from *them* and provides testimony to *their* place within *their* society around *them*, as well as society at large.

Ethics and consent

As a result of inviting the intergenerational group of trans participants to provide this sense of testimony of their individual places with the society around them, a key consideration was the holding of the participant's words and narrative and their control and ownership of these. As such, a range of consent forms were created to ensure that each participant felt in control of the use of their words. It is important to ensure that a clear research project information sheet is provided to allow potential participants to fully understand the rationale behind the research material being gathered, as well as how this will be used. This documentation can be found in Appendix B as examples for other researchers to amend and use for their own work. These forms were used throughout the research and verbatim writing process to ensure the co-creation throughout the process to allow the (re) presentation of the trans person and their history and narrative and included:

- Consent to participate in the verbatim interviews
- Permission to use material from the verbatim interviews for research
- Accuracy of the initial transcript
- Final draft accuracy
- Accuracy of any amendments
- Permission for the material to be included in the PhD thesis submission

It is of paramount importance, from an ethical perspective, to constantly have the permission and agreement from the participants throughout the process, as this builds the transparency and personal reward of the research project for the

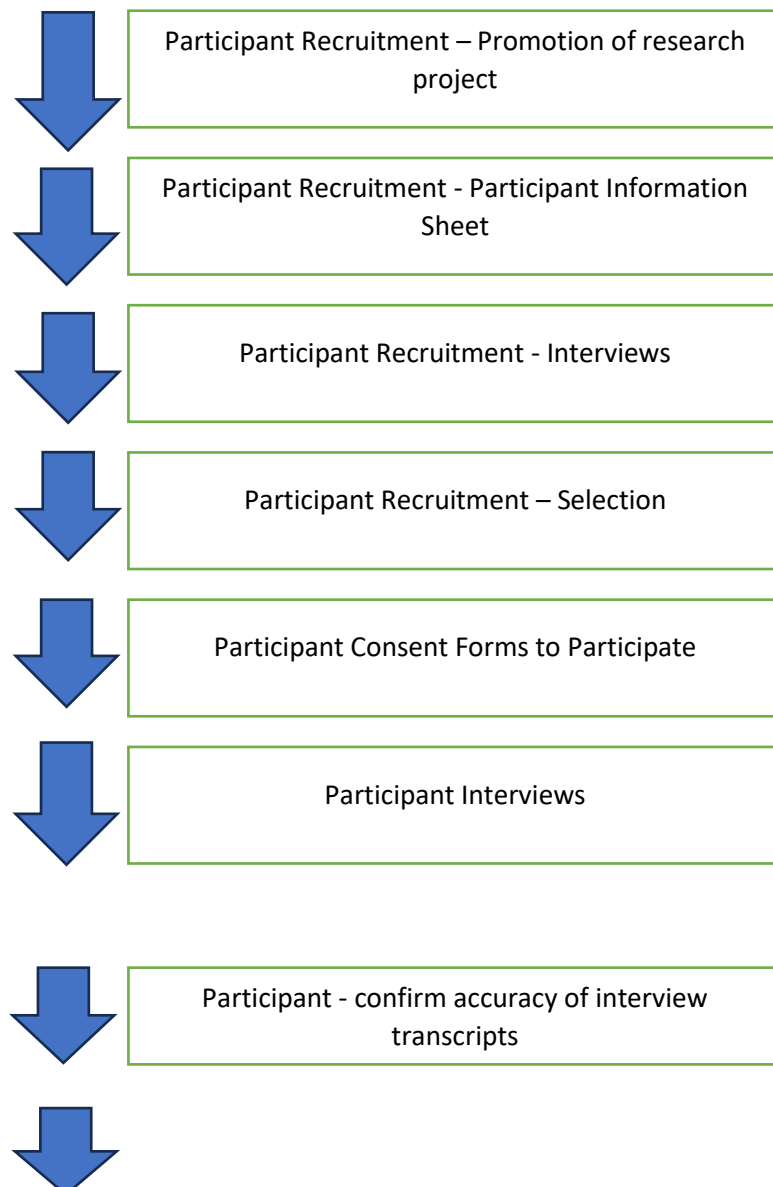
participant, as well as avoiding any misrepresentation. Indeed, as Rae (2008) says, this in turn creates:

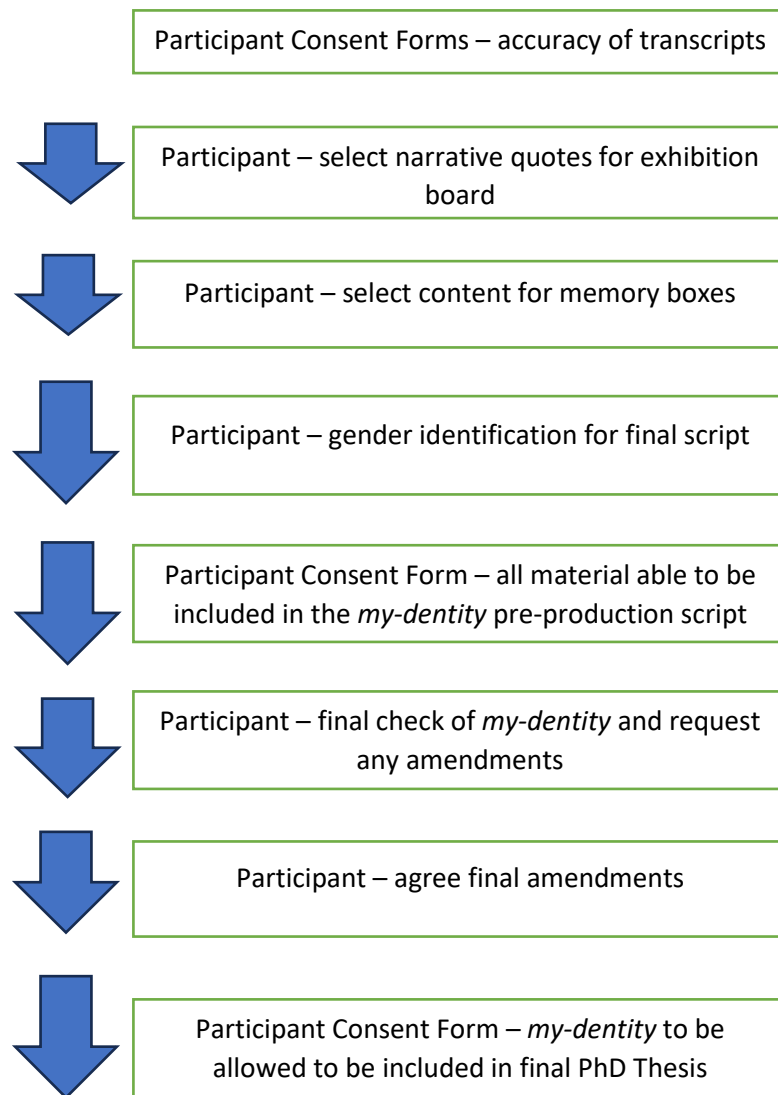
A space for open discussion concerning an unresolved issue, in the presence of an alert audience, which is listening to the different voices and the conflict between the characters.

(Rae 2009: xi)

My motivation throughout the research project was to avoid the cis lens taking priority and the performance piece merely becoming another failed opportunity to support trans identities.

Table 4.1: Degree of trans-collaboration in my Queer cis-led research project.





Project timeline

The project timeline was established with the formation of my latest (and current) PhD supervisory team in 2019 and the need to apply for ethics approval to commence my research.

Table 4.2: Research Project Timeline

Date	Activity
June – September 2020	Ethics Approval
August – November 2020	Online Questionnaire (Appendix D)
September – December 2020	Interviews (Appendix A)

November 2020	Verbatim interviews (Appendix B)
December 2020 – March 2021	Interviews and verbatim interviews transcribed and sent to participants for approval and confirm accuracy of the words
March 2021 – November 2021	Co-creation and trans-collaboration with the performance piece material
December 2021 – July 2022	Writing of <i>my-identity</i> performance piece
April 2022	Confirm final content from the verbatim interview transcripts to be used in the final performance piece
May 2022	Confirm quotes from the used verbatim interview transcripts to be displayed on the exhibition boards as part of the final performance piece
June 2022	Confirm materials to be used in the memory boxes to be used as part of the final performance piece
July 2022	Final approval for the individual monologues, quotes for the exhibition boards, and materials for the memory boxes.
August – September 2022	Writing up of the thesis for submission.
December 2022	Viva Voce Examination
February 2024	Resubmission of PhD Thesis

Participant Recruitment

When recruiting the participants, there needed to be transparency of the aim of the project, its methodology, and the degree of trans-collaboration to produce the final performance project. This allowed the participants to see that their involvement was to allow them to (re) present their narratives in their tones, to avoid them becoming 'frustrated by a stream of poorly designed calls for participation, heightening community alienation from academic enterprises' (Vincent 2018: 102). It would be a research project to underpin the awareness and education that Chapter Three evaluated as being much needed in Newcastle upon Tyne and the LGBTQ+ 'scene.' The verbatim interviews recorded and transcribed for Chapter Five allowed each individual participant to be provided with their own opportunity to co-create the

design of the project and the final performance piece in the aim to alleviate the 'poor design' as identified by Vincent (2018), and creating a unique opportunity within Newcastle upon Tyne, for a needed and valuable performance piece to speak to the city. Drama and theatre allow for different opinions and standpoints to meet face to face, in a safe environment without the need for direct conflict or position of potential physical, mental, or emotional threat, for the exploration of differences, similarities, and possibilities.

Theatre is a quest for differences, and the raising of discussions between them ... Theatre stresses differences rather than similarities; it stresses confrontation rather than agreement. It is a place of uncertainty, a place for the struggle of ideas; it is a space for open discussion concerning an unresolved issue, in the presence of an alert audience, which is listening to the different voices and the conflict between the characters.

(Rae 2009: xi)

Although Faye (2021) believes that there is debate within society around trans people and trans rights, these discussions do not place the trans person at the heart of the conversation. As such, my Queer cis-led research project allowed trans voices to be central to the conversation, and as high a level of trans-collaboration as possible to avoid a research output that had been manufactured *about* the trans identities in Newcastle upon Tyne avoiding any impersonation of trans identities (Paget, 1987). *my-identity* does not aim to create a fully realised sense of equity for the trans person living in the city, but more so the opening of the sharing of the differences and the potential for the discussions of what these might be, and how these might be embraced and celebrated, rather than criticised or seen as alien and leading to prejudice and injustice. This is not *talking* about trans people from the cis position; or the talking *for* trans people; but a conversation between trans and trans, and trans and cis together, able to articulate trans identities, narratives, and lived

experiences. The sharing of lived experiences from the perspective of trans people might 'generate discussion and debate' (McNamara, 2018: 125).

I recruited participants for my research project through advertising on a range of social media groups, as well as social media platforms used by the venues on the 'scene' in the city. There were eighteen expressions of interest in the project initially. I had only ever wanted a maximum of six participants to allow for depth and detail to their lived experiences, rather than the possibility of these being diluted with too many individual voices that may have resulted in a vocal battle for understanding and a platform to have their narratives listened to. As a result, I had initial meetings with each interested individual via Zoom. The Covid-19 pandemic meant that it was not possible to meet in person due to restrictions, lockdowns, and health and safety considerations, and as such a remote approach was the only possible route to follow. This was based on government guidance on social distancing, lockdowns, formation of 'households' and 'social bubbles,' closure of venues, and personal safety and responsibility of not transmitting the virus. March 2020 saw the full lockdown of the country, and as such Newcastle upon Tyne as a city literally 'stopped'. Only specific shops were open, people were advised to work from home, venues closed fully, trans people lost access to public toilets as safe places, and we were only allowed outside for specific reasons and timings. Although July 2020, did see a reduction in restrictions, venues had to close by 10 pm, and toilet facilities were even more gendered with a 'one out, one in' approach to social distancing and the gendering of individuals waiting to access these. As a nation, we saw a range of 'Tiers' introduced by the government between July 2020 and June 2021, that impacted on what could be accessed and what was required to be closed based on the localised number of cases of infection and fatalities within the first 28 days of

infection. As such, risk assessments and methodologies being included in my Research Ethics application, needed to take all of this into consideration, especially with limitations to public venues and the privacy for these types of interviews for the participants. Considerations were made of holding interviews in a home (researcher or participant), however, personal safety needed to be of the utmost priority. As a result, the only possible option to allow these interviews to be held between September and November 2020 would be remotely. I conducted these initial discussions on a laptop and situated myself in my dining room at home. I had made this conscious decision to be at home, as the applicants were allowing me into their homes, and places of safety, and I wanted to respect that level of trust and invite them into my home and lifestyle as well. I used headphones with a built-in microphone for added privacy, to support the open dialogue and discussion that was needed to introduce each person to the project, the expectations, the final proposed material, and their rationale for wanting to be involved. These initial discussions allowed for the exploration of the individuals' narratives and experiences, as well as who they were as people. Trust was an enormous consideration as we would be sharing very personal and sensitive information and dialogue, as well as them giving their words to me as a researcher for the project. Following the initial discussions, I had to select the trans individuals I wanted to explore the narratives of. To support my selection of the participants moving forward, I considered the following criteria:

- The age of the individual to allow for an intergenerational participatory group
- The balance of male and female trans people
- The need for the participants in being from Newcastle upon Tyne and the North East to truly resonate the experience specifically in this location
- The narrative to be told in regard to what was being shared and discussed and how this met the aims of the project

At this point, I sent all interested parties the project information sheet and guidance, as well as the initial consent forms for clarity of what the next stages of the project would be. I met online with all applicants to be participants in the project and explained the reason behind this, the methodology I would be using, and the key point that the project material would not be performed. There was discussion around anonymity and the protection of identities, as well as possible discussions around words, phrases, or names used in the transcripts if these were seen as needed within the project material. I wanted to ensure that I have a range of ages within those I selected to ensure the intergenerational narratives would be evident and to allow comparisons of transgender lived experiences over the last 50 years or so. Some applicants did not want to have their cameras on during the Zoom interviews, others did not want to call to be recorded, and some were concerned about the transcription of the conversation by the Zoom platform as part of the recording. I was of the opinion that it was essential to use cameras for the development of personal connection, as well as the participants seeing my dining room, lounge, and home as they had invited me into theirs. Also, the timeline of the project did not fit into the personal schedule of some of the applicants which would have made it difficult to apply the co-production and collaborative approach I wanted. Health was also a consideration as a couple of applicants had to withdraw due to ill health. The final process of selection was agreeing with the questions to be asked, as these were sent out prior to the interviews being held, as well as the applicant's agreement to answer some of the questions (as they were given the option not to answering a question if they did not want to). Transcripts were reviewed and agreed. The participants were then sent transcripts with the responses highlighted that I had identified as being useful for the material. This allowed the open discussion of

selection, and any preference they each had for comments to be included or deleted. There were a number of conversations about specific lines being re-introduced as the participant was of the opinion that those specific comments represented them better. At times, I needed to defend my opinion of why something should be deleted based on repetition or if the interview had gone onto a tangent and the material was not reflective of the questions. There was also the need to consider if any of the comments to be used might identify the individual and therefore impact any societal or personal opinion of them. This was needed to ensure the project was considering their safety and place in the city after the thesis was completed and submitted.

The Interviews

The original plan was for up to three interviews; however, all participants were able to answer all questions in one 60-to-80-minute interview. The process then included:

- Transcription of the interviews
- Agreement with the participant of the accuracy of the transcript
- Mutual selection of areas of text of interest to be included in the project
- Discussion and co-creation with the participant on selected material, its placement in the piece and the order of the narrative
- Writing the final version of the project

I had intended to intertwine the individual narratives to create intergenerational responses on each point or discussion area, however when constructing the final piece, this approach lacked focus and clarity of the individual participants, and the power behind the experiences was lost. I worked with each trans participant to create their individual sections and narrative, which allows for clarity and a fuller

sharing of their lives. This was important as the trans voice is rarely (re) presented truthfully or authentically:

Transgender (heretofore shortened to 'trans') people remain largely excluded from involvement and leadership in the research conducted with their communities. As a result, few trans insiders (i.e., trans people who are also researchers) are ever in the position of designing, conducting, and disseminating knowledge from trans research. As such, social narratives of trans experiences are often inaccurate, lacking nuance, or directly damaging.

(Rosenberg and Tilley, 2020: 1)

During the selection process of the material to be included, there was movement of material in regard to its order, however, the final monologue from each was finalised as the original ordering of their words. There was the need for each participant to have the time to reflect upon their words and the selection of the narrative to be included in the final performance piece. To allow me to present their stories, and for each participant to (re) present their lived experiences, there was the need for open, honest, and regular conversations about the project and what might be included. I allowed all of the participants to remain anonymous and to have names (or any other comments or mentions of places) that might identify them to have these deleted. There were only two of the participants who made adjustments to their transcripts to allow for this anonymity to be in place. Some interviews produced a large amount of material and as such needed more time with the accurate transcribing of the material. This was based on adopting the recorded delivery approach with every pause and vocal stumble recorded and transcribed. Indeed, this approach can take some getting used to for the reader as the text can feel fragmented, whereas when acted these are more natural as speech patterns and everyday delivery.

As a result of my research project that has created the *my-identity* verbatim play, my opinion is more resolute that trans people need to be able to define themselves,

rather than be defined by someone else. Stryker (2017) comments that the term transgender is still constructing its meaning and definition, and as such trans people need to be part of the societal shift as they have their own meaning and place (rather than being 'other'):

Transgender is a word that has come into widespread use only in the past couple of decades, and its meanings are still under construction.

(Stryker 2017: 1)

and that each individual trans person has their own history, journey of transition, and place in their society. My Queer cis-led trans-collaborative project allows the five trans people the opportunity to do just that – have the space to create their own sense and identity of 'participant citizenship' (Bottoms in Harpin and Nicholson, 2017: 179). They are provided with the opportunity to speak to those who identify as LGBTQ+, transgender, and cisgender heterosexual on a personal level to encourage awareness, equity, and self-education and learning. I am hopeful that this will lead to an affect of social change on trans injustice (Busby, 2021). Due to their role within the creative process, they are able to design the relationship between the text and the audience, the participant, and the audience, the active and submissive, the proactive rather than reactive considerations:

.... the desire to use the theatrical process to raise consciousness around a particular issue.... take their audiences beyond the point of awareness and into the arena of social action.

(Prentki in Prentki and Preston, 2009: 19)

They are (re) presenting themselves rather than being represented as 'other' by someone else. Their narratives shared in the performance piece are wholly theirs, from the initial response to my research questions at the verbatim interview, to the selection of the words to be included in the final performance piece. Indeed, they made suggestions and gave final approval for every aspect of their (re) presentation

in the piece including the exhibition board quotes, memory box contents, and the naming of the character for each monologue. The narratives are constructed about their real lives, not mine; their lived experiences, not mine; their journey of transition, not mine (as I am not trans); and their continuing journey through life.

Hybrid Oral History/Verbatim project

Due to the global pandemic of 2020-2022, the need to have ethics approval to begin the interviews, and the lack of clarity on the opening of performance venues, I made the decision to create a production-ready verbatim performance text, a hybrid of an oral history record and verbatim drama. This was a difficult decision to make as a drama practitioner, who wanted to embrace the potential of applied theatre and verbatim techniques to share the narratives of the participants in an environment that would hopefully allow for empathy, understanding, and the potential for changes to social injustice for the Newcastle upon Tyne trans community. As a patron of these venues, it is saddening to consider the behaviours and physical actions towards transgender individuals, where there has been blatant pointing and name-calling; invasive questions and dead naming being one of the most used verbal assaults on a transgender individual; to moving to other areas of the venue so that they did not have to be close to or 'see' the transgender individual. As a cisgender gay man who is part of the Newcastle upon Tyne wider LGBTQ+ 'scene,' this has an emotional and intellectual impact on me as a person. I had always believed in equality and equity of everyone I have met and make a conscious attempt to identify and negate (as far as possible) any unconscious bias I might have. As a Queer researcher I will remain living within the Newcastle upon Tyne 'scene' and as such have an accountability of the authorship of the research output and my project developed.

Initially, I had some concerns that something would be lost or missing from my research material that would be purely written and not performed to an audience. As a drama qualitative researcher and theatre-maker, I was worried that this might result in a project that did not evidence the originality of my contribution to drama-related research. However, I am of the opinion now, that, *my-identity* allows the intergenerational participatory group of trans people to speak for themselves, rather than be spoken about or to, allowing for a pre-production performance project that expresses their lived experiences and narratives of being trans in Newcastle upon Tyne based on their lives, their position, and their experience. In saying this, I would like to highlight that when I began my research, I was of the naïve opinion that there would be ‘one’ real voice from ‘a’ transgender community: when this is not the case. Selecting a cross-section of age demographics was decided upon to allow for the similarities and differences of experiences to be shared, as well as a range of social, economic, religious, cultural, and educational backgrounds. My Queer cis-led research project does not represent **the** transgender community, but more so is the acknowledgment of individual lived experiences from those who identify as transgender. The selection of the questions within these interviews were of paramount importance, as they needed to be consistent to allow for a range of responses to the same questions of this potential ‘shared impact’ on their lives: non-offensive to the name, pronouns, and terminology used (for example the use of transexual rather than transgender; and use of transgender as an overarching term). It should be noted that on occasion a participant might have been asked a follow up question based on the response they made to allow for more personal elaboration and information to be shared. This has allowed for the depth and breadth of the individual response to be fully referenced in *my-identity*, with discussion on

employment, personal lives, family and friends, discrimination, venues, and opportunities to socialise, healthcare and access to medical support, definition, and diagnosis of gender dysphoria, as starting points for the (re) presentation of their individual lives. Although this work is pre-production ready in regard to it being a piece of writing that could be produced for the stage with actors, it is an oral history as it:

Oral history and theatre make natural partners. Interviews are a form of performance in themselves.... So it is not surprising that oral history projects have often turned to drama to present the stories they have recorded, or that theatre has taken to oral history to reach out to groups and communities who may not often cross the foyer threshold.

(Summerskill, 2021: 3)

and that the project, be it verbatim or oral history, offers ‘exciting possibilities for addressing social justice issues, community engagement and personal growth’

(Summerskill, 2021: 3).

The *my-identity* project

In the next chapter you will be able to read the final production-ready verbatim piece entitled *my-identity*. The reader will see that this is not a typical chapter as found elsewhere in this thesis, as it is presented as a play text and as would have been presented if a live performance had been an option during the ethics approval process. The script reads like a traditional play script and includes sections that discuss:

- Title Page
- Dedication
- Introduction
- Author’s Note
- Front of House

- Message Tree
- Audio Recording
- Exhibition and Memory Boxes
- Exhibition Boards
- Audience Perception of trans
- Setting
- Costume
- Props
- Cast
- The Play
 - Scene 1: Transgender Man – Aged 23 - Pansexual
 - Scene 2: Woman with a Trans History – Aged 34 – Heterosexual
 - Scene 3: Trans Male – Aged 31 – Straight
 - Interval
 - Scene 4: Woman with a differently gendered past – Aged 66 - Married
 - Scene 5: Trans Female – Aged 29 - Straight

The play is not there to empower them, as that would be based on my perception that they are oppressed and need *saving* in some way. It is a Queer play co-created as far as possible within the constraints of a PhD thesis and in being cis-led and offers the opportunity for each individual trans person to (re) present themselves in the way they want to, with the words they would use, in a nuanced way that is as personal and unique as they are. Each monologue demonstrates the power within each trans identity, without the need for me as the researcher to provide any secret formula, as they have it themselves. What the play is doing, is allowing them to (re) present themselves from their perspective.

Chapter Five: The *my-identity* Project (2022)

my-identity

A play by Tony Chapman-Wilson

Dedication

The writer would like to thank all those who engaged with the project, from completing an online questionnaire; engaging in interviews based on the questionnaire questions; and the participation in verbatim technique-based interviews to create a record of their words. These are some of the most exciting individuals I have ever met, and I will be forever grateful for allowing me to hold and curate their words. I would also like to thank the research supervision team at the University of Hull, Dr Catherine Baker, and Dr Christian Billing, for their ongoing support, patience, and many hours of reading the research project in its many guises. Also, to my husband, Stuart, for being there for over ten years of research – thank you.

Introduction

This script is the result of a ten-year PhD journey researching the intergenerational transgender experience in Newcastle upon Tyne, where the writer resides. Research was conducted to consider the pockets of prejudice found within the Newcastle 'scene,' as well as the continued hate crimes and transphobia evident in the city venues, and comparisons made nationally. Following an online questionnaire that allowed for those who identify as part of the LGBTQ+ community, and their allies, interviews were conducted with a range of individuals who use, work in, or regularly attend these venues to ascertain if the 'scene' creates a form of a community through shared, 'lived' experiences.

It became evident very quickly that the 'T' is still trying to find its place in the community acronym, as well as the need for transgender voices to be given the opportunity to have a platform speak for themselves, and to be heard.

Between August 2020 and November 2020, I had the pleasure of meeting several wonderful, interesting, and thought-provoking transgender individuals willing to share their experiences and narratives. Following these interviews, I was able to transcribe these and share this with each participant for the checking of accuracy, and to embark on a trans-collaborative project with the selection of the interview material to be used. There would be no selection or editing from myself as a cisgender researcher and theatre maker, but the individual narrative being selected by the speaker themselves in order to give accuracy, and true meaning to the words.

These words track growing up; coming out; and the reaction of friends, family and society. Education, employment, and individual rites of passage are shared within their words of bravery, challenge, and the upmost honesty.

This play is my dedication to their bravery and incredible strength, a vehicle to amplify their experiences, and the opportunity to raise awareness, understanding and acceptance.

As a member of the wider LGBTQ+ community within Newcastle, and as a trans ally, I hope this play demonstrates my upmost respect, care, and true admiration for all of the participants.

Enjoy the opportunity to listen to their words and hear the reality of each lived experience for each.

Author's Note

This play was written during the many country-wide lockdowns within England during the Covid-19 pandemic between 2020 and 2022. As such, all recordings of

interviews were conducted through Zoom, with the need for emails to be used to send materials for checking and approval to be granted.

As a result of these lockdown measures, there was an uncertainty regarding the re-opening of theatres and performance venues, and as such this project has ethics approval to be a written piece with no intention of being performed, without the permission and collaboration with the original participants.

The text is, however, performance ready and includes production and technical notes. As such, each narrative can be used as an individual monologue, or read in its entirety to hear the different experiences and narratives.

Front-of-House

Message Tree

In the foyer to the performance venue there is a message tree placed in an area of the front of house space, where it can be clearly seen by the audience. This is made of wood and has numerous branches available for the audience to place their reflections on.

Recording

There is the recording playing of the questions asked of the participants in their interviews. This will be the voice of the researcher and theatre maker for the pre-performance period in the front of house area, and in the auditorium prior to the start of Act One. This allows the audience to hear these questions; to engage with the experience of the participant; and to grasp the questions behind the monologues they will be witnessing in the performance space.

The recording contains the following material:

“What does being trans mean to you How about to your family and friends

How do you relate to, or think about, the 'label of transsexual' Is this a dated term Does it describe the transgender experience Do you see transgender as being a decision or something you 'knew' How do you think society sees and understands transgender today Do you think there is a LGBTQ+ community in Newcastle and is the T a part of that How does the Newcastle LGBTQ+ community perceive transgender Have you ever experienced any bullying or prejudice from members of the LGBTQ+ community How does society perceive the difference between transgender and sexuality What does it mean to be trans today What is the strangest question you have been asked What one question would you like to ask the cisgender community What does it feel like to be able to live your life as you want Are you comfortable in telling me what transition/transitioning is/was like When you look back, can you remember what it felt like to be (birth gender) compared to knowing your identified gender As a child what was your favourite toy Knowing societal stereotypes of gender based toys and clothing, have you ever experienced this What was school like, living as your birth gender Was there ever any bullying or prejudice at school What did it feel like as a child to be 'made' to wear clothing or behave in a way expected of your birth gender What was employment like – living as your birth gender, presenting as your identified gender, transitioning What advice would you give to your younger self dealing with the realisation that they are transgender What positives do you experience as a transgender individual What has been the most interesting or embarrassing question from your family or friends For you, what does it feel like to be a man/woman/non-conforming First thing in the morning, you get up, so what is your daily 'getting ready' regime When you began your transition did you have a different 'version' or 'presentation' of what/who you wanted to look like What in your life defines you today What are your experience with the use of pronouns and names How do you think the media and the arts represents transgender individuals Are there any positive characters that accurately represent the transgender experience/transition How do you think the LGBTQ+ community in Newcastle see the difference between trans, cross-dressing and drag queens”

This recording is on a loop and played from 30 minutes prior to the start of the performance. It will continue to play whilst the performance is on to allow for latecomers, or those returning to the front of house (toilets, drinks, etc.) to continue to hear the questions. As soon as Act One finishes, this recording will be changed to the performers asking the questions rather than the researcher, as the intergenerational participants begin to ask the audience these. This recording will be playing during the interval in the front of house area, and when the performance is finished, as the audience leave the venue, and will remain playing for 15 minutes after the end of the performance. Each loop lasts 3 minutes and 50 seconds in duration with 5 seconds in between each question. As such there is the need for 10 loops to be edited and played prior to the start of the performance with 38 minutes and 20 seconds of recorded material; the interval will require 6 loops with 23 minutes of recorded material; and the end of the performance will require 7 loops with a total of 30 minutes and 40 seconds of recorded material.

Exhibition and Memory Boxes

Around the front of house area there are five exhibition boards placed where is practical and adheres to health and safety considerations of the venue.

Each exhibition board is specific to one of the participants monologues and contains extracts of their testimony, as well as images reflective of their narrative. In front of each, there is a memory box which has been made from a 2 foot by 2 foot wooden cube and contains materials that represent each of them. (Examples in Appendix E).

Memory Boxes

Transgender Man – Aged 23 - Pansexual

Having reviewed the selected words from the original transcript to be included in the project, the key items discussed, which would be included in the memory box are:

- Images of family
- Labels – male, female, trans, gay, straight, bisexual
- A number of letter J's
- Qualification certificates ripped up
- YouTube logo
- PE kit – male
- PE kit – female
- Images of children playing – to include kiss chase
- Images of Jeremy Kyle

Woman with a Trans History – Aged 34 – Heterosexual

Having reviewed the selected words from the original transcript to be included in the project, the key items discussed, which would be included in the memory box are:

- Map of Ireland
- Images of Portsmouth
- FaceBook Logo
- Image of people coloured as though a rainbow
- Pageant sash and crown
- *Boy Meets Girl* images
- Images of handsome men
- Images of Section 28
- Images of *Ghostbusters*
- Images of *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*
- Picture of Dana International
- Picture of Nadia Almeida from *Big Brother*
- Picture of the character Hayley Cropper from *Coronation Street*
- Images from the television programme *Pose*
- A tutu
- A pirate costume
- A wishing troll

Trans Male – Aged 31 – Straight

Having reviewed the selected words from the original transcript to be included in the project, the key items discussed, which would be included in the memory box are:

- Pink balloons saying 'It's a Girl'
- Blue balloons saying 'It's a Boy'
- School photo
- School uniform – dress
- School uniform – trousers and T-Shirt
- Images of children chasing each other
- Binding bandages
- Images of *Boys Don't Cry*

- Images of Hillary Swank
- YouTube logo
- Images of journeys – car, boat, plane, walking, cycling

Woman with a differently gendered past – Aged 66 - Married

Having reviewed the selected words from the original transcript to be included in the project, the key items discussed, which would be included in the memory box are:

- Images of Newcastle
- Image of Stalin
- Images of a doctor, nurse, and midwife
- Blue and pink balloons
- Symbols of male and female
- Swiss flag
- A cowboy bell
- Images of Sisyphus
- Image of John Wayne
- Images of the Berlin Wall
- USA flag
- Images of the Hokey-Cokey
- Aldi logo
- Images of Simone de Beauvoir, Judith Butler, and Donna Haraway
- Small Action Man and Cindy

Trans Female – Aged 29 - Straight

Having reviewed the selected words from the original transcript to be included in the project, the key items discussed, which would be included in the memory box are:

- Images of doctors
- Stethoscope
- World map
- Small globe
- Newcastle City Map
- Headlines about lockdown
- Images of Pride Café, Newcastle
- Logo for MesMac Newcastle
- Logo for Tyne Trans
- Diagrams of surgery
- Images of holding hands – male and male, female and female, male and female

Exhibition Boards

These will be 6ft in height and include three joined panels to create a backdrop for

the memory boxes. They will also include quotes from the individual participant's narrative as used within the project piece.

Transgender Man – Aged 23 - Pansexual

Having reviewed the selected words from the original transcript to be included in the project, quotes to be exhibited include:

- “Erm, being trans to me, it means being authentic and living a long happy life in a way that I wouldn't have been able to do without being trans.”
- “Think, like everything things, do need labels, it's like cisgender is a label, it doesn't mean that it's negative, it's just a word to describe which labels do, do, and I take pride in having the label because I know for myself that there's nothing wrong with being trans, I know that it's not a bad thing.”
- “I mean, most of the people that I know that use the word transsexual are older people, er people that are usually about 50 plus.”
- “..... because if I haven't had surgery or had hormones, it doesn't make me less of a man I am a man because I say I am and because I know I am.”
- “I think decision, if that's like the terminology, the person uses, then that's fine, but in my head I can't see how anybody would choose, or make a decision to be trans because when you make a decision, it's usually a hard one ... but ... it's also .. positive ..”
- “.... it was a girl and she was like, well, I only date men, sorry, and I remember my head just getting really offended, and I was like, but I am ... and it really set off a reaction in my head, erm Cos I just, I knew obviously I was ... female at the time, but I just couldn't work out, I was like but, I am like I couldn't work out the rejection for that reason, because in my head, my head didn't comprehend that I wasn't male ..”
- “I think I knew in the back of my head before that, from a very young age, but I think ... it was about 12/13 I, I realized something was wrong.”
- “I was like, mam if I was trans, what do you think my name would be, what do you think .. I would suit, and she said ‘why, are ya,’ and I went, ‘Yeah’ .. and then I thought, ‘fuck’ and went to bed.”

The participant was involved in the selection of these quotes to be included in the exhibition board.

Woman with a Trans History – Aged 34 – Heterosexual

Having reviewed the selected words from the original transcript to be included in the project, quotes to be exhibited include:

- “I kinda feel that we're, we're kinda like pushed out like a little bit .. and we're trying to say like “No, no, we're just transitioning the way that we are, you can be whoever you want to be, that's, that's fine,” but .. you know, you can't have it all ways, you can't say to another trans person that they're transitioning wrong, you know what I mean ...”

- "... he's my youngest brother, he said "Oh, well I always say to people that I've got a brother and a sister" ..."
- "Which is, which .. is .. important for some people, like myself and there is others like me, it's about aligning your body to that 'of' a cis-woman, so a ... a cis-woman does have boobs and a vagina by and large, so that is .. that is your goal."
- "I always say that you don't choose to be transgender, but .. you have to make that choice to transition because society is set up as such .. that you have to come out if, if you are trans and you want to be .. seen as transgender or you want people to perceive you, or refer to you as .. your true gender .. you, you have, you have to kind of declare that .. so that is a decision that you make, but I don't think it's a it's, it's certainly not something that you just wake up one day and think "oh, just going to be trans now like." It's not."
- "It is like being gay almost, you .. you don't choose to be gay .. course you don't, you don't choose who you're attracted to, but because of the soc-, society we live in .. it .. you .. you make that choice to tell people ..."
- "I, I think people nowadays are a lot more .. erm ... aware, a lot more willing to learn."
- "The community erm, well, erm ... like I was saying before, I, I don't think we're as united as we were anymore, I think there's a lot of in-fighting erm, I think there's a lot of .. there's a lot of silencing, there's, there's a massive friction between lesbians and trans women .. and I, I'm such ... I'm such a supporter of women's rights and I'm willing to listen to cis women and understand where they're coming from."
- "I think I'm just, I ... I suppose I have just done the, the cliché thing of fully transitioning and almost assimilating .. into the cis straight world."
- "I have had my moments, erm I, I've been bullied out of two jobs in my life, because of being trans .. which wasn't a very nice experience."

The participant was involved in the selection of these quotes to be included in the exhibition board.

Trans Male – Aged 31 – Straight

Having reviewed the selected words from the original transcript to be included in the project, quotes to be exhibited include:

- ".... but then I'd sort of see my friends and they'd say 'Oh well I'm a boy' and I'd be like well I like the same things you do so maybe I'm a boy too and I suppose that was sort of when I started to realise the label didn't fit sort of thing"
- "There was, there was time when I was slightly forced into the stereotype of having to wear a dress for a photo day or something like that, but then teachers would allow us to change from that dress into clothes I was comfortable in."

- “Pretty much got to the point of when I was in the girls changing rooms they was spitting on us, they was calling us, er, ‘Fat sweaty dyke’ ... and then eventually, after that lesson they chased us across the field, there was no less than about 30 people chasing us across the field ...”
- “I think, er, everybody sort of understands that gender and sexuality are a different thing, but there’s like, there’s no like black or white with either ...”
- “I’d say the first thing I do is find some way to flatten me chest out ... like, depending on what I’m wanting to wear that day .. like what would it take to flatten me chest out .. if I was wearing something baggier I probably would get away with doing a lot less .. but if I was, say if I was going to wear a shirt or something I’d bind a bit more ... and ... I suppose cos outwardly that’s the first thing people would see, is either a large chest or what I was wearing ... that would probably be the very first I would do ... and ... yes, I suppose that would be it like ..”
- “I just think if people just took time to understand a bit more they’d probably see why I’d be using the male toilet instead of a disabled one ... erm, yes like I said, it’s not, like, I, it was pretty degrading having to use disabled toilet
- “To me, I think ... like me personally .. the word transgender it’s .. trying to find some sort of identity in between being male and female .. cos at the minute I don’t like sometimes I look female, sometimes I look more male, sometimes I really pass, and sometimes I don’t ... I just think it’s, I think it’s a safety word, to be in like a middle ground sort of thing
- “I think it probably is quite accurate that it is like a journey cos ... I went from being one thing and now slowly progressing onto be another thing It’s erm ... it’s definitely more of a journey than it is a process because there’s different stages to it and there’s always different stages to a journey, right up until you get to the sort of final destination ...”
- “I suppose the worst explanation has been ... it’s a choice, like, why would you choose that, like ... I think it, again it’s people misunderstanding ... People have sort of said ‘Well you’ve chosen to be this way so ... like, like I’m, like I’m disputing that it’s natural and that you were born this way .. I think you made a choice’ ... yeah, I think that’s the only way like people have been negative in that sort of respect.”
- “Erm, I’ve had, I’ve had people look at us and go ‘Are you a boy or a girl?’ .. and I’ve been like ‘Well, what do I look like’ .. and they’re like ‘erm, a boy’... I was like ‘Well there you go then’... It’s sort of ... It’s the, it’s quite a funny analogy, but me mum put an analogy to it so she could understand, she said ‘If it walks like a duck and talks like a duck it probably is a duck’ or, ‘If it looks like a duck, walks like a duck, it probably is a duck’”
- “I’ve got this sort of little idea where, I’d sort of have my own sort of little theatre company, where, the cisgender community can work with the transgender community as if they were normal actors .. like have trans actors ... sort of, just being actors ... that sort of integration .. like showing that trans people are just as capable of, of doing things as what cisgender people are.”

- “..... helped her learn sort of learn who she actually was and where her place is in life, sort of thing like, like I said she’s been left behind but never forgotten sort of thing ... cos if I hadn’t have been that person to start with I wouldn’t be who I am now.”

The participant was involved in the selection of these quotes to be included in the exhibition board.

Woman with a differently gendered past – Aged 66 - Married

Having reviewed the selected words from the original transcript to be included in the project, quotes to be exhibited include:

- “My one real defensive mechanism that I've got is transparency, that's what I call it ...”
- “Sisyphus pushes a stone up the hill and every night it rolls down again. The next day he pushes it up again, he does that as punishment for the whole of eternity and that's what it used to be like for me doing the bloke thing.”
- “This is the hilariously funny thing. You always think you're the only one .. you know, everybody else is normal and you're the one who dresses, wears these clothes, and this lipstick, and this hair and all the rest of it. You always think that ...”
- “Put a Berlin Wall around a category and make sure the person concerned fits inside it .. if they don't fit inside it there must be something wrong.”
- “I didn't invent the, the term ‘sex.’ ‘Male,’ ‘Female’ were not terms I’ve invented. I gotta live with all of that, and you know the society I came out of uses, sometimes uses, those terms as a means of, of explanation of things that happen within society in terms of how people relate to one another, in terms of reproduction and love and, and, and living together and so on .. and roles but sometimes it's used as a defence.”
- “People in the majority community go “Ah, do you have to be so irritating, you know. Why can't you just be” here's a wonderful, loaded word, “normal” ...”
- “They will come up to me and say “Are you a man or a woman?” And my answer is always “Yes.” Then they don't get the joke, because logically this is the right thing to say -- in the sense that yes, I am a man or a woman, it's up to you to work out. I'm not gonna give you a like ‘get out of jail card’ here you know ...”
- “21st century Geordies have got other things on their minds and therefore accept ‘difference’ because they're too busy to do otherwise.”
- “Knowing is being able to tell a story, a history, a tale, about a particular event that's happened to you, or a particular issue that’s within your life ... and explaining it in such a way that it's, it’s rational ... Now those thoughts are stories I think. Those thoughts are stories about knowing you’re trans alters as your life goes on.”

The participant was involved in the selection of these quotes to be included in the exhibition board.

Trans Female – Aged 29 - Straight

Having reviewed the selected words from the original transcript to be included in the project, quotes to be exhibited include:

- “It's quite simple in my head. It's just ... it's just it's kind of the just the process of being born with one body and just and mmm You know having a er body and a gender that's different from each other and just aligning that together. It's kind of just the process for me.”
- “.... parents were just complete other .. end of the spectrum to them. To them .. th- .. they .. they're ... It's just not something they understand about they probably ... erm their understanding of trans people is probably .. er ... the kind of things that were in comedies like decades ago and ...”
- “I feel like if anything, if I tell somebody that I'm trans, I'm just more likely to have issues anyway, so it's better that I don't erm because I, I generally don't have problems.”
- “I think cos of like the media and stuff like that. There's no, there's no like education out there It's, to my knowledge, it's not something that's ever taught in schools erm The, even doctors a lot of doctors don't really understand and erm know much about it and going you know, that out into the scene to fight that when I used it and the word people who didn't have a clue then, they seem to ... very much draw a strong connection between someone who's trans and like drag queens ... and things like that. So yeah, there's not much understanding at all.”
- “You know, like .. erm we used, we watched stuff on TV when I was growing up the make jokes about like all transsexuals have like big hands and Adam's apples and all this kind of stuff.”
- “I think as a community, there are there are, there are a lot of members who are particularly hot headed and almost quite .. very like political in the way they think and very rigid and stand with the way that they think ... erm, like if you don't agree with them, then you know it's like ‘you're out, I don't like you’, you know, hate you kind of thing ..”
- “Erm, but there has been a couple of instances with gay men when I've been out ... like I say with the, with the ‘oh you're drag queen’ kind of thing. I remember I was in, I can't remember what the place was called, but it was one of the small places on the scene erm and, like I think I said was, wearing like a dress at a time and one of these men put their, tried to put up hand underneath that, and that kind of behaviour.”
- “I'm bit sceptical on whether education would be good, would be enough, you know, erm you know it's, it's telling people about things in school, more you know, the truth of real life going often to get missed in schools ... erm it is simply by educating doctors and people like that as well. Erm I also kind of think I sound like a radical one ... but, erm I, I think what I was saying before about the trans community being like there's lots of people who aren't transitioning, but are considering themselves transgender, it would

almost be more useful if there was actually an extra one extra letter, maybe, so that trans people really are the people who are making a transition that are going from one to the other. Yet people who were gender fluid etc., it kind of feels like there's something else anyway ... just because it's related to gender doesn't mean it's transgender to me just, you know, and, erm yeah, it's just clarity and education for people.”

- “There’s a lot of things I get confused about what cisgendered say, but really it’s just kind of like ‘Why?’ well not to everybody, obviously, because there’s a lot of people who are accepting, but to the people who might accept it, it's kind of like what, why does it bother you, or why, why do you respond to it as though it actually has an impact.”

The participant was involved in the selection of these quotes to be included in the exhibition board.

Audience Perception of transgender

As the audience arrive at the performance venue, they are greeted at the door by members of the front of house team. They are given a brown luggage label (with an amber/orange ribbon to represent the start of their journey through the performance), and shown the message tree, and asked to write down ‘What transgender means to them.’ There is anonymity as no names are required.

At the end of the performance, members of the front of house team will be at each exit point and hand each audience member a second brown luggage label (with a green ribbon to represent the end of their journey and the start of a new consideration and understanding of transgender issues in Newcastle), and a coloured luggage label (from the colours of the rainbow). They are asked to write on the second brown luggage label ‘What does transgender mean to you now,’ and the coloured luggage label to consider ‘What one thing will you take away from this performance.’

These are placed on the message tree as an artefact of the audience’s expectation and feedback. By colour coding these, the writer is able to look at pre-conceived thoughts and perceptions on transgender, the examination of the success of the material and if these perceptions changed, and finally what has been learnt, and considered by the audience. These evaluative tools will allow the research project to be examined in regard to the impact and success of the performance.

Setting

The play is to be performed end-on. There are five tables and chairs on the stage.

Three are upstage, with one being USC, and the remaining two in equal space at USR and USL. Two are downstage in the spaces between those placed upstage.

Upon each table there are a variety of objects that relate to the individual monologue. There are lights from above on each table, with lantern barn doors used to create a box of light on the stage floor around each.

Costume

Each character will be dressed in stage blacks. The monologues share their emotional and mental inner-most thoughts, and as such there are no distractions from the words with costume.

Props

There will be no props used in the performance by any of the cast members as these are used within the memory boxes. This will also keep the audiences focus on the words of the narrative, rather than being distracted by movement or objects.

Cast

Transgender Man – Aged 23 - Pansexual

Woman with a Trans History – Aged 34 – Heterosexual

Trans Male – Aged 31 – Straight

Woman with a differently gendered past – Aged 66 - Married

Trans Female – Aged 29 – Straight

The Play

As the audience enter the performance space, the recording of the interview questions is playing on a loop.

The five tables and chairs are lit.

When front-of-house clearance has been granted the front-of-house lights fade to black. The recording of the interview questions fades out.

The five actors enter one at a time, come to DSC and address the audience with their question. Once this has been asked they sit at their table.

Enter from DSR, walk to DSC.

Transgender Man – Aged 23 – Pansexual:

What does being Trans mean to you?

Move to table that is USC.

Enter from DSR, walk to DSC.

Woman with a Trans History – Aged 34 – Heterosexual:

Do you see transgender as being a decision or something you 'knew'?

Move to table that is DSR.

Enter from DSL, walk to DSC.

Trans Male – Aged 31 – Straight:

What does it mean to be Trans today?

Move to table that is USL.

Enter from DSR, walk to DSC.

Woman with a differently gendered past – Aged 66 – Married:

What is the strangest question you have been asked?

Move to table at USR.

Enter from DSL, walk to DSC.

Trans Female – Aged 29 – Straight:

What in your life defines you today?

Move to table that is DSL.

Once the final actor has sat, the general cover of stage lighting fades slightly, with the light above table one (placed USC) brighter than the rest for the first monologue.

Scene One: Transgender Man – Aged 23 - Pansexual

Erm, being trans to me, it means being authentic and living a long happy life in a way that I wouldn't have been able to do without being trans.

I think to my family especially I think it means the same thing. It's a way of me being happy, healthy and a way of living the longest happiest life I can, because without being trans and transitioning, I would have had a part of myself that would have always just made us unhappy cos I couldn't have lived a life where I wasn't trans.

Think, like everything things, do need labels, it's like cisgender is a label, it doesn't mean that it's negative, it's just a word to describe which labels do, do, and I take pride in having the label because I know for myself that there's nothing wrong with being trans, I know that it's not a bad thing, I know that it's not disgusting, like people try to put on the trans community. And I think away from society, and just to myself the label trans, it means it's the same as labelling myself as Jay it's without the label of being trans I would never have been able to identify who I am and being Jay is ... the

thing that's important to ... being alive.

Er, my .. birth ... name .. begun with the letter J, and it was a panic that I was starting college and I wanted to ... be able to, I suffer a lot from mental health in my childhood I dropped out with middle school and high school I left with basically no qualifications ... erm, and a lot of that was due to gender dysphoria and not being able to just integrate into society in the way I wanted to it, and not being able to ... be seen as who I am. So when I was starting college it was a really big deal to be able to start as myself.

So my birth name begin with the letter J and me and my mam would just back and forth on arguing about names because, erm, she was a little bit iffy at first, it wasn't a negative, it was just, it was scepticism, and it was kind of like what if I change my mind and then have introduced myself to new people, so it started off as a compromise, it was more or less, well I'll just go by Jay, because then it's a nickname erm, and then over the years I decided that Jay was a nickname, so my actual Deed Pollis under James .. so my name is technically James, but I just go by Jay and I'm comfortable with it, it was the first name, where I've been called it, and I didn't physically cringe.

I think it's a very individual question, I mean, most of the people that I know that use the word transsexual are older people, er people that are usually about 50 plus.

Erm, and you find it a lot in like medical fields and stuff, the actual like diagnosis you get is like, er, I've got a bit of paper that says, I've been diagnosed with er female to male transsexualism and stuff like that, so it is very much a term that is used within like medical fields and with older

people, but I think until very recently people saw trans as very medical thing, erm more than being able to say like this is who I am and being proud of it. It was more like go to a doctor, sort it out, live your life, as a man, but ... don't tell anyone. Only the doctors know, only few people know it was very much different to what it is now where ... if somebody medicalised is your transition it is offensive, because if I haven't had surgery or had hormones, it doesn't make me less of a man I am a man because I say I am and because I know I am. So, I think that's why it's more dated than it was, because being trans is so less medical than it was, if that makes, that's what I'm trying to say.

... erm it would depend on the context, I'm very much about context with things like, if I was talking to somebody who I knew had no idea about trans and was just kind of questioning, I would ... probably say like, well, technically yes, but please don't use that word, and if you're talking to a trans person, I'd recommend saying, transgender, or trans not transsexual unless the person uses that .. erm, cos ... I think it is a term that like I say, it's very outdated now, so it's very few and far that you're going to find people who are comfortable with it erm ... in medical like situations.

I'm not too keen on it, just because I don't like the word, erm, .. it's, it's used a lot to sexualise trans people, like within fetish communities and kink and stuff, erm and you'd find like a lot of if you're looking at trans porn or something like it will say transsexual and stuff like that, like, like it's a very niche word, so I think the relation of that with obviously it's modern solutions for modern problems, isn't that like pornography wasn't there, years ago in the accessible way it is now, and so, it's a new thing that younger

trans people have to deal with, with the different stigma of the word transsexual to what it was 25 years ago.

I think decision, if that's like the terminology, the person uses, then that's fine, but in my head I can't see how anybody would choose, or make a decision to be trans because when you make a decision, it's usually a hard one ... but ... it's also .. positive, in a way, and if that experience is positive then great but ... in that decision of being trans you also getting discrimination, hate, medical procedures, the thought of losing your family, your friends like it's a big leap to take, and I don't think anybody would just make the decision if they could not, like if I could of .. lived the rest of my life, being a woman and not have to go through half the stuff that I have, erm ... I definitely would have took it, it would be ...given us a lot simpler, easier life, but the thing is, it just wasn't possible. So I knew, and ... it was basically I will seeing things online and, erm..I was talking to somebody and ... erm it was a girl and she was like, well, I only date men, sorry, and I remember my head just getting really offended, and I was like, but I am ... and it really set off a reaction in my head, erm Cos I just, I knew obviously I was ... female at the time, but I just couldn't work out, I was like but, I am like I couldn't work out the rejection for that reason, because in my head, my head didn't comprehend that I wasn't male, erm so I started searching on YouTube, of all places, and I found a video of a trans man erm, and his name was Alex and he had just came out as trans and he was explaining, that, the way he felt about his body and what went on in his head, erm and I went back into thinking about my childhood and stuff like that, and I remember situations of ... erm, PE in first school when they used to separate the boys and girls. I used to kick off and

shout at the teachers because I was ...in the girls and I couldn't work out why I was in the girls.

Erm, having stupid games of kiss chase, I would always, not work out why I couldn't be chasing people like the boys did and it was little things like that came into my head.

Erm, and then the discomfort that I had been feeling just made sense, it clicked .. so ... I think sometimes it's not something you go looking for, sometimes it's usually a situation that just occurs and ... you can't do anything about.

Erm, I would have been about .. er, pwhah ... 12/13 I think I knew in the back of my head before that, from a very young age, but I think ... it was about 12/13 I, I realised something was wrong.

Erm, and then at the age of about 15 , I .. confided in my mam after watching an episode of Jeremy Kyle ... and it was very accidental ... erm, there was a trans storyline on, if you know the usual Jeremy Kyle stuff where somebodies shouting at this other person ... and they were dead-naming them and just more or less saying that they wouldn't accept the fact they were trans on television, and my mam was like 'that's bloody awful', isn't it like, erm and I was like, 'mam if I was trans, what do you think my name would be, what do you think .. I would suit', and she said 'why, are ya', and I went, 'Yeah' .. and then I thought, fuck and went to bed.

So I was quite an accidental coming out as well, it was just on a whim.

The light above table one (USC) lowers to the same level as the general stage

cover. The light on table two (DSR) is increased for the second monologue.

Scene Two: Woman with a Trans History – Aged 34 – Heterosexual

Ermmmmm Oh, I suppose lit, literally it means to transition. To go from one to the other. Erm .. I .. I .. I hold my hands up, I .. I am binary .. I I I am on the binary, I ... I believe that I am on the I'm just binary. Erm, so for me that, that's what it means to go from one binary gender, to then transition, which is almost like a, kinda like a middle passage almost and then, the goal is to .. to transition, what I would say fully, which I get in trouble for saying, but to transition fully, to then live your life as the gender that you are. Best way I can describe it. Erm, I think nowadays it, it means many other things, and it's a little bit confusing Erm, and I'm sure you've heard of the trans umbrella ... erm, I think, I think it was created with good intentions, but I think it has kinda created a bit of a division...

Because, because I'm not saying that the way I've transitioned is the right way for everybody, it was just right for me, and there is other people like me, so therefore, it's right for them .. does that make sense?

They're fabulous in their own right, that's what I believe .. you know, be fabulous in your own right and own it.

Erm, so my, my family ... most of my family..erm very, very supportive ... erm, I, I say that my coming out story as trans is quite legendary, so I'm going to tell you it so it was when I was about ..18, prior to that I had kind of had came out as gay, bit gender non- conforming..anyway, when I was 18 me and my mam went on holiday to Ireland ... and erm, my mam made friends with this lady (NAME) .. and (NAME) is a lesbian, we love her And after the holiday, about three weeks later, my mam told me that she was in a

relationship with (NAME) ... so then, she'd said, "So you know" (she'd obviously used my birth name) ... I'm a lesbian" and I said, "Oh well, you might as well know, I wanna transition" ... so I came out to my mam on the same night. So we kinda supported each other through it, and my step-mam, (NAME), did as well, cos me mam and erm, and (NAME) are still together ...15 years later.

Er, so yeah the, my family was really, really supportive, like my grandma was just .. she was just like "We knew .. like, we just knew that that was .. you and you would .. you know ... we'll always support you" mm, my dad's side of the family, is a little bit different Erm I didn't really have a falling out with my dad, we just, we kinda lost touch for a few years ... erm and in with that, I lost touch with my stepm-, my dads wife, my step-mam and my youngest brother. Erm ... but over the years I have kinda made amends with my dad. Last year, quite tragic circumstances, but erm, but my step-mam died, my dad's wife .. and I, and, it's one of those moments where you just like, what I do now is important. So, so I knew my other brother, who lived in Newcastle, was going to be going to my dad's, erm, my dad lives in Portsmouth ... so I was just like, right I'm coming down. So I went down, and I hadn't seen my youngest brother for about ten years Like it was ... it was .. it was weird but it was like quiet acceptance with them ... and I, I was out one night with my two brothers, we just went to a pub and we, and we were just chatting, and ... my youngest brother is my half-brother, but we've always just said brother, like I, I still do even when I hadn't seen him, and (NAME) said, he's my youngest brother, he said "Oh, well I always say to people that I've got a brother and a sister" ... it, and I didn't make a song and dance about

it but I just, I nearly fell off me seat .. I was like, "Oh my god, like ... you don't realise (NAME), but that actually means a lot to me, that .. you would refer to me as sister .. like, that is how you perceive me, thank you" .. so ... yes, my, my family's pretty cool.

I, I think people nowadays are a lot more .. erm ... aware, a lot more willing to learn. Personally, I, I, I've never really had any problems. I, I don't know if that's cos I'm quite a confident person, I'm, I'm not sure but like, I, I have been in situations where I've had to come out, like .. sometimes work situations, it's just ... people can find out, you know, they can look on your Facebook, they can just find out, but mmm, mmmm I, I I think people are more accepting nowadays, I, I think that they are.

The community erm, well, er ... like I was saying before, I, I don't think we're as united as we were anymore, I think there's a lot of in-fighting erm, I think there's a lot of .. there's a lot of silencing, there's, there's a massive friction between lesbians and trans women .. and I, I'm such ... I'm such a supporter of women's rights and I'm willing to listen to cis women and understand where they're coming from, you know maybe if we just talk about things, maybe we can come to an arrangement, but it's, it's almost as if it's.. some people in the trans community are almost militant in their views and they've, they've almost imposed it on other people, and that's now the status quo and if you don't subscribe to that .. like me .. you're seen as a fossil. Or that, that you're ... oh, what was that thing called before .. cis normative or something, and I'm just like .. well .. what.

I would rather just say like 'Rainbow people' or something ... , I think that's

nicer and that's like, nobody can get really offended by that, that includes everybody... includes all of us, it's lovely ... all, we're all accepted by that beautiful rainbow.

Erm ... yeah ... well I, I believe that there's certainly a wider LGBT community, I'm not really a part of it anymore..I think I'm just, I ... I suppose I have just done the, the cliché thing of fully transitioning and almost assimilating .. into the cis straight world. But obviously I, I've got me mam, and I'm still connected to the community in that way ... erm, I think the trans community ... erm, yeah it exists ... mmm .. but erm, I'm not really a part of it ... excommunicated. Actually yeah, that's actually a true story it's ... erm .. cos I I did a, I did the pageant a few years ago and that was .. quite controversial that I did the beauty pageant as transgender and .. erm ... yeah ... ended up with me kind of being barred from the trans group, cos went to a meeting and ... I don't know .. just the way they were talking about me and ... and my friends ... it was, it was almost as if .. oh I don't know, it was as if we were just these stupid airheads who were just going along with stuff, and we weren't, we were like we're trying to just like show this is what, this is what it can mean to be trans, not saying that it definitely, that this is what it is, but it just can be .. and if, if you feel the same way, well you achieve this kind of thing as well So, I'm not really, I'm not part of the trans community.. anymore.

[Is there bullying] Yes ...Yes, and within the community as well ... within the community .. but yeah, yeah ... erm, just because I, I personally haven't really

experienced it, I .. I'm ...I'm not so vapid ... to accept that other people do have it .. I, I, I have seen it. erm, I, I have had my moments, erm I, I've been bullied out of two jobs in my life, because of being trans .. which wasn't a very nice experience. Erm, so yeah, I think there is still a little bit of mickey taking, I think there is still a little bit of, people kind of whispering behind your back which, I don't know if they are, but I think, just because that's in your mind-set, you, you do just kind of always second guess that .. you, you, you just think 'oh well, how will I be perceived if I do this' ... you know .. that's probably why most of us have depression and bloody anxiety ... always having to second guess.

I think every, I think we all just need to sit down in a locked room together and like have it out. If I'm totally honest, put all the TERFs and the militant trans rights activists in one room ... maybe they'll kill each other, I don't know .. maybe they'll all just sleep together, I don't know .. whatever it is they'll get it out their system, just get it out your system and let's maybe realise that, at the end of the day, we're not all that different ... you know ... still humans, still live and breathe the same as everybody else.

Break down the walls ... you can still have your own identity, but ... just don't put a wall up. Bring down the wall.

One, one, one of the ones that made us literally go like 'er ... how how would what ... er' was when I started uni..and erm some girl, just asked me 'So do you know (NAME), when you were a guy were you like straight, were you into women?' ... was just like, no, my sexuality's never changed, like, no 'just because you always say you're straight', I'm like, 'yeah ...

for all extents and purposes I'm straight' ... I'm a woman and I'm attracted to men ... straight.

I do think some people still kind of think of it as all as one and the same. Like, I but I accept that there are some people out there, that no matter what, they will just see me as a hyper-feminised gay man .. whatever ... like that makes no odds to me, what they think about me erm, but yes, I think there is a little bit of work to do. I think education's .. a big thing .. I'm, I'm all for LGBT awareness and education in schools, erm well it obviously wasn't there when I was still at school because we still had section 28 ... so there was .. no mention of it when I .. not at all ... all throughout school it never really came up in lessons. I went to a Catholic school as well, so that might have been why, but yeah .. I think .. education ... but even that, like you see in the media, they're teaching five year olds about gay sex, about transitioning, and about surgery and they're like .. no they're not, they're just teaching children that, you know, there's .. there's different people out there, there's diversity .. that's all they're teaching them ... so that, so there's .. so they can grow up to .. to have a fair mind ... like why would you want to bring your kid up in ignorance .. I don't get it.

Erm I, I .. I think nowadays there' ... there is a lot of representation, there is loads, people saying there isn't and I feel like saying to them, 'you wanted to be a teenager when I was a teenager ... the only thing that was around when I was younger ... remember Dana International ... winning Eurovision we had Hayley Cropper ... Nadia winning *Big Brother*, and there was that *Miriam* programme, that was it.' The odd random documentary, but

nowadays ... I, I could easily list off more than ten, probably twenty trans celebrities, that are household names, or that are quite well known There's shows ... like *Pose*, such an amazing show, the representation on that is just fantastic. Erm, so I, I think there is a lot of role models, I personally do think there is a lot of role models nowadays.

I don't really know if I had one .. I .. I ... it sounds a bit like cringy, but I suppose it was the woman I was going to become .. I had this goal in my head, kind of how I wanted to be ... I weirdly see myself as long blonde hair .. no, no, no, no, no, tried that, hated it. But .. yes, I .. I suppose Nad, Nadia in *Big Brother* kind of did ... it made me see like, oh this is a trans person living day to day ... she's not just dressing up on a night time .. this, this is her, and .. and people can accept her. Erm, so yes, maybe Nadia at the time I came out.

No, no, not really, I don't suppose it's much of a question .. I suppose if I was to .. to address the entire cis population I'd probably just say to people 'Educate yourselves' ... like, you know, get, get to know us .. we, we genuinely do walk amongst you, like sometimes you don't know .. who is trans .. erm, not blowing my own trumpet, but I, I, I do think I pass quite well .. erm, I don't really get a lot of hassles, so you know I go to the shop, I go where I go, I'm always perceived as female ... obviously I don't have to tell that person I was trans, but ... they have been amongst a trans person without realising.. that, that, is just the reality. And most of us, 98% .. 99% .. we're not a threat .. we're just trying to live our life.

Erm .. I, I ... I don't actually remember this, but it's quite a well-known story in my family .. but when I was three one of my grandmas' friends asked me what I wanted to be when I grew up, and I, I said, I want to be, I want to grow up to be a girl. I can't remember that. My first memory though was when I was about seven .. erm .. some, somebody had this erm, little wishing troll thing they'd brought into school .. and it, it was raining outside so it was obviously ... here was no break outside, we were all inside and the doll was just lying around, and I remember rubbing on its belly wishing 'I want to be a girl' .. that is my first memory, when I was seven .. and then I suppose .. I'm, I'm very much, I am the cliché of, of a gender dysphoric child .. erm, but I personally didn't really start to feel disassociated with my gender until I was about 15 ... but I, I just kind of thought it was a phase I would grow out of, I was still going through puberty even though I hated it ... I kind of did think 'oh well, maybe when I get to like 18 I'll, I'll just become like, like manly, I'll be gay and that's fine.' But it was, it was when I was 17, when I was 17 that is when I, I ... erm, I knew I think it kind of was in part seeing Nadia, when I, when I think of it now, I probably forget how big, how big of an influence it was erm, so yeah .. when I was 17 ... that's when I, that's when I knew cos I was like 'Oh, I actually can transition, this isn't just something I have to pretend or just go off and, and make this character of this woman, which I kind of had started to do .. that, that could, that is me, that can be me ... that's what I did.

Funnily enough, the other day, I don't know, I was thinking of something, and I just thought to myself you're not like you used to were, you're better .. and that's kind of how I see it, it's not, it's not like I used to be, I'm better .. I still do have quite good memories, obviously of when I was a young boy, when I was

a teenager, and I, and I will say that, I would never refer to myself as a girl..
back then, because I wasn't Erm, but I certainly feel a .. I, I, I just feel more
comfortable in myself, I just feel better .. I do .. I just feel better.

It's just, it's just, it is ... for me I suppose I am privileged in this sense, but it is,
it is reassuring to have people accept you, to have people to, to perceive you
as a woman, to accept you as a woman .. like ... I am really, really fortunate
that that has happened to me ... I'm, I'm aware that there's people that that
doesn't happen to .. and that makes us a bit sad.

So the answer to the question isErm ... I was saying before, very, very
typical of a child with gender dysphoria .. when I went to play group, I can't
really remember this, but I used to wear a tutu, I can vaguely remember we
did these pictures where it was our outline, and my outline I had the tutu on. I
can vaguely remember my dad didn't want it going up in the kitchen, but my
mam was like so proud of it, cos me mam just .. me mam was just so .. my
mam's just amazing, like she was so accepting. I had a dolly called Holly
er with one eye and hair that stood on end. I found her at the back of my
cousin's wardrobe ... when I was about 4. Then the year later my little brother
was sick on it, and it had to get binned and I cried for about three days. Erm
... I, I used to always borrow my cousin's Barbie's and My Little Ponies, erm
... until somebody at school found out I was about 7 .. 6 or 7 ...and that's
kind of when I stopped playing with dolls. But, yeah, erm, and then I went
through the stage of ripping the dolls heads off Honestly I'm just like, it is
literally the tick box there like frustration ... 'I can't play with these toys, I'm
just going to rip their heads off' But even with that though, I, I did enjoy

stereotypical boys activities and boys toys. I loved *Ghostbusters*, I loved *X-Men*, I loved .. the *Turtles* ... you know all of them kind of things. Erm, I hated football, so I wasn't, I was never really sporty ... erm, but things like that ... like, you know like *The Power Rangers* I loved all that.

There's been a few moments where I'm just like, oh that is clearly just because I'm trans, but ... the first job I had in care, erm I was bullied out of because when I started working I, I call that, that my, my gender queer phase...so I wasn't quite a boy, I wasn't quite a girl, but I was still using my old, my birth name Erm, but then you know I was in that job for about two and a half years, and in that time I did begin to transition, and it was when I started to present more as female ... I was, I asked could I .. like (NAME) ... it just started to get bad, so I, I was, I was just bullied out of that job. Then it took a good few months to find work, I was unemployed for about 7 months ... erm, and then I went to work in a lovely little care home and they were really accepting .. erm, I worked night shift which .. which suited me for the time cos it, it meant that .. I was going through my transition, I could still work, but I didn't have to deal with like the public, I didn't have to deal with resident's families, I was just basically The staff members, and the few, it was such a small home, like the few residents that we had, and it was lovely there. Erm, and then work was fine ... erm, I stopped work when I, when I went to college, so I didn't work when I was at college ... and then when I went to uni I didn't really work, erm I did a bit of agency work, but I, I, I had ... I kind of had no problems, but then ... about five years, five years ago, this was when was in the pageant ... erm, I had a job in a care home, I was an activities coordinator ... and the manager that employed me, was lovely, but then she

left we got a new manager, but the manager that we got was the manager that had known me about ten years before ... you can imagine how that went down ... erm, I lasted a year, but .. again ... I felt I got bullied out of that job. So I was fortunate that I'd made a good impression with the previous job that they welcomed me back with open arms .. erm, and since then ... I haven't really had any problems at all. Where I work now ... I love where I work .. everybody knows that I'm trans .. erm, that kind of came out, by accident, cos they know the show that me and my friend did. So, (NAME) had just ... had my phone, cos oh you can have my phone, message who you want with the show not realising or forgetting to say, but the work people maybe not ... so then she sent it to some people at work, it was the work group chat, and I was like 'oh well, they know now,' and everybody was fine.

I would probably just say I'm a woman with a trans history ... that's probably the thing that fits me best ... and yes, I am transgender, but it doesn't really define me. The only, the only thing at the moment that being trans is a little bit of a thing .. is just in the dating game, but it's hard for everybody ... so.....

The light above table two (DSR) lowers to the same level as the general stage cover. The light on table three (USL) is increased for the third monologue.

Scene Three: Trans Male – Aged 31 – Straight

I don't think I necessarily had any discomfort with it cos growing up me mam sort of looked at us as a young person ... sort of like she didn't sort of push us into any sort of gender stereotype. I think more of the time ... she just let me choose what I wanted, so if we went into a clothes shop ... she let

us go to the boys section and pick out what I wanted. So, I don't necessarily think it was a discomfort, it was just me mam said to me 'you're a girl' and I was like 'yeah okay' and I just sort of always had that thought in me head but then I'd sort of see my friends and they'd say, 'Oh well I'm a boy' and I'd be like well I like the same things you do so maybe I'm a boy too and I suppose that was sort of when I started to realise the label didn't fit sort of thing.....

I suppose there was a level of curiosity between the differences between what's a boy and what's a girl But like I didn't know any different ... just kids were kids ... like if people associated with me calling myself a girl or a boy I never identified with one or the other ... or neither ... well as it happened, I identified with the boys more ...

Erm, bullying happened sort of well into High School, it wasn't during primary school or anything like that .. I think, er during primary school, everybody just sort of accepted who I was and what I liked There was, there was time when I was slightly forced into the stereotype of having to wear a dress for a photo day or something like that, but then teachers would allow us to change from that dress into clothes I was comfortable in, so

Er, I felt probably a bit more confident changing from a dress into me trousers and me t-shirts cos I could go run about and do the things I wanted in ... me shorts and t-shirt or me trousers and t-shirt ... erm when I, when I was forced into wearing dresses, I used to sit awkwardly and walk awkwardly so people knew it wasn't necessarily the right thing for me...

I think it was pretty from the start of high school, sort of been like from the start of year 7 ... erm people started to noticing different things about us, like I would sit awkwardly and I wouldn't talk, and I think that sort of started the bullying cos, I wouldn't talk to anyone, and they were like 'there's a quiet freak sat over there.'

Pretty much got to the point of when I was in the girls changing rooms, they

was spitting on us, they was calling us, er, 'Fat sweaty dyke' ... and then eventually, after that lesson they chased us across the field, there was no less than about 30 people chasing us across the field ... one of me friends threw themselves in front of them trying to stop them, but they wouldn't stop, and then, it took like getting to a teacher to stop them all sort of chasing ... like just disperse the crowd sort of thing.

Er, I'm not sure what I would say to them I would just sort of question why they were doing that, what was their purpose in chasing me, what did that do for them.. like does it really change anything for them ... I don't know, it's just like I didn't understand why I was being chased ... and I think that's what, I think that's the thing that made it more scary, the fact that I didn't know why I was being chased ... think that's what I'd really ask, like why .. what was their purpose, what did they get from chasing someone across the field for being different....

I'd say the first thing I do is find some way to flatten me chest out ...I like, depending on what I'm wanting to wear that day .. like what would it take to flatten me chest out .. if I was wearing something baggier, I probably would get away with doing a lot less .. but if I was, say if I was going to wear a shirt or something I'd bind a bit more ... and ... I suppose cos outwardly that's the first thing people would see, is either a large chest or what I was wearing ... that would probably be the very first I would do ... and ... yes, I suppose that would be it like.

I think, er, I watched, well, I watched this er film with Hilary Swank in it called *Boys Don't Cry* and I remember there's a scene where she's seen packing a bandage away ... in her bag and then er, later on you see her wearing it .. I think that started the curiosity so I sort of googled it and had a look on YouTube and I found loads of like videos on how to, on how to actually bind and what you could actually use to bind, what was the safest options to bind ... and things like that.

Transition .. is ... sort of ... going through that process, so ... finding out right the way through to sort of ... the final product .. that there'll never really be 100% one final product because your developments and changes ...erm, I think it's just the different stages, like the whole process ... so it'll be like from being, from being referred to ya specialist to going to see the mental health team to being assessed to getting your hormone therapy

I've been, erm spoken to briefly about, about how long it'll roughly take ... and, er, basically they've mapped out the whole, sort of next year for me ... whether that's, like whether I'm successfully accepted by the panels I'll then be accepted for hormone therapy and then they've said within the next twelve months I should be put down for me first chest surgery And then after that they've said the rest of the process could take five years ... so really it's only the first year I've been spoke to about so far.....

My case is spoken about at like a It's like a small sort of, not necessarily an interview .. but I have to go along and sort of say this is what I want, this is why I want it ... I just think .. it shouldn't be about having to prove yourself .. it should be about you sort of saying this is what I want to happen, this is how you can make me comfortable ... cos I think at the minute there's far too many people who have went and said 'This is who I am, can ya help us' and they've been rejected .. for one reason or another, whether it's funding, whether it's they don't think they're ready .. or something like that

I think it would be incredibly hard for the panel to be able to make decisions like that without having a transgender person on the panel ... I just think it, sometimes it varies ... it depends on, er representatives for that sort of area like, er, as far as I'm aware I think there's one trans-person on the panel for the northern region.. but I think everywhere else, if there is a transgender person on the panel it would be incredibly difficult for everyone else to see what it's like.

I think it probably is quite accurate that it is like a journey cos ... I went from

being one thing and now slowly progressing onto be another thing It's erm ... it's definitely more of a journey than it is a process because there's different stages to it and there's always different stages to a journey, right up until you get to the sort of final destination ...

Erm (giggle) I suppose the worst explanation has been ... it's a choice, like, why would you choose that, like ... I think it, again it's people misunderstanding ... People have sort of said 'Well you've chosen to be this way so ... like, like I'm, like I'm disputing that it's natural and that you were born this way .. I think you made a choice' ... yeah, I think that's the only way like people have been negative in that sort of respect.

I think, I'd have preferred to have been born with all the right .. anatomy, but in a sense ... now ... looking at it I wouldn't change anything .. that's happened to me so far .. cos it's made me the person I am .. it's ... it's sort of shaped who I am as a person now and like if that hadn't happened to me I wouldn't have done half the things I've done now ...like I'm, I'm incredibly proud of a lot of things what I've done, the past few years, I just wouldn't change it

Leanne was a person who ... who was who wasn't sur..... about things and Lee's sort of helped her learn sort of learn who she actually was and where her place is in life, sort of thing like, like I said she's been left behind but never forgotten sort of thing ... cos if I hadn't have been that person to start with I wouldn't be who I am now.

In turn, each actor stands behind their table, says their lines and exit the stage.

Transgender Man – Aged 23 – Pansexual:

Erm, being trans to me, it means being authentic and living a long happy life in a way that I wouldn't have been able to do without being trans.

Exit DSL

Woman with a Trans History – Aged 34 – Heterosexual:

The community erm, well, erm ... like I was saying before, I, I don't think we're as united as we were anymore, I think there's a lot of in-fighting
erm, I think there's a lot of .. there's a lot of silencing, there's, there's a massive friction between lesbians and trans women .. and I, I'm such ... I'm such a supporter of women's rights and I'm willing to listen to cis women and understand where they're coming from.

Exit DSR

Trans Male – Aged 31 – Straight:

Lee's sort of helped her learn sort of learn who she actually was and where her place is in life, sort of thing like, like I said she's been left behind but never forgotten sort of thing ... cos if I hadn't have been that person to start with I wouldn't be who I am now.

Exit USR

Woman with a differently gendered past – Aged 66 – Married:

My one real defensive mechanism that I've got is transparency, that's what I call it.

Exit USL

Trans Female – Aged 29 – Straight

There's a lot of things I get confused about what cisgendered say, but
really it's just kind of like 'Why?'

Exit DSR

Once the last actor has left the stage the stage lights dim.

The house lights come up. The tables are lit once again.

The audio recording of the interview questions begin to play once again on a loop.

INTERVAL

When front of house clearance has been granted, the stage lights and front of house lights fade to black. The recording of the interview questions fades out.

The five actors enter in blackout and sit at their tables.

There is a general cover of stage lighting, with the light above table four (placed USSR) brighter than the rest for the fourth monologue.

Scene Four: Woman with a differently gendered past – Aged 66 - Married

My one real defensive mechanism that I've got is transparency, that's what I call it, and the idea being that I you know, er .. everybody wants to ask me anything, they can ask me something and I don't mind even if it's ... very personal ... however they may not get the answer they expected ... A lot of transgender people ... for instance don't like talking about their pre-transition days ... and ... my view is it's vital to talk about your pre-trans ... pre-transition days otherwise you don't get ... you have no history ...

Newcastle is a very peculiar thing it is, uh ... it has been dominated by one or two ... very powerful personalities who one of which has now disappeared off to London, thank God and, er .. I think ... to be perfectly honest with you, I think one of the biggest problems with all of that was it meant that a lot of ... people didn't want to come out of the closet because they were so worried that they were gonna have to conform to the ... slightly Stalinistic

approach to trans trans-ness which Newcastle was ... had problems with at one time ... I don't think it does now, but it used to have with that.

Transgender is relatively new term .. and when I was first ... growing up .. in my, you know teens and a little before that, there was no such word And consequently when I was growing up there was only things like not even cross-dresser ... transvestite and transsexual were the two words which were very most often used, and those words were heavily laden with stigma, probably less so now, um but in those days they certainly were. So when I was growing up the word trans didn't exist .. but being trans means it being somebody who has not .. um ... stuck within the parameters of the gender they were allocated when they first popped out into the world and the doctor said or the ... the, the, the nurse said or the midwife said .. "oh, it's a," you know ... and you decide, well you don't decide ... there's no decision making in it ... you end up somewhere else in the gender regime Most people, I think this is very common amongst my generation, we grew up in a world in which there were only really two genders, which related to the two sexes. So there were male people, and there were female people and anybody who didn't conform to one of those two things ... the allocations of particular gender and sex were seen as, as weird and that kind of .. like that kind of assumption has remained in place for a generation uh right through the 60s, 70s, 80s, right up to, almost to the present day.

My local Geordie family, found it really tough going ... my mother was fine ... great .. I mean she was ... but then .. my mother was the kind of person who would probably take on almost anything ... my sister found it .. found the

whole idea of the transgender thing ... difficult ... She's never explained to me exactly why she found it difficult ... and I've no ... Because she's never explained that, I have no way of actually knowing what the issue is, but I can make guesses .. my guess ... my biggest ... when I try to put myself in her .. shoes ... my guess is that it's due to a very simple thing called embarrassment The embarrassment of having to deal with somebody who is a brother, you know, and with all the brother things that go with it you know ... wearing trousers and being a bloke and all that kind of stuff ... certainly Suddenly, and from her point of view, deciding ... that I was going to stop doing all of that and I was going to really cause all sorts of trouble in the family by wandering around in a frock and if that sounds if, I ... I mean, I kind of describe it as if it was comical, but the trouble is it has been ... enormously hurtful and damaging. It has caused me great degree of grief because, uh, my sister doesn't talk to me It's not that they didn't want to take part in the whole business of acknowledging me, it's just that it was easier for them to not to, because that meant they didn't have to go through the whole business of thinking about things like what pronouns are we going to use and oh ... "Is she going to be okay if we invite her to an event" ... you know, I might suddenly decide to take all my clothes off. I'll wander around and shout at people, you know that idea, they're kind of like ... the weird thing that people often have with when confronted with unknown con-, concepts I, I have Swiss relatives by, by my uncle's marriage and they're great I mean they ... you know the Swiss are kind of like, "yeah go on do it," you know.. "yeah go on, if you want to wear a cowboy bell in public around your neck we'll go with that" .. Um, friends I, it was really funny when I .. I, I thought

all my friends were the kind of wonderful liberal people ... and I thought when I came out that because they were all these people who had nailed their colours to the mast of ... liberal ... 'live and let live' approaches, that they will be just fine ... I was totally wrong .. I was abs ... shockingly wrong .. I discovered overnight the people who I'd known for years ... literally years, I mean decades, most of my life, suddenly disappeared The interesting thing is, and in the time since I transitioned in, in 2008 ... I've made loads of other friends ... you know both on ... both trans friends and people who are cisgendered and .. and I still make friends, it's just the friends I did have .. have kind of decided that this was too much like hard work and that's mainly the way I approach this is that, their, their way of looking at this was too much like hard work and ... sort of stuck with that ... It was kind of like an accumulation of ... pressure .. uh ... it was like um, the famous myth of Sisyphus ... sisy, Sisyphus .. if I can say it .. Pushes a stone, you know this one, pushes a stone up the hill and every night it rolls down again. The next day he pushes it up again, he does that as punishment for the whole of eternity and that's what it used to be like for me doing the bloke thing .. every day .. I would do .. the, the business of being a guy ... it wasn't the ... it was just all the kind of crazy .. hiding and being .. fake for year, upon year, upon year, upon year, upon year and eventually .. I just got to the point where I couldn't take it anymore could I, I was literally so bad that I was committing, I was thinking of committing suicide, ending it all ... because I was just, it was just too, too much .. I couldn't take it .. So one Christmas, the Christmas of uh, 2007.. 2008 .. I decided uh, that was enough ... had enough of that .. you know .. I did partially because at the end of it all .. I had felt that I was

running out of time, that my life was drifting away from me you know .. and ... I just thought to myself ... I'm going to spend, I'm going to die .. this beardy blokey person and people are gonna plonk, gonna plonk me in a box and I'm gonna be You know my life will just be .. The word I would use now is wasted .. not really wasted, it was, it was a really good life, it's always been a good life but it, it, I didn't want to be a person who was .. er .. lacking an authenticity So I mean you know ... if ... if I sit down and teach stuff about the authenticity aspects of existentialism, and I'm not authentic myself .. it sort of gets me right there, you know it's that, it has that ... it has that kind of impact on me.

When I was .. a kid there was .. you, know what I mean .. this is prior to section 28, this is just .. like you know .. couldn't even talk about it at school let alone, you know, come out ... So for people in that generation only all I can say is, you know prior to prior to, uh .. you know the, the, the, the 70s ... I always get the impression that they were .. if you came out in those days you were kind of like .. heroic, you were like John Wayne, you know And the gay community in particular, but, but the thing, the interesting fact is the gay community, after I suppose, had a cultural resonance historical cultu-, cultural resonance within the UK. Well that wasn't the case with the, with the transgender people because every trans person I've ever met of my generation always thought they were the only one This is the hilariously funny thing ... everybody else is normal and you're the one who dresses, you know, wears these clothes Oh, and this lipstick, and this hair and all the rest of it And there is that, that sense that um ... you know the ... the availability of information, and the availability of the capacity to be able to talk

about it, and the availability of models they use .. have made it easier for people today It hasn't made it any easier for them in terms of the way in which attitudes operate within society, because as far as I'm concerned the attitudes, instead of being on the surface that they were back in the days when you know telling jokes about ... gay people and ... crossdressers was acceptable just every day now it's driven below the surface, but the jokes are still there The primary myth of mythology is, is, is, is something that cisgender communities sort of evolve, but the trans community itself has got its own secondary mythology about what it is to be trans. In other words, yes from the popular concept is .. you're supposed to go for surgery .. you know every trans people will say, will say to me, sidle up to me in bars .. when I'm a weird 'sparkle' down in Manchester, they'll say things like "have you ..are you pre-op," no ... and I'll say, say .. I'll sort of sigh inwardly ... as if it was any business of theirs, even though they are, are trans ... but it's assumption that somehow you're going down that road and you know I think though, those kind of let's get every ... the biggest issue I think is the biggest struggle we have is trying to get everybody .. to feel that they have to categorise everybody in, in, in with clear root, clear boundaries ... Put a Berlin Wall around a category and make sure the person concerned fits inside it .. if they don't fit inside it there must be something wrong.

So when I first started, I had this all sorts of assumptions about myself ... which are not true ... and I've learned it ... cognitive ... it's called in the educational trade ... it's uh it's, er ... it's cognitive apprenticeship the word 'know' .. I mean people throw the word 'know' around as if it was kind of like just a very simple word ... as if somehow you woke up ... you know you,

you were lying in, in, in, in bed at the age of lying in the cot at the age of two ... and there's a little thought going through your head saying "Ah, not a boy. I'm a girl" you see that's psychologically.... that doesn't happen ... and when you investigate .. every single story that trans people make about themselves, they always speak in, in retrospect about their particular experiences and, and, and not dress it they don't dress it up. What they do is, they reinterpret the past in a way that suits their present ... so the idea is they often say "Oh I knew when I was very young" Knew? I would suggest that what there was, was a sense of deep rooted unhappiness with the status quo that they found themselves in .. and very often didn't know .. what was wrong .. and later on found a way of explaining explaining that, so what is knowing? .. Knowing is being able to tell a story, a history, a tale, about a particular event that's happened to you, or a particular issue that's within your life ... and explaining it in such a way that it's, it's rational ... Now those thoughts are stories I think. Those thoughts are stories about knowing you're trans alters as your life goes on The terminology shifts as society and, and, and their understanding of themselves shift You know the understanding of trans, trans-ness .. in, you know .. the 2020s is ... limited ... overly stereotyped still ... overly based upon .. an assumption, assumptions that are made, not about transness but about about cisgendered people's own hegemony within society and their own use of language .. which people like me .. have .. got to adapt to ... You know when Bea comes along and says "Well I'm" ... you know .. you know .. I'm not as clear, not as obvious as it might look Trans people get annoyed at me .. because I, by saying that, I also .. inadvertently .. cause issues with their

own assumptions about .. themselves you know. They .. a person will come up to me and, and talk to me about things like, uh .. they've tried to, tried to say to me, um .. "Have you not had voice therapy" and I'll say "Yeah, it didn't have much effect" ... and I say, well the only reason I did it was partially because I, I wanted to have a more female voice, on phones. I didn't bother the rest of the time, it's just on the phone, when nobody can see me, if they assume I'm a bloke and I tend to end up getting called 'he' all the time .. or 'sir' .. which is even more irritating .. um .. And that assumption, that somehow I should be doing this, when I say I haven't, I kind of like, I get sometimes, not very often, but sometimes, I got put into this slot which says .. 'renegade' .. 'maverick' .. 'not quite to be trusted' .. within the community .. 'not the kind of person you want your, your, the young transgender people to associate with because she's going to tell them things which are .. not orthodox' The trouble is with the trans community is, it's full of orthodoxy and uh, there were, there were two struggles going on in life one is the .. one is the struggle against the orthodoxy of gender within wider society what's pretty clear is that lesbian, gay and bisexual people, have all got a thing in common which is the word .. 'sex' .. You know it's a, it's, it's sexual attraction and who you're attracted to and you're ... and everything that goes with that is the core issue of being gay, or you know if .. you're going to use that term that seems pretty Well, not obvious exactly, but foundational let me put it that way but for trans people it's not. People will assume for instance that because, um, I'll give you an example, assume that because I'm ... I have transitioned, that I'm the person, and then I must also be gay ... and the word gay doesn't ... really fit it doesn't fit ... it doesn't even fit in my marriage.

I mean this story ... I love telling, so please excuse me for telling you it ... I, my .. I was .. I was born genetically, biologically male. I have, my gender is female. I act within society in the role, the acceptable roles of society, which I have nothing to do with, which is the economic feature of the, of, of societies, I, as I experienced it. I act within those roles, as a means of establishing myself ... as I keep saying .. I carved out a niche from myself as a woman within, that's what I did. My .. wife .. my, my, the person I'm married to Roxanne Alison Groves-McDaniel, from the United States .. did .. the same thing ... You know, formed ... she was born ... er, biologically male and, and, and formed a, a niche for herself with an American society based upon the same sort of constraints as I did. And when we got married, people from the outside looking in have a tendency to say "That's two blokes ... two blokes in frocks ... and therefore, they must be gay", because the assumption is ... when we're in the bedroom ... good grief, people's imaginations are wonderful, I just When we're in the bedroom we must be doing 'gay things' ... and my view about all that is they haven't got a clue .. about that. They make an assumption. Therefore the assumption they make is .. trans people, when especially .. by definition because of the nature of relationships transitive, trans people have with each other, they must be gay I'm .. a woman .. and ... so is my wife ... therefore we could, as some people do as trans I could be ... could say .. I have a lesbian relationship ... with my wife Except for the fact that many people now, not many, a few people in the lesbian community would say "That's not quite right, yeah ...," again making assumptions. So, there is a kind of like, betrayal of you of, of my situation and my wife's situation based upon the language which we've

inherited So ... LGBTQ+, as a term I'm more than happy to use it. More than happy to take part in it. More than happy to, to put my ore in with regard to, you know campaign work around those issues .. no problem with that Except actually for, for me I don't think that trans people fit in there really .. because our issues are different.

The really funny thing, our issues are more like ... the issues that black people have .. You know racism is to do with the business of skin colour ... and everything goes with skin colour. And for me, it's very much the same, it's, it's because I ... When I walk around in society, I don't always .. give the ... communicational signals that identify me as female, because I've got male inheritance. Therefore, people gain a prejudice against me because of the assumption based upon my appearance, the signals I give, the voice I've got, and so on. In the same manner as ... in terms of, of relationships that Black people often have with white society you know .. they have this .. uh antithesis, with white society and, and so do trans people In other words, we're, we're, more .. the kind of prejudices we experience are, are cognitively similar to racism .. less so than they are to, uh ... than they are to the LGB, LGBQ aspects of that. Having said that there is overlap, and you know that's why I said earlier on I'm quite happy to, to go along with that. Life's too short to get into a big .. fits of argument about .. you know .. whether, whether we should, whether you should be worried about putting the T here, or taking the T out ... This is not this, is not the gender Hokey-Cokey you know, it's not one of those things that we need to worry about ... there are other things to worry about. How we make use of terms which are hegemonic to cisgendered, straight people, you know who created the terms to start off with

.. use them in society and then expect ... me ... and, I would guess .. you .. to then, you know just accept what we live they've got ... and just accept it and then live with it. So when, when it doesn't quite match up to the way which it was supposed to match, you know with, with me and Roxanne, or the story of the tale you've told, naturally people are going to say "Why couldn't you just be ... Why do you have to make it awkward for me" Only becomes an issue at the end of the day if there's an underlying challenge which the person who's worried about pronouns has got and you know I, I expect, when I walk around in the world outside ... I expect to be called by the established female pronouns not because I love them, but because I find it .. a real ... way of establishing a sense of recognition. I was just, just earlier on uh, today, I was over at Aldi, uh ... buying some .. bread ... and I get the checkout, and the checkout ladies call me "love" which is great and, I know, and they know I'm trans because I, I tell them ... I've told them in the past probably guess anyway ... I get called "love" and "pet" ... occasionally "petal" .. which is kind of very Geordie and as I was going out the door people called me "dear", you know other people, and I, I know some, some women who say, who probably find that a little bit patronising, but for me it's a sense that, that people are going ... are sending these signals, communicational signals saying "We recognise you, we recognise you, we recognise you" and it's that sense of .. politeness and kindness and, which is easy to do ... You know .. I don't even call my domestic robot 'it' Which, it just shows you, you know, it's just there is a sense that there's a .. prior concept of self-defence that the standard, average, cisgender, straight person thinks is a good way for them to act ... That somehow .. they own the language, therefore it's up to

them to decide exactly how you're going to be called, what exactly all can be called "It" - come on man, I don't even call dogs "It" ... Well it's strange in the sense that I wonder why people ask it ... and then I know why they ask it because it's, uh, it's clearly the case and the question is often said to me by slightly pissed people in bars. They will ... come up to me and say .. "Are you a man or a woman?" And my answer is always "Yes" But it happens a lot ... I don't think, the other thing that happens, it doesn't happen very much, in the past 12 years I think it's probably happened um ... maybe two or three times .. but people have sometimes asked me um .. uh .. "Do you still have your ... original genitals?" Have you asked somebody, have you stood in a .. have you ever stood at a bus stop or on the metro station and just walked up to people randomly and asked them whether their genitals has, as, you know.. what their genitals are Yes, for some weird reason that I can't quite work out ... trans people seem to have a big poster stuck .. alright we're wearing an invisible t-shirt which says "Please ask me about my naughty bits ... uh ... I won't mind" ... you know and I just don't quite First time it happened, I was poleaxed ... second time it happened I was just a bit annoyed ... third time, third time it happened I was bored Now I think it's so funny ... that anybody would want to do that, you know you .. you don't do it to everybody else I'm sure there are people out there who would love to ask .. you know Roxanne and I which, which way it goes ... And it probably was encouraged by the fact that when .. uh ... when we were married I was the one in the white frock and she was in a grey ... skirt suit ... and she, you know she's ... I suppose both of us have got our blokey bits that, that, that go through our existence ... You know she .. you know I, I often think that she's

.... she's probably more blokey than I am on a really, on an inadvertent system ... but on the other hand, is not .. in other ways One of the questions I want to ask, very often want to ask .. ask, ask, ask some feminists is.. you know, how is it you can pill-, pillory people, like myself, and at the same time have a sense of respect for great, great, and hugely recognized and, and, and remarkable thinkers of feminism over the past 50/60 years like Simone de Beauvoir and Judith Butler and, and Donna Haraway, and people of that sort How can you possibly pill-, pillory me and not see that you, you, you're betraying the very foundations upon which .. modern feminism was based. The idea, the conceptual idea that women are as Simone de Beauvoir put it ... women are made and not born. In other words it's, it's you know, and I, I find it I mean I think the one reason why ... well you know Rowling and other people have, a very minority of feminists have ended up uh, attacking trans people and especially trans people's rights for self-recognition, has been on the basis that there is a distinct and very clear fear of things changing It was okay up until now .. and now suddenly they're, they're wanting other things. It's just like being Black, you know, it's "why are they rioting when they've got freedom," "they're not slaves anymore." Why would they want .. to ... to get annoyed at White society. And it's the same thing, trans people want to be, just to be themselves and not have to go through these bureaucratic hoops in order to be able to have things like ... you know, like change the documentation of their lives. And then some small minority of feminists come along and say "Yeah you shouldn't be doing this because you're a threat, da da da da da"

I, I, I, I was aware, it was probably a much better word I didn't know it at the time, I mean I loved things like dolls .. I mean .. uh .. I, but my, you know, one of the things I used to do ... I had an Action Man, you know ... he's a doll for crying out loud. You know, he's got a little scar right there ... just to, just to make him look even more manly you know, he's gonna have a scar. But .. my sister and I in a .. she had ... Cindy, and they would ... we had this thing where they would .. Cindy, and Action Man .. would have these kind of relationships .. of sorts you know Not sexual, I should point out so just get that out of your mind I mean they've gone, they've gone, the organs, I mean it's all smooth down there so

And then I, I started dressing you know. I, I liked it. It was a lot of trans people will say that it, it provides them with kind of mental ... 'at ease-ness.' It makes them feel at ease with themselves. They don't .. feel .. awkward when .. dressed. The term that's used in, in the trans, with the trans people is not 'dressing up,' that's what little kids do when they ... they're pretending to be Spiderman or, or Wonder Woman .. 'dressing up.' It's called 'dressing' ... and dressing was, is, especially in, in, within The vast majority of the trans community are not out. It's like a pyramid. It's like a, an iceberg, you know there's, this, this, this, this bit of the top, which is the people you've met and so on. I don't know if there's a huge number of people out there who are you know ... not out, and probably a lot unlikely ever to come out because they're married and they've got kids and they don't want to lose any of that, and they're very worried about they're going to lose their jobs. But they're dressing, you know ... But by and large it's all a secret ... you know it's, it's

more secret than the Mafia. I mean we know about the Mafia, but the, the secret trans community in, in the closet is, is very much underneath all that. One of the great ways of getting rid of that particular stress was to do things like ... you know ... have a good night out at The Yard or something like that It was a way of, of, of being around other trans people and sort of saying "Hi," you know, "I'm Bea, who are you?" ... sort of like this kind of signalling that goes on where you, you they recognise you and you recognise them and you become part of something which is bigger than just you in your bedroom, and those sorts of things The Yard and its, its trans community on Friday and Saturday nights in particular ... was really important ... it wasn't, it wasn't important for everybody .. you know .. it was important, I think it was important in a sense that what it did was give ... closeted trans people an outlet .. and ... newly 'out' people a chance to have ... somewhere they could go to try out ... being ... themselves which ... you know they could be, they could be as outrageous as they wanted to be without necessarily feeling that they, that they were going to have to face the general public in the, in, in the in the jungle you know

Well ... 'accepting' ... see the ninety percent of the time, most people have got better things to do than worry about 'accepting' trans people. They're too busy thinking about ... buying a bottle of wine, did they remember to bring their ... shopping bag with them, or where's their mask these days ... you know that kind of trivia of life gets in the way ... and people like me are kind of like .. urk ... who cares, as long as they're you know it and it's only a small number who are walking around the streets going "Oh there's a transgender person I must I must be, you know I must be prejudiced. I

must go and ask them weird stuff.” And that once I knew that I realised it wasn't so much the fact that I was being ‘accepted’ in this wonderful, understanding and benevolent way it's just my life was like that Suddenly people who didn't think of themselves as noticing there was such a thing as a trans person, suddenly go “Oh my god. They're out there. I didn't notice. Therefore, I must somehow react” - why? What is it about this it's an issue for you, alright, yeah ... Cut a long story short 21st century Geordies have got other things on their minds and therefore accept ... ‘difference’ ... because they're too busy. They stop accepting difference when suddenly it's pointed out to them in a big specialised and ... you know ... obvious way, and then ... anything in terms of the feeling of, a feeling of threat will rise to the surface and will suddenly become an issue. Otherwise, you know, it, it's not a, I don't think it's a, it's a, a big problem for the most part.

The light above table four (USR) lowers to the same level as the general stage cover. The light on table five (DSL) is increased for the fifth, and final monologue.

Scene Five: Trans Female – Aged 29 - Straight

Erm It's quite simple in my head. It's just ... it's just it's kind of the just the process of being born with one body and just and mmm You know having a er body and a gender that's different from each other and just aligning that together. It's kind of just the process for me. It was quite mixed I think, erm I think friends I had at the time, cos I was probably about seven- I think I was 17 ... erm so I was doing my A levels, friends were generally quite good, but they just didn't really ... erm understand it, but some were, like generally supportive. I th-, I think they

were just unsure about some things of what to do. Name wise, etc. But .. they were better than I expected .. erm parents were just complete other .. end of the spectrum to them. To them .. th- .. they .. they're ... It's just not something they understand about they probably ... erm their understanding of trans people is probably .. er ... the kind of things that were in comedies like decades ago and ... erm, and I think I see now, I didn't see it so much when I was 17 that it ... that their worry did come from like a basic concerns. It was like .. oh .. you'll never get a job, you'll never find love anything like that.

Erm, so that it ... that is something that's changed a lot over time. But when I came out, they were very much like as though my life was going to be over.

Er .. I ... I don't feel like the term trans empowers me ... erm but I have, I'm not hugely active within like a trans communities and stuff like that. I think I really kind of going into doing our own kind of thing and and I don't tend to bring up that I'm trans to people .. erm because I don't see it as, important ... erm .. unless it ever is necessary, but it's, it's never really necessary for me to bring it up. So yeah, um I, I see it as something that potentially makes me other. It's not that I'm ashamed of being trans. It just doesn't it doesn't make me more or less than like anything.

I feel like if anything, if I tell somebody that I'm trans, I'm just more likely to have issues anyway, so it's better that I don't erm because I, I generally don't have problems.

There's no, there's no like education out there It's, to my knowledge, it's not something that's ever taught in schools erm The, even doctors a lot

of doctors don't really understand and erm know much about it and
going you know, that out into the scene to fight that when I used it
and the word people who didn't have a clue then, they seem to ... very much
draw a strong connection between someone who's trans and like drag queens
... and things like that. So yeah, there's not much understanding at all.

I feel like worldwide, there's been like a change, but maybe in Newcastle
there hasn't been so much of a change Erm, obviously like 10 years ago,
I, er, I wasn't passing at all, like someone looked at me they'd think like, oh,
that person's male, and that would draw a lot of attention for the reasons I was
dressing, and acting and stuff but like these days that almost never
happens, erm So, I think you could say I'm almost privileged enough
that I don't have to go through that, so it's kind of hard for me to be able to tell
..... what people's reactions are like these days Erm, if I've ever had any
bad reactions these days, you know, it's just been as bad as it
always has been, but

I think I remember seeing something a couple of months ago that if this has
happened .. when I was 17, I don't think I would have survived lockdown.

Because I wouldn't have been able to exp-, er .. because you know if I was
living with my parents back then I wouldn't have been able to feel like myself
or express myself, you know so, yeah.

So, one of my first LGBT kind of group experiences would have been through
Newcastle College, erm ... which ... twice, there wasn't much really
happening with that it was ... probably just meeting up in, I can't remember
what it was, Pride cafe that used to be there.

Erm, like every couple of weeks, but I always kind of felt like I was the other, I

was like the only trans person that was there, for instance .. I think it's probably not helped by a lot of trans people are kind of more introverted and stuff as well. Erm so, so there's not a lot of stuff with trans people in it I felt like erm, there was .. the best thing I was a part of was MesMac ... erm.. which, you know, is like a trans youth kind of thing, and that was, that was really helpful cos it because there was probably about a dozen of us, erm of different ages, kind of hoping each other's experiences...erm meeting up, I think it was like once a week.

Erm, so that was quite good, but it was very much like erm like, it's the same with Tyne Trans ... group as well. It's kind of like .. there's probably like LGB groups who probably say their LGBT, but there's no real T in there ... erm .. and then there's the Trans groups, is like completely separate it's, it's probably largely because people who are LGB can't fully relate .. really ... to like what like the trans experience is, but the same time it's a shame because when it comes to, you know, big events like Pride, it's ... you know, everyone needs to kind of communicate for stuff like that and help each other but ... yeah.

Erm, I think in firstly like other trans people, there's been like fallings out and stuff like that. I think as a community, there are there are, there are a lot of members who are particularly hot headed and almost quite .. very like political in the way they think and very rigid and stand with the way that they think ... erm, like if you don't agree with them, then you know it's like "you're out, I don't like you," you know, hate you kind of thing .. erm, which was stuff I experienced with Tyne Trans, many years ago, which is why I would, I would .. just left it with them and a few, quite a few other people did as well just left there erm But in terms of, say like bisexual people and lesbians, I

would say haven't really had much of an issue with them.

Erm, but there has been a couple of instances with gay men when I've been out ... like I say with the, with the "oh you're drag queen" kind of thing. I remember I was in, I can't remember what the place was called, but it was one of the small places on the scene, erm and, like I think I said was, wearing like a dress at a time and one of these men put their, tried to put up hand underneath that, and that kind of behaviour. And sorry, I don't have the confidence I had back then, erm

Erm, I'd, I'd probably say the first thing is education .. erm .. and I'm bit sceptical on whether education would be good, would be enough, you know, erm you know it's, it's telling people about things in school, more you know, the truth of real life going often to get missed in schools ... erm it is simply by educating doctors and people like that as well. Erm, I also kind of think I sound like a radical one ... but, erm I, I think what I was saying before about the trans community being like there's lots of people who aren't transitioning, but are considering themselves transgender, it would almost be more useful if there was actually an extra, one extra letter, maybe, so that trans people really are the people who are making a transition that are going from one to the other. Yet people who were gender fluid etc., it kind of feels like there's something else anyway ... just because it's related to gender doesn't mean it's transgender to me just, you know, and, erm yeah, it's just clarity and education for people.

Erm, strangest question one thing I would say about, in terms, in terms of questions in general is that as much as I say to people, if I tell

someone I'm trans I'd say like, I'm happy just ask me questions and I'll tell you if I'm not happy to answer them and erm A lot of people don't ask questions I think it's because of the fear of saying the wrong thing quite often.

But, erm I don't ... I don't really want to disappoint. I've not really I don't remember any particular item.

A common question is have you had the surgery. That's a very common one.

Erm, and that's one I always just refuse to reply to it's kinda like, because that one is a bit of like, it's none your business like why do you care about erm

(Smile) er There's certainly been occasions, where, there have, people have, wondered with [NAME] and my relationship ... erm, just like whether that would make me gay or straight, which you know, doesn't make sense at all and I think people probably get double confused because [NAME] is trans as wellhmm So it's like scre-, completely screws their mind up.

Erm so I think, probably the question that like, so are you gay or straight, because you date a trans man, like what, where does that put you in. It's kind of like I'm, I'm a woman, he's a man ... you know Even, even if you didn't accept our being trans and took our birth genders we'd still be, still be in a straight relationship.

The actors stand and make a line for the bows at the front of the stage.

Standing DSR

Transgender Man – Aged 23 – Pansexual:

What does being Trans mean to you?

Standing DSL

Woman with a Trans History – Aged 34 – Heterosexual:

Do you see transgender as being a decision or something you 'knew'?

Standing DSC

Trans Male – Aged 31 – Straight:

What does it mean to be Trans today?

Standing between DSL and DSC

Woman with a differently gendered past – Aged 66 – Married:

What is the strangest question you have been asked?

Standing between DSR and DSC

Trans Female – Aged 29 – Straight:

What in your life defines you today?

Bows.

Stage lights fade as the actors leave the stage.

House Lights come up.

The audio recording of the interview questions plays on a loop until the house is empty.

Chapter Six: The *my-identity* Project Discussed

As discussed in the introduction and Chapter Four, the development of the *my-identity* project saw a range of creative and academic decisions being made in the creation of the material. These ranged from the ethical considerations of working with verbatim techniques, as well as the response to the thesis title of ‘To what extent can drama, and especially verbatim theatre techniques, be used to (re) present intergenerational Transgender identities in the North East of England?’ These included the consideration of the significance of active participation as included in the theatre-making used in this research project and approach to drama construction (Harpin and Nicholson, 2017); as well as the need for trans people to be fully included in the research to allow for authorship and a meaningful involvement for them (Rosenberg and Tilley, 2020). This was central to the performance project, as was also examined in Chapter Four, along with the creative process selected to allow this to occur. Otherwise, the research and subsequent material produced have no relevance or meaning, except for the cis writer and reader. This would in turn not allow the research to be transparent or have value to the trans participants or ‘trans population’ (Vincent, 2018: 105), or result in any form of ‘balance (between) individual and community rights’ (Kerr, 2009: 186). This was the theoretical framework for the *my-identity* Project, and as such needs to be reflected on as I evaluate the impact of the performance project, as well as examine if *my-identity* sufficiently allows all of this to occur practically to the benefit of the intergenerational group of trans participants.

Basing the creative approach as that of being a co-creator and cis-collaborator rather than an editor or writer, there were a number of decisions required to allow for the co-creation of the project material allowing for a trans-collaborative approach, rather

than an inevitably unconsciously biased attempt at providing accurate and valuable narratives of real lived experiences of intergenerational transgender individuals in the North East. This allowed for the combination of the creative approaches of both an oral history project and verbatim drama, with the need to consider how the material might be used and archived. To achieve this, you will have seen from Chapter Four that I made creative decisions on several installations in the pre- and post-show front-of-house area. Each of these will be discussed throughout this chapter, but these included the use of a memory tree which is traditionally seen at weddings where guests are able to leave a message for the newlyweds; exhibition boards with participant-selected quotations to frame their narratives and the feel of the performance piece; memory boxes to (re) present each individual trans identity developing across time, and through material representations of their lived experiences; and the use of the interview questions to allow the audience to experience the questions the participants were asked by the researcher, and the switching of these questions being asked by the participants/actors of the audience members.

University of Hull Brown Bag seminar 1 December 2021

I presented Chapter Three at a University of Hull faculty-led Brown Bag seminar in December 2021. This was to a range of PGRs and academics across sociology, law, and Criminology, and allowed the opportunity to share research findings and the lead into the research project. Although I had presented at a number of conferences at the start of the research journey, this was the first opportunity to disseminate my most recent work, that demonstrated focus and investigation into the need for this research in Newcastle upon Tyne. Following my overview of the chapter and the key findings and areas for further development, there were questions around the use of

the word community and what constitutes this. These discussion points allowed me to review my definition and how this was being used within the thesis. The positionality of myself as a Queer cisgender researcher and living within the city was commented on as being an interesting situation that allowed the exploration of my position as a researcher and the research methodologies being employed. Indeed, as discussed in earlier chapters, I have always questioned my place researching the city and the Newcastle upon Tyne 'scene' which I am part of and will continue to live within after the submission of the thesis. Just as I have a research and ethical responsibility for the participants within the project, I have a similar consideration for the wider community. The research around this prejudice received academic comments around the work being fascinating, interesting, and valuable. This allowed for some validation of the originality and need for this research, and Chapter Three highlighted the tensions and lived experiences of trans individuals in the city, with the highest recordings of hate crimes in the UK according to Stonewall (2017). The seminar allowed me to see that the research was valid and that something was needed to alleviate some of these tensions. My own interviews and questionnaire responses identified the lack of opportunity to speak and be heard for trans people, and that there is the need for awareness raising and education. This supported the thesis title of how drama, and verbatim techniques in particular, might be used within this. If a community is created from those who share lived experiences, then it must be those narratives that are told with accuracy and from the trans lens and standpoint. Otherwise, the cis perspective may cloud and warp the meaning behind these narratives and place a cis agenda and set of political opinion upon them. As such, verbatim techniques, and especially the recorded delivery approach of Anna Deavere Smith and Alecky Blythe would allow for intergenerational trans voices to

share these experiences in a way that will create a reaction, a potential to affect change (Busby, 2021), or development of knowledge and understanding. Following the obvious need for this work, especially based on the high numbers of hate crimes, verbatim techniques, and the *my-identity* Project could be used as this vehicle for sharing, informing, and emotionally connecting with the audience.

This event was my first opportunity to disseminate my research findings from the research questions developed with the recent change to my supervisory team in 2020. At this point, I had been able to reflect on my positionality with the research and the methodology being used. It also allowed me to consider my unique position as a researcher of being a member of the wider LGBTQ+ community in Newcastle, whilst looking into the lived experiences of trans people allowing for an ethnographical and semi-auto-ethnographical methodology. This situated knowledge also creates a sense of my responsibility and accountability as a researcher. This is even more important when considering earlier chapters that have examined the lack of trans leadership, research design, or creation of outputs, as well as the need for meaningful trans involvement in research as this:

... provides more in-depth data, builds more constructive rapport with community members, and produces more effective research than the norm of purely outsider research in the field.

(Rosenberg and Tilley, 2020: 1)

and ultimately allows for the lived narratives and experiences being shared by trans people, rather than about them:

For trans people, documenting and disseminating experiences is an inseparable aspect of how knowledge is shared between them and within communities; this includes knowledge about how trans people survive, thrive, create, relate, and experience pleasure.

(Rosenberg and Tilley, 2020: 2)

supporting my discussion in a later section of this chapter on the immersion of the audience into the performance and the need to balance the narratives shared as not just focussing on the traumas faced by some trans people, but also the joy and laughter. This balance not only allows the intergenerational group of trans participants to share the layers of their experiences but also allows the audience to see these multi-faceted emotional responses to them. Rosenberg and Tilley (2020) consider the need for research with trans participants to be led by a trans researcher to:

..highlight the unique contributions of self-determined trans people within a field of research that is currently dominated by voices without significant lived experience of gender diversity. These voices carry with them a deep understanding of trans history, a nuanced understanding of trans-related language, an inroad to trans spaces, and other factors that are crucial to constructive and culturally appropriate trans research.

(Rosenberg and Tilley, 2020: 2-3)

As a cis gay male, I cannot give this accuracy of understanding and nuance, yet I am able to stand with the wider LGBTQ+ community as a result of my own personal experience of prejudice. Through the co-creation of every part of the performance project, I have been able to experience moments of empathy based on insight into what the trans people had experienced, with the use of a semi-auto-ethnographical and peer group ethnography to ensure that:

By giving trans people control over their narratives, we are able to facilitate their social inclusion, empowerment, and self-determination.

(Rosenberg and Tilley 2020: 12)

and this in turn will allow the (re) presentation of the intergenerational trans identities interviewed for the performance project and the control they were given within the trans-collaborative approach used.

Title

The project began with the title of *The Newcastle I-identity Project* based on the intention of the material being a (re) presentation of each transgender voice around their gender identity and lived experiences. Within the initial project title, the 'I' (of I-identity) was based on the first person to emphasise the personal truth and autobiographical accuracy of the trans narrative with no cis lens imposed upon this. However, the interviews allowed the use of 'my' (found within *my-identity*) to be more evident and stressed in the conversations and participant responses. It is their individual thoughts, experiences, and lives being shared that the decision was made to use 'my' rather than 'I.' Although both of these are about the individual doing the talking within the interview, and thus creating the narrative being presented, 'my' felt more personal as though the person was being more relaxed and open with their discussions. It also highlights the trans-collaboration within the project as each of the participants is able to acknowledge that they were 'my' story allowing them to take authorship of their words, and the trans-selection of the words they wished to share using their trans history, trans language, and consideration of trans spaces as highlighted by Rosenberg and Tilley (2020). I wanted the final piece to have a sense of the participant speaking to the individual audience member and as such 'my' felt more welcoming and intimate. Harpin and Nicholson (2017) discuss the emotional connection to the language and words we use to place ourselves within the social environment we find ourselves in. The use of 'I' in I-identity allowed the title to show that these were the words of an individual; however, 'my' as found in the final title of *my-identity* creates a stronger sense of ownership and authorship in the process as each participant is personally sharing 'my' narrative. They are giving something to others for them to hold, hear and respond to.

..the 'I' and 'We' are shaped by, and even take the shape of, contact with others.

(Harpin and Nicholson ed., 2017: 12)

The intention is that their words will make contact with the audience, inviting them to welcome 'my' words into their awareness and understanding, rather than placing it outside of them and their social position. Indeed, this will support the community's self-development around verbatim in relation to 'is whether developmental transformation of oral culture constitutes a betrayal or is consistent with the community's self-development' (Kerr, 2009: 178). This has been an ongoing question for the research and its position, as its core has always been to support the intergenerational trans participants to (re) present themselves through drama and anonymity verbatim and my creative and ethical methods have allowed. This is not based on a cis perspective that might have produced a 'naïve insistence on the truthful representation of others' (Gibson, 2011: 1-2), but more so a 'sense of contribution, empowerment, and value for participants' (Rosenberg and Tilley, 2020: 12) through the process of a commitment to 'authenticity', transcribing and feeding back to their source communities, through performance, with some exactitude and respect, life stories and oral histories' (Gibson, 2011: 3). All of this has allowed me to work with the intergenerational group of trans participants, have discussions with and from them, and create a peer group ethnography where a sense of truth is created within each narrative as I have negated as far as possible any unconscious cis bias or agenda:

In seeing themselves as the guardians of the 'truth' in the public sphere, some verbatim practitioners overlook their bias in the creation of their work and the impossibility of locating and exposing the 'one' truth in the fictive domain of the theatre. They may also disregard the ways in which they appropriate

materials from others for their own gains: speaking for rather than with their subjects.

(Gibson, 2011: 5)

Indeed, within Chapter Four and in this chapter, I discuss the steps I took within my model of practice to mitigate this cis bias by rejecting the role of the guardian of truth that Gibson is criticising.

As discussed earlier in the thesis, there is no single trans identity or community, and there are no universal truths or single truth about trans people. The need to work with trans people is of paramount importance to avoid bias, un-truths being created, and the sense of speaking *about* or *for* trans people. The title of the overarching project of the verbatim interviews and creative process was The Newcastle I-identity Project; however the final performance piece is entitled *my-identity*.

The following sections will examine what creative decisions were made in the construction and development of the *my-identity* project, and the components that were influenced by some of the practitioners discussed previously in Chapters Two and Four.

Interval

The interval was a major consideration for the performance project, as originally, I had decided not to include an interval within the script to focus the audience on the narratives rather than having potential distractions of the front-of-house. This had been based on the productions included in the case studies where an interval had not been employed in the work of Kate O'Donnell. I had considered the 1 hour and 30 minutes running time to create a more succinct and focussed play keeping the audience in the moment with no distractions when formulating their reaction and opinion of the piece. However, there was the need to consider the level of audience

engagement and how much of a one-act piece devised from 5 monologues would hold their attention. Also, as the final material was co-created it became clear that there were dramatic beats within the play and an obvious point within the material to allow the audience to have some time for reflection of the narratives being presented. This would provide a number of other creative choices during this time of an interval, as it would not only provide another opportunity to engage audience members with the exhibition boards but also allow the audio recording of the interview questions to be switched from that of the voice of the researcher, to that of the performers (re) presenting the trans participants. The pre-performance researcher's voice was used to introduce the questions that had been answered within the interviews and to frame the content and tone of the performance piece for the audience. I also wanted my voice to be heard as that was the one heard, trusted, and interacted with by the participants. The audio recording in the interval and post-performance would then be the voice of the performers as the participants/characters began to ask the audience the questions. This was to allow the questions to be turned to the audience asking them to reflect upon the performance and their new awareness of the presented trans identities. This also allows me to de-centre my voice and role as the cisgender researcher and place the focus of the audience onto the trans participants. The third narrative in the performance project was one of these major dramatic beats with the final comments of positivity about the gender identities supporting and developing one another and the reality of needing both to have been able to become the person they are today. There are references throughout the piece about trans injustice, prejudice, and the points of similarity for the five participants. This has the potential to make the piece uncomfortable for some audience members, and although we do want them to

respond in some way, this needs to be a positive challenge of their perceptions and the societal status quo, rather than a harsh and alienating experience that would encourage the audience to switch off and ignore the topics and themes, rather than embrace them and ask themselves questions about trans people and trans identities. This audience engagement allows for the hope of relevant conversations (Faye, 2021) and the potential for drama to affect change (Busby, 2021) to be a possibility. Also, by having monologue three finish the first act, it balanced the recurring themes of trans identities blurring the lines of gender normativity; the call for society to accept everyone and come together; and the need to stop merely having discussions about trans people based on biology and what they may or not have had done medically. The interval is a release valve for the audience in readiness for the fourth monologue which is the longest included in the piece, but also the most detailed and thought-provoking. I wanted the audience to engage with all of the narratives, and as such breaking the monologues up with an interval would encourage and support this and allow them to engage in the exhibition boards and memory boxes whilst discussing and posing their own questions with one another.

Monologues

The decision made about including the interval and where this might be placed also raised the question of audience engagement with five large monologues. In the early stages of placing the co-created material together, I made a number of attempts to integrate the different voices around the themes and topics of the piece. However, this lost clarity and emphasis, as well as the participants feeling the five identities were being lost and a cis attempt at creating a trans community voice was being created. This was my attempt to respond to what the trans participants wanted and were worried about, rather than what I creatively wanted to do. This is an example of

how the trans participants had more control in the process. As such, they remain as five individual monologues that can be used independently, or as part of the entire performance project. Also, the actors and the production director would not merely be producing a piece of theatre based on five bodies of text, but more so allowing them to offer the variation in tone, emotion, and motivation within the context of a theatrical performance. The interviews adopted the recorded delivery method as used by Deavere-Smith and Blythe in relation to the transcripts being an accurate account of the delivery of the narratives with the nuances, pauses, and vocal slips being recorded. However, I did not then propose to use the actual recordings of the narratives in rehearsal or performance. I would recommend that the cast play the recordings as research for the role, and to understand the articulated lived experiences of the intergenerational participatory group of trans participants. I also note that this can be a difficult technique to use effectively and might be distracting to the performers. In Chapter Four I discuss how Blythe needed to make the decision to remove the earpieces in the production of *London Road* (2011) at the National Theatre as they created feedback with the radio microphones being used by the actors. There has been introduced into the final *my-identity* performance project the opening lines as the actors enter the stage and sit at their table which are them asking the audience some key questions from their interviews, but also the key questions they would like the audience to consider; as well as the introduction of one of the exhibition board quotations being placed to end the first act as the audience are introduced to the two voices they will meet in Act Two, as well as a form of closure of the monologues for the three participants/characters from Act One.

Play into installation

Following a supervision and mid-term PhD review in 2022 with my supervision team, the notion of creating an installation was suggested to allow for a more considered relationship with drama and theatre-making, rather than a hybrid oral history/verbatim piece. The decision was made to include memory boxes and exhibition material to highlight the key narrative points and moments within the text, which created the question of how much time an audience needs to understand and compute a sensory experience. I considered the fact that should the audience arrive within minutes of the start of the production, they may miss any exhibition material or installation materials considered; and again, after the performance they may miss this opportunity. As such, my consideration was around the amount of opportunity an audience member might have to engage in the material. Should this engagement be placed in one area in the hope the audience would find their way there, and if an installation, would the audience be able to tie the different levels together to create the intended outcome for the piece? On the other hand, there is also the role of the venue with this audience engagement as the box office might inform audience members when they are booking tickets to arrive early as there is an exhibition to support the trans narratives being presented in the performance piece and to allow them twenty to thirty minutes to interact and engage with the material. The placement of the installation material needs to be based on the venue risk assessment, layout and health and safety considerations. Therefore, this engagement might also be encouraged with the physical journey the audience make from the main entrance to the auditorium. The exhibition and memory boxes might line the journey the audience need to take between the main entrance and the bar, and from the bar to the auditorium; or if possible, be a separate space which the

audience needs to enter and pass through to gain entry to the auditorium. An example of this would have been my intended production that was part of my research design pre-Covid and my original selection of the Northern Stage in Newcastle upon Tyne as a performance venue. The Northern Stage was founded in 1970 under the name The University Theatre and has always been an advocate for new writers, new performers, and the introduction of new works. Having gone through a number of titles and spaces within the venue, The Northern Stage was reopened after refurbishment in 2006. The Northern Stage has three auditoriums for a range of performances and theatrical needs and audience capacities from their main house (Stage One with 447 seats), to a studio theatre (Stage Two with up to 200 seats), and a relaxed and intimate cabaret space (Stage Three with up to 100 seats). Stages One and Two can be combined, and as such the smaller area of Stage Two would have been ideal for the installation and exhibition area that would lead into the auditorium for the play. As discussed in earlier chapters, the Covid-19 pandemic in the UK (2020-2022) and the requirement to gain ethics approval for the research project resulted in the need for me to *write* rather than have *produced* a performance piece. Despite this, I have made Chapter Five and *my-identity* as performance-ready as possible. However, despite the venue, the audience needs to be placed at the heart of the environment being created, and as such there was then the question of how to immerse them into the project. The approach of an installation approach to immerse the audience in the trans narratives allowed for them to be placed in the centre of the experience, to engage with the trans narratives; and to take away questions to be considered and discussed with other people after the performance has ended.

Exhibition Boards

As discussed in Chapter Four, the idea of exhibition boards with material on became another device to immerse the audience in the performance project. It would allow for participant-selected overarching quotations to be used to allow thoughts and conversations created by trans people rather than about them. I wanted to keep the recorded delivery transcript rather than removing the pauses and vocal trips, as I wanted the audience to become familiar to this approach and to introduce them to the verbatim techniques I had used in the creation of *my-identity*. These transcripts of the accurately recorded trans participants' words become the actual delivery of these individual narratives and lived experiences rather than a text written from the perspective of a cis writer.

Memory Boxes

As discussed in the case study on Pam Schweitzer in Chapter Four, memory boxes became an interesting opportunity for the intergenerational group of trans participants to be presented and (re) presented in a way that evidenced and supported their interview narrative and the content they shared with the interviewer. As the participants reviewed the full transcripts and the collaborative selection of the material, they were asked to pull out key images and references for this memory box. As such there was co-decision making and co-creation between the researcher and each participant.

Luggage labels

The luggage labels used for the memory tree were originally going to be brown for the pre-performance response, and white for the post-performance opinion. The idea behind these were as an opportunity to evaluate the success of the play with any change in audience opinion and reactions, as well as encourage reflection and

thinking processes of perceptions around the trans experience. This links once again to the hope of Faye (2021) and the opportunity to affect change in social injustice as discussed by Busby (2021). These are to look like traditional luggage labels, along the lines of *Paddington Bear* (1958), of the audience going on a journey and sharing this experience with one another and the voices and lived experiences of the trans participants. However, in an attempt to avoid this being perceived in a racialised hierarchy of moving from ignorance to knowledge (brown to white), the decision was made to use traditional brown luggage labels for both. The pre-performance ones would have an amber/orange ribbon to represent the start of their journey through the performance, and the second brown luggage label would have a green ribbon to represent the end of their journey and the start of a new consideration and understanding of transgender issues in Newcastle upon Tyne.

Immersing the audience in the experience

As mentioned in the previous section, the audience needed to be placed in the very centre of the material allowing them to immerse themselves in as much of this as they wanted. I aimed to use immersive practice within the performance as ‘a triangulation of body, mind and space’ (Shearing, 2017: 174). As discussed by Shearing (2017):

With the proliferation of experiential artworks and performances, audiences are invited to move, touch, listen and interact; there is now a need to examine the nature of audience experience away from traditional ‘end-on’ modes of spectatorship.

(Shearing in McKinney et al., 2017: 170)

This would allow the audience to immerse themselves in the range of environmental experiences within the performance space with the aim of emphasising:

... dramaturgical and narrative concerns, which might draw upon additional modes of cognitive and sensory engagement through the performance text. Narratives, stories, characters and other performing bodies might further enable connections between audience and performance.

(Shearing in McKinney et al., 2017: 172-173)

It was this level of connection that I aimed to establish with the range of pre- and post-performance cognitive and sensory artefacts (Shearing, 2017) in the front of house spaces to 'help to create profound experiences through establishing deeper and more meaningful relations' (Shearing, 2017: 187) between the audience and the trans narratives being (re) presented.

Some audience members might arrive to see the main performance and not be interested in the memory boxes or the exhibition board, and as such would need to receive the intended learning within the confines of the performance space. This was another deciding factor for the inclusion of the interval, as would 1 hour and 30 minutes be enough for them to engage with the material, consider the lived experience of each individual narrative, and be able to reconsider their own perceptions and thoughts on trans? Would this short amount of time provide enough? There was also the need to consider different approaches to observing as an audience member and the immersion of more than one sense. By having things to look at, things to listen to, and things to observe and engage with mentally and emotionally, there would be greater opportunity for the audience to get something from the project – be this a feeling, a thought, a word, an image, or a question. As Shearing (2017) asserts, this immersive practice allows for 'participant engagement in immersive experiences as a form of [a] mindfulness encounter' (Shearing, 2017: 171). The very nature of the project was the telling of the first-person stories for the audience to engage with, and Liam Jarvis (Harpin and Nicholson ed., 2017)

comments on his own performance work, *Re-enactments* (2012-14) and the use of multi-media techniques used to invite the audience to wholly immerse themselves in the material to create a connection and understanding and that:

...participation provides a means of reflecting on the interrelationship between theatre and trauma – the live restaging of a post-traumatic character's memories becoming an allegorical artistic form-as-symptom.

(Jarvis in Harpin and Nicholson ed., 2017: 43)

and although this performance considered the post-traumatic experience and result of being involved in a gun crime, the telling from the trans position is telling their traumatic experiences and the effect these have had on them over time. Their 'allegorical artistic form as-symptom' as described by Jarvis above is a corollary presentation of the trans participant's narratives and experiences through the spoken word, and their representation within the artistic creation of their memory box; right to the audience being exposed to the interview questions throughout their visit to the venue, where they can only escape being interrogated by leaving the venue. *my-identity* is not an exact replication of the work of Jarvis, however, I have included in my model of practice some of the approaches of his to create my own (different but cognate) work. Obviously, the immersion and engagement of the audience would also be influenced by their positionality as well. There might be a range of age groups attending with different backgrounds, perspectives, and perceptions, and lived experiences of their own. They may also fall into one of four distinct categories of cis heterosexual, cis member of LGB, non-binary people, or a trans person. Each of these brings with them again their own set of reactions and relationship (if any) to the subject matter of the performance piece. Also, I wanted there to be a balance for trans people in the audience as the piece refers to moments of trauma and trauma responses, as well as trans social injustice (Busby, 2021) and prejudice. There

needed to be moments of trans joy and trans euphoria. Trans people may only be seen as a medical term and that gender dysphoria is the only part of their identity, however, there is the need to celebrate the joys and moments of laughter, as well as those of trauma to show and (re) present the whole identity of the trans person and not just the cis perception of trauma and trauma responses.

Like it was ... it was ... it was weird but it was like quiet acceptance with them ... and I, I was out one night with my two brothers, we just went to a pub and we, and we were just chatting, and ... my youngest brother is my half-brother, but we've always just said brother, like I, I still do even when I hadn't seen him, and (NAME) said, he's my youngest brother, he said "Oh, well I always say to people that I've got a brother and a sister" ... it, and I didn't make a song and dance about it but I just, I nearly fell off me seat .. I was like, "Oh my god, like ... you don't realise (NAME), but that actually means a lot to me, that .. you would refer to me as sister .. like, that is how you perceive me, thank you" .. so ... yes, my, my family's pretty cool.

(my-identity, Scene Two: Woman with a Trans History – Aged 34 – Heterosexual)

There needs to be this balance to allow trans people to engage in project material, as well as consider how they can (re) present themselves on a daily basis.

Despite the need for this trans-balance, there also needed to be the (re) presentation of the trans identity of each of the participants for the cis heterosexual and cis LBG audience members. Each participant was a co-creator in the selection of the material to be used, and they were able to consider this balance. Indeed, conversations and email exchanges saw open discussions with what was needed to be included in the final performance piece from an experiential perspective, including those moments of trauma and tears, as well as laughter and joy. The trans audience members were of primary concern as there needed to be the consideration of triggers which might impact on their engagement and overall impact of the material upon them.

The consideration of space was, again, of paramount importance, and the project was written as though able to be performed anywhere. Yet, the size of the venue does need to be considered and addressed by those wishing to perform the material. Should the front-of-house and the number of performance spaces in the venue be too large, the memory boxes and exhibition boards may potentially be lost in the space void around them, and only seen when entering the auditorium or performance space. Larger venues with multiple performance spaces can also allow for more areas for the audience to escape from the need to be immersed in the material and installation content, as they are able to visit the venue bar (s), bookshop, or social spaces. A smaller parent venue with just one (or two smaller) space will allow for focus and the audience being surrounded by the installation and able to hear clearly the recorded questions, see the colourful memory boxes, and read the quotes and narrative extracts, as this is around them fully. Also, venues will open the house to the audience a short amount of time before the commencement of the performance, and as such, a smaller venue will capture them more succinctly for them to engage with the material. There also needed to be a consideration of the accessibility of the material to a range of audience goes to allow for further engagement. The use of the recorded interviews and the performance would allow visually impaired audience members to experience the material. There might be the need to introduce headphones at the different exhibition boards to allow these audience members to experience the selected quotes and comments as well as those able to read and consider them that way. A similar approach might be needed for those with some form of auditory need with the potential use of screens being displayed around the front of house area projecting the questions being asked from the interviews; as well as screens or a sign language interpreter being present at

performances to share the narrative experience. Without this consideration, the researcher or theatre-maker cannot be sure what the audience is able to engage with; what they are able to learn, think about and develop during the experience; and what it is they will take away from the performance. In fact, without this sense of inclusivity can change be affected or be considered as a result of the drama material presented to an audience?

The research question of 'To what extent can drama, and especially verbatim theatre techniques, be used to (re) present intergenerational Transgender identities in the North East of England?' requires this level of accessibility to be evident as without these considerations, the project is excluding members of the audience. Without this inclusivity, the audience affected by auditory or visual additional support needs are at a disadvantage and unable to fully engage with and consider the presented material. Through using a range of multi-media techniques, and the creation of a more immersive experience, the audience is able to engage with a dramatic vehicle able to express the real lived experiences of the trans participants that have been 'presented' by the trans-collaboration between the researcher and participant, as well as the 're-presented' trans experiences through the recorded delivery approach to the verbatim material, and the removal of a controlling and selective cis lens through the interview and content creation approach. The participants are also able to 'present' and 're-present' themselves in their own attempt and objective to raise awareness and ask for equity within inclusivity and equality as fellow members of society. The project is a series of narratives that just so happen to be from an intergenerational trans perspective, however, are no different to other experiences of us all 'finding ourselves' and 'becoming the person we want to become' regardless of

gender identity, sexuality, ethnic background, or religious background to name just a few.

Use of recording of questions

When considering the overall content of the final performance piece and the (re) presentation of the intergenerational trans identities, I wanted the cis audience to be aware of the verbatim approach and that the final piece was based on responses to a range of questions. I also, wanted them to consider what it is like to be asked questions based on inaccurate perceptions about every aspect of their life, experiences, and anatomy. Therefore, I spoke with the participants about whether this would be a good creative idea based on the variations of questions they had been asked by cis people, as well as questions they would like to ask of cis people themselves. **All** were in agreement that this would **frame** the experience of the interviews, and of their lived experiences, and so the decision was made to have the interview questions recorded and played in the front-of-house area and auditorium. I had not wanted to include these in the play text as I wanted to avoid the Q&A approach and feel of repetition as the same questions were asked of all the participants. In saying this, I did not want every section in each narrative to begin with the repeat of the question they were answering, and I wanted each monologue to be an individual voice and shared moment in time of that individual's life. I wanted the audience to feel the questions that are actively asked of LGBTQ+ individuals and especially trans. I am unaware of any cis heterosexual person who has had to 'come out' to family, friends, and work colleagues; I am unaware of any cis heterosexual person who is asked to describe the biology of their genitalia, except for perhaps some intersex people; and I am unaware of the need for (re) presentation of individuals as found in this material. Kate O'Donnell as a performer is able to create

material within the framing of theatre and performance, however how can those without this background have a similar opportunity?

Participatory theatre, inter-active theatre, theatre in education, theatre of the oppressed, theatre for development – all are interested in the applications of a reflective theatre, a theatre that is concerned with facilitating dialogue on who we are and what we aspire to become.

(Taylor, 2003: xviii – xix)

This project has allowed these five intergenerational trans participants to share their dialogue on who they are, today and yesterday. The aspirations they share are for the person they might have wanted to become as a trans person, as well as their aspirations for a more equitable society to live within. The constant looping of these questions for the audience (before entry into the theatre) is reflective of the constant questioning and lack of understanding of cis people of trans people, with the experience of being asked the same types of invasive questions constantly.

Audience members are being made to feel they are living under the microscope of those around them. The audience themselves are now being judged on what they look like, sound like, dress like, walk like, and present as. The use of the recordings also allows the active role of the interviewer to be highlighted as the responses come as a result of the trust and mutual respect built over time. These questions led to open discussions around the initial response and questions, as well as allowing for exploration and explanation to be encouraged and drawn out. This active role is seen in the co-constructing of the material and with not being included in the script they do not take away any focus from the speakers in the piece. As the audience are being asked the same questions as the participants, will they consider themselves if they are embarrassing, probing, too personal, or thought provoking? With these being played on a loop it is hoped that the audience will consider if they have asked

these (or similar) questions themselves. And if they have the right to do so. This is enforced in the exhibition boards where there are the responses to the key questions as identified and selected by the intergenerational group of trans participants, as well as their responses in the final performance project. A further reminder of this reaction to being asked such questions would be present in the use of the voices in the recordings, moving from researcher to participant/actor as the audience moves from hearing the questions asked by the researcher to the participants, to they themselves (the audience) being asked for responses from the participants/actors. The switch of these voices adds to the tone and participation of the audience in the material and their reaction (and questions) to it. 'What is the strangest question you have been asked' as a key question is truly representative of the intimacy and trust built between interviewer and interviewee. It also highlighted the absurd fascination of the cisgender individual about trans lives and also why they think it is *OK* to ask things like this. By keeping these questions on a short four-minute loop, the repetitiveness focuses and stresses key words and phrases to create a response within the audience.

Who are the audience?

This was the key question within the development of the project and was the only intended outcome I had as the researcher. I do need to note that one of the main priorities of the research project was to gain a PhD. Who needed to hear these narratives, what influence, and impact would the experience have on them, and what would they do after? In discussion with the participants the answer gradually became *everyone*. This provides another example of how I shaped the project in response to what the trans participants were telling me. There had been a consistent comments and discussions from my trans participants about the lack of education and

awareness of cisgender individuals, the 'pockets of prejudice' within the Newcastle upon Tyne 'scene,' and the inter-politics and tensions between different trans groups and identities themselves. As discussed at the start of this thesis, there is no 'one' trans person, and there is no 'one' cis person. We all have different backgrounds, unconscious biases, upbringing, sexual orientations, ethnic background, religious beliefs, and so on; that we are all as individual as our DNA and fingerprints.

Therefore, to consider that this project would resonate with everyone would be a terrible mistake to make. Each audience member will listen or ignore; understand or doubt; answer or question and have a range of reflections and outcomes. The objective is to encourage the individual audience member to become more aware – of themselves, their positionality within the trans debate and understanding, their view, and the opportunity to question and listen. Every trans person does not have gender reassignment surgery or hormonal medical interventions; not every trans person considers themselves to be male to female (MTF) or female to male (FTM), but more so male or female; not every trans person uses *Trans* before their identified gender; not every trans person falls into a binary or a transition from one binary to another. Each trans person has their own lived experiences and their own personal geography, politics, and beliefs. Bearing this in mind, there are thousands of variations that would need to be written to specifically speak to each of these individuals. In a similar vein, not every cis person has met a trans person (or knows they have met one that is); or feels any prejudice; or indeed has any level of understanding about the individual trans identity. This is the starting point of the end of the project performance with the hope of questions in every audience member. These might be about the trans identity, or their own bias and prejudice. However, as a starting point, allowing each audience member to consider their positionality

around trans identities. From this understanding of where we are within ourselves, we can begin to explore this position and our relationships with one another on a social, cultural, and a fellow-human level. This, in my opinion and based on my research, is what can affect change. It is not merely about the performance of a piece of text, but more so a development of awareness and understanding of each cis person in regard to their personal positionality within the debate of trans social injustice and need for equity of opportunity and equal rights.

Difficulties along the creative process

Covid-19 in the UK (2020-2022)

There were many difficulties and challenges throughout the research process and project, and it is important to identify these and examine the impact they had and how they were overcome. This in turn will add to the toolkit approach of Chapter Four by identifying some potential difficulties for other practitioners and their projects, whilst explaining some solutions to these.

As discussed throughout this thesis, the Covid-19 pandemic in the UK between 2020 and 2022 created a number of barriers and issues to my research and project development. As a result of government lockdowns and restrictions, performance spaces were closed to allow for social distancing and the attempts to control the virus and its spread. This resulted in the need to adjust my overall research project. As discussed throughout this thesis, there had always been the intention that this would be a live performance to an audience where all the evaluation of the success of the project would be identified through audience feedback, participant responses of the final performance, and peer review and critique. At the time of the first lockdown period from March 2020 I did not have the ethics approval to begin the

research process and due to the doubt over if or when performance venues might open, coupled with the need for me to begin the research project to allow me to submit to the deadline within my registration, I had to decide on making this a hybrid oral history record and verbatim technique performance piece. Initially I had some concerns that this would merely result in a series of monologues, however as discussed earlier in this chapter, the concept of creating an installation was presented allowing me to re-think what the performance project might look like in a pre-production ready state and its position in drama research. This project might easily have become an oral history of intergenerational trans identities with the words being archived and potentially forgotten; however, I wanted the performance project to have worth within the academic and research fields of drama, and to have a finalised artefact of the research which might be performed at a later date. These are stories that (it is hoped) engage the reader from the page, but with the potential to engage in front of an audience at some point in the future (with the consent of the trans participants).

With government lockdowns and the legal requirements for social distancing, there was also the need to adjust the process of interviewing the verbatim participants. Originally, and as might have been possible following the government's four-stage roadmap releasing the country from social distancing measures that occurred on 19 July 2021, these would have been in-person and in venues selected by the participants to allow for their sense of safety and positive mental health. However, due to the need for ethics approval (which was submitted in July 2020 and final approval given in September 2020) this approach needed to move to digital and online. This is not a new approach in any way and has been used by social science ethnographic researchers for a number of years (Johnson et al., 2019) however,

there was the consideration of where the participant would be located within their space and how rapport, respect, trust, and relaxation could be produced from a two-dimensional image on a computer screen. There was also the consideration of technology and whether they had Zoom or Teams or Google to be able to engage with the interviews. Howlett (2021) considered this and reflects upon the adjustments she needed to make within her own project with participants in Ukraine, and the change to the response and participation of them. As I had selected an ethnographical research method, I needed to consider how I could work with participants in the locality of Newcastle upon Tyne and their positionality in the wider LGBTQ+ community and 'scene' and how we work socially within this. Indeed, as Howlett says:

As ethnographic fieldwork has traditionally been based on ideas about locality and physical immersion in geographically defined research areas (Wittel, 2000), which determine where and how we interact with our participants, online approaches very much complicate the 'placeness of ethnography' (Haverinen, 2015: 82).

(Howlett, 2021: 6)

As I live in Newcastle upon Tyne and have been a patron of various venues on the city 'scene' there was a 'placeness' as we would be able to talk about areas, we had all experienced. I was not going to an unknown geographical location where I had no experience or knowledge as some ethnographic researchers do but was rooting the research in a place I know and live within, and the many responsibilities and accountabilities this brings as previously discussed. In Chapter Four, I discuss the approach I took and the sharing of the mutual space of being in one another's homes. Indeed, from the five interviews these all took place inside the participant's home with one participant being interviewed at their kitchen table, two participants sat on their sofa in their lounges, one participant being sat at a table in their

lounge/diner, and the fifth being sat on their bed. I placed myself at my dining room table and have discussed the approaches I took for confidentiality within the interviews in chapter four – i.e., use of headphones, windows being shut, being home alone. None of the interviews were distracted by anyone walking into the camera view, and there were no disturbances like phones ringing, or anyone being at the door (Howlett, 2021). As such, we were able to focus on one another through the safety of a screen. I want to note that these interviews were conducted in November and December 2020 when the country had become used to digital technologies and interactions taking place online, as well as not being within the Zoom fatigue of 2021 when so much interaction had taken place online (work and home) and the frustrations of not being able to interact with others emerged. As Howlett comments, I was able to therefore construct ‘a new digital and meaningful space for our interactions’ (Howlett, 2021: 7) and that my methods and approaches to the interviews allowed me to ground ‘me’ in a site with my participants even as our bodies were merely staring at screens within our respective homes’ (Howlett, 2021: 7). My participants appeared relaxed as they made themselves comfortable on their sofa or bed, as well as having drinks at hand and the option to take time out as and when required. This may well have been a sense of comfort of safety due to the UK still being in the height of the pandemic and government restrictions, and their ability to participate in the safety of their own homes with no possibility of being infected with the virus due to travel, venue or from myself. As a result of the verbatim project information sheet supplied to all applicants to participate which gave full information and reassurances of the process and aims of the project, as well as the interview questions having been sent to each well in advance of the interviews, there was a sense of a commonality between us as we were sharing the same intention and

aspiration to produce a trans-collaborative project using verbatim techniques to create a piece of drama. As such, there was no ambiguity normally created through digital means, as we were able to see the 'shifting the interaction from offline 'co-location' to online 'co-presence' (Howlett, 2021: 7) and allowing for a project of co-creation being agreed and established. Indeed, this sense of comfort was noted by Howlett when she needed to move her interviews and focus groups online:

My online participants were noticeably more comfortable. This was demonstrated by their clothing choices, which indicated a lesser degree of formality in ranging from business casual to sweatpants, with one participant in her bathrobe.

(Howlett, 2021: 7)

and she informs that these interviews took place both inside and outside of normal working hours based on time differences and on weekdays and weekends, as a result of the flexible working hours of her own participants. I made the decision to conduct my interviews between 10am and 4pm on a weekday to keep this within normal business hours, even at a time when some people were working from home, some were on the government furlough scheme to protect jobs and salaries, and others working from the normal place of work. There was only one participant unable to attend their interview due to personal reasons, and it was mutually agreed to conduct this on a Saturday lunchtime. In a sense, it was good that these needed to be conducted on a digital platform, as at the time of holding these digital calls, I was myself self-isolating as my husband had tested positive for Covid-19. Whether that knowledge allowed the participants to be more relaxed, I don't know, however there was a sense of mutual care as I was caring about their participation and suitability of questions, just as they had a sense of care for me during the interview as a researcher and person infected with the Covid-19 virus and ill. As such, these digital

experiences allowed me to feel ‘like I was speaking to a friend rather than a research participant’ (Howlett, 2021: 8), and the parameters I had set for the project and the trans-collaboration allowed mutual trust and respect to be created due to this relationship I was able to create and maintain throughout the project timeline with them. I want to stress that I did not physically meet any of the participants in person during the research and creative process between November 2020 and July 2022, except for one participant in December 2021 who came for dinner as her wife was visiting from the USA. As such, all communication was digital, either on Zoom or via emails. Due to the nature of the project being trans focussed, co-created, and seeing trans-collaboration, there was more value and moments of power within these digital exchanges:

...online methods actually enabled a more symmetrical relationship with my participants. This is because they had greater agency and power in our exchanges.

(Howlett, 2021: 8)

and each exchange was *from* and *with* the trans participants, rather than *about* them, with the ‘power’ being about their positionality within the performance project and their creative collaboration.

As the interviews were online, they were longer than if they had been present-in-person, potentially due to the safety of the two-dimensional space we were sharing, and the trust I had built with them during the recruitment and preparatory time prior to conducting the actual interview and our extensive and supportive email exchanges. Indeed, Howlett also comments on this:

The online conversations were also noticeably longer, evidenced by nearly 1,500 additional words in the transcripts. In many instances, my participants exposed intimate details about themselves and their everyday lives, and even more so than the in-person conversations.

(Howlett, 2021: 7)

She was in the fortunate position to make this comparison as she had conducted some research fieldwork, interviews and focus groups in-person in Ukraine prior to the travel restrictions and government lockdown guidance in March 2020. I too found a variation in word counts within the transcripts, and these were mentioned in Chapter Three, but as a reminder:

Table 6.1: Interview transcript word count compared to the final version of *my-identity*

Participant	Initial Transcript	Narrative found in my-identity
Transgender Man – Aged 23 - Pansexual	13,017	1,555
Woman with a Trans History – Aged 34 – Heterosexual	5,817	3,910
Trans Male – Aged 31 – Straight	4,829	1,509
Woman with a differently gendered past – Aged 66 - Married	19,278	5,233
Trans Female – Aged 29 - Straight	5,263	1,652

Again, this might have been a result of the comfort of meeting in a digital space rather than in person. Carignani and Burchi (2022) suggest:

One of the benefits is related to how these interviews help the researchers reach out to those that they cannot access in extraordinary conditions.

(Carignani and Burchi, 2022: 210)

This allows for access and a sense of safety for the interviewee as they are located in their own space whilst participating in an interview or research project. Indeed, Carignani and Burchi (2022) assert that:

... there is no pressure or presence, which means that the presence of the interviewer could have been more stressful.

(Carignani and Burchi, 2022: 210)

This notion of online interviews being more supportive and welcomed by participants is shared by Keen et al. (2022) as technology can allow for a different 'scope for emulating natural conversation and establishing rapport' (Keen et al., 2022: 2). When we meet someone in person, we are always looking at their body language, listening to their tone and nuance, considering our positionality in the space where the interview is taking place; however, there is an avoidance of this when meeting digitally as some of these verbal and non-verbal communications are difficult to see. One should also consider that this might be a negative as potentially participants might feel more anxious if they are unable to read the researcher and their digital/physical interactions. There is also personal and societal perceptions and assumptions made when we meet someone as we consider all the information, they are presenting about themselves, and in the digital world this can be difficult to do. Carignani and Burchi (2022) see one disadvantage as being:

... limited capacity to build rapport in the online interviews ... people are reserved, they do not perform well on online interviews.

(Carignani and Burchi, 2022: 210)

However, the digital age of the Covid pandemic did create a small sub-culture of comments when meeting people for the first time in person like 'Oh, you're taller than I thought,' etc. Yet, as a result of these digital interviews being in our homes, there could potentially have been assumptions made based on what we could see – i.e., the decoration, the furniture, what was on the walls, other people, or even pets – and as such, it could be just as distracting looking around the digital room as it might be in the physical space. In Chapter Two I make reference to the report in *The Express*

newspaper online on 25 July 2022 and how Sharron Davies claims to have been vilified by trans activists, however, it is not until the reader scrolls down and reads the tone and language used in reader reactions and comments that the true depths of transphobia and vilification can be seen. This raises the awareness that not all digital or online activities can create this environment of safety and comfort, due to online trolling, online comments, and online hate crimes and transphobia. Once a comment is posted it is there for all to see, allowing the potential for them to agree with in a negative and transphobic way, or to be traumatised by the depths of the language used.

Finally, there needs to be a consideration of how the trans participants perceive me and my place in the project. The *my-identity* performance project shares a range of upbeat and joyful moments, as well as the sharing of moments of trauma and the individual's response to this. An example of this can be found in monologue five where cis gay men are physically and verbally abusive to the participant:

But... in terms of, say like bisexual people and lesbians, I would say haven't really had much of an issue with them. Erm, but there has been a couple of instances with gay men when I've been out... like I say with the, with the 'oh you're drag queen' kind of thing....and, like I think I said was, wearing like a dress at a time and one of these men put their, tried to put up hand underneath that, and that kind of behaviour.

and I had not fully considered how they might perceive me as a cis gay man as well. I would hope that the safety of being a digital interaction, and the trust built in the earlier timeline stages prior to the interview may have alleviated any concerns of triggers they may have experienced.

Working with interviews

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, considering the difficulties in researching and working with participants during Covid-19, I identify that the interviews were longer in duration than if in person. This opinion is based on the reflection of Howlett (2021) and my own professional work prior to this project. As I had decided to use the recorded delivery approach to transcribing the interviews, I had underestimated the time this would take. Indeed, with the need to have full accuracy of every pause, vocal slip, self-correction, and choice of words (correct and incorrect). I found that I was listening to smaller sections at a time, and multiple times to ensure this was transcribed as said. The shorter interviews took between twelve and fourteen hours each to transcribe, with the longest taking approximately thirty hours across a number of days. I had made the decision at the very start that I would transcribe the material myself due to the sensitive nature of the responses, but also allowing the trust to be built with the participants aware that I would solely be responsible (and as such accountable) for their narratives. Also, with different lockdown restrictions imposed, and as previously mentioned with all communication being digital, the communication and approval process was more time consuming than if we had been able to be in the same physical space together. As such, some emails were not responded to for a number of weeks, and I also found that there were some periods of time when I paused communications with the participants due to research, preparation of other chapters, full-time work schedule, and the different government guidance and restrictions. I had initially put four months into my research plan for performance project to be completed from first interview to fully agreed piece with the participants. However, due to the extended time transcription took, and the need for the participants to agree a number of things:

- Accuracy of the transcript
- I highlighted sections in their transcript I thought were important
- The participant highlighted their transcript the same way
- I collated these to see common sections
- There was open dialogue on the participant selection of the remaining material
- Participant selection of the quotes for the exhibition boards
- Participant selection of the quotes for the memory boxes
- Final approval of the monologue of their narrative
- Final approval for the work to be submitted in the PhD Thesis

this four-month period became November 2020 to July 2022. However, this time frame allowed for full co-creation and trans-collaboration based on each individual participant being able to consider how they might, wanted to, and finally did (re) present themselves.

What now?

The *my-identity* performance piece is now a fully considered play text which has been able to demonstrate that drama can be used to (re) present a number of intergenerational transgender identities in the North East. This is evident in the immersive nature of the installation and exhibition that runs alongside the play, as well as the play text itself. The reader has been presented with five trans narratives that clearly articulates and shares their lived experiences. The sense of this peer group ethnography, and the full collaboration and authorship for the participants has created an original and rather unique performance piece that address the needs of awareness, understanding and equity for trans people in the city of Newcastle-upon-Tyne. *my-identity* has a geographical identity here in the city as it is focussed on the cis and trans people, their interactions and perceptions, and the need for the Newcastle upon Tyne 'scene' to be accepting of everyone and to come together. Without the pockets of prejudice being removed, how can the T have its 'Stonewall

moment' and the LGBTQ+ community have equity with the cis heterosexual community in the city.

Despite being positioned in Newcastle upon Tyne, there are themes of prejudice, trans social injustice, trauma and trauma responses, and moments of poignancy; as well as evidence of trans joy, trans euphoria and of laughter; all of which will be present in any city, town, or village where a trans person lives. This performance project was based on the 'pockets of prejudice' that were identified in Chapter Three and written about in 2021. In the conclusion I will consider if, and how, these might have changed. I will also examine how the peer ethnography worked in practice, in relation to the (re) presentation of trans people from their perspective rather than as presented by cis writers (Faye, 2022), and how the final performance piece allows the individual trans identities to share their personal histories to shape change with society to create a better present and future (Stryker, 2017). I will also be able to consider how community was explored and theorised in the research and how the project has allowed the intergenerational group of trans people to co-create with trans-collaboration a performance piece with the opportunity to speak for themselves, rather than *for* or *about*, to (re) present their identities in Newcastle upon Tyne in 2024. This will allow the need for performance pieces of this nature to be evidenced, and for the originality of this research to be summarised and placed within drama research, as well as gender and historical fields.

Conclusion

The research project

My research project began in February 2012 and has been the most challenging, yet wholly rewarding experience of my life. As a mature, part-time, distance learning PhD candidate, there were a number of intercalation years, which interrupted both my studies and research. As such, there has been the constant need to review my research questions and areas of research I was interested in, to support changes in the world of academia and drama; as well as reflecting the development of my own thinking and positionality within my research design and the city of Newcastle. I came to realise that I was writing one PhD thesis and not a number of them, that this was a drama research project rather than one based on considerations that were medical or scientific, and as such I needed to reconsider my research questions and research design and methodology. My research project was fully reconsidered in 2020 with the change of my PhD supervisory team to become more focused on the city and 'scene' I live within and know, as well as questioning the position of the T within the LGBTQ+ here in Newcastle-upon-Tyne. Having examined my own research design and objectives, I came to realise that applied theatre and verbatim techniques are not vehicles to change society constraints or individuals in marginalised community groups (Busby, 2021), but are more focussed on being points of reference towards achieving this. As asserted by Busby (2021) and her own practice Applied Theatre can be seen 'as part of a search' (Busby, 2021: 2) to engage in some wider activities to affect social change to injustice and lack of equality and equity. Having decided to research lived experiences and the lack of opportunity for trans people to share these, I had realised that the ethical considerations of working with my participatory group was the need for the research to be relevant and important to them, as well as to my own PhD thesis and research design. I wanted to

realise a research project that was not 'more concerned with publication and career progression than with participant well-being' (Vincent, 2018: 103), and that allowed for some higher level of my intergenerational participatory group of trans participants being involved in the research itself to not only build 'rapport and trust' (Vincent, 2018: 103), but to engage 'in some kind of joint activity' (McNamara, 2018: 126). Having made this decision my research allowed me to evaluate my own practice and research design to ensure this sense of joint activity would be introduced to the *my-identity* project. The work of Busby (2021) has reassured my practice with this sense of joint-ness as 'what works with one group may be a disaster' (Busby, 2021: 15) to another, and my focus was always on how I might (re) present the lived experiences of my own trans participatory group. Although McNamara (2018) is discussing her work with trans, non-binary, and gender diverse young people; I too wanted to consider how I might ethically and positively use my own group's experiences in my research outputs:

They are living lives and much as they face barriers and challenges, their collective experience of navigating the social world and finding solutions to problems is a valuable resource.

(McNamara, 2018: 318)

In retrospect, no matter how much I did not want to consider my participants as resources, I must conclude that for the evidence required of a PhD they are just that. I did not wish to, even inadvertently, create a sense of 'objectification and delegitimisation' (Vincent, 2018: 102), but more an opportunity to provide a platform for each trans participant to use their voice and narrative in the best way they wanted to with the intent that 'theatrical events *can* serve as a 'crucible' to make citizens want to take action' (Snyder-Young, 2013: 3). As mentioned earlier in this conclusion, I came to realise quickly that I was unable to prove that 'theatre makes

social change' (Snyder-Young, 2013: 7). In 2012 I believed that my research project would change the perception of the cisgender community in Newcastle upon Tyne and create a new inclusive approach to the lived experiences of trans people.

Theatre-making provides the opportunity to present an opportunity to affect change and a sense of 'what might be and thus creating [s] the possibility of change' (Busby, 2021: 14). Within my approach, this possibility came from the cis-led project with consistent trans involvement project (Rosenberg and Tilley, 2020) I conducted that produced the final qualitative play text *my-identity*. The success of this in a wider context cannot be fully evaluated in 2024 due to the nature of it being production-ready and having never been seen by an audience for their feedback. However, I do hope that it will contribute to further research that will support 'long-term sustained interventions, and these small changes may lead' (Busby, 2021: 200) to some level of change, social and/or personal. This possibility of change is also needed within the field of research as:

... researchers can benefit from considering that the re-framing of participants as co-producers of knowledge opens up what the researcher can potentially learn.

(Vincent, 2018: 112)

I accept and celebrate the gain of this knowledge from my trans participants based on their lived experiences and narratives. It is these trans individuals who have supported my own finding a platform to express my academic opinions on trans social injustice, and the realisation that applied theatre 'is not a practice that is for or about communities' (Busby, 2021: 17) but actively involves them to as high a level as is possible by the constraints of your research. Therefore, allowing for the development of a peer group ethnography methodology with co-creation of the final performance project, with cis and trans collaboration, allowing for the

intergenerational trans participants to have as high a level of authorship and input into the design, development, and decision-making process throughout the project as possible (Rosenberg and Tilley, 2020). This approach allowed for the recognition of 'self-determination' and the use of language to 'describe/understand themselves that other community members reject' (Vincent 2018: 106).

This became the originality and power behind the project as the participants were speaking for themselves, rather than my speaking *about* or *for* them as the response to the thesis title of 'To what extent can drama, and especially verbatim theatre techniques, be used to (re) present intergenerational Transgender identities in the North East of England?'. As the response to this question, this thesis has considered the 'scene' in Newcastle upon Tyne and the positionality of trans, and more importantly a group of intergenerational trans people within it. My research showed that there is a distinct lack of visibility of trans in Newcastle, and a definite need for awareness raising, understanding and education with the cisgender community. This also extends into the LGBTQ+ 'scene' to alleviate the pockets of prejudice identified through the research especially in Chapter Three. As such, the thesis included a number of chapters each to consider a specific area in response to the overarching research question, as well as smaller research questions that fed into this:

- What is community – how can this be considered in a city where there is fragmentation of equality, equity and opportunity within what is perceived as an LGBTQ+ 'community'?
- What is the position of trans people today (in 2024), how has it changed, and do trans people need their own 'Stonewall moment'?

- How has applied theatre practice, and specifically verbatim techniques, been used by other practitioners in similar contexts and how might this overarching approach to theatre-making be used to provide opportunity to identify the position of trans people today?
- What are the ethical considerations of verbatim techniques, and how might these provide the opportunity for trans people across different generations in Newcastle upon Tyne to (re) present their lived experiences and share with other trans and non-trans people the day-to-day experience of being trans today in the North East of England?
- How is this research important and needed based on research into, and the examination of data around hate crimes and transphobia locally and nationally?

These became the focus of the means to respond to the overarching research question of the thesis title and fed into the research methodologies adapted and the consideration of the different chapters and how they led from one to another to lead the reader to *my-identity* as the verbatim performance piece. This production-ready piece allows for a full response to the thesis title as it address the extent to which drama, and especially verbatim techniques could be used to (re) present intergenerational trans identities.

The need to raise awareness of trans identities continues to be needed in the ‘decimated Newcastle ‘scene’ (Interviewee 1, Wednesday 11 November 2020), to alleviate the ‘cliqueness that exists around the scene, where you will be bitched about and dog-eyed’ (Interviewee 5, Wednesday 11 November 2020); however with the ‘hope’ (Faye, 2022) that projects like this will continue to see the emergence and

use of the 'scene' as 'a lot more people living a trans existence [are seen] openly as well' (Interviewee 9, Tuesday 15 December 2020).

My research project has highlighted the representation of trans people in trans characters, as well as considering the trans casting of roles. In the past, trans characters have been ones of comedy or ridicule, played to the extreme; or characters portrayed by a cis actor unable to use any lived experience to give an authentic account of the identity and lived experiences of a trans person. The media amplification is discussed by Faye (2022) regarding:

Media coverage of the trans community rarely seems to be driven by a desire to inform and educate the public about the actual issues and challenges facing a group.

(Faye, 2022: 8)

If we allow the media and drama to continue to perpetuate this lack of authenticity in trans identities, and the lack of awareness raising, how can trans people be given the opportunity to have their voice, their identity, their gender, and their position of social equity be respected by the society they live within? As asserted by McLaren et al.:

In the current state of transgender representation, transgender characters are fighting to be recognised as gendered people.

(McLaren et al., 2021: 188)

We continue to see transphobic comments made in politics in the UK, about participation in competitive sporting events, lack of access to NHS provision, the questions around trans women being able to attend female only colleges; and these are all escalated in the media and the tabloids with there being no conversation *with* trans people, but rather judging and commenting *about* or *for* them. The word *for* is interesting as a negative consideration is that a cis writer believes they understand

the trans identity and can (re) present them which has been discussed throughout this research project and my positionality within it. However, the *for* might be as an advocate or ally who is trying to deconstruct inaccuracies of societal perception and to open up dialogue and positive conversations for trans people to be able to enter into. These conversations were identified and discussed by Faye (2022), and she states that it is her 'hope' for change that motivated her to conduct and present her research, and that:

Hope is part of the human condition and trans people's hope is our proof that we are fully human. We are not an 'issue' to be debated and derided. We are symbols of hope for many non-trans people, too, who see in our lives the possibility of living more fully and freely. This is why some people hate us: they are frightened by the gleaming opulence of our freedom.

(Faye, 2022: 268)

By creating more performance work like *my-identity*, trans people will be provided with the opportunity to share their voice in a manner that they choose and agree and have a level of authorship and ownership of the words. They can (re) present themselves as trans people and not the 'issue' that Faye comments on. If drama practitioners and theatre-makers can see the benefits of this performance project and continue to develop this peer group ethnographic approach to research and co-creation and trans-collaboration, it is my 'hope' that (re) presentation can be 'precious and powerful' (Faye, 2022: 268).

How successful was *my-identity*?

As a performance piece that is production-ready, but not having been performed to date, it might be difficult to fully evaluate the success of this due to no audience feedback or opinion. Yet, the method adopted to create this can be evaluated and the success factors clearly identified. The intergenerational group of trans

participants were involved throughout the process, allowing for a peer-group ethnography approach with the co-creation and collaboration for the piece. This resulted in their consistent involvement and higher level of ownership of the development of the piece which has been missing in other research projects as discussed by Rosenberg and Tilley (2020) and their discussion that trans people have been 'largely excluded from involvement and leadership'. Although they discuss the position of a cis researcher leading on research projects to create an 'insider/outsider research staircase' (Rosenberg and Tilley, 2020: 1) to allow for trans voices having 'priority in conducting trans research' (Rosenberg and Tilley, 2020: 12), *my-identity* has allowed for this due to my methodological approach and my research design, with the co-creation and trans-collaboration allowing for each trans participant to *own* and *author* their story for themselves. This was not dictated by my cis agenda, but their desire to share their daily lives with the reader/audience. In turn this avoids them being 'too much spoken for and about already' (Prentki and Preston, 2009: 86) and the 'celebrating otherness' as discussed by Sue Wilkinson and Celia Kitzinger in Prentki and Preston (2009). As a result of my basing the research in Newcastle upon Tyne and the geographical local of these lived experiences, the response to the research question and development of *my-identity* becomes the opportunity to raise awareness in the society they live within, in the hope of awareness and change. Indeed, Halpin and Nicholson (2017) include a response from Alison Jeffers around authority, authorisation, and authorship, where it is discussed that:

... socially disadvantaged people needed to be encouraged to participate in their locality, thus increasing their sense of investment and building their capacity to be engaged citizens ... Community plays are a specific art form that rely on the participation of non-specialists.

(Jeffers in Harpin and Nicholson, 2017: 214-215)

and my research project provided the opportunity for the trans participants to speak for themselves and to share their investment in the society they live within, share their challenges, and joy, and also share their positionality as citizens in *their* words, tone, language, and nuance. They are also not drama specialists, but are specialists in their trans identity and need to be recognised as such, and as a ‘collective author’ (Kerr, 2009: 178) of the final performance piece, with the avoidance of any ‘clash between individual and collective rights [which] applies to questions of privacy’ (Kerr, 2009: 179) due to their collaboration, co-selection and approval of the material throughout the creative process. Their participation in the project has allowed them to run counter to the hegemony surrounding their lives and identities and to question it, creating a sense of functional and interactive participation, as well as self-mobilisation. The participation of the intergenerational trans participants had been functional and interactive, as well as allowing for self-mobilisation as a result of the authorship, ownership and trans-collaborative approach and creation of the performance piece. It has also allowed the trans identities to discuss for themselves their narratives and position themselves within the society around them:

These practices [verbatim] prompt the act of storytelling, and the material generated in a verbatim theatre process often includes the core features of belonging, such as identity narratives, people making sense of their experiences and discursively identifying their sense of self and how they belong in their community.

(Peters, 2019: 39)

which in turn has allowed them to use the dramatic framing of the use of verbatim techniques to (re) present intergenerational identities in the North East of England as they have been presented with the opportunity to share their:

...stories that ‘describe, share and confirm a sense of cohesion for our lifeworld’... The theme of belonging is therefore evident in a play when characters...deliver identity narratives about who they perceive themselves to

be, when they are establishing coherence by endeavouring to make sense of an experience or encounter.

(Peters, 2019: 43)

Each narrative has achieved that sense of sharing and the opportunity for each trans identity to inform us who they are as people; how they position themselves in the world around them; and what that world needs to consider, question and change.

Looking to the future

My research project has introduced me to a need to continue to question the cis perception of the positionality of trans people within our society, and within Newcastle upon Tyne in particular. How can we as LGBTQ+ identifying people in the city continue to allow the 'pockets of prejudice' to continue in such a way that allows the marginalisation of trans people? This relates to the 'hope' identified by Faye (2022) and the avoidance of the risk 'that the UK will lean so far to the right that trans people's emancipation is suppressed by the state again' (Faye, 2022: 267). The hope to affect change is possible, and as researchers and theatre-makers we need to create projects that hopes a change to social injustice (Busby, 2021) may occur. I would hope that other researchers and theatre-makers consider the position and active involvement of each participant within their work to allow for this higher level of co-creation and a continued development of what trans authorship and ownership can be (Rosenberg and Tilley, 2021). This will create material produced *by* and *with* them, rather than *about* or *for* them. Verbatim techniques continue to have the range of ethical considerations discussed in this thesis, however, can be used to allow for a level of co-creation and the curation of performance work, rather than the writing or editing of the words given by a participant. Although Gibson (2011) discusses that

narratives are taken or 'mined', there is an opportunity to create something ethical, co-authored, and co-owned material that allows for the piece to say things 'right':

There are ethical responsibilities when verbatim theatre is created, especially to those from whom stories are mined....I do also issue a caveat to Schmidt: in the making of theatre and performance pieces, which are essentially inventions, it is impossible to ever 'say it right', tied as this idea is to notions of mono-dimensional 'truth' claims.

(Gibson, 2011: 2)

my-identity creates the opposite to Gibson's claims as the narratives were neither 'mined,' nor providing any sense of 'mono-dimensional' or a cis perceived notion of 'truth.' In Chapter One I referred to the 2023 report by the United Nations Independent Expert on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity after his visit to the UK in May 2023 and the identification of ongoing tensions with trans injustice. This report also summated that:

It is telling that, during the visit, the current environment was uniformly described as toxic by stakeholders across the board, without exception, all of those who he met declared themselves unable to suggest a winning formula for making inroads in a situation that has been driven to a state of such acrimony. Yet, it is the very British people who have for decades inspired the world to know what to do in such situations of confusion: keep calm. Examine the evidence. The evidence shows that there is nothing to fear in the existence of LGBT persons, and much to celebrate in the diversity that they bring to our common humanity. Keep calm. Examine the evidence. Respect Diversity.

(United Nations, 2023: 18)

As I sit at my desk in January 2024, hearing the news, reading research on continuing social injustice, I can only hope myself that change can be a possibility. There is continued toxicity and lack of positive and forward-moving social change today for trans people. I would assert that the instruction to keep calm is not enough. However, the acceptance that there is nothing to fear from LGBTQ+ people is an ideal, and I would question how realistic this is in 2024.

The individual members of my intergenerational group of trans people spoke their 'truth' and provided *their* narratives of *their* experience and position in *their* world. This was given freely (as a result of trust and respect) and due to the co-creation and trans-collaborative approach is 'true.' Each trans person selected their own words, used their own language, and discussed their own personal existence. Nothing was added or replaced by me as the cis researcher. The project is *their* work, *their* collaboration, and *their* position as specialists of being a trans identity in Newcastle upon Tyne in 2024. Maybe, we can use their words in moments of confusion and respect *their* diversity.

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Appendices

Appendix A



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Interview 1 Questions

1. Do you think there is an LGBTQ+ community in Newcastle?
2. Why do you think this?
3. Where would you say the LGBTQ+ community in Newcastle is based/can be found?
4. Do you think there is equal opportunity and support across the L, the G, the B, the T, the Q, and the + in the Newcastle LGBTQ+ community?
5. If you had to describe the Newcastle 'scene' what would you say?
6. Has the Newcastle 'scene' changed over the last few years?
7. What changes have you seen?
8. What do you like about the Newcastle 'scene'?
9. What do you think is missing from the 'scene'?
10. Where do you go on the Newcastle 'scene'?
11. Where would you not go on the Newcastle 'scene'?
12. Which of these Newcastle venues are sociable and welcoming to all within the LGBTQ+ community?
13. What do you go to these Newcastle venues for?
14. What entertainment do you enjoy on the Newcastle 'scene'?
15. What type of entertainment do you avoid on the Newcastle 'scene'?
16. What is missing from the Newcastle 'scene'?
17. What is your best memory whilst out on the Newcastle 'scene'?
18. Have you, or others you know, ever felt unsafe in the Newcastle 'scene'?
19. Where was this?
20. Was this followed up?
21. Have you been victim to any of the following
22. Do you think there is prejudice from within the LGBTQ+ community in Newcastle?
23. How is this internal prejudice seen on the Newcastle 'scene'?
24. Which group do you think is least represented on the Newcastle 'scene'?
25. What can be done to change this?
26. How do you feel about the use of some of the Newcastle venues by straight customers?
27. Have you ever felt awkward when an LGBTQ+ venue is filled with mostly straight customers?
28. Why was this?

Interview 2 Questions

29. Have you ever attended a Pride event in Newcastle?
30. What event was this?
31. What year did you first go?

32. How have you been involved with the planning of Newcastle/Northern Pride?
33. Where did Pride as a concept come from?
34. When did it appear in the North East?
35. What do you think is the reason for its growth in popularity and 'success'?
36. What challenges and drawbacks has it faced over time?
37. How were these solved/dealt with?
38. Who 'controls' Newcastle/Northern Pride?
39. How are sponsors sourced and approached?
40. Are there any expectations of sponsorship clauses from sponsors for the event?
41. Pride is global, have you been to any other events?
42. How would you best describe Pride in Sydney, San Francisco, London, Manchester and Brighton?
43. Why do you think some Pride events are more documented or commented on than others?
44. What has Newcastle/Northern Pride done to raise its profile and to have its place on the Pride map?
45. How does transgender identity feature in Newcastle/Northern Pride?
46. How has this inclusion and representation changed or developed?
47. What more needs to be done?
48. What research do you know has been done about the LGBTQ+ community in Newcastle?
49. Why do you think this research was done? What did it say or evidence?
50. What further research or activity needs to be done in Newcastle and the North East?
51. Is the transgender community and Trans identity represented in the North East?
52. What more should be done?
53. What continued prejudice do the Trans community face in Newcastle, the UK and globally?
54. What should the Newcastle LGBTQ+ community do stop this?
55. What should society do to stop this?
56. What is the social perception of Trans today?
57. What can be done to support transgender individuals in the Newcastle LGBTQ+ community?

Thank you for taking part in this interview (s) and answering these questions.

Appendix B



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Recruitment for The Newcastle I-identity project

I am looking for between 3 and 5 transgender individuals to participate in a research project as part of my PhD Thesis. This will involve up to three interviews which will then be transcribed into examples of verbatim theatre pieces which will be for research purposes only. Verbatim theatre is the use of journalistic interview techniques in the writing of a performance piece using the actual words, feelings and nuances of the interviewee, whilst protecting confidentiality and anonymity.

The aim of this project is to evaluate what the LGBTQ+ community looks like in Newcastle upon Tyne and how this is supported through the 'scene' in the city. It will examine the inter-generational transgender history and experience, and to compare the experiences of these different generations socially and within the confines of their own community. What has changed? How have things improved? What are still the global issues faced by the Trans community? What learning can be found from a sociological perspective?

Participants will receive the questions for each interview in advance. Participants can ask for specific questions to be removed from the interviews.

Data confidentiality and anonymity:

You will not be named in the thesis, allowing the information provided to remain confidential and anonymous. The data contained within the interviews will be recorded and stored in a secured location, will be password encrypted, and only the researcher will have access. There are no known risks for any participant to be involved in this survey.

Please note: Participants can withdraw from any part of the project at any time up to one month prior to the PhD submission in February 2022.

If you would like to participate, please contact the researcher.

Information on The Newcastle I-identity project

Please read the following information about this research project and decide whether you would like to participate or not. **The aim of this project is** to evaluate what the

LGBTQ+ community looks like in Newcastle upon Tyne and how this is supported through the 'scene' in the city. The project will look how the 'scene' has grown over the last 40 years and how participants use and perceive it. There will be a consideration of whether the 'scene' represents all members of the LGBTQ+ community, as well as any internal (from within the LGBTQ+ community) and external (from the straight community) prejudice and harassment.

There will be up to three interviews with the researcher in regards to the participant's personal experiences being Transgender in Newcastle upon Tyne. These interviews will be recorded and then transcribed for each participant to agree accuracy and content. The researcher will then edit these interview transcripts into an example of verbatim theatre to examine the inter-generational transgender history and experience. Verbatim theatre is the use of journalistic interview techniques in the writing of a performance piece using the actual words, feelings and nuances of the interviewee, whilst protecting confidentiality and anonymity. These verbatim theatre pieces will allow the researcher to compare the experiences of these different generations socially and within the confines of their own community. What has changed? How have things improved? What are still the global issues faced by the Trans community? What learning can be found from a sociological perspective? The key content of the interviews will be:

- Society and the Newcastle Community
- Participant personal journey and experiences
- Gender and Transgender Representation

Data collected for this research will involve you participating in up to three interviews, which will take around one hour each to complete. Participants do not have to answer any questions they do not feel comfortable answering. These interviews may be conducted virtually due to Covid-19 (ZOOM, Teams, Skype, Telephone) or face-to-face if health and safety can be adhered to with safe working practices and physical distancing being maintained. Face-to-face interviews can take place in a range of venues - your home, the researcher's home, the researcher's office, or in a public venue agreed by both parties.

Participants will receive the questions for each interview in advance. Participants can ask for specific questions to be removed from the interviews.

All interviews and verbatim theatre pieces are for research purposes only and will not be performed or published outside of the PhD Thesis.

Data confidentiality and anonymity: The interviews will result in a number of consent and agreement forms where your name and signature will be recorded in regard to:

- Confirmation of your agreement to participate in the verbatim theatre project and subsequent interview (s)
- Permission to allow the audio recordings of the interviews to be transcribed
- Confirmation of accuracy and content for all transcripts
- Permission to allow the researcher to edit the transcript materials into a piece of verbatim theatre
- Confirmation of any amendments or corrections to either the individual transcripts or draft versions of the verbatim theatre piece
- Confirmation of the accuracy of the final verbatim piece and permission to include in the PhD Thesis
- Final confirmation and release for the material to be submitted in the PhD Thesis summative submission in February 2022

You will not be named in the thesis, allowing the information provided to remain confidential and anonymous. The data contained within the interviews will be recorded and stored in a secured location, will be password encrypted, and only the researcher will have access. There are no known risks for any participant to be involved in this survey.

Please note: Participants can withdraw from any part of the project at any time up to one month prior to the PhD submission in February 2022. If you have any concerns, comments or questions about the research please feel free to contact the researcher.

Verbatim Interview Questions

Interview 1

- What does being Trans mean to you?
- How about to your family and friends?
- What does the word Trans mean to you, not to society or the LGBTQ+ community, to you?
- How do you relate to, or think about, the 'label of transsexual'? Is this a dated term, is it relatable to transitioning? Does it describe the transgender experience?
- Do you see transgender as being a decision or something your 'knew'?
- How do you think society sees and understands transgender today?
- Has that changed in the last XXXX years ?

- Do you think there is a LGBTQ+ community in Newcastle and is the T a part of that?
- Has this changed over time at all
- How does the Newcastle LGBTQ+ community perceive transgender?
- Have you ever experienced any bullying or prejudice from members of the LGBTQ+ community?
- How does society perceive the difference between transgender and sexuality?
- Is there a difference in regard to how members of the LGBTQ+ community see this?
- What changes are needed?
- What does it mean to be Trans today?
- Has this changed over time?
- What is the strangest question you have been asked?
- What one question would you like to ask the cis-gendered community?
- What does it feel like to be able to live your life as you want?
- Are you comfortable in telling me what transition/transitioning is/was like?

Interview 2

- When did you realise that it didn't feel comfortable to be living in your birth gender – what age, how did you know?
- When you look back, can you remember what it felt like to be (birth gender) compared to knowing your identified gender?
- As a child what was your favourite toy?
- Knowing societal stereotypes of gender-based toys and clothing, did you ever come across this?
- What was school like – living as your birth gender?
- Was there ever any bullying or prejudice at school?
- What did it feel like as a child to be 'made' to wear clothing or behave in a way expected of your birth gender?
- What was employment like – living as your birth gender, presenting as your identified gender, transitioning?
- How do you think your physical appearance has changed?
- What advice would you give to your younger self dealing with the realisation that they are transgender?
- Is there anything you would do differently?
- What is life like for you today?
- What positives do you experience as a transgender individual?
- What daily negatives still continue today? Have these changed?
- If you get ID'd what do/did you use?
- What has been the most interesting or embarrassing question from your family or friends?
- Or the one question that has made you smile or laugh?
- For you, what does it feel like to be a man/woman/non-conforming?

Interview 3

- First thing in the morning, you get up, so what is your daily 'getting ready' regime?
- Have you ever felt the need to 'present' as your identified gender
- How did you discover 'binding' (MTF) – if appropriate
- When you began your transition did you have a different 'version' or 'presentation' of what/who you wanted to look like?
- What in your life defines you today?
- Is gender learnt or is it part of who you are?
- What are your experience with the use of pronouns and names?
- How do you think the media and the arts represents transgender individuals?
- Are there any positive characters that accurately represent the transgender experience/transition?
- Are there any MTF/FTM actors, speakers, individuals that you respect and have influenced your transition?
- How do you think the LGBTQ+ community in Newcastle see the difference between Trans, cross-dressing and drag queens?
- What is your opinion on this?
- What needs to change?

Research Agreement and Agreement to participate in interviews

Following receipt and consideration of the Participant Information Sheet from Tony Chapman-Wilson, XXXX confirms they have read this material, and this agreement is in place as a research ethics document to confirm that the participant has agreed to participate in a series of interviews to be used for research purposes and included in the researchers PhD Thesis for submission in February 2022.

These interviews will be transcribed and then edited into a verbatim theatre piece.

Further agreements will be issued for:

- Accuracy of the transcript material
- Permission for the transcript to be used to write a verbatim theatre piece
- Accuracy and confirmation of any amendments/corrections to either the transcript or versions of the verbatim theatre piece
- Accuracy of the final version of the verbatim theatre piece
- Permission to use the final version of the verbatim theatre piece in the PhD Thesis, and release for this to be submitted to the University of Hull for examination in February 2022

This agreement also confirms that from the receipt of the Participant Handover Sheet and any subsequent questions, the participant was given a 'cooling off' period of XXXX days to decide if they would like to participate in this interview for the researchers PhD Thesis.

This agreement also confirms that the participant is aware that these interview will be recorded and will be stored securely in a password encrypted file. These files will be deleted if the participant removes their permission or no longer wish to continue to participate in this project; or 5 years from the submission of the PhD Thesis in February 2022.

The participant will be referred to in an anonymous manner and the participant can remove their permission at any time up to one month prior to the submission of the thesis in February 2022. This removal of permission will result in the removal of the research material and it no longer being used for any research purpose or written thesis. It will also be deleted securely.

Research Agreement and Permission to use material for research

Following an interview between Tony Chapman-Wilson and XXXX on XXXX, this agreement is in place as a research ethics document to confirm that the participant has agreed to allow their interview to be used for research purposes. This interview will be written into transcript form and will be used to write a piece of verbatim theatre.

This transcript and subsequent performance piece will be given to the participant to confirm the accuracy of the transcript.

This Research Agreement is an agreement between Tony Chapman-Wilson and XXXXXXX to allow the audio material to be written into a transcript and to be used for this verbatim theatre piece.

The participant will be referred to in an anonymous manner and the participant can remove their permission at any time up to one month prior to the submission of the thesis in February 2022. This removal of permission will result in the removal of the research material and it no longer being used for any research purpose or written thesis. It will also be deleted securely.

Research Agreement and Accuracy Agreement - Transcript

Following an interview between Tony Chapman-Wilson and XXXXX on XXXXX and the researcher listening to the audio material and writing a dramatic transcript, this agreement is in place as a research ethics document to confirm that the participant has agreed to the accuracy of the transcript.

This Research Agreement is an agreement between Tony Chapman-Wilson and XXXXXXX allowing this transcript material to be released to be used by the researcher to edit into a verbatim theatre piece of theatre.

The participant will be referred to in an anonymous manner and the participant can remove their permission at any time up to one month prior to the submission of the thesis in February 2022. Any removal of permission will result in the removal of the

research material and it no longer being used for any research purpose or written thesis. It will also be deleted securely.

Research Agreement and Final Draft accuracy

This Research Agreement is an agreement between Tony Chapman-Wilson and XXXXXX confirming that all amendments to the verbatim theatre piece have been agreed and verified for accuracy of intent and as such this is the agreed final version of this piece of theatre. This will be used for research purposes only and this agreement confirms that this material will not be published (outside of the PhD thesis) and will not be performed in any form.

Following this agreement the researcher will write the chapter of the PhD Thesis which will include this verbatim piece of theatre and this agreement forms the participants agreement to this work being completed.

The participant will be referred to in an anonymous manner and the participant can remove their permission at any time up to one month prior to the submission of the thesis in February 2022. Any removal of permission will result in the removal of the research material and it no longer being used for any research purpose or written thesis. It will also be deleted securely.

Research Agreement and Amendments Accuracy

Following an interview between Tony Chapman-Wilson and XXXXX on XXXXX and the researcher listening to the audio material and writing a dramatic transcript, this agreement is in place as a research ethics document to confirm that the participant has agreed to the amendments made within the transcript/version X of the verbatim theatre piece regarding XXXXXXXXXXXXX

The participant will be referred to in an anonymous manner and the participant can remove their permission at any time up to one month prior to the submission of the thesis in February 2022. Any removal of permission will result in the removal of the research material and it no longer being used for any research purpose or written thesis. It will also be deleted securely.

Research Agreement and Submission of PhD Thesis

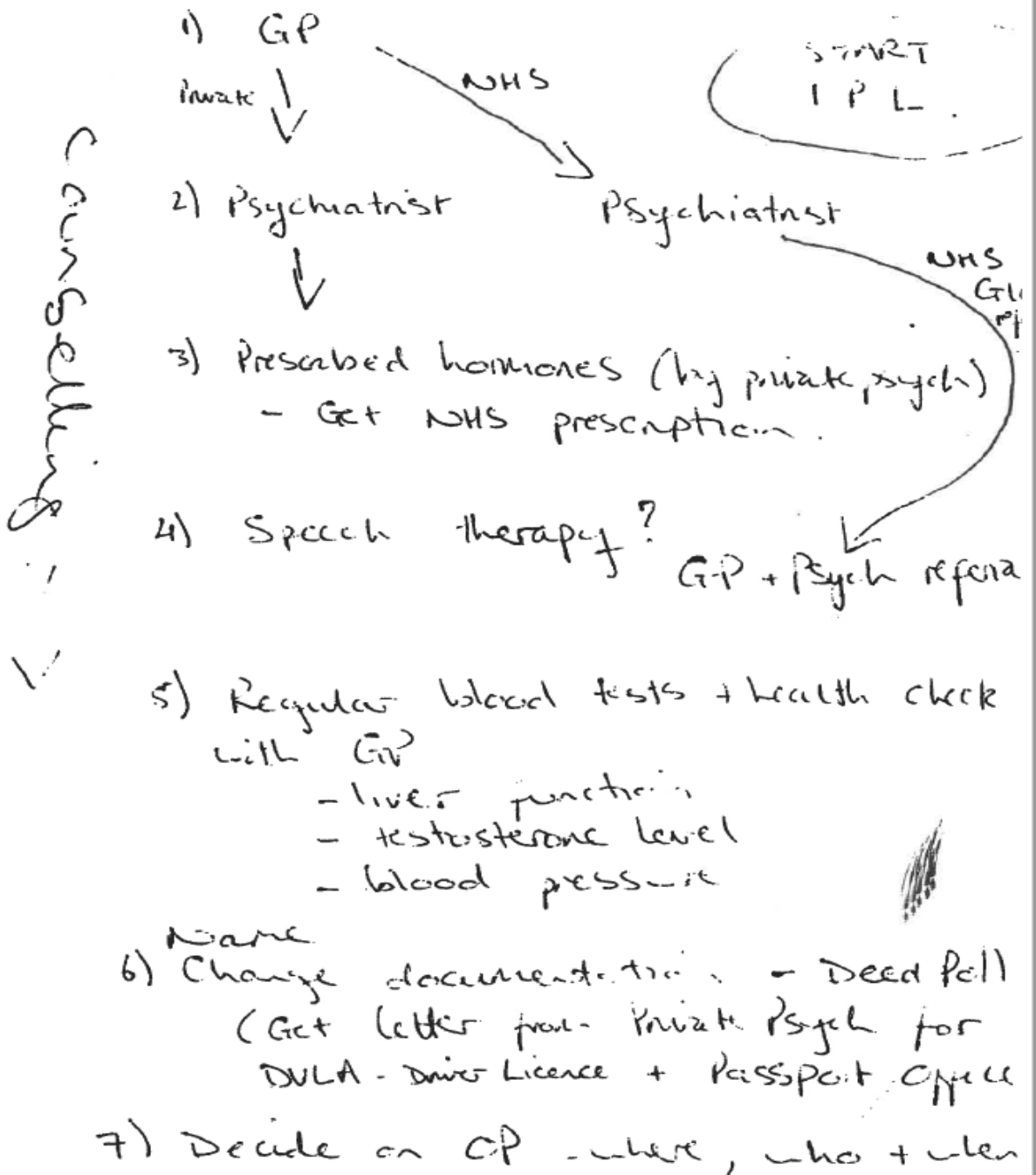
This Research Agreement is an agreement between Tony Chapman-Wilson and XXXXXX confirming that final permission is given for the completed PhD Thesis to be submitted for examination at the University of Hull. This PhD Thesis contains a verbatim theatre piece based on interviews with the participant, which they have agreed to accuracy of the initial transcript, amendments and final version to be included in the PhD Thesis. This will be used for research purposes only and this agreement confirms that this material will not be published (outside of the PhD thesis) and will not be performed in any form.

Following this agreement the participant releases full permission for the PhD thesis to be submitted with the inclusion of the verbatim theatre piece based on their interviews.

The participant will be referred to in an anonymous manner and the participant can remove their permission at any time up to one month prior to the submission of the thesis in February 2022. Any removal of permission will result in the removal of the research material and it no longer being used for any research purpose or written thesis. It will also be deleted securely.

Appendix C

Kate O'Donnell list



Appendix D



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Information on the Survey

Please read the following information about this research project and decide whether you would like to participate or not.

The aim of this project is to evaluate what the LGBTQ+ community looks like in Newcastle upon Tyne and how this is supported through the 'scene' in the city. The project will look how the 'scene' has grown over the last 40 years and how participants use and perceive it. There will be a consideration of whether the 'scene' represents all members of the LGBTQ+ community, as well as any internal (from within the LGBTQ+ community) and external (from the straight community) prejudice and harassment. The venues and entertainment offer will also be examined in order to see what has been lost from the 'scene' over recent years, and what is needed to continue to support the community. As most research considers cities like London, Manchester, Leeds and Brighton, this project is also important to evaluate what Pride means to the Newcastle LGBTQ+ community, and the city itself.

Data collected for this research will involve you answering a non-invasive survey, which will take between 5-10 minutes to complete. Participants do not have to answer any questions they do not feel comfortable answering, therefore please use N/A in this case.

Data confidentiality and anonymity: The survey does not ask for any personal details which might identify you, allowing the information provided to remain confidential and anonymous. The data contained within the survey will be exported into an excel spreadsheet and stored in a secured location, will be password encrypted, and only the researcher will have access. There are no known risks for any participant to be involved in this survey.

Please note: Participants can withdraw from any part of the survey at any time. If you have any concerns, comments or questions about the research please feel free to contact the researcher.

Survey Questions.

- What gender do you identify as
- Which age bracket are you in

- What sexual preference do you identify as
- Do you think there is an LGBTQ+ community in Newcastle?
- Why do you think this?
- Where would you say the LGBTQ+ community in Newcastle is based/can be found?
- Do you think there is equal opportunity and support across the L, the G, the B, the T, the Q, and the + in the Newcastle LGBTQ+ community?
- If you had to describe the Newcastle 'scene' what would you say?
- Has the Newcastle 'scene' changed over the last few years?
- What changes have you seen
- What do you like about the Newcastle 'scene'?
- What do you think is missing from the 'scene'?
- Where do you go on the Newcastle 'scene'?
- Where would you not go on the Newcastle 'scene'? (select as many as apply)
- Which of these Newcastle venues are sociable and welcoming to all within the LGBTQ+ community?
- What do you go to these Newcastle venues for?
- What entertainment do you enjoy on the Newcastle 'scene'?
- What type of entertainment do you avoid on the Newcastle 'scene'?
- What is missing from the Newcastle 'scene'?
- What is your best memory whilst out on the Newcastle 'scene'?
- Have you ever felt unsafe in the Newcastle 'scene'?
- If you answered 'Yes', where was this?
- Do you think there is prejudice from within the LGBTQ+ community in Newcastle?
- How is this internal prejudice seen on the Newcastle 'scene'?
- Which group do you think is least represented on the Newcastle 'scene'?
- What can be done to change this?
- How do you feel about the use of some of the Newcastle venues by straight customers?
- Have you ever felt awkward when an LGBTQ+ venue is filled with mostly straight customers?
- Why was this?
- Have you ever attended a Pride event in Newcastle?
- What event was this?
- What year did you first go?
- Has Newcastle/Northern Pride changed over time?
- How has it changed?
- What should Newcastle/Northern Pride be like and include?
- How does Newcastle/Northern Pride compare to others you have been to?
- Do you have any Trans friends?
- Do they/you suffer from prejudice and harassment?

- What can be done to support transgender individuals in the Newcastle LGBTQ+ community?
- Are there any other comments you would like to make about the Newcastle 'scene' – this can be about today or throughout the last 40 years?

Appendix E

Examples of Memory Boxes









