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BUILDING AN IDENTITY DESPITE DISCRIMINATION: A LINGUISTIC
ANALYSIS OF THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF GENDER VARIANT PEOPLE IN
NORTH EAST ENGLAND.

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Abstract

Trans issues are at the forefront of today's society. It is estimated that approximately one percent of the UK population is gender variant, and the number of people accessing treatment is growing each year. However, linguistic research into trans identities and communities is still deficient. Models of language and gender studies still assume a binary gender structure and do not take into consideration the increasing amount of gender variance in society. Additionally, a lack of an established transgender studies discipline and limited numbers of trans researchers makes research into trans populations more difficult.

The aim of this study is to examine how transgender people in North East England construct their identity with a backdrop of discriminatory discourses perpetuated by British news media and wider society. Sociolinguistic research into trans populations is an emerging area of study, as language and gender research has traditionally been constrained by cisnormative assumptions. Even with Butler's (1990) seminal work on gender and discourse, this kind of research has still been done within the binary gender system. Taking an inductive approach to data collection and analysis, I conducted semi-structured in-depth interviews with trans participants in the North East, and used a mixture of Membership Categorisation Analysis and Narrative Analysis for data analysis.

The findings from the research illustrate how difficult it is for gender variant people to find a name or label for themselves within the binary system, and that emerging terminology is often inadequate for trans identities. Additionally, there is a pressure for gender variant people to adhere to narratives appearing in media outlets which perpetuate one way of 'being trans'. The difficulty in finding a name for oneself promotes a feeling of being the other. Also, the perpetuation of a singular trans narrative creates pressure and fear in people who may not adhere to it. In conclusion, this fear which arises for trans individuals is often pre-emptive as being othered through language and exposed to external ideas of gender variance creates an extra burden on participants. It is this that leads them to equate their positive experiences with luck.

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Statement of Originality

This is to certify that I am responsible for the work submitted in this thesis, that the original work is my own except as specified in acknowledgments or in footnotes, and that neither this thesis nor the original work contained therein has been submitted to this or any other institution for a degree.

Introductory Chapter

The following thesis is a sociolinguistic analysis of the lived experiences of trans people in North East England. Gender has been a part of sociolinguistic study since the early twentieth century where early academics began to recognise it as a factor which may influence language (Jespersen, 1922; Kim, 2004). Second wave feminist language and gender studies emerged alongside the second wave feminist movement and helped develop interactional models of speech (Lakoff, 1973; Spender, 1980; Tannen, 1998). These studies highlighted power imbalances between the sexes and the socialisation of language use, however, they only took into consideration men and women as homogenous groups. Since then studies such as Butler (1990) and Coates (1998) have examined the discursive production of gender. This theory has enabled gender variant identities to be explored linguistically and given way to queer linguistics as a subset of sociolinguistics. Despite this, it is only in the last decade in which we are seeing sociolinguistic studies which take gender variant identities into account.

An increase in contemporary sociolinguistic studies of gender and gender variance has allowed for the exploration of identities outside a restrictive and ideological binary. Yet these studies, whilst important, do not necessarily place lived gender variant experiences at the centre of the research, rather focussing on stylistic elements of transgender speech, for example see Zimman (2017). The focus of this thesis, therefore, is language used in various cultural contexts. More specifically, this thesis examines how trans people themselves use language to reflect their identity in comparison to language and narratives imposed from British news media sources.

Research Rationale

I began work on this thesis an open ended and broad idea, having previously worked for a local LGBT homelessness charity as their volunteer coordinator. The limited experience I had with lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) issues came through the personal experiences of my LGB friends and I had no experience of trans issues. However, due to my place of employment, I found myself in a good environment to learn. As I worked for the charity, I got to know the young people who approached us for help, and it was increasingly clear that, whilst the charity did

everything it could, access to support for trans people was extremely limited. Not only that, we were living in North East England, an area that at the time only had two dedicated organisations for trans people; compared to Manchester for example which had significantly more. From this, it became clear that there was a need to explore the lived experiences of trans people in the North East.

My undergraduate degree was in English Language and Linguistics and I found modules on sociolinguistics and discourse analysis the most interesting and engaging. I had a notion of binary and essentialist language and gender research from a module I had taken years previously, in which I was taught feminist models of gendered language speech. I always found these models lacking and, even having familiarised myself with Butler's (1990) seminal work on performativity, I thought there was a lack of linguistic research on gender diverse identities. Having been with the charity for nearly two years it became increasingly clear to me how marginalised trans people still were. When I had begun work there I had once questioned whether the organisation was still needed as surely as a society we have developed to a point where this is no longer required? This, however, was just a reflection of my own heteronormative assumptions. My getting to know the young, trans people we supported, teamed with my own interest for language and gender research, gave way to a broad idea to collect the lived experiences of transgender people in the North East and analyse them linguistically.

There is a gap in academic and cultural discourses for a linguistic analysis of trans people's experiences in the United Kingdom. Academic literature about trans experiences often comes from the point of view of the United States of America (Schultz, 2015; Valentine, 2007) and is frequently analysed sociologically. Experiences of gender variance in the UK are often eclipsed by those coming from North and South America. As a linguistic analysis of the lived experiences of trans people in the UK is still too broad a topic for study, the scope of the research needed to be more defined and narrowed. In order to do this and narrow the focus, I decided to concentrate on North East England.

I chose to analyse the experiences of people in the North East for several reasons. Firstly, there is no other research pertaining to the lived experiences of trans people in the North East. Secondly, the region is one of the largest in the UK but also one

of the most sparsely populated (Statista, 2018), yet the region has, or is perceived to have, a strong regional identity; something which can be argued exists less in other regions. Additionally, there is a disparity in public funding between the North East and other regions which has contributed to a lack of available services for LGBT people. As I mentioned above, in 2014 there were only two organisations solely dedicated to helping trans people in the entire region. Because of the above considerations, gender variant people in the North East may have experiences which differ considerably from gender variant people living in other regions. For example, Manchester is considered to be a very LGBT friendly city with a plethora of organisations and events dedicated to trans people (Sparkle, 2018). It can be presumed, therefore, that living in this area will provide a completely different experience of being gender variant than living in rural Northumberland or a smaller city like Newcastle or Sunderland. Finally, because I had experience working within a support charity for the LGBT community in the area, I was able to gain a primary knowledge of trans experiences from the very people I would be interviewing. I was also able to gather connections to individuals and organisations who would be able to help me to source participants.

The overall aim of the research is to collect rich data pertaining to the lives of gender variant people in the North East. My primary research question therefore is '**what are the lived experiences of trans people in North East England?**' In answering this question I will particularly explore:

- In what way do trans people name, label and categorise themselves?
- How do news media narratives of gender variance affect trans people?

To answer this question I will gather data from people who identify as gender variant in some way and who are based in North East England. The data gathered by myself will take two forms; spoken and textual data. It is anticipated that the majority of primary data collected will come in the form of in-depth, one-to-one interviews. The textual data gathered will take the form of print newspaper from the British national press, which centre on transgender people.

Representations of trans people in the UK often come from the media we consume, however the media does not necessarily paint an accurate picture of gender

variance. Overall, it is clear that gender diverse identities are increasingly visible in today's society. There are no official statistical estimates on trans and gender variant populations, however the number of people accessing gender services in the United Kingdom has steadily risen (Bachmann and Gooch, 2018). Despite this increase in visibility, wider society is most likely to gain their knowledge of gender variant identities from the media (McInroy and Craig, 2015) and as a result, there is still a perpetual idea of what a trans person 'should' be. My own perceptions of trans people also came from the media I consumed, and it was not until I started work at the charity I was able to question them. It was this enlightenment that gave way to my research project. It is important to study these experiences in order to understand trans people as a marginalised community, and this will add to the wider discourse on gender variance. Additionally, with well-known celebrities such as Kellie Maloney and Caitlyn Jenner publically disclosing their trans identities within the media, there is a growing understanding of gender variance. However this understanding is guided by what is written in the media which perpetuates a narrative about a certain experience of being trans.

This research will add to the wider understanding of gender variance by linguistically analysing the lived experiences of trans people. Not only will it add to the body of academic work on language and gender, but it will also add to the cultural understanding of gender variance. Widening this understanding will benefit trans people as it is actual lived experiences used for data, rather than cisnormative presumptions about gender variance. These results can go on to inform workplaces, policy makers and other organisations on acceptable ways in which to refer to gender variance. This will also have a positive effect for gender variant people who access organisations, as appropriate and considered language helps inclusion for marginalised identities.

Thesis Background

Before the introduction of the Gender Recognition Act (GRA) 2004, there was an inadequate legal framework in which trans people were forced to exist, unrecognised and denied basic legal rights such as a passport and birth certificate reflecting their gender identity (Whittle, 2002). This inadequate framework also gave legitimacy to the dehumanisation and oppression of people who lived outside of the

gender binary norm. Whilst the GRA has afforded some rights to trans people, it is still problematic, and the pervasive oppression of gender variant people still exists.

However, despite these moves forwards, there is a lack of linguistic research into trans communities. Language and gender research emerged in the early 1970s coinciding with the second wave feminist movement, and as a result the deficit (Lakoff, 1973), dominance (Zimmerman and West, 1975; Spender, 1980) and difference models (Tannen, 1998) of analysing talk between men and women emerged. Fundamentally, what these models suggest is that either women are deficient in their interactions, men dominate interactions, or men and women are culturally different. Whilst these models may be adequate for their time, they do assume that gender is on a binary and leave no room for other gender identities outside of cisgender male or female. Additionally, these frameworks essentialise gender by suggesting that there are central traits to masculinity and femininity which cause the variations in male and female interactions. In Lakoff's (1973) work for example, women are deficient in their speech patterns due to a presumption that women are lacking or inadequate; and, whilst Lakoff does question where this idea comes from, it is still presented as something that is fundamental to femininity. Likewise with Spender's (1980) work where essentialist masculinity is presented as a reason for the theoretical dominance of men in interaction.

The introduction of Butler's (1990) work gave a differing perspective of gender, as it enabled the scrutiny of both essentialist and constructionist theories. As Butler outlines, gender is something that is constructed through dominant discourses and repeated stylised acts of gender, and, underneath these acts, gender does not exist. Essentialist and constructionist theories of gender, however, still create a binary system to which we are bound. Butler criticises the categories of men and women as a universal truth, something that is taken for granted in feminist linguistic works, but rather suggests that they are 'a regulatory fiction' (Jagose, 1996: 83-84). Butler paved the way for what we might recognise as the modern academic queer theory, which has allowed for further studies into sexual and gender diversity, and indeed, there is a burgeoning body of linguistic work which explores language and sexualities (see *The Language and Sexuality Reader*, Cameron and Kullick, 2006). However, the essentialist, binary view of gender identity is pervasive, 'publically understood and frequently justified' (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, 2013).

Perhaps because of the endearing essentialist view of gender, trans identities have been historically pathologised and medicalised since the nineteenth century. Early sexologists like Krafft-Ebing (1906) attributed gender variance to homosexuality which dominated cultural, medical and legal discourses for over a hundred years. In the 1960s Harry Benjamin (1966) made surgical interventions for trans people more widely available which brought gender variance into the public sphere. Media representations of 'transsexual celebrities' emerged at the time Benjamin was working and, people like Christine Jorgensen and April Ashley gained celebrity status because of their gender identity. This contributed to pervasive media discourses which present trans people as novelties for the entertainment of the reader. It also left trans people open to hostility from other areas of society.

Taking into consideration these facets, the gradual wider understanding of trans identities contrasted with the lack of feminist linguistic research into gender variance, there is a gap in the research for the real lived experiences of trans people. As mentioned previously, whilst the media is reporting stories on gender variance, these are not wholly representative of the trans community and portray one narrative of gender variance; often from a cisnormative and heteronormative viewpoint. Additionally, linguistic research has focused on male and female as two homogenous groups and does not leave room for gender variant identities. As a result it is important to ascertain the real lived experiences of trans people, in comparison to media representations, and further introduce trans identities into linguistic research.

The method of analysis for this thesis is Critical Discourse Analysis. CDA has developed over the last twenty-five years to become a method of textual analysis with the aim of exposing socio-political inequalities, power abuse and ideologies (Van Dijk, 1995; Wodak, 2011). Trans people are some of the most marginalised in our community (Women and Equalities Committee, 2016) and the primary function of CDA in this respect is to uncover social inequalities experienced by my participants whilst navigating their identities. Discourse, according to Fairclough and Wodak, 'is socially *constitutive* as well as socially shaped' (1997: 258, emphasis in original), in that it both establishes and shapes societal conventions and identities. CDA as a method of data analysis will allow me to analyse participants' experiences

whilst taking into account the historical and cultural context of their lives and experiences. It also allows to me to take into consideration the context of the research interview and discuss how my participants and me co-produce knowledge.

The research question as outlined above is intentionally open ended and broad, and I have approached this thesis in that way. Having considered initially a historical and cultural background for gender identity I decided to take an inductive approach. This would allow the participants' data to 'speak for itself' and go some way to reducing potential hetero- and cisnormative biases I might have held (as demonstrated above). In researching LGBT lives there are ethical considerations which need to be taken into account. Perhaps most salient is the possibility that my own cisnormative experiences can produce a bias throughout the research. The idea, therefore, is to collect data and let key themes and topics emerge and choose a method of Critical Discourse Analysis accordingly. This approach is reasonable given the subject of the research and also myself as a researcher. The research questions allow for semi-structured interviews with participants which can be open-ended enough to gain a rich picture of participants' experiences, as well as provide some answers.

Thesis Outline

This thesis is organised into seven chapters. The first chapter begins with the theoretical underpinnings of the research, chronologically exploring gender theory and gender and language theory. I begin with biological essentialism and explore the notion of essential characteristics of male and female. Starting with Victorian science, in the age of burgeoning evolutionary sciences, in which behavioural characteristics were believed to be part of a person's 'metabolic state' (Mikkola, 2017: no pagination). These theories are pervasive in society and have been used to inform debates on language use and gender. Perhaps the most well-known early study of this being Otto Jespersen's chapter *The Woman*. The chapter explores Psychoanalytic ideas of gender and how notions of sex and gender moved away from being seen as purely biological, and rather something that is constructed in our unconscious selves (Freud, 1905). I then explore emerging ethnomethodological studies which place gender as a social construction; arising as a reaction to essentialist thinking. At this time, feminist language and gender studies emerged which critically examined gender difference in interaction with regards to a

patriarchal society. This took the onus of sexed language differences from women and onto men, yet the theories still assumed an essentialist gender binary. This then enables us to explore in-depth Butler's (1990) discursive construction of gender and how this changed academic discourses of gender construction. Gender moves away from being a binary construction to discursive one. Next, I explore queer theory which looks further at gender and gender 'deviance', and places it within a heteronormative matrix. Finally, from these theories, I look further at the gendered body and how pre-existing assumptions of gender affect gender variant identities.

The second chapter places gender variant identities, and previously discussed gender theories, in a wider cultural context. I start by exploring early notions of gender expectations, and how these moved from the domain of religion and morality to that of psychiatry. I move on to explore early sexology and how gender variant identities were pathologised by sexologists such as Freud (1905) and Krafft-Ebing (1906). From this I look at how attitudes to gender variance changed within sexology with the works of Hirschfeld (1910) and Ellis (1915) who began to move away from the pathologisation of gender identities but still medicalised it. From here I introduce culturally significant gender variant lives from history, such as Lili Elbe and Radclyffe Hall, who were living at the time of early sexology. As sexology moved forward and grew as a discipline, I then turn to the 1950s and 60s to explore how gender variant identities became medicalised as surgical interventions for trans people became more of a possibility. However, there was still discord within the medical community and I look at the work of Benjamin (1966) and Cauldwell (1949) who had juxtaposing ideas on trans identities. From this point the chapter focuses on further cultural aspects of gender variance. We explore gender variance in the media and the notion of transgender celebrities such as Christine Jorgensen and April Ashley and then move on to counter debates of gender variance from some second wave trans exclusionary radical feminist activists. Finally, I explore gender variance in a British context with the introduction of the increasing representation of trans people in popular media, and the eventual introduction of the Gender Recognition Act (2004). Overall, this chapter provides an important cultural backdrop for the data analysis. These two chapters provide a literature review in two sections; one which outlines the theoretical underpinnings to the thesis, and one which discusses the research topic in a wider context. This thesis is fundamentally a linguistics based piece of

research and therefore theoretical considerations are ordered before any contextual information.

Chapter three is the methodological chapter, and it outlines further the process in which I collected the data and also how I decided on a method for analysis. Initially I discuss how I place myself as a researcher, as this thesis is intended to be a co-production of knowledge between the research participants and myself. I explore the ethical considerations of researching LGBT lives, as an 'outsider' to the community (Silverschanz, 2009), and the actual ethical process undertaken for this research. From here I outline important considerations for data collection and the maintenance of confidentiality for participants who are part of a small and marginalised community. Next I outline my process for recruiting participants and provide short biographies and discuss living in the North East as a commonality between participants. The overall method for analysis is Critical Discourse Analysis, (CDA) however this is a broad theoretical framework which encompasses differing specific methods for analysis. I outline CDA and the specific methods for analysis, as well as how these arose after the data was collected. For the analysis I use a mixture of Membership Categorisation Analysis and Narrative Analysis, with Critical Discourse Analysis as the theoretical framework. These are discussed in detail in the remainder of the chapter. Overall, these first three chapters fall together to provide a rich theoretical, cultural and methodological literature review which provides the basis for analysis of the data.

The data analysis is split into three further chapters. Chapter four deals with naming, labelling and categorisation. It explores how the participants in the research use categories in relation to gender identity and what categories represent their experiences. I start with looking at gender as a category in itself and the wide assumptions of gender that we hold. Next I analyse how the participants categorise their own gender identity and argue that the language and terminology is inadequate for the amount of diverse gender identities. From here I look at how wider language is also problematic for gender variant people, because not only is labelling oneself difficult, but so is describing one's experiences. Next I outline personal name choice and the motivations behind this, also with reference to those participants who chose their pseudonym for the research, as a personal name is also a category in itself. Overall this chapter argues that the language and terminology surrounding gender

variant and trans identities is insufficient, and that it cannot keep up with diversifying gender identities. As a result this might cause some unease for gender variant and trans people who cannot find a label to adequately express their identity.

Chapter five then looks at participants' narratives in comparison to media representations of gender variance. Having explored problematic terminology surrounding gender diverse identities, this chapter endeavours to look at how these are used within a media context. Additionally, media narratives which perpetually use certain outdated or inadequate terminology help construct an idea of what a trans person 'should' be. To counter this I explore the actual narratives of my participants and how these may align with or differ from media narratives. I also take into account language choice, tellability and relevance of the narratives in this chapter, in order to argue how media narratives may put pressure on trans people to conform to an idealised trans identity. Overall this chapter argues that media narratives help create pressure for trans people, which then contributes to the feeling of unease and otherness as ascertained in the previous chapter

Chapter six is the final analysis chapter and it brings together the themes that arose in chapters four and five. This chapter explores the consequences of inadequate language choices and perpetual media narratives, and I argue that these lead to a level of pre-emptive fear for participants. I discuss not only how this arises from the previous discussion, but also how this manifests in participants' stories and choice of language. In particular, I look at the production of fear through the notions of an 'idealised' trans person and external pressure to conform to gender roles. This also leads to participants seeing positive experiences as lucky. I argue that these notions of fear and luck arise from an insufficient lexicon surrounding gender variance and a subsequent difficulty in finding a name or label for oneself. Also the media perpetuated narratives of the 'ideal' trans person present extra external pressure for participants to conform to an ideal which is not representative of their identity. The inadequacy of gender categorisation and the pressure to conform to a certain narrative leads to anxiety for participants in which they can then pre-empt negative experiences while discussing positive experiences as lucky.

The final chapter, chapter seven, summarises findings as discussed in the previous three analysis chapters and critically reflects on these conclusions. I explore in

further detail the conclusion of pre-emptive fear and what may lead to this, whilst also taking into consideration other external influences. I also discuss the limitations of the research, in how myself as a researcher could have affected participants responses, as well as the difficulty of making generalisations from my conclusions. Additionally, I discuss whether there is scope for further study in this area, whilst also exploring potential implications of this study.

A Note on Terminology

Before I move on to the first chapter, I must acknowledge the terminology used throughout this thesis as it may seem to change depending on the context. Firstly, when discussing trans identities today I will use trans, gender variant, and gender diverse interchangeably. This is because these terms are most inclusive of the diverse gender identities and enable me to discuss identities outside of the male and female binary. As Hines (2007) points out, trans encompasses myriad identities from transsexual to non-binary and is the most suitable term to use when discussing gender variance in general. Any specific terminology I use, such as transsexual or non-binary will either be because of the historical context of my writing, or because they are used by my participants to describe themselves.

In chapter two, where I introduce the historical and cultural context of gender identity, the terms used are reflective of when the research was published. For example, transgender as a term was not coined until the 1980s (Stryker 2006), so it would be inappropriate to use the term when talking about sexology research in the 1920s. The only point at which this may happen is if I discuss how the subject of the research could identify today, for example Lili Elbe was one of the first people to undergo gender surgery in the 1930s, and it is possible she could have identified as transgender if alive today. There is further in depth explanation of the use of terms with regards to historical cultural research at the beginning of the chapter.

A large part of the interview data discusses terminology, categorisation and self-identification, so whilst discussing the participants in this research, I will only use terms which they have told me they prefer; as well as trans, gender variant and gender diverse when discussing them in general. These terms change between each participant, however it is important not to impose other inappropriate terminology on them through my writing. When referring to my gender identity, I will

refer to myself as a cis gender woman, this is partly because in this context just calling myself a woman is not adequate, and I have not experienced gender dysphoria or transitioning like my participants. It is also significant as this also informs some of the decisions made in undergoing this research. For a more in depth discussion of this please see chapter three which outlines how I place myself as a researcher.

Finally I wish to note my use of the noun 'understanding' throughout this research, and particularly when I use it in relation to the media. In the context of this thesis, I use the term 'understanding' (as outlined in Oxford Dictionaries (2019)) to mean '[t]he ability to understand something; comprehension'. Another definition is '[s]ympathetic awareness' (*ibid.*), which a reader could easily define 'understanding' as whilst reading this research. However, I argue throughout this thesis against the sympathetic awareness of gender variant people in British print media; although this does not necessarily mean that the British print media cannot, or does not comprehend gender variance.

Of course, there is still nuance to the definition under which I use 'understanding' and, by using the term in the context of this text, I do not suggest that British print media grasps what it is to *be* gender variant; nor do I suggest that their representations of gender variant are therefore accurate. Rather, by using a neutral definition of 'understanding', I suggest that the print media grasps a wider social concept of gender variance, despite how the media chooses to represent it. It is important that this distinction is made at this point in the research as any other definitions could potentially undermine my argument.

Finally, the terminology I use throughout this thesis has been carefully considered. This has been outlined above and will also be discussed throughout the research. However, I do not use some terminology uncritically and endeavour where appropriate to question how and why certain terminology has arisen and become an everyday part of the gender variant lexicon. This critical examination of language does not mean I am necessarily questioning the morality of these terms. As I have made explicit above, I will be using terminology which the participants use to describe their own identity, or in alignment with the historical context where necessary. As a cis gender researcher and outsider (Silverschanz, 2009) to the

community, it will be inappropriate for me to assume the language use of participants.

Chapter One

Theoretical Underpinnings: Gender, Language, and Stereotypes

Introduction

This chapter examines theories pertaining to gender and language which will underpin this thesis and introduce key concepts in gender theory and language and gender studies. Beginning with essentialist thought, I will explore historical scientific perspectives on gender from the physiological and pathological concepts of gender; looking specifically at Victorian biology and psychotherapy. From there I will explore how gender theories move away from essentialist biology to a social constructionist approach.

Within social construction theories there are two main subsections; materialist and discursive. I will discuss how these theories started to separate sex and gender into two concepts and how far society goes towards the construction of these. Discursive theories gave way to early feminist linguistic explorations of gender, however these theories still assumed a gender binary system and presented men and woman as two homogenous groups.

Having explored these, I will move on to look at the work of Judith Butler and her seminal work on gender performativity. Here I will discuss the fundamentals of discourse and identity production, and how sex and gendered identities are a result of repeated social discourses and acts. Having explored Butler's work, I will move on to discuss how she has greatly influenced queer theory and also contemporary theories of gender identity. It is at this point where gender variance will become more salient in this chapter, as queer theory paved the way for gender variant identities.

Throughout the chapter, there will be a running theme of gender stereotypes and expectations as I discuss each theory or section in regards to how they legitimise or destabilise gender norms. The literature discussed is not exhaustive of academic gender discussions, far from it. However, I have picked out the significant arguments in gender theory in addition to those most pertinent to this research.

Biological Essentialism and the 'Legitimisation' of Gender Stereotypes

In order to understand gender philosophy and the prevalence of gender stereotyping, it is important to explore the scientific beginnings of sex and gender and the enduring idea of essentialism. In its fundamental definition, essentialism is the belief that things have an essential set of properties which are necessary to make them what they are. In gender studies, essentialism shows us that male and female are a dichotomy which, as Eckert and McConnell-Ginet suggest, is 'publically understood and frequently justified' (2013: 23). There are some pervasive ideas in society about the differences between men and woman, for example; men are strong, women are weak; men are rational and level-headed, women are emotional and irrational. It can be argued that essentialism is the foundation of many gender theories, either in agreement with or as a reaction to. For example, social construct theories both have essentialist and non-essentialist facets (Alsop *et al*, 2002). The discussion of gender, however, began with a biologically essentialist view and influenced theorists throughout history.

According to essentialist thought, the division of male and female is considered to be part of the natural order of the world. Victorian scientists Geddes and Thompson believed that 'all higher animals are represented by distinct male and female forms, is one of the most patent facts of observation' (1899: 3). Their 1899 publication 'The Evolution of Sex' is an archetypal example of the essentialist belief that the sexes are two distinct categories, with naturally occurring characteristics that are fixed. Geddes and Thompson (1889) believed that these distinct social and behavioural characteristics of men and women were caused by a person's biology, or 'metabolic state' (Mikkola, 2017: no pagination); the female and male sexes are described as 'anabolic' and 'katabolic' (1899:232) respectively. These organic states dictate the characteristic nature of men and women. Women, being anabolic, conserve energy which leads to passivity and demureness and political apathy; whereas male catabolism makes them energetic, passionate, and politically active (Mikkola, 2017; Geddes and Thompson, 1899). These supposed innate traits have been historically used to justify the hierarchical disparity between men and women in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

However, even though this extreme kind of biological determinism has largely been dismissed, the idea that men and women are inherently different has endured. As

nineteenth century science progressed, the focus for distinguishing 'maleness' and 'femaleness' moved from physical biological differences to hormonal and genetic differences (Alsop *et al.* 2002). These so called hormonal differences have been, and are still being used, to 'give biological reasons for inequality ... thereby legitimizing social oppression' (Rogers, 2010: S5). For example, women may be seen as excessively emotional and unstable due to their hormonal influences and men may be seen as aggressive and driven due to the influence of testosterone (Alsop *et al.*, 2002). Each of these assumptions carries with them both negative and positive stereotypes which are perpetuated by the idea that they cannot be changed. Women are perceived to be caring and nurturing with the instinctive ability to raise a family but may be overlooked or criticised in positions of authority or leadership (Brescoll, 2016). On the other hand, the perceived hormonal drive of men gives them a power and privilege in society inaccessible to women. However, this may prevent them seeking help for (for example) mental health issues due to the fear of emasculation (Wilkins, 2015)

When exploring gender in terms of language research, it seems that early explorations use biological essentialist thought to argue that there are clearly defined differences in the way men and women talk. The most well-known and often cited example of this is Otto Jespersen's major work, *Language: Its Nature, Development, and Origin* (1922). It must be said at this point that there were other linguists exploring language and gender at the same time as Jespersen, however his work was available in English which enabled it to be widely read (Cameron, 1998).

This study contains a chapter called 'The Woman' which was written as a single chapter in an anthology study on language. Most notably, 'The Woman' is placed alongside other chapters such as 'The Foreigner' and 'Pidgin and Congeners', and the anthology lacks an equivalent chapter for 'The Man'. As a result, western, predominantly white, men's language is placed as the norm from which the speech of other groups deviates.

Jespersion allocates creativity in language to men and suggests that were we to use women's speech, the language would become bland and lazy.

‘Men will certainly with great justice object that there is a danger of the language becoming languid and insipid if we were always to content ourselves with women’s expressions. (Jespersen, 1922: 247)

The prejudices which permeated society in terms of women’s inferiority shows itself in Jespersen’s work. Women, he believes, have a smaller vocabulary and inferior intelligence leading to more volume of talk with less meaning (Talbot, 1998). However, what must be noted is that Jespersen is using essentialist thought as a basis for his assumptions.

“Women more often than men break off without finishing their sentences, because they start talking without having thought out what they are going to say.” (Jespersen, 1922: 250)

The above excerpt shows the gender biases which were presented by scientists within the nineteenth and early twentieth century. At this point sex and gender were still seen as the ‘domain of religion and court’ (Kim, 2004: 190) and scientific interest in the area was in its infancy (this will be discussed in further detail in the context chapter).

Looking at this chapter in the context of the rest of his work, and also in a social context, Jespersen asserts that ‘women’s language’ is part of a wider phenomenon of language change and diversification which was of great interest around the early twentieth century (Jespersen, 1922; Thomas, 2013). Jespersen offers a lot of evidence of sex differences in languages from all over the world; including Africa and South America. These languages may have morphological or lexical differences in speech between men, however as Thomas (2013) suggests, Jespersen seems to argue against speech communities with extremely contrasting men’s and women’s speech. This then is used as a basis for his assertions of a differing men’s and women’s speech in English. However, whilst providing clear morphological examples in some languages (1922: 240), there are none for the English language. Instead, Jespersen seems to base his assertions on a small experiment done in North America where male and female college students were asked to write down 100 unique words. The outcome of the experiment showed more lexical variation with the male students than female students. Additionally, it was found that male

students wrote words pertaining to the animal kingdom, and female students wrote words referencing apparel and fabrics and food (pp. 248 – 249).

This experiment does show a clear difference in language use between men and women and it is easy to see where Jespersen got his conclusions from. If men were reportedly offering more unique lexical items, then it could be generalised that men are linguistic innovators. Moreover, if women wrote words mostly referencing outerwear, it supports his argument that vocabulary and lexical choice of women is unimaginative as it is concerned with the material.

‘In general the feminine traits revealed by this study are an attention to the immediate surroundings, to the finished product, to the ornamental, the individual, and the concrete; while the masculine preference is for the more remote, the constructive, the useful, the general and the abstract.’ (Ellis, quoted in Jespersen, 1922: 249)

The above quotation is important as it reflects the assumptions of Jespersen and society at the time. It is assumed that language use in women is frivolous and unimportant, which is also a reflection on how women were seen at the time. Men’s language is ‘constructive’ and ‘useful’ as a reflection of their standing in society. Jespersen uncritically accepts these sexist assumptions about how men and women use language (Coates, 2004), as they are reflective of a wider societal attitude towards women and men at the time.

Jespersen’s work, as Cameron (2003) argues, is an archetypal example of the language ideology that ‘there are clear-cut, stable differences in the way language is used by women and men’ (Cameron, 2003: 450). It reflects essentialist science of the day that there are innate biological differences between men and women, and that these gendered differences ‘just are’. Whilst reading Jespersen’s work nearly a century after its publication can be troubling, it is important to remember the context in which it was written. In addition, it could be argued that Jespersen’s work was important because not only was it one of the first linguistic studies on gender, but also it gave way to further feminist studies of language and gender – most of which used Jespersen’s ‘The Woman’ as a basis to argue against.

Throughout some gender philosophies there has been an assumption that the dichotomy of 'maleness' and 'femaleness' is decided by a person's secondary sex characteristics (Alsop *et al.*, 2002). These categories are something which humans build themselves on from birth, as process of gendering starts from the almost 'ritualistic' (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, 2013: 7) declaration of 'it's a boy/girl' at the first look at a new child's genitalia. A child is immediately converted from an 'it' to a 'he' or a 'she' (Butler, 1993: 7) and begins the process 'girling' (or 'boying' (*ibid.*)). This sets up a lifetime of gendered assumptions, expectations and boundaries that must be adhered to and has permeated the popular consciousness. Popular publications such as *Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus* (Gray, 1992) further reinforce the idea of innate gendered difference and bring essentialism into a popular context. Even in the title, men and women are placed in conflict with one another having been assigned to separate planets; essentially suggesting that men and women are separate species. Not only does this reinforce essentialist thought, but it does not take in to account any external factors which may influence behaviour and thought.

Fundamentally, our bodies are gendered from birth into the binary categories of male or female based upon what is perceived to be our biological sex. Men and women, according to essentialism, are different due to the possession of a set of characteristics which are intrinsic and natural to 'man' or 'woman'. These characteristics are unchanging and stereotypical and lead to unhealthy assumptions in society, however they are still pervasive. Gender theorists and linguists have agreed with, or reacted to, essentialist thought as it seems to be a major part of our perceptions of sex and gender. Historically, essentialism was the 'gold standard' with which to study gender, however as our understanding of gender identity has changed so have the theories surrounding it.

Psychoanalysis – A Shift from Body to Mind

We have briefly discussed psychoanalysis in terms of gender variance, and its significance in sexology. However, it is a fundamental part of gender theory as gender essentialist ideas were an enduring part of the study of sex and gender throughout the Victorian era. With sexology moving away from the domain of religion and morality towards scientific studies, the notions of gender were linked increasingly to the biological discoveries of theorists like Darwin. However as

understanding of human biology developed, so did the theories about gender and gender development.

Perhaps one of the earliest radically different theories about gender identity development is that of psychoanalysis. Psychoanalytic theory and practice begins in Austria with Sigmund Freud and explores our relationship with the unconscious mind, which Freud believed develops through early childhood. The foundation of psychoanalysis splits human identity into two states of being; the conscious and the unconscious. The conscious self is what we consider to be our perceived reality, however we are unaware of the unconscious self (Minsky, 1996). Psychoanalysis in therapeutic practice helps us become aware of our unconscious selves.

Freud was studying the psychosexual in a time of exploration and discovery of the sexual and gendered self; alongside other noted sexologists Magnus Hirschfeld and Havelock Ellis. Freud developed a model of psychoanalytic treatment which sought the origins of sexual deviances through the exploration of an individual's childhood experiences (Bullough and Bullough, 1993). Freud's psychoanalytical model reflected elements of his contemporaries' work, particularly Krafft-Ebing's early beliefs which focussed on non-procreative sexual practices and fetishes as deviance (De Block and Adriaens, 2013), in stark contrast to Hirschfeld and Ellis' more liberal research.

According to Freud, gender identity construction is part of the unconscious self and happens throughout childhood. In his work 'Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality' (1905) Freud outlines his theories on psychosexual development in children. The term 'sexuality' as used by Freud differs from our modern day understanding of it. Sexuality as it is understood today refers to a person's capacity for sexual desire and sexual activity, as well as a person's sexual preference or orientation. Freud's definition is broader. Firstly, he uses the term libido to refer to these base sexual instincts and encompasses 'every form of pleasure and satisfaction which can be derived from its objects' (Diem-Wille, 2011:187). These pleasures include activities like eating for example, where we eat to obtain pleasure and satiate the libido.

Psychosexual development, as proposed by Freud (1905), happens during childhood in fixed stages. Freud calls these 'the phases of development of the sexual organisation' (1905:62) and comprise oral, anal, phallic, latent, and genital. Each stage represents a part of the body upon which the libido (or sexual instinct) is fixated and provides conflict one must overcome in order to move to the next stage (McCleod, 2008). During oral and anal phases, the mouth and anus provide pleasure for the child. In the oral phase the separation of the sexual and nourishment is not present (Freud, 1905). The child explores its world and gets gratification through the mouth, satiating the libido. During the anal stage the focus of the libido moved to the anus where the child becomes fixated with defecating. The child derives pleasure from excretion and the retention of stools (Diem-Wille, 2011).

These stages, according to Freud, show the development of latent sexual desires in young children, but in terms of gender development it is the phallic stage which is most salient. Before the child enters the phallic developmental stage they are perceived to be 'bisexual' (Freud, 1905: 19), they do not distinguish between male and female, particularly in regards to anatomical sex. When the child enters the phallic stage, the child becomes aware of the genitals as a source of pleasure and is able to distinguish 'male' and 'female' anatomical sex. It is at this point at which the Oedipal and Electra complexes emerge to help the child discover their gendered identity.

The Oedipal complex explains how, around the age of five, a young boy will develop sexual feelings towards his mother and see his father as a source of rivalry. In his desire for his mother, he discovers she does not possess a penis and he will therefore develop *castration anxiety* (Freud, 1905). At this stage the penis is the primary source of pleasure for the child and in discovering his mother does not possess a penis believes her to be castrated; as a result the child experiences anxiety that they themselves will lose their penis. As their father is seen as a rival for the attention of the mother, the anxiety is that the father will be the one to castrate him. This drives the child to give up his sexual feeling towards his mother and identify with his father. Thus, the child will have entered into masculinity (Minsky, 1996).

The Electra complex is the manifestation of the Oedipus complex in young girls. The term was coined by Carl Jung to differentiate the experiences of the sexes in this stage (Khan and Haider, 2015). Again, this occurs in the phallic stage of childhood development and is where the young girl begins to discover her gender identity. In discovering she does not possess a penis, the young girl's attachment to their mother is rejected and then focussed on the father. The young girl, according to Freud (1905), is angry with their mother for not giving her a penis and attaches to her father in hope she will obtain a penis from him. This is called penis envy (Freud, 1905) and manifests itself in jealousy of the mother who has 'privileged access' (Minsky, 1996: 45) to her father's penis. In order to enter femininity, the young girl must be resigned to the fact that she must seek a penis from a man who is not her father, and in the process re-identify with her mother as female. It must be noted that if, during the phallic stage, identification with the same sex parent does not occur then this may lead to 'sexual deviations' such as homosexuality and/or fetishism (Freud, 1905).

As Minsky (1996) highlights, Freudian psychoanalysis is phallocentric as gender and sexual identity comes from the child's relationship to the penis; either the desire for or the fear of losing one. The eventual identification with the same sex parent leads to a satisfactory gender identity. According to Freud, we are all fundamentally 'bisexual' and it is this phallic process which enables us to gain masculinity or femininity. Behind the rigid gender stereotypes is a psychological identification process (*ibid.*). Therefore, gender identity development is a psychological process driven by biological urges (Bland, 2003). The theory is certainly pioneering as it is the first time gender development is taken away from the domain of biology to the domain of psychology. However despite this, Freud still uses rigid gender roles as a basis for the theory and it is inherently patriarchal, reflecting his views on women in general; as pathological, passive, and controlled by their reproductive organs (Minsky, 1996).

The Social Construction of Gender

A large part of the development of gender identity is finding its distinction from 'biological sex'. As early sexologists surmised, gender and sex were inextricably linked and the separation of the two did not begin to emerge until the mid-twentieth century. This and the onset of second wave feminism in the 1960s and 70s inspired

critical evaluations of gender. In this section therefore, I will briefly explore the emerging sociological and philosophical distinctions of sex and gender of the time and how these led to materialist and discursive theories in the social construction of gender.

The distinction of sex and gender tried to ensure that the idea of biological essentialism was omitted from contemporary gender studies. As a result, gender theorists began to argue that the perceived differences between men and women were 'socially produced and therefore changeable' (Mikkola, 2017: no pagination). Perhaps one of the first theorists that deals with social construction and gender is Harold Garfinkel who, in his *Studies in Ethnomethodology* (1967), presents the case study of Agnes, a young trans woman who was raised as a male and transitioned to female at age 17. In studying Agnes, Garfinkel begins to separate sex and gender, however this is something that is done unwittingly as he begins to explore Agnes's experience of gender variance. It must be noted that Garfinkel's study was published in 1967, a time at in which gender variant identity was pathologised, and at which society still mostly ascribed to biological essentialist thought; yet social constructivist theories of gender were emerging.

The subject of the study, Agnes, herself ascribed to the idea of essentialist thought, that there are innate biological markers that determine male and female. She regarded her sex characteristics and genitalia as a mistake that needed to be rectified in order to become a member of the 'natural population of sexed persons' (Garfinkel, 1967: 127). However, as Garfinkel (1967) argues that despite her essentialist beliefs, Agnes was a female with a penis before her operation.

According to Garfinkel, to successfully claim the category of female, Agnes had to be alert and aware of 'threats to the security of her sex category' (West and Zimmerman, 1987: 132). However, as West and Zimmerman (1987) point out, the categories of male and female are social and if an individual can be seen to be a part of that category, then society will place them there. Agnes is described by Garfinkel as 'convincingly female... tall, slim, with a very female shape... long, fine dark-blond hair, a young face with pretty features, [and] a peaches-and-cream complexion' (1967: 119). These facets to Agnes's appearance are what we might

call stereotypically feminine, and because Agnes possesses these traits, she can easily be categorised as female.

However, as West and Zimmerman discuss, for Agnes being categorised as female and what they term 'the accomplishment of gender' (1987: 134) are two separate entities. Her gender relied on how she acted beyond outside observable facets such as appearance and dress (Garfinkel, 1967; West and Zimmerman, 1987). Agnes had to be a woman, as well as look like one. To achieve this gendered identity, Agnes had to learn to act and behave in what would be deemed as culturally imposed norms of feminine behaviour.

There is more to Garfinkel's (1967) study of Agnes, however the most salient point for this thesis I have discussed above. You can see how the separation of sex categories and gender identities is beginning to occur. Also, perhaps most interestingly, this distinction has emerged from the case study of a gender variant person.

Sex and gender distinctions also became a fundamental part of feminist theories and these early feminist distinctions can be seen in de Beauvoir's work *The Second Sex*. Her famous assertion '[o]ne is not born, but rather becomes, woman' (2011: 330) suggests that the social role of womanhood is distinct from what could be called 'biological femaleness' (Jackson and Scott, 2002: 9). Her work provided a foundation for further feminist analyses of gender and gender as a social construct, which is elaborated on by Oakley (1972). Using the terms sex and gender from psychoanalyst Robert Stoller, Oakley sets out to define sex and gender as distinct categories, explaining:

"Sex' is a biological term: 'gender' a psychological and cultural one. Common sense suggests that they are merely two ways of looking at the same division and that someone who belongs to, say, the female sex will automatically belong to the corresponding (feminine) gender. In reality this is not so. To be a man or a woman, a boy or a girl, is as much a function of dress, gesture, occupation, social network and personality, as it is of possessing a particular set of genitals.' (Oakley, 1972: 115)

What Oakley here provides is an early framework for social construction of gender in which sex is a biological category which represents the anatomical and physiological characteristics of an individual. However, gender represents the social and cultural characteristics of masculinity and femininity which are acquired through the process of becoming a man or woman (Jackson and Scott, 2002).

However, there were challenges to this distinction. Whilst Oakley (1972) does provide an important distinction between sex and gender which enables us to move away from essentialist gender theories, there is still an assumption of sex being a fixed biological category in which gender is a cultural overlay. In other words, whilst gendered identities may be produced by cultural and social factors which contribute to how masculine or feminine one may be, sex is something that is still part of a 'natural order' (Stanley, 2002:39).

An argument to this comes from Goffman (1976, 1977) who suggests that the perceived biological distinction between sexes are irrelevant yet hold significant social importance. The division of bodies into two sex categories comes from the interactional field in which meaning is ascribed to biological markers through discursive practices. As a result, sex differences are not part of a natural order, but rather produced by social practices (Brickell, 2006).

According to Goffman (1959), in social interactions we manage the impression we wish to give out by either changing or fixing our setting, appearance and/or manner. Goffman's idea of impression management can be extended to our gendered and sexed selves as we place meaning on masculinity and femininity and perform these according to how we wish to be perceived. Therefore, as Brickell points out, our gendered identities are managed presentations rather than reflective of 'internal truths' (2006: 93).

In Goffman's 1976 work *Gender Display* he explains that femininity and masculinity are seen to be 'the prototypes of essential expression – something that can be conveyed fleetingly in any social situation and yet something that strikes at the most basic characterization of the individual' (1976: 75). Whilst human beings perform a gendered self, depending on their interactional context, there is an assumption that

these displays of gender are natural signs of a state of being. However, Goffman (1976) sees gender displays as optional performances which reveal 'what we would like to convey about sexual natures, using conventionalized gestures' (West and Zimmerman, 1987: 130). Goffman's work is a precursor to the discursive theories of gender as he suggests that it is our social interactions that uphold gender identities. West and Zimmerman's 1987 study *Doing Gender* uses Goffman as an influence on their work however, they suggest that his approach does not take into account how much gender permeates everyday life.

West and Zimmerman also present gender as an ongoing interactional process, however they describe gender as an 'achieved status' (1987: 125). Gender is achieved by how an individual's gender performance is assessed in interactional contexts. Taking influence from Garfinkel's study of Agnes, West and Zimmerman begin by unpicking sex, sex categories and gender, and discuss them in terms of societal construction. Sex, sex category, and gender all have social implications, according to West and Zimmerman (1987). Sex involves a set of criteria which includes chromosomal make-up and genitalia, however these criteria are socially agreed upon. Sex category, on the other hand, is the assumption of sex placed on the individual, irrespective of the individual's gender identity (*ibid.*). Sex and sex category, therefore do not rely on the notion of natural and innate biological differences, rather society's agreed upon biological criteria and their imposition on individuals. It could be argued then that sex is partly socially constructed from masculine and feminine stereotypes and expectations. Having explored sex and sex categories, West and Zimmerman (1987) argue that gender is the degree to which one is masculine or feminine based upon the societal norms of their sex category. If a person is categorised as female, their gender is constructed from the behaviours they employ which may be 'typically' masculine or feminine.

A fundamental part of Wests and Zimmerman's (1987) argument is that gender is created by humans. These so called gender differences are not natural, biological, or innate, but reinforced in an interactional context. Once they are created they are used to prop up essentialist gender beliefs. It is assumed that gender identity is a result of biological sex, however West and Zimmerman (1987) argue that gender identities are constructed and actually used to legitimise essentialism. There are parts of society that are divided into male and female which we take for granted. For

example the division of public toilets into male and female. We take for granted this division and automatically use the bathroom according to our gender identity, and any deviation from that would result in an act of social dissent. These divisions are restraining in that they don't allow for non-conventional gender expression and serve to restrict us to a gendered identity which we are expected to *do* (West and Zimmerman, 1987). Thus, it is argued that the societal institutions which surround us construct gender and force us to ascribe to it.

Also, the above examples of gender divisions are used by West and Zimmerman to demonstrate the 'omnirelevance' of gender, as gender is apparent in almost every interaction. It is also relevant in almost every interaction as not only do we manage our gender identity, we assess the gender identity of others based on preconceived notions of maleness and femaleness. However this constructed behaviour is used to legitimise gender as something that is innate. Overall, the 'doing' of gender is something that we all do and take for granted as natural to the point at which it is difficult to escape the notions of masculinity and femininity.

Second Wave Feminist Language and Gender Studies

Having explored a facet of the social construction of gender, it is important to explore what linguistic theories work on the basis that gender is an institutional concept. The following frameworks are what can be described as the beginning of language and gender research, but also take on a somewhat social constructionist approach to their theories.

In the early 1970s second wave feminism was well established and flourishing. Beginning in the 1960s and spanning at least two decades, second wave feminism arose within western society. Publications such as Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949) and Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) began to question the renewed domesticity of women after the Second World War. This gave way to a movement which forefronted women's rights and worked against the limitations put on women at the time. There is such a large body of literature from and about the second wave feminist movement and it would be impossible to include everything, however, it is important to recognise how the movement influenced academic discourses. I will discuss further the cultural context of the second wave feminist movement and gender variant identities in the next chapter, however in this

chapter, it is relevant to look at how the second wave feminist movement influenced language and gender studies.

Feminist studies in language and gender emerged as part of the second wave feminist movement in a reaction to works such as Jespersen's, and the sociological climate of the time (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, 2013). Lakoff's 1975 work 'Language and Woman's Place' has been often cited as the first feminist critique of language and gender, and its publication is hailed as the introduction of the study of language and gender to the field of sociolinguistics (Bucholtz, 2004). In her work Lakoff describes a specific set of linguistic markers which are distinctive to what she calls 'women's language' (1973: 45). These include hedging, tag questions, politeness and 'empty' vocabulary. Not only are these markers part of women's speech, they are also described as subordinate to neutral or men's speech patterns. Lakoff's work has been placed within the deficit model of language study and, whilst seminal, it coincides with early linguistic observations of women's language as deficient. Cameron suggests that 'every radical movement carries traces of the order it is trying to overthrow' (1998: 216), and in this case Lakoff carries similar assumptions to Jespersen in that women's language is deviant from the norm. However, Jespersen (1922) relies on the idea that women themselves are deficient and their use of language reflects this. Lakoff (1973), on the other hand, argues that the way women speak both reflects and produces subordination in society. The linguistic markers alluded to earlier, are socialised into women's speech as part of societal norms and make women's speech appear 'tentative, powerless, and trivial' (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, 2013: 38) The result of this is the exclusion of women from power and authority; essentially women's language is a form of oppression.

It must be said that Lakoff's work is not without its flaws. Perhaps the most striking is that most of her observations are anecdotal and based on her observations of her peers, for which she has been widely criticised (Cameron, 1997). However, it must be noted that Lakoff was writing in a pre-empirical tradition in which anecdotal observations were not regarded as problematic. So whilst this can be criticised by the rigours of today's research, it is a legitimate study for its time. Placing her actual evidence aside, the more problematic parts of Lakoff's study are the comparison of 'women's language' to 'neutral language' which inherently points to men's language as the norm; an 'unthinking masculinist bias' (Cameron, 2003: 216). Furthermore,

Lakoff's ascription of certain linguistic markers to 'women's language' is somewhat arbitrary, and she further perpetuates the irreconcilable dichotomy between men and women. Her observations show essentialist thinking about the sexes and fail to take into account further variables which may have an effect on speech acts. However, despite its empirical flaws, *Language and Woman's Place* was a seminal work and paved the way for the discussion and debates of language and gender for the next four decades.

In response to Lakoff's (1973) deficit theory, language and gender scholars tried to explain asymmetric language patterns between men and women using a model in which women were not deficient. Thus emerged the dominance model. Within the dominance model, the onus is not put on women as lacking confidence and authority (Talbot, 1998), but on men as the dominating force within interaction.

Zimmerman and West's 1975 study is widely regarded as the starting point for dominance theorists. At the Santa Barbara campus of the University of California, Zimmerman and West recorded 31 'conversational segments' (1975: 111) between interactional partners, equally divided between same sex and opposite sex participants. The outcome of the study showed that in same sex conversations, interruptions were comparatively equal between the participants, however in opposite sex conversations 96% of interruptions were done by the male speakers (*ibid.*, pp. 115-116). These interruptions, as Zimmerman and West conclude, show that male speakers dominate women in conversation.

Seeing these compelling results may lead us to agree that men dominate conversations in mixed sex interactions, however there are limitations to the study. Firstly, the study sample was small and hard to extrapolate from. Also Zimmerman and West's participants were all white, middle class and under the age of 35, and all sourced from The University of California. This is somewhat limiting as the study does not take into account any other variables such as class, race and age where the asymmetrical nature of these interactions may present themselves differently. Zimmerman and West do briefly note the need for further study at the end of their article stating that '[a] challenging task for further research is the specification of conditions under which they occur' (1975: 125).

Carrying on from Zimmerman and West's beginnings is Dale Spender who, in her work *Man Made Language* (1980), expands greatly on the dominance theory. Spender uses the English language as an example of how men dominate women in society as well as through language. She begins with a criticism of language and sociological research until this point, which she suggests has begun with the initial assumption that women are deficient and leads to skewed findings. She states:

'The presentation of skewed findings has helped to establish the deficiency of women's language and in conveniently circular logic has thereby helped to confirm the validity of the initial premise that women's language is inferior' (1980: 7)

Deficit theory, therefore, is a self-fulfilling prophecy. Because there has always been an assumption that women are subordinate in society, the bias is already present in research which invariably leads to results showing women as deficient language users. However, Spender takes the focus away from women as deficient, and overtly rejects the 'concomitant supremacy of males' (1980: 51). Instead, the dominance of men comes from their monopolisation of language and meaning (Spender, 1980; Talbot, 1998). This control of meaning equates to control on our perception of reality (Talbot, 1998).

Here we can see where *Man Made Language* draws its theoretical framework from the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis. In its strongest sense, the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis suggests that the structure of a language wholly determines the speakers' worldview, this is often known as linguistic determinism (Crystal, 1978). As a result, Spender ascertains that the English Language has been 'literally man made' (Spender, 1980: 12) and remains the control of men. Because, therefore, English has been constructed by men, it props up the view of a patriarchal society in which women are the other.

According to Spender, this dominance can be seen in many aspects of the language. Firstly there is what she calls the 'semantic derogation of women' (1980: 16) in which she notes that words associated with women and femininity take on negative connotations, whereas the male counterpart does not. For example, she uses the words 'spinster' and 'bachelor'. Both of these words relate to a person in

an unmarried state, however spinster has become a derogatory term for an older unmarried woman. Bachelor on the other hand has for more positive connotations and is often preceded by words such as 'eligible' - you would not often find a spinster referred to as eligible. This asymmetry is seen throughout the language when referring to men and women. Dominance theory is slightly more nuanced than deficit theory in that it advocates women's language on the basis of power imbalances in society, rather than the outright deficiency of women. However it still takes an essentialist view on sex and gender.

Difference theory came as a reaction to both deficit and dominance theory, which places men in a position of constant oppression. Deborah Tannen's (1998) main criticism of deficit and dominance theories is the cultural assumption that all speakers use the same lines of discourse, i.e. men are always dominant and women always submissive. As a result, these discourses are unquestionable, and taken to represent all speakers in a group. As I have argued before, both deficit and dominance theories do not take into consideration factors outside of gender in order to examine gendered talk, in fact one of the main criticisms Zimmerman and West's (1975) study on dominance was the lack of diversity amongst respondents.

Tannen's (1998) research argues that so called male dominance and female submissiveness cannot be measured through a specific set of linguistic practices, as outlined by Lakoff (1973) and Zimmerman and West (1975). These linguistic markers, she argues, are ambiguous and serve more functions than to express latent power disparities between men and women. In order to theorise her model, Tannen (1998) draws on the concepts of power and solidarity and their relation with one another. She calls power and solidarity 'paradoxical' (1998: 262) to one another, as the terms may denote opposite states, but also may necessitate one another. In deficit and dominance theories the assumption is that, as men exert power and dominance they therefore cannot show solidarity with women. However Tannen argues that solidarity may entail power and power may entail solidarity, and these can be shown through semiotic as well as linguistic practices.

These early theories provide an important introduction into the study of linguistic practice and gender, something which was understudied until at least the 1970s. However, their frameworks use basic assumptions about gender which exclude

individual experience and gender identity. Deficit, dominance and difference place men and women into two homogenised categories and assume that both of these categories use the same set of linguistic practices equally (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, 2013). Deficit and dominance assume that men and women are socially constrained to a set of linguistic practices due to their gender. In addition, men are placed at a disadvantage due to the assumption that men want to dominate women. The frameworks grossly overlook diversity within the groups. For example, class, race, and other variables are not considered in the construction of gendered speech and there is no room for gender variance.

The difference framework examines cultural representations of men and women and makes room for variables previously omitted. Men and women are socialised to interact in a certain way and this is what leads to discursive conflict. It places more emphasis on 'differences' between men and women, however still manages to place people into two homogenised groups. There is an assumption that the gendered socialisation of people is the same for everyone, and ultimately still omits any gender variance.

Overall, these models of gendered linguistic behaviour, whilst pioneering in their outlook, take for granted the gendered groups which they analyse. The aim of these texts is to question linguistic relationships in terms of gender, but gender in these theories is not examined in terms of how it is developed or acquired - it is just there. These models do move away from the idea of innate biological gender differences and begin to question how social organisations might play a role in gendered speech. However, in taking gender identity for granted, the deficit, dominance, and difference models perpetuate the ideology of there being fundamental linguistic differences between two homogenous gendered groups; male and female. They also, in their own way, perpetuate the gender stereotypes of the passive woman and aggressive man and, as Cameron (2003) argues, these texts present women as having to strive for a linguistic ideal that may not exist in observed reality.

Performativity: A Turning Point in Gender Theory

Until this point we have been exploring gender in relation to the binary of male and female. In early feminist language and gender theory the purpose was to break down traditional gender roles, however most of them used the binary as a starting

point. Later theorists and philosophers turned these theories around and began to explore how discursive practices can help create gender, instead of how gender affects discursive practices. In doing so, they set about the destabilisation of gender categories and their associated norms and thus the theory of performativity emerged.

Michel Foucault is perhaps one of the most important early philosophers in terms of discourse, power and institutional oppression and his theories are also an important precursor to performativity theory. Foucault developed the genealogical approach to analyse these establishments, enabling him to critique the structure of the present by challenging traditional practices of the past and philosophical assumptions (Mills, 2003).

Discourse, as used by Foucault, is defined in a number of ways. In his early work *The Archaeology of Knowledge* Foucault describes discourse to mean more than just 'statements' (1972: 80) but to include everything which produces meaning and has an effect. This includes the single utterance produced by the individual and also utterances which form a group dialogue (Mills, 2003), for example the discourse of media. In addition, he discusses 'regulated practice[s]' (Foucault, 1972: 80) which refers to the unwritten rules we use in which to produce discourse. Power and knowledge, therefore, is realised through discourse. As gender theories have changed and developed so has the meaning of discourse. In research examined previously, theorists have concentrated on gendered discourses; how men and women speak according to their gendered identity. However Foucault, and eventually Judith Butler, examine the 'discourse of gender', or how gender is constructed, maintained and perpetuated through discourse.

Foucault's *The History of Sexuality* (1978) is an important precursor for modern gender studies as he discusses contemporary ideas of sexuality and the body in terms of historical and institutional 'discursive forces' (Mills, 2003: 81). In volume one of *The History of Sexuality* Foucault discusses what he terms 'the repressive hypothesis' (1998: 15). It is a contemporary view point that sexuality was repressed, as sexual pleasure outside of reproduction was frowned upon, and discourses on sex and sexuality were confined to the context of marriage. Sex and gender, as mentioned previously, was in the domain of the church. Therefore, it can be argued

that the notion of the repressed nineteenth century is pervasive due to powerful discourses of morality and deviance coming from religious institutions.

Instead, Foucault (1972) suggests that in the nineteenth century people were not repressed but fixated on sex and sexuality. In the nineteenth century, discussion about sex and sexuality moved away from marriage, but more towards what would be described as 'deviant' sexual behaviour. If, as Foucault argues, discourses are productive (Kendall and Wickham, 1999), then the emerging discourses of sexuality in the nineteenth century created the notion of sexuality itself. However, as Kendall and Wickham (1999) point out, because the discourse of sexuality became prevalent, it does not mean that sexuality was created at that point. For example, in the nineteenth century sexuality began to move away from a matter of morality to a matter for science. Because of this, sexology as an area of study emerged, as did so called deviant sexualities. Homosexuality was a part of this discourse as it became pathologised and entered the consciousness of society, thus the category of homosexual, and the notion of sexuality, arose. However, homosexual behaviour did not just spontaneously occur with the advent of the discourse, but the discourse enabled the categorisation of sexuality.

Foucault provides a precursor for Judith Butler's performative theory, which has taken a central role in the development of gender theory. Like Foucault, Butler's intention is to destabilise and subvert our notions of established, binary gender categories (Alsop *et al.*, 2002), and reject the essentialist idea of gender; that our bodies dictate our gender identity. Judith Butler was writing about performativity under the auspices of philosophy and feminist theory, however she uses discourse as the basis for her theories which have become important in gender and language studies.

Butler explores gender from a queer and feminist standpoint, with the exploration of 'woman' at the centre. In early essays Butler starts to explore Simone de Beauvoir and in particular her idea that 'one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman' (2011: 330). De Beauvoir's statement outlines that there is a distinction of sex and gender, both of which have been and are still regularly conflated in gender theories. Butler's early essays begin to argue that gender is in fact a 'cultural construction' (1986: 36) which is both imposed by society and constructed by the self. De Beauvoir's

assertion that one 'becomes' a woman is, as Butler (1986) suggests, somewhat ambiguous. The use of the verb 'becomes' suggests a conscious 'acquisition' (ibid: 36) of gender, however many gender theories at the time purported that gender was passively attained, or even imposed, through what she calls the 'epistemic regime of presumptive heterosexuality' (Butler, 1990: viii).

Gender Trouble, published in 1990, expands on Butler's initial exploration of gender identity and compounds her thinking into a viable theory. In particular, it looks at the performative nature of gender which differs from previous gender theories as it questions the binary view of gender which had been prevalent. In addition, she also critiques feminist theory's distinction between sex and gender (Brady and Schirato, 2011). However, it needs to be highlighted that Butler recognises that there is a dominant (and restrictive) binary construction of sex in society and the purpose it has served; to prop up traditional reproduction practices in a heteronormative society (Alsop *et al*: 2002). Fundamentally though, performativity overtly rejects the binary, essentialist view of gender and moves to a more fluid representation.

Foucault is a major influence on Butler and *Gender Trouble*, as she uses his genealogical approach to critique gender categories. Foucault's main use of genealogy is to examine that which 'we tend to feel is without history' (1977: 139) and, in his studies on sex and sexuality he argues that traditional heterosexuality is perceived to be 'without history' due to its universal normativity (Brady and Schirato, 2011). Butler employs a '*feminist genealogy*' [emphasis in original] (1990: 5) to question the category of women and how and why it comes to be 'without history'. In addition, Butler uses Foucault's fundamental argument that 'discourses are productive of the identities which they appear to be merely representing' (Alsop *et al*: 2002) to examine discursive practices which go towards producing gender.

Whilst *Gender Trouble* (Butler, 1990) takes a feminist standpoint, it still criticises a fundamental aspect of feminist theory which uses the category of woman or women as a universal truth. Butler argues that 'woman' does not signify a natural unity but instead a regulatory fiction' (Jagose, 1996: 83-84). Gender identity, according to Butler, is a cultural fiction. The production of woman (or gender) therefore does not come from innate biological functions or is not constructed by the societal structures which surround us. Gender is performative.

'Gender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being.' (Butler, 1990: 30)

These stylised acts, according to Butler (1990), give the illusion of gender identity, however no actual gender identity exists behind them. Hence a person cannot be 'man' or 'woman' because there is no being, just the appearance of being. Butler (1990) also asserts that this process of becoming gendered does not actually involve the physical, anatomical make-up of the individual. So therefore it can be expected that the bodily form of the person may not be what is normally considered to be a female or male body (Alsop *et al.*: 2002).

Performativity is quite often misunderstood (Butler, 2014) to mean that one actively chooses their gender identity and performs gendered behaviour accordingly. One group which has misunderstood performativity (whether willingly or not) is that of radical second wave feminists. I briefly touched upon second wave feminism earlier in the chapter, explaining that the movement arose as a backlash to the 're-domestication' of women following the Second World War. As the movement continued and academic arguments about gender and gender equality grew, second wave feminism split into subdivisions. A number of radical feminists are trans exclusionary and do not believe that trans women and transfeminine individuals are 'real' and that trans identities are a social construction (Jeffreys, 2014). I will be further discussing trans exclusionary radical feminists in the next chapter when I begin to discuss gender variant identities in a cultural context, however it is definitely worth noting that Butler's performativity theory has been used by radical second wave feminists like Raymond (1994) and Jeffreys (1997) to delegitimise transgender identities.

Butler points out:

'I have never agreed with Sheila Jeffreys or Janice Raymond, and for many years have been on quite the contrasting side of feminist debates. She [Jeffreys] appoints herself to the position of judge, and

she offers a kind of feminist policing of trans lives and trans choices. I oppose this kind of prescriptivism, which seems to me to aspire to a kind of feminist tyranny.’ (2014, para. 8).

Because gender is performative, does not mean a person enters into an identity voluntarily (Butler, 1990; Butler 2014), but that the formation of gender identities comes from within discourses that we did not choose. Using performativity to argue against trans identities is counterintuitive as it is often used to suggest that gender is an individual’s choice and therefore because trans and gender variant people choose their gender identity, it is somehow not ‘real’. That is not to say that it is not difficult to imagine gender as performative, especially as the majority of people never have to choose their gender. As McConnell-Ginet says, ‘gender performativity does not mean that I am any freer to intend to enact a male persona in the middle of a conversation with a friend than I am to intend to conduct our conversation in Greek’ (2011: 28).

Performativity is profound and revolutionary in its arguments. Until this point, gender was assumed to exist through biology or social construction. However Butler ascertains that whilst there may be biological constraints on our gendered identities (McConnell-Ginet, 2011), gender is fundamentally performative, and thus does not exist. Social construction argues that it is institutional frameworks that prop up gendered identity, however there is an assumption within social construction that everybody has an underlying gendered identity, which may or may not be linked to biological characteristics. Butler (1990) subverts this by suggesting that as humans, we produce gender through rigid, repetitive acts and discursive practices because as humans we are ‘meaning-making creatures’ (McConnell-Ginet, 2011: 29). These discursive practices are already solidified into hetero- and cis-normative discourses in society, and as a result our gendered selves have developed within these ‘vocabularies’ (Butler, 2014: para. 9).

Queering Gender

Queer theory is extensive, and ‘loosely describes a diverse, often conflicting set of interdisciplinary approaches to desire, subjectivity, identity relationality, ethics, and norms’ (Giffney, 2009: 2). It is important therefore to recognise it not as a method for analysis for this thesis, yet understand that in gender theory, one must also

explore how queer theory enabled us to move from prescriptive representations of gender to a more fluid approach. Again, much like the theories discussed previously in this chapter, queer theory is extensive and therefore I will only discuss certain theories which are most relevant to this research.

Queer theory brings together fundamental aspects of feminist studies and LGBT studies. It builds upon the rejection of an essentialist gender identity, as well as exploring sexual acts and identities within a heteronormative framework. Heteronormativity, a key concept in queer theory, is the assumption that heterosexuality is the default state and that identities outside of this are deviant or unnatural (Warner, 1991). Whilst the majority of early queer theory is particularly concerned with theorising lesbian and gay identities (Giffney, 2009), it is not irrelevant for this research as it explores identities outside of the heterosexual norm. Gender is as much a part of queer theory as Jagose (1996: 3) states, queer theory 'focuses on mismatches between sex, gender and desire. For most, queer has been prominently associated with those who identify as lesbian and gay. Unknown to many, queer is in association with more than just gay and lesbian, but also cross-dressing, hermaphroditism, gender ambiguity and gender-corrective surgery'.

It is widely agreed that Butler's *Gender Trouble* is the establishment of modern, academic queer theory. Her critique of social constructionism and gender essentialism paved the way for the further examination of gender and sexual identities –in particular the 'mismatches between sex, gender and desire' (Jagose, 1996: 3).

'Butler has been termed the *queen of queer* theory for providing an account of the construction of gendered subjectivities and gendered social practices which places heterosexism at its centre but, crucially, refuses determinism ... Butler thereby provides the theoretical space for the emergence of queer desire and ... destabilizing and signifying of our categories.' (Alsop *et al*, 2002: 96, italics in original)

Perhaps the most conspicuous example of this 'destabilisation of categories' which queer theory evokes, is the use of the term 'queer' itself. Its etymology comes from early Irish to mean 'crooked', 'bowed' or 'bent' (Sayers, 2005: 17) and it became a

description for peculiarity in people. Eventually queer became a pejorative term for homosexual people, as non-normative sexual identities were seen as deviant and morally 'wrong'. However, queer theory reclaims the word and turns it from 'slur to affirmation' (Thomas, 2009:17), eventually to become a term to describe minority gender and sexual identities, as well as academic theory. This change in the use of the term 'queer' still provokes critical debate amongst theorists, however it is reflective of the changes in how we see gender identity.

Another theorist to tackle normative assumptions of gender identity is J. Jack Halberstam (formerly publishing under Judith Halberstam). Halberstam's work *Female Masculinity* (1998) explores the often overlooked idea of masculinity in women. Masculinity, according to Halberstam, evokes notions of social power and privilege, something not necessarily afforded to women and gender variant people and hence has been ignored in academic writings. It is this, Halberstam claims, that 'has clear ... ideological motivations and has sustained the complex social structures that wed masculinity to maleness and power' (1998: 2). In addition, female masculinity in childhood, what might be called '[t]omboyism' (Halberstam, 1998: 5), has given rise to the notion that gender deviation in women is something that is tolerated in society, as it is something that is relatively common. However, Halberstam argues that you cannot measure the tolerance of female masculinity from attitudes to masculinity in young women, which, they suggest, can be just as easily attributed to the desire for 'greater freedoms and mobilities enjoyed by boys' (*ibid.*:6).

Female masculinity outside of childhood, however, is largely associated with sexuality i.e. the notion of 'butch lesbian'. This is seen in popular culture, such as in literature like Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness* (1928) and Leslie Feinberg's *Stone Butch Blues* (1993), both of which follow young, masculine, gay women as they navigate their sexuality and gender identities. These identities suffer stigma and humiliation because of their sexuality and gender presentation, both of which deviate from the heterosexual norm. Both Hall's and Feinberg's protagonists suffer at the hands of discrimination and, despite the six decade gap between the stories' settings, the discriminations are very similar. This discrimination, Halberstam (1998: 269) suggests, comes from the fundamental fact that masculinity is, and has been, reserved for those with male bodies and actively denied those with female bodies.

Female bodies taking part in masculine activities open themselves up to judgement, and as a result actively dismiss their own masculinity. The cultural context of female masculinity is explored in detail in the next chapter in which explore the impact of *The Well of Loneliness* on wider society.

On the surface, it seems like Halberstam's conclusions are comparable with Raymond's notions of masculinity and femininity in trans people. Raymond (1994) believes that trans identities, particularly transfeminine identities, are a way for men to own both femininity and masculinity. Halberstam (1998) argues that masculinity is owned by those with male bodies, something akin to Raymond's views on the ownership of femininity. However, what sets Halberstam apart from what they call 'lesbian feminist paranoias' (1998: 147) of Raymond and Jeffreys, is their assertion that it is masculinity (and indeed femininity) which is more diverse than the 'either/or' binary. Through the example of female masculinity, it is clear that we produce an 'enormous range of masculinities and genders' (Halberstam, 1998: 179), and that as a result of these emerging identities, new terminologies will be produced.

Queer theorists have not only paved the way for sexuality studies, but also for transgender studies, which arose in parallel with queer studies (Stryker, 2006). With the emergence and recognition of diverse gender identities, it was inevitable that academic studies have moved on to explore gender in terms of gender variant identities. The Transgender Studies Reader (2006) is one of the first major bodies of works which explores gender variance in depth, bringing together important papers and works in the historical development of trans identities alongside contemporary debates. In her introduction, Stryker outlines transgender studies as 'cross-cultural and historical investigations of human gender diversity ... subcultural expressions of "gender atypicality," (2006: 3) theories of sexed embodiment and subjective gender identity development', as well as relating to laws, public policy and further political issues. In addition, linguistic performativity is highly influential in transgender studies despite its conflation with the notion of 'performance' (*ibid.*)

Gender Representations: The Gendered Body

I have briefly touched upon transgender studies, however, as transgender studies is interdisciplinary, it encompasses many historical, social, and political facets. As a result, the wider exploration of gender variant identities, particularly in a cultural

context, will be discussed in the following chapter. Meanwhile, with the advent of queer and transgender studies, the argument for gender identity has moved firmly away from exploring what gender is, to exploring gender representations. It is clear from the development of gender theory that biological essentialism is increasingly anachronistic, however the theories still have influence over our gendered lives, and particularly our bodies. The binary categories of male and female are something which humans build themselves on from birth. As I have discussed above, the process of gendering starts from the announcement of sex at birth. This process converts a child from an 'it' to a 'he' or a 'she' (Butler, 1993: 7) and instantly assigns a process of 'girling' (or 'boying' (*ibid.*)), which sets a lifetime of gendered boundaries and norms that must be adhered to.

Society is organised by this gender binary system, and when a person is assigned either 'boy' or 'girl', they are expected to adhere to the social norms that have become connected to these labels. Transgressions from the normative may be questioned and even ridiculed, yet 'breaching gendered expectations through our embodied activities is something many of us do ... without questioning the veracity of our birth sex' (Lorber and Moore, 2011: 119). Supporting this notion Halberstam (1998) describes their experiences of using a female bathroom in an airport, in which they went to use the female bathroom and, because of their masculine appearance, found themselves having been reported and followed in by security. When Halberstam spoke, however, their 'womanness' was somehow legitimised with their self-described 'fluty voice' (2012: para. 5).

Halberstam was assigned female at birth and presents as masculine, however they describe their gender identity as ambiguous. Additionally, they describe their attitude to pronouns as 'loosey goosey' (2012: para. 1), which has informed my use of 'they' as a pronoun when referring to Halberstam. However, what Halberstam's story shows us is that despite personal gender identification, gender is policed by outside eyes. Whilst Halberstam may not be performing femininity to the norms expected for women, when they speak using their 'fluty voice' (2012: para. 5), they are no longer questioned about their right to be in a women's bathroom. In fact, Halberstam goes on to say:

'Having one's gender challenged in the women's rest room is a frequent occurrence in the lives of many androgynous or masculine women; indeed, it is so frequent that one wonders whether the category "woman," when used to designate public functions, is completely outdated.' (1998: pp. 20 – 21)

The body is adorned with cultural signs and symbols which both reflect gender identity and enable it to be read (Kimmel, 2011). The body, therefore, can be described as a text as we often construct it so that our gender identities can be 'read' from outside eyes (*ibid.*). We live in a gendered society which has difficulty getting away from the male/female binary. Those with gender expressions which do not adhere to stereotypical gender norms are at the least questioned, and at the worst abused, as demonstrated by Halberstam's (1998) story above. As Connell and Pearse (2015) point out, despite more awareness and practice of 'gender bending', there is still a common-sense understanding of gender as a dualistic system with natural, innate differences between them. This may come from the separate biological processes of reproduction which, again, are inherently gendered.

Reproduction is a natural biological process which fundamentally allows the genes of two individuals to be combined in order for the continuation of the species. Whilst this is true of most species, humans in particular have used these reproductive differences, these have been used to assume gender identity. As Lorber and Moore state:

'We organize society based on a two-gender system that most people believe is based on a clear-cut two-sex biology with a clear path to the "appropriate" or socially acceptable gendered body' (2011: 118)

This 'clear-cut two-sex biology' is not so clear cut, particularly when intersex births are taken into consideration. However, this is something which is difficult to quantify because of the reported inherent heteronormativity projected by clinicians about genital appearance (Karkazis, 2008). Historically intersex, conditions in children, particularly those which can be easily 'seen' have been something to be fixed (Connell and Pearse, 2015; Karkazis, 2008), in order to achieve 'normality'. This is

an example of the regulation of gender binaries (Butler, 2004), that in order to achieve normality, one must align to a gender, both physically and mentally.

Furthermore, the idea of a 'clear-cut two-sex biology' has led to the body being used to manufacture and legitimise gender differences (Connell and Pearse, 2015) so that biological processes are inherently linked to gender expression. Of course, according to Butler (1990) gender is produced through discursive practices, under which gender does not exist. However, it is these discursive practices which have solidified femaleness and maleness to be congruent with secondary sexual characteristics. Yet, despite this, Butler points out that gender is a 'firmly fixed sense of self' (2014: para. 13) where being a gendered being is something fundamental to humanness:

'The very criterion by which we judge a person to be a gendered being, a criterion that posits coherent gender as a presupposition of humanness, is not only one which, justly or unjustly, governs the recognizability of the human, but one that informs the ways we do or do not recognize ourselves' (Butler, 2004: 58)

For gender variant people, it is this the incongruence between biological processes and a person's 'firmly fixed sense of self' (Butler, 2014: para.13) that can cause distress and cause gender dysphoria. The criterion of which Butler (2004) speaks is something which people use unconsciously as, because we live in a gendered society, we immediately assume gender based on what we perceive to be a masculine or feminine appearance. There is an expectation, therefore, for an individual to perform gender in a way which aligns with how society perceived their gendered identity. Any deviation from this, which may include any kind of gender nonconformity, can lead to ostracisation and vilification.

Gender variance, and this historical and cultural development of gender variant identities will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter. However, it is important to link trans identities and bodies into the larger theoretical background. Butler's theories form the basis for this research, and they are still relevant today. In a recent interview, Butler (2014) was asked whether there can be a society without gender. Her reply is reflective of her theories in that she suggests that gender is

intrinsically linked with humanness and, whereas it is possible for some to minimise the importance of gender in their lives, for some gender provides a sense of self. Therefore, it must be asked, is it possible to move beyond gender?

Conclusion

In this chapter I have discussed the theoretical background to this research, one which is concerned with gender theory. Starting with biological essentialism, it is easy to see where fundamental gender stereotypes have originated from, and then permeated society. Biological essentialism ascertains that there are two sexes in which are essentially different and there are traits which are innately male and female. This has led to the legitimisation of gender stereotypes as, as Eckert and McConnell-Ginet say, essentialism 'publically understood' (2013: 23) and frequently used to justify the disparity in treatment amongst gender identities.

Gender theory, however, moved away from biological essentialism, to the mind. It is at this point that psychoanalysts became interested in the development of gender identity, particularly Freud's Oedipus and Electra complex theories which led to the pathologisation of 'deviant' gender identities. However since then, there have been numerous theories in which the shaping of gender by society has been explored, including Goffman (1976, 1977), Oakley (1972) and West and Zimmerman's (1987) studies.

Social constructionist theories of gender separate sex and gender. In these, sex represents the biological facets of the individual, and gender represents a cultural and social overlay. Gender is explained as being the social and cultural expectations of men and women which are placed on an individual according to their perceived sex. From these assertions came the discursive theories of gender from Goffman (1977) and West and Zimmerman (1987) which suggest that gender categories are propped up through social interaction. However, whilst gender is created in social interaction, it is still such a widespread part of life that it is taken for granted as being natural.

Language studies into gender and identity, whilst also endeavouring to separate gender and sex, have still focussed on the male and female binary. This has left little room for other gender identities and, as such, these are largely missed in linguistic research. I have also argued that early feminist language and gender

research upholds gender stereotypes which have been perpetuated through biological essentialism. Lakoff's *Language and Woman's place* for example suggests that women use politeness forms and hedging, whilst men are more aggressive in their speech patterns. This is an important study because it is the first to recognise that there may be societal influences on the way people produce speech. However it still props up gender stereotypes legitimised by essentialist theories.

After exploring these theories, I turned to Judith Butler and her influential theories of gender which suggest that gender is produced through repetitive discursive practices. Butler's theories not only further remove gender identity from biological processes, but also make room for more identities outside the male female binary. Butler's theories are still influential today and provide a plausible alternative to biological essentialism or social constructionism. This will enable me to discuss my participants' experiences of gender without either the suggestion that their identity is not real because of biological processes, or that their identity is constructed by society rather than themselves.

Overall, I find Butler's (2014) most recent sentiments the most useful and relevant to this research. That, whilst gender is performative, for most of us it is intrinsically linked to our sense of self. It is these theories which are fundamental to this research and provide a basis for the exploration of gender variant identities further on in this work. However, having discussed gender theory as a whole, it is important to provide cultural, historical and socio-political contexts to gender variant identities. The next chapter will focus on how gender variance has moved from the domain of religion to psychology and explore the representations and attitudes towards gender variance in society.

Chapter Two

The Historical Development of Transgender Identities

A Note on Terms

This chapter discusses over 150 years of medical and social history relating to the development of modern transgender identities. The chapter starts with the early psychopathology of sexual deviance, right through to the diverse trans communities of the twenty first century. As I outlined in the introduction, terminology and language is fundamental to trans identity and how I use it may differ throughout this research. Because of the historical nature of this chapter, it is important to outline how terminology will be used throughout.

Originally, terminology relating to gender variance and trans individuals developed alongside an emerging understanding of gender variance as a disorder. Magnus Hirschfeld coined the term transvestite in 1910 (Bullough and Bullough, 1993), the term transsexual was not brought into common usage until the 1960s (Whittle, 2002) and the umbrella term transgender not until the 1980s (Stryker, 2006). Until these points in history, people who fell into these categories would not have been recognised as such (Whittle, 2002), either by medicine, society or themselves. It is important to recognise this and not to mix up modern thinking and terminology with historical facts. In addition to this, it is commonplace in historical medical texts and journals, particularly those preceding the 1960s, to discuss a trans person using pronouns relating to their birth sex rather than gender identity, something which is today looked upon adversely in both academic writing and the wider media.

The specific use of terminology has been carefully considered to avoid presentism in this writing. Taking the lead from academics writing on the subject today, including Whittle, Oosterhuis, Bullough and Bullough, and Beemyn, I intend to write using the terminology which the author or subject of the time uses, whether that is the use of transvestite or transsexual and their choice of pronouns. This decision prevents me from putting modern diagnoses on historical cases and skewing the development of trans identities in the writing. I may make suggestions as to what historical case studies could identify as today, however these are clearly explained and will not take away from the discussion of the historical development of gender variance. Overall

it would be inappropriate and inaccurate to call somebody genderqueer, for example, when that term did not come into modern parlance until the late twentieth century.

Introduction

This chapter introduces gender variant identities within a cultural context. Having explored theoretical perspectives on gender in the previous chapter, it is important to place these within a wider context. It is also important to note that the context in which I will be discussing gender variance is within western culture, mapping a history of gender identity through North and West Europe, the United States of America and the United Kingdom. Much of what we understand about gender variance in western culture today has come from a history of sexology and pathology in Europe and America. This chapter is also part of my education as a researcher on gender variant identities, as I will discuss more explicitly in the following chapter. Overall, cultural phenomena discussed in this chapter should not be generalised as a worldwide understanding of gender variance, as throughout history different cultures have had different understandings of trans people (for a brief introduction for gender variant identities outside of today's Western culture, please see Ramet's (1996) edited collection *Gender Reversals and Gender Cultures*).

Sex and Gender Expectations in the Nineteenth Century

I will begin towards the end of the nineteenth century, where the study of sex, known at the time as 'sexology', gained momentum. Psychology and study of the brain was still a fairly new area of medicine and it is in this period that psychologists took the authority on sexual morality away from the Christian church. Previous to this, in the early 1800s, scientists and medical professionals believed that sexual instinct in humans was for the sole purpose of reproduction; any deviation (i.e. homosexuality) was a disease of this instinct which manifested itself in the genitals (De Block and Adriaens, 2013).

Until this time, the church was the main authority on morality and what constituted deviant sexual behaviour. During the Middle Ages and Renaissance, the law of God and the Bible was synonymous with the law of nature, meaning that religious teachings dictated what was normalised human behaviour (De Block and Adriaens,

2013). As a religious attitude towards sex was for the purpose of procreation, sexual 'vices' which did not lead to reproduction, such as sodomy and masturbation, were seen as unnatural; whereas rape and incest were seen as being consistent with nature. It was when psychiatrists began to study sex in more detail that the use of divine law to define the normalcy of human sexual behaviour began to decline (*ibid.*).

During the nineteenth century, medical interest in sexual deviancy was focussed on criminality (Oosterhuis, 2012) with the newly emerging field of forensics studying abnormal sexual behaviours with regards to rape and sexual assault. However, the psychiatric study of abnormal sexual behaviours emerged largely because of two distinct factors. Firstly, politicians and leaders were fearful for the apparent declining moral, physical and mental standards of the general populous, as well as moral corruption. This fear of 'depopulation and degeneration' (De Block and Adriaens, 2013: 278) saw psychiatrists, who were revered by the public and leaders as well as offering new medical practices, being brought in ahead of the church (De Block and Adriaens, 2013) to study sexual deviations. Keen to 'enhance their professional standing' (De Block and Adriaens, 2013: 279), psychiatrists took on this task and insisted that such sexual deviations should be investigated psychologically as well as physically. Secondly, there had been some previous medical writing during the Enlightenment regarding non-reproductive sexual behaviour which included a combination of graphic descriptions and admonitions, with no effort to understand (Cryle and Downing; 2009); most well-known of the era was the case of the Marquis de Sade, from which the term 'sadism' is derived, who was famously institutionalised for his libertine sexuality and graphic writing. These medical writings did not influence the public's opinions about sexual deviancy but were a platform from which nineteenth century psychiatrists and sexologists could work (De Block and Adriaens, 2013).

Gender has always been at the forefront of the study of sexuality and, each sexual deviation was classified with nineteenth century ideas of what made you male and female. During the Enlightenment, clear gender divisions arose and there became a clear distinction between men and women. Writers such as Rousseau believed men to be superior and there was a general fear that excessive femininity would undermine a man's natural place in the world (Robertson, 2005). Women were seen as 'the other' (Outram, 2013: 88) and were seen to be inferior. Gender was also

slowly becoming of interest to the medical profession as well as philosophers of the period. Beforehand, the female body had been seen as a deviation of the male body, with the ovaries and testes even being labelled the same, however in this period much more attention was being paid to the physiological differences between men and women. Outram (2013: 89) uses the example of the brain, as the female brain was found to be physically smaller than the male's, therefore intellectually inferior.

During the industrial revolution, middle and upper class women's roles shifted to the home where the notion of the frail and passive woman came into being (Outram, 2013). The readily available goods and materials as a result of the revolution ensured that the middle class woman became the consumer, ultimately leading to the 'domestic sphere' (*ibid.* 91), which became the fundamental place for a woman. As the domestic sphere became the norm for women, working class women found themselves working in industrial factories and running a household. Because of this, women were found to have a significantly lower wage, as it has been suggested that women were paid less in the factories because they were not the main breadwinner (Burnette, 1997). Despite working all day, a woman's place was still in the home and their responsibility was to the family. Another suggestion for this pay gap is because of the believed intellectual and physical inferiority of women (Robertson, 2005). Because the female body was perceived to be physically smaller, it was assumed that women were naturally weaker and could not do as much work.

When the study of sex began, it was believed that these preconceived gender roles were also reflected in the act of sex. Women who were culturally obedient and passive, were supposed to be submissive in the sexual act, whereas men who were aggressors and active, were supposed to maintain the dominant sexual role. To sexologists this was the heterosexual ideal. It was actually believed that women had masochistic tendencies, yet masochism was uncommon in women because these tendencies were seen as a natural part of the female condition; however, it was a deviancy in men because it threatened traditional masculinity (Oosterhuis, 2011). On the other hand, Sadism was believed to be only a perversion adopted by men. Interestingly it seems that because of the nineteenth century gender expectations of men and the role of masculinity, men were seen to have more sexual deviations than women and, as Oosterhuis explains, '[w]omen were hardly considered perverts

... the issue was not so much sexual perversion per se, but mental disorders relating to menstruation' (2011: 193).

These gender expectations were largely unquestioned until the mid-nineteenth century, yet there are well documented occurrences of cross-dressing throughout history. As I have discussed gender expectations in the nineteenth century, it would be appropriate to briefly discuss transgressive dressing practices in this period also. Cross-dressing and transgressive dressing practices were not new to the nineteenth century, and there is well documented evidence of cross-dressing previous to this. Discussions of medieval cross-dressing can be found in Bennett and McSheffrey (2014) who look particularly at cross-dressing women in late medieval London and the reasons for it. As they point out 'women who put on men's clothes, wore men's hats, and even cut their hair like men were usually noticed by London's courts in one context only: moral oversight of sexual misbehaviour' (Bennett and McSheffrey, 2014: 2). As discussed above, sexuality and gender were at this time the domain of the church and, as a result, transgressive dressing was brought before the ecclesiastical courts. Cross-dressing lead to accusations of prostitution, homosexuality and other sexual deviancy as it was seen as an indicator of 'the extremity of women's sexual disorder' (Bennett and McSheffrey, 2014: 3).

This is a juxtaposition to the Victorian notion of deviancy and sexuality, as outlined above (Oosterhuis, 2011) which suggests that women were rarely considered 'perverts'. It may be that this is a reflection of how the domain of sex and gender shifted from church to medicine in the nineteenth century as cases of women cross-dressing come from ecclesiastical courts; a male dominated institution (Bennett and McSheffrey, 2014). As a result, there is a pervasive idea that women who cross-dressed in this period were seen as deviant, most likely because the majority of records come from religious institutions. These records, however, highlight so-called moral degeneracy and ignore other reasons why women, in particular, may have cross-dressed. Howard (1988) does offer other reasons for women to cross-dress in the early modern period, from accompanying their husbands to war to being 'in service' (*ibid.*: 421; Bennett and McSheffrey, 2014). These suggest more economical reasons for cross-dressing than the church may have us believe, and also reflects how women were constrained at the time.

Interestingly, there are far fewer records of male cross-dressing being deviant in the early modern period and those that do exist seem to be more lenient or even sympathetic in their treatment of the individual. John Tirell, as mentioned briefly by Bennett and McSheffrey, was arrested for wearing women's clothing but released after promising to 'behave properly' (2014: 3). In fact, in the early modern period male cross-dressing while 'not officially permitted [was] at least tolerated under two conditions: when the person was clearly recognized as being a man or when the man performed a social function that, because of other prohibitions, women were not allowed to do' (Bullough and Bullough, 1993: pp. 61-61). As a result, men were allowed to cross-dress to perform the social functions of a woman, (for example a female role in a play), however if women were found cross-dressing to earn a living, they were punished and accused of deviancy (Bennett and McSheffrey, 2014; Bullough and Bullough, 1993).

Whilst cross-dressing and homosexuality were linked in the early modern period, it is perhaps most significant in the development of transgender identities and the early gendered views of homosexuality from Victorian sexology. In the 1860s, German lawyer and writer Karl Heinrich Ulrichs wrote of homosexuality in terms of a 'third gender' (Scobey-Thal, 2014) suggesting that men who were sexually attracted to other men had a female consciousness which was contained in a male body; an early allusion to the transgender idea (*ibid.* and De Block and Adriaens, 2013). Ulrichs revealed his homosexuality and was dismissed from his job in a legal office, however this spurred him on to become one of the first gay rights activists. Before this, he was a patient of Dr Richard von Krafft-Ebing, a leading psychologist of his time and Ulrichs' gendered view of homosexuality had a profound effect on Krafft-Ebing's theories of sexuality for many years (Clark, 2011).

Taking this into consideration, I now turn to perhaps the most notorious cross-dressers of the Victorian era, Fanny Graham and Stella Boulton, or rather Frederick Park and Ernest Boulton. Their lives, as outlined by McKenna (2013), were embroiled in scandal and they were well known in Victorian society. Fanny and Stella started out touring theatres as a double act, and receiving good press reviews. As they became more well-known they also attended social events and theatres as women. Boulton was reportedly encouraged to dress in girls' clothing from being a child and was encouraged to do so by his mother, who consequently gave him the

nickname Stella. Fanny and Stella were eventually arrested for 'outraging public decency' (Carriger, 2013: 136) by dressing in women's clothes in public; the legality of which ended up being debated in their public trial. Having found no basis for prosecution, they were subsequently accused of homosexuality, however they were acquitted on lack of evidence (McKenna, 2013). This is an important part of Fanny and Stella's story as it shows how the Victorians perceived cross-dressing and sexuality. Fanny and Stella's performances on stage were legitimate forms of cross-dressing, however when taken into the public sphere, cross-dressing became a transgressive act. As Carriger suggests, '[t]he scandal of the case really came from the fact that the female personaters [sic] weren't particularly scandalous at all until retroactively and suddenly reclassified as such by the arrest' (2013: 138).

I have only spoken briefly about Fanny and Stella as an example of Victorian male cross-dressing and there is much more to their story. However, in this respect it is important to recognise how male cross-dressers were regarded at the time and Fanny and Stella are a good example. Their attire, whilst legitimate on stage, became salacious and immoral in the public sphere; an example of sexual deviations as was being studied at the time (Oosterhuis, 2011). However this kind of gender crossing is also intrinsically linked with homosexuality and, depending on which side you stood, was either a form of expression or of deviance. If we consider Ulrichs and Kraft-Ebbing's view of gendered homosexuality in relation to Fanny and Stella, it would be conceivable that their cross-dressing was seen as a manifestation of their homosexuality. In contrast, there are well documented cases of women cross-dressing, however, more often than not these lack the theatricality and scandal of male cross dressers.

There are cases where women would cross-dress to 'legitimise' same-sex relationships (Oram, 2016), and cross-dressing as a reflection of homosexuality and gender identity is discussed in detail further on in this chapter when I explore the author Radclyffe Hall and *The Well of Loneliness*. However, there are also a considerable number of cases where women would cross-dress and take on occupations which were considered male at the time, such as doctors and soldiers. We do not necessarily know the sexuality or gender identity of these women at the time, so it would be inappropriate to speculate, however, what is clear is that cross-dressing for women was also done for economical reasons; something which does

not seem to have changed since the early modern period. For example, an article from 1875 which appeared *The Graphic* newspaper stated '[a]t Liverpool, a woman who has for nine years disguised her sex, dressing in male attire, and earning a living as a cab driver, is not in custody for having stolen some butcher's meat' (p. 187). This somewhat innocuous line in the legal section of a newspaper reflects a whole societal attitude towards women's roles in society. As I mentioned above, at this point women's roles were in the 'domestic sphere' (Outram, 2013: 91) and, depending on their class, working for low wages in laborious jobs; to be a cab driver would have been an illicit and inappropriate occupation for a woman.

Overall what this shows is that gender expectations were constraining, particularly for women. The way cross-dressing was viewed has shifted throughout history. However as we reach the nineteenth century ideas about sexuality and gender began to change. As sexuality and gender became a part of psychology, cross-dressing was intrinsically linked to homosexuality and increasingly seen as transgressive. Yet, as I have briefly demonstrated, cross-dressing also served another purpose for women; emancipation. Constrained by expectations of their gender, some women would cross-dress in order to take on a man's role in society. At this point sexuality and gender was progressively becoming pathologised as the study of sexology gained momentum and transgressive dressing practices now entered the domain of psychology.

The Pathologisation of Gender Identity

Krafft-Ebing

Dr Richard von Krafft-Ebing is considered by psychologists and historians of sexuality alike to be one of, if not the most, influential in early sexuality studies. Working in the latter half of the nineteenth century, until his death in 1902, Krafft-Ebing agreed with his predecessors on a gendered view of sexual deviancy, however, what set him apart from them is his belief that sexual deviance was deeply ingrained in an individual's personality, something that is natural to them, and not a result of 'weak will', or 'defective anatomy' (De Block and Adriaens, 2013: 280).

However, this belief was not always the case. Over the course of his life and studies, Krafft-Ebing's views changed and, like many psychologists of his time, he initially believed that the sexual instinct was the cause of all sexual deviation (Clark, 2011).

The sexual instinct was believed to develop from the foetus to being a sexually mature adult and if anything went wrong with this development, both physiologically and psychologically, then the result would be sexual degeneration, or what Krafft-Ebing called 'a perversion' (Clark, 2011: 184, DeBlock and Adriaens, 2013). These perversions included; homosexuality, sadism, masochism, fetishism and cross-dressing (which, in reference to the previous note on terms, encompasses what we would recognise today as transgenderism as well as transvestism). It was believed that poor development of the sexual instinct was due to hereditary defects which caused excessive masturbation, leading to a lack of inhibition, and ultimately a perversion (Krafft-Ebing, [1903] 1998, De Block and Adriaens, 2013).

Many people presenting with signs of deviance were treated in asylums and Ulrichs was one of Krafft-Ebing's patients. Ulrichs was unusually open about his homosexuality, actively and openly engaging in a homosexual lifestyle (Bullough and Bullough, 1993). However, Krafft-Ebing reacted by publicly denouncing and pathologising Ulrichs' homosexuality (Clark, 2011, Bullough and Bullough, 1993) as at that time he believed that sexual practices were for reproduction alone. What did come out of this meeting is Krafft-Ebing's adoption of Ulrich's idea of inborn homosexuality presented through gender variance, which can be seen in later editions of *Psychopathia Sexualis* (Kennedy, 1997; Kennedy, 2002).

Psychopathia Sexualis

Krafft-Ebing's work and theories about sexual deviance began to change after the publication of his *Psychopathia Sexualis*. First published in 1886, it is seen as his seminal work and also a fundamental tome in the study of sexuality (De Block and Adriaens, 2013). The book was the first of its kind, documenting and explaining forms of sexual deviance and using a number of case studies, giving an active voice to many people who had been suffering alone with their nonconforming sexual desires. Krafft-Ebing also published his correspondents' letters and personal accounts of their sexuality and slowly began to get more involved in their experiences.

It is in *Psychopathia Sexualis* that Krafft-Ebing tentatively begins to explore the notion of transgender behaviour, or what he labelled, 'androgyny' (male to female) and 'gynandry' (female to male) (Krafft-Ebing, 1906: 337). Throughout the cases,

homosexual behaviour plays a dominant role in explaining why people cross-dress or desire to be in the wrong body. For instance, in case 126 (*ibid.*: 294) Krafft-Ebing describes a young woman given to cross-dressing to try to earn a living as a tutor and on the railroads, and also because of a sexual attraction to the same sex. Although whilst reading, it can be assumed that the young woman would be referred to as 'bisexual' in today's terms. Krafft-Ebing surmises that the desires of the young woman are made worse by masturbation, and also (and perhaps most importantly) congenital, which suggests that his beliefs on the development of sexual deviations were beginning to change.

Further on, Krafft-Ebing discusses 'Homosexual Feeling as an Abnormal Congenital Manifestation' (1906: 335), of which he outlines four ways in which it develops. The first being 'psycho-sexual hermaphroditism' (336-337), known as bisexuality today; secondly homosexuality; thirdly homosexuality with either effeminacy in men, or masculine qualities or 'viraginity' (336) in a woman; and finally the crossing over of genders in outward appearance and character, which, as Krafft-Ebing says, would make a person 'correspond with [their] peculiar sexual instinct but not with the sex which the individual represents anatomically and physiologically' (336).

Further on in *Psychopathia Sexualis* there is a particular case which wholly embodies Krafft-Ebing's last manifestation of homosexuality; gynandry. Case 166 (1906: 428) is that of an individual who had lived a life as Count Sandor but, on being arrested for forgery, it was discovered that the Count was in fact a Countess. Since a young child Sandor had been brought up as a boy by her father until the age of twelve when she was forced into wearing female clothing. However, by the age of thirteen she had had her first love affair whilst presenting as male. This had become Sandor's life, even though she had been born female, she lived her life as male, dressing and acting male, taking on male vocations and activities, and also entering into marriages with seemingly unsuspecting women. In her accounts, Sandor claimed:

'I had an indescribable aversion for female attire – indeed, for everything feminine, but only in so far as it concerned me; for, on the hand, I was all enthusiasm for the beautiful sex.' (Krafft-Ebbing, 1906: 430)

In addition to this, it was discovered that Sandor had used handkerchiefs and other garments to emulate a scrotum and also used a phallic object to provide the illusion of a penis (*ibid.*). Upon reading this today, it is clear that this is not the behaviour of someone trying to come to terms with a homosexual identity. It can be assumed that Sandor had gender dysphoria, and her actions, especially in creating a phallus and scrotum, would support this assumption. The fact that she found female attire so repugnant, to the point of fear, when forced to wear a dress whilst incarcerated, teamed with her character change between wearing male and female clothing would suggest that her strong feelings of existing as male outweighs any homosexual feeling she had. In fact, because she so strongly identifies with the male persona, today she would be known as heterosexual.

At the end of this case, Krafft-Ebing diagnosed Sandor as having a hereditary, congenital 'abnormal inversion of the sexual instinct' (1906: 438) which manifested itself in gender variance and cross dressing. Or in other words, she was homosexual which drove her to live as a man. Further to this, Krafft-Ebing blamed her criminal activity on her sexual deviancy. What is interesting to note throughout this case study is, even though Krafft-Ebing's still ascertains that transgender and homosexual acts are closely interlinked, he begins to define the transgender phenomena as something distinctive and persistent in society.

Unquestionably, the nineteenth century was a time for the medicalisation of sexuality and gender variance. Before Krafft-Ebing, medical studies into sex were inherently related to criminality; early forensic medicine for cases such as sodomy and public indecency (Oosterhuis: 2012). Krafft-Ebing's is extreme in its medical discourse, however, what sets Krafft-Ebing's work apart is his belief that sexual deviants were not responsible for their actions and therefore should not be punished by law, but instead be medically institutionalised.

Towards the end of his life, Krafft-Ebing's views about sexuality had changed and he began to see homosexuality as something that was natural, instead of a form of psychosis (Clark, 2011). By the time of his death in 1902, Krafft-Ebing had been in contact with many people, most of whom had read the work and written to express their gratitude and to tell him about their experiences. Having witnessed that

homosexual people could engage in loving relationships and live a normal and healthy lives, Krafft-Ebing came to the conclusion that this was a natural 'inborn trait' (*ibid.*: 184, Oosterhuis, 2011) and he spent the latter end of his career arguing for the decriminalisation of homosexuality.

Overall, Professor Richard von Krafft-Ebing was what you might call a 'gateway sexologist'. His initial thoughts and feeling about sexual deviances, and particularly gender non-conformity, were that they were psychoses brought on by sexually deviant behaviour (Beemyn, 2013). His studies on homosexuality, and in particular gender variance relating to homosexuality, enabled people to put a name to their desires and, until *Psychopathia Sexualis* many people believed they were alone in their sexuality. Over the years, after working with patients in asylums and corresponding with people touched by his writing, Krafft-Ebing began to sympathise with, and then argue for homosexuality, maintaining that it was natural and people were able to function normally, both physically and sexually. This great change in ideas opened up a door for later sexologists like Havelock Ellis and Magnus Hirschfeld to explore gender variance, create new sexual identities and go on to pioneer new surgical methods.

Havelock Ellis and Magnus Hirschfeld

British and German contemporaries, Havelock Ellis and Magnus Hirschfeld were studying sexuality in the transitional period from a culture of Victorian morality and values to a more open and relaxed post-war society. In the society in which they lived, Ellis and Hirschfeld were radical, both in their personal lives as well as their views. Ellis married Edith Lees, an openly lesbian author and women's rights activist (Suellentrop, 2013), whilst Hirschfeld was openly homosexual himself and an active advocate for homosexual rights (Bullough, 2003). These liberal attitudes came up against a lot of conflict when Ellis and Hirschfeld were researching. It has been suggested that it is because of this that Ellis and Hirschfeld are not household names like their peer, the psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud, despite having pioneered most modern studies into sexuality and gender variance (*ibid.*).

Krafft-Ebing had a profound impact on the studies of both Ellis and Hirschfeld who both produced significant work on gender variance. Ellis and Hirschfeld began to separate cross-dressing and transgender behaviour from sexual identity,

categorising it as an identity in its own right. Ellis first coined the phrase 'sexo-aesthetic inversion' to describe cross-dressing, which he stopped using later on in favour of eonism (derivative of the Chevalier d'Eon), explaining that the phrase was too much like Krafft-Ebing's 'sexual inversion' which describes homosexuality (Bullough and Bullough, 1993).

Transvestite Heterosexuality

It was Hirschfeld who had coined the most recognisable term, 'transvestite' from his 1910 publication *Die Transvestiten* (Bullough, 2003), which is still commonly used today to describe someone who dresses in the clothes of the opposite sex with no desire to change their sex permanently. However when reading Hirschfeld's work with a modern eye, it is clear that, whilst the term 'transvestite' is used throughout his work, the majority of his participants are most likely what we would today call 'transgender'. *Die Transvestiten* was the first major piece of research which looked solely at gender variance outside of sexual identity. His main findings in the study were that the majority of people he interviewed were heterosexual (Bullough, 2003), something in complete contrast to earlier sexologists' beliefs that cross dressing was a result of homosexuality.

Ellis and Hirschfeld's findings were ground-breaking in that the people studied exhibited transgender behaviour but were, for the most part, heterosexual. One journal at the time discussing Ellis' work went so far as to say the subjects were 'completely and enthusiastically heterosexual' (McMurtrie, 1915: 91). This broke apart everything that previous sexologists believed and began to separate sexuality and gender identity, categorising them separately. This shift can also be seen in the subjects which Hirschfeld and Ellis are studying. Where previously people who demonstrated cross dressing or gender variance were diagnosed with psychosis and most likely institutionalised (Beemyn, 2013), here the participants are allowed to explore their identity more freely (within the confines of a researcher/participant relationship). One female participant in Ellis' '*Sexual Inversion*' described herself as 'belong[ing] to a third sex of some kind' (1915: 240), 'occasionally... experience[ing] slight erections' (1915: 242) and imagined herself 'as a man loving a woman' (1915: 243). Rich personal details like this had never been explored and some might have said it was graphic, however this personal interest in sexuality and sexual practice

moved the study of sexology forward and gained it recognition throughout Europe and the USA.

Ellis and Hirschfeld's studies were motivated by a passionate interest in LGBT rights, and Hirschfeld's early studies have been described by contemporaries studying early sexology as 'poorly organised and not very well thought out' (Bullough, 2003: 63). As a sexologist, he was described as dismissive of people disagreeing with him and a 'propagandist' (*ibid.*). However, unlike their predecessors, Hirschfeld and Ellis' studies were motivated by a desire for emancipation rather than academics and therapy. Ellis believed that sexuality should be talked about openly and was an advocate for women's sexuality and homosexuality (Suellentrop, 2013) and Hirschfeld, active in the advocacy of homosexuality, often combined his scientific research with his own liberalistic agenda; for example, it has been suggested that Hirschfeld didn't use a random data set of cross dressers in *Die Transvestiten* to present them as mainly heterosexual in order for them to avoid the same persecution as homosexuals. (Hill, 2005).

This period for the study of sex behaviours was a transition period from the Victorian era of high morality to one of more tolerance and even some acceptance of alternative sexual and gender identities. In addition, the period was fundamental for the development of sexuality and gender variance as we know it today. What becomes clear from the literature of the period is that '[s]exologists were clearly making things up as they went along' (Hill, 2005: 316), using their initiative and observations to draw new conclusions on previously unstudied phenomenon. However, as Hill (2005) goes on to say, it was this period of insight that researched the many sexual categories we still have today and helped shape modern ideas about sexuality. Ellis and Hirschfeld's personal passions may have blurred their research somewhat, yet their passions paved the way for a more accepting society, where medical professionals studied sexuality instead of pathologising and institutionalising people. Ellis and Hirschfeld's work on gender variance was so pioneering, it is still referenced in modern gender and transgender studies.

Psychoanalysis and Gender Identity

I have discussed psychoanalysis in some detail in the previous chapter, particularly pertaining to general gender identity development. However psychoanalysis also has a place in sexology and it is important to recognise its contribution. Freud's research developed alongside Hirschfeld and Ellis's research, as Freud studied sexology alongside his contemporaries and developed a model of treatment which sought the origins of sexual deviances through the exploration of an individual's childhood experiences (Bullough and Bullough, 1993). Freud's psychoanalytical model reflected elements of his contemporaries' work, particularly Krafft-Ebing's early beliefs, and focussed on non-procreative sexual practices and fetishes as deviance (De Block and Adriaens, 2013), in stark contrast to Hirschfeld and Ellis' more liberal research.

Sexologists' work up until this point had aimed to document and classify the diverse nature of human sexuality. It had with it an emancipatory goal, to 'cure society' (De Block and Adriaens, 2013: 283) of deviancy. In contrast, the aim of psychoanalysis was to treat and cure the individual. Psychoanalysis was not developed with the treatment of transvestism or cross-dressing in mind, however it was adopted later by some sexologists (Bullough and Bullough, 1993) who believed that 'castration anxiety' (*ibid.*:222) was the cause of cross-dressing. For example, adult transvestites had negative sexual experiences in their childhood which would lead to cross dressing. A boy saw his mother naked and noticed she had not got a penis, he would be overcome with extreme fear and anxiety for losing his penis, or a girl would cross dress because of penis envy (Bullough and Bullough, 1993).

The use and popularity of psychoanalysis diminished in the early nineteen sixties with the introduction of drugs to treat mental disorder, as there was more evidence that there may be biological factors in the onset of mental illnesses, as well as psychological imbalances (De Block and Adriaens, 2013). Later on, influential sexologists working with transvestites (and the newly categorised transsexuals) would dismiss psychoanalysis as a legitimate means of treatment (Pfaefflin, 1997). However, the development of psychoanalysis enabled the focus of sexology to change from documentation and categorisation and curing society, to diagnosis and treatment of the individual (De Block and Adriaens, 2013), a focus which would be adopted by pioneering sexologists of the future.

Psychoanalytic theory has changed fundamentally since its inception, however, Freud's work still permeates society. Freud's psychoanalysis is largely criticised for sweeping generalisations and for ascribing a lot of behaviour to sexual motives (Wasmer Andrews, 2010). In addition, Freud's works are reflective of a patriarchal and phallogocentric society which marginalised female sexuality and reduced women to essentially men without penises (Slipp, 1993). Yet often we find ourselves uttering terminology made famous through Freud's work, for example 'Freudian slip' and 'being anal'. This shows how influential psychoanalysis has been for psychological studies and particularly the study of gender and sexuality, which was separated from physiology for the first time.

Before moving on to the lived experiences of gender identity discussed in the next section, it must be discussed as to why I have included a critical summary of essentialism, sexology, and psychoanalysis. Whilst these views on gender and sexuality have largely been dismissed, it cannot be underestimated how much they have contributed to our modern understanding of gender identity. Early sexology moved sex and gender away from its religious binding as it became less a moral issue and more embedded in psychology. Trans and gender variant history can be found within early sexology and psychoanalysis; as what we know about gender identity has its roots in these fields of study.

These theories are also an important part of trans cultural history, and without critically analysing them we cannot understand how gender identity has come to be understood today. Krafft-Ebing's (1906) *Psychopathia Sexualis* places gender identity in the domain of sexuality, suggesting that one who exhibits 'behaviour' of the opposite sex must be struggling with their latent homosexuality. Often, today gender identity still gets conflated with sexuality and, as will be discussed later in this chapter and analysis, there is still ongoing debate as to where sexuality ends and gender identity begins. Ellis and Hirschfeld (2015) built on Krafft-Ebing's work yet approached gender identity with a more liberal attitude. They used real life examples of gender variance and gave voices to people experiencing what we now call gender dysphoria. Finally, psychoanalysis moved the concept of gender identity from societal deviance, and placed it at the behest of the individual.

Within these theories we can show how modern attitudes towards gender identity have developed and proliferated across society. Whilst we can say that these theories are 'debunked', the overall attitudes may not be, and it is trans people who have to live with this burden. To put these theories into a social context, it is also important to discuss the actual lived experiences of people experiencing gender variance in the times of these sexologists and their research. In the next section, I discuss how these theories impacted gender variant people's lived experiences in the early twentieth century.

Lived Experiences of Gender Variance in the Early Twentieth Century

Having discussed so far the early pathology of gender variance, it is important to place this in a social context. Whilst gender identity entered the domain of pathopsychology, people like Count Sandor (as discussed above) were routinely seen as deviant and mentally ill. However, researchers like Hirschfeld and Ellis enabled an understanding of gender variance which moved away from deviant sexual behaviour.

Lili Elbe 'The Danish Girl'

Lili Elbe was a patient of Magnus Hirschfeld and one of the first people to undergo any kind of gender reassignment surgery. Working as a painter and illustrator, Einar Wegener started cross dressing after being asked to stand in for an absent female model for one of his wife's paintings. Having no other way to diagnose or understand his feelings, Wegener believed he had a female 'twin being' (Bullough and Bullough, 1993: 245) sharing his body.

Working with Magnus Hirschfeld, Wegener was transformed into Elbe over a series of five operations where they removed his penis and testicles and implanted ovaries and a uterus so that Elbe could carry children. During this time, Elbe had been legally allowed to change her sex and had her previous marriage dissolved. Elbe, however, died shortly after the fifth operation after her body rejected the implanted uterus. The operations carried out were very risky and experimental as little was known about transplantations and chromosomes so, the idea of organ rejection was not known. However, Elbe was a living case study of someone having the desire to change sex without necessarily being homosexual. This would go on to influence sexologists in the study of gender variance, particularly Harry Benjamin.

Not only was Elbe's story one of medical innovation but one that also was culturally significant. At the time of her surgeries, Elbe's story was covered by both German and Danish Newspapers and also picked up by the North American press. These outlets focussed on Elbe being allegedly intersex in order to present 'shocking accounts of unusual behaviour, rare biological problems, and astonishing surgical solutions' (Meyerowitz, 1998: 164). However, Meyerowitz (1998; 2002) suggests that Elbe was not actually intersex and this was used to legitimise the idea of surgery for Elbe who otherwise may have been considered mentally ill.

Overall, what we know about Elbe's life is somewhat irregular as her records at Dresden Women's Clinic were destroyed during the allied bombing of Dresden, and also Hirschfeld's records were destroyed by the Nazis in 1933 (Meyerowitz, 2002). However, Elbe left letters and diaries which were edited by Neils Hoyer (2015) and published posthumously in 1933. Elbe was almost forgotten until the publication of 'The Danish Girl' (Ebershoff, 2000) which led to the theatrical release of a feature film of the same name in 2015. The release of the Danish Girl coincided with a shift in society's awareness of trans issues, which will be discussed further on in this chapter.

The Well of Loneliness

The Well of Loneliness by Radclyffe Hall is hailed as a ground-breaking work in lesbian fiction. Published in 1928, the novel follows Stephen Gordon, an upper class woman who is described throughout the novel as an 'an invert'. Hall's protagonist is presented outwardly as a masculine woman, from her physique to her cropped hair and unorthodox tailored suits and neck ties. She also undertakes masculine sports such as fencing and hunting and even the decision to give her a male name adds to the inversion of the character.

Throughout the novel, the influence from sexologists is apparent. Havelock Ellis provided a short introduction to the novel stating that *The Well* 'possesses a notable psychological and sociological significance' (1928: iii) and he urged that the novel should be widely read and revered. Most notably, he suggests, the novel is a vivid example of the life of an invert 'with such complete absence of offence' (*ibid.*). Not only does *The Well* have the support of noted sexologists of the day, 'Karl Heinrich

Ulrichs' (Hall, 1928: loc 312) was noted by name early on in the novel where Stephen's father tries to find out more about sexual inversion. 'Krafft-Ebing' (Hall, 1928: loc 3181) was also named later on as Stephen comes to terms with her father's knowledge about her inversion. It is evident that Hall had read and become familiar with *Psychopathia Sexualis*.

The pathology of sexual inversion meant that sexologists were able to attribute seemingly innocent personal characteristics to female homosexuality. Krafft-Ebing and his peers had essentially 'invented the stereotype of the masculine lesbian' (Bauer, 2003: 23). The high profile nature of the book and the character of Stephen threw the idea of the 'mannish lesbian' further into the public sphere. The creation of Stephen was not only heavily influenced by the sexologists of the time, but also Hall's understanding of her own sexuality and gender identity (Halbertstam, 1998; Fitzgerald, 1978). Hall represented herself as masculine, wearing tailored suits and a typically (for the era) male haircut and also going by the nickname 'John'; it has been argued that Stephen Gordon was 'lifted... right out of real life' (Fitzgerald, 1978: 50).

It is not until after the Second World War that gender identity became separated from sexual identity and, in the time of *The Well*, gender variance was used to explain numerous sexual deviances (Halbertstam, 1998). More recently, readers have argued that the character of Stephen Gordon was transgender, and there have been parallels drawn between Stephen and Krafft-Ebing's 'Count Sandor' (1906: 428) because, as Fitzgerald (1978) suggests, Count Sandor is the older Stephen Gordon personified; a masculine, athletic, chain smoking heiress in conflict with her family who engages in 'manly' sports such as fencing. However, as Halbertstam (1998) points out, because the novel is being read with hindsight and the knowledge of transgender identities, it cannot be known for sure how many masculine inverts of the time would have wanted to change their sex. Because the female invert often presented herself as masculine, it cannot immediately be assumed that she would want to change sex.

The Well of Loneliness created much controversy in a world where any sexual practice or inclination but heterosexuality was demonised and medicalised. As Hall had experienced an amount of success as a writer and poet, she wrote *The Well* as

an attempt to liberate the invert in the eyes of society; such was her mission that she would only allow *The Well* to be published on the proviso that no words in the manuscript be changed (Cline, 1997). The subject matter, though not graphic, led to one of the most high profile obscenity trials of its time. Suppression of literature was nothing new in the United Kingdom as previously Joyce's *The Dubliners* and Lawrence's *The Rainbow* had been halted in their printing due to homosexual scenes or undercurrents (*ibid.*), however *The Well* had managed to be published and was widely read and either defended or vilified.

Whilst not graphic or indecent, *The Well* had been accused of obscenity. By publishing, Hall had made herself a martyr for sexual inversion and the right to publish (Sigel, 2011; Cline, 1997). As Sigel (2011) suggests, the outcome of the trial was somewhat predetermined as the Home Office did not usually take on big obscenity cases without the knowledge they would win. Essentially the trial was a 'performance' (Sigel, 2011: 68) with newspapers reporting on the attendees and the attire. Many famous authors and contemporaries attended and testified including Virginia Woolf. Woolf and Hall differed in opinion and identity, Woolf was married to protect her public image and did not see her lesbianism as political (Cline, 1997), she also thought that *The Well* was a badly written book (*ibid.*). Despite this, she was opposed to its banning on the grounds of literary expression and the argument that a lesbian theme does not necessarily make a book obscene.

Whilst today it is widely agreed to have little literary merit (Cline, 1997), *The Well* had an effect on western ideas of sexuality and gender. Female inversion, or lesbianism, had been publicly scrutinised in a dramatic spectacle which was designed to condemn, as Hall and her peers had fought for the right to publish. The banning of the novel had ensured that lesbianism was now in the public eye; as Taylor succinctly puts it, the 'attempt to repress [sexuality] actually produced knowledge' (2001: 267). In the United States the book was also put on trial for obscenity, however, because it had lesbian themes but not explicit lesbian content it was found not to be obscene (Taylor, 2001). The novel was published in the USA and France thereafter and was a turning point for the representation of lesbianism and gender variance in fiction.

Post-War Sexology

From Germany to the USA

During World War and its preceding years the study of German sexology fell greatly. The newly elected Nazi party was developing its ethnic cleansing regime, and as a Jewish homosexual, whose life work was the study of sexualities, Hirschfeld, (amongst others who studied sexualities with a liberal attitude, such as Freud or Steinach) came under close scrutiny (Amidon, 2008). It was not long before Hirschfeld's outspoken and liberal attitudes towards sexuality (and particularly his own) as well as his religious background would come up against him, and he was targeted as a 'degenerate' to 'be eliminated' (Vyras, 1996: 127-128); ironically, members of the Nazi party had also been his patients (*ibid.*).

By 1930, Hirschfeld was being subjected to physical attacks whilst out in public, which drove him out of the country on the pretext of a world tour (Amidon, 2008). In 1933, Hirschfeld's extensive collection of raw data and research was destroyed by the Nazi Party (Bullough, 2003). Fortunately, Hirschfeld had published the majority of his findings, but he was never to return to Berlin. Hirschfeld exiled himself in France where he tried to start again (*ibid.*); however he died there in 1935 at the age of 67.

Whilst sexologists were being attacked or driven out of Germany, it must be admitted that the Nazi party's ideas of racial cleansing had its basis in early German sexology (Kennedy, 2002; Amidon, 2008). Krafft-Ebing's theories centred on the idea of degeneration and with the publishing of *Psychopathia Sexualis* his ideas were available to the public for the first time. Krafft-Ebing, as discussed earlier, was a breakthrough sexologist and his degeneration theory had a profound effect on society, despite other efforts to dispute it (Kennedy, 2002). The Nazi Party used early sexology theories and the idea of degeneration as the foundation for the murder of millions of Jewish people, homosexuals and intellectually disabled people, who they saw as degenerate, unworthy members of society (*ibid.*; Amidon, 2008). From this point the study of sexology in Germany would be no more.

During and after the war, sexology studies had found a new home in the United States of America. Because of early sexologists, and surgical and psychological advances, people who experienced a misalignment between their biological sex and

their psychological sex were able to be diagnosed and treated. Even with Hirschfeld's early efforts to distinguish the two categories, the true distinction between transvestism and transsexualism was not seen until the immediate post war period. Surgery in this field had hugely advanced and become more readily available for those who desired to change their sex and, as Bullough and Bullough (1993) suggest, this led to a new diagnostic category being formed. People who were gender variant were no longer seen as 'extreme transvestites' (*ibid.*: 253) but as transsexuals.

Despite readily available surgical treatment options for transsexuals, the right course of action was still highly contested amongst sexologists; does one make the mind fit the body, or the body fit the mind? Further to this, the root cause of transsexualism was still being debated. Overall, in this post-war period, attitudes changed and there was a more open-minded stance on sexuality, particularly in academia and medicine (Ekins and King, 2001). Thus, as transsexualism was increasingly studied and defined by medicine, it was also introduced into society in a sensationalist way.

Psychopathic Transsexuals

David O. Cauldwell was a general practitioner who had a particular interest in sexology and began writing advice columns regarding sex and sexualities (Stryker and Whittle, 2006). Cauldwell's most famous article was perhaps *Psychopathia Transexualis* which was published in 1949 in the magazine *Sexology*. *Sexology* was a populist publication which somewhat masqueraded as a scientific journal (*ibid.*) and published a mixture of tabloid articles and scientific studies.

Psychopathia Transexualis (1949) presented the case study of a young woman called Earl whose desire was to become male. Earl approached Cauldwell personally and their relationship exceeded the traditional doctor/patient relationship. Cauldwell invited Earl to stay with him and his wife at their family home and he was the first point of contact for Earl when she had been found homeless and in jail. Further on in the case study, Cauldwell describes Earl's family, having come to collect her, leaving money when she refused to leave.

This case study reflects that of early sexologists, particularly Krafft-Ebing, as Cauldwell first outlines the family history of the subject, providing a background from which to judge. Earl is described as having a somewhat difficult family background, with Earl's father described as a womanising drunkard who frequented the local jail, and Earl's younger brother described as 'feebleminded' (Cauldwell, 1949: 276) and having been institutionalised. Finally, Earl grew up wearing 'boy's attire' (*ibid.*) and was not discouraged from doing so. In another interesting reflection of Krafft-Ebing, Cauldwell also physically examines Earl, something that was becoming less necessary as sexologists moved away from the physicality of their patients to their mentality.

The article has been heavily cited over the years and stands the test of time as a particularly seminal piece of writing on a trans identity. However it is extremely problematic. As Stryker and Whittle state, '[the article] is an...excessively pathologizing, anecdotal account of Cauldwell's experience with one transsexual person' (2006: 40) and it is clear that Cauldwell uses his case study of Earl to start generalising about people who experience gender variance. Towards the end of the article, Cauldwell (1949) described Earl's behaviour as 'psychopathic' (p.278), 'narcissistic' (p.279) and parasitic, and attributes this to a 'genetic predisposition' (Stryker and Whittle, 2006: 40) to transsexualism in combination with Earl's unstable family life and childhood. As a result, Earl will be unable to integrate successfully into society due to her condition. Cauldwell concludes therefore, having written a case study of *one* person, that psychopathic characteristics in conjunction with a dysfunctional upbringing is what leads to transsexualism.

The problem in Cauldwell's article arises when he begins to discuss transsexuals who have lived as members of the opposite sex successfully, including an individual who passed so well that their biological sex was not discovered until death (1949: 280). Here he admits that there are transsexuals who have lived and integrated well into society and are functioning and thriving, becoming active members of their community; a stark contrast to his '*psychopathia transexualis*' (*ibid.*).

Finally, the case study itself is anomalous as Cauldwell's involvement with Earl pushes the therapeutic boundaries and leaves you questioning his ethics in presenting this case study of a vulnerable young woman, whilst maintaining a

questionable amount of personal involvement. As mentioned before, Earl was a guest at Cauldwell's house and became close with his family. Throughout the article Cauldwell is seen making a number of personal remarks about Earl's clothing and choices; e.g. 'she was a pitiful sight... dressed in helter-skelter get-up of male attire' (1949: 278) or she was 'in male attire of terrible taste' (p.279).

These contradictions and anomalies have not gone unnoticed in the modern study of gender variance and Cauldwell has many critics. As Ekins and King (2001) explain, Cauldwell believed that whereas transvestism was a 'quirk' (no pagination), transsexualism was 'mentally unhealthy' (no pagination). Cauldwell was opposed to sex-change surgery on ethical grounds, stating:

'it would be criminal for any surgeon to mutilate a pair of healthy breasts and it would be just as criminal for a surgeon to castrate a woman with no disease of the ovaries ... Earl also wanted to know if I didn't believe what I advocated in my writings: that the individual had a right to live his or her own life as he or she chooses provided that in doing so no innocent party is involved. A surgeon evidently did not appear as an innocent individual in her mind.' (Cauldwell, 1949: 278)

Cauldwell's views on transsexualism may not be palatable to the modern reader, or even to readers of his era, however, his most staunch critics have admitted that he was a pioneer in his own way. Cauldwell never published academically, choosing instead to write advice columns and articles for the popular media and magazines such as *Sexology* (Stryker and Whittle, 2006), and was described as 'quasi-medical [and] quasi-scientific' by Ekins and King (2001, para. 16). Despite this, Cauldwell's contribution to sexology is considered important (Ekins and King, 2001) as his writing appeared in popular booklets and magazines which were easily accessible to wider society. These publications discussed taboo topics, which were once the realm of psychiatrists and institutions, with a more liberal attitude, enabling the notion of transsexualism to be spread into the wider consciousness; this ultimately helped the early development of a transgender subculture which began to eclipse the pathological writings of sexologists (Ekins and King, 2001).

Harry Benjamin: The Founding Father of Modern Attitudes to Gender Variance

At the time Cauldwell was writing for popular magazines, Harry Benjamin was working with transsexual patients. Benjamin was an American endocrinologist and sexologist who is most famous for his work on transsexualism. German born and heavily influenced by early German sexologists, Benjamin is seen by modern medicine as 'the founding father of contemporary western transsexualism' (Ekins, 2005: 306). Benjamin became a United States citizen during the First World War after attending a conference on tuberculosis. His ship back from New York to Germany was stopped by the British navy where he was given the choice to either be detained in a British camp as an 'enemy alien' or return to New York. Having chosen the latter, Benjamin set himself up and started practising in the USA. Benjamin only returned to Germany for research interests and to study, and these relationships would be the influence of his future interest in transsexual research (Stryker and Whittle, 2006).

Benjamin's initial medical interest was the research of hormones and their possible ability to refresh and prolong life. In the 1920s he became a pupil of Eugen Steinach, a leading hormone researcher. Steinach was a pioneer in his field having isolated the sex hormones testosterone and oestrogen and discovered their effects through experiments on the surgical sex change of rats (Hirschbein, 2000: 282). Benjamin worked with Steinach to discover the biological differences between the sex hormones and to develop procedures to 'rejuvenate' masculinity in older men (Stryker and Whittle, 2006). The operation, which involved a form of vasectomy so that the testes pumped semen back into the bloodstream, was vogue in the nineteen twenties and case studies were written about it in the popular press, such as 'The New York Times' (Hirschbein, 2000: 284).

In the 1930s, the fashion for surgical rejuvenation diminished (Hirschbein, 2000) and Benjamin's attention moved towards the study of gender. Whilst working with Steinach, Benjamin struck up a friendship with other notable German sexologists including Magnus Hirschfeld. Benjamin was aware of Hirschfeld's research on transvestites and ongoing work on transsexual surgery (Stryker and Whittle, 2006) and took this back to his practice where his interest developed. It was not until 1948, however, when Benjamin himself was 63 years old, that he saw his first transsexual

patient (Ekins, 2005). Transsexualism then became the focus of Benjamin's practice until his retirement in the 1970s (Schaefer and Wheeler, 1995).

Schaefer and Wheeler (1995) provide an outline of Benjamin's first ten transsexual cases, including the famous Christine Jorgensen. In their article Schaefer and Wheeler explain that they were colleagues and friends of Benjamin until his death in 1986, and shared in his frustrations of the lack of funding for research. Schaefer and Wheeler also explain that as a result of this, the only evidence for their work with gender dysphoric people was Benjamin's published books and the unpublished medical files of his patients, which were entrusted to Schaefer and Wheeler after his death and are still fairly secret. Also, Benjamin himself did not publish in high volumes and, as Ekins (2005) explains, his work was somewhat repetitive. This explains why there is a lack of academic literature on Benjamin's cases, particularly notable because he is considered to be the 'founding father' (Ekins, 2005: 306) of modern treatments for gender dysphoria.

Until Benjamin's interest in transsexualism became his career, most sexual study in the USA adopted Freudian theory and psychoanalysis (Bullough, 2000); as can be seen in Cauldwell's *Psychopathia Transsexualis*. Benjamin was a critic of Freud and psychoanalysis, something which was exacerbated by a meeting of the two where Freud accounted Benjamin's erectile dysfunction to latent homosexuality (Pfaefflin, 1997). Whereas Cauldwell was highly in opposition to transsexual surgery (Ekins, 2005), and pathologised transsexuals as psychotic and social parasites (Irving, 2013), Benjamin adopted a more person-centred approach. In order to diagnose and treat gender dysphoric people, Benjamin used his skills as a practising physician to listen, as Schaefer and Wheeler state;

'[he] treated all these patients as people and by respectfully listening to each individual voice, he learned from them what gender dysphoria was about.' (1995: 75)

This testimony of Benjamin's practices contrasts with previous sexologists' work with their patients. Sexologists before this point saw the people they were working with as case studies, immediately diagnosing and pathologising their experiences. Krafft-Ebing (1906) institutionalised his patients and, even though towards the end

of his life he began to advocate for homosexual rights, he still believed that cross-dressing and gender variant behaviour was psychologically abnormal. In fact, most sexologists and practitioners believed transsexualism and cross-dressing was a result of 'dysfunctional socialisation' (Hines, 2007: 12) of which clear evidence can be seen in Cauldwell's (1949) 'Psychopathia Transexualis'. Through these new practices Benjamin was able to develop the idea of gender dysphoria and, for the first time create a clear and well defined distinction between transvestitism and transsexualism (Hines, 2007).

This distinction appeared in Benjamin's own writing. First published in 1966, 'The Transsexual Phenomenon' was his attempt to bring ideas surrounding transsexualism into 1960s mainstream medicine. As he says in his preface:

'There is a challenge as well as a handicap in writing a book on a subject that is not yet covered in the medical literature. Transsexualism is such a subject. ... The challenge lies in the novelty of these observations and in the attempt to describe clinical pictures and events without preconceived notions, with no axes to grind and with no favorites to play. Conclusions, therefore, are "untainted", growing out of direct observance.'" (Benjamin, 1966: 4)

Benjamin learnt about gender dysphoria from his patients often through therapy, but also personal correspondence (Schaefer and Wheeler, 1995) which put him in a unique position. By listening, he was able to readdress the treatment of transsexualism, as it was widely believed that transsexualism was a psychiatric disorder which needed to be addressed by making the mind match the body. Benjamin followed in Hirschfeld's pioneering footsteps to make the body match the mind; 'if harmony between sex and gender is a precondition of psychic comfort and social acceptability, it 'makes sense' to achieve harmony by altering the body.' (King, 1996). Benjamin also describes the transsexual as being 'physically normal' (1966).

As well as gender dysphoria, Benjamin found that some of the psychopathic traits with which transsexuals were diagnosed were not the result of psychic abnormalities or sexual deviancy brought on by this, but developed as a result of the extreme discomfort of being gender variant (Benjamin, 1996). For example, Schaefer and

Wheeler discuss Barry who was Benjamin's first case he referred for genital surgery. Barry, who since the age of two had dressed and lived as a woman, presented some of the same 'psychopathic traits' of Cauldwell's case study Earl. He was prone to tantrums and periods of aggression and at one point, as Schaefer and Wheeler (1995) describe, after being refused surgery to become a woman, had become so violent he hospitalised his father. Also, in comparison to Earl, Barry was consumed by the idea of living permanently as, and physically becoming, his preferred gender, to the point where he 'was utterly unable to see the social impracticability of his desire and refused any alternative to surgical change' (Schaefer and Wheeler, 1995: 79). In relation to Earl's tried and failed attempt at procuring surgery, Cauldwell states 'if doctors would not do exactly as Earl wanted them to do, or if they could not, she would continue to do as she had done and...dress as a male and live as much the role of a male as possible' (1949: 277). Cauldwell described this behaviour as 'narcissistic' (*ibid*: 278), Benjamin recognised this as an outcry.

Benjamin and his colleagues, whilst trying to better the lives of transsexual people in the 1950s and 60s, did introduce a medical model of gender variance which is still pervasive today. The introduction of medical terminology such as transsexual came from this period. Additionally Benjamin was responsible for developing the term gender dysphoria in the 1970s (Hines, 2007) which medicalised gender identity as a disorder and enabled its inclusion in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, further equating gender identity with pathology. However, as treatment interventions for trans people developed, as well as a greater understanding of gender identity, the term gender dysphoria remained 'the key classificatory term' (Hines, 2007: 13) to refer to gender variance.

'From its inception in the 1970s, then, the concept of 'gender dysphoria' has guided understandings of, and practices towards, transgender. Therefore, it is not surprising that the central tenet of the concept of – dissonance between sex (the body) and gender identity (the mind) – figures large in many transgender narratives.' (Hines, 2007: 60)

What Hines highlights is a pervasive medical narrative. Sexologists in mid twentieth century coined terminology in response to a medicalised idea of gender variance,

however these are still pervasive today. Benjamin and his peers had a profound influence on how we understand gender identity today, and also introduced terminology which is still widely used.

Gender Variance in the Media

So far we have explored a medical and cultural history of gender variance. However, to further delve into lived experiences of trans identities throughout history, it is important to consider the media. Today, society's experience and knowledge of gender variance and trans identities, more often than not, comes from media consumption (McInroy and Craig, 2015); and this can be said for both trans and cis identifying people. This is also true throughout history, as both historical and contemporary media depictions have an impact on overall attitudes to gender variance, as well as an impact on the lives of trans people.

The rise of the popular press 'provid[ed] a shared lexicon for the public discussion of sex and scandal' (Oram, 2007: 6) and stories of cross-dressing and gender variance have been a regular part of that lexicon since the early twentieth century. Until this point, I have discussed how gender variance was written about in mostly academic and medical contexts, however, stories of cross-dressing and gender variance have been visible in popular press publications since the early 19th century.

Early reports of gender variance focussed on two aspects of the story; the idea of a deception, and the physical appearance of the person in question (Oram, 2007). In several regional publications throughout Tyneside and Merseyside in the 1900s and 1910s, the story of Robert Coulthard, also known as Jennie Gray, appeared. Coulthard was arrested for loitering with intent to commit an offence, however, his only crime seemed to be wearing women's attire. When he appeared in a mug shot and the dock, he was described as being 'stylishly dressed as a woman' (Rees, 2017). Furthermore, *The Liverpool Echo* reported that Coulthard was arrested for 'having led an immoral life' and that he wore 'clever make-up [which] caused both the officers to believe that he was a woman' (1916: 4). This reflects Oram's (2007) assertions about early reporting on gender variance as the articles which can be found about Coulthard describe his appearance using unnecessary adjectives. These further exaggerate what will already be a peculiar story and add to the novelty

value of Coulthard; he may be male, however his make-up is clever and his attire stylish.

Taking into account the discussion so far on the socio-medical development of gender variant identities, it is understandable that Coulthard's gender identity would not have been explicitly referred to in the press at the time. However, Rees (2017), a North East based historian and archivist, ascertains that it is likely Coulthard was gender variant to some degree, as further evidence of his life suggests he continued to live as a woman. Additionally, Coulthard had also admitted to wearing women's clothing from childhood (*ibid.*). Archival information on Coulthard's life is limited as he only appears in articles pertaining to criminal proceedings, so it was difficult for Rees to track his life further. However, this is by no means the only example of gender variance in early news reporting.

Oram (2007, 2016) highlights stories of women's gender-crossing. According to Oram (*ibid.*), women are mostly always referred to as 'masquerading'. For example, there are two decades between the stories of Adelaide Dallamore in 1912 who was 'charged with masquerading as a man' (Oram, 2007: 18), and Jack MacDonald/Madeline Findlay in 1932 whose 'masquerade deceived an Admiral' (*ibid.*: 74). The term masquerade endured in reporting until the 1950s (Oram, 2016) and helped create the idea that trans identities are deceitful and presented for titillation and entertainment of a mass audience.

The 1912 story of Adelaide Dallamore broke after she was arrested and her 'disguise' was discovered; much like Coulthard whose identity was reported on alongside criminal activities. However, as Oram outlines, the article in which Dallamore's identity was reported 'changed frequently throughout its coverage, switching between astonishment, puzzlement and sentimentality' (2016: 159). There is a difference in reporting on Coulthard and Dallamore as cross-dressing men was seen as morally reprehensible. Cross-dressing women were instead seen as 'masquerading' and their stories were romanticised (Oram, 2016). This led to the development of a familiar narrative of sensational discoveries of cross-dressing, which in turn influences the stories of gender variance which still appear in contemporary publications.

These themes still exist in modern day stories of gender variance, this will be analysed further within this thesis. In terms of historical media representations of gender variance, there was a shift which took place in conjunction with the developing medical aspects of gender identity. In the 1950s medical practices surrounding gender were developing with the acceptance by sexologists that gender dysphoria existed. Before this time, as explained above, gender variance had been reported as a deceitful action or as a peculiarity found in the Sunday tabloids to entertain readers. However, as attitudes shifted so did representations of gender variant people. Whilst still presented as a peculiarity, there was less questioning of morality, with people who had undergone pioneering surgical interventions becoming celebrities in their own right; for example Christine Jorgensen and April Ashley.

Transsexual Celebrity in the Mid Twentieth Century

Christine Jorgensen

In 1950 George William Jorgensen met Doctor Christian Hamburger, a renowned surgeon and endocrinologist, in Copenhagen whilst travelling to find treatment for his desire to become a woman. Hamburger took Jorgensen on as a patient and provided her with hormone treatment, psychiatric therapy and eventually complete genital castration. She would then become known as Christine Jorgensen (Bullough and Bullough, 1993; Meyerowitz, 2006).

After her return to the USA in 1953, Jorgensen was introduced to sexologist Harry Benjamin via mutual friends and was to become his seventh gender dysphoric patient (Schaefer and Wheeler, 1995). Jorgensen was to have a profound effect on Benjamin's work. In *The Transsexual Phenomenon* (1966), Benjamin explains that without Christine Jorgensen, the book would never have been conceived, as the media onslaught after she was outed as transsexual brought the issue of transsexualism to the forefront of the modern American society (and as a result the United Kingdom). The amount of publicity and media attention Jorgensen received, alongside her personal determination and courage to come out in an unknowing environment, was the most influential factor in her case (Schaefer and Wheeler, 1995). As Benjamin put it, '[w]ithout her courage...transsexualism might still be unknown... and might still be considered to be something barely on the fringe of medical science' (1966, 4).

At the encouragement of Benjamin, Jorgensen was to go on to advocate for transsexual rights and deliver seminars and workshops to educate wider society about living as a transsexual and its problems. She also gave psychological assistance to the many more people coming forward with gender dysphoria, following her sensationalised outing (Schaefer and Wheeler, 1995). Jorgensen used her knowledge and experiences to help the development of treatment and care for transsexual people and worked closely with Benjamin to contribute to the normalisation of transsexualism in society.

Overall, Jorgensen's experiences enabled transsexualism to gain a platform for recognition in wider society. This had a knock on effect of helping people 'self-diagnose' and seek help from medical professionals, who in turn gained funding for further research and study. Jorgenson initially shied away from the media after her outing (Schaefer and Wheeler, 1995), but then decided to use her sensational celebrity status as a force for change. Amongst all her efforts, perhaps her most influential action was to argue against the gender binary (Meyerowitz, 2006) and actively promote the idea of the gender spectrum (an idea already more popular in Europe due to Hirschfeld and Ellis). The argument for humans having both male and female characteristics would go on to influence modern academic ideas of gender which lead to theories such as Butler's (1990) gender performativity.

April Ashley

In the United Kingdom, the first person to be publically outed and sensationalised as having had sex reassignment surgery was April Ashley. Ashley was a sought after model with a successful career and marriage, however her story was sold to *The Sunday People* in 1961, which revealed her birth sex as male.

Ashley also set the precedent for transsexuals in English law prior to the commencement of the Gender Recognition Act in 2004 (Davy, 2011; Whittle, 2002). In the famous case known as *Corbett v Corbett*¹, Ashley's then husband, Arthur Corbett, filed for annulment of the marriage after its breakdown. However, in English law at that time, a marriage could not be annulled solely by mutual agreement (Davy,

¹ *Corbett v Corbett* [1970] 2 All ER 33.

2011) so Corbett changed tack and applied for annulment on the grounds that Ashley was born male and the marriage was therefore illegitimate. What followed was a case which saw the intimate details of Ashley's medical history closely examined and scrutinised. Ashley's 'true sex' was to be decided in court of law and this decision would not only impact the outcome of the annulment proceedings, but also have a profound effect on the legal standing of transsexual individuals for the following forty five years.

Whilst deciding Ashley's true sex, Judge Ormrod took into account three factors; (1) Chromosomal, (2) Gonadal (i.e. presence or absence of testes or ovaries) and (3) Genital (including internal sexual organs) (Davy, 2011). Based upon these factors, Ormrod decided that Ashley's true sex was male; she had male chromosomal sex, and male gonads and external genitalia before her surgery and she would be unable to have female gonads or genitals. Medical professionals at the time had put forward a fourth factor, that of psychological sex (Whittle, 2002) which was dismissed entirely by Judge Ormrod as psychologically Ashley was seen as transsexual, not female (Davy, 2011).

Ashley was judged biologically a man and therefore seen in the eyes of the law as man. Her marriage was annulled on the grounds that marriage is between a man and a woman and that consummation could not have really taken place due to Ashley's surgically constructed vagina (Whittle, 2002). It is this ruling, and Judge Ormrod's 'test' (Davy, 2011) for true sex, which dominated British law until the Gender Recognition Act of 2004.

Trans Exclusionary Radical Feminism and the 'Transsexual Empire'

Between the 1960s and 1980s there was what may be described as the golden age of the gender clinic in the United States of America (Schilt, 2010). After the research and treatment of gender dysphoria, through the work of Benjamin and his contemporaries, gender reassignment surgery became more readily available and the term 'transsexual' was used solely to describe people who had undergone surgery (Hines, 2007).

The first 'respectable' gender clinic opened at John Hopkins Hospital in 1965 and performed over 100 gender reassignment surgeries which were largely

experimental in practice (Witkin, 2014). The leads on these operations were psychologist John Money and surgeon Claude Migeon. John Money, a pioneering sexologist at the time working with intersex and hermaphrodite children, developed the concepts of gender and gender identity (Bullough, 2003a). Until then, the term gender had primarily been used to designate nouns into their linguistic categories (i.e. masculine, feminine and neutral), however Money used the concept of gender to identify femininity and masculinity in individuals regardless of their biological sex (*ibid.*). Money's concept of a gender identity prompted the profound questioning of the male-to female binary and saw the emergence of a new sociological concept; gender as a performance (Butler; 1990; West and Zimmerman, 1987), rather than an innate biological occurrence.

As people began to question gender in the 1980s, this saw a shift for transsexuals. Medically, with the concept of a 'gender identity' having cemented itself in medical discourse, transsexuals were able to be recognised and diagnosed and as a result, medical professionals had shifted their focus from debating the causes of gender dysphoria to treating those with it. In 1979 the Harry Benjamin International Gender Dysphoria Association (HBIGDA) was formed and was the first organisation devoted to the study and treatment of gender dysphoric individuals. The first organisation of its kind, the HBIGDA was instrumental in providing a 'professional consensus about the psychiatric, psychological, medical and surgical management' (Meyer *et al*, 2001: 1-2) of people with gender identity disorders; providing standard practices for anyone treating gender identity disorder. In addition to this, in 1980 transsexualism was included in the third edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-III) (Davey, 2011); whereas homosexuality had been removed in 1973 (Zucker and Spitzer, 2005).

Despite the medical advances, it seemed that legally transsexual people were in limbo. Either before or after surgery, transsexuals could live as their preferred gender identity and change their gender on passports and driving licenses, open new bank accounts in their preferred gender, and change their names by deed poll (Davy, 2011). However, national insurance and birth certificates were unable to be changed whether or not surgery had been undertaken. It seemed that superficially transsexuals could live as their preferred gender but they were unable to make it official in the eyes of the law. Without a birth certificate expressing their preferred

gender, transsexual people could not marry and would have to disclose their previous sex to employers or in applications for universities and loans etcetera. (Whittle, 2002; Davy, 2011).

This inequality left transsexual people vulnerable and at risk of hostility and attack from other areas of society. Most notably, and arguably most damaging for male to female (MtF) transsexuals, was the antagonism from some radical parts of the second wave feminist movement which staunchly believed in the gender binary. Before launching into a discussion on trans exclusionary radical feminism, I must briefly discuss feminism itself. Defining feminism is a difficult task as there are many subsets which are constantly changing and developing. I refer to feminism and its subsets throughout this research as well as suggest that the research itself takes a feminist standpoint. By this I mostly refer to the principles of postmodern and intersectional feminism, as they both align with my personal ideals as well as the aims of this research. However, this is not necessarily an exhaustive definition and even within these labels there are subsets to feminism. Postmodern ideas of feminism arise from Butler's (1990) performativity theory and the idea of a discursive construction of gender. Intersectional feminism, recognises how different forms of discrimination intersect with gender based discrimination. Both of these reflect my ideological standpoint and should be reflected within this research.

I also refer to radical, second wave or trans exclusionary feminism, and it is important to emphasise the meaning and differences of these feminist factions. Second wave feminism started with the women's liberation movement in the 1960s and brought important light into issues of gender based discrimination. Simply put, this movement split into two factions (Tong, 1993) liberal and radical. Historically, radical feminism calls for the reordering of society by eradication of male superiority and a deeply entrenched sex and gender system (Tong, 1993). Whilst radical feminism has its roots in the women's liberation movement, not all second-wave feminists are radical, and not all radical feminists are second wave.

Trans-exclusionary radical feminism is a sub set of radical feminism which denies trans' peoples identities (Raymond, 1994; Jeffreys, 1997). Ideologies surrounding gender variant people have been debated within radical feminism since the 1970s (Goldberg, 2014). In her 1979 (and 1994 reissue) work *The Transsexual Empire*,

Janice Raymond's ideas about transsexuals centre on the gender binary, and that gender identity is determined by biological sex; a complete contradiction to Money's fluid gender identity concept. This idea is shown in the text as Raymond refers to transsexual people as either 'male-to-constructed-females' (1994: 15) or female-to-constructed-male[s]' (1994: 25) dismissing the individual's preferred gender identity outright with a suggestion that it has been constructed either psychologically or societally; often in the case of MtF transsexuals, because of a patriarchal society.

Raymond (1994) ascertains that MtF transsexuals are a product of a patriarchal society where men objectify and control women and their bodies. Transsexuals take this one step further by transitioning, not just objectifying ciswomen but constructing fake female forms to be personally possessed and maintained by men. She suggests that many transitioning men, whilst happy to possess femininity, do not want to give away their masculinity; another facet of male privilege. Furthermore, in what is suggested to be the most inflammatory chapter of her book (Stryker and Whittle, 2006), 'Sappho by Surgery' (1994: 99-119), Raymond cements her views on MtF transsexuals by stating that '[a]ll transsexuals rape women's bodies by reducing the real female form to an artifact' (1994: 104). The common consensus amongst radical lesbian feminists at the time, which was appropriated by Raymond (1994), was that men who underwent gender reassignment surgery remained 'deviant men' (Stryker and Whittle, 2006) and would never really be women. It is believed that a MtF transsexual's outer female appearance would be used to gain entry to female only spaces in order to flaunt male aggression and authority over women.

The Transsexual Empire rejected transsexuals outright and perpetuated anti-transsexual prejudices from the standpoint of the academic feminist. It must be noted that whilst Raymond did not invent these prejudices, *The Empire* was instrumental in disseminating anti-transsexual discourses and justifications to a wider academic and popular audience (Stryker and Whittle, 2006). Halbertstam sums up Raymond's writings as 'lesbian feminist paranoias' (1998: 147), a view shared by Carol Riddell who published a critique of *The Transsexual Empire* aimed at both transgender and non-transgender communities. Throughout the article, Riddell (2006) actively refutes Raymond's overarching claim that transsexualism is a further way for men to maintain control over women's bodies by getting the reader

to consider the transsexual man which she accuses Raymond of disregarding (2006: 149). Instead, Raymond suggests that transsexual men are a 'token ... to promote the universalist argument that transsexualism is a supposed "human" problem' (1994: 27). In response, Riddell argues that throughout history and across cultures there have been records of gender variant and cross dressing behaviour in both men and women and, by ignoring transsexual men, Raymond nullifies her own argument that transsexualism is purely a product of deviant men. Furthermore, Riddell argues that to deny the transsexual man's existence in history and culture is to deny their humanity and sense of self. However Raymond perpetuates the idea that transsexual men have been coerced into changing sex by the patriarchal gender clinics to maintain the illusion that transsexualism is not just for men. Interestingly, she uses the word 'assimilate' (1994: 27) which suggests a lack of humanity and freedom of thought and suggests that in Raymond's eyes transsexual women are aggressive dominant men and transsexual men are passive impressionable robots. Does this not reflect the gender expectations of which radical feminists like Raymond are supposed to be opposed?

Much like Halbertstam (1997), Riddell suggests that Raymond's thinking is just 'paranoid fantasy' (Riddell, 2006: 151) and states that the book is 'dangerous to trans-sexuals because it does not treat [them] as human beings' (*ibid.*: 155). These extreme views reflect the views of other second wave feminists who disseminated opinions like this well into the 2000s (Withers, 2010). However, second wave feminist views, whilst damaging to the popular perception of transsexual people, also provided a platform for debates and responses from the transgender community and also none trans-exclusionary feminists, particularly concerning gender privilege and the use of women only spaces (Withers, 2010). Transgender communities emerged in the 1990s, developing from small private support networks into a transgender and transvestite consciousness (Whittle, 2000). These visible trans-communities began to emerge as a reaction against radical feminist views, such as those of Raymond, and developed further with the invention and popularisation of the internet. People were able to access information, seek help and find others quickly and anonymously (*ibid.*).

Contemporary Gender Variant Identities

Gaining Social, Cultural and Political Recognition

The term transgender came into modern parlance in the 1980s (MacKenzie, 1994) and is now widely recognised as an umbrella term to describe anyone who is gender variant. The conception of the term came as a direct result of the gender binary/spectrum debates of the 1980s and '90s and its beginning is attributed to Virginia Prince, a trans-activist, who was looking for a term to describe herself (Stryker, 2006) as she was neither a transvestite, periodically cross-dressing, or a transsexual who had undergone full genital surgery.

Transgender as a term offered a new sense of identity and community to gender variant people, and towards the 2000s, the transgender community grew stronger and more active in social and academic debates (Whittle, 2000). However, they still had stereotypes to overcome. The existence of transsexuals having been denied outright by second wave feminists, transgender people were suffering a backlash from the publishing of Raymond's (1994) work. The influence of this could be seen throughout other areas of society, as an increasingly sex-orientated media used transgender people to provide titillating scandal stories; no longer were transgender people the exotic other, but the subjects of seedy sex stories (Whittle, 2000). Furthermore, and perhaps most discouraging for modern transgender communities, early sexology had classed gender variant behaviour as symptomatic of homosexuality and there was still a large consensus amongst some medical professionals that this was the case (Whittle, 2000).

The introduction of the 2004 Gender Recognition Act (GRA) in the United Kingdom was a breakthrough for the British transgender community as it allowed trans people, for the first time, full legal recognition of their preferred gender. As a result, trans people were able to obtain a new birth certificate, legally marry and could live fully in their preferred gender identity. The act also protects trans people in official capacities, for example in section 22 (1) (Gender Recognition Act, 2004), it is outlined that it is an offence for anyone in an official position who may possess information regarding birth sex, to 'out' transgender people. Further to this, in section 22 (3) (b) (Gender Recognition Act, 2004), it explicitly mentions employers or prospective employers which gives transgender people added protection in employment.

The implementation of the act seems to be the ultimate in legal recognition for gender variant people in the eyes of the law and also cements gender dysphoria as a medical issue and not just a case of latent homosexuality, as can be seen in section 25 (Gender Recognition Act, 2004). However, as Whittle reminds us, the act was 'not perfect' (2006: 267) even though it was a step forward. Whittle compares the implementation of the GRA to that of the Abortion Act 1967. The role of Parliament should 'maximize the liberties of all with the least cost to others and the state' (Whittle, 2006: 268) and navigating the GRA (much like the Abortion Act) to ensure that trans peoples' rights were upheld whilst appeasing other groups, and ensuring no one's liberties were at stake, was complicated.

Whilst debating the act, the main group of opposition was the far right Christian Evangelicals who were staunchly against transitioning, and same sex marriage and families. Married trans people wishing to become legally recognised would ultimately end up in same sex relationships. To appease this, there was a short lived notion to sterilize people wishing to legally change gender, something which was later pointed out to be contravening the Human Rights Act, if not somewhat reflecting Nazi eugenics (Whittle, 2006). Ultimately, the decision reached was to ensure trans people divorced before seeking gender recognition, with the ability to remarry or obtain a civil partnership in their preferred gender, and enable a clause to exempt religious groups from offering marriages for transgender people. As Whittle says, it was 'an offer we could not afford to turn down' (2006: 271).

The GRA has moved the cultural, legal and medical recognition of transgender people forward. Justice Ormrod's test to determine sex in *Corbett v Corbett* was based on biology and did not recognise the fluidity of gender. Sex and gender were so intertwined that the decision also rested on whether or not Ashley could perform heterosexual intercourse, something that apparently could not be done with a constructed vagina (Tirohl and Bowers, 2006). The GRA was the first major step in unlocking the shackles of the biological gender binary in which transgender people have been trapped for decades. For the GRA, the physical attributes of the body in determining gender is irrelevant (Whittle and Turner, 2007) as the need to undergo medical procedures is not a prerequisite to gaining a gender recognition certificate

and therefore new birth certificate; furthermore, in the eyes of the law, a person's preferred gender becomes their sex (*ibid.*)

Gender Variance in UK Culture

Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, gender variant identities have been gaining recognition. As discussed above, there has been an influx of terminology designated to gender variant identities and laws passed to protect trans people. Culturally gender variance is seen more in news media, on our televisions and in popular fictional and non-fictional shows.

The cultural representation of trans people on the big and small screen is not a new phenomenon and had been an interest of film makers since the mid twentieth century (Phillips, 2006). In UK television culture, there was the character Hayley, a trans woman who appeared in the popular soap *Coronation Street* in 1998. Originally cast as a joke character in a programme which is reflective of a normative culture (Phillips, 2006), Hayley went on to become one of the most endeared characters in the soap. Yet, as Phillips (2006) explains, her character was presented in such a comic way with her on screen partner, that the importance of her gender identity was eroded over time. In an interview with Radio Times, Hayley Cropper actor Julie Hesmondhalgh acknowledges that, whilst the character may have provided some good in the representation of gender variance, '[Hesmondhalgh] playing Hayley now would be an anachronism' (2017: para. 15). Today we are seeing an increasing amount of shows in which gender identity and transitioning is at the forefront of a character's identity, however there are still debates and issues surrounding the representation of trans and gender variant people. *Coronation Street's* Hayley was played by cis actress Julie Hesmondhalgh, which when she was cast twenty years ago, was acceptable. However, as visibility and cultural representations of transgender people have increased, the amount of trans people playing trans characters has not.

One of the most recent well known films about a trans person was *The Danish Girl*, which was released into mainstream cinemas in 2015. As discussed briefly above, *The Danish Girl* follows a fictionalised account of Lili Elbe's transition and her changing relationship with her wife. However, the film was widely criticised for, amongst other things, its casting of cis actor Eddie Redmayne as Lili. When you

consider these two facts, its fictionalised account of Lili's life and the casting of a cis actor, it can be suggested that the film was made for the 'cis gaze' rather than as an accurate representation of a trans pioneer (Keegan, 2016). This can be seen throughout the film itself, which has the look and the feel of historical fiction, with sumptuous settings and costumes used to appeal to a mass audience. In addition, the film moves away from the depiction of Lili as an independent agent (*The Danish Girl*, 2015) and constantly shifts the focus from Lili's subjective experience of transitioning to her wife's reaction to it. Keegan further points out that the film is actually 'defraud[ing] transgender viewers of access to a more accurate history' (2016: 55) as it purports to be an accurate portrayal of LGBT history. Lili's story is one of early gender variance with surgical intervention, yet she is portrayed as being the first and only person to have had surgery at that time. Despite the destruction of the Dresden Women's Clinic's records we however know that Hirschfeld and his contemporaries were treating gender variance at the time of Elbe's life (Keegan, 2016; Hill, 2005; Bullough, 2003).

The Danish Girl was released with a background of increasing cultural knowledge, representation, and acceptance of gender variance, however, the film is still problematic; as is the industry. A study done by GLAAD (2017) on studio responsibility and representation of LGBT people on screen, stated that there was one mainstream film release which included a transgender character and that character was played by a cis actor and played primarily for comedic effect (*Zoolander 2*, 2016). However, on the small screen, representations of trans people are making a little more progress. In 2014 the BBC started a search for talent to develop a show based on the transgender community. The result was *Boy Meets Girl* (BBC, 2018) which follows the blossoming relationship between Judy, a trans woman, and Leo a cis man. This show was culturally significant for many reasons. Firstly, Judy was played by trans actress Rebecca Root, an important choice as the show was released amidst a (and still continuing) cultural debate about cis gender actors playing trans characters. Additionally, the show placed gender variance in the context of the traditional sitcom and, as a result, in the context of ordinary everyday life. The show's title itself underlines this with the purpose use of binary gender categories reflective of a heteronormative television trope. The show is not without its problems however, as Paris Lees (2015) writes, it was shown at a time

when UK television is questioning the way in which trans people are being represented on screen.

'Boy Meets Girl', set in the North East of England, was being produced when I first started interviewing for this research. This is reflective of the cultural shift being seen in the way trans people are represented on film, as my research into lived experiences of trans people is coinciding with a greater visibility of gender variance. We have briefly discussed representations of gender variance in a UK cultural context, with particular reference to film and television. However it is important to remember that cinematic and television representations, however empathetic and truthful, do not necessarily represent the everyday experiences of trans people.

Conclusion

The history of transgender identities and gender variance is a long and uncomfortable one. Early sexologists were responsible for the attribution of gendered characteristics to homosexuality (Krafft-Ebing, 1906), for example, the masculine female (Halbertstam, 1998). This is something which dominated cultural, medical and legal discourse for over a hundred years, even throughout the emerging work of Harry Benjamin in the '60s and '70s. As a result of these early theories, sexuality and gender could not, or would not, be separated. This attitude was the deciding factor in the seminal case of *Corbett v Corbett* which was responsible for Justice Ormrod's test for true sex, and was to dictate similar cases until the implementation of the GRA in 2004.

Transgender people, not equal in the eyes of the law, were also subject to further discrimination throughout society with the rise of some radical trans exclusionary facets of second wave feminism in the '70s. Radical feminist writers and academics who were staunchly opposed to transgender people, endorsed the restrictive gender binary, believing, much like Justice Ormrod, that gender was purely biological. The feminist agenda saw further arguments against transsexualism by arguing that MtF transsexuals were 'deviant men' and FtM transsexuals were 'passive agents' of the patriarchy (Raymond, 1994). This was both damaging and motivating to transgender people, as the opinions were disseminated widely and publicly, but it sparked a wide backlash from the newly emerging transgender communities (Whittle, 2000; Riddel,

2010). Legally, transgender people were still not recognised, however, they could fight to be recognised in society.

The implementation of the GRA was a step forward for transgender people as it legitimised their circumstances. Legally, people could be recognised as their preferred gender and gender dysphoria has also entered legal discourse. However, it is a decade since the GRA was passed and the lives of the trans community are still changing. Today, transgender people are more recognised and accepted in the mainstream, with an influx of well-known and glamorous transgender celebrities, television shows and films. However, the everyday lives and experiences of ordinary people are not documented. Away from the glamour and celebrity there are people who are navigating their transitions alongside the prejudices thrown up by sexologists and medical professionals before them. The GRA is helpful in their plight, however the UK still has a long way to go to really recognise the gender variant in society.

Chapter Three

Methodology

Introduction

In this chapter I will outline the specific methods of analysis used for this research and how these methods were chosen. I will also discuss the ethical and practical considerations for this research whilst also considering my own place as a researcher. Because of the nature of the research, it is important to consider carefully data collection in terms of being fair and ethical, as well as providing an authentic and candid account of the experiences of the participants. Gender identity can be a sensitive subject, so I begin by discussing how I collected the data and any ethical considerations to be taken.

The next section outlines the specific methods of data collection and how these were arrived at. Throughout the interview and transcription process, these methods were continuously questioned and changed so that the most appropriate model may fit. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) has always been the basis for analysis since the research started, however as it is a flexible and multidisciplinary approach to data analysis, I was able to tailor the model to suit the data. This, and the specific methods of Membership Categorisation Analysis and Narrative Analysis are discussed here, with reference to how they fit with both the data and the theories as discussed in the previous chapter. I shall begin by discussing the cultural contexts of the interviews and how, I as a researcher, may play a part in the shaping of the data.

Data Collection

Placing Myself as a Researcher

Silverschanz (2009) explains that by researching LGBT lives, the culture of research changes and as a result, there are specific ethical and practical considerations that should be undertaken. Despite more visibility in society, the trans community is still one of the most marginalised (Women and Equalities Committee, 2016), and as a result, research participants were potentially at a greater risk of exploitation. Therefore, it is particularly important for me, as an outsider to the LGBT community, to ensure that data collection was conducted responsibly.

Within this research, I aim to question both hetero- and cisnormative assumptions which can often be found in mainstream cultural enquiry. As Silverschanz (2009:8) explains, '[o]ften when non-heterosexual lives are considered in a more favourable light, the assumption is made that daily functioning proceeds in ways similar to the lives that of heterosexuals'. This can be extended to trans people as the comparison of 'well-functioning' trans lives to everyday cisgender lives assumes that there is only one model of existence; the cisnormative model. Conducting research under this assumption at best, limits the researcher from finding new patterns and models, and at worst damages the community and individuals taking part in the research.

McClennen (2009), a non-LGBT academic researching domestic violence in LGBT relationships, describes herself as a 'non-affiliated' (2009: 223) researcher. As a cis female, I am not affiliated to the community I am researching, so therefore as McClennen (2009) suggests, I need to exercise transparency and sensitivity to build trust and overcome challenges. A lack of clarity on researcher strategies not only invalidates the research but also may have negative impacts on the community being researched.

Representation; Representing Participants

Representation is defined by the Oxford Dictionaries (2019) as 'the action of speaking or acting on behalf of someone or the state of being so represented', or 'the description or portrayal of someone or something in a particular way'. Simply put, in conducting this research I am speaking on behalf of my participants as well as portraying their experiences. Representation, however, is described by Webb as a 'slippery term' (2009: 7) as its meaning for cultural studies is very complex and nuanced. Having considered how I place myself as a researcher, it is important to consider how I may represent my participants. Stuart Hall asks '[h]ow do we represent people and places which are significantly different from us?' (Hall, 2012: 215); a salient question for myself as a researcher. As I have discussed above I am a 'non-affiliated' (McClennan, 2009: 223) researcher, not being a member of the community which I am researching and having lived without the shared experiences of the community. Consequently, there are ethical considerations to be made for how I will represent my participants in order to reflect their experiences adequately.

The words I have used, as outlined in the beginning of this thesis, have all been carefully considered. Language is an important part of representation as that is how we give meaning to things (Hall, 2014), enabling us to make sense of the world. The quotations, categories and labels used throughout this research represent the participants as they are how the participants represent (and understand) themselves. As a result, to change or use terms which are known to be out-dated or inappropriate, would not be a fair representation of the experiences of the participants; language itself is a representational system (Webb, 2009) so the words the participants use, whilst potentially limiting, are the most appropriate representations of their experiences.

Gender identity is an abstract concept, and how it is represented through language helps form wider society's understanding of the concept. As Umeogu and Ifeoma outline, meaning does not 'inhere in things rather it is constructed, produced and understood in relation to oneself' (2012: 130 -131). When consuming texts, we understand it in relation to our own experiences, yet when we encounter a text, we do not see 'reality', but someone's version of it. To someone, like myself, whose understanding of gender identity primarily comes from the consumption of media, it is easy to believe that these texts are representative of a community. The outdated and inappropriate terms used become part of a wider discourse which solidifies over time to create a reality (Butler, 1990).

According to Hall (2013: 1), 'representation connects meaning and language to culture', it is an essential part of how we produce and exchange meaning. For example, this research represents a community with the aim of producing meaning surrounding their experiences. This written thesis, therefore, is a way of exchanging meaning. How I represent my participants in this thesis is an extremely important issue as, not only does it reflect my attitude as a researcher towards my participants, but also wider attitudes towards gender variant people. Webb (2009) uses the example of how women are represented in film can convey the filmmaker's attitude towards women, as well as how women are understood and viewed in a wider social context. The same can be said for how I represent my participants' experiences; this research will convey my attitude towards gender variance, as well as contribute to how gender variant people are viewed in wider society. Therefore I have a responsibility to accurately and honestly depict what they tell me, as well as

recognise that, as a cis person, I will have had experiences and privileges my participants may not have.

As I have reiterated throughout this and other chapters, one of my aims in writing this research was to present the experiences of my participants in a non-biased way. As a heterosexual cis gender female, I am in a position of privilege, not having to either question my gender identity or sexuality; or even be questioned by wider society. However, as Barker *et al.* state 'there has been a marked tendency in past qualitative research, for writers to co-opt trans experience for their own ends' (2012: 70). They argue that queer theory has historically used trans experience to support postmodern theories about gender fluidity; yet there is also diametrically opposing research which uses trans experiences to demonstrate heteronormativity within trans communities. Going in to this research I have no agenda. I do not want to 'co-opt' my participants' experiences for 'my own ends', rather represent them for what they are within a framework of critical discourse analysis. I am aware that I will also be exploring wider representations of trans people from British media outlets and, until I began working at The Albert Kennedy Trust and like the majority of wider society (McInroy and Craig, 2017), my conceptions of trans identity came from media consumption.

Written representations of speech have the capacity to influence reader attitudes towards the social, ethnic and even intellectual status of the speaker. Preston (1985) claims in his study *The Li'l Abner Syndrome* that the use of nonstandard respellings of words, whilst to the researcher or writer may merely be indicative of accent or pronunciation, actually produces a false impression of the speaker. In discussing this, Preston highlights three types of respelling used; 'allegro speech', 'dialect respellings' and 'eye-dialect' (1985: 328). To the reporter, each of these serves a purpose. Allegro speech is used to represent the rapidity and informality of speech in conversation, for example 'want to' becomes 'wanna'. Dialect respellings are nonstandard spellings of words which attempt to capture dialectic and accent variations in speech, for example in Geordie parlance 'don't' or 'do not' could be represented as 'divent' (Graham, 1987: 17). Finally, whilst dialect respellings attempt to represent phonological differences, eye-dialect forms do not have any phonological differences from their standard written equivalent, for example 'says' can be represented as 'sez'. (Preston, 1985: 328).

These forms of spelling and speech representation are often used as a literary technique, hence Preston's references to *Li'l Abner*, a comic strip in which non-standard spellings are purposely used to present caricatures (Cameron, 2001). This can also be seen in myriad literary texts, used purposely to influence a reader about the state of a character. However, as Preston highlights:

'Though academic respellings seldom mar intelligibility, they all create a false impression of the speaker, or, worse, they suggest a negative or condescending attitude by the reporter towards his or her informant.' (1985: 329)

The participants, as I will outline in their brief biographies later on in this chapter, are all based in the North East. Yet some are native to the area and some have moved here as adults; often for further or higher education. As a result, the participants' accents are mixed and each will need thorough explaining before attempting to represent them on paper. This research is based on lived experiences, not accent or dialect variations. Taking the above into consideration, it seems that if I do endeavour to represent participants' accents using the linguistic devices as highlighted by Preston (1985), I open them up to unnecessary regional and social stereotyping. As I have outlined previously, I have conducted this research with an aim to reduce bias and influence on the part of my participants. As a result, I have consciously chosen not to transcribe participants' speech with anything other than standard written English.

Considerations for Data Collection

I decided to take an inductive approach to data collection and analysis. This approach was influenced by, if not explicitly using, the principles of Orientalism and Grounded theory. In its simplest terms, Orientalism is the study of the East with a Western perspective. As historically the West has colonised and dominated the Eastern world, discourses and fictions have arisen of the East which depicts them as the other (Said, 1978). This way of thinking can be seen in narratives about trans people where cisnormative models have dominated society to the point at which trans communities have been 'othered'. Like the East and West binary in Said's

(1978) Orientalism, there has developed a cis and trans binary whereby trans communities are homogenised and defined by dominant cisnormative narratives.

Taking the above as a starting point, I looked at utilising grounded theory as a methodology. Grounded theory is a method of research which is used when the researcher's fundamental aim is to generate theory from data (Strauss and Corbin, 1997). The aim of my own research is to generate theory from data, as the culture and community which I am researching has not previously been studied; consequently there is not data enough to be able to provide an initial hypothesis. Additionally, as an outsider to the community I am researching, I feel it would be unethical to hypothesise about a community whose life experiences differ so fundamentally from my own. In exploring grounded theory further, I found that there were principles to the methodology which enabled me to consider and address my positionality as a researcher.

Grounded theory was developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) in reaction to sociology's 'over emphasis ... on the verification of theory' (*ibid*: 1) which, Glaser and Strauss argued, provided the backbone to university sociology departments the world over. Indeed, in their 1967 publication *The Discovery of Grounded theory*, Glaser and Strauss suggested that there was an assumption within sociology that predecessors to the discipline had generated enough theory on social life 'to last for a long while' (1967: 12). Grounded theory sought to rectify this assumption by championing the discovery of new theory and perspectives which came from 'grounded' data. This data was 'rooted in first-hand evidence – the problems, actions, symbols, and aspirations of the people being studied' (Hadley, 2017: 3-4).

The basic process of data collection and analysis across differing grounded theory paradigms is similar. Grounded theory methodology starts with data collection, and begins the process of analysis as soon as the first sets of data is collected (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Strauss and Corbin, 1997; Hadley, 2017; Charmanz, 2008). This method highlights issues that may need exploring further and can be incorporated into further data collection. Overall, the development and identification of categories is part of the analysis process, and this continues until either no new or relevant data emerges (Strauss and Corbin, 1997). This is in contrast to sociology's tendency towards the verification of existing theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), as it actively

tests and retests data as it emerges. This theoretical saturation has become a fundamental aspect of grounded theory; the point at which data collection is supposed to stop.

What will become known as traditional, or classic, grounded theory was designed to reduce researcher bias in sociological studies. This approach to data collection allowed very little or no previous reading around the subject, which was designed to enable new theory to be generated around the most salient aspects of the data (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). The rationale behind this approach was that there were no preconceived ideas and the researcher does not run the risk of influencing data to fit with pre-existing theory, whether consciously or not (Mills *et al*, 2006; Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Furthermore, within this method, data collection and analysis is merged. Whilst collecting data, grounded theory enables a researcher to start analysing and coding at the same time which enables a progressive identification and integration of categories (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Charmaz, 2014).

Since its inception, however, grounded theory has become polarised. Glaser and Strauss, the original proposers of this method of data collection and analysis, split and each proposed new ways in which this method can be implemented. Glaser carried on with traditional, stricter grounded theory which does not make allowances for initial theoretical knowledge before data collection, allowing for insights to 'emerge' throughout the analytical process (Kelle, 2005). Strauss, however, teamed up with Corbin (1997) to produce what might be called a 'coding paradigm' (Kelle, 2005: no pagination) in order to provide some more structure to the data analysis process.

As Grounded theory has developed further since its beginning, there has emerged variations on the methodology and, over the years, there has been debates about which one should take precedence (O'Connor *et al.*, 2018). Charmaz (2014) moves away from classic grounded theory to what has become known as constructivist grounded theory. This method, whilst acknowledging the principles of 'data first, theory later', criticises classic grounded theory for its assumptions of a neutral observer:

'[Classic] versions of grounded theory assume a single reality that a passive, neutral observer discovers through value-free inquiry. Assumptions of objectivity and neutrality make data selection, collection, and representation unproblematic; they become givens, rather than constructions that occur during the research process...'
(Charmaz, 2008: 401 – 402).

Here, Charmaz makes a salient observation about classic grounded theory which has informed my decision to take a flexible approach, and pick and choose the principles of grounded theory I would use. As discussed above, I have considered quite thoroughly how I place myself as a researcher and acknowledge that I am not an unbiased observer of my participants, rather a co-creator of knowledge. Being an outsider to the community, and my participants' knowledge of this, may influence their responses to my interview questions, and even myself as a person. For example, in her interview, Sophie answered a question freely admitting that in another circumstance she would answer differently. Sophie acknowledged that the context of the interview setting and having me as an interviewer actively changed her answer. This, in itself, carries meaning and provides cultural significance.

Constructivist grounded theory marries well with discourse analysis as both methods work on the fundamental principle that meaning is constructed, situated, and negotiated (Wertz *et al.*, 2011). This thesis works on the basis that '[l]anguage users actively engage in text and talk not only as speakers, writers, listeners or readers, but also as *members* of social categories' (Van Dijk, 1997: 3 italics in original). This was clear in the interviews with my participants. We were part of social categories, both self-imposed and imposed upon us, and throughout the process we negotiated these and deconstructed these categories; throughout recognising that I was not a neutral observer. Furthermore, both discourse analysis and constructivist grounded theory see research as a 'continuing process' (Wertz *et al.*, 2011: 298) which views talk as meaningful social interaction (*ibid*; Van Dijk, 1997). This meaningful social interaction can manifest as spontaneous, natural talk, as well as in more formal settings. Gathering data from research interviews, whereby some talk may be elicited or manufactured, as well as from other sources like formal dialogues or written documents, is acceptable in both critical discourse analysis and constructivist grounded theory. This fits well into the overall cultural studies

discipline which underpins this thesis, as all types of interaction as part of data collection carry meaning and I am as much a part of the data as my participants.

Having briefly explored grounded theory as a methodology, it was clear that I would cherry pick certain aspects and principles to use whilst collecting and analysing data. One fundamental difference, specifically to classic grounded theory, is the idea of going in to a research situation without any prior theoretical knowledge (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Principally, I wanted to go into the research interviews with as little bias as possible, and I understand why there may be concerns of researcher bias in the data if one were to research a topic beforehand. However in this instance, I thought it was prudent to research gender and transgender identities in a cultural context before conducting the interviews. This is particularly important because ostensibly I am heterosexual and cis female, and therefore have what Silverschanz describes as 'invisible privilege' (2009: 10). Having grown up mostly without realising I have a gender identity and sexual orientation, I have generally fit within society's norms and not had to question my identity. This questioning is something which my participants will have spent their lives doing. To go into the research interviews and be uneducated about trans history, culture, and current issues would most likely alienate participants and deter any future involvement by individuals and organisations. On the other hand, to go into research interviews with a predetermined theory to prove or disprove would skew the data in favour of my own cisnormative experiences and detract from the experiences of the research participants.

By acknowledging this, I can ensure that as a researcher I do not let any potential preconceptions overtake my research aims, yet avoid hostility by becoming more knowledgeable about the trans community and its history. As a researcher who is not a member of the community being researched, it is particularly important I am overtly aware of my own assumptions and biases. As Charmanz (2008) argues, reality is not objective and that knowledge is co-constructed between researcher and participants. By recognising this, constructivist grounded theory offers researchers a 'frame to clarify their starting assumptions' (*ibid.*: 402) and, by researching the history of trans and gender variant identities, I provide myself with enough history to be legitimate for my participants whilst also avoiding bias. Like

critical discourse analysis, this approach allows a researcher to acknowledge their positionality and influence on data collection.

Another aspect of grounded theory I decided to use was the process of analysing data straight away. As soon as I had finished my first interview, I had begun the transcription and coding process. This enabled me not only to become familiar with my data, but also pick out initially interesting categories and themes which I was able to refer to in subsequent interviews. This was also particularly important as I had a small number of interviews to conduct (especially when compared to sociological studies), and it was important to discover what I could initially be able to discuss in further interviews. Unlike Strauss and Corbin (1997) I used no structure to coding, preferring a more organic approach to data analysis which aligns more with Glaser's traditional approach. Again, imposing a coding structure could potentially force data emergence, something which I was keen to avoid.

As well as the principles of grounded theory, I knew that Critical Discourse Analysis would also be an approach to data analysis. As a result I had to consider carefully what form my data would take. Initially I proposed to compare experiences of trans identities as depicted in the British print media, and then engage with focus groups of trans individuals about their experiences. However, after taking into account ethical and personal considerations, it was decided early on that focus groups would not be the most appropriate form of spoken data collection.

There are ethical considerations for the maintenance of privacy in focus groups (Morgan, 1998), particularly as the participants would know who else had taken part. There is no official estimate of the number of gender variant people, but in 2011 the Gender Identity and Research Society (GIREs, 2011; Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2016) estimated that there were between 300 000 and 500 000 trans people in the United Kingdom. Even though this number is likely to have changed in the interim six years and at the time it was largely considered to be a conservative estimate (*ibid.*), it is still less than one percent (approximately 0.8%) of the population of the U.K. in 2011. According to the Office of National Statistics (2013), the North East of England is the lowest populated region in the U.K. so the number of gender variant people in the North East will be relatively small. In addition to this, the number of support and community groups which trans people can access in the

North East is significantly lower than its regional neighbours (Gender Identity Research and Education Society, 2017). As a result of this I am limited to where I can find participants, and, as the North East trans community is relatively small, there is a higher chance of participants knowing one another previously. This in itself is not ethically problematic, the problems may arise from the sensitive subject matter; it may be difficult for people who know someone in the group to open up, or they may feel that they cannot drop out if the discussion provokes distress.

Gender identity can be a sensitive subject for some, and the focus groups would have centred on experiences with gender and society's preconceptions. However, even with the participants fully aware of the nature of focus groups, there may be subjects that arise which could prompt distress. If someone was in distress, I would not be able to help them. I do not possess the skillset to help with participant distress and will need to focus on mediating the group. If the situation did arise, I would be unable to take my attention away from the rest of the group. Also, at this point I did not have access to a suitable venue for interviews, so a situation may arise where a participant in need of help leaves without any signposting of where to access. Taking these things into consideration, it was agreed that the risk for participants was greater than the need for group discussion. This project was also reviewed by the Research Ethics Group (REG) at the University of Sunderland where this research took place. It is the policy of the REG that all research involving human participants and this study was subjected to scrutiny to ensure ethical rigour. During the process, the necessity for focus groups was questioned as, as mentioned previously, gender identity is a sensitive subject for some people.

At this point, it was decided that one-to-one semi-structured interviews would be a more appropriate form of data collection. Also, the textual data from print media sources would be a secondary source and not a primary source. Using print media as a primary source is useful for media based research, however, I wanted to focus on the lived experiences of my participants. By using media as a basis for comparison, I detract from the lived experiences; instead of asking 'here is what the media says, is it true?' I want to ask, 'what are your experiences, what do you think about these media representations?' This then places the importance of the participants' experiences at the centre of the research.

There is still a place for news media in this project however. Media discourses hold what Fairclough calls 'hidden power' (1989: 49), influencing its audience according to its ideology. More often than not an individual's knowledge of trans identities comes from media consumption, and these representations not only influence society but also have an impact on trans people's lives (McInroy and Craig, 2015). As a result, I gathered opinions from the participants about certain articles about transgender people, and this was done in the last section of the interview once they had a chance to tell their stories. In the pilot interview, I presented the articles there and asked the participant to comment. This proved to be clumsy and wasted time as the participant read the articles. After this I sent the articles ahead of each interview.

Sourcing Participants and Interview Processes

Before sourcing participants, I spoke to trans support groups and professionals in the North East who were able to offer invaluable advice about approaching the topic and approaching potential participants. In addition to this, I was invited to speak to members of Tyne Trans (now operating as Be: Trans Support and Development North) about the research project. The peer support group was interested to hear about the research and was also able to advise me on issues they saw arising from the proposal; in particular the stipulation that to take part, a participant must have gone through, be going through, or have the intention of gender reassignment surgery. The idea behind this stipulation was firstly a naïve way to narrow down the field of participants, and secondly so that participants were able to answer questions on gender services in the North East. After meeting with Tyne Trans's peer support group it became clear that this stipulation was an unnecessary barrier and an example of my own subconscious cisnormative assumptions, i.e. that most trans people have surgery. Through these interventions, I was able to correct my potentially offensive mistakes and remove unnecessary barriers for willing participants, creating a more inclusive environment for participants with the help of support group consultation.

Another potential issue which arose from the meeting with Tyne Trans, was my use of trans*. At this point I had done some preliminary and basic research on correct or preferred terminology when writing about trans people and found that on a number of personal websites and blogs, trans* was increasingly being used. Infographics

and posts, such as Ryan (2014) and Killermann (2015), state that the use of the asterisk finds its origins in computational language (specifically Boolean Search) where the asterisk represents a wildcard, i.e. when using the search term 'trans*', results will bring up words where trans is a prefix. Essentially then, trans* becomes inclusive of all gender variant identities. However, I was questioned about this by members of Tyne Trans's peer support group who found the term to be offensive because of its origins I was not aware of. It was explained that trans* is a potentially transmisogynistic term which may have been brought into use by trans people assigned male at birth as a way to suppress trans women's experiences. Also, the term transgender itself is used to describe anybody whose gender identity is not what was assigned at birth, so the need for an asterisk is redundant for inclusion of other gender variant identities outside of trans male and trans female (Gabriel, 2014; Trans Student Educational Resources, 2017).

As a result, I decided to stop using trans* in any writing pertaining to this research, unless specifically necessary. From this I was also made more aware of the necessity to be led by the participants in terms of names, terminology and pronouns, instead of using terms which may seem on the surface to be acceptable but hold problematic origins of which I had not researched properly. Because of this, one of the first questions I was able to ask was the participant's preference for pronouns and terms, and to ask them how they would describe their gender identity. In addition, I was able to ask about general opinions of the use of trans*. This somewhat shaped the interview into a discussion of terminology and provided rich data on the names and naming practices of my participants; which comprises the first of the three analysis chapters included in this research.

Participants were gathered from a number of LGBT organisations in the North East as well as the LGBT societies of North East based universities and colleges, all of which were happy to advertise my research. The only stipulation for participants at this point was they self-identified as trans. I used the term 'trans' purposefully as trans is becoming more frequently used as an umbrella term for anyone expressing gender variance. As a result, anyone who expressed gender variance was able to take part, however the commonality between the participants is that they all experience gender dysphoria; namely the condition in which a person feels there is incongruity between their assigned biological sex and their gender identity (NHS

Choices, 2014). Overall, I sourced five participants; Donna, Michael, Sophie, Rachel, and Terri.

In order to maintain transparency, participants were offered the chance to see the interview questions in advance and also the finished transcript. This enabled further comment on anything that was written. Donna, Sophie and Rachel all opted to see their finished transcripts, and Sophie asked to see the questions in advance. All interviews were conducted at MESMAC in Newcastle City Centre or Hart Gables in Hartlepool, both of which are LGBT specific organisations. The organisations were able to provide a confidential and safe space for the interviews to be conducted in, which was particularly important for both the participants and myself. MESMAC and Hart Gables are both LGBT safe spaces, and both had trans support groups running during the period of the interviews. As a result, if there was any danger or the participant felt uncomfortable, there were people in the office to assist. Also, there were panic buttons in the rooms used at MESMAC and help and information at each site.

Before each interview, participants were sent a participant information sheet and consent form and if requested, a copy of the interview questions. The participant information sheet outlined the nature of the research, risks and benefits, confidentiality, and other pertinent information. Before each interview commenced, I went through the information sheet with participants ensuring they understood what the research and interview may entail then asked them to sign a consent form if they wished to continue. These forms can be found in the appendix. Each interview was voice recorded using a dictation machine, with the consent of the participants. After each interview the recordings were downloaded onto my computer hard drive, deleted off the dictation machine and stored offline in password protected documents only I had access to.

At the beginning of each interview, I set out by explaining my research standpoint and why I am interested in this area. Also, I made clear to them that I was there to learn; the participants were the experts and they were able to correct me at any point if they felt I was erroneous in my understanding of their identities, and other gender variant identities. Every person interviewed was asked how they define themselves in terms of their gender identity and which pronouns and terms they

prefer, which I used throughout. I tried not to make presuppositions about the participants, and on the few occasions I did I was able to correct myself, or the participants were. This transparency of my intentions helped build a strong sense of trust between the participants and me, making the interview process much more comfortable.

The interviews themselves were shaped by each participant. As it was my intention to uncover theory from the data when sourced, and make the interviews as relaxed as possible, a completely informal and exploratory interview was considered. An informal interview is used when a researcher does not know about the topic and to collect data for further interviews (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016), however I was unable to conduct further interviews and it was important I was knowledgeable about gender variance to avoid potentially alienating participants. As a result, a semi-structured interview technique seemed most appropriate as I was able to finalise key questions before the interview, also allowing for prompts and tangents ensuring a relaxed atmosphere. In addition, I could gather certain information about each participant, for comparative purposes, by the use of these key questions.

As Galletta (2013) outlines, effective interviewing takes equal amounts of preparation and flexibility. As an interviewer, I must be prepared with questions and knowledgeable about the research topic and to also recognise that a research interview is still a formal process. In addition, I need to be able to adapt the interviews to each participant without straying off topic. One of the disadvantages of semi-structured interviews is the risk of taking an off topic tangent. Because I am listening to a participant's story in 'real time', I need to be able to judge the right times to provoke or interrupt unfolding narratives without disrupting the flow of the interview (Galletta, 2013). This issue was one of the issues which emerged when I conducted a pilot interview.

Of the six interviews collected, one was a pilot and five will be used for the main analysis. Each were one and a half to two hours long. The pilot interview was conducted first with a participant called Jamie. I used this interview to ascertain if there would be any issues with the questions and format of the interviews. As a result, two main changes were made. Firstly, I realised I had forgotten to ask basic demographic information, namely the age of the participant, which was then

included in subsequent interviews. Secondly, I asked questions regarding the media and presented the participant with news stories for reference during the interview, but found this to be awkward and too much time was consumed reading the news articles. For subsequent interviews, selected stories were sent out prior to meeting and it was explained that these would be a point of reference.

The pilot also gave me a chance to practise handling the interview, how to steer and probe the dialogue in an unobtrusive manner. Whilst interviewing Jamie I found that the conversation very easily strayed off topic, particularly when talking about his family's opinions about, and reactions to, his gender identity and transition. What emerged was an initial discussion of the topic yet it had strayed into a general family history which, whilst interesting, was not relevant to the research. This tangent was no fault of the participant, as an interviewer I had found myself letting him continue to talk unsure when I should be interjecting; essentially the conversation was too relaxed and I did not steer it enough. Because of this experience, I was able to better anticipate this issue in further interviews. Overall, the pilot study was very useful in helping me to hone my interview skills, yet because of the issues arising during the interview, it was decided not to be used in the final data set.

The data sample size of five is reflective of a discourse analysis sample as it needs to be analysed word for word. A discourse analysis interview offers unique insights into how participants interpret themselves and how they interpret the subject of the interview (Cruikshank, 2012), which requires a verbatim transcription and in-depth analysis. As a result, there will be enough data emerging from a smaller sample. I decided to transcribe the interviews myself instead of hiring a transcriber as I found the advantages for self-transcription, as outlined by Merriam and Tisdell (2016) outweighed the disadvantages. Whilst time consuming self-transcription enabled me to gain an intimate knowledge of the data, something which is particularly important as I need to be familiar with not only words spoken, but other speech events such as pauses and hesitations for example.

I decided to start transcribing the interviews before they had all been completed. Firstly, this was done for practical reasons in that I did not have enough time to wait for interviews to be completed before starting transcription, as the interview process

took about eight months to complete. Also, if each interview was a maximum of two hours long, then the amount to transcribe would be significantly larger for one person to accomplish. Overall transcription took me six months to complete. Secondly, I was able to pick out interesting data and preliminary patterns during early transcriptions, which enabled me to better be able to conduct subsequent interviews. By being aware of emerging themes, I was able to prompt participants and ask questions in the right places, keeping interviews on topic. Transcriptions were done on word processing software which was then stored offline in password protected documents. They were also printed off for ease of analysis and these were stored in either a locked drawer unit or cupboard, to which I had the only keys.

The North East

Without going in to in-depth analysis, it must be pointed out the varied experiences of each of the participants. They have two main commonalities, that they all live in the North East and that they are gender variant. Each person has a unique relationship to the area in which they live, as well as a unique experience of gender identity. I have outlined previously my intentions and challenges of sourcing participants who were gender variant, however what has not been mentioned is the specific sourcing of participants from North East England.

Broadly defined, the North East of England is the area of the country which encompasses the counties of Tees Valley, County Durham, Tyne and Wear and Northumberland. As Milne suggests, that '[o]ften, the county and metropolitan county boundaries of the 1970s are used in aggregate to define the North East, thereby encompassing what was Northumberland, Tyne & [sic] Wear, Durham and Cleveland' (2006: 7). Therefore, I will also define North East England as including these areas. Each participant came from the region as expressed above, either having been born and raised there, or moving locations for employment or education. Of course, as I live, work and study here, using the North East for the basis of this research is both sensible and practical. However, the region itself has a unique historical, cultural and socio-political background which lends itself to the study of gender.

The North East is the least densely populated region in England, with a population of approximately 2.5 million in 2016 (compared to South East England's 9 million)

(Statista, 2018). Within the region there are three university cities; Sunderland, Durham and Newcastle upon Tyne. Despite this, the region has a strong identity which has been constructed around an industrial heritage of ship building and mining. In their 1975 study, Townsend and Taylor suggest that the overall North Eastern identity was rooted within the close knit working class communities which emerged as part of its industrial heritage. Nevertheless, the national election of a “New Right’ Conservative administration’ (Byrne, 2005: 41) in 1979 changed the identity of the region dramatically. Whilst the decline in industry was endemic throughout the United Kingdom in this period, the North East was one of the worst hit with masses of job losses, largely affecting working class families.

In subsequent decades as industry has declined, the economy has been negatively affected. However, as Shaw and Robinson outline the North East still has ‘a strong and distinctive voice, reflecting its well established identity based on a shared economic history and geographic coherence’ (2012: 235). Historically, the North East was a thriving industrial centre and it is this heritage that has come to define the culture of the North East (Colls, 2005). As Fowler *et al.* suggest, ‘it was the reality of the mid to late nineteenth century industrial achievement which has given rise to the present culture and self-identity’ (2001: 121 - 122) for those living in the area.

As such, not only does the North East have a strong self-identity, the region is subject to what Fowler *et al.* call ‘external prejudices’ (2001: 126). These prejudices have evolved from a result of a long history of artistic and cultural portrayals of the North East as a ‘foreign country’ (*ibid.*):

‘Images from the industrial revolution invoke colourless metaphors relating to grimness, greyness, dullness and dirt. Perceptions and prejudices continue, and the culture of the region remains to many outside ‘foreign’ or, at the very least, ‘strange’. This was/is more than image; justification for the perception is borne out in government statistics which point to an unhealthy, under-educated, poorly-housed, poorly-paid population’ (Fowler *et al.*, 2001: 126 – 127).

What Fowler *et al.* suggest is that the images presented since the industrial revolution help create a negative stereotype of the North East as a barren landscape

whose population is fundamentally working class with bleak prospects. These ideas about the North East persist today, and it is easy to see why with recent statistics: Life expectancy rates for the North East are the worst in England (Office for National Statistics, 2018); Middlesbrough was reported in 2015 to have the highest number of deprived neighbourhoods (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2015); and at the end of 2018 the North East had the highest unemployment rate in the U.K. (Office for National Statistics, 2019). To support this, Beal *et al.* suggests that to an outsider, the North East is a 'homogenous entity' (2012: 10) in which Newcastle upon Tyne is the nucleus. However, the region actually hosts within it distinct cultural identities and local rivalries (*ibid.*).

These identities and rivalries manifest in several ways; regional dialect, sporting pride, and culture (Colls and Lancaster, 2005; Beal *et al.*, 2012). There is a perception that the North East region is synonymous with the 'Geordie' accent (Corrigan *et al.*, 2012; Beal *et al.*, 2012). For outsiders to the region, it is difficult to garner the nuances of the various regional dialects, which adds to the idea of a homogenous region. However, the linguistic landscape of the North East is diverse, with notable differences between the major areas of Tyneside, Wearside, County Durham and Teesside. As Beal *et al.* (2012) outline, being misidentified as Geordies is a source of frustration for other people living in the region, particularly because of the outside social perception of the North East. Additionally, Snell (2017) highlights, there are some dialectal words which are unique to the area and are markers of a working-class North East identity which may support Fowler *et al.*'s assertions about the North East being perceived as a primarily working class region.

Another source of pride and rivalry for the North East is sport; particularly football. Sporting prowess and rivalry has, according to Taylor, flourished from '[t]he masculine flavour of the North East cultural identity, and its obsession with strength and courage' (2005: 128). The Tyneside and Wearside rivalry, it is argued by Beal *et al.* (2012), is expressed most strongly through football. Unlike most major cities, both Newcastle and Sunderland do not have more than one Premiership or English Football League team, so rivalry is not 'based on sectarian or historical occupational grounds ... but on local allegiance' (*ibid.*: 15). The region's strong attachment to football has endured for decades. As Holt and Physick (2001) outline, football has

been a constant through the closing of the mines and shipyards, providing sporting heroes for each generation.

The third particularity of the area I wish to outline is the culture. Whilst being the least densely populated in the U.K., the North East hosts five universities; two of which are redbrick Russell Group institutions (Russell Group, no date). As a result, there is a large influx of young students into the towns and cities in which they are situated; helping to create multi-cultural centres. However, the region is the least ethnically diverse in England and Wales with 93.6% of the region's population identified as White British (Office for National Statistics, 2018). Despite this, the region has undergone regeneration with larger city centres being transformed and funding pumped into the region's cultural hub areas. Institutions such as the Live Theatre in Newcastle upon Tyne, National Glass Centre in Sunderland, and Beamish Museum in County Durham each celebrate the region's history, as well as contribute to the region's economy and cultural landscape.

As well as being a cultural hub, Newcastle upon Tyne has garnered a reputation as a 'party city' (Bennison, 2005: 167) which brings tourism and funding to the area. Indeed, the nightlife of the city is touted on both Newcastle and Northumbria Universities' websites, being described as 'unparalleled' (Newcastle University, 2019) and Northumbria having previously been ranked number one in the UK for nightlife (Northumbria University, 2016). However, like Fowler *et al.*'s (2001) previous point that images from the industrial revolution created and perpetuated a stereotypically working-class and austere region, modern day depictions of the region prop up the stereotype of drinking. *Geordie Shore*, first broadcast in 2011, is a reality television series which follows the party lifestyle of young North East based housemates. The focus of the show is the stars' binge-drinking, clubbing and sexual antics which are broadcast in an overly dramatised style. The show, however, has been criticised by people in the North East for not accurately representing the region, and perpetuating 'cruel and regional stereotypes of the white working class' (Woods, 2017: 41). Nevertheless, '[t]he cultural and economic dominance of Newcastle is clearly resented by those who perceive themselves as having distinct local identities within the wider North-East region' (Beal *et al.*, 2012: 14), which can be a source of resentment for other cities and towns in the area. Despite this, the

city of Sunderland has placed a bid and been shortlisted for City of Culture 2021 in an attempt to garner its own cultural recognition outside of Newcastle.

Overall, '[d]efining a regional culture is a difficult task' (Tomaney, 2010: 81) and it is not something I endeavour to do in-depth with such a short section. With that said, it is important to outline the particularities of the region as all my participants live and work, or are educated, in the area. As I have argued throughout the methodology, contextual information is important to analysis of the interviews as where the participants live or have lived, and their experiences there, are likely to have an effect. Next, I outline short biographies of the participants which will give some contextual information on their lives.

Participant Biographies

The people I interviewed all came from differing backgrounds and with different life experiences, both in terms of their gender identity and their day to day life. Each person's interview focussed on what was salient to them at the time. Despite the interviews having taken place before the time of writing, when discussing the participants, I will be using the present tense for ease and clarity.

Transcript One: Sophie

Sophie is 25 years old and lives in Tyne and Wear, having moved two years ago from County Durham. She has also lived briefly in East Sussex. Sophie is unable to work due to mental health, however takes a great deal of interest in writing, music and photography and has a journalism qualification through the BBC.

At the age of ten Sophie experimented with wearing her mother's clothing but is unsure of the motivations for starting. Sophie's early experience of trans identity came from cultural depictions like Hayley Cropper from *Coronation Street* and equated being transgender with being a joke. At this point, she had not realised that transitioning was a possibility. Sophie identifies as female and explains that she should have been born cis gender. As a result, Sophie lives stealth, in which she does not disclose her gender variance freely as it is not an active part of her identity, rather a means to an end. There were some potential barriers to Sophie's transition. Namely Sophie felt that she could not transition whilst still living in County Durham she considers it small and not as progressive, and she knew too many people in the

area. Transitioning whilst living in County Durham is counterintuitive for Sophie as she is living stealth. Additionally, passing was a large part of Sophie's transition where she explains that if she was unable to pass as cis gender, she may not have transitioned.

Sophie's motivation for taking part in the interview is to give a balanced view of how people live with a gender variant identity. It may be that for most people who come forward to take part in this research being trans is a fundamental part of their identity, but it is not for Sophie. She has come forward to represent a community who choose to live stealthily and have avoided being associated with anything gender variant.

Transcript Two: Donna

Donna is 43 years old and was born in Cumbria. She, however, moved to Tyne and Wear when she was a young child. Donna has been married to her partner for ten years, having been together for 25, and they have a son together. Having been made redundant three years previously, Donna is currently unemployed.

Donna identifies as a trans woman and recently disclosed her trans identity to her wife. She also recently began the process of accessing gender identity services through the NHS and is waiting for her first appointment. However, for Donna it has taken many years to get to this point. Donna has been cross-dressing since the age of four or five and it became integrated into her identity over the years. Donna disclosed her cross dressing to her wife early on in their relationship and also to the majority of her friends and family, all of whom are supportive of Donna's identity. She also disclosed her cross-dressing to her son 18 months previous to the interview.

Donna has accessed gender identity services previously, however decided not to take things further as she was not ready to transition at that point. At this point in her life, Donna was stuck in a job she hated which led to a deep depression and her experience of her identity differed greatly than to today. Donna further explains that because she did not want to be that person in that situation, she focussed on the idea that she could change that part of herself; a pressure relief. Without this, Donna admits she may have gone down a suicidal path. The difference between her

experience then and now, is that Donna feels that this is much more fundamental to her identity.

Donna is at the very beginning of her transition process and so far, she describes her friends and family as very supportive, and not having experienced much discrimination. However, this is indicative of where Donna is in her transition. Overall Donna describes herself as not being in the best mental state and expresses some doubts about whether she is doing the right thing in transitioning. This is alongside her worries of losing her wife and that she personally will not be able to make the change she seeks. It is clear that Donna is in a very vulnerable position in terms of her identity and how this impacts her relationship with others.

Transcript Three: Michael

Michael is 24 and an undergraduate at a North East based university. He grew up in a small town in Derbyshire and moved to County Durham to attend college and university. He has pursued volunteering opportunities in local LGBT organisations but has found this difficult as there are few organisations which are oversubscribed with volunteers.

Michael has lived in a few places in County Durham and found some more hospitable and friendly than others. In his current location, Michael feels isolated as he lives some way away from the university campus, finding the community not very diverse. In his previous location Michael was more comfortable as he found it friendlier and closer to his working class background. Michael describes himself as being from a working class family with a traditional sense of gender roles and values. He describes his step-father, with whom he grew up, as hyper-masculine.

Initially when he was discovering his gender identity during his late teens, Michael identified as gender-queer. Assigned female at birth, at this point Michael had no intention of transitioning and was happy without surgical interventions. However, as his understanding of his gender identity progressed, Michael then found that his previous situation was inadequate in expressing how he felt about his gender. As a result, Michael underwent surgical intervention and identified as male. Today Michael identifies as non-binary but stereotypically masculine presenting; he uses masculine pronouns and has chosen a masculine name. However, Michael is well

educated in feminist and gender theory and is overtly questioning gender and sex. This has enabled him to deconstruct his gender identity to a point at which he feels gender categories are arbitrary and do not fit his personal identity. Michael does, however, state that he classes himself as a man for legal reasons.

Transcript Four: Rachel

Rachel is 33 years old and lives in County Durham. She is a self-employed web developer after studying a similar course at a university in Tyne and Wear and finding employed work in the industry was drying up. Rachel was born in Tyne and Wear and has lived across the North East, and briefly in the North West. Self-employment for Rachel has been successful and she is pleased with taking the step to branch out on her own.

In addition to IT, Rachel describes her interests as basketball and American football, as well as running. She has just bought a guitar in order to learn the instrument. Rachel also has a young son and is amicable with her ex-partner, with whom she is currently going through a divorce. When discussing her family situation, Rachel is keen to express she is extremely close with her ex and, whilst it might still be emotionally raw, she is moving on.

Rachel identifies as female, or trans female, depending on the context of the situation; but is particularly aware of potential accusations of appropriation. She was assigned male at birth and experienced her earlier life and relationships as she describes what she understood to be a 'straight guy' and took on the role socially expected of men. Rachel explains that this was before she understood herself as she is at the moment. Rachel describes herself as being the soft kid at school, however does not necessarily attribute this to gender dysphoria or gender identity. When Rachel hit puberty there was some experimentation with cross-dressing and being drawn to trans issues on television and in the media. Her dysphoric feelings came and went whilst Rachel was growing up, and she explains that it did not take a hold of her until she attended university when she moved away from home and was able to explore gender variance in a safe context.

Meeting her partner and having her son, however, pushed the dysphoric feelings to the back of Rachel's mind where she was able to forget about it. That was until her

life began to settle down and the dysphoric feelings took over. Rachel's transition contributed to the breakdown of her relationship, however her ex-partner remains supportive and understanding of Rachel's identity.

Transcript Five: Terri

Terri is in her mid-twenties and grew up in Yorkshire. She moved to County Durham to pursue further education in the visual arts. Previous to her education, Terri worked for the Ambulance Service and around that time started to abuse substances. At this time, Terri explains, she was experiencing poor mental health and describes herself as having had suicidal feelings. In order to break away from these feelings and actions, Terri decided to move to County Durham to pursue her education and distance herself from friends and family.

Terri identifies herself as a girl, having been assigned male at birth and been unable to go through puberty as female. This, she explains, is fundamental to being a woman, and as she had not experienced it, she could not describe herself as a woman. Terri is not estranged from her family and friends, however, and describes them as understanding and considerate. The disclosure of her gender identity to her parents took place amidst intensive counselling and her decision to move away was also to enable a fresh start. She has disclosed her gender identity to some close friends at university.

Methods of Data Analysis

As this project is data driven, I waited until I started transcribing to build a model of analysis. The basis for this analysis has always been Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), however there are many facets to CDA. Academic discourse suggests that CDA is increasingly seen as an 'approach' to text and speech analysis, rather than a 'single method' (Meyer, 2001), so in order to build a method for analysis, it was important to be aware of what emerges from the data. In addition, a fundamental principle of CDA is to take into account the context in which the texts for analysis arose. For this research, as discussed earlier in the chapter, I have given careful consideration to my position as a researcher interacting with a participant group to which I am an 'outsider'. CDA allows me to take this into account, and also constructs the interview as a speech event in itself which needs to be taken into consideration throughout the analysis.

Discourse, Text and Intertextuality

Before discussing the specific methods of analysis, it is important to define the terms discourse and text, outlining how they are used in this research. Discourse has a multitude of meanings, definitions and functions which depends on the area of study. In the previous chapter, I discuss discourse in terms of Foucault and his uses of it; namely Foucault's expansion of discourse away from the idea of just 'statements' (1972: 80) but to everything that produces meaning. Lee and Poynton describe Foucauldian discourse as a 'body of knowledge' (2000: 6). Foucault's definitions of discourse, not only provided a starting point for performativity theory, but also for Critical Discourse Analysisists who use Foucault as a basis to develop a theory on how discourse functions in society.

Since Foucault, and in the eyes of sociolinguists, discourse has become political because of its intimate relation with society. Discourse, according to Fairclough and Wodak 'discourse is socially *constitutive* as well as socially shaped' (1997: 258, emphasis in original), insofar that it both establishes and shapes societal conventions and identities. Therefore, because discourse has such an influence on society, it can have ideological effects. Not only does it produce and reproduce societal conventions, but it also produces and reproduces unequal power relations which gives rise to sexist, racist, ageist (not an exhaustive list) discourses (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997). To uncover these unequal power relations, CDA analyses discourses on the micro-macro level; that is to say both linguistic features arising from texts and bodies of knowledge.

The cultural studies definition of text expands beyond the everyday meaning of text as written works to include things that are representative of culture; essentially a text can be any meaningful aspect of culture. Lehtonen (2000) outlines this classification by describing texts as having three connected features; materiality, formal relations and meaningfulness. Materiality, according to Lehtonen is, the physical part of text; a 'communicative artefact ... [or] human-produced instruments of communication' (2000: 72) which has been produced in many forms according to technological advances throughout history. Lehtonen refers to the physical features as 'signs' (*ibid.*). The formal relations of a text, therefore, are how these signs relate to other signs in text to produce hierarchical, organised units, for example letters

make words, which make sentences. Finally, a text's meaningfulness arises from the fact that a text refers to something outside of itself.

Fundamentally, Lehtonen's (2000) discussion shows that meaning in text are not produced naturally, but fabricated in a way that produces reality, rather than reflects it. This production of reality can be seen perhaps most overtly in news media. News media is consumed with the presumption that the events reported on are in the past and therefore is a reflection of past reality, however certain 'signs' such as language and textual context can have an effect on how we integrate news reports into our realities. Trans Media Watch's (2010) research on how trans people experience the media suggests that the majority of cis gender people get their opinions of trans people from how they are portrayed in the media. If this is true, then media texts help to produce realities about trans people for society.

Much of discourse analysis uses the terms text and discourse interchangeably, without effort to distinguish between the two (Lee and Poynton, 2000), however CDA, which will be discussed further in the chapter, separates the two. Discourse, according to Wodak, 'implies patterns and commonalities of knowledge and structures, whereas a *text* is a specific and a unique realization of a discourse' (2011: 48, emphasis in original). Discourse here, therefore, takes on board Foucault's original discussions of bodies of knowledge and text is specifically used to represent the material, semiotic, and meaningful realisations of discourses.

However, texts are not self-contained, discrete entities, but contain traces of other cultural texts from the society in which it is produced (Talbot, 1995; Alfaro, 1996). This is known as intertextuality and was coined by Julia Kristeva who also developed the concept out of Bakhtin's theory of dialogism in texts (Kristeva, 1986). Dialogism, as defined by Bakhtin, is 'the necessary relation of any utterance to other utterances' (Stam *et al.*, 1992: 208), and it is this that forms the basis for intertextuality. Essentially, a text cannot stand alone as it will have always been influenced by texts before it. This base concept has existed in different forms throughout history (Alfaro, 1996), however since Kristeva's coining of the term it has become prevalent in linguistic studies.

Intertextuality is used particularly in CDA, as it enables a text to be studied within its wider context. As Fairclough (1989) points out, methods of discourse analysis outside of CDA analyse discourses and texts in isolation without any reference to other texts and away from its historical context. However, Fairclough and Wodak (1997) state that discourse is historical, produced with context, and cannot be understood without reference to that context. Since discourse, according to CDA, both reflects and produces society, then it is evident that texts are intrinsically linked and their meaning shaped by other texts.

Having defined discourse, text and intertextuality, it is important to recognise how this links with the research. In terms of text, there are a number of representations. Firstly, the interviews themselves are texts, culturally significant as they contain everyday experiences of a group of people who find themselves increasingly in the public eye. In addition, specific media texts were used to inform part of these interviews, as well as my own research. Intertextuality therefore is relevant as these media texts helped shape part of the interview. Also, it is evident that media texts and other texts surrounding gender variance may have shaped participant's experiences, opinions, and feelings; some of which may be seen through frequent references to television, publications, or gender theories, to name a few. Finally, there are many discourses to be analysed throughout. There is initially the fundamental linguistic discourse of the interview transcripts which is then analysed to uncover underlying discourses such as gender and prejudice.

Approaches to Critical Discourse Analysis

Having discussed the basis for analysis, next we need to consider what the methods of analysis will be. I have very briefly discussed Critical Discourse Analysis and now will discuss it in further detail, whilst building a method for analysis from it. Developed in the late 1980s, CDA finds its roots in Foucault's work, in which he examines how power in society is expressed through discourses. Fairclough is most often cited as the 'pioneer' of CDA (Blommaert, 2005), as his argument that language is a form of social practice has been central to critical discourse studies since its inception. What sets critical discourse studies apart from other discourse analysis methods is its focus on discourse in the context of social problems and political issues (Van Dijk, 2015), which enables researchers to analyse language use in relation to power and control, and dominance and discrimination. Language,

therefore, is 'not a neutral or transparent medium that unproblematically reflects an objective reality' (Benwell and Stokoe, 2006: 44), but is predetermined by societal structures (Fairclough, 1989).

In his famous work 'Language and Power' (1989) Fairclough outlines how language is a part of social practice. Language and society had, until this point, been treated as discrete entities and often studied as such. However, Fairclough argues that language has an 'internal and dialectical relationship' (1989:23) with society, in which discourse practices are both shaped by and reproduce social structures (Phillips and Jørgensen, 2002; Strauss and Feiz, 2014). The language an individual uses may seem arbitrary, however it is influenced by social conventions; whether the settings be intimate or otherwise. On the other hand, language use is a fundamental part of social processes and institutions and creates specific discourses surrounding these institutions (Fairclough, 1989).

If discourse is influenced by social convention and institutions, therefore it must be presumed that we are not passive in the production of language (Wodak, 2001). By analysing discourse with this belief, CDA starts 'empowering the powerless, giving voices to the voiceless [and] exposing power abuse' (Blommaert, 2005: 25). In addition, identity, according to Ainsworth and Hardy, is not pre-existing. Instead it is produced through social interaction and a 'shared process of meaning making' (2013: 232). This reflects Butler whose performativity theory suggests that gender is produced through repetitive discursive practices. In addition, trans identities are increasingly politicised and receive prejudice. The participants in this research, despite increasing societal recognition, are largely marginalised, and there are persistent ideologies surrounding trans identities which is perpetuated by mass media and general social interaction.

Whilst the primary function of CDA is the analysis of social inequalities, there has arisen differing approaches as CDA has developed. The focus of this research is gender variant identities, which also examines personal experiences of navigating that identity whilst being a member of a marginalised community. The discussion above shows the broad aspects of CDA in terms of institutional power and ideologies, which is what stimulated the development of the methodology. Critical Discourse Analysis is particularly useful in the study of identity; both personal and

collective. Moreover, as CDA is not a strict method of analysis, it is possible to use the salient elements of these approaches in order to effectively study gender identity.

Outside of Fairclough's beginnings, the Discourse Historical Approach (DHA) is perhaps the most well-known approach to CDA. A fundamental part of the DHA is the attempt to assimilate all background information into the analysis (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997) in order to uncover prejudices. The background information the DHA alludes to not only includes public discourses and textual context but also a social-psychological dimension of the discourse producers and consumers; including culture, gender, class, personality etc. (Titscher et. al., 2000). Whilst the experiences discussed with the participants are relatively contemporary, their identities have been realised over decades of personal experiences. In addition, the social-psychological aspects of the participants provide an important part of their engagement with trans discourses. Finally, wider trans discourses from outside sources may have had an impact on their experiences, therefore it is important to consider these public discourses alongside personal narratives.

Critical Discourse Analysis, however, is not without its critics. As Breeze (2011) outlines, that CDA is now solidified in academic discourse as a method and approach to analysis, it gets taken for granted as the orthodox way of discourse analysis. Stubbs (1997) critiques CDA by questioning its lack of standard criteria for analysis. Whilst Fairclough (1989) begins to outline some formal features which may be 'ideologically significant' (Stubbs, 1997: 4), Stubbs (1997) however believes that the methods for analysis in CDA remains too unclear when compared with other paradigms. Breeze (2011) adds to this by suggesting that CDA should share universal standards of rigour in its analysis of texts, however if we were to apply a standard to CDA, then it would defeat the purpose of CDA as an 'approach' to discourse analysis.

In addition, Stubbs (1997) believes that CDA finds itself in a 'catch-22' situation because texts do not stand alone, and it is the 'force of history' (1997: 4) which helps shape ideological positions for analysis. However, if this is correct, the CDA should also stand up to the scrutiny which it affords to other discourses. The catch-22 according to Stubbs, is that CDA cannot 'have it both ways' (1997:4), however he

acknowledges that CDA practitioners do note this in their work. CDA, however, is not an ideologically neutral method of analysis, therefore it stands to reason that it should be held up to the same ideological scrutiny it affords other texts. There is an issue, therefore, that CDA research cannot be politically objective. However, as Breeze (2011) outlines, CDA practitioners usually make their political leanings clear before embarking on analyses, and Fairclough (1996) suggests that despite his left leanings which informs his work, there is scope for right wing CDA. Because of the nature of CDA, it is impossible to use it without any ideological basis and, for some, this is problematic. Therefore, when interpreting a work of CDA, the author's personal leanings must be taken into consideration (Breeze, 2011). This is true of this research, as not only would my political ideologies influence how I interpret the data, but I am also of the opinion that meaning and significance is made by both the interviewer and interviewee. In addition, with a topic such as gender identity, one that is very politically charged, it would be impossible to remove it from political ideologies, those of both interview participants.

Overall, CDA was chosen as the most appropriate method of analysis because of its flexible and critical nature. As CDA is typically interdisciplinary in its approach, it allows for flexibility in methods for analysis. Van Dijk suggests that because CDA focuses on social issues and not the methodology, then 'any theoretical and methodological approach is appropriate as long as it is able to effectively study relevant social problems' (1995: 17). Also, CDA's critical nature makes it suitable for analysing discourses surrounding gender identity because gender variant people are still a highly marginalised group. Critical social research aims to uncover and address social injustices, and then use its analyses to overcome these (Fairclough, 2010).

Like grounded theory, critical discourse analysis is multifaceted. Since its inception, there have been several factions to CDA, some of which has been discussed above. However, as this research takes a feminist approach, it can be asked why I have not explicitly looked at feminist CDA as a mode of enquiry. Feminist CDA was conceived by Michelle Lazar to counter what she saw as a discipline dominated by straight white men who do not recognise the work done by feminist scholars (Cameron, 1998; Lazar, 2005). There are a significant number of well-respected and recognised female scholars working in the field of CDA (for some works from the

time see Talbot, 1998 and 2010; Wodak and Meyer, 2001; Wodak, 1997; McElhinny, 1997), however Lazar does point out that there is an imbalance in the field which needs improving.

By trying to address this imbalance and creating a field of feminist CDA, Lazar alienates it from a wider CDA 'school' which allows for the exploration of disadvantaged groups. To explain this further, we need to revisit the point made by Fairclough (1996). From his beginning in CDA, Fairclough has used it to explore issues of social class, and has been very explicit about his leftist Marxist leanings (*ibid.*). This is a crucial element for critical discourse analysis, 'the explicit awareness of [the researchers'] role in society' (Van Dijk, 2015: 352), as it recognises that we are not neutral observers, instead being co-creators of knowledge. That being said, Fairclough has stated that there is scope for CDA with a right wing ideology (1996), so long as the researcher's political affiliations and ideologies are made clear, and that the aim is to explore the plight of disadvantaged groups. I, therefore argue, that if there is scope for CDA with a right wing ideology, there is scope for CDA with a feminist ideology.

Taking this into consideration, I would argue that feminist CDA is no different to CDA in that there are the same aims and objectives between the two. CDA is interdisciplinary in nature and, as it is an approach to data analysis rather than a strict method, it is generally agreed that any method in cultural studies and the humanities can be used under the guise of CDA. Additionally, the main facet to CDA is the examination of how 'social power, abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context' (Van Dijk, 2003: 352). This being said, power, abuse and inequality are enacted and reproduced in gendered discourses and therefore warrant investigation under the CDA umbrella.

Finally, there are many scholars utilising CDA from a feminist perspective but who do not call it feminist CDA (Wodak, 1997; Talbot, 2010; Talbot 1995), rather seeing CDA as an approach to study rather than a strict methodology.. It is this approach that enabled me to tailor the method of analysis to the participants and data. Arising from the interviews, as mentioned previously, were narratives which include patterns of naming. I was able to use CDA as a basis for analysis, taking influence from the

DHA and social actor and use two further forms of analysis, Membership Categorisation Analysis and Narrative Analysis, which I will be outlining below.

Methods for Analysis and Qualitative Interviews

There is debate amongst the discourse analysts about the use of qualitative interviews (Cruickshank, 2012). Schools such as Conversation Analysis and Discourse Psychology generally argue against the use of interview data as it is not considered 'natural speech' (*ibid.*). Natural interaction is 'not co-produced or provoked by the researcher' (Have, 1999: 48) and is produced in everyday interaction without interference from observers. For these schools, natural speech is preferable as it is argued that people are too aware of themselves and may 'police' how they speak, and the interviewer may influence the participant too much with potentially leading questions and statements. However, each interview was conducted over a period of at least two hours and, despite some self-awareness and possible self-policing, it would be impossible for participants to do this for the entirety of the interview.

Critical Discourse Analysis has traditionally been used as a tool for the analysis of particular types of institutional writing and speech (Cameron, 2001). For example, in Woods's (2006) *Describing Discourse* the chapters presented cover the discourses of advertising, politics, law, medicine, and education. In terms of speech, CDA is often used to analyse specific spoken interactions which present unequal power relations, these may include; doctor and patient interview, television broadcasts and in-classroom interaction. These talk interactions are appropriate for a CDA analysis because it is not the discrete use of language that is being analysed, but how the interactions go towards producing power and ideology (Cameron, 2001).

The research interview is an unequal relationship of researcher and participant. As a researcher from an academic background, there may be a presupposition from the participant that I am an 'expert' which automatically provides a power imbalance. An interview is an asymmetrical exchange and, as much as I tried to produce an egalitarian environment, there would have been 'asymmetrical rights to talk' (Cortazzi, 1993: 55). As Thornborrow (2002) explains, in more formal settings the

role of the questioner holds more interactional power than the role of the answerer which produces an environment which can be held to the scrutiny of CDA.

As the aim of the research is to collect personal experiences, then the qualitative interview is the most suitable form of data collection, despite the potential shortcomings outlined above. Interviews offer unique 'insight into the intentions, feelings, purposes and comprehensions of the interviewee' (Cruickshank, 2012: 42). Cruickshanks (2012) further argues that interviews can offer a deeper insight into how the participants interpret themselves and the topic in question. Studying written texts cannot provide this information, particularly in terms of gender identity. The majority of media and textual representations of trans people come from cis gender people who at the least present inaccurate depictions of gender variance. For example, a study from Trans Media Watch (2010) explored how trans people experience the media and its findings state that 78% respondents found that media representations of them were highly inaccurate. In addition, 55% of respondents wish to see more representations of trans people. From these findings it can be concluded that in order to gain a knowledge of actual trans experiences, a qualitative interview is the most appropriate way. Nevertheless, these media representations are not wholly redundant in this study, as this is where power and ideologies surrounding gender variance can be most obviously seen.

Cameron (2001) further discusses working with elicited spoken discourses and suggests that the research interview is a specific speech event itself, which needs to be taken into account in the analysis. It is important to recognise the context in which the data was elicited throughout the analysis, as participants may use the situation in which to present themselves as a certain kind of person (*ibid.*). However, the motivations of the participants to take part in the interviews form part of the analysis itself and, I would argue, contribute further insights to how the participants construct their identity. For example, one participant's self-identification changed for the purposes of the interview. This will be discussed in further detail in the next chapter, however it shows that the participant's change in how they refer to themselves might be because of the interview situation; providing important cultural information about identity construction.

Membership Categorisation Analysis

Membership Categorisation Analysis (MCA), a subset of Conversation Analysis (CA), is an ethnomethodology developed predominantly by sociologist Harvey Sacks. CA was developed out of a desire to answer the sociological question 'how is social order possible' by examining sociological practices and routines in action, rather than asking participants explicitly (Housley and Fitzgerald, 2015). CA looks at sequential speech patterns in order to answer the above question. MCA is 'topical' (Stokoe, 2012: 278) in that it enables researchers to explore the production of categorical data from members (or participants), rather than those imposed by researchers.

Membership Categorisation Analysis is unique in its approach to social categorisation as it focuses on the everyday lived experiences of actors. Compared to other identity theories such as Social Identity Theory or Self-Categorisation Theory, MCA allows the researcher to look beyond the theoretical and explore 'how identity is done, managed, achieved and negotiated in situ' (Housley and Fitzgerald, 2015: 2) by the individual. The focus of other identity categorisation theories is on social group dynamics and hierarchies, and how an individual navigates these groups (*ibid.*). MCA explores social structures and the production of identities in its linguistic context by analysing how people describe their social world.

The production of categories is something that is often done subconsciously, and it can be seen in its basic and most obvious form in conversations between strangers (Silverman, 1998). For example, people having been recently introduced to one another might ask 'what do you do', ultimately invoking an occupation category. It is this which enables people to navigate their social world as categories hold certain expectations and presumptions according to our shared cultural knowledge (Sacks, 1974; Housley and Fitzgerald, 2015; Silverman, 1998). To demonstrate how simple utterances can hold 'complex layers of social knowledge and social action' (Housley and Fitzgerald, 2015: 7), Sacks uses a two line story as heard from a child:

'The baby cried. The mommy picked it up' (Sacks, 1974: 216)

Sacks observes that native speakers will most likely hear that the 'mommy' who picks up the 'baby' is the mother of that baby and that this presumption is made

without any further knowledge needed on the listener's part. What Sacks argues is that the meaning of the two sentences as intended by the producer of the story, is understood in the same way by the listeners; the majority of whom may not share an acquaintance but will share cultural knowledge.

'The sentences we are considering are after all rather minor, and yet *all* of you, or many of you hear just what I said you heard, and many of us are quite unacquainted with each other. I am, then, dealing with something real and something finely powerful.' (Sacks, 1974: 218)

The unproblematic understanding of the 'baby cried' story shows that people use their shared cultural knowledge to describe and navigate society (Housley and Fitzgerald, 2015).

To use MCA as a method for linguistic enquiry Sacks introduced his 'apparatus' (1972: 219; Schegloff, 2007; Housley and Fitzgerald, 2015), the mainstay being the Membership Categorisation Device or MCD and its rules of application. A 'category' is how an actor is described, that is to say 'their choice of ways of describing themselves and others' (Antaki, 2007). Using Sack's (1974) story as an example, 'mommy' and 'baby' would be categories, however it should be noted that categories are not finite and that 'mommy' could also be 'doctor' or 'vegetarian' and so forth. The Membership Categorisation Device is therefore a way of organising these individual categories into collective categories (Sacks, 1974; Stokoe, 2012; Housley and Fitzgerald, 2015), so that 'mommy' and 'baby' come to belong to the collective category 'family'. Collective categories are context dependent (Lepper, 2000). Our ability to recognise 'baby' and 'mommy' in the collection of 'family' comes from the shared understanding that in our culture when a baby cries, it will most likely be picked up and most likely by its own mother. It is possible that in other cultures this may not happen, but as native English speakers, we understand the cultural context in which this utterance was made. As Lepper (2000) maintains, the narrator calls upon the MCD of 'family' and we as listeners recognise this, even without the use of referential pronouns.

As mentioned previously, MCA is 'topical' (Stokoe, 2012: 278) and therefore relevant in exploring the construction of gendered identities. When the categories of

'male' and 'female' are invoked, they hold loaded expectations of what the categories should entail. Surprisingly, however, there is a scarce amount of academic research on language and gender which uses MCA as a method of analysis. In her article 'Doing Gender, Doing Categorisation', Stokoe (2003) highlights this and also tries to rectify it. Feminist language and gender research, as outlined in the previous chapter, has imposed and fixed the binary categories of 'male' and 'female' on society, whilst ranging from the theoretical to purely anecdotal. MCA allows researchers to explore how gender is produced in discourse, and in particular for this research, how gender is produced by the actors themselves. Stokoe (2003) explains that conversation analysis had enabled the study of gender performativity (Butler, 1990), especially in sequential interaction. MCA may be more 'fruitful' (Stokoe, 2003: no pagination) as a researcher can focus on explicit and implicit gender categories in use. West and Zimmerman's (1975) work, as outlined in the previous chapter, examines how men may 'do' masculinity in conversation which gives space for CA as a method of analysis. As a result, the conclusions drawn suggest that there arises interactional patterns which maintain gender structures (Stokoe, 2003). However, Stokoe (2003) criticises this use of CA and gender as uncritical as the principle of CA is to approach data with no preconceptions and analyse talk purely in its interactional context (Stokoe, 2003; Stokoe and Smithson, 2001). However, as a feminist researcher and a gendered being, I approach research with a set of political and cultural standpoints, or 'baggage' (Stokoe and Smithson, 2001: 247). In addition, Stokoe (2003) argues that CA construction of gender identities are often essentialist and fixed in the binary, however MCA allows for an analysis of gender performativity more in line with ethnomethodological principles.

This has been described as '*culture-in-action*' (Stokoe, 2003: no pagination; Hester and Eglin, 1997: 153) and in terms of gender, it allows the exploration of how gendered lives are built and fixed by actors in their everyday lives. It makes sense, therefore, that MCA can be used successfully to further explore gender performativity. Conversation analysts treat interactional patterns as a result of gendered identities, prioritising the researcher's interpretations of gender identity. MCA's focus is more on the participant's experiences of gender (Stokoe, 2003) and the production of their gendered identities through the use of categories in interaction (Benwell and Stokoe, 2006).

Narrative Inquiry

People are natural story tellers and these stories come in many forms, from stylised performances in the theatre, to sitting around the dinner table recounting your day to your loved ones. It is highly likely that during your day you will have been exposed to a story in one form or another. It became increasingly apparent throughout the interview process that narrative enquiry was an appropriate method for analysis. The questions asked within the interview process evoked stories of personal experience and it was apparent that the participant's identities were tangled within these narratives. The basis for narrative analysis is that we understand reality through 'storied forms' (Josselson, 2011: 224), and this is what was happening throughout the interviews. In addition to this, there is an increasing awareness of trans identities in the media and, more often than not, these stories produce narratives which either converge with or diverge from actual lived experiences. It therefore seems pertinent to use this method of enquiry in conjunction with MCA to explore how participants navigated and experienced gender variance.

The first to write about naturally occurring narratives, or what they call 'oral versions of personal experience' (1967: 3), was Labov and Waletzky. They explained that the day-to-day stories of ordinary people contain fundamental narrative structures which need to be understood. This is before we can go on to understand the complex functions of narrative from traditional oral, or stylised literary traditions. Labov and Waletzky (1967; Labov, 1972) produced and developed a framework which helps researchers analyse naturally occurring narratives of what they term 'unsophisticated speakers' (*ibid.*: 3), or from everyday interactive conversation. The framework is outlined below:

Narrative Category	Narrative Question
Abstract	What was this about?
Orientation	Who or what are involved in the story and when and where did it take place?
Complicating Action	Then what happened?
Resolution	What finally happened?
Evaluation	So what?
Coda	How does it all end?

(Adapted from Simpson, 2004: 115)

A narrative, as Labov (1972) argues, generally features each of the six components as outlined in the first column, and they serve to answer hypothetical questions for the listener (Simpson, 2004) as outlined in the second column. However, some narratives may miss certain components. In addition, Labov (1972) argues that temporality is an essential feature of personal narratives and that narrative, in the Labovian definition, is a way of reiterating past, personal experiences through a spoken sequence of sentences or clauses which match a temporal sequence of events (1967; 1972). As a result, narratives are broken down into their fundamental structures; 'narrative clauses' and 'free clauses' (Labov and Waleztky, 1967; Labov, 1972). As Labov explains, narrative clauses are the pillar of the narrative. They define the story and are in sequential order; reordering them would change the semantics of the narrative. For example:

1. John fell in the river, got very cold, and had two large whiskies.
2. John had two large whiskies, fell in the river and got very cold.

(Toolan, 2001: 145)

Each of the clauses above are narrative clauses, they are intrinsic to the story being told. Reordering them not only affects the narrative's meaning but also our reaction to what it being told. As Toolan (2001) points out, we may feel sorry for the John in example one, but not in example two. The meaning is changed as the sentences structure changes.

This is a very brief discussion of the technical linguistic analysis behind narrative analysis and fundamental to understanding the narrative sequence, although my use of narrative analysis is less formal and rigid than Labov and Waletzky's (1967, 1972) model. Rather more salient for this research is the idea of how narratives create or project social identity, and how it relates to gender theories as previously discussed.

Thornborrow and Coates (2005) suggest that narrative plays a key role in the construction of gender and link narrative discourse to performativity theory. As, according to Butler (1990), gender is something that is 'done' through repeated stylised acts, it is not static but produced through discursive interaction. Coates's (2005) analysis of what she terms 'collaborative narrative' in which she analyses couples' interactions to explore how masculinity is produced. Heterosexuality, she argues, is a 'key component of hegemonic masculinity' (2005: 92) which may influence the way in which men produce masculinity. Co-narration of stories produce an intimacy between participants, and Coates found that this intimacy is sometimes avoided by heterosexual men interacting with a male partner. She found that male interactors often tell solo narratives, which reflects traits associated with traditional masculinity; that of assertion, independence and distance from intimacy. When analysing heterosexual couples' co-narrations, Coates found that even though male participants were more willing to co-construct the narrative, there were still performances of heteronormativity and 'traditional' masculinity. Whilst engaging in an intimacy avoided in other interactions male participants were still constructing themselves as assertive and heroic. Yet by allowing the co-production of the narrative with a female partner, Coates (2005) argues that they are performing their heterosexuality and as a result hegemonic masculinity.

The above example may come from narratives which are told by more than one narrator. However, the principle of gender construction in narrative is the same for interview discourses. Even though the research interviews are elicited narratives and told by one producer, gender construction is still identifiable both overtly and covertly. Overt gender performativity is seen through the specific questions, most of which deal with how the participants experience theirs and general gender identities.

Covert gender performativity can be seen by analysing how participants tell their stories and subconsciously relate to ideas of traditional gender roles.

In addition to its relationship to performativity and gender theory, narrative analysis is useful in analysing the construction of personal identities. As Benwell and Stokoe (2006) point out, narrative allows us to construct edited versions of ourselves, and by telling stories we can put forward the most salient parts of our identities. The interviews may deal with gender identity primarily, however other identities will emerge through the stories told. It is important to recognise that gender is only a part of the identities of the participants and that narrative analysis allows us to 'examine people's lives holistically through the stories they tell' (Benwell and Stokoe, 2006, 143).

Conclusion

I began this chapter with a discussion of the methods of data collection and how I place myself as a researcher. As a cultural piece of research it is important to recognise how I place myself within it; as the interviews are affected by my presence. I needed to consider carefully how, as an 'outsider' to my participants, I was going to conduct the research ethically and sensitively. After this consideration, I have outlined specific details on how I approached data collection and transcription.

Having conducted the interviews early on in the process with no defined method for analysis, this enabled me to build my own model for analysis depending on what arose from the data. It was clear that from the beginning I was going to use CDA as a basis for analysis as some of its fundamental principles aligned with the research. As the participants were a marginalised group, it was important to use a method which allows for the critique of society and uncovering of prejudices; this research's aim is to better society and CDA is a tool for that.

Also, as CDA is a multidisciplinary method and flexible in its approach to analysis, it was easy to build an appropriate model for analysis. As the transcription process went on it became apparent that names, labels and storytelling were themes running through each interview. As a result of this, membership categorisation analysis and narrative analysis emerged as appropriate methods.

Having outlined these methods and how they fit together with one another and the gender theories discussed in the previous chapter, I feel I have developed an appropriate model of analysis for this research. I am able to critically evaluate the data with the intention for societal betterment like the fundamentals of CDA, and whilst doing so use and take into context outside influences; whether they be me as a researcher or influential media texts. In addition, MCA and narrative analysis allows me to focus on arising themes using methods which have developed in order to specifically investigate those themes.

In the next chapter, I will begin my analysis looking at naming and labelling and how these are used to discursively construct my participants' identities. This will be discussed alongside the participants' notions on constructions of gender variance in wider society and how this affects their own identities.

Chapter Four

Naming, Labelling, and Categorisation

Introduction

In previous chapters I have discussed the theoretical underpinnings of this thesis and discussed the methods for data analysis, both of which will be used in the following chapters. I have also discussed trans and gender variant issues in a cultural context, in order to place the participants within society. Context is important as language is not studied as a discrete phenomenon, but rather as one practice which is part of a wider set of cultural practices.

The focus for this chapter will be the theme of naming and labelling. This was prevalent in each participant's interview, whether in answer to explicit questions about names and labels, or embedded within the discourse. Names and labels were particularly salient themes throughout the interview process as they reflected how participants viewed their identities, both internally and within the trans community. Naming and labelling was something that the participants had to consider carefully in many aspects of their lives, from personal names to how they prefer to refer to their gender identity, and was found in every aspect of the interviews. The emergence of this theme enabled me to consider Sacks's Membership Categorisation Analysis (MCA) as the main method of analysis for this chapter.

As discussed previously, MCA examines how social order is possible through the analysis of implicit and explicit social categorisation within discourse. Not only does MCA focus on the everyday experiences of actors, but it uses our common sense knowledge and understanding of culture to explore how identities and social structures are produced and described.

When analysing talk, MCA assumes that no part of conversation is incidental and that each utterance needs to be examined in its wider context in order to be fully understood (Lepper, 2000). With this in mind, it is important to recognise that I am as much a part of the research as the participants. It was my role to elicit narratives from participants for the purposes of research, and the way the participants talk will have been affected due to the research interview situation, the surroundings, and also the way I have presented myself. Additionally, when analysing talk from

sources where you are an outsider, it is important that you analyse the common sense understanding between the actors and not to your own interpretation (Lepper, 2000). Having been co-produced by my participants and me, the following analysis of the interaction uses my interpretation to analyse the common sense cultural understanding between us.

Gender Categorisation and Gender as a Category

As explored in the theoretical chapter, my foundation for exploring gender is performativity theory and how gender is produced and reproduced in society. The primary method for analysis, Membership Categorisation Analysis (MCA), allows us to explore this by examining how the participants categorise themselves (and others) in terms of gender. Categories, according to scholars of MCA (Sacks, 1974; Stokoe, 2003; Housley and Fitzgerald, 2015; etc.) are *inference rich*, and it could be argued that this is seen particularly clearly in gender categories. In MCA, Gender is a Membership Categorisation Device (MCD) which allows a collection of categories which relate to the state of being male and/or female. As perhaps demonstrated in the wording above, one of the main assumptions of the MCD gender is that it is limited to the binary of male and female. Of course, I am researching gender variance and recognise that the collection of gender categories goes wider than male and female, yet the common-sense understanding of gender in wider society has historically been tied to this binary.

Another common sense understanding of gender is that it is related directly to an individual's physical attributes, i.e. genitalia, chromosomes, hormones etc. The use of man or woman, male or female, as categories hold with them the assumption that the individual is cis gender, and that they were born with and possess genitalia congruent with that of either man or woman. In addition to inferences about the body, the categories of male and female also hold with them cultural and social assumptions based on what roles men and women are perceived to play in society and how they are 'supposed' to act. People, as Stokoe highlights, risk 'gender assessment if they do not live up to normative conceptions of femininity or masculinity' (2003: 4).

English, like other Germanic languages, distinguishes sex using third person singular pronouns (Talbot, 1998), however there is no third person singular gender-

neutral pronoun in common usage. The third person plural 'they' is increasingly used by non-binary, genderqueer and genderfluid (not an exhaustive list) people to refer to themselves, nevertheless this is far from ideal when there is a lack of a singular gender neutral pronoun. The use of the impersonal pronoun 'it' could be used here, however this is extremely problematic as it might be gender neutral but it carries with it fundamental connotations of dehumanisation and has often been used as a derogatory term for trans people. There have been attempts to introduce third person pronouns, for which Crystal (2007) provides a list of examples. However, in their study, Senden et. al. (2015) found the introduction of a gender neutral pronoun into a language is often met with hostility and can take years to become more generally accepted.

Therefore it could be argued that pronoun usage imposes a gendered identity onto people as it becomes extremely difficult to speak about a third person without assigning them male or female, particularly over a long period of time. Additionally, the linguistic assignment of sex carries with it the presumptions of societal gender norms and expectations; which supports Butler's (1990) argument that the idea of gender is ingrained into humans by the repetition and normalisation of gendered acts. McConnell-Ginet uses an interaction between her and a colleague to highlight this point:

A: 'One of my students missed the final because of a sick kid and no baby sitter available.'

B: 'Well, did you tell *her* that it is not acceptable?'

(McConnell-Ginet, 2011: 229)

Societal gender expectations tells us that women are more likely to take on a nurturing role, enabling the assumption that the student is female. Linguistically, we are bound by gendered pronouns which ensures the assumption is easier to make. It is also, as McConnell-Ginet points out, the reaction to the assumption which could also perpetuate gender expectations. As she says:

'If I ascribe maleness to the student and want to make that clear I might say "it's a *he* actually,"... On the other hand, if there is no conflict between my colleague's presumption of sex and my assessment of

the situation, I may well fail to point out there was a presumptive leap and thus may contribute in some measure to sustaining the gendered division of labor that supports that leap.'

(McConnell-Ginet, 2011: 229)

McConnell-Ginet highlights an important point which affects the participants in this research on a daily basis. Our assumptions and inferences about what constitutes gender fails to consider gender variant people and further solidifies normative gender practices. The dichotomy of male and female reflects how humans classify sex and gender, people are either one or the other. But is clear that for gender diverse people, English becomes even more limiting. Whilst the majority of cisgender people are comfortable to fit within the male/female binary, trans people often struggle with restrictive categories, binaries and boundaries imposed by the language; and subsequently society.

It is important to highlight how gender categories, and gender as a category, work within society and within language, as these base assumptions have more of an adverse effect on the participants. The rest of this chapter analyses directly the participants' experiences in navigating gender categorisation of the self and others, and how this impacts their lives.

Gender Categories: "How would you describe your gender identity?"

According to Antaki and Widdicombe (1998: 3) 'for a person to have an identity ... is to be cast into a *category with associated characteristics or features*' (italics in original). In talk categories enable us to order the world around us, and that is done by bringing together disparate characteristics, features, and/or objects into a collection. However, before we talk about gender identity, it will be interesting to discuss briefly how the participants categorise themselves before the onset of the interview. The participants were, of course, aware that experiences of gender variance, and the fact they were gender variant, were going to be the focus of the interviews. However, the first question I asked was a variation on 'tell me a little bit about yourself'. This question was twofold, first it was a purposely an open ended ice-breaker question to put participants at ease and introduce them to myself as an interviewer. Secondly it enabled the participants a chance to categorise themselves without necessarily talking about gender identity.

It is clear that answers to 'tell me about yourself' reflect what was most salient to the participants at the time of interview. They showed how the participants categorised themselves before we started to discuss gender identity.

I: 'So firstly I'd like to get to know a bit about you so if you just want to tell me about yourself.'

S: 'What specifics really?'

I: 'Just in general, just sort of...'

S: Erm... ok, er I'm 25 and live in Newcastle, quite near the centre. I'm sort of an occasional, but not full time, sort of writer slash music journalist type.

(Sophie, Transcript 1, lines 4 – 8)

The example I have used above reflects how people categorise themselves when asked for vague information. Sophie asks for clarification on what information I am asking for, probably because, as mentioned before, she is aware that gender identity is the focus of the interviews and this may be the information I'm seeking. As a result, her answer reflects important parts of her identity, her age, location and occupation. Interestingly, when describing her occupation Sophie is quite tentative about it. She describes herself as 'sort of' a writer and journalist which is perhaps indicative of the fact that it is not currently paid work for Sophie, despite her having a journalism qualification and experience.

Comparatively, Michael answered in a similar way.

I: 'So firstly, I just want to get a bit to know about you as a person, so just tell me about yourself, it's quite an open interview question.'

M: 'Ah, oh goodness me, ok erm well, studying at Durham, doing Anthropology, undergrad. Erm, what else do I do? I don't know um... I'm 24, almost or I will be by the time you've done everything er, I'm originally from Derbyshire from a working class family.'

(Transcript 3, lines 1 – 5)

It seems like this initial question has caught Michael off guard, and it is something that is also seen in Sophie's answer. There is an initial trouble in talking about themselves and a need to think quickly of what to disclose which causes the amount of fillers in each answer. He categorises himself as an undergrad, again suggesting that his education is a large part of his identity. Interestingly when describing his family, he states he is from a working class family, rather than stating he is working class. The mention of working class, again, suggests that this is a part of his identity yet he may not necessarily see himself as working class.

In contrast when Donna was asked a similar question, she immediately categorised herself in terms of marital status and gender variance:

I: 'And I just want to get to know a bit about you if you could just tell me a bit about yourself.'

D: 'Erm, well, er I'm... er I've been married now for 10 years with my partner for 25 with my wife for 25 even, erm, I have been, I have been a cross dresser my entire life erm, I started when I was young, I started playing dress-up at around age 4, 5, 6 something like that.'

(Donna, transcript 2, lines 3 – 6)

I subsequently found that Donna was at the beginning of her transition having just been referred to the gender identity clinic and coming out to close family members. In addition, having just come out to her wife, Donna was unsure whether their relationship would continue. It is therefore not unexpected that Donna would discuss these things as they are most salient to her at the time.

When asked vaguely to talk about themselves, the participants will use categories which are most relevant to them at the time; even in the context of the research interview. Donna, who has just started her transition immediately categorises herself as having been a cross-dresser as this was a large part of her identity from childhood. Also, gender identity would be at the forefront of her mind as she was at the beginning of her transition. On the other hand, Sophie mentions later on in the interview that being trans is not part of her identity. As a result, it makes sense she would talk about her occupation and interests rather than her gender identity.

What these excerpts demonstrate is that, despite the prerequisite of gender variance for the research, it is more likely that participants tend to categorise themselves outside of gender. Participants talked about other parts of their identity which were important to them, particularly occupation, age and background. The reasons for this may differ. Of course these are salient parts of the participants' sense of self, and it is reflective of an intersectional identity. However, the context of the research interview must be taken into account, they may not be answering with their gender identity as they know the rest of the interview will concern that.

It was at this point I asked the participants to talk about their gender identity, eliciting self-categorisation. Gender categorisations happen both consciously and subconsciously as we immediately categorise people's gender without knowing them; often through our own biases and ideas of what social and physical characteristics constitute 'male' and 'female' (Butler, 1993) . As outlined in the methodology chapter, the only stipulation for taking part in this research was that they did not identify with the sex they were assigned at birth. By taking part in the research therefore, the participants identify that they experience gender variance, in whatever form that may take. It was most appropriate therefore that one of the first questions in the interview was 'how would you describe your gender identity?' There were similarities between the ways in which the participants answered this question, something which I was not expecting. Firstly, no two participants described themselves in the same way and secondly, each answer took a narrative turn. What was clear from the outset is that gender identity is more complex than the male/female binary which we have become culturally restricted to, and for gender variant people describing their identity becomes problematic.

Perhaps the most candid answer to this question came from Donna:

I: 'So er, how would you describe your gender?'

D: 'I'm a trans woman ... erm ... it's taken me a long time to get to that point er... I'm, one of my worries is that I'm wrong, erm but since coming out to my wife sort of the flood gates have opened, the dysphoria has really hit hard and is actually, despite all the problems and all the stress it's causing me, it has actually convinced me that I'm right.'

(Transcript 2, lines 39 – 43)

Donna's answer is initially frank as she confidently categorises herself as a trans woman. She had mentioned her gender identity previously in the interview which may explain some of the ease with which Donna was able to categorise herself as a trans woman, as she had been considering her gender identity greatly at the time of the interview. However, Donna's answer takes a narrative turn in which she then explains her internal anxieties about her gender identity. It does not reflect a narrative in the Labovian sense of regimented criteria, yet, there is a sequence, it is temporal and serves a narrative purpose.

It is the purpose of this short narrative which is most interesting, specifically after Donna has confidently categorised herself as a trans woman. It serves to briefly explain the process in which she reached that point, and somewhat justify herself. The context of this utterance also should be taken into consideration. Donna, like all participants, is aware of the purpose of the interview, which may be a reason for the initial frankness of her answer and her subsequent narrative. In this context, this question is acceptable, whereas it may not be in other social situations where the question may not have elicited the same candid answer and may be seen as potentially offensive. Despite this, however, the anxieties Donna discusses are something that she was experiencing at the time of our interview, and therefore relevant to her and her gender identity.

To focus back on Donna's self-categorisation, I probed her further in the interview, asking her as to why she uses trans woman to describe herself.

I: 'Erm, so you described yourself as a trans woman, why do you choose to use that particular term?'

D: 'Erm because I'm, I'm not male, er I was not born female physically erm I, I hav- I'm proud of who I am er I see no reason, I have no desire to go stealth at any point erm it's who I am basically, it's , I- there's, I know that I have I will never have the life experiences as a cis woman erm there will always be that sort of, there will always be a certain amount of erm expectation of male privilege erm that no matter how hard I try is always going to be there, erm and so accepting myself as,

no not accepting but sort of putting myself there in the- as a trans woman, it in a way reminds me of this as well as sort of allowing myself to sort of be out there as who I am.'

(Transcript 2, lines 69 – 76)

Donna performs her gender through the categories she uses to describe herself. As Stokoe (2003) points out, the categorisation process is made possible by the inferential resources carried by the category used. The categories we use have a set of connotations with it, and this may be particularly relevant with gender categories. Therefore, the consideration Donna took to categorise herself is as important as the category itself. For Donna, it seems that categories of male, female and woman all have connotations of being cis gender, which is why she does not use them to refer to herself.

As Antaki (2007) suggests, claiming a category for oneself is usually trouble free, however by claiming the category of woman, there are implications. Donna takes this into consideration as she is not male and not cis female however considers her identity to be on the male/female binary. 'Woman' belongs to a collection of categories which includes man, woman, male and female, which makes up the gender binary in which people are usually categorised. As a result, when the category of woman is evoked, so are a specific set of activities and characteristics which are inferred by social actors; often relating to biological processes and physical attributes. It is clear that Donna is aware of these considerations after what seems to be an agonising experience defining herself. She suggests that having not had the life experiences of a cis woman, and having experienced an amount of male privilege whilst still presenting as male, does not warrant her use of 'women'. Yet *also*, Donna's notion of 'woman' and its inferences and implications are not a fundamental part of her identity. 'Trans woman', therefore, not only fits Donna's personal experiences and gender identity, but also carries with it implications of which Donna is happy to be associated.

Like Donna, Terri is also very aware of how the category of woman might lead to false assumptions, however the inferences Terri makes with the category woman somewhat differ from Donna's. Terri's experience of her gender differs the most from the other participants as she had not medically transitioned and had no intention to

at the time of interview. She was also presenting as female to a limited number of friends and family. When asked her identity, Terri started to explain her conflict:

I: 'So how would you describe your gender?'

D: 'It's a weird one because the erm, for me the erm, how can I explain it? It's it's like in two parts, like my brain's saying one thing and my heart says another, so my brain'll say 'oh well do you want some hormones or you're going to have a penis whether you like it or not, here's loads of testosterone, tough shit you're going to have it, and my heart says the complete opposite and it's like I think the hardest part for me is I feel like I've just been like an observer ever since I was a teenager, like I isolated myself at school, I'd stand back and watch the crowds watch how people talk, watch how the different, the differences between boys and girls works you know, in groups, in social situations and everything, it feels to me like I've just learnt how to be a- I don't even like saying the word man to be honest with you because I'm not a man, it's totally the wrong word, I see myself even physically I see myself as a boy who just didn't grow up how sh- he/she whatever should have grown up and I think that's part of the conflict that I have so it's both, it's everything, but I'd say personally I'm a girl, I'm not a woman because to be a woman you have to grow up from being a girl to be a woman and that's just never going to happen, that's how I interpret it anyway hence why I can, why I just have a continual clash in my brain all the time because none of it really, it's all so conflicting.'

(Transcript 5, lines 53 – 68)

Throughout the excerpt Terri uses two specific categories to describe herself, girl and observer. When we consider the term girl as a category, it carries with it the category predicate features of infancy and immaturity. Essentially, it could be argued that Terri infantilises herself through the use of girl. However, to explain and contextualise her use of the term, Terri highlights a specific category predicate feature which she considers to be a fundamental part of 'woman'. To be categorised as a woman Terri believes she needs to have grown up and experienced puberty as cis female. Having missed these experiences she categorises herself as 'girl'. Again, girl suggests an amount of infancy and immaturity, yet Terri is actively

ascribing these to her identity. This is further realised when she discusses the category of man, something which is far removed from her identity, so much so that she has difficulty saying it. Terri sees herself therefore as mentally a girl and, not having experienced a female adolescence, physically still a boy.

Interestingly, Terri also describes herself as an observer, having observed how gender should be performed by her peers. In a reflection of Garfinkel's (1967) and West and Zimmerman's (1987) studies, for Terri, gender is something that is learnt from observable behaviour. For Agnes, in Garfinkel's (1967) study, gender had to be accomplished through learning how to act and behave in a culturally normative way. Additionally, West and Zimmerman (1987) ascertain that gender is something that is done by aligning ourselves with normative conceptions of what men and women are. Having been assigned male at birth Terri learned how to do masculinity through observation of behaviour and interactions of people in social situations, and performed that in order to be read as male from outside. This is also reflected in Terri's self-categorisation as a girl. Terri had to learn to do masculinity in order to maintain her performative male identity, however being a woman is not possible for Terri having not experienced what she feels are fundamental aspects of womanhood. It is also interesting to note that Terri refers to herself as an observer before she refers to her gender identity which further supports the idea that it is difficult for Terri to externalise her gender identity.

The question of gender identity elicited an explanation from Terri. Like Donna, Terri's answer took a narrative turn in order to explain her self-categorisation. Also, like Donna, Terri's narrative is a short one, but necessary to put her gender identity into context. Without the short story of her growing up, her self-categorisation as an 'observer' would not make sense; and potentially neither would her gender categorisation. Again, it is the purpose of the narrative, rather than the coding, which proves most interesting as it also reflects a certain amount of justification and explanation on Terri's part. Additionally, it also reflects the amount of conflict participants feel when categorising themselves; something which may not be seen when cisgender people are referring to their gender identity.

Conflict in categorising the self is something that is seen throughout the participants' answers. Donna's conflict arises from whether she is 'making the right decision' and

Terri's arises from not having experienced puberty as a woman. Rachel shows conflict not in how she perceives herself and her experiences, but in how she may be perceived by others:

I: 'So how would you describe your gender? Or gender identity. Is it gender? Or would you call it gender identity?'

R: 'Er, yeah gender identity is probably the more accurate term I guess. For me I suppose it's female but... I try to not be too... I'm always concerned about the kind of appropriation and you know it's female but with a 'but', sort of. So trans-female I guess, but it's pretty clearly cut for me, it is very much on the feminine side, I'm not, I would never describe myself as kind of non-binary or anything like that.'

(Transcript 4, lines 39 – 45)

Rachel hedges around her identity, claiming the category of female but tentatively. Again, as pointed out when discussing Donna, generally claiming a category for yourself is trouble free (Antaki, 2007), and Rachel's main concern is 'appropriation'. Typically a cisgender person would have no trouble claiming the categories of either male or female, however they may be questioned on how well they are performing masculinity or femininity. Masculine women and effeminate men may find their outward appearances and mannerisms are scrutinised and find themselves subject to homophobic and heterosexist abuse. However fundamentally, a butch woman may still be seen to some as 'more of a woman' than a trans woman (Halberstam, 1998).

Hedging is seen as a form of politeness which is used euphemistically, and has been associated with women's speech (Lakoff, 1973). However in this context, it seems more due to uncertainty. Not necessarily uncertainty over her gender identity, rather uncertainty over how to self-categorise in the face of appropriation. Appropriation in the context of gender identity can be used to describe a multitude of ideas which suggests that trans women are not 'real' women and transitioning is another way that men can own femininity. Some radical feminist researchers and writers such as Raymond (1992) and Jeffreys (1997), use the concept of 'gender appropriation' to delegitimise trans women's identities. Rachel is aware of these sentiments and their damaging effect on trans women, so therefore she pre-empts

any hostility with her self-identification. She's a female with a 'but' – identifying as female and using 'but' as a buffer to preserve herself from potential threats due to her gender identity. Rachel's self-categorisation becomes a justification of her identity.

Rachel's hedging also shows an overt awareness of how she may be perceived when claiming a gender category and as a result she uses three categories to refer to herself:

- I suppose it's female.
- Female but with a but, sort of.
- Trans-female I guess.

What Rachel's categorisations show is a breaking of Sack's (1974) economy rule, as one category for Rachel is not referentially adequate. This reflects a difficulty faced by gender variant people in describing their identity as the categories society has traditionally used to discuss gender do not reflect the identities of the participants. It also elicits an explanation from Rachel because, as her cisgender audience, I do not share the common understanding of gender variance with Rachel. This can be said to be true of the majority of cisgender people and it is not unexpected therefore, that an explanation in the least, is warranted.

Like Rachel, another participant Michael has to explain his gender identity. He explains the stages he went through to reach his current identity. Prevalent narratives of trans lives perpetuated by (but not restricted to) media outlets offer stories of trans people who have known exactly who they are and how they identify from being small children. These stories continue the idea that every trans person knows their identity and once they transition then that is the end of it – the 'I was born in the wrong body' trope.

'Erm, I'm not really sure to be honest, 'cause initially when I came out I, I told my parents that I was genderqueer and I hadn't didn't have any intention of taking hormones or having surgery or um like legally changing my name and pronouns or anything like that but then after a couple of months I was just like no this is no good so I was like yes, I am now a man and that is just it and I kind of maybe went with that for

like three years or so? Erm, maybe, maybe a bit more but certainly in the last year or two I just don't really feel like that fits, like I'm happy with my body as it is, my body is... I, I'm just comfortable but in terms of like erm, externally imposed social roles it doesn't really feel right so I would probably just consider myself non-binary, but you know, stereotypically masculine presenting' (Michael, transcript 3, lines 55-63).

The question about his gender identity has evoked a narrative from Michael in which he describes the process of finding his gender identity. During his narrative Michael is explicit about his trouble with categories and finding it difficult to find one due to not wanting to be associated with it; for example, he is uncomfortable with the externally imposed social role of being male. However, Michael describes himself as 'stereotypically masculine presenting' as he uses a male name and pronouns, wears more masculine associated clothing and chooses to grow out his facial hair. He is aware of how he may be perceived as cis male. However, he perceives himself as non-binary to avoid parts of identity which are imposed rather than chosen, like cultural signs and symbols of the body that enable it to be read as cis (Kimmel, 2011)

Despite this, Michael is also conscious that his process of finding an identity may not be true for other people. It seems that Michael's experience of his developing gender identity has also shaped how he identifies. This is made clearer when he discusses his interest in feminist theory and alludes to cultural attitudes to gender variance, such as Facebook's implementation of more gender 'options' (Facebook Diversity, 2015):

I: 'So would non-binary be the only sort of specific terms you would use to describe yourself?'

M: 'Yeah I think so, um yeah, I'm just not sure, you've just caught me at an interesting time in my life where just I think as well the more I got into feminism as well the more I really started to question what I really knew about anything so when I started to deconstruct literally what gender is and what sex is the more I was just like, gender is a shoe,

so I literally don't, just don't even know, like Michael just seems fine and if that could be a gender category on its own then that would be brilliant. Everything seems to arbitrary to me, none of them seem to fit because if you choose one then it comes with certain kind of connotations or expectations.' (transcript 3, lines 64 - 82)

Michael's answer supports the argument that the lexicon surrounding gender variance is inadequate, despite the influx of new terminology, and more often than not this new terminology does not fit the identity of the individual. Michael's process of finding a category for himself has been difficult and, despite his identifying as non-binary, this still inadequately reflects Michael's identity. Furthermore, the inadequacy of gender terminology can also reflect a restrictive wider society which has not 'caught up' in terms of gender variance. He goes on to say:

'Purely for, like political reasons, I don't know like, well not political... legal reasons I would class myself as a man just to make things easier but I don't know, socially and politically I want to rock the boat' (transcript 3, lines 83 - 85)

It is interesting to note that the choice of a gender category can not only relate to how someone personally identifies but also can relate to the situation. I have mentioned that Michael considers himself non-binary, which he has gone through a process to come to, however for ease Michael may also identify as a man. There are legal, social and cultural instances where the categories of man and woman are only used, for example on United Kingdom passport applications. In these contexts Michael may identify as male, or man, because he has no other choice. Overall, what is clear is that his gender identity has been more of a process of finding the right terms to fit his personal situation and beliefs, yet it still has to shift depending on the social and cultural context Michael finds himself in.

In comparison, Sophie also shifted identities depending on her cultural context:

I: 'So how would you describe your own gender?'

S: 'Female, without any qualifiers, if it was for anyone. If it was for this, obviously I'm transgender, I'm male to female but I conform to the

binary, not because I feel that everyone should, but because... because I think it should be someone's choice, but because it's how I actually identify, I identify as female that should have been born cis. I want to, I want to identify as cis, I want to be stealth I don't want people to know. Being trans is not part of my identity.'

(Transcript 1, lines 76- 81).

The common knowledge between Sophie and me is that she is gender variant. She describes herself as "female, without any qualifiers." (transcript 1, line 77), and 'qualifiers' in this context is not explicitly explained as we both understand it to mean the prefix 'trans-'. Out of context, if someone were to read 'female without any qualifiers' it is most likely they would not understand the relevance of the addition to the category. This shows that in her categorisation, Sophie is using our mutual understanding of her culture and identity.

Additionally, when I asked Sophie about her gender identity, there was no pause between the end of my question and her answer. With this reflexive response Sophie not only shows the confidence she has in her own identity, but she also purposely distances herself from the transgender community. This is because being trans is, as Sophie explains, not a part of her identity. Therefore it makes sense that trans would not be part of her self-categorisation. Also, for Sophie, there are negative connotations with the trans community with which she does not want to align herself to; much like Michael and his rejection of various categories. However, further on in the utterance Sophie categorises herself as transgender for the purposes of our interview. The context of the interview situation is really important in how Sophie describes herself, as it is known to me that she is gender variant and that is a motivator for her to take part in the research.

Further on in the interview Sophie explains that she lives 'stealth', another category which she uses to describe her identity. By stealth, Sophie means she lives with a limited set of people knowing her gender variance and 'passes' in the public sphere. As said before, Sophie and I are using our common shared knowledge of her identity during the interview. We are both aware of her gender variance and her desire to live as stealth, and if she had just said female in response to the question I would still be aware of her gender variant identity. However, Sophie states that for the

interview she is transgender, which suggests a need to legitimise her taking part in the interview. However, as Sophie explicitly states, being trans is not part of her identity. She outright rejects a transgender identity but acknowledges that trans labels apply “literally speaking” (Transcript 1, line 84).

This section of analysis is interesting and also unique in that MCA is traditionally used to analyse the production of categories in talk, without provocation. In this instance, however, I have explicitly asked my participants to categorise themselves. Each participant uses multiple categories to describe their gender identity which is indicative of the difficulty gender variant people may experience when discussing gender categorisation. As explored previously, categories are rich with inferences and the MCD of gender holds the fundamental inferences of being cisgender and of being either male or female. What is evident, however, is that gender categories are much more varied and complex than we infer them to be.

Each participant’s gender identity differs from the others, some in small ways and some in larger ways. With this in mind, we find that what is clear is gender variant people do not ‘fit’ into the preconceived categories of gender we have in society and so have to navigate cissexist assumptions in order to claim their gender identity. This seems to make self-categorisation as a gender variant person somewhat difficult. As seen by Donna’s answers, the process of recognising and possibly coming to terms with gender dysphoria or a gender variant identity can be a long and difficult process. Terri and Michael also demonstrated the difficulty of this process by describing their experiences, or lack thereof, which have contributed to their use of categories. Rachel and Sophie, however, discussed their self-categorisation in terms of how others may perceive them.

Overall despite their differing answers, there was a striking common facet in participants’ responses. In some way, each answer was an explanation of their gender identity. It could be argued that because the question is phrased ‘how would you describe...’, it may have provoked a more detailed account. Or that the interview context provoked an explanation, as participants may have felt obligated to justify their choice of category. However, it is taken for granted that if a cisgender person is asked for their gender identity, they would answer male or female, and as a society these are the answers we would expect. I considered how I would answer

that question and decided that it was most likely I would answer female without any further clarification. As a cis gender woman I am in the privileged position of not having to think about my gender identity, or have it questioned. So it struck me that each participant began to almost justify their answers to me. All participants but Michael, who chronologically described the process of his self-identification, identified themselves and then explained their use of category.

Overall, what is clear is that not only is finding a name for yourself a difficult process, it is also a process where wider society is often also considered. Concerns of appropriation, living 'out' or being 'outed' as trans and fear of repercussions have a major influence on how the participants define themselves. This can lead to conflict as to whether the label or category the participants choose for themselves accurately represents their identity or how they might be perceived in the public sphere. Whatever the reason for this conflict, it often manifests in a narrative or explanation of the choice, something taken for granted as rote by cisgender people.

Living in a Gendered World - The Problematic Terminology of Gender

Variance

Transgender and Trans

As demonstrated previously in trying to label their personal gender identities, it can be a difficult and long process. Transgender as we know it today took on its meaning in 1992 (Stryker, 2006) having been coined by Virginia Price to describe someone who 'changed social gender through the public presentation of self, without the recourse to genital transformation (*ibid.*: 4). The term transgender is a clear example of how language has evolved to encompass widening and diversifying gender identities, as before this the terms 'transvestite' and 'transsexual' were mainly used to describe people who cross-dressed and people who underwent genital surgery, respectively.

Transgender is now widely considered to be an umbrella term which encompasses a range of diverse gender identities. Academic texts such as Hines (2007), and Stryker and Whittle (2006) explain that broadly speaking, transgender as a term relates to any gender identity that moves beyond the male/female binary. This includes, as Hines explains, 'practices and identities such as transvestism, transsexuality, intersex, gender queer, female and male drag, cross-dressing and

some butch/femme practices ... individuals who have undergone hormone treatment or surgery to reconstruct their bodies, or those who cross gender in ways that are less permanent.' (2007:1).

Because of its fluid definition, transgender has become less of a gender identity category and more of descriptor for gender variant categories. This is reflected in the participants' self-categorisations as only Sophie has used it to describe herself, yet this was in a restricted cultural context. An example of this is Donna's self-categorisation, she identifies as a trans woman as opposed to transgender, yet according to her definition, Donna's identity fits with the term transgender.

I: 'What's your opinion on the term transgender?'

D: 'Erm it's... it's probably the best one we have as an umbrella term it's perfectly, it's perfectly good it's, it's more inclusive than breaking it down into all the various different shades of being trans, it's-'

I: 'So would you include cross dressers and drag kings and queens under the-'

D: 'Yes.'

I: '-term transgender?'

D: 'Absolutely yeah. I, it's, it's different shades on a continuum, I mean in a way it could still be seen as divisive because ultimately male female trans whatever, we're still people erm but we are a long way from, from even thinking about people just ignoring all the labels and going with this person is Donna.'

(Transcript 2, lines 77 – 86)

Donna describes 'transgender' as being an adequate descriptor for a community of people who share gender variance as a commonality. For Donna, transgender is an inclusive category in which her experiences of gender can exist alongside other experiences of gender variance. Additionally, Donna includes cross-dressing within the category of transgender, something which is contentious amongst other participants. However, as Donna once identified as a cross-dresser, and taking into consideration her gender identity now, it is reasonable that Donna sees cross-dressers as transgender.

Rachel's opinions regarding transgender as a term were initially similar to Donna's. It is seen as descriptive, inoffensive and inclusive.

'I don't have any real strong opinion on it, it's I suppose it's to me it's just a descriptive word, obviously it's quite open to a lot of interpretation, it's used in a lot of different ways by a lot of different people, if it's a case of you know either/or, if it's a case of transgender or some of the other terms that get- or have previously been floating around erm, you know transsexual and the like, then, I mean obviously that has a medical definition, but when it's used in general parlance it tends to be used wrongly. Whereas I think transgender, it doesn't really limit it in anyway, it's just a case of I suppose my interpretation of it is just like gender variant or something along those lines, it's just it's not a straight clear match between your birth sex and your gender identity, so in that, I don't really have any problem with it, it's just a word like any other descriptive word you might come across.'

(Transcript 4, lines 57 - 66)

Again Rachel sees the term more of a descriptor, and also preferable to other terminology referring to gender variance. The example she uses is 'transsexual' which has highly medicalised connotations, which is residual from the pathologisation of gender variance, particularly in mid twentieth century USA (Benjamin, 1966; Cauldwell 1945; Stryker, 2006). Unless using the term in a medical context, or whether an individual chooses to use it to refer to themselves, describing people as transsexual is inappropriate because of its clinical nature. It seems that as a result, transgender has taken over as an inoffensive descriptor for the gender variant community. What is interesting is, despite the development and usage of the term, it is still insufficient for describing individual experiences of gender.

If we compare the participants' opinions of transgender as a term to how they define themselves, it is clear that transgender is used less as a personal identity label. Despite finding the term descriptive and inclusive of gender identities, Donna, Rachel and Michael do not use it to describe themselves. Sophie uses the term to describe herself but only in the context of the interview. Taking this into

consideration, and despite academic and dictionary definitions, there was a difference of opinions as to which identities could be accepted under the term transgender. I enquired as to the inclusion of cross-dressers and drag performers, and it was clear that personal experience played a role in shaping the participants' opinions on the subject.

Donna, who identified as a cross-dresser for the majority of her life before identifying as a trans woman, believed that the transgender umbrella included cross-dressers and drag performers, explaining that "it's different shades on a continuum" (transcript 2, line 84). Also, she suggests that society is a long way from recognising people as individuals and not as their gender. This is reflective of Michael's earlier discussion on his own gender where he suggests categorisation as arbitrary and would prefer a 'Michael' gender.

In comparison Michael is conflicted about the term. He feels that on a personal level he should believe transgender is an all-inclusive term, however his experience has altered his opinion:

'We had a trans support group that was for people who were transitioning in whatever way that meant, whether it was purely social or whether it was physically or whatever, but then management of it changed and it got kind of branched out to mean any person who does anything vaguely gender variant, whatever you want to call it, so then we got a lot of transvestites coming to the group who were wearing quite sexualised clothing and it made a lot of people uncomfortable.'

(Transcript 3, lines 124 - 130)

If we look closely at the way Michael is describing his experience, it is clear that there is some uncertainty and a reluctance to fully define what transitioning or gender variance is. The support group was originally for people who were transitioning *in whatever way that meant* and changed to allow people who did anything vaguely gender variant *whatever you want to call it*. This is common when asking participants to define terms as there seems to be an acute awareness of how others might define words or categorise themselves. Michael here, for example, either cannot or will not refer to any potential category bound features of 'transgender', recognising the subjective nature of the category. Exploring all the

participants answers it is clear that there is an overall disagreement of the category bound features, whereas with the categories of 'male' and 'female' for example, there would be a general consensus.

Further on in his explanation Michael demonstrates this awareness by explaining that he is an outsider to other people's experiences:

'Because you can't know what is actually happening in another person's head, I can't possibly know whether this person had a fetish or whether they identify with that gender but they actually don't know [themselves]. Because that was another thing with the age gap, all of these people who were coming who I didn't feel were really right for the group were all a lot older, so you know it could easily be that when they were first experiencing it, the terminology and the support just didn't exist so all that existed was 'I'm a man who likes to dress up as a woman because I find it arousing', or whatever, so maybe if they were born now they would identify as a trans woman.' (Transcript 3, lines 124 - 151)

The terminology surrounding gender variance is relatively new and transgender as a term was not widely used until the 1980s (Stryker, 2006). Because of this, and as Michael explains above, there may be people who have cross dressed for decades and not known they were trans because the terminology and support did not exist. Michael's experiences, however, make him reluctant to include these identities under the transgender umbrella. Yet, whilst Michael's definition of transgender was still somewhat open, Sophie, on the other hand, had a clear idea of what it meant. When asked about drag performers and cross-dressers Sophie explained:

'I think transgender has to indicate some sort of intention to transition if you get dressed up in drag go and DJ and then go home you know as a gay guy back to your boyfriend and live as a guy you're not transitioning you're not transgender you're just a you're- you're a drag queen.' (Transcript 1, lines 278 - 281)

Despite previously distancing herself from a trans identity, Sophie has strong views on what the category should entail; specifically the intention to transition. Even though she distances herself from 'transgender', Sophie also could be seen to protect the idea of it by saying 'you're just a drag queen'. This reflects her previous discussions on the need to medically transition. To illustrate her point, Sophie embarks on a hypothetical narrative of a gay drag queen.

In terms of the transgender umbrella, Rachel also finds drag performers problematic:

'Yeah that's a difficult one isn't it, I think cross-dressers I think that they would definitely to me fall under that drag is where you get, again to my mind, is where you get into sort of a grey area because it's what's going on in the person's head. Is the drag purely just a performance?'

(Transcript 4, 69 – 71)

Perhaps not as forthright as Sophie's views, but Rachel feels that there needs to be an element of dysphoria and "cross-gender thought processes" (transcript 4, line 73) in order to be considered transgender.

How the participants used transgender in their speech is also significant, as throughout the interviews it was always used as an adjective by the participants. This echoes a prevailing view that using 'transgender' as a noun is problematic and offensive. For example, the word class issue of transgender also arose whilst I was transcribing Rachel's interview. I had been writing 'transwoman' as one word throughout, ignorant to the fact that it was potentially problematic. When spoken, there is no issue with the phrase 'trans woman' however when written down it's very specific. 'Transwoman' as one word she explained, suggests that she belonged to a category of humans that were distinct from women, i.e. men, women and transwomen. When separated, trans becomes an adjective and can be used interchangeably with other descriptors such as short, tall, English etc. to indicate various parts of her identity. Rachel is a woman firstly, for whom being trans is one part of her identity. This also extends to the term transgender.

Transgender as a noun is problematic in the least. 'A transgender' suggests a discrete category of person, separate from man or woman. Not only is this reductive as it reduces transgender people to one aspect of their lives, but it is also impersonal and dehumanising. To separate transgender into its own category is also to separate it from masculinity and femininity, which for gender variant people who identify within the binary is exclusionary; i.e. if one is not a man or a woman then one must be 'a transgender'. This is often used in media outlets which often present trans people as a peculiarity, essentially othering them. After United States of America President Donald Trump's 2017 ban on trans people serving in the United States military, there were headlines from all political leanings using transgender as a noun. For example, in an article for *The Daily Dot*, Valens (2017) presents a screen grab of Business Insider's headline 'Trump bans transgenders from joining the military'. This headline is made more provocative by the use of 'transgenders' as, again, it places trans people in a category of their own, suggesting there is something deviant about trans people, as opposed to 'normal' men and woman able to serve.

Overall it is widely agreed that transgender is an acceptable term to use when describing gender variant people generally. Despite its potentially problematic definitions, the term denotes gender variance but has become broad enough to allow an individual to define themselves within the scope of transgender. This is clear from the how the participants define themselves using differing categories to transgender but recognise that this falls under the wider transgender category. Again, participants' definitions of the word also greatly differ, in terms of what constitutes transgender and how it applies to them. This is another example of how categorisation of gender variant identities can be difficult.

Transition

The participants were asked their opinions on terminology relating to gender variance and how they fit with their own gender identity. What is clear within the answers is that the words are open to interpretation on the basis of each person's experience of being trans. The denotation of transition is 'the process or period of changing from one state or condition to another' (Oxford Dictionaries, 2017), so for example, water can transition to steam or to ice. However, more recently transition

has been used to describe the process in which an individual assumes the characteristics of the gender they identify as.

When asked their opinion on the term 'transition' it was generally accepted as being "appropriate", "pretty accurate" and "the best term there is at the moment". However, there were still some differences in how 'transition' is interpreted. The prefix trans-meaning across or beyond which can provide problems for some gender variant people. The Latin meaning of trans, 'to cross over', offers a binary view of gender, suggesting that one must cross from one sex or gender to another. This may be the experience for some people, however others would argue that they have always been their preferred gender and it is not that which is changing. In addition, non-binary and gender fluid identities that do not ascribe to the binary do not necessarily change from one state to another. Finally there is the consideration of surgery and hormone treatment as some gender variant people do not have these done, yet may feel they have transitioned. There are many interpretations of this term and below I outline what they mean to each participant.

Rachel explained that while 'transition' describes the process well enough, each person's experience of transition differs:

'I think it describes very much the, the phase that you go through and in terms of where you would sort of mark the edges of that, I think that's very grey and kind of open to a lot of interpretation and probably just different for each person.' (Rachel, Transcript 4, lines 510 - 512)

Michael supports Rachel's opinion about the term by also suggesting that although 'transition' might be an accurate term for what happens:

There might be a problem with it if you're kind of using the word for all trans people kind of expecting that being trans implies there is a transition. (Transcript 3; line 285 - 286).

It is clear that the experience of transitioning is a subjective one and how the participants describe that process is also subjective. For example, in contrast to

Rachel and Michael, Sophie claims the term and uses it willingly to describe her experience.

'I've been through a transition ... I think if you're doing anything medical you are transitioning ... Transition is absolutely valid' (Sophie, transcript 1; lines 242 – 243, 247).

She has a strong idea about what the term means for her which disagrees with Michael's interpretation. Sophie believes that to transition you must be medically altering your body. Both Michael and Sophie have had medical interventions as a part of their transitions, however Michael's idea of gender identity is more fluid than Sophie's. Michael is non-binary identifying, whereas Sophie conforms to the gender binary.

Sophie describes transitioning as "a process" (transcript 1, line 244). As she conforms to a male/female binary, transition retains more of its dictionary meaning i.e. changing from one state to another. It makes sense therefore, that Sophie would feel surgery is a prerequisite to transitioning. Michael, on the other hand, describes himself as "non-binary but stereotypically masculine presenting" (transcript 3, lines 62 – 63) and when asked about transition explained that it is appropriate but not a catch-all word.

'I think it's a pretty accurate term for what happens I guess there might be a problem with it if you're using the word for all trans people kind of expecting that being trans implies there is a transition ... I guess for people who don't do anything to transition, not just physically but socially, legally or whatever else then it's probably not really appropriate ... but then I guess that's for people of that experience to kind of determine themselves.' (Transcript 3, lines 284 – 292).

Also, in contrast to Sophie, Michael believes that defining what transition and transitioning is, is determined by an individual's experiences. For Michael, transition was appropriate for his experiences, but there was no prerequisite for medical interventions. These two contrasting opinions highlight that even within the trans community, definitions of the shared gender variance lexicon differ.

In addition to the differing definitions, transition also provides more difficulty in only being adequate for use. On more than one occasion it is suggested that it is an accurate term but that it does not quite describe the participants' personal experiences.

'it's the best term there is at the moment but it's still far from ideal, I'm certainly not going to refer to it as a sex change which is hideous, so yeah it'll do.' (Donna, transcript 2, lines 268 - 270)

It is easy to see why transition is a complex term. I have discussed briefly the denotation of transition and the subsequent connotations. As gender variance becomes more diverse, the more restrictive the language becomes. Trans- is potentially exclusionary for anyone identifying as agendered, genderfluid, genderqueer, or anyone not identifying within the gender binary. Also, as Whittle (2015) explains, using the trans- prefix may provide problems for MtF or FtM identifying people.

When asked if 'transition' applied to her, Donna explained; "the way I see it, [it's] probably more a normalisation." (Transcript 2; line 274).

Stealth

At the time of interview Sophie, a self-identified female, was living "socially stealth" (transcript 1, line 60). This, as Sophie went on to explain, means that whilst she was living full time as female, people outside of close family members were unaware that she used to present as male. Sophie's decision to live stealth is tied in with her sense of self:

'I conform to the binary, not because I feel that everyone should but because, because I think it should be someone's choice, but because it's how I actually identify, I identify as female that should have been born cis. I want to identify as cis, I want to be stealth, I don't want people to know. Being trans is not part of my identity.' (Sophie, transcript 1; lines 78 – 81).

Being trans is not part of Sophie's identity and she describes it as a means to an end. What is interesting in this utterance is the use of the word 'stealth'. Stealth is traditionally a noun however with the adjective form being 'stealthy'. In this context, stealth is being used as an adjective as Sophie describes herself as such. The change in word class enables stealth to take on a new meaning and, as a result, become a new category.

What the above examples show is that words change their meaning as the participants discuss their personal experiences more and society's understanding of gender identity increases. For example in Legman's (2006 [1941]) 'The Language of Homosexuality', a glossary of American slang vocabulary to describe sexuality, the term 'to discover one's gender' was used in the early twentieth century to describe people who have 'come out' as lesbian or gay.

Society's understanding of gender variance was limited and the conflation of gender identity and sexuality was common (and still is to some extent today). It was believed that gender variant people were repressed homosexuals unable to cope with being gay and the language used reflects this. Just as one can discover their gender identity, one can also lose it by 'leav[ing] homosexual practices and becom[ing] heterosexual' (Legman, 2006 [1941]: 26).

Categorising the Self - The Process of Personal Name Choice

Having explored how the participants define themselves in terms of gender identity, it is worth exploring how they find a name for themselves, literally. When meeting new people, the first thing we often find out is their name, which is arguably one of the main signifiers of identity. However, as VanderSchans (2015) explains, it is something that we do not pay too much attention to on a day to day basis. Names can invoke ideas of race and religion, age, class, and arguably most significantly, gender. Trans people are in a unique position as they are amongst the relatively small group of people who get to choose their own name, and those names are a reflection of their identities and personalities. To support this, Hagström (2012) ascertains that a proper name's meaning comes from its relationship to 'oneself', arguing that 'a person's own name is important because it distinguishes [them] as a unique person and identifies [them] as [themselves]' (2012: 81). This is developed further by VanderSchans who begins to explore how people assign 'identity value'

(2015: 3) to their name, specifically in the context of gender variant people who (if they choose to) are in the unique position of being able to choose their own name. Personal names, according to VanderSchans (2015), are an important part of our social identity, and are a key factor in our perceptions of gender.

If this is the case, then it's not only the ritualistic pronouncement of gender at birth (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, 2013) which sets up a lifetime of gendered performance, so does the choice of a personal name. The number of gendered names used in the English Language exceeds unisex names greatly, and there are a great amount of female names derived from male names; for example, Andrew and Andrea, and Charles and Charlotte, etcetera. If one wanted to be perceived as specifically male or female then one is more likely to choose a masculine or feminine name, however there are other considerations that participants have taken whilst choosing their names in order to ensure that it fits them as a whole and not just their gender identity.

Rachel stated that using the feminine diminutive of their assigned birth name was 'kind of lazy' (transcript 4, line 471) but wanted to keep the same first initial.

'I had one other name that kind of rattled through my head but it never really fit, I never used it, I never said it to anyone else but it didn't feel right... I did think about the name that my mam had told us she would have used for a girl but no, nope, no no no no! It's not even a name... So I started thinking well something that was popular 30 or 31 years ago and so I looked on a website you know a list of all the names and just came across Rachel and like it and used it in my head for a while and it felt comfortable.' (transcript 4 lines 464-466; 474-476; 483-486)

Rachel further explains that keeping the same initial as her birth name was a respectful "nod" (line 473) towards her parents. The idea of respecting parents' wishes or keeping ties with their family was an important part in choosing names for the participants.

In the United Kingdom, traditional naming practices include naming children after relatives. The practice is not followed as much today, with often middle names rather than forenames coming from relatives (Bramwell, 2016). This tradition, which became standardised in the eighteenth century, was a way to honour family members. Whilst the practice is waning, it is still a large part of the naming practices of the participants.

Another example of this is Michael. His middle name “is still the same except a different spelling” (transcript 3, line 276) and, he explains;

‘it didn’t occur to me a couple of years after I started transitioning that my mum might have had a different name in mind had I been assigned male at birth and it turned out yeah that it was oh yeah we were going to call you Kevin- I wish I’d’ve known but I don’t know whether that name would have really suit me’ (transcript 3, lines 278 – 281).

Having chosen a name which suited his identity, Michael still retrospectively consulted his family on names. The indication of regret suggests that he would have seriously considered his parents’ choice as a viable option for a given name. The latter comment however, shows that he had already built up his social and personal identity as Michael. This is similar to Sophie who says;

‘My mother would have actually called me Emily but I didn’t know that until after I picked my name otherwise I probably would have made it my middle name.’ (transcript 1, line 600 – 601)

What is also interesting about these stories, is that they suggest no initial familial involvement in the choosing of a name but still a desire to honour and respect family members. This may be because in choosing a name with a link to the family, there is a sense of membership; particularly if relationships are strained.

Another important and common trait of choosing a personal name is the idea of not wanting to ‘stand out’. It was important for all participants to choose a name which both reflected their identity, which they felt comfortable with and that would allow them to blend in.

'I want something that's quite feminine because that's how I feel... I don't want anything that's going to attract undue attention.' (Rachel transcript 4, lines 481 - 483)

Rachel's desire to blend in is not uncommon, however it is sometimes believed that trans people, and in particular trans women, purposely choose outlandish names when transitioning. There is a widespread conflation between gender variant identities and, to what Shapiro calls 'outside eyes' (2005:1); drag performers, cross-dressers and transvestites are assumed to be transgender. With the pervasiveness of drag in history and culture (Schacht and Underwood, 2004), it is clear to see how the erroneous assumption that trans people choose unusual names has come about.

This idea of outlandish names is also something that is discussed within the community:

'This is going to sound like I am bitchy towards trans people, but some of them pick ridiculous names that sound ridiculous, middles names that you wouldn't even pick ... it stands out to me, you know?.' (Sophie, transcript 1, lines 602 - 606)

This also related to Sophie's desire to live stealth; something which is particularly important for her personally, having explored how she identifies. To Sophie an outlandish name stands out and may risk her being unnecessarily outed. What may be an expression of gender identity for someone is a potential risk for Sophie. In addition to this, Sophie also expressed a family connection, having found out after her name change her mother would have called her Emily as baby. She stated that this would have been her middle name if she found out sooner.

Before Donna became known as Donna, she was known as Danielle. Her original name choice stems from the feminine version of her male birth name. It was an 'easy jump' because, as Donna explains, it's taken her a long time to get to the point of identifying as a trans woman.

'I have no idea, I cannot remember it was years ago. Originally when I first started coming out to people [as a cross-dresser] when I was around 16 or 17 I was Danielle because my male name was Daniel so it was an easy sort of jump to make. But as time went on I decided I didn't like that name... there were I felt sort of negative connotations and relationships.' (Donna transcript 2, lines 110 – 112, 114 - 115).

Experiencing negative connotations connected to certain names is something that parents also experience. This also adds extra difficulty to the already complicated process of choosing a name. However, it must be noted that Donna's experience differs from the other participants' in that whilst she was still cross-dressing, Donna was a persona which was somewhat (but not entirely) separate from her life as Daniel.

'there was a feminine persona people always said that Donna tended to be quieter, would listen more, I was being more stereotypically feminine, you know sort of calm, quiet, demure that sort of thing, but as time went on the two sides of who I was started to merge a bit more, over the last few years there's no difference whether I am dressed male or female, I think I am the same person now.' (transcript 2, lines 135 – 141).

The general connection between participants was that choosing their name was a complex process with a lot of thought. A parent's choice of given name for a child at birth helps to create and reflect social identities (Aldrin, 2016), via names which reflect the culture or religious background of the family, or the use of family forenames. Whilst choosing their name, the participants' identities are developed in some areas, namely in terms of race and ethnicity and possibly class, however not in others, namely gender identity. Because of this the list of priorities in choosing a name becomes longer. Trans people have to consider a name which fits both their developed and undeveloped identities; a name which potentially reflects their cultural and/or religious background, their gender identity, pays respect to family members or important people, feels comfortable and above all fits in.

Personal names are particularly important to the participants, having described the way in which they came to choose them. To maintain confidentiality it was required for me to ascribe pseudonyms to the participants, however I was aware that it might be more difficult to choose a name for them as I did not want to pick anything that was potentially damaging; this could include names that had been considered and disregarded or names close to the ones they were given at birth, for example. It was decided at this point to let the participants choose their own pseudonym if they desired. Sophie, Rachel and Donna all chose their own and Michael and Terri did not.

Rachel chose her pseudonym based on the name she was also considering for herself. As mentioned previously Rachel chose her name in order not to draw attention to herself, and the pseudonym is also a reflection of this. She wanted something that was still salient to her and held the same values as her real name. In addition, Sophie chose her name because she really liked it. Again, it is not a name which may draw attention to her and is feminine enough to reflect her identity. Donna, on the other hand, took the opportunity for personal fun and chose her name based on a Dr. Who assistant. A fan of the show and currently watching the series with Donna in it, Donna thought this was a great pseudonym. But, like Rachel and Sophie, the name is not outlandish or would attract attention.

Overall even when participants know they are going to be anonymised, it is clear that the choice of pseudonym reflects a desire to blend in. Taking this into consideration I chose Terri's and Michael's name, having not heard from them about picking their own. Terri made her name feminine by adding an 'i' at the end instead of a Y, for example the masculine form would have been Terry, but she uses Terri to denote femininity. There was no complete change of name, and so I endeavoured to choose something which reflected that. Michael I had not heard from so I decided to choose a traditional male name which, again, is not outlandish and relatively common. This reflects Michael's actual name.

Conclusion

I feel it is prudent to say that the terms discussed here are not representative of the entire transgender community. It would be impossible to document the lexicon of the vast amount of trans experiences and narratives. Language changes over time

and language related to gender variance has adapted and changed as the culture and community has changed (Enke, 2012), therefore the terms here are only representative of the media and culture I am investigating.

Throughout this chapter I have explored the ways in which the participants have found a name for themselves. Ranging from how they describe their gender identity to how they chose their personal name. What is clear from the outset is that these processes are far from easy ones, with many considerations to be had. Whilst discussing gender categories, what is striking is that no two participants identified in the same way, each participant had chosen a specific label which reflects their experiences with gender identity yet everyone identified with the 'umbrella' category of transgender in some way.

This reflects how difficult it could be to find an identity for oneself, particularly when moving away from the gender binary. There are considerations made by the participants which cis gender people do not have to think about, for example, does this label reflect my experience? Or even I cannot identify as this because I have not experienced life as this. It is clear that even though language is developing to keep up with gender variant identities, there are still clear connotations to male and female, masculine and feminine, which makes claiming a category far from trouble free.

Outside perceptions are a major consideration for the participants in their identity; often something which is taken for granted by wider society. It is assumed that a person transitions and that is that, it might last a few months and then the process is finished. However, as the participants have described, it is an ongoing lifelong process which enables the continual growth and development of identity. Categories are seemingly a small part of this, however what is clear is that they take on huge importance and are highly personal for each individual.

Chapter Five

Trans Narratives

British Print Media Constructions and Lived Experiences

Introduction

In the previous chapter I discussed the participants' choices of categories and the meaning behind these. These categorisations were purposely elicited throughout the interview by asking for specific opinions on certain terms and how the participants described themselves, as well as their implicit usage in the participants' answers. Categorisation was a fundamental part of the interviews, however, what also arose were specific stories, or narratives, told by the participants. The stories told can be considered to be elicited insofar as the interview format naturally enables stories to be told, particularly in this instance as the probing questions allowed me to ask further about participants' experiences. Yet what was also found were a set of spontaneous narratives which were used to explain and justify participants' choices.

As discussed earlier it is not necessarily narrative coding, like those of Labov and Waletzky (1967) and Labov (1972), which will inform this chapter, though they are still relevant. As discussed in the previous chapter, there are narratives in which it is difficult and even unnecessary to code, but they still serve an important purpose. Therefore, how narratives and stories produced by the participants and their relation to performance and performativity, culture, and identity will be at the forefront of this analysis. As Thornborrow and Coates (2005) highlight, performance is key in narrative discourse and particularly Goffman (1971) and Butler's (1990) theories of performativity. In the production and repetition of stories we see the repeated stylised acts which Butler ascertains produces gender. This is also prevalent in media narratives, which go some way to solidify wider society's opinions of trans lives; whilst not necessarily representing real lived experiences. In addition, the stories we tell are a powerful form of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1992) and help construct single and group identities, as well as life-histories (Thornborrow and Coates, 2005).

In order to gain some insight into popularised trans narratives, I will begin by looking at how the media represents trans people. 'Media' is a broad term which encompasses a number of communication outlets however, in the context of this

chapter and thesis, I will be using media to refer to UK printed newspapers and their online counterparts. The reason for this, as discussed in the methods chapter, is because more often than not cis people gain their knowledge and understanding of trans people from their consumption of media (McInroy and Craig, 2015). I also discuss the use of media articles and how it might detract from the experiences of my participants, however in this chapter it is necessary to have an understanding of how media outlets use and write about trans lives.

The Tellability and Relevancy of Gender Identity in British News Media

As outlined in the historical context chapter, trans lives have always been prevalent in the British press. In her research, Oram (2007, 2016) highlights several historical stories of trans identities in the British press and the pervasive narratives which have given rise to several tropes about gender variance which can still be seen today. This is true of other forms of mass media but, for the purposes of this chapter and thesis, I will be focussing on print media in the form of newspapers and their online counterparts. Because these are so widely disseminated and easily accessible, it is reasonable to presume that, more often than not, society's experience and knowledge of gender variance and trans identities comes from media consumption (McInroy and Craig, 2015).

Taking into consideration the historical context of gender variance in the media, I will now explore how trans people are represented and written about in modern tabloid publications. Trans people have traditionally been used in the media for sensationalist stories and as curiosities (Oram, 2007), and the stories surrounding trans people often focussed on either deception or peculiarity. It was often that trans people (whether willingly or not) gained a celebrity status because of their gender identity (*ibid.*) and people like Christine Jorgensen and April Ashley built on their celebrity status to advocate for trans rights (Feinberg, 2006). Most of these narratives can still be seen in media outlets today, however, in light of the increasing visibility of trans identities in the media, there has become an increased awareness of how transgender people are spoken about.

In recent times, it was the stories of Lucy Meadows (Pike, 2012; Greenslade, 2013) and Kate Stone (BBC News, 2014) which brought how the press reports about trans people into the spotlight. Both Lucy and Kate received severe press intrusion and

highlighted the press's use of gender identity for reader titillation. Lucy Meadows was a teacher at a primary school in Accrington, North West England, who came out and transitioned over a Christmas break in 2012. The school at which Meadows was working was supportive of her, and sent letters to parents explaining the situation. However, Meadows's transition was reported online in the local news outlet *The Accrington Observer* (Pike, 2012), which outlined concerns from a parent of a pupil at the school. Pike's article is short, not inflammatory or sensationalist, yet still explains that, despite parents' concerns, Meadows had full support from the school in her transition. The story was then picked up by the National Press and Richard Littlejohn of the *Daily Mail* wrote an opinion piece about Meadows.

Littlejohn's (Winslow, 2013) article is filled with double-voiced discourse in which he goes out of his way to express understanding about the trans community's plight, yet proceeds to then criticise Meadows under the guise of concern. Littlejohn suggested that as she was transitioning, Meadows was not fit not be teaching young children because 'he is putting his own selfish needs ahead of the well-being of the children he has taught for the past few years' (Littlejohn, quoted in Winslow, 2013). Meadows was presented as a self-centred person who, by transitioning, put the welfare of her pupils in jeopardy; whilst also expressing 'his [sic] sympathy for the 400 or so people a year who opt for 'gender reassignment surgery'' (Littlejohn, quoted in Winslow 2013).

This double-voicing is used by Littlejohn as a token, and by including this Littlejohn legitimises his opinions of Meadows, and by extension, trans people. The *Daily Mail*, for which Littlejohn was writing, is well known to be right wing and conservative in its ideologies, and it is not unexpected that an article like this may appear in the newspaper. However Littlejohn's article is an opinion piece, in which the opinion of the author is expressed more freely than it might be in other news articles (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2008). The opinion piece is often seen as a reflection of a newspaper's identity (*ibid.*), and Littlejohn's article reflects a right-wing and conservative ideology which marginalises gender variance. Yet its double voiced discourse, with expressions of sympathy and understanding, indicates an attempt to safeguard himself from potential backlash. The piece, however received a lot of public backlash, and is widely believed to have contributed to her death by suicide (Pidd, 2013). The coroner in Lucy Meadows death accused the press, and particularly the

Daily Mail, of bigotry, character assassination and salacious reporting (Pidd, 2013), which was widely reported. As a result, Littlejohn's piece and the reaction to it brought how trans people are spoken about in the media, more into public consciousness. However it took another story, that of Kate Stone, to help solidify standards of reporting for gender variance.

In late December 2013 Dr. Kate Stone was gored in the throat by a stag, piercing her spinal cord and severely endangering her life. Stone pulled through and her story was reported on by major news outlets, as would be expected for such an unusual incident. The issue arose when, throughout the reporting on this story, however, the press had made several references to her trans status; something entirely irrelevant. Headlines appeared in six national newspapers referencing 'sex-swap' (Roberts, 2014) and mentioned Kate's gender identity.

Writing in 2017, Stone describes the initial anger at having her 'trans obscurity' (2017: 29) stolen from her by the irrelevant and sensational reporting from the national press. It was this that encouraged her to seek advice from organisations who work with media outlets on their representations of trans people, so that no one had to experience the invasion of privacy she had. Eventually Stone complained to the Press Complaints Commission (PCC), and with this intervention, the six papers reporting on Stone's gender identity agreed to remove all references of it from their online articles, acknowledging that it was inappropriate and irrelevant (Press Complaints Commission, 2014). Stone now sits on the Editor's Code of Practice Committee and is an important part of the process which regulates the UK press. Both Meadows's and Stone's stories were sensationalised, and their gender identity used as a tool for 'shock'. The publication of these stories led to significant changes in the way in which gender identity was discussed in the media. In January 2016, unnecessary discrimination of gender identity was added to The Editor's Code of Practice for the first time so that clause 12ii now reads:

'Details of an individual's, race, colour, religion, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, physical or mental illness or disability must be avoided unless genuinely relevant to the story' (Independent Press Standards Organisation, 2017: clause 12ii)

What is clear is that there was motive in reporting about the gender identity of both Meadows and Stone. Meadows's gender identity was used for ideological reasons, for an author to express his general opinion on gender variance in society using a specific case study. Stone's on the other hand was used for shock and entertainment value. Her gender identity was completely irrelevant to the already gruesome accident she had been involved in, yet was included to further sensationalise an already shocking story. These media tactics, particularly pertaining to Stone's story, can be found in early news reports on gender variance (as discussed in chapter three). For example media stories of Christine Jorgensen in the 1950s revolve around her transition with headlines such as 'Doctors Turn George into Miss Christine' (Daily Herald, 1952). Jorgensen was turned into a celebrity because of her transition and that was the focal point of media reporting about her.

What is clear, however, is that at the time of publication of these stories, there was a shift in public awareness and opinion of gender variance. In a more trans aware society, the tellability of trans stories has changed. As McInroy and Craig, (2015) point out, representations of trans people have increased significantly since the 1970s and the way they are being spoken about has also. The public backlash these stories created may be indicative of a more understanding and tolerant society, in which it is no longer acceptable to use gender identity as a tool for newspaper stories. This is also reflected in the change of IPSO (2017) guidelines in 2016, which now state that a media outlet must only report on gender identity if it is relevant to the story.

However, by outlining these events, I do not suggest there are no longer negative representations of trans people, just that being trans is generally no longer a news-worthy story in itself. Celebrity stories like those of Lili Elbe, Christine Jorgensen and April Ashley who gained celebrity status through gender surgery, no longer hold relevance within today's society. This can be seen from the general public reaction to Meadows's and Stones stories, and the subsequent changes in reporting guidelines. Despite this, we are still seeing an influx of stories on gender variance in which the focus has shifted, though gender identity is used as an ideological tool.

Contemporary Newspaper Narratives

Having briefly discussed how gender identity is spoken about and used in news media, it will be interesting to explore what 'trans narratives' are most often found in newspapers. Newspaper narratives are distinct from the stories told in social settings. Whilst social and media narratives are both temporal in that they report on past experiences or events, their structures are distinct. News media narratives are often politically driven which are reflected in the structure. Toolan (2001) states that hard news stories are positioned around the opening sentence, which 'will include the most tellable and critical world-disrupting event of the story' (*ibid.*, 207). After that the narrative is less likely to be ordered linearly, but in what the author considers to be the most salient points of the story.

The NHS, Taxpayers and Money

There is an interesting subset of stories about trans people which are presented as hard news, yet the content can be categorised as soft news. This can be seen most blatantly in tabloid journalism, and often on the front page. For example a Daily Star front page headline about a trans woman begins:

'Sponger wants sex swap op reversed... And YOU will end up footing bill again.' (Robins, 2014: 1, emphasis in original)

The headline is sensationalist and provocative. It personally appeals to the reader by the use of the personal pronoun 'you', which is capitalised for maximum effect. In contrast, Chelsea as the subject of the story is depersonalised, being referred to only as 'sponger', which in itself is a highly provocative category. In the context of this article, 'sponger' carries with it certain implications of a person who takes advantage of the generosity of others, lives off the money of others and someone who may not be employed. These implications are what Sacks (1974) calls common sense cultural understandings, in that they do not need to be explained and, readers of this article will implicitly know what the newspaper is trying to suggest about Chelsea. However, unlike categories discussed in the previous chapters, the category of 'sponger' and its implications are imposed on Chelsea rather than claimed by her. Additionally the impersonal nature of the category of 'sponger' and the second person 'you', not only depersonalises Chelsea but is also othering to her.

Also in the headline is the term 'sex-swap', a sensationalist way to refer to people who transition medically. The term is steeped in historical medical discourses originating from people like Cauldwell (1949) and Benjamin (1966), who contributed to the medicalisation of gender identity, and they are still pervasive in media narratives today. Terms like sex-swap and sex-change are reductive and medicalised, essentially reducing Chelsea's identity to her genitalia. Use of these terms erase Chelsea's overall experience and adds to the wider discourse of medicalised gender identity. Sex-swap also reduces the experience of transitioning to the gender binary. With it comes the insinuation that transitioning is a switch, which leaves out the nuance of transitioning and simplifies what may be a difficult and ongoing process. This is reinforced further in the story of Chelsea as the article describes a desire to 'swap back'. This again delegitimises transitioning, and implies that Chelsea is erratic in her decisions.

The first sentence of the article, like Toolan (2001) explains, sums up the main arguments of the story, yet does it in a biased and assumptive manner.

'Jobless transgender Matthew Attonley, who had a £10,000 sex change on the NHS, now wants another op to reverse it because being a girl is too "exhausting"'. (Robins, 2014: 1)

It is unclear in the strapline what the word class of transgender is; it could be read here as either an adjective or a noun in this context. As discussed in the previous chapter, the word class of transgender is important as when used as a noun it can be offensive to gender variant people. Using transgender as a noun creates a discrete category of person outside of male and female, which suggests that gender variant people are neither. This adds to the othering of Chelsea and, by association gender variant people, as they have been put in a category of their own.

The Daily Star does not have a clear political affiliation (BBC News, 2009; Paperboy, 2017), however its stories are mostly right wing and reactionary in tone. This is clear in the above example. The first sentence introduces not only the premise of the story, but also the paper's ideologies; which are presented in a way that encourages the reader to make assumptions about the person in the story. By highlighting

Chelsea's employment status and the cost of potential surgeries, the paper immediately draws the readers to monetary issues and the conflict between Chelsea's status and wishes; she is unemployed but wants a £10000 operation. Then, with the NHS being introduced, the readers are led to consider how the surgeries will be paid for. Overall, the structure and content of this sentence is designed to encourage people to have a negative opinion of Chelsea, simply that as she is unemployed Chelsea will be draining the NHS and the readers, as tax paying citizens, will be paying for her surgeries. There is also an implication that Chelsea is not, and has never been, a tax payer, and her right to access NHS services is covertly questioned; this adds to the further marginalisation of trans identities.

The words used in the content of the article also support this stance, and present Chelsea in a negative way. The author uses Chelsea and her story to push their ideology without being overtly transphobic, yet throughout the article Chelsea is deadnamed and referred to with male pronouns, showing how little understanding the author and paper has for her. This article may be less subtle in its approach, however there is an obvious repositioning of the story. Like Littlejohn (Winslow, 2013) who uses concern for children, Robins uses concern for the NHS. There is an implicit assumption that it is okay for Chelsea to be trans, but not okay for her to use public funded organisations in order to facilitate her transition; hence an assumption that gender dysphoria is a lifestyle choice.

The author provokes anger in a number of ways, firstly through the repetition of references to tax, taxpayers and benefits, something which is already part of the public consciousness. Additionally throughout the article, inflammatory and reductive language is used when referring to Chelsea. I have discussed the problematic and reductive headline for the article which reads 'I want sex-change U-turn on the NHS' (Robins, 2014: 7) however, this is continued throughout the article. In the first line Chelsea is referred to as '[a] jobless transsexual' (Robins, 2014: 7). As we have explored in the previous chapter, labels, names and pronouns are an important part of trans identities. In this article, terms such as transsexual and sex-change are forced upon Chelsea by the (presumably) cis gender author, and at no point throughout does the author suggest having confirmed with Chelsea about her preferred labels and pronouns.

Using 'transsexual' and 'sex-change' also reduces Chelsea to the sum of her genitalia, which is not only dehumanising, but also reflective of a media which uses gender identity for titillation and entertainment. Transsexual (in addition to sex-change) is a term considered to be clinical and pathologising by the wider trans community (Hines, 2007) and only used when a person refers to themselves as such. The term gained wide usage in the 1950s and was historically associated with mental illness and psychopathy (Cauldwell, 1949) and, despite the growing understanding of gender variance and influx of new terminology, this past is something many gender variant people want to disassociate themselves from.

Overall, it may be argued by some that the article content is not as offensive because Chelsea is actively expressing her desire to transition back to male, so that the use of certain terminology like male pronouns and transsexual is acceptable. However the article is written in a reductive way in which readers are manipulated into being angry with Chelsea for desiring NHS treatment. Chelsea's story also highlights specific narratives about trans lives which are often found in the media. It covers what might be called a 'regret narrative', and also the narrative of trans people as 'scroungers', 'spongers' or drains on the NHS. At no point during the article was Chelsea's mental health taken into consideration, or her potential struggle with gender dysphoria which is likely to cause distress (according to the Trans Mental Health Study 84% of respondents had considered suicide, McNeil et. al., 2012).

Chelsea's story is well known and it was discussed by Rachel in her interview with me. Rachel discusses the problematic reporting of the story and calls it 'sensationalist beyond belief' (transcript 4, line 809). She picks out specific tools used by newspaper authors when talking about trans people, such as the use of before and after photos, birth names and inconsistent pronoun use. In addition, there is an unnecessary emphasis on money and cost, which is all focussed on the taxpayer. These, Rachel says, are tools used in a lot of articles, which often downplay the real experiences of the person in the article:

'and that article about Chelsea, I can't remember her surname, who wanted to revert I actually did a bit more reading because I remember

this case from a little bit- from when it actually happened and I had something in my head and it's right, she was later interviewed again afterwards and she hasn't had surgery, she's had HRT, she actually hasn't had GRS so where they get *all* this like this person wants to have surgery to rebuild a penis, that was never- there's nothing to revert there.' (Transcript 4, lines 808 – 817).

Rachel does not take newspaper reporting on trans people at face value and brings up further examples of this kind of reporting on gender variance. She uses the example of Billy-Joe Newington (Evans, 2014). Newington, a trans man, is in the process of undergoing various surgeries and, having had a mastectomy, is embarking on bottom surgery. His story was reported in the Daily Mail (Evans, 2014) which reported on Newington's future having penis construction surgery, with the focus being the use of the tattooed skin on his forearm for the surgery. Throughout the article, 'NHS' is used three times, whilst 'taxpayer' is also used twice when describing the surgeries that Billy-Joe has undergone. When describing his upcoming surgeries, the author also highlights the exact cost of the operation. However, as Rachel highlights:

'the trans guy that's going in for surgery and he's got a tattoo on his arm and it mentions that he's had top surgery which costs £6000, well they very much downplay the fact that they also found a tumorous lump that they removed so it's like well he would have needed that anyway.' (Transcript 4, lines 785 – 788)

Both these articles show how stories about trans lives often have underhanded motives. Both articles juxtapose one another in that the ideologies in Chelsea's story are more blatant. The article in the Daily Star was written with the intention to cause outrage, however Billy-Joe's story was written in the style of a lifestyle/human interest piece containing references to the NHS and money in order to drum up outrage. The motives here are hidden within the outward presentation of a positive piece. However, there is an implication that trans people consume resources from the NHS, and therefore the taxpayer, without contributing themselves. It is also implied that surgery for gender variant people is cosmetic and therefore does not warrant NHS spending. This intent is recognised by the readers of the newspapers

who will also be aware of other contextual knowledge like the paper's political affiliation and ideologies. As a result, these implications about gender variant people become 'mutual knowledge' (Blum-Kulka, 1997: 39) between newspaper and media. However, as Donna states:

'it was deeply unpleasant even despite the fact that it was relatively positive ... we've got the headline and then the first two paragraphs ah, the image header and the first paragraph all repeat the fact that he's going to have a tribal print penis that's kind of hitting you over the head with it, it's a little unnecessary and that is what they keep harping on about, that's- not the fact that this person is going to be happy now, that he's going to be- to get married to his girlfriend, that's absolutely secondary, the important point is, this man is going to have a tattoo on his penis, and it's not going to be a real penis because it's made from the skin on his arm – what. a. freak.' (Transcript 2, lines 507 – 514)

Donna and Rachel highlight perhaps the most important points about these articles; the fact that they either downplay, or completely ignore, any health aspects which may lead gender variant people to opt for surgery yet focus on the supposed 'peculiarity' of both Chelsea's and Billy-Joe's lives. Both Chelsea's and Billy-Joe's mental health is omitted from the articles, and Billy-Joe's cancerous tumour are understated and overtaken by overt and implied displays of outrage on behalf of their readership.

Overall, what these articles demonstrate is how the media uses gender identity to further their political and social ideologies. It is clearer in Chelsea's story that Billy-Joe's, however there is a significant amount of implication in each article which is suggestive of these ideologies. The stories themselves influence their readership and perpetuate a particular narrative of gender surgery being cosmetic and part of superfluous spending for the NHS. Also, what we begin to see in both articles are a set of narratives which present gender variant people as peculiarities and a source of entertainment for wider society. Additionally the medicalisation of gender identity is overt in both articles, not only through the constant references to the NHS but also because of outdated terminology. Experiences of gender, as we have discussed in the previous chapter, are so subjective and nuanced that current

terminology is too insufficient and inadequate to describe them. When the five participants were asked to categorise themselves I received five unique answers, which is reflective of the nuances in gender identities. The term transsexual, however, is here used as a catch-all term to describe gender variant people. Despite the coining of the term transgender in the 1980s (Stryker, 2006) and the general consensus of it being an umbrella term, in the media it is often used interchangeably with transsexual.

These articles were chosen because of their overt and covert ideological stances concerning treatment for trans people. I have demonstrated above that some trans stories are used to push ideologies and provoke outrage. These stories may not be subtle or may be touted as positive representations of trans people, yet they are publishable because they are careful not to attack anyone's gender identity outright; just the decisions people make because of their gender identity. Furthermore, there is another significance to these articles, and a lot of other stories about trans people; the presentation of their subjects as peculiarities, or 'the other'. There is another subset of stories about trans people which are pushed as 'real life' or human interest stories, like that of Billy-Joe, yet present gender variance and a novelty. These are often found in so-called 'women's magazines' or the centre folds of tabloids, and are always presented as positive and 'feel-good'. However, stories which are touted as positive representations often still have adverse effects.

Trans People as Peculiarities and Novelties

In 2015 The Sunday Mirror ran the story of Roxy whose relationship with her young autistic son had improved since her transition. Again, the story was front page news, however with a more understated headline; 'Daddy Became Mummy and Now I Love Her Even More' (Gilmour, 2015: 1). This edition of the Daily Mirror was published on the run up to the 2015 UK general election, however stories covering the election, the NHS, and other political matters did not appear until page six in the paper, with Roxy's story taking precedence. Roxy's transition story took the entire front page and was touted as an 'exclusive', which adds to the idea that Roxy is a novelty that needs to be read about. The story presents itself from the angle of Roxy's relationship with her son before her transition, and how her transition has seemed to improve that relationship. Throughout there is nothing negative said about gender variance and transitioning and on the surface this is a positive

representation of trans lives. When analysing the language used and the angle of the story however, it becomes clear that even this positive story is problematic.

Roxy, according to the article, came out to her wife in 2013, two years prior to the publication of the story. However throughout the article, Gilmour (2015) uses male pronouns and Roxy's birth name. In fact, male pronouns are used to describe Roxy for the first four paragraphs of the article, with female pronouns not being used in the lede of the story on the front page, and only introduced in paragraph seven out of the 25 paragraph article. In addition, Roxy's birth name is used eight times by the author to refer to Roxy, this is without counting direct quotes from family members. The frequent use of male pronouns and Roxy's birth name delegitimises her identity as a woman. This teamed with the 'before and after' pictures reinforces the idea of Roxy as a novelty, something to be stared at. Another way of delegitimising Roxy's identity is consistently referencing masculinity throughout the article. Roxy is described as 'a former bodyguard' by the author, and there are direct quotations including 'Bob was so masculine and afraid to show emotions' (Gilmour, 2015: 5). Being a bodyguard and being afraid to show emotions reflects what we might think of as traditional masculinity, this also adds to the 'novelty' value of Roxy's story. The reader is constantly reminded of Roxy's sex assigned at birth and, as a result, is subtly led to question her gender identity.

In parts of the interviews with participants, I had asked what they thought the main differences between media portrayals of trans people and trans people in real life. It seems that the issues highlighted above are a commonality amongst media portrayals of trans people and are often recognised by the participants:

I: 'What do you think are the main kind of differences between the way that trans people are written about and the way that trans people are in real life I suppose between the-'

S: 'I don't think we introduce ourselves as our former name and born a boy, it isn't a personality trait, like newspapers have always been kind of name and you know like 'blah blah, 25, from wherever', whereas newspapers seem to be 'blah blah, formerly blah blah' and I, I think that's a big thing erm it's not a big deal like point and look and

do you know, this is the main interesting thing about this person it shouldn't be something that matters I think the media makes it something that matters, I think that's the main thing.' (Sophie, transcript 1, lines 556 – 563)

What Sophie highlights here is the sensationalist nature of newspaper reporting in trans people. As she states, a person's sex assigned at birth is 'not a personality trait' yet is consistently included in media stories as a fundamental part of the individual. As we saw in the previous chapter, the participants' assigned sex at birth was not discussed outright as it was understood by the participants and myself that they were gender variant and therefore irrelevant to talk about. I did not need to know these details for the interviews, and the participants may not have wanted to divulge that information. What is clear, however, is that none of the participants introduced themselves with their name and their birth name, or revealed 'before and after' photos to me, so it must be questioned why it is acceptable for the media to do.

Returning to Roxy's story, there is further delegitimisation of Roxy's gender identity in the way the article is written. Despite the story centring on Roxy's transition, she is not actually at the centre of her own story, rather her son is. The first direct quote in the article is from Roxy's son, William, who says 'I love mummy Roxy and never want Bob back. He was grumpy' (Gilmour, 2015: 1), and continues on describing how William has reacted to Roxy's transition. This is a common trope in reporting on stories about trans people, where cis gender people's thoughts and feelings are more often used to tell the trans person's story. It could be argued that presenting stories in this way enables them to be accessible to a largely cisgender audience and thus promotes trans issues. However, it also reflects a cisnormative society which prioritises cisgender people's thoughts, feelings and experiences and ultimately undermines trans people. By not being the subject of their own story, trans people and their experiences are further erased and delegitimised.

'Real life' stories about trans people are often presented in this way. Another Daily Mirror article, this time published in the middle pages, also presents trans people as a peculiarity. The story 'We met as WOMEN, we're going to marry as gay MEN' (Wainwright, 2015: pp. 32 and 37, emphasis in original) is presented in a similar way

to Roxy's. This story revolves around Finlay and Drew who, before their transition, were in a lesbian relationship, but are now getting married. Like Roxy's story, this is presented as a positive representation, and you could argue that it is. There are no overt slurs or references to money or the NHS and the couple in the story are presented as being in a loving relationship. Yet the use of language is still problematic and reinforces tropes about trans experiences.

We can see problematic language use immediately from the subtitle which reads 'couple's amazing double sex change' (Wainwright, 2015 p.32 and p.37). Again, there was a general consensus amongst the participants that the term sex change was inappropriate, even being called 'hideous' by Donna (transcript 2, line 269). Historically in the media, the term sex change has been used in sensationalist reporting to 'out' people as trans, like in the case of April Ashley who was outed by the Sunday People in 1961. Today its use also overemphasises the role of surgery in a person's transition and perpetuates the idea that surgery is a pre-requisite for transitioning.

Additionally, sex as a category when discussing gender identity can also be seen as problematic as there are biological implications which support the notion of essentialism. As Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (2013) suggest, essentialism endures in society, despite gender theorists like Butler who attempt to move beyond the gender binary. The use of 'sex' and 'sex change' in these contexts therefore suggest that a person who is transitioning, is still transitioning within a binary; from male to female or female to male. When discussing biological sex, Michael makes a salient point:

'I know a lot of people do say it is their gender that has changed not their sex, but your sex can't really change anyway, that's what I find so problematic with transsexual, it's such a kind of an archaic term I think that like you cannot change your sex, most people don't know their sex, and what even is sex anyway as we're all made up of so many different things' (transcript 3, lines 114 – 117)

Because of the connotations that 'sex' as a category carries, there is little room for nuance in identities. In Drew and Finlay's story the term may fit their identities as

they are actively discussing their surgical interventions, yet the term is still used widely by the media in most reporting on gender variance. As Michael discusses above however, the category of sex can be problematic. With the use of the terms sex and sex change, there is an assumption that a person is changing their fundamental biology, which in turn leads gender variant people open to criticism from gender critical radical feminists. As we know, people cannot change their chromosomal make up, and critics such as Raymond (1994), Jeffreys (1997) and Greer (2015) use this to delegitimise trans peoples' identities. Sex is often essentialised by being aligned with certain fundamental biological characteristics, i.e. the female sex menstruates and bears children.

The story itself is presented in a two-page centrefold and includes two sets of before and after photos, as well as a photo of Finlay topless after his top surgery. This is somewhat gratuitous, again presenting Drew and Finlay as a novelty act, for the titillation of the reader. The story is also touted as an exclusive, which reinforces this idea. Drew's and Finlay's birth names are used interchangeably with their chosen names throughout the article, as well as both male and female pronouns. However, in contrast to Roxy's story, the only direct quotes come from either Finlay or Drew, and there are no references to cis gender friends or relatives throughout, which places the focus of the article solely on trans experiences.

The Problematic Language of Gender Variant Identities in the Media

Having briefly explored these media representations of transgender experiences, it is easy to see how particular stereotypical narratives of trans lives emerge. These tropes are played out through the construction of the articles and the words most commonly used. The participants were asked their opinions of trans representation in the media, and I had sent Chelsea's and Billy-Joe's stories for reference. It was up to the participants whether they referred to these articles throughout or discussion on media. All participants had similar viewpoints about new media representations.

Sophie discusses how trans people are written about compared to their actual experiences and she makes some salient points. Firstly, with the overuse of birth names, Sophie states:

'I don't think we introduce ourselves as our former names and 'born a boy', it isn't a personality trait' (Transcript 1, lines 558 -559)

The overuse of these journalistic techniques, and the focus on medial and monetary aspects of gender identity, takes away the intersectional identity of the individual. Often trans people are represented in the media as just that, trans. This is supported by Michael who says:

'if your blueprint of what a trans person is comes from just your consumption of news media, then I think you would just end up with this view of who gets up, takes a bucket of hormone pills then goes out and tricks somebody to having sex with them, then gets beaten up on the way home, then loses their job, then goes to bed and then the next day just does the same thing with more tragic things put in.'(Transcript 3, lines 689 – 694)

Here Michael references further tropes that are found in media narratives; the medicalisation of trans people and trans people as deceivers. In chapter two I discussed how gender variance was reported in nineteenth and early twentieth century news media, and as Oram (2016) highlighted, trans people were seen to be masquerading. At that point, the 'masquerade' itself was newsworthy, and the narrative of deceitful trans people emerged. However, as I have mentioned previously, trans identities no longer have tellability, and it is rare to find a story about a trans person without another story alongside; whether that be the improvement of a relationship with a child, or the 'concern' for taxpayers' money.

Having explored some of the more pervasive media narratives about trans people, it is important to look at how these are perpetuated. A lot of the news outlets I have referenced and read throughout this research have a set of common phrases and words used to describe gender variant people. However, much like the self-categorisation discussed in the previous chapter, one word or phrase may not reflect the experiences of most trans people. One of the most pervasive words used is 'become' which is used to describe the transition process and is common in newspaper reporting. Roxy, Chelsea and Lucy all wanted to 'become' women, and Drew and Finlay wanted to 'become' men, and 'become' is used in each of the above

articles. The verb 'to become', as defined by the Oxford Dictionaries (2017), is 'to begin to be', which suggests that a person's transition is the commencement of their gender identity. However, it is argued that for most trans and gender variant people, there is no 'becoming' involved, as one was always male, female, non-binary or any other gender variant identities. To suggest someone becomes male or female, erases the history of the individual, the potential distress and mental struggles the person may experience, and also how that person came to transition. It is, in itself, a binary concept in which the individual is, for example, a man, but then suddenly starts their life as a man; much like the eponymous hero of Woolfe's (1928) *Orlando* who starts their story as male and then wakes up one morning as female.

When the participants spoke about their gender identity throughout the interview, no one referred to themselves as becoming a man or woman. In fact, the participants spoke about having always known, in some capacity, that their gender identity did not align with their sex assigned at birth. Terri states 'I've always been a girl in my mind' (transcript 5, line 266), and when Donna was asked about whether she saw herself transitioning, she said 'the way I see it, it's probably more a normalisation' (transcript 2, line 274). These quotes are particularly interesting because, at the time of interview, Terri had no plans for hormonal and surgical intervention, and Donna was at the very beginning of her transition. Both these quotes from the participants suggest that they both do not consider themselves to have to become anything, as they are already their preferred gender identity.

Another phrase most often found, particularly in headline, is sex-swap or sex change. The Daily Star article, written about previously uses, 'sex swap op' (Gilmour, 2015: 1) in its front page headline. It is a tactic of tabloid papers to use alliteration and puns in their headlines; designed to be catchy and draw in readership. However they are often reductive and, again, erase the diverse experiences of trans people whilst also medicalising them. For example, a headline from the Mail Online refers to the subject of the article as 'sex change father' (Winter, 2014), again, reducing this person's experiences to surgery.

Donna describes the term sex change as 'hideous' (transcript 2, line 269) however goes into no more detail. However Michael explains that 'you cannot change your sex, most people don't know their sex, and what even is sex anyway as we're all

made up of so many different things' (transcript 3, lines 116 – 117), which underpins why 'sex-change' or 'sex-swap' is problematic. These terms make assumptions about people and identities. Not only does it conflate sex and gender identity, but it assumes that we all know our chromosomal make-up and that there is a binary choice between male and female that every gender variant person makes. As mentioned when discussing the term 'become', 'sex change/swap' also assumes that to be trans you must have surgery and also erases the experience of people who may not choose to have surgery.

The reductive nature of news media reflects an archaic attitude towards gender identity as a whole. Early concepts of gender development were reduced to biology and sexual characteristics (see chapter two). However, whilst academic and theoretical discourses around gender may have moved away from essentialism, wider understanding of gender still places people into two categories. As Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (2013) outline, biological essentialism endears in society and can be seen permeating public spheres such as social media and newspaper comments spaces. I have demonstrated that throughout the media there is a common discourse about gender variant people which is reinforced by a constant representation of one experience of being trans.

What this research discusses is that there are many different ways to be trans, or gender variant. However, news media consistently presents trans people in a particular manner which perpetuates a specific narrative about gender variance. This is evident not only in negative representations, but positive ones too, and to do this there is a specific set of words and phrases which are constantly repeated. This is comparable to Butler's (1990) theory of performativity which suggests that gendered identities are a result of repeated social discourses and acts. It could be argued therefore that news media outlets are creating popular narratives around trans identities by repeated discourses about gender variance. If gender identity is a cultural fiction (Jagose, 1996) then news media as cultural outlets are creating a fictional trans person, especially when we consider that the majority of society's experiences with trans people come from media consumption (McInroy and Craig, 2015). Because of this, gender variant people are represented as a homogenised group who experience gender in the same way. Each trans person crosses a binary line from either male to female, or male to female, and this is always done with

hormone treatment and surgery. After speaking to the participants, it is clear how much news media erases experiences and lacks nuance when discussing trans stories, however these narratives are so pervasive that not only do they inform wider society, but often gender variant people feel they need to adhere to them to be considered 'legitimate'.

Participants' Narratives

Having discussed how gender identity is represented and constructed in the news media, I will now discuss the experiences of the participants in this research. As discussed previously, the narratives for analysis have been elicited from participants. The narratives in Labov's research are also elicited, which takes away the burden of 'tellability' and relevance (Liang, 1997). Because I have asked about specific experiences and points in the participants' lives, it is inevitably assumed that the stories are 'tellable' as I am a willing and receptive audience member. Additionally, because they are elicited, the framework that Labov and Waletzky (1967) and Labov (1972) use for narrative analysis may be seen more clearly as the narrative is not in a conversational context.

What is clear is that the stories told by the participants do not adhere strictly to media narratives. As demonstrated in the previous chapter, it is difficult to place names and labels on trans experiences because they are as diverse as the people themselves. Whilst it might be commented that terms like 'transition' and 'transgender' are 'probably the best one[s] we have' (Donna, transcript 2, line 78), it is also commented that these terms are not 'one size fits all'. This can be said about news media, which, as demonstrated, talks about gender variant people as a homogenous group with the same experiences

As mentioned previously, a common theme running throughout the participants' stories is the idea that they must adhere to these specific narratives. By not conforming to these narratives, gender variant people are at risk of having their identities scrutinised, both from outside and within the LGBT community. The participants all had stories in common, such as telling their parents about their gender identity, and their personal stories of coming to terms with their gender identity. It is these personal narratives I will be analysing to provide a contrast to common media narratives. These mutual stories have, in themselves, enough

nuance to support the idea that there is not one experience of being trans, but myriad.

Stories of Coming Out

The coming out story has been discussed in queer theory literature mostly within the context of sexuality. As Liang (1997) outlines, the coming out story describes both the internal and external experiences of revealing intimate, potentially stigmatising details about your identity. Zimman (2009) argues that coming out as lesbian and gay has largely been conflated with experiences of coming out as trans. Whereas the premise of the narrative is comparable, and a coming out story is culturally significant because it serves the purpose of 'describing the process of coming out to have, and making sense of, a marginalized identity' (*ibid.* 2009: 71). Yet Zimman goes on to argue that coming out as a trans person lacks the repetitive process that coming out as homosexual might have.

However, despite potential disparities in coming out narratives, it must be noted that a coming out narrative is a commonality amongst queer communities, and forms a significant part of the identity of the participants. I will start here with some stories of coming out because that is something that all my participants have experienced in one way or another. Whether they are living socially stealth or socially as trans, each participant has revealed their gender identity to at least one person in some way. Sophie, as discussed in the previous chapter, is living socially stealth. Being trans is not part of her identity, and she views the transition process as a means to an end. Because of this, only a small amount of people know about her gender variance as she chooses to live 'stealth'. Sophie has, however, told her parents:

'Yeah, I mean I'm full time, there's no way they couldn't know. I told my mother, she's one of the first people I told before I decided to transition. She didn't want me to, it was quite obvious but she's come to accept me, I think she's accepting, she makes an effort, sometimes gets my name wrong but she's tried. Her partner, with whom she's been with a long time, likewise is fine, again early on there was a little bit of like aggression maybe... not aggression but I felt he was- I felt uncomfortable with it. Erm, my dad I've not really been close to anyway hasn't accepted it, or got his head round it, I only told him in the past

6 months because we're not connected, I told him when I was drunk. I'm not teetotal, but when I was drunk basically told him drunkenly on Facebook one time, I thought he should know eventually.' (Transcript 1, lines 208 – 216).

The first interesting thing about this narrative is Sophie's choice of words when describing herself. If stories serve a function in constructing the self and placing ourselves in our social world (Thornborrow and Coates, 2005), then the choice of 'full time' to describe her status is significant. As we have discovered, Sophie does not refer to herself as trans or gender variant in wider society, and she rejects trans as part of her identity. As a result, 'full time' here sounds like Sophie thinks of being trans as a job, it is not something that she is, it is something she has to do in order to be her true self.

In analysing the structure of the story, we can see that the abstract is missing. However, because I have explicitly asked Sophie about coming out, the abstract is unnecessary as an introduction. There are, however, three repetitions of an orientation and complicating action as we see the order in which Sophie tells me about who she has revealed her gender identity to. The way this is constructed is significant as Sophie starts explaining about her mother, her mother's partner and then her father. It is clear how Sophie talks about these individuals that they are presented in order of best experience and most accepting. However, the way in which Sophie describes these experiences is somewhat perfunctory, possibly reflecting her own attitude to her gender identity.

If Sophie's coming out narrative is short and to the point, then we can contrast it with Terri's as hers reflects more of her inner experiences and often breaks off into tangents. Terri, as mentioned previously, is not undertaking any hormonal or surgical interventions, and lives mostly between her identities of Terri and Terry. However, I asked if she had come out to people and if she could describe her experiences with coming out:

'Ok, well the first... the f- oh the first time was absolutely fucking horrible, for want of a better way of putting it. I'll tell you why, because erm, I met this girl and erm I worked with her for ages and then I started

really liking her blah blah blah erm and it like, at that time in my life I was just like in that I have totally perfected this surviving/coping/look at me I'm a bloke and all of this kind of thing and I kind of perfected it, erm or I thought I did anyway, it turns out that wasn't the case but I thought I did but it was just little things that she'd say like 'oh well when I go out drinking I just go out just cause I like to be pretty and I like dancing around and you know I like getting compliments and stuff' and it was little things like that that made me think, well actually that's not fair why couldn't I do that I go out drinking I just get fucking abuse do you know what I mean?' (Transcript 5, lines 157 – 165).

This is the first half of Terri's story in which she outlines 'the first time' she came out. This suggests that, unlike Zimman's (2009) argument, coming out for Terri is a repetitive process. Again, as we have outlined, Terri is not necessarily outwardly performing notions of traditional femininity, and we can see this throughout her narrative. Her use of profanity does not align with what might be considered 'women's language' as, according to early feminist language and gender theories (Lakoff, 1975; Talbot, 1998), stereotypical speech patterns in women show the use of euphemistic and polite forms. There are studies into modern usage of profanity (Thelwall, 2008), which suggests that there is no gender disparity in the use of swearing in UK online contexts. Despite this the stereotype of polite 'women's language' still exists and, as Eckert and McConell-Ginet (2013) suggest, many people still feel uncomfortable at women swearing.

What starts as a coming out narrative for Terri turns into her discussion of her inner experiences with her gender identity. Here we can see further evidence of Terri's 'doing' gender, ascribing to what she considers to be masculine behaviours in order to hide her gender identity from others. Terri states that she has perfected a surviving and coping method, something which she later calls 'this brilliant, like camouflage mask' (transcript 5, lines 178 – 179). Where she outwardly performs traditional masculinity of smoking, drinking and swearing and uses that to disguise her desire to be feminine.

'Why, why, am I not allowed to be pretty? No cause I'm a bloke so I must be smart and I must be handsome and that really pissed me off,

it was just- and it kind of like, it it kind of like sort of woke up all this stuff in my head that I'd completely buried to the point I'd forgotten about it cause it'd been that long erm so anyway blah blah blah blah, so I fell in love with her, really really bad idea and I went batshit insane hence loads of drugs, loads of weed and self-harming and stuff, erm and then she eventually stopped talking to me, I thought if I don't tell somebody how I actually feel properly, then I'll never tell anybody so in the end I tried ringing her, I tried texting her, that never worked so I told her on email and that was probably the first time and I never heard anything back and I thought well she either just doesn't believe me or she just thinks I'm insane or she just doesn't care, so that wasn't really very good.' (Transcript 5, lines 167 – 176).

In telling her coming out story, it is important for Terri to relay her inner thoughts and feelings to me as it sets up the rest of her story. Her abstract of 'it was fucking horrible... I'll tell you why' sets up an expectation with the audience, and in order to fulfil this expectation, Terri goes off topic to include her inner monologue between the abstract and evaluation of the narrative. This is not to deny that Terri's experience was bad, however the context of the interaction needs to be taken into consideration. I am an outsider to Terri's experiences and not knowing her beforehand, Terri edits her narrative in order to reflect the terrible experience.

As Benwell and Stokoe (2006) discuss, in telling stories we produce an edited version of ourselves in order to make aspects of our identities more salient. This is what Terri does throughout this story as, she may feel that in the interactional context, leaving out her inner experiences and thoughts would produce a story which is not reflective of the terrible experience she had, and would also become less impactful for the audience.

Donna's narratives about coming out, again, differ from the participants we have seen so far. I spoke to Donna at a critical point in her life as she had just started to transition, however she was familiar with living within a potentially stigmatised identity having cross dressed since adolescence:

'I'm out I would say I can't actually think of a single friend or family member who doesn't know about my cross-dressing' (Transcript 2, lines 205 – 206)

Donna had experiences of coming out as a cross dresser and it had been a comfortable identity for her. However, as a trans woman she is aware of how her gender identity might affect those closest to her:

'I'm slowly coming out to people erm that one is because of the negotiations between me and my wife about what's happening, about whether we're staying together, erm I'm not pushing it as far as fast as I would like to erm it's n- it's not just me transitioning, it's everybody, but the people it impacts most are my wife and my son' (Transcript 2, lines 208 – 211)

Unlike Sophie and Terri, whose stories centred on their personal experiences, thoughts and feelings, Donna's coming out narrative focuses on her closest family. Again, if our narratives are indicative of what is most salient to us at that moment (Benwell and Stokoe, 2006), we can see here that Donna's current focus is the impact on those around her. Donna refers to her coming out as a 'negotiation' between her and her wife, reflective of a process which is more complex than media outlets would have us believe.

For those participants I have discussed above, coming out is a continuous process which has an impact on most aspects of their lives. Coming out, however, is something that is glossed over in news media and, if it is discussed, it is discussed in terms of one close family member or friend. For example, in the story of Finlay and Drew as discussed above, their respective coming out experiences are reduced to three sentences. This is interesting because the focus of the article is how Drew and Finlay met and became a couple as cis women, but are marrying as gay men. The first sentences of the article read:

'Kate Bushnell was stunned when her live-in girlfriend sat her down and confessed she wanted to become a man. The pair had been together for two years yet Kate had no idea lover Abbie Games had

secretly battled a desire to change sex since her childhood. To Abbie's delight, Kate put her heartache and confusion aside, vowing to stand by her as she went through the transformation to Finlay.' (Wainwright, 2015: 32)

This story, albeit brief, does contain some idea of an internal struggle, something which has been demonstrated by the participants above. However, the story is also told with Drew as the subject, rather than Finlay. This is a particular media trope and it has been discussed above using Roxy's story as an example, in which a gender variant person's personal narrative is discussed with a cis gender loved one as the subject. As a result, Finlay's personal narrative has been eclipsed by Drew's feelings of 'heartbreak' and 'confusion' (*ibid.*), effectively reducing the importance of his experiences. Additionally, Finlay's coming out narrative has been reduced to three sentences in a two page news story.

Further on in the article, Drew's coming out narrative is written about. However this differs from Finlay's as it contains a direct quotation from Drew himself:

'And 18 months after Finlay's revelation, it was his turn to stun his partner. "It felt surreal, only months earlier it was Finlay telling me and now it was the other way round," he says. "I didn't know how he was going to take it."' (Wainwright, 2015: 37)

Some of Drew's personal experience is written about, and Drew here gets to express his feelings and worries in relation to his transition. However, it still must be noted that his experiences have been reduced down to three sentences. I use this example as a way of reflecting the overall reductive nature of news media in comparison to the diverse experiences of the participants above. Drew and Finlay's story is a unique one and overall it is a positive representation of gender variance, despite how it is represented could be seen as problematic.

If we were to take their story at face value, we may be led to believe that coming out is an easy experience which happens once in a person's life. Drew and Finlay are represented as having found a steady existence after coming out to each other. Referring back to the participants' narratives, we can see how lived experience

differs from this media narrative. Donna, for example, expressed that she is 'slowly coming out' (transcript 2, line 208) which reflects the ongoing process she is experiencing.

These narratives do not reflect lived experiences and this is problematic because, as I have discussed throughout this research, the majority of wider society gets its knowledge of gender variance from the media. As a result, knowledge and understanding of gender variance can become limited to the narratives perpetuated in the media; in this instance the condensation of coming out stories. Media narratives add to the cultural fiction (Butler, 1990) of gender, and in particular create a cultural fiction of gender variance. This cultural fiction affects both cis people and gender variant people as it perpetuates a narrative which people believe is representative of gender variance. In this example, coming out stories are condensed to the degree at which the distress, difficulty and potential fear felt in coming out is erased. Cis readers, therefore, receive a skewed view of gender variance they are lead to believe is true. Gender variant people also receive this view, but with it may also receive a pressure to conform to this narrative; not conforming may create a sense of otherness.

When Did You Know You Were Trans?

As well as reductive coming out stories, there is also a perpetual trope of people knowing they were trans from a very early age. Currently there is an increasing amount of media attention surrounding gender variance in childhood. 'Transgender kids' stories have been gaining more media attention and can be found in publications as wide ranging as the tabloid centre spreads, the Sunday supplements from left-wing and centrist newspapers, and the reputed National Geographic magazine. In addition to this, trans youth stories have been promoted from reality television shows to be the subject of a self-described 'challenging' (BBC, 2017) documentary produced and aired by the BBC.

Rachel explained that her feelings of gender dysphoria did not manifest until she was in early adolescence:

'I was always quite soft and one of the kids that you know got hassled and I was overweight so I was a target for bullies anyway, I was always

the soft kid but I didn't think that was necessarily a gender thing... I was just the soft kid.' (transcript 4, lines 191-195).

In terms of her childhood she calls herself 'the soft kid' which is an interesting phrase. Being 'soft' is often associated with weakness and sometimes femininity, and can also be used as an insult. However Rachel suggests it is not necessarily because of her gender identity, rather a personality trait. Rachel goes on to explain that her dysphoric feelings came and went throughout late adolescence and into early adulthood, however she was only able to recognise them as such in hindsight.

'There was always like a sort of a dissatisfaction but I could never put my finger on it, I just felt like for all I was a success in terms of my work and my personal life and so on, there was something just not quite right but I could never really kind of grasp what it was' (transcript 4, lines 248 – 251)

Rachel previously described herself in terms of being 'what I understood [sic] to be a straight guy in a relationship marriage with a wife, it was very much that I did the guy things because well that was just what you did and what was expected' (transcript 2, lines 96 – 98). The way in which Rachel describes herself suggests she was performing masculinity in a way which was socially expected. Additionally, she was living in an unquestioned heteronormative life which may have also resulted in the later realisation of her gender identity. Heteronormativity and social expectation is a powerful tool in propping up gender norms and Rachel may have found herself confined unwittingly within this. As a result, it took a while for Rachel to discover her gender identity, rather than her knowing from an early age. Rachel's experience is not necessarily a unique one. We are led to believe in media outlets that people struggle with gender identity from an early age, although the participants' experiences suggest otherwise. Sophie explains that she did not know from an early age that she was gender variant:

'I didn't really have any feelings when I was small, that I remember. Then when I was about nine or ten years old I started cross dressing using my mother's wardrobe and stuff. I dunno why, what motivated me to do it.' (transcript 1, lines 42-44).

Her motivations for cross dressing are unknown to Sophie, much like Rachel's overall dissatisfaction. These motivations and feelings are unclear to the participants. Unlike Rachel and Sophie, Donna began to experience strong dysphoric feelings in her early forties. When asked about her gender identity, she explains "it's taken me a long time to get to this point" (transcript 2, line 40). When the interview was conducted, Donna was very early on in her transition. She had been cross dressing since childhood:

'I started playing dress up around four, five, six, something like that and it became more serious around puberty and then there was a sexual element involved in that. And that has continued with the sexual element dropping away, it becoming a lot more integrated into who I am over the years.' (transcript 2, lines 5-9).

Donna's story coincides even less with the popular 'born this way' narrative as for the majority of her life she identified as a cross-dresser and was comfortable with this. She explains that she realised she...

'...needed to take it further, it was sort of last September, October it started coming into my mind and it grew and grew and it has only been the last couple of months I've done anything about it, telling my wife, getting referred to the gender identity clinic and sort of coming to terms with it.' (transcript 2, lines 12-16).

The use of 'coming to terms' is significant. Depending on the circumstances, gender variant people may have to 'come to terms' with their identities. However the other participants started to explore their dysphoric feelings before they had a chance to formulate their gender identity, whereas Donna's identity had been established for four decades.

Donna started to experience internal conflict about five years previous to our interview.

'I was in another job which I absolutely hated, and it made me deeply deeply depressed, and that point, er it was the first time I'd sort of

decided right I want to be a woman. Looking back from that point I realise I didn't at that point it was sort of a pressure release – I didn't want to be that person in that situation, without that sort of pressure release of being able to think 'I can change my gender' it might have gone down a much more of a darker, much more suicidal path.' (transcript 2, lines 46-52).

It is easy to see how popular trans narratives are perpetuated. However, where it may be the experience for a number of people, there are other experiences which become buried. The perpetual 'trans kids' narratives is potentially damaging for gender variant people. Whilst there are people who do experience dysphoria from an early age (National Geographic, 2017), there are people whose gender variance is not realised until puberty or later. There is a pressure to conform to this narrative and any deviation potentially delegitimises a trans person's individual identity.

Early twentieth century theories placed gender variance within the realms of sexuality (Krafft-Ebing, 1906; Ellis, 1915). The leading theory was that people who experience gender dysphoria were actually dealing with repressed homosexuality by cross-dressing. Sexologists in the mid twentieth century began to separate gender identity and sexuality, which helped develop our understanding of trans identities today. Ideas of autogynephilia persevered in the subconsciousness of society, and these have been propped up in the interim by works such as Raymond's *Transsexual Empire* (1994).

Repeatedly being exposed to these narratives enables them to become normalised. As a result, it is clear to see how people may feel that for their gender identity to be valid, they should have experienced gender dysphoria from an early age. But, as Rachel explains, this can be potentially damaging.

'When you're in that sort of questioning phase it makes it hard to understand –when you're trying to work out whether this is something that is real and you're at a point where you need other people to validate you, any kind of deviation from the norm is a real worry because the norm and the standard of trans stories of 'oh I knew when I was 4 and I always played with girls' toys' is so pervasive that people

think you have to conform to that... for it to be a real issue for you.'

(Rachel, transcript 5, lines 185 – 190).

Rachel's explanation comes from her experiences from within the trans community. The repeated repetition of the narrative has normalised the 'born this way' story for society, to the point at which it is expected that trans people should know about their gender identity from an early age. Rachel is aware of the prevalence of tropes about trans people, especially "when you go online you see the same stories repeated over and over again, the same narratives and mine feels... well I've seen people with similar stories but part of it feels quite unique" (transcript 5 lines 182 – 184).

As Rachel does not adhere to this perpetual narrative, she asserts that her experience may be unique. This is not to deny that Rachel does have a unique experience of her own gender identity and also transition, however she has been exposed to a certain trans narrative to which she does not adhere. This does not necessarily make her experience exclusive, just that she has not seen representations of her story in wider society. It can also add to the otherisation of people like Rachel whose personal experiences do not coincide with the overall 'trans discourse' which is perpetuated by media outlets.

Conclusion

Cheshire and Zeibland explain that telling stories about everyday life is a way of 'making sense of our experiences' (2005: 17), however enduring media stories of how trans people should exist can often influence wider society's views on gender variance. Initially I looked at media stories and how, despite the angle of the piece, there is a set of narrative tropes which are fixed and perpetuated by these stories. There are a set of linguistic and visual markers which often comprise media stories of gender variance; 'before and after' photos, use of inappropriate pronouns and the person's birth name and references to how masculine or feminine a person was prior to their transition. Ordinarily, as discussed above, these facets are not discussed widely by gender variant people, most of whom prefer to keep that part of their lives private.

Additionally, there are often tropes which are discussed frequently, such as knowing you were trans since early childhood or having been born in the wrong body, or

undergoing extensive and 'expensive' surgeries. It is clear that the participants do not adhere to these tropes. Terri, for example, self identifies as a girl yet is undergoing no medical transition and also refuses hormone treatments. Also Rachel, as we just discussed, did not fully understand her gender identity until she was in her twenties and never necessarily felt it in early childhood. Donna identified as a cross-dresser for the majority of her life, only transitioning in her forties. Already here we have diverse experiences of gender variance, all each as legitimate as the rest, however consuming media stories would lead an audience to believe there is only one way of being trans. Cis audiences in particular may get their knowledge and understanding of trans people from the media and when representations are limited to a very narrow lens of trans experiences and stories, this knowledge and understanding also limited. Media discourses on gender variance prop up certain tropes of trans identities and build a picture of what trans people should be. Consumed by cis audiences, these tropes become expectations and if not met, may lead to further discrimination.

Having analysed the above articles, what is also clear from the choice of words these print media narratives use, is the power that they hold. As Fairclough (1992) outlines, there is hidden power behind media discourses, and it is only through the scrutiny of the words used and their contexts that this can be uncovered. In the article about Chelsea there are several sources of power, perhaps the most striking being how she is described personally.

As I have mentioned 'sex-change' and 'transsexual' are outdated, reductive terms and their use takes power away from Chelsea as they have been imposed on her, rather than chosen. This point is particularly salient because in chapter four we have discussed at length personal naming and labelling choice of the participants. The participants' personal gender categories are something that have been carefully considered by each person. Their choice of label has great personal significance and takes into account their life experiences; in contrast, these labels imposed by the print media take away the autonomy of gender variant people to choose how they are spoken about. It could be argued that this imposition of categories puts gender variant people in a powerless position and, therefore, creates vulnerability.

This is significant because as Thornborrow states '[t]he mass media have become one of the principle means through which we gain access to a large part of our information about the world...' (2004: 56). As a result, it can be presumed that readers whose only knowledge of trans people comes from the media, may find these terms either acceptable to use or may be swayed by the implications of the terms. For example, 'sex-change' and references to surgery may imply that surgery is an essential part of transitioning (GLAAD, no date).

These implications and impositions have been described by the participants as; 'a mixed bag of varying degrees of horrible' (Michael, transcript 3, lines 633 – 634), 'unfair' (Rachel, transcript 4, line 773) and 'fucking awful' (Donna, transcript 2, line 444). It is clear that they have an impact on the lives of the participants, however what kind of impact will become clearer with further analysis. Living with a backdrop of discriminatory discourses, whether overt or covert, provides extra pressure on participants to adhere to certain ideas of gender variance. Not adhering to these expectations creates a feeling of otherness and can lead to questioning the validity of one's identity. It is difficult not to see your experiences represented in the media as it also creates isolation in an already isolated and marginalised community. As a result, we need to ask what the impacts of these perpetual narratives are. In the next chapter, I will bring together the analysis of naming and labelling and the analysis of narratives and explore how these together form fear and pre-emptive fear on behalf of the participants.

Chapter Six

How Categories and Narratives Lead to Fear and Exclusion

Introduction

In the previous two analysis chapters I have discussed in detail the themes of naming and labelling and storytelling. Whilst conducting the interviews, it was apparent that names, labels and stories were a major part of each person's experiences. As outlined in the methods chapter, I decided to take an inductive approach to data collection, allowing theory to be generated from the collected data. Throughout the transcription process, it then became clear that a mixture of MCA and narrative analysis would be the most appropriate methods for analysis.

In terms of naming and labelling, the key findings showed that terminology relating to gender variance and trans identities does not keep up with increasingly diverse gender identities. This is reflected in the participants' attitudes towards these categories, in which each person identified differently to each term discussed. In addition, those terms which were used by participants were often described as adequate. Overall, the difficulty with naming and labelling increases when a person's identity moves away from a cisgender binary of male and female, which may make finding an identity difficult.

Having considered the above as two significant components in the participants' interviews, it was clear that the names and labels, and narratives explored, contributed to the persistent themes of fear and negative expectations. Each participant, in one form or another, expressed that their experiences of transitioning and gender variance did not match their expectations, and often their experiences were more positive than anticipated.

At this point it needs to be made clear that the participants did, of course, experience negativity because of their gender identity. To suggest there were only positive experiences would deny the overall experiences of the participants and present a false representation of living as gender variant. It is my intention with this chapter to focus on why participants felt, in particular, that their positive experiences made them describe themselves as 'lucky', and gave participants the idea that their

situation was anomalous and unique because of these positive experiences. In addition I will discuss how the results found in the previous analysis chapters may contribute to the participants' adverse expectations, and the reasons behind why this is believed to be down to 'luck' or 'chance'.

The Production of Fear

Before examining participants' specific experiences, it is important to return to the theoretical background and previous analysis in order to explore how feelings of fear could be produced. Diverse gender identities, once the domain of sexology and psychology, were pathologised during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century (Krafft-Ebing, 1906; Bullough, 2003; Benjamin, 1966). Attitudes changed and gender variant identities were no longer seen as a psychological issue, yet they are still medicalised (Hines, 2007). The emergence of queer theory, however, has ensured a wider understanding of gender variant identities, with subsequent cultural and socio-political shifts which have helped make a 'trans identity ... accessible almost anywhere, to anyone who does not feel comfortable in the gender role they were attributed at birth' (Whittle, 2006: xi). This has not been an easy process and the resistance to trans identities, in particular trans women, can largely be seen in radical feminist theories.

Radical trans exclusionary second wave feminists, such as Raymond (1994) and Jeffreys (1997), have been particularly outspoken against trans identities; with the main assertion that gender surgery is used to sustain the idea of male dominance and female subordination (Jeffreys, 1997). This preoccupation with surgery has been apparent in the articles we have analysed in the previous chapter, and reflects a perpetual trope that surgery is necessary for gender variant people; something still seen today. Raymond uses surgery to suggest that men assert power over femininity and the media uses surgery to take power away from gender variant people, however, they both reduce gender variant people to their body parts. Raymond's notable work on trans identity *The Transsexual Empire* was originally published in 1979 and republished in 1994, which not only coincides with, but contrasts with Butler's *Gender Trouble* (1990). Whilst Butler subverts traditional feminist ideas of gender by suggesting that there is no innate identity behind the performed acts of gender, Raymond's work assumes an intrinsic female category which is represented by the structure of the body; this can be seen in her description

of trans people as either 'male-to-constructed-female', or 'female-to-constructed-male' (1994: pp. 15 and 25).

Raymond (1994) argues that gender surgery is a way in which men can own femininity and women's bodies, something which is reiterated and expounded by Jeffreys (1997) who argues that gender surgery violates human rights. These works question the legitimacy of the identities of trans people who choose to undergo medical interventions by suggesting that a person cannot lay claim to being male or female because they 'desire' (1994: xxiv) it or because they have surgically altered their bodies. Whilst these papers were published in the 1990s, this argument is still a common theme for second wave feminists today. In 2015 Germaine Greer caused controversy by publically stating that trans women are not 'real' (2015); again questioning the legitimacy and authenticity of trans identities.

Critics of works such as Raymond's suggest that, whilst they protest against gender stereotyping, they do so by 'essentialising' gender (Riddell 2006). That is to say, whilst Raymond accuses trans women of propping up gender stereotyping by conforming to an idealised version of femininity, she also does this in a way that suggests that trans women can never be 'real' (1994: xix). To Raymond, Greer and Jeffreys, to be a 'real' woman is to be cis, because, as Greer herself states, she does not believe that 'post-operative, or even, non-post-operative, transsexual, M-to-F transsexual people look like, sound like or behave like women.' (2015).

These ideas may stem from academic works, yet still provide somewhat of a basis for discriminatory discourses about trans people, which can also be found in wider society. The news articles examined in the previous chapter reflect this essentialist viewpoint; for example, in the case of Lucy Meadows. Meadows's competency as a primary school teacher was questioned because of her gender identity (Littlejohn, as found in Winslow, 2013), under the guise of protecting children. What is clear when reading this article is that if Lucy was not transitioning there would be no story, and it can be presumed that there would be more public outcry if a cisgender woman was questioned on her competency to teach because of her gender identity.

Meadows's story may be an extreme example of the demonisation of trans people in the media, however there is a constant stream of delegitimisation and

undermining of gender variance; even in seemingly positive articles. These manifest in several ways including; misgendering and deadnaming, use of the trans people as a fraudster trope, misrepresenting trans identities, and fetishisation and/or sexualisation of trans bodies (Billard, 2016). In addition to this, trans people are often represented within the confines of cis- and heteronormativity. The articles explored in the previous chapter focussed on trans people who were recognised as stereotypically feminine or masculine, and their relationships were a point of interest particularly if they were gay and/or lesbian (Wainwright, 2015; Winter, 2014; Robins, 2014).

These points are explored in detail in the previous chapter but are also relevant for this section of analysis. It is well known that news media holds power (Fairclough, 1989), and the producers of these news stories hold power not only over their story subjects, but also their consumers. In addition to this power imbalance, it is the principle of language and gender researchers (Butler, 1990; Stokoe, 2004; West *et al.*, 1997; McConell-Ginet, 2011) and this thesis, that gender is produced in discourse. Taking both these points into consideration, it is clear to see how fear is produced in mass discourses, and why trans and gender variant people may absorb this more. Below I will explore how the above points produce fear, using participants' answers in interviews and taking into consideration the previous chapters' analyses.

Origins of Fear for Participants

Gender and sexual identities, as discussed by Foucault and Butler, are constructed, maintained and perpetuated by discourses. The discourse of gender identity has traditionally been confined to heteronormativity, particularly with the dominance of the church and other institutions (Foucault, 1978; Mills, 2003). For example, the notion of the sexually repressed nineteenth century arose from pervasive discourses of morality and deviance coming from religious institutions. This can also be expanded to the discourses of gender identity.

It is Butler (1990) who suggests that the dominant and restrictive gender binary of male and female is also perpetuated by powerful institutional discourses and the repetition of stylised acts which give the impression of gender. These so called acts, however, are inherently heteronormative and despite advances in gender theory and queer theory, gender stereotypes and heteronormativity are still pervasive in

society. This then leads to the assumption that those who claim male or female as a gender category are cisgender. We have also previously explored how these discourses are propped up in problematic reporting which uses language often archaic and outdated, and which perpetuates a false narrative of what it means to be gender variant. Whilst society may be becoming more understanding of trans identities there is a narrative ideal which people must still adhere to; with deviations from this ideal leading to further questioning and delegitimisation of trans identities.

Overall, it could be argued that the restrictive binary categories of gender, and the slow pace in which language is catching up with gender diverse identities, creates a sense of unease. Gender categories are adequate for purpose, but as we have explained, do not necessarily fit with the identities of the participants. This unease, teamed with the pressure to adhere to trans tropes perpetuated by media outlets, leads to an 'ideal' trans narrative. For Sophie, a cis identity is more desirable:

'If I could be cis I'd much rather be cis but, you know I'd only use the trans qualifier in relation to something which, like this where like it was relevant, I would always refer to myself as female I don't see it as part of my identity' (Transcript 1, lines 85 – 87)

In this respect, Sophie's experiences differ from the other participants as her gender variance is not actively part of her identity. In her interview, Sophie explains she has 'shunned' and 'walked away' (transcript 1, lines 93 and 114) from the wider LGBT community and distanced herself from a gender variant identity. Sophie's attitude reflects the desirability of cisgender as not only a label but also a state of being. If being cisgender is desirable, it is implied that being anything but cis is unwanted. Sophie does address this by suggesting there may be some internalised transphobia on her part, however, she is vehement that her being trans is 'a means to an end' (transcript 1, line 122).

Further on in our interview, Sophie suggested that there may be more to her shunning of the LGBT community:

'the trans community I think has this identity of being trans, trans is an identity to the people in that community and that scares me off

because that's the last thing I want to be. I'm averse to the idea of embracing something which is such a frustration and such a terrible thing to have to go through.' (Transcript 1, lines 431 – 435)

Taking this into consideration, it is easy to see how being cis becomes desirable. However, I would ask is this also part of an underlying fear for Sophie? The fear of being discovered to be trans? Sophie describes herself as being 'scared off' from the trans community due its perceived ideological stance on gender identity. This contrasts with her previous point about shunning and walking away from the community, which emphasises Sophie's control of the situation. By being 'scared off', Sophie loses that control.

Interestingly, this is the only open admission of fear within her interview and it surrounds her perception of the wider LGBT community. For Sophie, it seems, transitioning and living as a trans person is not only personally distressing, but a source of fear, as well as being discovered to be trans To support this, there was an occurrence during our interview which, upon reflection, shows Sophie's worry. The room in which the interview took place was private, however the organisation was also hosting another LGBT group at the same time. Half way through the interview, one member of the group came into the corridor to speak loudly on the phone which visibly distressed Sophie who kept losing her train of thought, pausing, and stuttering over her words. Taking this and the context of the interview into consideration, as well as Sophie's previous assertions about being 'stealth', could this be a further display of fear of being 'found out' and the desirability of being cis?

It is not the objective of this research, to interrogate Sophie on her attitude towards her gender identity, but instead to question how it might have arisen. Sophie had already expressed the desirability of being cis, which reflects a society in which value is placed on cis identities. This can be seen in early trans studies such as Garfinkel's (1967) case study of Agnes. Widely regarded to be the first significant sociological study on gender variance (Schilt, 2016), Garfinkel's examination of Agnes's case explores how Agnes ascribes to gender essentialism. For Agnes there are two categories, with no other genders to consider and to be female is the desirable outcome. In order to attain this status Agnes must undergo the necessary changes. Sophie, however recognises that there are other categories than male and

female, yet personally ascribes to this binary; hence the value placed on a cis female identity.

There is a history of biological essentialism in society, which is still 'publically understood' (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, 2013: 23) to exist. Whilst gender variant identities are also increasingly visible, there continues the pervasive idea that even if one is trans, one must still ascribe to be male or female. Having examined trans narratives in news media sources, it is clear that the prevailing attitude towards gender variance follows these narratives. In the stories we have explored, people are talked about in very masculine or feminine terms, sometimes both, with explicit references to their former identity. For example, as a former boxing promotor Kellie Maloney lived what might be described as a masculine lifestyle and this is purposely juxtaposed with pictures and descriptions of her now feminine appearance. In addition, there was lots of commentary which describes surprise at what was called the 'grown-up reaction of the hard-nosed boxing community' (Mitchell, 2014: 7) to Kellie's transition. The boxing community has widely been associated with 'traditional' or hegemonic masculinity (Woodward, 2007). Overall, sport is associated with this, however boxing in particular is a sport in which displays of physical strength and toughness are used to demonstrate 'macho' masculinity (McConnell-Ginet, 2011); something presented as being in direct opposition to Kellie's gender identity and presentation.

This is also seen in other articles which purport to be about 'real lives', or articles which focus on ordinary people rather than celebrities. The story of Roxy (Gilmour, 2015), as discussed previously, also shows a strict adherence to binary notions of male and female. Roxy's former masculine life is described in detail, with references to her occupation as a body guard and also quotes from her wife discussing her as 'so masculine and afraid to show emotions' (*ibid.*: 5). This again juxtaposes the pictures and descriptions of Roxy which focus on the feminine presentations of her body. Both these stories, and the others analysed in the previous chapter, place masculinity and femininity as binary opposites with no allowance for other identities which do not fit within the binary. There is also an expression of surprise or disbelief when a person crosses the invisible male and female binary.

It is important to remind ourselves of the pervasiveness of these trans narratives depicted in the public sphere, because they are so established as the norm; to the point at which they have permeated other aspects of society. Additionally, language used in media representations is often archaic and medicalised, and does not reflect the wider experiences of gender variance. The participants were questioned about gender stereotypes and what they meant to them, and it was clear to see that these had an impact on their lives. From this, there was a general consensus that there is a pressure for trans people to stick to traditional gender roles, and this was experienced in some form by each participant.

Michael discusses gender roles in terms of himself and gender variance as a whole. I asked whether he thought there was a pressure for trans and gender variant people to conform to gender roles and he explains:

'I think definitely and particularly from what I have seen for trans women and this usually comes about with, I guess trans women who maybe class themselves as tomboyish, air quotes, or you know would maybe consider themselves masculine, but a masculine woman. But then yeah as soon as they start to transition, they wear trousers or they don't wear make-up or they don't conform to like, this hyper-femininity and if you don't then you're obviously not a woman. Whereas a cis woman can do these things and still be considered a woman, like you know whether she is performing the role of woman properly might come up for debate or be kind of a thing that ends up with her being harassed or whatever but, but there still won't be the question of at your kind of core you are a woman you're just not doing it properly, whereas for trans women it's like you must do these things to be a woman, not you are a woman therefore you must do these things.'

(Transcript 3, lines 173 – 186)

Michael makes a salient point about the inherent double standards for femininity and masculinity between cis and gender variant people. This links to Halberstam's (1998) point that masculinity is reserved for those with masculine bodies; by being a trans women do you give up your claim to masculinity? As Michael explains, for cis women who may not perform femininity as expected by society, their claim on

'woman' is still not questioned. However not only is a trans woman's claim on 'woman' questioned, but it will be scrutinised further if they were to present as anything other than stereotypically feminine. It is interesting that Michael uses trans feminine identities to make this point as he explains that he feels trans men have an easier time with their gender identities:

'I feel like once trans guys who- particularly binary trans guys who decide to take hormones and then have surgery- once they've been through the whole kind of physical transition and then can just like blend in I guess, like be read as cis then there's a lot of space to do whatever you want with your gender presentation and your role fulfilment or whatever, and so you know if you want to wear make-up or wear a skirt or whatever it's- because the person looking at you has decided that yes you are a man because to me you have all of these secondary sexual characteristics and so I'm not going to question that.'
(Transcript 3, lines 189 – 197)

As a gender variant person, being so scrutinised by wider society is akin to having your entire identity questioned; something which, Michael argues, happens significantly less to cis gender people. It is easy to see how, by having your identity and personal choices constantly questioned by wider society, this can cause unease and even fear. Michael's points, however, seem to highlight just the beginning of the pressure to conform to stereotypes. This is part of a wider pervasive idea of essentialist binary thought which puts masculinity in the domain of cis men and femininity in the domain of cis women, which itself suggests that to have a legitimate gendered identity one must also be cisgender. It is also a reflection of the cisnormative society in which trans and gender variant people must navigate; in order to exist in a binary society one must be read as cis. As Michael states, it is easier for trans men to 'blend in' particularly if they have gone through hormone therapy and experienced the changing effects of testosterone. Those changes may enable the body to develop signs which not only reflect gender identity, but enable it to be read (Kimmel, 2011).

According to Halberstam (1998) masculinity is, and has been, the reserve of men and evokes notions of power and privilege; something which gender variant people

lack in society. Additionally, as Michael outlines above, trans men who perform masculinity to the supposed ideal do not get questioned or scrutinised as much in wider society. It might be worth asking, therefore, why this might be; is it because they have 'crossed over' to occupy a position of power akin to cis men, or because of pervasive cisnormativity in society. It is interesting to note that for whatever reason, trans men and masculine identifying gender variant people do not have their legitimacy questioned to the degree at which trans women may do; according to participants' experiences. This comes at a time in which the legitimacy of trans women as women is again being publically scrutinised as the current 2018 UK Government opposition party, the Labour Party, is involved in a dispute as to whether trans women should be included on all-women shortlists (Boycott-Owen, 2018). This is pertinent because the row is bringing biological essentialist arguments to the forefront of debate, namely the alignment of gender identity with genitalia and legitimacy of transfeminine identities.

Trans women and feminine identifying gender variant people face more scrutiny for not adhering to the discourses of traditional femininity, particularly having seemingly 'given up' masculinity yet not adhering to femininity in a way that is acceptable (Halberstam, 1998). Their whole identity is questioned based on secondary sex characteristics which have been ascribed to a gender through years of essentialist thinking. This leads to particularly interesting data which emerged from my participants in which they suggest that these gender essentialist discourses are not only perpetuated by the media and wider society who may have little understanding of gender identity, they are also found within the very institutions which are specifically to help people experiencing gender dysphoria.

The pervasiveness of these gender stereotypes have been experienced by participants whilst accessing medical services. For those who accessed, or were on the route to accessing, NHS gender services, there was an external pressure to adhere to feminine and masculine norms. This is interesting as these institutions are there to help trans and gender variant people in a professional setting. However, as I have discussed in the historical context chapter, gender identity has been historically pathologised to the point at which there is now what is described as a 'medical model' (Johnson, 2015) for being trans. Nineteenth century sexologists understood gender dysphoria as a psychosis which arose from 'deviant' sexual

preferences (Krafft-Ebbing, 1906), and whilst this notion changed during the early twentieth century, nevertheless gender dysphoria has still been seen as the domain of medicine.

Gender dysphoria, or gender identity disorder as was more commonly used at the time, was introduced into the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) in 1980 (Johnson, 2015) under the guise of 'psychosexual disorders' (American Psychological Association, 1980: 18). This seems to be the culmination of work done by early sexologists who studied gender in a clinical setting, and particularly the work of endocrinologist Harry Benjamin and psychologist John Money who helped shape modern medical attitudes towards the treatment of gender dysphoria (Benjamin, 1966; Stryker, 2006). Attitudes towards gender dysphoria have, however, changed since its inclusion in DSM-III (1980) enough that the understanding of gender variance has shifted from it being a symptom of mental illness. Now, gender variance is seen as a disorder which may have psychological effects which need to be treated medically (Johnson, 2015). With this said, Johnson argues that the medical model of gender variance suggests that the distress caused by gender dysphoria is due to a 'lack of access to medical interventions rather than the social consequences of gender ideology' (2015: 804).

This is reflected in Rachel's story who, when asked to relay any negative experiences with medical institutions, described her experiences with the gender identity clinic in detail. Rachel's account is not only lengthy but also describes the barriers she faced in trying to receive treatment, and you can see the frustration in her narrative. At one point, she describes an interaction with a psychiatrist saying:

'So then I went to see her and then she said something about ah Rachel yeah you're on my list to babysit until Dr Smith gets back- I didn't like that word, I didn't like her saying babysit... the use of that- to me what it said was I'm going to take no actions whatsoever on anything, I'm just going to see you to keep you from feeling like you've been discarded and when the other doctor gets back, if anything needs to happen then that is when it will happen' (transcript 4, lines 712 – 716)

At this point, Rachel had waited six months from her initial assessment to see the psychiatrist and this appointment had been cancelled before she was referred in to see a locum. Again, her frustration is clear and particularly the use of 'babysit' in this context is inappropriate. As Rachel herself says, it suggests there will be a lack of progression for Rachel in the gender identity clinic, which obviously causes some distress. Additionally, it infantilises Rachel, who at that time was feeling particularly vulnerable. It is clear to see that the amount of gatekeeping causes distress for people who already have been dealing with the distress of gender dysphoria and, as experienced by Rachel, the professionals who remove autonomy over one's body from the individual. This reflects what we have briefly discussed in chapter five regarding media narratives imposing categories on their subjects which leaves gender variant people with a lack of control over their own identities and bodies. Rachel's experiences also show this lack of control over her body and identity, but in a different setting.

'I don't need to be babysat, all I need you to do is your job. I'm fine you know, and I am I'm totally fine. I don't need counselling. I don't need any support, for me, my transition has been about as easy as it can be, I mean other than the separation [from my wife], which has remained amicable and we're friends so you know everything else has gone brilliantly so I'm not someone who's at risk, I'm not a safeguarding issue or anything like that, just talk to us like a normal adult' (Transcript 4, lines 718 – 723)

Rachel's experiences are indicative of medical discourses in which 'doctor knows best' (Woods, 2006: 118). Status and power are afforded to medical professionals and their knowledge and opinions are respected and sometimes revered (*ibid.*), which provides a power imbalance in the interactions between doctor and patient. Rachel is already part of a community which is marginalised and at higher risk of mental health issues, suicide, and homelessness (McNeil *et al.* 2012), so this relationship between her and the psychiatrist is even more imbalanced. As Rachel states clearly, she knows she's fine and does not need counselling, however the gatekeeping by medical professionals cause more distress. In addition, the infantilisation of Rachel and the seeming lack of conviction in Rachel's autonomy over her own body adds to this distress further, as it reflects a further delegitimisation

of Rachel's identity. By being spoken to like children and seemingly distrusted about their body, people accessing this service may be led to excessively question their own gender identity further which, as Rachel points out, is even more damaging for people having waited for treatment.

'The problem is when people go and ask for a referral to the gender clinic, you don't do that straight away, you do that after you've already been battling with yourself for a good while, you go and you ask when you need help and then you've gotta wait another two years to actually get the help –it's not good enough.' (transcript 4, lines 748 -751)

It is clear to see from Rachel's story how this might manifest in fear. If a person is accessing gender services, often they will have, as Rachel puts it, battled with themselves first. That is after having absorbed external influences such as the media's attitude to gender variance, and gender variant identities being questioned as legitimate in public institutions such as parliament and education. Hines's research outlines trans women's experiences in care settings and states that 'psychiatric practices frequently demand that transgender women model an outmoded feminine style before being accepted for hormone therapy or surgery' (2007: 97). Whilst Hines's research was published in 2007, just under a decade before the interviews for this were conducted, it is clear that these attitudes are still experienced by the participants. Sophie, as we have discussed, conforms to the gender binary through a personal choice and presents as feminine. Despite this, she still experienced the expectation for trans people to conform to a stereotypical version of femininity.

'In the NHS services you've got a voice- a speech therapist, she was very very sort of... I mean I've went in jeans and she's been very much like you should be wearing a pretty dress, there is actually that enforcement of the feminine female, very stereotypical, I call it the 1950s female.' (Transcript 1, lines 163 – 167)

The expectation for Sophie to conform to what she calls 1950s female is seemingly inherent in the NHS gender services to the point at which her clothing choices were scrutinised by a speech therapist. During our interview I was personally wearing

jeans, trainers and a plain hooded jumper and Sophie pointed this out and explained that:

‘You have to be presenting, you can’t be androgynous, yeah I mean, I think you’re dressed in a way that I think that if you went into an assessment there’s a chance that they would say you’re not presenting, which is ridiculous.’ (Transcript 1, lines 194 – 196).

As a cis woman, my clothing choices are not questioned, however as someone seeking help from gender services, Sophie’s choices are scrutinised and held up to an outmoded feminine ideal. This attitude again delegitimises trans women as women and adds to the notion perpetuated by radical trans exclusionary second wave feminists such as Raymond (1994) and Jeffreys (1997), that trans women are somehow not ‘real’. This also reflects the reporting on trans women in British media whose feminine identities are presented for scrutiny and purposely juxtaposed against masculine identities. These pressures and ideas which the participants have experienced in professional services relate to the theory and analysis we have been discussing throughout this thesis. We have asked where gender stereotypes arise from, and of course, throughout the discussion of gender and language theory in chapter two, we can see gender stereotypes arising over decades of gender research. Despite an influx of gender theory which has aimed to provide an alternative essentialism (for example, Butler, 1990; de Beauvoir, 2011; Cameron, 2003), essentialist ideas persist. In the media stories discussed in the previous chapter there are a set of perpetual narratives which build the ‘ideal’ trans person. Each piece discussed has a ‘before’ and ‘after’ photo of the subject which is used to reflect how masculine and feminine the person was and now is. In the case of Kellie Maloney for instance, there is also the juxtaposition of her former boxing career, a traditionally masculine career.

These masculine and feminine narratives appear in the media and are taken on board by other institutions, and particularly healthcare; which was discussed with each participant. Therefore, not only is there pressure to adhere to trans narratives coming from media sources, these media sources subsequently inform the majority of society (McInroy and Craig, 2015). Additionally, stories of gender variance build up through the repetitive discursive practices which solidify together to ensure

tropes about gender variance are as entrenched in society as the notions of men and women. Whilst society may be more accepting of people who transition, there is still a pressure to conform to gender stereotypes, which is reflected in Sophie's above point about clothing and the pressure to present in a certain way.

From the points above, it is clear that there is undue pressure for the participants to conform to stereotypes which might not be congruent to their identities. Additionally, it seems that gender variant people also have a large share of scrutiny from wider society about their gender identities and presentation. In chapter five, we have discussed how narratives are created and perpetuated by print media outlets; much like Butler's (1990) performativity. It could be argued that the media is not only 'doing gender' by assigning stereotypical masculinity and femininity to its gender variant subjects, but is propping up these stereotypes. These narratives become so pervasive that they seep into everyday life and, as a result, the participants are expected to do gender in a way which aligns with these expectations; to the point at which these attitudes also show in the very institutions which are designed to help gender variant people.

How does this lead to fear? It could be argued that the above points are just frustrations, annoying but not promoting fear. However we need to take into consideration the inherent cisnormativity of the language (as discussed in chapter four) and the insidious cissexism of media narratives (as discussed in chapter five). These create a daily struggle for gender variant people who, as Rachel pointed out above, are often struggling internally before having to think about navigating wider society.

Internalised Gender Roles and the Origins of Pre-Emptive Fear

As I have demonstrated above, there are external pressures for my participants to conform to stereotypes. These come from institutions which both help and hinder the marginalisation of gender variant people in society. We have explored in detail the media's role in propping up hetero- and cisnormative stereotypes, and the contribution this makes to the external pressure felt by participants. Seeing and experiencing these pressures from external sources can also lead to an internal pressure to conform to stereotypes.

One of the sections in the interviews dealt with gender roles and the meaning of them to the participants. In terms of describing gender roles, participants gave similar answers in terms of masculine and feminine stereotypes, attributing domesticity to women and providing to men. For example Terri says:

I: 'So what do you understand by the term gender roles?'

T: 'Gender roles, well it's pretty simple really isn't it, erm I don't know if you want to go back to the old traditional old school style, girls go in the kitchen do the cooking do the cleaning, boys go out make the money dah-de-dah-de-dah, girls dress up and go out on nights out, boys are the ones who go out and pull and get wasted you know that kind of stereotypical thing isn't it really?' (Transcript 5, lines 92 – 97)

Interestingly, Terri uses the terms boy and girl which is reflective of how she describes herself in chapter four. Still, Terri does equate traditional stereotypical gender roles to girls and boys and describes them both in terms of home-making and entertainment. This shows how pervasive gender roles are in society. What is more interesting are the answers given when the participants were asked whether gender roles applied to them in anyway. Rachel says:

I: 'Do you think [gender roles] apply to trans people in any way, or can apply to trans people?'

R: 'I think they do yeah and I think that's- I don't know that they necessarily really apply to trans people any more or less than they do to anyone else but I think trans people will often, particularly if you've got more of a binary identity, start to internalise that and feel like 'well if you're not X you must be Y' and 'if you're not going to conform to this role then you kind of have to conform to this role' and that's something that I went through and then kind of discarded over time' (Rachel, transcript 4, lines 114 – 119)

Rachel makes an interesting point about how gender roles may not necessarily apply to trans people any more than cis people. I have argued, however, throughout this chapter that trans people may feel more of a pressure to conform to gender stereotypes, and it seems that this manifests early on in a person's transition.

Additionally, Rachel mentions internalisation, which supports the idea of external pressure. Rachel has experienced internalisation of gendered norms, as well as suggesting the majority of trans people experience it. It would not be difficult to think that internalisation comes from being exposed to media representations of trans people, which I have argued, prop up gender expectations. Additionally, our language is based on a binary cisnormative system which makes finding a name for your identity as a gender variant person much more difficult. I asked about her experience with internalisation and Rachel explains:

'I don't think it got to the point where it ever enforced behaviour but going into, I think it was actually before coming out publically, and before my kind of female self was really real, and it was more how you think you're going to be and how you think you have to act and so on, so I remember saying stupid things like 'oh you know, I used to be really into computer games and I'm not playing them so much anymore' and I don't know whether that was just a genuine thing that maybe my head was just so taken up with other things or whether it was that I felt that well that's not a girl thing and you should be moving away from that... and other little things like that, that I maybe did that I started to feel like I couldn't or shouldn't do going forwards and the more I kind of went through the process the more I thought well this is just rubbish, you know if it's something that I enjoy and it's something that I wanna do then it doesn't make me any less of a man or a woman or whatever, I'm just a person, so yeah all that stuff just kind of gradually came back.' (Transcript 4, Lines 132 -146)

Rachel says she did not necessarily impose gender roles on herself because of her identity. What this suggests is that conforming to gender roles was initially more inherent. Having struggled with coming to terms with her identity, Rachel found an internal pressure to conform to what she thought was feminine behaviour; ultimately equating certain activities with masculinity. We see this in the previous section where we discuss the external pressure to conform to stereotypes. This often comes from media narratives purposely juxtaposing masculinity and femininity (Mitchell, 2014), ultimately creating an oppressive dichotomy in which people must adhere to or risk being interrogated. What Rachel discusses above is her internalisation of this

oppressive dichotomy, creating extra pressure for her to conform to a stereotypically feminine role as she transitions. This internal pressure has led to Rachel self-scrutinising, questioning aspects of her personality and her interests and whether they align with her gender identity. When asked about the pressure to conform to certain gender roles Rachel explains that the pressure comes from a feeling of needing to fit in and an anxiety about what wider society would think.

'I think it's not necessarily for themselves it's for everyone else, it's that feeling of again if you're going to do it, you have to do it, you have to fit in and be what- if society expects this of a woman then if you're going to transition to become a woman then unless you're doing that, again, what is the point? Erm and the other thing is that if you go too far that way then you start to be accused of being a caricature.'

(Rachel, transcript 4, lines 149 – 153)

What this also suggests is the pressure comes internally from a pre-emptive fear of what may happen to them. This pre-emptive fear does not arise out of nowhere. Not only has Rachel been pressured by external factors to conform to a gender stereotype, she has been conditioned by perpetual narratives to also scrutinise herself. As I have discussed at the beginning of this chapter, historically gender variant ideas have been pathologised and medicalised. They have also been subjected to a scrutiny which is not normally afforded to cisgender people (Raymond, 1994). Additionally, seeing representations of trans identities which fixate on masculinity and femininity and support a binary view of gender, can easily influence people into ascribing to them. This is supported by Michael who, like Rachel, felt the need to conform to gender roles earlier in his transition and then disregard them later on.

I: 'Do you think the term [gender roles] applies to you in any way?'

M: 'I think it did, back in, back in the day erm because it was pretty much- I didn't really have much understanding of gender theoretically I was just like okay I've kind of perceived that men in society generally do this and women generally do this so erm I should probably also do this and fulfil this masculine role and erm I guess for a while it just made sense but it kind of was not very helpful because

it was just too prescriptive and too confusing.’ (Transcript 3, lines 161 – 166)

Again, Michael suggests that he has perceived how people behave in society and felt he needed to conform to that and ‘fulfil a masculine role’. In order to be masculine, Michael learnt to perform gender from his observations of this around him; admitting that a big influence on his perception of masculinity came from his step-father. Michael grew up with what he describes as:

‘A really very hyper-masculine step-dad who, erm, just loved fighting and being drunk constantly and- I swear you could almost call it a hobby of his not to be feminine’ (Transcript 3, lines 202 – 203).

Michael uses a double intensifier and the adjective ‘hyper’ to accentuate his stepfather’s stereotypical masculinity, and describes violent behaviours which further accentuates this notion. Additionally, whilst saying this sentence, Michael pauses briefly after each intensifier which also emphasises his stereotypically masculine upbringing. In comparison Michael then jokes about hyper-masculinity being a hobby for his step-father, which also suggests a normality surrounding his behaviour. It could be argued, therefore, that this stereotypically masculine behaviour, which was repeated and solidified, was internalised by Michael. This is supported by Michael’s further statement:

‘Growing up with that it was kind of like even before I came out I felt like I was being masculinised, in terms of socialised to be as masculine as possible and to get into fights and erm I don’t know just be like him I guess erm so that when I finally did come out and start transitioning I felt like I needed to do those things’ (Transcript 3, lines 206 -209).

This is not the only report of the participants learning to perform gender from those around them. In chapter four we discussed Terri’s attitude to gender roles and she had also suggested that (before identifying as a girl) she learnt how to behave like a male from the observations of her peers. Interestingly, no participant has discussed learning to perform femininity through societal observation. This is

perhaps a reflection of the commodity we as a society place on masculinity (Halberstam, 1998).

For Michael and Rachel, conforming to stereotypical behaviour dissipated as they became more comfortable with their own identities, yet there seems to be a theme in participants' answers about the need to appear really feminine and masculine. This is also seen in Sophie's answer, which is interesting because of how she sees her identity. As we have discussed Sophie identifies fully with the binary and outwardly presents as feminine. Being trans is not actively part of her identity but a means to an end, so it is somewhat unexpected that she may feel the need to conform to gender stereotypes.

S: 'I dressed more girly girl early on, I've become more alternative in my style as I've went along yeah.'

I: 'Was that because of a pressure or was that because that's how you felt personally?'

S: 'I think it's because I felt it's what I had to do, I don't think it's pressure or, it felt, it's what I had to do.'(Transcript 1, lines 202 – 206)

Whilst Sophie does not necessarily attribute her 'girly girl' dressing to pressure, she did however feel it was necessary. Earlier in the chapter I discuss Sophie's experiences in the NHS services she was using, where she was expected to dress in a stereotypically feminine way in order to be taken seriously. It could be then that, at that time, Sophie felt she needed to dress in a certain way to be taken seriously outside the services she was using. What this also suggests is an element of pre-emptive fear in her initial transition.

By internalising stereotypes, participants have demonstrated some pre-emptive fear. There is a fear of what may happen if they do not adhere to a certain level of masculinity and femininity and also fear of the legitimacy of their own identity. It is easy to see where this might arise when participants have been constantly subjected to media narratives of gender variance which paint a picture of an 'ideal' trans person. These narratives also often present before and after photos which purposely juxtapose the masculinity and femininity of the person being written about, and this encourages the reader to compare and judge. These can not only pressure

gender variant people themselves but also encourage cis readers to expect masculinity and femininity from trans people. As Rachel highlights:

I: 'Where do you think these pressures come from?'

R: 'I think it's just society as a whole, I don't know how to identify maybe where it would have originated from 'cause it's so deeply ingrained erm but I think you know obviously kind of media portrayals and the, the comments that you see about a lot of validation of trans people is in, is in the visual you know you see articles about you know obviously the ones that erm we'll probably discuss where it's like the better someone looks the more accepted they are and so obviously people will try and attain that whether it's erm achievable, whether it's realistic, whether it's healthy for them or not because they see it all around, they see that if you look the part and if you act the part then you're far more likely to be able to be allowed to just live your life without just having people kind of just questioning you every step of the way.' (Transcript 4, lines 163 – 172)

Rachel makes an interesting point that supports the above discussion of stereotypes; 'validation' of trans people is in the visual. We have been discussing the purposeful presentation in the media of trans people as either very masculine or feminine, and here Rachel explains, they create a very cisnormative picture of how trans people should present. Without adhering to cisnormative ideas of masculinity and femininity, trans people are more likely to have their identity questioned as Rachel puts it, 'every step of the way'. This is an interesting idiom, as not only does it reflect the process that is transitioning, it also reflects how persistent these discourses are for people transitioning. Media discourses permeate our lives and influence our idea of gender variance. As Rachel highlights, these expectations are so deeply ingrained that often we may not realise they are. Gender, according to Butler (1990) is performative and I feel that the participants' responses above support this notion; not only in their personal experiences and expectations of their gender identity, but also outside perceptions.

Media discourses enforce binary gendered lives on to gender variant people and also regulate how a cis audience might see trans people. The repetition of these

discourses prop up an idealised trans narrative which people may feel they must adhere to and, by not adhering to this, may face criticism and even condemnation. With this, teamed with a language which is insufficient to accurately describe their identities, it is easy to how participants may feel othered and ostracised. This may create a sense of fear for participants as there are undue expectations placed on them. These can be the driving forces that lead to a level of pre-emptive fear. For a person at the beginning of their transition, or who has not yet 'come out', seeing these pervasive discourses and examples of constant scrutiny could lead to a level of expectation of what may happen; hence a pre-emptive fear.

At this point I feel I need to explain that not all fear for the participants is pre-emptive; to suggest so would be dangerous and reductive of their experiences. The participants have experienced, and will experience, things which produce fear and urge cautiousness. However, what I suggest with this section is that media discourses which influence both trans and cis readers into a prescriptive idea of gender identity often undermine trans peoples' general sense of security. Michael talked about personal safety in his interview, discussing his considerations in coming out to his university peers:

'it's kind of an awkward decision between outing myself so that I can contribute to the conversation in a way that I want to or you know, is this going to make me unsafe, are these people going to tell their friends and then are there friends going to tell this big jock guy who's going to come and like do whatever to me like- so I g- I guess there's always that worry in the back of my head that Boys Don't Cry situation is going to break out.' (Transcript 3, lines 457 – 461).

Boys Don't Cry is a 1999 film which dramatises the life of Brandon Teena, a young trans man who was violently raped and killed by people he had befriended. A 'Boys Don't Cry situation' as Michael describes is the potential for violence after disclosing his gender identity to someone. It is this pre-emptive fear which causes dilemma for Michael as he 'wants to contribute to the conversation' yet is fearful of the consequences of disclosing his gender identity. As Helvie, who wrote about Brandon Teena, states '[e]ven in the most seemingly innocent linguistic acts we make value judgements. The information which we choose to include or exclude when

contemplating the life of another reveals a specific paradigm which is expected to “explain” an individual’ (1997: 39). Michael’s appearance (which by his own admission is ‘stereotypically male’) is not only communicating to others a gender identity which aligns with cis male, but also is being read as cis male. By revealing his gender identity, Michael destabilises society’s perceptions of him, which then could lead to an experience replicating Brandon Teena’s.

Whilst violence and murder is a legitimate fear for someone who is gender variant, and one which ensures cautiousness for Michael, the context of Brandon Teena’s story differs greatly to Michael’s life, he explains:

‘When I catch myself being paranoid I kind of feel like I have to remind myself that I’m one of the least at risk trans people like, the only way I could be less at risk is if I did subscribe to hyper-masculinity and did not do anything to deviate from that then I guess I feel like I’ll probably be the safest of trans- but you know, I’m kind of quite close to that in that people read me as cis and so they don’t question why I’m in a bathroom, they don’t ask me about my genitals without having even asked me my name first or you know anything like that, I don’t have people following me home or anything and so I kind of have to just kind of ask myself what I’m paranoid about and whether I’m kind of erm, how do you put it like, like shouldering the burden of other people’s experiences so like erm I think there’s a lot, particularly online, in the last few years, there’s a lot of bundling together of statistics and not really separating out who’s at risk so you know, if you put all the stats together there’s like a, I don’t know something like a one in seven chance that a trans person is going to be murdered for being trans but then when you break it down into who’s getting murdered it’s erm trans women of colour in the US, or South America or whatever erm and then when you look at people like me, there’s maybe, there’s a slight increase in risk of erm sexual violence or you know or murder or whatever but it’s nowhere close to you know the woman in Brazil who’s being murdered because she’s a sex worker’. (Transcript 3, lines 474 – 490)

Of course, reading through Michael's explanation it is clear to see that comparatively, the North East of England is a relatively safe place to live for gender variant people; particularly in relation to North and South America. However, it cannot be ignored how detailed Michael's answer actually is, which is why I have included the 16 lines of quotation above. It is not only clear that Michael has researched rates of murder and violence against trans people across the world, but he has also felt the need to research these statistics. I would argue that this is a manifestation of pre-emptive fear, as discussed above. Looking at statistics provided by Transgender Europe (2018) (as part of the *Transgender Murder Monitoring Project*), between 2008 and 2016 eight trans people were murdered in the UK due to their gender identity. Whilst this is a disquieting number, it is small in comparison to the 146 trans people murdered in the USA, 257 in Mexico and 868 in Brazil in the same period. What Michael is explaining is his internalisation of these statistics and the experiences behind them. Seeing these makes him feel unsafe, even though he recognises he is living in a safer area and is one of the least at risk people. This internalisation leads to pre-emptive fear and an expectation, on Michael's part, of violence.

Being exposed to stories and narratives which do not reflect their identity has had damaging effects on the participants. Some feel they have to adhere to a certain standard of femininity or masculinity, or present in a particular way, otherwise there will be repercussions. These, depending on the participant, range from having your legitimacy as a man or woman questioned, to violence and murder. However, these repercussions may be expected but do not necessarily manifest themselves. The expectation of rejection, and negative experiences, is a common theme. The study by Rood *et al.* explores the anticipation of rejection and concludes that narratives told by trans and gender variant people are 'punctuated with a sense of urgency, distress, and resignation' (2016: 160), and the participants interviewed for this study are no exception. However, this urgency, distress and resignation, particularly on the part of my participants, is somewhat pre-emptive and is often met with expressions of relief and luck.

Consequences of Pre-Emptive Fear: Positive Experiences as Unique and Lucky

I have spoken extensively about how the participants experience and even internalise gender stereotypes. These stereotypes, I have argued, start with an inadequate language which results in the struggle to find a name or category for oneself. This inadequacy is seen in media discourses, which are used to perpetuate stereotypical masculine and feminine dichotomies. Exposure to these discourses creates a sense of fear for participants as they expect ostracism, rejection and even violence. Nevertheless, as I have outlined above, the North East is a relatively safe place to live, particularly when compared with the Americas. Taking this into account, I have argued that this fear can be pre-emptive. With this said, there is one interesting consequence of pre-emptive fear which was experienced by the participants; they often describe their positive experiences as a consequence of 'luck'.

The first notion of how pre-emptive fear manifests for participants, is the frequent references to luck, or being lucky. I had asked participants to describe their experiences in order to elicit longer narratives, and occasionally I had asked for specific positive and negative experiences. In the participants' quotations outlined above, Sophie mentions being 'scared off' from the LGBT community and Michael refers to himself as 'paranoid' when talking about the threat of violence. These are the extent of the overt references to fear; often described in passing. It seems that throughout the interviews, the idea of fear was mostly alluded to; often through either references to luck and chance or regular comparisons of their experiences to those of people they know. In the participants' cases, therefore, it appeared that their fear was pre-emptive, and that any support provided from friends and family was through luck rather than the actions of themselves.

Luck, according to the Oxford Dictionaries (2018), is 'success or failure apparently brought by chance' and both Terri and Michael describe their experiences as a whole using this term. This is significant because they both seem to have an underlying expectation of rejection and ostracism, and even potentially violence. Any experiences outside of this, therefore, are attributed to luck on behalf of Terri and Michael, rather than their knowledge of close friends' and family's attitudes towards them.

'I think in fairness, in comparison to like, I know people have had really bad experiences and I think I've been really lucky that like pretty much I mean there's been some crazy ones but whatever like probably 99.9 percent of my experience of telling people has been really good erm because I think they've all been really good friends and I think I'm probably just really lucky in that, do you know what I mean? Because I know some people have had some bad experiences so I think I've been really lucky really.' (Terri, Transcript 5, lines 241 -246).

Above, Terri compares herself to others she knows that have had 'bad experiences'. We do not know what these experiences might be, however they are significant enough for Terri to describe herself as lucky in comparison. In the previous chapter, we do explore Terri's story of coming out to a friend, which she describes as 'absolutely fucking horrible' (Transcript 2, line 157), from which we can ascertain that the experience of coming out was not a pleasant one. As the narrative progresses, we find that Terri's experiences in telling the rest of her friends and family were better than anticipated; what started out as a 'fucking horrible experience' ended up as not a big deal:

'Well it turns out that it wasn't that big a deal anyway I should have just done this when I were like fucking ten years old' (Terri Transcript 5, lines 202 – 204)

The pre-emptive fear has been built from Terri's first experience of coming out and her knowledge of other peoples' experiences. Terri's first coming out experience, as outlined in detail in the previous chapter, was emotional and painful for her as she was not only going through a period of substance abuse and self-harm in order to cope with her feelings, but also the person to whom she came out distanced themselves from her. Listening to Terri tell this story, it was clear how distressing the first time coming out was for her. Additionally, in comparing her experiences to that of others, Terri has built up an expectation of how 'awful' coming out to others will be. Of course her experiences would have had a major impact on Terri, particularly as her first coming out experience was a negative one, and this would contribute to the pre-emption of fear she experiences, yet she still describes herself

as 'really lucky' even though all of her proceeding coming out experiences were positive.

Whilst Terri has told me about personal experiences which may have contributed to her pre-emptive fear, other participants had not disclosed in detail distressing experiences. Of course, this does not necessarily mean the participants did not have any, just they may have chosen to keep that information to themselves. I point this out as not only is it part of this research to take into consideration contextual information and how I place myself as a researcher, but also recognise that I can only analyse what the participants have disclosed to me in interview. That being said, there is a subtext of fear which is alluded to through how the participants regard their personal experiences. Michael, like Terri, also believes he has been lucky in having a supportive network of people around him, which led to his belief he has had an unusual experience.

I think I was quite lucky because I got quite a lot of support from, from family and- some people who weren't so great but I think my experience has been an anomalous one to be honest. (Michael, Transcript 3, lines 259 – 260)

Michael here explains that he thinks his situation is inconsistent with his perceived discourse of gender variance, as he has experienced support from family members. Having explored Michael's attitude to personal safety above, it is not surprising he may feel that his experiences are anomalous as, he outlines, he has been subject to narratives of violence against trans people through his media consumption. Michael is very candid and detailed in the description of his internal struggles with his gender identity:

'When I was like 15 and at that time I was like okay I'm a lesbian and that's just it and I can be Shane from The L Word and it'll be great, erm and er, and then that kind of just fit for about a year and a half or something like that ... I was like 17 something was wrong- I don't even really remember it now, I can just kind of remember it as a, I can explain some kind of events but actually remember them, I just know they happened so at some point I was, I felt that something was wrong

and I wasn't comfortable and I was really depressed and I don't even remember even thinking anything about gender really but then my girlfriend at the time found some people who were trans for me to talk to and then I spoke to them and I was like ooh yeah that's exactly how I feel ... and then eventually I told my mum and I she didn't really know what it was but she was like okay well that's fine whatever you're happy with' (Transcript 3, lines 235 – 236, 239 – 245 and 438 - 439).

This is only a part extract of Michael's discussion of his gender identity, however it carries on in a similar way. It seems that whilst Michael was struggling internally, mentioning his depression and being uncomfortable, his friends and family were supportive; his girlfriend at the time introducing him to trans people, and his mother wishing for his happiness. Without undermining Michael's internal feelings, we need to probe why he feels his supportive experience is an anomalous one. To do this, we need to return to his previous discussion of *Boys Don't Cry*. Having been subjected to narratives of murder and violence from North and South America, it seems that Michael is expectant of the same happening to him. By contrast, as he explains, his experiences have been far from violent. It is this which leads him to believe that, in receiving support, his experience is anomalous as he is expectant of ostracism and violence based on his own accumulated knowledge; hence pre-emptive fear.

Other participants have expressed similar sentiments in that they feel their positive experiences are unique. Rachel states:

'I've seen people with similar stories but as part of it feels quite unique, whether it is or not, I don't know erm but it does when you're in sort of the questioning phases it makes it hard to understand- when you're trying to work out whether this is something that's real and you're at that point where you need other people to validate you' (Transcript 4, lines 184 – 187).

Throughout our interview Rachel has described to me her own experiences; which we can compare to Michael's. Rachel suffered with internal struggles, including 'questioning phases', trying to understand her identity and also seeking validation.

Additionally she also describes an amicable relationship with her ex-partner and a supportive family.

Conclusion

Taking the above claims from the participants into consideration, we need to ask what contributes to their feeling this way. The assertion that the participants are unique or lucky is not something said in passing by one person, it is evident in each participant's interviews. Both Terri and Michael feel that they have been lucky in their experiences and attribute a supportive environment to chance. In addition to this, and Rachel calls her experiences unique. However, all participants have similar experiences with their gender identity which makes their experience not as unique as previously thought. All participants also have some level of support from friends or family. Again, I am not aiming to downplay any negative experiences and also suggest that being gender variant is not difficult, however I do ascertain that the participants are lead to believe their experiences are unique and lucky due to the influx of media narratives.

These media narratives create an idealised trans person which adheres to masculinity or femininity in a way which is expected by wider society. These narratives not only influence gender variant people, but also cis people who are susceptible to these narratives. The external pressure of conforming to stereotypical masculine or feminine ideals creates an internal pressure for the participants. Additionally, the language is insufficient in describing the participants' identities, which also creates a sense of being the other. Overall, being questioned from both internal and outside sources, as well as being exposed to narratives which delegitimises gender variant identities, ultimately undermines the participants' feelings of safety. As I have outlined, the North East of England is a relatively safe place to live, but despite this participants experience pre-emptive fear to the extent that positive experiences are unique or lucky.

Concluding Chapter

I started on this research project with a broad question; 'what are the lived experiences of trans people in North East England?' In answering this question I also explored two further sub-questions relating to how gender variant people used categories and how the media has an effect on gender variant people. The research project was inductive in its approach to data collection as a way to help reduce cisnormative bias on my part as a researcher and, because the community I researched was a unique one. The use of critical discourse analysis enabled the uncovering of social inequalities, both in personal and media discourses. In particular I analysed categorisation and narratives in relation to the trans community and from this emerged a narrative of discriminatory discourses and language and how that affects participants.

Language Inadequacy

Initially I explored the language of gender variance with particular interest in terms and terminology that was used by the participants. This was part of the sub-question related to my research question which was used to elicit answers regarding to how the participants saw themselves. As a result, categorisations became a salient part of the research. Asking the participants to categorise their gender initially provided an insight into how they saw themselves. Labels that were used were described as inadequate or the best they've got, yet still did not fully represent the identity of the participant. Additionally, no participant labelled themselves in the same way; essentially there was five differing gender identities.

Initially this was a somewhat surprising find, however, when taking into considering the theoretical and cultural history of gender identity, it seems less so. An essentialist thought of gender is, as I have discussed, 'publically understood and frequently justified' (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, 2013: 23). Therefore there is a wide understanding of gender identity being a male and female dichotomy with both groups having essential characteristics based on perceived biology. Despite academic theories which present alternative constructions of gender (West and Zimmerman, 1987; Butler, 1990), hetero- and cisnormativity are pervasive in society. Language in relation to gender identity reflects essentialist thought about gender as we are still restricted by a male and female binary; my surprise, therefore,

emerged from an inherent assumption that even gender variant people will identify in some way with the terms male or female.

The categories chosen, however, were more complicated than initially thought. Each participant had chosen a label which reflected their experience with their gender identity, however, these labels also came with a short narrative turn. The aim of the narrative it seemed was to explain their personal choices. There are still clear connotations which come with male and female as a category, and I argue that the participants' explanation of their gender identity is a way to distance themselves from these connotations; whether that is by explanation or self-justification. On reflection, this does not necessarily happen with cisgender people who can comfortably claim a gender category for themselves (Antaki, 2007; Halberstam, 1998). The trouble free claiming of a gender category for cisgender people comes from a general personal identification with the label and being socially read as that label. The participants, therefore, not only identify with a category that does not align fully with their gender identity, but also have to explain their choices.

Not only are the categories the participants use to describe their gender identities inadequate, but so is the language surrounding gender variance. Transgender and trans are seen as umbrella terms for gender variant identities (Hines, 2007; Stryker and Whittle, 2006) and most participants identify with it as such. It is seen as an adequate descriptor for a community of people, however it is not necessarily adequate for individual identities. The term transition is also similar in that participants describe it as an adequate descriptor for a process. However, participants agree that the transition process is such a subjective one, that the term is still restrictive.

What the above shows is that language is unable to represent the experiences of the gender variant individual. Gender identity is subjective and those who do not identify as cisgender may find it more difficult to find a way to describe their experiences. Additionally, in trying to find a category, gender variant people often consider outside perceptions. Kimmel (2011) argues that our body is adorned with cultural signs and symbols that enable our gender identity to be read. For a person whose gender identity does not match their assigned sex at birth, these signs and symbols may not all come from the body. As a result, categorisation is just as

important as embodied experience in reflecting gender identity. However, what I have discussed above is the general inadequacy of language pertaining to gender variance, which in turn leads to the inadequacy of gender categories and the need for an explanation.

Perhaps the most personal category for the participants is their name. In choosing a name, the participants are able to choose a somewhat category to reflect their personality and experience of gender. Trans people have to consider a name which fits both their developed and undeveloped identities; a name which potentially reflects their cultural and/or religious background, their gender identity, pays respect to family members or important people, feels comfortable and above all fits in. As a result, finding a personal name is an important process. This is because it is difficult for participants to find a category which sufficiently reflects their personal experiences of gender due to language which has not caught up in terms of gender variant identity. As a result, one of the most reliable ways to find a name for one's identity is in choosing a personal name. This is also reflective in the pseudonyms chosen by participants, as they were chosen for the same reasons they chose their personal names.

Overall, what this section of analysis shows us is that the English language is still restricted by a masculine and feminine binary, despite more visibility for people who are gender variant. We begin to see how inadequate the language is for the participants to identify and describe themselves. If meaning is constructed and understood in relation to ourselves (Umeogu and Ifeoma, 2012) through language, then it can be argued that a restrictive, inadequate language is problematic for people trying to understand their gender identity.

Media Narratives of Trans Lives

Having discussed the inadequacy of language for participants, I decided to explore how the media used this language. Using British print news media as a basis for analysis, I explored media representations of trans people. From these I argue that there is a set of narratives tropes perpetuated by the media by the language they use. Historically, media narratives of gender variance have focussed on a person's gender identity as a novelty. Oram (2016; 2007) provides background on how transgressive dressing and gender expressions have appeared in British print media

for the entertainment of the readership. Gender variant people were presented either as peculiarities or as being deceptive. The stories of Lucy Meadows and Kate Stone lead to changes in the guidelines on gender variance reporting (Press Complaints Commission, 2014) to ensure that gender identity is mentioned only when relevant to the story. Despite these changes, stories which appear in newspapers still use gender identity as an ideological tool and perpetuate tropes about trans people.

Cheshire and Zeibland explain that telling stories about everyday life is a way of 'making sense of our experiences' (2005: 17), however, media stories about trans people do not necessarily help people make sense of their experiences. As we have outlined previously, the language used today to describe gender variance is inadequate in reflecting the subjective experiences of being trans. However, newspapers often still use out-dated and inappropriate language when referring to gender identity. Additionally, this language can be used in conjunction with sensationalist reporting, such as Chelsea's (Robins, 2014) story in the *Daily Star*. Terms such as sex-change and transsexual, as found in Chelsea's story, are part of an archaic medical discourse which reduces trans people to biological characteristics. These terms are also not necessarily reflective of the experiences of trans people, and particularly my participants. What these terms do do, however, is prop up an essentialist view of gender which has been used to delegitimise trans identities (Raymond, 1994). Additionally, as essentialism is still so pervasive in society and 'publically understood' (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, 2013: 23), it is further legitimised by the language used in newspaper reporting.

This kind of language is also used in so-called 'positive' stories of gender variance. In the stories of Roxy (Gilmour, 2015) and Drew and Finlay (Wainwright, 2015), there were common language choices which would not necessarily be used by the participants. The use of sex-change appears again, further reducing trans people to their biological make-up. Additionally, the use of wrong pronouns and deadnames opens trans people up to questions about their identity which otherwise might be inappropriate. The participants I interviewed found it inappropriate when people questioned them about their lives before transitioning, yet these newspaper representations legitimise this behaviour.

Having explored media narratives, I begin to explore participants' narratives; specifically experiences that they might have in common. Each participant had experienced coming out in some way, yet in media narratives, this experience was usually abridged or even ignored. These do not accurately reflect actual experiences and also reflect an easier experience than those of the participants. Additionally, I also looked at the trope of 'knowing from an early age' as often gender variant people are represented as having known they were trans since early childhood. The participants, however, all developed their gender identities at different times during their lives. Terri had known since an early age; Sophie, Rachel and Michael since late adolescence, and Donna in her early forties. Of course, participants do not adhere to narratives as perpetuated by the media and, what this shows is the power of the media discourses in creating a cultural fiction of gender variance (Butler, 1990). This cultural fiction affects both trans and cis people as it perpetuates an idealised version of gender variance which people believe is real. Trans people, therefore, may feel extra pressure to become part of the cultural fiction, otherwise be open to scrutiny.

Pre-Emptive Fear and Luck

Inadequate language and perpetual media narratives permeate society. It is difficult for participants to find a name which accurately reflects their experiences of gender, due to out dated language. This language is also used in media outlets and creates a homogenised experience for all trans people. This creates pressure as gender variant people feel they need to conform to these narratives as it is expected by 'outside' readers. From this, there is a level of fear produced.

Having been historically pathologised and medicalised, gender variant identities have been open to criticism from sources both in and out of academia (Raymond, 1994; Jeffreys, 1997; Greer 2015). Biological discourses, especially, enable the questioning of gender variant identities as legitimate, as biological essentialism is still 'publically understood' (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, 2012: 23). These discourses find their way into media outputs and eventually become a common-sense cultural understanding. As a result, these create and maintain gender stereotypes.

What became clear throughout the participants' narratives is a level of fear each person was experiencing. Whilst not mentioned explicitly, this is alluded to in experiences of the participants. Firstly I discuss the desirability of cis bodies which, I argue, comes from restrictive binary representations of people; even trans people. One must adhere to feminine and masculine ideals which places value on cis gender bodies and these ideals are perpetuated by the media we consume. Also, as Rachel highlights, 'validation' for some trans people comes from the visual, particularly people who may be at the beginning of their transition. Hence there is a pressure to conform to gender stereotypes in order to be seen as legitimate; by not adhering to a feminine or masculine ideal, trans people are left vulnerable to scrutiny. This is supported by Michael, who suggests that transmasculine people may more easily be read as cis gender, they get less scrutiny than transfeminine people.

Another level of fear comes from gender expectations within medical institutions. Those who attended a gender identity clinic found they were expected to present in either a very masculine or feminine way, or find themselves questioned. This is interesting given the history of gender identity, where it has been highly medicalised (Hines, 2007) and, despite trying to move away from a 'medical model' of gender variance, it is still seen as a disorder which may have psychological effects which need to be treated medically (Johnson, 2015). As a result, stereotyping still exists within medical institutions, which undermines a person's knowledge of their own body. Having been scrutinised by the institutions which purport to help, as well as from a wider discourse of gender essentialism, it is easy to see why participants may experience fear. Also, these outside pressures can be internalised after having been exposed to pervasive discriminatory discourses.

In addition to the pressure to conform to a binary identity, exposure to discourses of violence, via news media or popular culture, creates a level of expectation amongst the participants. Consuming these texts contributes to the fear that they may experience violence, despite living in a relatively safe area. It seems that this kind of expectation is something that the participants have to consider in most aspects of their lives; the decision to come out to university peers for Michael, or the decision to live as 'stealth' for Sophie, for example. What was also found is that the experience of fear by participants can be pre-emptive. Having been exposed to certain narratives, questioned and undermined, and also finding a place within

language difficult, it is easy to see how participants may pre-empt negative experiences. In fact, participants reference these narratives as a possible scenario for them (*Boys Don't Cry*, 1999) which then urges cautiousness. As a result, I argue that media discourses influence both trans and cis readers into a prescriptive idea of gender identity often undermine trans peoples' general sense of security. Yet, if you take into context the participants' lives, living in the UK and in the North east, they are less at risk of violence than compared to North and South America (Trans Europe, 2018).

Whilst pre-emptive fear may seem practical, in that it enables participants to be wary of potential threats to themselves, it does have consequences. These consequences are not overt in their everyday lives, but became clear in our interview. When discussing their experiences, the participants often relayed their internal struggles which came across as distressing for some. Participants spoke of their internal struggles with their identity and with their mental health, which will have had a contributing factor as to why they experienced fear. However, when relaying experiences with friends and family, there was a common theme of luck, or uniqueness. As a result of pre-emptive fear, as discussed above, positive experiences for participants are often referred to as lucky. There is a common theme in which participants attribute supportive environments to chance. By being able to come out and receive encouragement rather than scrutiny, participants believe themselves to be unique or lucky.

Some participants referred to their experiences as unique, as they did not align with the perceived discourse of gender variance; ostracism or violence for example. By not experiencing what was expected, the participants feel their experience is anomalous. Of course, there will be instances of scrutiny and even vilification, however this is so universally expected that it is necessary for participants to pre-empt it. This pre-emptive fear, I argue, is also a result of pervasive media narratives which and insecure identities.

Conclusions

Overall, there is a permeation of historical notions of gender variance in contemporary discourses. These are presented in British print media and create a cultural fiction of gender variance. Because these are consumed by both trans and

cis people, it has an effect on both by providing idealistic expectations of what a trans person should be, and opening up gender variant identities to unnecessary scrutiny; enabling them to be policed by outside eyes (Halberstam, 2012).

I argue that this starts with the language we use. There is an emerging lexicon of gender variance which has arisen as society's understanding has increased, yet even this is insufficient to properly reflect participants' experiences of gender. The discourse of gender is a rigid regulatory framework (Butler, 1990) and this restricts the linguistic expression of identity for participants. Terminology such as trans, transgender and transition, whilst acceptable in describing a general process and community, do not reflect the subjective experiences of gender variance. As such, participants are left in a situation where they have to describe and justify their choice of gender categories. Also, as meaning is created through language, and language is restricted to a cisnormative binary system of gender, it is clear to see how describing your identity as a gender variant person is problematic.

Claiming a category is usually trouble free (Antaki, 2007), however, participants choosing a category also claim the assumptions which go along with that category. Male and female carry with them a common-sense cultural knowledge (Sacks, 1974; Richard and Housely, 2015) of being cisgender and, if a person is not 'read' as cisgender whilst claiming either male or female, there is a further risk of outside scrutiny. Additionally, as language does not accurately reflect gender variant identities, participants are left in a situation where they cannot effectively label their identity. Arguably, this can lead to insecurity and a sense of otherness because if a person cannot adequately define their identity for themselves, how can it be explained or understood by wider society?

As participants are already somewhat insecure in finding a name for their identity, it can leave them initially demoralised. When teamed with exposure to perpetual cisnormative narratives from media outlets, this can further undermine a personal sense of identity. A pre-occupation with biology has allowed early essentialist representations of gender to persist in society. News media outlets use out-dated and medicalised language to discuss gender variance and, as we have seen previously, participants mostly do not personally relate to this kind of discourse. Additionally, there are a set of linguistic and visual markers which make up news

stories on gender variance which often reflect a part of participants' lives they do not wish to make public. These include before and after photos, deadnames and inappropriate pronouns. What the use of these do is open up gender variant people to inappropriate intrusion and questions from wider society.

Also, news media perpetuate narrative tropes about gender variant people which can influence wider society's perception of trans people. Media discourses create and maintain gender stereotypes by juxtaposing masculinity and femininity in their stories, leaving no room for identities which do not ascribe to either. Additionally, those people who do ascribe to masculine and feminine traits are often further undermined, as there is extra pressure to subscribe to hyper-masculinity or hyper-femininity; not presenting as so, again, leaves gender variant people open to scrutiny. What news media is doing is placing value onto essentialist ideas of gender and also onto cis bodies. As Halberstam (2012) outlines cis female masculinity can be scrutinised, yet it is usually 'tolerated' in society as the body usually carries cultural signs (Kimmel, 2011) which allows it to be read as cis. News media, therefore places value on cis bodies by presenting gender variance in this way, allowing people to be held up to a cis ideal. Participants, on the other hand are not cis and do not identify as such, yet are held up to an unfair scrutiny imposed by gendered media narratives; this has even more of an effect when you take into consideration that many cis people get their knowledge of gender variance from the media they consume (McInroy and Craig, 2015).

Living with a backdrop of discriminatory and constraining discourses provides extra pressure on participants to adhere to certain ideas of gender variance. Not adhering to these expectations creates a feeling of otherness and can lead to questioning the validity of one's identity. It is difficult not to see your experiences represented in the media as it also creates isolation in an already isolated and marginalised community. Additionally, any representations which do propose to represent the gender variant 'experience' reflect an experience which aligns more with essentialist binary expectations of gender, and often pander to a cis audience. This, teamed with a language which cannot sufficiently express your gender identity, creates further insecurity. It is my argument that these aspects of media and language use lead to a sense of pre-emptive fear in participants, and this has interesting consequences.

Taking into consideration the cultural background of gender variance, it is clear to see how fear can be produced. I have outlined the pervasive discourses which permeate our language and media, and these come from a history of medicalisation of gender identity (Krafft-Ebing, 1906; Bullough, 2003; Benjamin, 1966; Meyer, 2001). This has historically equated gender identity with psychological disorders and this has been used by people to delegitimise trans identities, along with biological essentialist opinions (Raymond, 1994; Jeffreys, 1997; Greer, 2015). Being exposed to wider cultural discourses which delegitimises gender variant identities, plus being constantly presented within the confines of cis- and heteronormativity will create a sense of fear for participants.

Further notions of fear are created through restrictive binary categories of gender, public understanding of biological essentialism (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, 2013). These contribute to the discourses which maintain gender stereotypes undermine the sense of identity experienced by participants. Constant exposure to these discourses, either through use or print media, creates a pressure to conform to stereotypes which can often be internalised, particularly when people are beginning their personal transition processes. Again, this reinforces the sense of fear as the internalisation of stereotypes creates further pressure to adhere to a way of being which may not be reflective of participants' identity. Overall, this leads to an expectation of ostracism, and even violence, for participants. Not adhering to stereotype can cause further insecurity in an already undermined identity. Being exposed to stories and narratives which do not reflect your identity has had damaging effects on the participants. Some feel they have to adhere to a certain standard of femininity or masculinity, or present in a certain way, otherwise there will be repercussions. These, depending on the participant, range from having your legitimacy as a man or woman questioned to violence and murder.

This overall feeling of fear, whilst legitimate, can also be pre-emptive. Whilst exposure to these discourses creates an undue pressure on participants to adhere to gender stereotypes, pre-emptive fear comes from the potential consequences for not adhering to these stereotypes. Participants referred to news stories and cultural depictions of gender variant people who have experienced violence, and even death, due to their gender identity. However, the participants acknowledged that

their personal situations were different to those of the people in these texts. One participant described it as 'paranoia', however, I would describe it as pre-emptive. Paranoia is defined as a 'mental condition' (Oxford Dictionaries: 2019) which is characterised by irrational delusions of persecution. These fears the participants describe, however, are not the result of paranoia, rather the result of the persistent exposure to damaging discourses and a restrictive binary language. Therefore, it would be better to describe the fear as pre-emptive as, whilst unlikely, the participants may experience violence due to their gender identity.

There are consequences for participants by having this pre-emptive fear, however. Participants often spoke about positive experiences as lucky. For example, those who found they had supportive family and friends put that down to chance rather than circumstance. Of course, there are people who do not have the same amount of support as the participants, and pre-emptive fear can serve a practical purpose in preparing participants for any potential negative repercussions. However, this leads to participants to compare their experiences to other and when those experiences are positive, it is down to luck. Additionally, those participants whose stories did not align with discourses of violence or ostracism described their experiences as unique, suggesting that violence and ostracism is the norm.

It is clear to see where this pre-emptive fear arises throughout this research. Participants live in a relatively safe area in North East England, however are still exposed to narratives of violence which come from larger places such as North and South America. British news media also constantly undermines and delegitimises gender variant identities by presenting them within a cis- and heteronormative context. This influences wider society where essentialism is still pervasive, and legitimises inappropriate prying into participants' identities before transition. As well as this, participants internalise these pressures and ultimately present in ways which do not reflect their identity. This is supported by the use of language which is also inadequate in reflecting identity. Fundamentally, participants are already placed in an insecure position as trying to find a name for themselves is difficult. Having to contend with this and external pressures to conform to a cis- and heteronormative way of presenting, leads to a sense of fear. Some of this fear for participants is pre-emptive which, whilst providing a practical safety net, can also have consequences

for participants. These consequences lead the participants to believe that positive experiences and support received are a result of luck, rather than circumstance.

Limitations of the Research

Having discussed the main conclusions of this research, it is important to discuss its limitations. Throughout the thesis I have alluded to the fact that this research focuses on a specific community; gender variant people in the North East of England. Because of this, the study is limited to the community which has been researched. It would not be prudent to make generalisations from this research about gender variant people across the country as people living in different areas will have different life experiences.

The participants I have spoken to all have unique experiences of their gender identity, and also unique experiences relating to the North East as a region and media portrayals of gender variance. Despite being unable to make generalisations from this research, it is still an important study. The community researched is an underrepresented one, both in terms of gender identity and geographical location. Their experiences will add valuable knowledge to the wider discourse on gender variant identities. Additionally, this study can be repeated in other regions of the UK which can then build up a country wide portrait of gender variance.

Another limitation which is necessary to highlight is how the participants reacted to me as an interviewer. As I discussed in the methodology chapter, placing myself as a researcher was as important to this study as the participants themselves. Researching LGBT lives bring with it further ethical and practical considerations (Silverschanz, 2009) and I have addressed these in detail previously. However, it must also be highlighted that as a cisgender, heterosexual woman, researching gender variant lives there may still be some inherent cisnormative bias, despite efforts to eliminate it. As I have discussed, I took an inductive approach to data collection, using specific principles from grounded theory and orientalism. Additionally, I researched the cultural history of gender variance and also placed myself in the position of learner throughout the interviews. Yet even with these interventions, I still do not have the same experiences of gender as my participants, having grown up without realising I have a gender identity and with what Silverschanz calls 'invisible privilege' (2009: 10). As a result, there was still some

cisnormative bias from myself particularly during the data analysis where sometimes I was not aware of the nuanced language surrounding gender identity. The example I discuss in chapter four is the difference between 'transwoman' and 'trans woman' and what the space between the prefix and noun signifies for participants.

Looking back at participants' responses to my questions, there is an element of justification and explanation, and this is part of my analysis in chapter four. I argue that the participants, when asked to categorise their gender identity, often provide an explanation of why they use the labels they do and this is part of a pattern of self-justification. It may be worth considering, however, whether my participants would have answered differently if they were being interviewed by a gender variant person. Would there, for example, be the same level of self-justification? Furthermore, a member of the faculty where I was conducting this research had read my drafts and made an interesting point. In chapter two I discuss radical feminists whose writing is inherently transphobic. My colleague asked; could the participants' attitudes have changed towards me as through a fear of being affected by transphobia in the guise of academia? Or is there an element of explanation to participants' answers as a reaction to some historically transphobic academic discourse?

Finally, I discussed representation as part of my methodology and, whilst every care was taken to represent the experiences of my participants as truthfully as possible, there was still some limitation to this. I mentioned above that my identity as a cis woman could have changed participants' reactions to me, but it also limits my understanding of the participants' experiences. I cannot know how it is to question my gender identity, or to have my gender identity questioned to the extent of the participants; I have also lived without the shared experiences of the community. That being said, can I, as a cis woman, accurately represent the experiences of the community which I am researching? Language is an essential part of how we produce meaning, and the participants and I have co-produced knowledge and meaning throughout this research, however it cannot be avoided that this research has been produced through a cis lens which, it could be argued further limits this research. That being said, I have been aware of my position as a researcher throughout the process and open with my participants about the scope of my knowledge. As a result, my being cis may limit the research somewhat, but does not undermine it entirely.

Applications and Scope for Further Research

What I have aimed to do with this research is uncover the effects of discriminatory discourses of trans participants. Having explained above, these create a sense of fear which can affect the way in which participants view positive experiences. This must be difficult for participants as they not only have to navigate internal and external pressures to conform to a gender binary which does not represent them, yet they are led to believe their positive experiences are by chance.

It is hoped that this research can help dismantle discriminatory discourses by enabling people to see the lived effects of these. This research can inform media outlets and policy makers in the restrictive nature of language and engage them in helping to create more positive discourses and representations of gender variance. Of course, gendered discourses are so pervasive in society, it will be very difficult to completely dismantle these. However more consideration on the type of language used, and history behind it, will help create more of a sense of inclusion for participants. This study set out to examine the lived experiences of gender variant people in North East England, and the results show how much discourses have a personal effect on participants. We can use these lived experiences to better inform how gender variance is represented as it is only the participants themselves who can explain their experiences of gender.

The scope for further research actually comes from the limitations I have discussed above. Firstly because of the research's exploration of a unique community, its results cannot necessarily be generalised from. However, the study can certainly be repeated in different regions of the UK. It would be beneficial to gather the same kind of experiences from gender variant people country wide. From these results, not only could we ascertain whether general experiences were common, but also ascertain whether the effects of media discourses are the same throughout the country. This could inform media outlets on better reporting and more accurate reflections of gender diversity.

Additionally, this research can be repeated with a gender variant researcher interviewing. This may influence how participants answer questions as it is more likely that a gender variant researcher will understand the experiences of the

participants further. Questions such as 'how do you describe your gender identity' may not elicit the same kind of explanation as when I asked them. It will be interesting to question whether attitudes towards these questions and see how the answers change if the interviewer can personally relate to participants' experiences

Final Statement

I set out on this research with one primary research question: **what are the lived experiences of trans people in North East England?** This was borne from a gap in literature for lived experiences of gender variant people and work experience for an LGBT homelessness charity.

The research question started broad and open-ended research question and was narrowed down with two sub-questions:

- In what way do trans people name, label and categorise themselves?
- How do news media narratives of gender variance affect trans

In answering these questions I have collected and analysed data from participants in the North East of England, and outlined my findings in this thesis.

Overall, it seems that participants live in a state of uncertainty; not necessarily with how they see themselves, but as a result of having to navigate wider society. Stereotypes and gender roles are imposed on the participants through language and media discourses which themselves prop up a two gendered society. Identifying outside of this opens people up to unnecessary scrutiny and creates a further sense of anxiety and fear. In order to defend themselves from this, participants' fear can be pre-emptive. This, whilst practical, does lead participants to believe that their positive experiences are through luck or that their experiences are unique.

This research scratches the surface on what seems to be a pervasive issue with language and gender identity. As our understanding of gender variance changes and grows, it seems that language cannot keep up. Media discourses about gender variance, even those that purport to be positive, still subscribe to a damaging discourse about gender which is insidious, affecting the everyday lives of gender variant people. Whilst this is a snapshot of a smaller community in North East

England, it is feasible that similar results can be found if repeated with other gender variant communities across the UK. Such is the universal nature of language, gender and the media.

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Note: All downloaded kindle texts have been referenced with location instead of page numbers. Each text can be found on my own personal kindle device, as well as at the link provided in the reference list.

Appendix

Interview Schedule

Name:

Age Group: 20-25
26-35
36-45
46- 55
56+

Geographical Area:

Firstly, I'd like to get to know a bit about you, please tell me about yourself, what is a typical day like for you?

- *Probe* Employed/retired/unemployed/education

How would you describe your gender? Why do you choose to use those terms to describe yourself?

What is your opinion of the term 'transgender'? Does 'transgender' apply to you in any way?

- *Probe* What do you think about the inclusion of cross dressers and drag queens/kings under the term 'transgender'?

What is your opinion on traditional gender roles, e.g. feminine women and masculine men?

How do you think gender roles apply to trans* people?

- *Probe* Do you think there is pressure for trans* people to conform to traditional gender roles? Why/Why not?

Do you consider yourself to be masculine/feminine? Why/Why not? How would you refer to yourself?

Please tell me about when you transitioned?

- *Probe* How did your family/friends react when you came out?

How did you feel before you decided to transition? Can you describe what was life was like for you?

Can you describe any experiences with medical professionals, either when you transitioned or after?

- *Probe* Positive and negative experience

- **Prompt* E.g GPs, gender identity professionals, surgeons, counsellors etc.*

What are your views on support and care for trans* people in the North East? In your area?

- **Probe* Private Organisations, NHS*

***Can you tell me about your experiences with your employer when you transitioned?*

***Can you tell me about your experiences with the Job Centre and searching for employment when you transitioned?*

***Can you tell me about your experiences in your volunteering role when you transitioned?*

*** Can you tell me about your experiences transitioning after retirement?
(Use appropriate question)*

What is your opinion on how trans* people are represented in the media today?

- **Probe* Do you think this is different on TV than in newspapers?*

How do you think the way trans* people are written about in the newspapers is different to trans* people in real life?

- **Prompt* Examples of newspaper headlines*

Do you use social media? What is your opinion of social media?

Can you recall any negative experiences you have had using social media because of your gender identity?

Can you recall any positive experiences you have had using social media because of your gender identity?

Can you name any role models for trans* people in the public eye? Who are your role models? Why?

Participant Information Sheet

Study: The Lived Experience of Trans* in the North East

Katie Ward katie.ward@research.sunderland.ac.uk

You are being invited to take part in a research project exploring the lived experiences of trans* people in the North East of England. You have been approached because you are, or identify as, trans*, or work closely with the trans* community. Before you decide whether to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take the time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask Katie Ward (the researcher) if there is anything you do not understand or if you would like any further information.

What is the project's purpose?

The purpose of the research is to collect and analyse experiences of trans* people within the North East of England. The trans* community is growing and becoming more vocal, however the rest of the society's knowledge is far behind, and this is reflected in poorly funded services which provide support for transgender people. This research aims to begin to bridge that gap by enabling trans* people to be more vocal about their personal experiences, as well being used by organisations to better understand trans* experiences.

Do I have to take part?

Taking part is completely voluntary. If you decide not to participate, that is your choice and there will be no prejudice or coercion.

What do I have to do?

You will be asked to take part in a one to one interview with the researcher. This discussion should last no longer than two hours. Throughout the interview you will be asked about your opinions on trans* issues and popular culture, as well as your personal experiences. The session will be informal and will take place in a mutually agreed upon location which is safe, confidential and where you feel comfortable.

Are there any risks or benefits to taking part?

A part of the research explores sensitive subjects surrounding experiences of trans* people in the North East. These can range from anything from the transition process to personal relationships and mental health. These subjects could be potentially triggering for some individuals.

Whilst there are not any immediate benefits for those participating in the project, it is hoped that this research will be used by organisations working with the trans* community to better understand the lived experiences of trans* people and provide better support within the North East.

Will my taking part be kept confidential?

Your taking part in this study will be kept completely confidential. All collected data will be completely anonymised; removing participants' names and any identifying

features. Raw data will be stored in a locked filing cabinet or in a password protected audio file and Word document to which only the researcher will have access. You will not be identified in any reports or publications or the final thesis.

What if I no longer want to take part?

You have the right to withdraw from the research at any time without prejudice and without giving a reason. All your data will be removed from the study and destroyed accordingly. However, once the data has been anonymised it will be impossible to remove your data from the research as it will not be individually identifiable. You will be notified when the data is to be anonymised to give you a final chance to withdraw if you wish.

Will I be recorded, and how will the recorded media be used?

The interview will be audio recorded and only used for analysis. No other use will be made of them without your written permission and no one apart from the researcher will have access to the original recordings.

Further Information

You will be offered the chance to see a transcript of your interview before it is written into the final thesis. The final thesis and findings will be available for you to access via the University of Sunderland's website after publication. For any further information about this project please contact:

Katie Ward

Doctoral Researcher

katie.ward@research.sunderland.ac.uk

[Dr Angela Smith](#)

[Researcher Supervisor](#)

[0191 5152102](tel:01915152102)

angela.smith@sunderland.ac.uk

[If you have any concerns regarding this research or how it is being conducted, please contact the Research Ethics Committee \(REC\).](#)

Research Ethics Committee (REC)

University of Sunderland

Research Support

2nd Floor Edinburgh Building, Chester Road, Sunderland, SR1 3SD

0191 515 3260

ethics.review@sunderland.ac.uk

You will be given a copy of the information sheet and a signed copy of the consent form to keep.

Participant Consent Form

The Lived Experiences of Trans* in the North East

Katie Ward katie.ward@research.sunderland.ac.uk

	Initial
<ul style="list-style-type: none">I confirm that I have read the information sheet carefully and understand the purposes of the study	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">I have been given the opportunity to ask questions	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">I understand that participation is voluntary and I can withdraw at any time without prejudice and without giving reason	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">I agree to the interview being audio recorded	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">I agree to the use of anonymised quotes in published material	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">I agree to take part in the above named study	

Name of Participant

Date

Signature

Name of Researcher

Date

Signature

Participants Needed

for a research study of

The Lived Experiences of Trans* in the North East

Seeking participants who:

- Are aged 18 or over
- Self-identify as trans*
- Will be/are going through or have gone through any medical treatment as part of your transition



For more information please contact
katie.ward@research.sunderland.ac.uk

What is involved?

- Participating in a 90 minute one-to-one interview
- Discussing your experiences of being trans* in the North East, including;
 - Living in the North East
 - Transitioning
 - Gender roles
 - Services and medical treatments
 - Mass media and social media
- Confidentiality will be maintained

This research is part of a PhD thesis at the University of Sunderland



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Sunderland**