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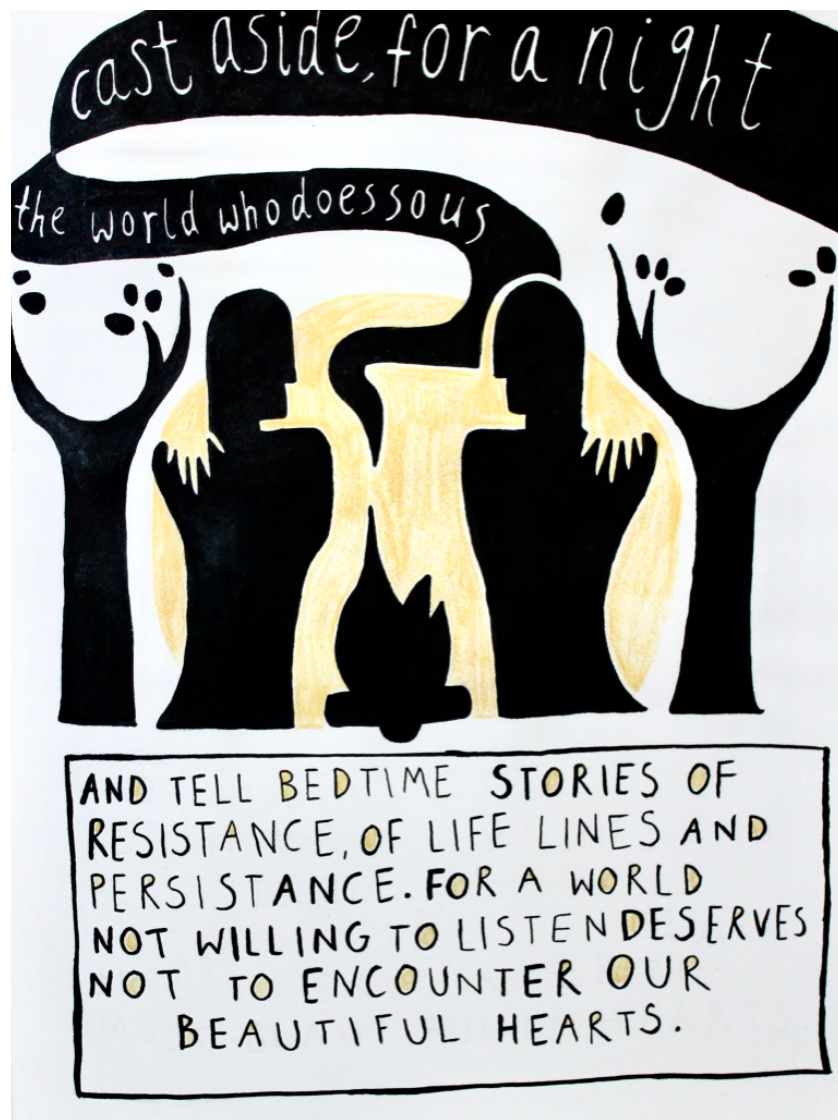
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*Exploring the everyday lives
of young trans people*



James David Todd

Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Geography

Durham University

2020

To young trans people

Cover image by Jón (pseudonym; pronouns he/they/something else, aged 18-21)

Abstract

Exploring the everyday lives of young trans people

James David Todd

This thesis explores how young trans people aged 14-25 in the UK experience everyday spaces and times and examines why it is imperative, and how it might be possible, to make visible their lived and embodied everyday realities. To do so, the thesis builds a novel narrative arc – developed out of young trans people’s stories and creative works shared throughout the collaborative research – that pays attention to three spatially and temporally interconnected modes of being in and experiencing the world articulated by its participants – ‘out-of-placeness’, exhaustion, and resilience, resistance, and restoration (termed in the thesis as RRR). Exploring these modalities through the thesis’ unique ‘more-than-representational’ and intersectional conceptual approaches, emphasises how trans youth – both as individuals and collectives – variously experience, embody, endure, accumulate, rub up against, slide into, resist, enjoy, and *continually emerge* through forces (whether social, material, and/or political), affects, societal conditions, spaces, and times of their everyday lives. Significantly, the thesis expands on temporalities that young trans people encounter, accrue, embody and orient toward, and recognises the *agency* held and enacted by particular spaces, atmospheres, and socio-materialities, producing an account of the specific ways that such phenomena exert force upon trans youth.

Through its innovative participatory research approach and collaboration with Gendered Intelligence (G.I.; a British national charity working to support trans youth) and their young trans service users, the thesis also counters existing problematic research approaches often taken by cisgender social scientists and develops a methodological blueprint for conducting social science research *with* trans folk and trans communities and queer/feminist geographical research exploring marginality and embodied experiences in certain spatiotemporal contexts. The thesis also affords space and voice to the often life-saving potential of trans and queer ‘safe spaces’ and young trans communities such as G.I., and conducts a novel compilation and examination of existing research and evidence around trans lives and societal hostility toward trans people in Britain.

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List of acronyms and abbreviations

| | |
|----------|---|
| AFRET | ‘Academic feminism radically excising trans people’ |
| BAME | Black, Asian and minority ethnic people |
| BIPOC | Black and Indigenous people and people of colour |
| BSA | British Social Attitudes Survey |
| Cis | Cisgender |
| DBS | Disclosure and Barring Service |
| ESRC | Economic and Social Research Council |
| GD | Gender dysphoria (medical/pathological diagnosis) |
| GEO | Government Equalities Office |
| G.I. | Gendered Intelligence |
| GIC(s) | Gender Identity Clinic(s) |
| GIDS | Gender Identity Development Service |
| GRA | Gender Recognition Act 2004 |
| GPC | <i>Gender, Place and Culture</i> |
| GoS | Geographies of sexualities |
| HRT | Hormone Replacement Therapy |
| IPSO | Independent Press Standards Organisation |
| LGB | Lesbian, gay, and bisexual people |
| LGB+ | (Cisgender) Lesbian, gay, bisexual people and people of other sexual minorities |
| LGBT | Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and trans(gender) people |
| LGBTYS | LGBT Youth Scotland |
| LGBT+ | Lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans(gender), and other sexual and gender minorities and nonconforming people |
| LGBTQIA+ | Lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans(gender), queer, intersex, asexual/agender and other sexual and gender minorities and nonconforming people |
| MSM | Men who have sex with other men |
| MTRT | ‘More-than-representational’ theory/theories |
| NLGBTS | National LGBT Survey |
| NRT | Non-representational theory/theories |
| NUS | National Union of Students |
| PAR | Participatory action research |
| POC | Person/people of colour |

| | |
|--------------|--|
| PVG | Protecting Vulnerable Groups certificate (Scottish DBS equivalent) |
| RRR | Resilience, resistance, and restoration |
| ‘Tavi’ | Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust |
| TERF(s) | Trans exclusionary radical feminist(s)/feminism(s) |
| QTIPOC/QTPOC | Queer, trans, (/intersex) person/people of colour |
| UCU | University and College Union |
| WEC | UK Parliament Women and Equalities Committee |

Glossary

When working with alongside trans people and within trans communities, as in any other research, it is important to adopt affirming and respectful language and markers of gender. In this thesis, I always respect participants' gender, pronouns, and all other ways that they referred to themselves in each research setting they attended. Crucially, when referring to participants I do not use the term 'gender identity' in place of 'gender' to recognise their self-determination of gender, and to avoid associating trans people as *identifying* with (rather than fully embodying and living through) their gender. Indeed, the language of 'gender identity' is rarely used to describe cis people's genders, despite trans people's genders being no less legitimate or authentic. This glossary is not exhaustive and each term is likely to be interpreted in varying ways by individual or groups of trans and gender diverse people.

–*Binder/ binding*. A binder is a piece of material that allows for the non-invasive compression or flattening of chest tissue; it is used by some trans people, particularly masculine-presenting trans folk, to enable a more comfortable gender expression or sense of self and to alleviate dysphoric feelings. Binders can be specially made from synthetic fibres; however, given that they are expensive and hard to come by, young trans people may use such materials as bandage wrapping.

–*Cisgender/ cis*. I use 'cis' to refer to cis(gender) people whose gender matches that assigned to them at birth. The term 'cis' avoids oppositional terms such as 'nontransgender' which might position trans people as 'other' (Aultman, 2014).

–*Cisgenderism*. A pervasive and hierarchical 'cultural and systemic ideology that denies, denigrates, or pathologizes self-identified gender identities that do not align with assigned gender at birth as well as resulting behavior, expression, and community' (Lennon and Mistler, 2014: 63).

–*Cisnormativity*. The assumption that all people are cisgender/cis. Cisnormativity can be spatially reinforced, for example through the presence/dominance of affects and architectures that privilege cis folk or are constructed with binary gender expectations. Many cisgender people may embody or reinforce cisnormativity through overt or microaggressive transphobia, hostility, or misunderstandings of trans lives.

–*Cissexism*. A set of beliefs, assumptions, and practices that position cisgender people's embodied identities and expressions as more legitimate and 'natural' than those of trans folk (Serano, 2016).

–*Dysphoria*. A complex term with multiple meanings and discourses, that can be loosely separated into social dysphoria and bodily dysphoria. See section 5.4.3 on bodily and social dysphoria for an expansive discussion.

–*Gender fluid(ity)*. A sense or embodiment of gender that fluctuates and shifts over time; may include the experience of bigender people who experience two gender identities either simultaneously or over time (Vincent, 2019).

–*LGBT+/LGBTQIA+*. Acronym used to encompass lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans people and other gender and sexual minorities and their communities; often used in conjunction and/or associated with the term ‘queer’. It must be recognised, however, that some individuals/communities might prefer to identify with or use other terms, or none at all. Many people whose selves align with LGBTQIA+ communities – including certain young trans people – may also be actively or more subtly excluded from such groupings and spaces, often according to intersectional embodiments of difference.

–*Misgendering and deadnaming*. Acts of referring to a trans person using their deadname (typically their ‘given name’) or incorrect pronouns that deny trans people’s lived realities and selfhood, and/or the ability to be, live through, or embody their authentic selves. Misgendering can be a violent act that indicates a lack of respect for trans people and their autonomy, and can (re)produce stigma. Misgendering can trigger painful embodied memories or result in trans people being forced to self-advocate to potentially hostile others.

–*Non-binary*. Following the expertise of non-binary people, I use non-binary to refer to those who identify with a gender which is outside, (in)between, or beyond binary gender categories, or to include those who hold a fluid gender identity, are agender, or identify with a combination of these identity characteristics, whether permanently or otherwise. Importantly, not all non-binary people identify as/with trans (Vincent, 2019). I use non-binary and genderqueer only where participants used that language to describe themselves, and avoid the use of the term ‘binary trans’ to describe those who are not non-binary to avoid imposing a “binary/non-binary binary” (Pearce *et al.*, 2018, cited by Vincent, 2019).

–*‘Passing’*. A messy and contested term in trans communities. Passing refers to those who are able to live ‘stealth’ (i.e. undetected as trans) in their everyday lives (Silvermint, 2018: 2). As Pyne (2017: 107) notes, ‘[w]hile many trans people certainly do seek to “pass” with less markedly trans visibility, more than one agenda emerges when youth who block puberty are described as “beautiful”, “normal” and “like everyone else”.’ Ahmed (2004: 167, fn. 10) describes passing as a ‘technology entail[ing] the work of concealment’, noting that when queer bodies ‘pass’, they ‘pass into straight space’. This slide into

straight space, Ahmed tells us, ‘might produce an effect of comfort (we can’t see the difference), but not for the subject who passes, who may be feeling a sense of discomfort, or not being at ease, given the constant threat of “being seen” or “caught out”’ (*Ibid.*). The concept and experience of ‘passing’ can be contentious in trans communities particularly as, from certain perspectives, it becomes ‘based upon an underlying acceptance of gender as binary, the assumption that the goal is to emulate one half of the traditional dichotomy between masculine and feminine appearance’ (Ritchie, 2018: 5).

–*Queer*. Following Browne and Nash (2010: 7), the term ‘queer’ is used to refer to people, bodies, experiences and performances associated with an LGBTQIA+ identity (though it is not a synonym of this acronym), recognising that what is signified by queer ‘is and should remain unclear, fluid and multiple,’ to reflect the unique and/or differing values it might hold for certain individuals. Halberstam (2005: 6) understands queer as ‘nonnormative logics and organizations of community, sexual identity, embodiment, and activity in space and time.’ As Marcus (2005: 196) describes, the term queer ‘emphasises affinity and solidarity over identity’, although it has become confusing in its many guises, given it is now sometimes used as a ‘neologism for the transgression of any norm’.

–*Self-determination*. Refers to means of determining (and asserting) ones’ authentic gender. In the context of the Gender Recognition Act 2004 (GRA) and the GRA consultation, self-determination would allow trans folk to obtain a Gender Recognition Certificate through statutory declaration without the need for a gender dysphoria (GD) ‘diagnosis’ or the intervention of a Gender Recognition Panel (Dunne and Hewitt, 2018).

–*Trans*. ‘Trans’ and ‘transgender’ are ‘concepts which cannot easily be conceptualised, categories that defy the categorical’ (Pearce *et al.*, 2020a: 1), although from the initial use of the term ‘transgender’ it was clear that such a category enabled the resistance of medicalisation, pathologisation, and society- and state-perpetuated mechanisms ‘delimit[ing] the socially disruptive potentials of sex/ gender atypicality, incongruence, and nonnormativity’ (Stryker and Currah, 2014: 5). As such, ‘trans’ constitutes a category of social difference that ‘names the body’s orientation in space and time’ (Stryker *et al.*, 2008: 13), whilst encompassing a ‘wide repertoire of identities, experiences, and modes of gender presentation’ (Pearce, 2018b: 4). Following participants’ language use, I use ‘trans’ to refer to trans(gender) men and women, non-binary people, and others whose gender is outside or beyond binary genders. This ‘umbrella’ approach is not entirely unproblematic, however, as ‘there seem to be as many umbrellas as there are terms’ to describe trans embodiments (Radi, 2019: 45).

I always refer to participants according to how they described themselves. In this sense, I use ‘trans’ as a term that encompasses ‘an overarching but open-ended means to describe bodies, identities and experiences that deft normative notions of sexual possibility, encompassing (potentially) all

individuals whose gender identity and/or physical body differs in any way from that they were assigned at birth' (Pearce *et al.*, 2020a: 2; Vincent, 2018a).

I am careful to avoid inadvertently upholding 'trans' as a 'third'/oppositional gender category, which could reinforce a gender trinary (Anderson, 2019). I am mindful that the language of 'trans' can often become stuck in Western discourse, with little attention paid to that the language originates through colonial projects and reinforces the Western gender frameworks which do not fully encompass gender diversities (Moon, 2020; Johnston, 2018). I avoid using 'trans*' as a term which has seen its inclusivity questioned by some trans scholars and writers (see Tompkins, 2014), and agree with Stryker *et al.* (2008: 12) in their assessment of gender(s) as 'potentially porous or permeable spatial territories [...] capable of supporting rich and rapidly proliferating ecologies of embodied difference.' I also avoid separating out trans and non-binary when referring to trans as a collective or umbrella term, or the use of terms such as 'trans and non-binary' or 'binary and non-binary trans' as these potentially risk positioning non-binary folk as 'fundamentally separate' to trans people (Vincent, 2019) and, again, could create a "binary/non-binary binary" (Pearce *et al.*, 2018, cited by Vincent, 2019; Vincent, 2020).

–*Trans adults/older trans people and 'trans years'*. It is important to think through time as not merely chronological: this, as Pearce (2018a; 2018b) and others invested in exploring trans temporalities (see chapter three and throughout the thesis) uncover, is especially the case for many trans folk who might, for example, experience time in 'trans years'. Indeed, consequently, 'chronologically younger trans individuals may be considerably *older* in trans years than chronologically older trans people' (Pearce, 2018a). Pearce (2018a: 62) provides several examples of how this might come about or be felt, including the following:

'two different trans people who are both aged 80 in chronological years might have aged quite differently in trans years: perhaps one of them came out many decades ago, while the other has only been out for a couple of years. These individuals are likely to have had vastly different trans temporal experiences, which belie their apparently similar chronological age.'

In the work of Pearce (2018a; 2018b) and others we see that trans temporalities and the experience of time and the self in 'trans years' demonstrates how trans folk might experience (aspects of) time such as ageing differentially and with greater variance than cis people.

–*Transing*. This refers to the use of 'transgender' or 'trans' as a verb and an 'illuminating analytical lens' (Kunzel, 2014: 288), and to 'transing' as a practice that takes place through, upon, within spaces in order to (re)make them in an alternative trans/queer direction (Crawford, 2012; Stryker *et al.*, 2008).

–*Transfeminine/transfem, transmasculine/transmasc*. Refers to the bodily/social/performative affiliation of a person or group(s) of people to masculinity or femininity. Asserting ones' (trans)femininity or

(trans)masculinity in a societal context expectant of rigid, binary gender identities can be seen as ‘an act of insurgency’ (Chávez, 2016: 63). As Krell (2017: 234) notes, the ‘affective and material histories that produced white, middle-class men as deserving of thoughtful care [are] erased in the service of [...] binary trans/gender construction. This binary not only obscures the fact that people can be viewed as trans feminine regardless of their identifications; it also renders abjection of trans masculine people as impossible.’

–*Transfeminist/transfeminism(s)*. Movements ‘by and for trans women who view their liberation to be intrinsically linked to the liberation of all women and beyond [...] [including those] also open to other queers, intersex people, trans men, [cis] women, [cis] men and others who are sympathetic toward needs of trans women and consider their alliance with trans women be essential for their own liberation’ (Koyama, 2001: 1-2). Stryker and Bettcher (2016: 11) define transfeminism as part of ‘a “third wave” feminist sensibility that focuses on the personal empowerment of women and girls, embraced in an expansive way that includes trans women and girls.’

–*Transnormativity*. I follow Johnson’s (2016: 466) definition of transnormativity as ‘a hegemonic ideology that structures transgender experience, identification, and narratives into a hierarchy of legitimacy that is dependent upon a binary medical model and its accompanying standards, regardless of individual transgender people’s interest in or intention to undertake medical pathways to transition.’

–*Transness*. Following participants’ language use, I use ‘transness’ in place of ‘trans status’ or similar phrasing to emphasise participants’ embrace of, and joy implicit in, their trans and queer/gender identities. To embrace and emphasise ones’ transness is a mode of affirming, rather than rejecting or supressing, trans(gender) embodiments.

–*Violence/‘everyday violence’*. My use of violence or ‘everyday violence’ is underpinned by Ahmed’s (2016a: 26) reading of both overt transphobia and discourse, negation, and structural oppression levelled against trans people: violence that might be understood as ‘trivial’, the systematic, often subtle mechanisms and process of attrition which are reproduced ‘by not being understood as violence’. These violences often carry with them the implication that ‘violence against trans people is “relatively” minor, a footnote in a much more horrifying history of human hatred’ (*Ibid.*). Additionally, as Ahmed exposes, trans people are often described and positioned as *causing violence*; this itself constitutes an act of violence and an ‘incitement’ to further violence and obscures the origins of violence (*Ibid.*).

i

Preface

Introducing the research: Karl's story

i.i Introducing Karl's story and the everyday lives of young trans people

What does the everyday look and feel like for trans youth? How do young trans people's everyday experiences vary according to space and time?² And how can these everyday spatial and temporal realities be made visible? Throughout this thesis, I demonstrate that these questions, which informed this research throughout its planning, collaborating, researching, analysing, and writing stages, are politically imperative and require urgent, expansive responses. To begin responding to them, signal the significance of focussing on young trans people's lives, and signpost readers to the thesis' empirical themes and conceptual threads, in this preface I focus on an individual young trans person's narrative. Many accounts shared by trans youth throughout this research would be equally powerful in demonstrating the importance of research focussing on the *everydayness* of life lived by young trans people in the UK.¹ Nevertheless, I begin here with Karl (pronouns he/him, age 22-25²). I follow an extended glimpse into Karl's life story with reflections that shed light on material addressed in Part I of this thesis, including my theoretical and methodological approaches to researching young trans lives, my expansion of existing work exploring trans lives in the UK and beyond (see particularly chapter one), and my contribution to geographical and social science literatures (chapter two). Throughout the preface, I allude to the significance of my work in its revealing of nuances and spatial minutiae of young trans people's lives through its unique 'more-than-representational' theoretical framework (addressed particularly in chapter three) and its development and implementation of a collaborative, voice-raising, and storytelling-focussed methodology (chapter four). By following Karl's life story (section i.ii) and my analysis of his narrative (section i.iii), I also set out the narrative and conceptual arc of the thesis' substantive chapters (Part II of the thesis) – one that portrays young trans people's everyday spatial and temporal encounters by attending to their interconnected experiences of being positioned as and feeling 'out-of-place' (addressed particularly in chapter five), subsequently embodying exhaustion (chapter six), and creating and embodying mechanisms and spaces of resilience, resistance, and restoration in response to these interwoven conditions (chapter seven).

Before exploring Karl's story, I consider the global context which has recently seen rapid change in trans visibility and rights, particularly in the North Atlantic (section i.i.i). Broadly speaking, the dichotomous presence of hostilities toward, and advocacies and affirmations on behalf of and between, trans people has led to societal polarisation whereby trans-positive advancements have occurred against a backdrop of growing discursive and political misrepresentation, violence, opposition, and oppression. It is important to understand the global context as this thesis considers political and

¹ Participants in this research were aged between 14 and 25 (see chapter four for rationale and ethics).

² To maintain anonymity, I refer to participants using an age range (14-17, 18-21, or 22-25) and the pronouns they used in each research encounter concerned.

social forces that influence young trans people's lives, bodies, and subject positions at every spatial and temporal scale. After introducing this global context, in section i.i.ii I briefly introduce the organisation I collaborated with throughout this research – Gendered Intelligence (G.I.), outlining how this partnership enabled me to develop my methodological approach for working *with* young trans people.

i.i.i Trans and non-binary rights globally: A new regression from a recent 'trans tipping point'?

Globally, as Winter *et al.* (2016: 395) declare, 'transgender people's daily experience across much of the world is one in which rights are denied'. Consequently, trans people are 'exposed worldwide to dynamics of stigmatization, discrimination, social exclusion, and transphobic violence' (Suess *et al.*, 2014: 73). However, even in relatively recent years (particularly in the early 2010s) this popular narrative of denial and exclusion did not always dominate. Indeed, in 2014 *Time* magazine ran the headline 'The trans tipping point: America's next civil rights frontier' (Steinmetz, 2014), while *Vogue* declared 2015 'the year of trans visibility' (Taylor, 2015). As trans scholar and historian Christine Burns (2018: 3) states, at this time it seemed that '[e]verywhere you looked there were beautiful, successful and articulate trans people in the public eye, putting forward the case for transgender equality'.³ For example, Wikileaks whistle-blower Chelsea Manning's 'coming out' as trans brought attention to diverse pronouns, gender self-determination, and the 'relationship of transgender identity to issues of state, to moral and political agency, to visions of social justice, and to strategies of social transformation' (Stryker and Currah, 2014: 2). As such, both trans people's visibility and public understandings around their life experiences were said to be increasing in the US and Britain in particular (Barker, 2017; Burns, 2018). According to geographers Vine and Cupples (2014: 117), trans people in the USA were regaining a 'sociopolitical and organizational foothold' previously lost in favour of advocacy for cis lesbian and gay people after the Stonewall riots.⁴ In 2018, the World Health Organisation, through its International Classification of Diseases, finally declassified being trans as a 'mental disorder' (Gleeson and Hoad, 2019). Meanwhile, with the advent of social media, trans and non-binary folk could defend and challenge their civil rights and contest dominant, binary understandings of gender, disseminating their cause to wider audiences globally. In sum, the early to mid-2010s saw a dominant discourse telling us that trans people's civil rights struggle – 'a long night, lasting generations' (Burns, 2018: 7) – was finally impacting North Atlantic societies.

Fisher *et al.* (2017: 3) outline connotations emergent from designating a global 'trans tipping

³ Although, as Pearce *et al.* (2020b, citing Raha, 2017) note, this narrative has served to obscure that trans people have been the focus of intense media attention for decades prior to this supposed 'tipping point'.

⁴ The Stonewall riots were a series of violent demonstrations beginning on 28 June 1969 at the Stonewall Inn in New York City in retaliation to police raids on queer venues. Sparking the gay liberation movement in the US, the riots are often cited as one of the important (set of) events in queer liberation history.

point’:

[‘the “trans tipping point”] announces that, for the mainstream, trans’s time has come and the “T” in LGBT is newly intelligible to the powers that confer rights, recognition and status. Transgender is now a marker of belonging within the nation-state, no longer an excluded identity category, and those who are transgender are now deserving of first-class citizenship and protections.’

The ‘trans tipping point’ has, for many, become a fallacy. Only *some* trans people were deemed worthy of inclusion in its narrative, with those excluded according to race, age, class, gender, and citizenship status reaping few benefits from supposed attitudinal shifts. Indeed, *young* trans people – those engaged in this research – were almost entirely absent from ‘tipping point’ discourse, their voices and stories obscured, or even suppressed, by mainstream media/discourse. As Pearce *et al.* (2020: 2, my emphasis) describe, in recent years trans people ‘have been both *hyper-visible* and *hyper-vulnerable* in many parts of the world’ (see chapters five and six discussing the embodied impact of this visibility/vulnerability on trans youth). Indeed, as stories told by trans people (predominantly adult trans men and women) have reached a greater cultural prominence, so have trans-hostile movements, such that those hostile to trans people have been able to discern more about trans folk and strategize against them (Jacques, 2018; Rose, 2016). Even during the supposed ‘tipping point’ era, ‘scarcely a day [went] by [...] without [trans people] encountering a report of deadly violence against a trans person somewhere in the world’ (Stryker and Currah, 2017: 3). Arguably, a global *regression* in trans people’s rights, alongside increasing hostile discourse and societal transphobia is underway. The election of right-wing populist governments globally has both spurned this regression and sparked global trans rights movements and feminist solidarities (Stryker, 2017). In this thesis, I demonstrate that it is *young* trans people who have borne a particular brunt of increasing hostility, without simultaneously achieving a greater public understanding of their lived realities. Indeed, in certain national contexts, trans youth have been directed with transphobic violence or used as vehicles to spread misinformation or hostile narratives around trans folk and gender self-determination (see glossary).

In this thesis, I am not principally concerned with contributing to the vast literature examining trans rights in global contexts. However, it is important to understand that young trans people’s experiences are continually formed by political and social forces and shifts at *all spatial and temporal scales*. I return to the global only when raised by young trans participants, who more often were concerned with the immediacy of their own situation and that of their communities, friends, and spaces shaping their everyday lives. However, in an expression that echoes throughout this thesis, I turn to Susan Stryker’s (2017: 231) reminder that ‘if there is a lesson to be learned from transgender history at [this] dispiriting moment, it is that trans people have a long record of survival in a world that is often hostile to us.’ Part II of this thesis illustrates this survival and demonstrates that young trans people often experience joy and euphoria connected to their gender and everyday lives.

i.i.ii Introducing Gendered Intelligence and a participatory research approach

My ability to share in Karl's life story and the stories of other young trans participants was facilitated by my collaboration with Gendered Intelligence (G.I.), a trans-led national UK charity which supports young trans people and advocates for greater public awareness of gender diversity through creative means, academic publications, consultancy, and political engagement from local to international scales.

As co-founder Catherine McNamara (2018: n.p.) explains,

'[G.I. aims] to increase the quality of trans young people's lives and to raise awareness of their needs across the UK and beyond. [...] [W]e seek to contribute to the creation of community cohesion and strength across the whole of the trans community throughout the UK and to generate discussion and debate around gender, inequality rooted in gender, misogyny, misandry and sexism.'

G.I. support their service users (primarily aged between 8 and 25) through youth group sessions, peer mentoring, creative workshops, arts and theatre, residencies, and other projects; as of 2018 they were engaging 500 young people annually in London, Bristol, and Leeds (Quilliam, 2016; McNamara, 2018; Stewart, 2018). In a funding bid reflecting the organisation's necessity, G.I. described its youth work priorities as aiming to (1) reduce isolation, (2) 'increase a sense of pride in one's gender identity', and (3) 'increase [young trans people's] ability to manage difficult situations' (McNamara, 2018: n.p.). As its CEO Jay Stewart and Head of Public Engagement Cara English state, G.I. 'meet trans children where they are and give them space to be themselves and with others who may be like them, so they know they're not alone in whatever it is they're going through' (English and Stewart, 2020: 182). Reflecting a dearth of trans-specific youth work provision in Britain and the desire some trans youth feel to access trans spaces (see chapter seven), many service users travel long distances to attend G.I. spaces (McNamara, 2018).

G.I. engages in trans communities through outreach events, fundraising, signposting, and health and policy interventions and campaigning, and through its collaboration with external researchers and resources; following the advent of austerity, some of these activities have been repurposed to generate surplus income for the organisation (*Ibid.*). As Stewart (2018: 291) describes, contextualising their work and societal pressures they work within, resist, and seek to alleviate,

'[G.I.] know that [...] to fulfil our mission [to support and platform young trans and gender-questioning people's emergent voices] we need to work at all levels: from supporting young trans people to increase their confidence and reduc[e] their sense of isolation to influencing government policy [...] Whilst we see an increasing number of balanced, informative articles about trans people reaching wide readerships, there are still a substantial number of polemic and negative pieces appearing [...] for this reason, going forward we are committed to [...] ensur[ing] that a trans person can feel safe, thrive and have access to a high quality of life alongside everyone else.'

To research this thesis, as chapter four discusses, I engaged in participatory action research (PAR) with youth accessing G.I. spaces in London, and within an LGBTQIA+ charity in Scotland.⁵ Through group-based, collaborative and ‘creative workshops’ and ‘one-to-one’ interview-like sessions, my research was informed by the activities and input of G.I. and the Scottish charity. As a result, the research was largely iterative and responsive to the concerns and voices of trans gatekeepers and participants. I discuss the implications of this collaborative and participatory approach throughout the thesis.

Throughout the thesis, I grapple with my discomfort linked to aiming for breadth and depth in representation, knowing that to claim (or even *aim*) to fully represent young trans people’s lives would be a violent act centralising my interpretations. For now, I sit with it, and hope readers will too, choosing instead to reflect upon *fragments* of Karl’s narrative. Such fragments of other young trans people’s life stories are told throughout this thesis; their narratives halt the reader, focussing their attention upon participants’ own words and experiences. This approach offers readers opportunities to deeply engage with specific stories, events, and encounters through participants’ voices.

i.ii Karl’s story

I first met Karl at a creative workshop I created to explore participants’ experiences of transport and ‘getting around’; we enthusiastically swapped our ‘coming out’ stories, and I felt our shared queerness⁶ as he told me of his desire for greater cohesion in the LGBT+ community. I was delighted a few months later when we met one-to-one to explore his everyday life experiences. Like most research encounters, it was emotional and intimate; Karl seemed to intensely value the space and time to share his many stories. As with other participants not often afforded platforms and spaces to voice everyday experiences, his narrative often emerged disjointedly and non-linearly as he wove connections between each experience. Ultimately, Karl shared his story for three hours; we halted our conversation only because G.I.’s office where we met was closing. In this section, I draw out fragments of Karl’s story and present them chronologically, prioritising his voice with limited analytical interference. I begin with Karl’s reflections on his childhood and teenage years, where a common thread in Karl’s stories and many other participants – a desire to do what might be ‘easier’ for those around him – first emerges.

i.ii.i *Dysphoria and a sense of shame*

While growing up, Karl did not have access to support around his gender, was not ‘out’ to anyone, and

⁵ To ensure anonymity, given the smaller number of participants engaged through this organisation, its name and location is not used throughout the thesis.

⁶ I am a white, cisgender, and queer gay man using he/him pronouns.

internally grappled with his identity. He told me that as a teenager ‘there’s no one I know that [...] tried so hard to be female. It was something that I was *desperate* to do, and couldn’t do.’⁷ Despite outwardly supporting his cis lesbian and gay friends, Karl would end up ‘being so *harsh* and feeling so bad about [his] own self’. At thirteen, he was diagnosed with depression when he began to experience puberty. Describing the influence of his childhood and teenage years – and societal and familial pressures – upon his recent self, Karl told me:

‘So from [when] I could dress myself, until I was at least eleven, I looked like a little boy. And I was seen by others that didn’t know me as a little boy. And that’s how I lived. I wore the boy’s school uniform, begged my mum [...] to cut my hair, and she did. And then lots of different things happened. And all the while that was happening there was a lot of shame being piled on about it. And then my teenage-hood was mostly looking like a homeless person, and then I tried to go hyper-feminine, I was like, I have to do this [be a cis woman]... [...] I would rather myself be hurt than someone else and that was part of the reason why I was so desperate to try and be a woman. To try and be what would please people around me and society. What was easier for other people.’

As a teenager, Karl began to experience social and bodily dysphoria (see glossary and chapter five), developing bodily dissociation and adopting a ‘mask of pretending’ as ‘coping mechanism[s] for deal[ing] with dysphoria’, life events he ‘wasn’t able to keep up with’, and his other physical health conditions. Karl described this ‘mask’, and the dissociation he experienced, as coping devices which ‘didn’t just influence [his] gender, [but] influenced every aspect of [his] life’:

‘It [dysphoria] originated in my gender but it influenced everything. It influenced me saying I was OK when I wasn’t OK. Erm, [saying] “I don’t need this, I don’t need that, I don’t need this, I can do it all myself” [...] everything was a big pretence of “I can do this alone” [...] So I dealt with my dysphoria for years through dissociation. Like *extreme* dissociation. So I... when I thought about myself, I thought about myself like a floating head. Like literally, didn’t have a body, couldn’t wash, couldn’t do all sorts..., could barely [function], would have to go somewhere so far away to do these *basic things* like get dressed and wash and this sort of thing. Erm, completely steered away from sex, couldn’t deal with it. All my friends were talking about it [...] [but] if I thought about it too long, it was like a smack in the face [...] I couldn’t take care of myself physically because I couldn’t even be comfortable with the reality of my physical body because of my gender, [my] dysphoria.’

⁷ Throughout, italicised phrasing reflects participants’ own intonation except where otherwise indicated.

i.ii.ii A transformational moment

In Karl's teenage years, his bodily and social dysphoria began to surface visibly upon his body's exterior – particularly his hair – which became a focal point for dysphoric emotions, coping strategies, and uncomfortable modes of living:

‘...because I felt so bad about the way I *looked*, my hair started to matte. And I loved showers, I'd be having two a day to help with my muscles [because of my physical health conditions]. So if you wet matted hair it gets even more matted. So I used to just *live* under a hat. I had this long, long, hair that was really matted.’

Karl described occasionally taming his matted hair to please his sibling who wanted to take him on nights out. This was an emotionally painful undertaking which involved forcing himself to appear more feminine:

‘The only times it was not matted was [...] maybe four times a year [when] I would spend two or three days painfully brushing it out to then [...] get my hair done, my make up done, going from looking *homeless* to looking like that and [...] there'd be big breakdowns, there'd be a good three hours of like *crying* just to go on [a] night out, and that would put a strain on my relationship with my [sibling] because I'd always be going out with her, [but now] I'd never go out.’

Soon after this time, Karl described experiencing ‘the worst summer of [his life]’ working abroad, one which he said ‘*broke me* psychologically’. Eventually, however, this time led to a ‘*wonderful*’ threshold toward self-acceptance and ‘coming out’, one wherein Karl's subconscious thoughts around his gender came ‘exploding out’:

‘...I was like “I need to cut the hair” because [...] it's making me feel really bad to have it all matted, and be with the hats on and to be all hiding. And I was like “*just buzz it off*”. So I buzzed it off erm, and it was like looking at pictures of me when I was like 10, that's how I felt. It was like looking in the mirror and seeing how I was at like 10. And I felt so, I felt *pure relief*. I felt, I actually felt a bit like, a bit ecstatic about it. Erm after the relief settled in, then this really good feeling [came]...’

Karl's parents reacted with shock to his shaved hair, with his father describing this visible change as ‘disgusting’, leading Karl to continually self-question and ask ‘why would I do this to myself?’ However, Karl's younger brother showed his sibling solidarity, openly questioning their parents' reaction. This solidarity, alongside Karl's newly-formed self-ecstasy and body *euphoria* emergent out of his reclamation of bodily autonomy, allowed him to form an internal dialogue of resilience and resistance (see chapter seven), a mantra for survival:

‘at the same time I was like “well this is who I am, I know who I am, it's actually *so much more* than just a haircut” [...] And those little words, though they're not great, and they do hurt, I was like, I already knew, I knew where I was going and I knew that, erm... those words weren't gonna break me, they just weren't. I knew they weren't intended to break me, but they weren't going to anyway.’

i.ii.iii: Developing intimate safety, accessing trans spaces, and feeling ‘seen’

After cutting his hair, Karl began to watch YouTube videos uploaded by other young trans people describing their ‘coming out’ stories, being visibly trans, and celebrating their transness (see glossary). Karl told me that in these videos ‘you see people, who you don’t know, [and] you’ve never met, [they have] this really erm *innate tie* to your own identity.’ For Karl, the mere knowledge of the ‘*existence*’ of someone else like yourself became transformational, allowing him to subconsciously process his struggles through ‘little tiny things telling [him] “it’s OK”.’ The privacy and intimacy of his bedroom allowed Karl to think through his gender in a secluded time and space. The affirmations of those on screen augmented in Karl’s subconscious over time, becoming subsumed into his body and identity and ultimately gradually increasing his comfort with being trans.

At a similar time, looking to meet with other trans people to be openly trans around, Karl began ‘searching online for things like trans groups in London’. G.I. frequently appeared in his searches. Soon, Karl formed a routine of ‘looking at their website every so often’ and delaying face-to-face contact with the group, telling me ‘I’d be looking kind of like erm “oh I’m going to a meeting”, or “I’ll go in two weeks”, and two weeks would pass, and I’d be like “I’ll go to the next one”’. The opportunity to attend a trans-exclusive camping trip with G.I. became a crucial moment. Karl told me:

‘I’d been online and I’d been looking. And I knew that this camp was coming up, it was like gonna open up at 8pm, the application form. So after seven or eight months of not going to a meeting, I was there at 8pm and I was like “I’m just gonna put my details in”, and I put them in, it filled up in ten minutes but at this point I was just there, waiting.’

Karl secured a place on the camp and began nervously anticipating a training day held at G.I.. Walking into the space marked, in Karl’s words, ‘the first time I’d sort of met, *ever*, another trans person, in my life.’ Meeting with fellow trans people became instrumental in Karl’s ‘coming out’ and growing comfort with being trans. From the first time Karl attended G.I., the organisation provided both physical space to meet other trans people and materials and mechanisms to alleviate his bodily dysphoria:

‘G.I. gave me my first binder *ever*. I turned up with silly stuff [I’d been using to bind my chest] so like I’d been trying to bind myself, cos at that time I couldn’t afford one, and they gave me one. I’ve kept it, I’ve still got it. [It’s now] my second one but I wore it non-stop for a year and a half. So they were quite instrumental in helping me to come out.’

Being able to access G.I. spaces allowed Karl to construct his ‘coming out’ and progressively understand his place in the world, particularly as a result of the consistent trans-positivity and malleability of their spaces and the care of the trans organisers and youth workers toward all of the trans folk within (see chapter seven), in opposition to the majority of spaces in which Karl spent everyday life:

‘[at the initial meeting] the staff here in some ways they give a lot of *freedom* [...] that was like the first time anyone had [said] “you can come as you are, mate. You don’t have to change anything about yourself in order to come onto camp.” And that was really important for me. [...] what they did was, they didn’t care for me in a different way that they cared for other people, they showed that care to *everyone*. [...] And because it was towards everyone, it was why I [could] finally accept it.’

Karl contrasted this experience to his daily life conditions, demonstrating the respectful, anxiety-free atmosphere of G.I., the opportunities for living through space differently offered up through their validation, and their sharing in the emotional labour involved in ‘taking the mask off’:

‘Their [G.I.’s] *big thing* was “this is an environment where often in our day-to-day lives we don’t get respected, we don’t receive the right care that we should receive”. [...] And this is a space where *you do not have to worry* or, like, we have our issues of our gender or our dysphoria [...] I [had] tried so hard with the *masks*, like you have them up, and you have them up for years. And someone was now telling me that there was a chance to take this mask off and naturally, or lower it even a little bit, or even acknowledge that it was a *mask*. [...] And that was related to being trans because [the] second thing for me was I hadn’t been a young person [in terms of role played in life] erm for about ten years, I hadn’t been cared for in any type of way for about ten years.’

Karl’s emphasis in our conversation was on the small affects, materials, and people present in the space – including other trans people, their solidarities and their compassion – and the influence which these hold in producing G.I. spaces as sites of safety, freedom, and affirmation/visibility (as chapter seven discusses). Crucially, the unfolding of these in confluence with one another allowed Karl to feel *seen* as his authentic self, where importantly (and perhaps paradoxically), his gender and transness did not colour his entire experience. Similarly, as understandings of trans identities in the space were overtly positive and visible, Karl did not have to perform through space along gender norms and expectations or as *trans and trans alone*, and ultimately he understood his visibility in the space as a positive, life-altering experience:

‘So I felt a mixture of *safe*, a mixture of free, but *ultimately* I felt *seen*. [...] I felt *seen* and I felt like I didn’t have to prove anything. To me that meant *everything* at that moment. And while I said I felt seen, there’s a duality to that. Because not only did I feel [...] *seen for who I was* but at the same time my gender wasn’t picked out as *the ultimate part of myself*. [...] I’m talking about that idea of not having to *prove* yourself. [At G.I.] it was like being seen but also not being kind of ostracised or picked up about it [...] often when we get visibility in the world, the visibility is negative. So it wasn’t just I felt seen, I felt seen and it *wasn’t a shameful thing*. [...] It was the first time *ever* I’d felt positive feelings towards my gender identity, you know.’

G.I.'s mechanisms of support were most apparent, for Karl, at the camp space which brought him more regular access to the organisation and, in turn, to a more positive sense of self, demonstrated through his 'positive feelings towards [his] gender identity' (see chapter seven for other participants' narratives of the camp/G.I. spaces). Powerfully, Karl described bodily freedoms he experienced whilst taking part in a particular activity at camp:

'I never take my binder off in front of anyone, mate. Mid-session, I went behind, I just slipped out behind the tent and took it off and put my hoody back on. That was a big moment for me, cos I made that decision, *camp had made me comfortable enough* [to do that] [...] I was almost shocked at myself for doing it, I can't even take it off in front of family members. And I didn't just take it off. I took it off in a *public space* behind a tent, mate.'

For Karl, the residential camp space, offering longer-term withdrawal from everyday life structured by cisnormativity and trans-exclusionary practices, was one wherein visibility and transness were not constructed as negative qualities suppressed and controlled by external others. Karl's removal of his binder around others demonstrates where and how spaces constructed along more *trans* lines (rather than cis or binary-gendered) allow trans youth to experience more authentic and safe encounters and movements through space.

i.ii.iv: 'On guard constantly'

Ultimately, however, such freedoms and comfort offered by G.I. remain for Karl attached to certain queer and trans spaces (those which might be thought of, or constructed as, 'safe'; see chapter seven), which only punctuate the anxious normalities of everyday life that might produce him as 'out-of-place' (see chapter five). Despite his ability to live 'kind of stealth in my day to day', and thus gain 'small amounts of privilege and power' when compared to other trans youth who cannot embody the passing privilege he possesses,⁸ Karl captured anxieties which remain embedded, for both himself and trans youth more broadly, in everyday spaces:

'...being on guard *constantly*, every day, with all these *little interactions*, that's what our normal *is*. That's not just with cis people, that's with our loved ones, that's with everyone who happen[s] to not be trans. We have these relations with people who we love more than *anything* who daily disrespect us and who we know love us but they daily do things that erm, you know [mean] we constantly have to feel like we have to protect ourselves. There's no shame in that, that's our normal.'

Indeed, the hostility and negative reactions of others are continuously implicated in the constancy of

⁸ This supposed 'passing privilege' refers to the idea that a 'member of an oppressed, stigmatized, or otherwise discriminated-against group is instead perceived to be a member of an advantaged group, and is treated accordingly', in this case a trans man being perceived as a cis man, and thus able to live, as Karl terms it, 'stealth' (i.e. undetected as trans) in everyday life (Silvermint, 2018: 2). See also glossary.

this ‘on guard’, anxious normality, which can paradoxically accrue over time as one comes out, or takes steps to become more visible as their authentic self despite, as in Karl’s story, embodying a deep happiness associated with ‘coming out’ or embracing transness (see chapters five and six). As Karl explained:

‘I’ve never been happier as I am out. I think a lot of people think that for trans people “oh it’s coming out, it’s all this stuff, that’s what makes the suicide rate so high”. I’d completely disagree. I’d say coming out and being allowed to be who we are raises our quality of life [immensely]. I think our biggest fight is our own dysphoria, but that’s something separate. In fact I think our dysphoria can increase as we come out. But it’s psychological acceptance of ourselves; that raises our quality of life. But the biggest thing that lowers our quality of life is society’s reaction to us, especially hostile reactions.’

i.iii Reflections on Karl’s story: Introducing the thesis’ narrative arc – ‘out-of-placeness’, exhaustion, and resilience, resistance, and restoration

Karl’s story consists of events and encounters only he has experienced, life that only he has lived – his matted hair, arrival at G.I., his dissociative, disembodied dysphoria, desire for queer community and recognition, and sheer happiness in himself, his transness, and with his ‘coming out’. Yet his words also encapsulate larger narratives which emerge throughout other participants’ stories in this thesis – doing ‘what would be easier for other people’, feeling *seen*, safe, loved, and affirmed in trans spaces, all whilst experiencing shame being ‘piled on’ by others in other everyday spaces, and holding on and attaching meaning to materials and things which mattered most in a journey to self-acceptance or ‘coming out’. Karl’s story allows me to explore several themes I use in this thesis to shed light on the everyday lives of trans youth, in a narrative arc employed in the empirical chapters that examines how young trans people (a) become positioned as and subsequently feel ‘*out-of-place*’ in everyday spaces (chapter five), (b) come to feel the affects of this ‘out-of-placeness’ as an embodied *exhaustion* carried through everyday spaces and times (chapter six), and (c) construct and embody mechanisms, and develop and access spaces, of *resilience, resistance, and restoration* (chapter seven). Figure i.i illustrates this narrative arc.

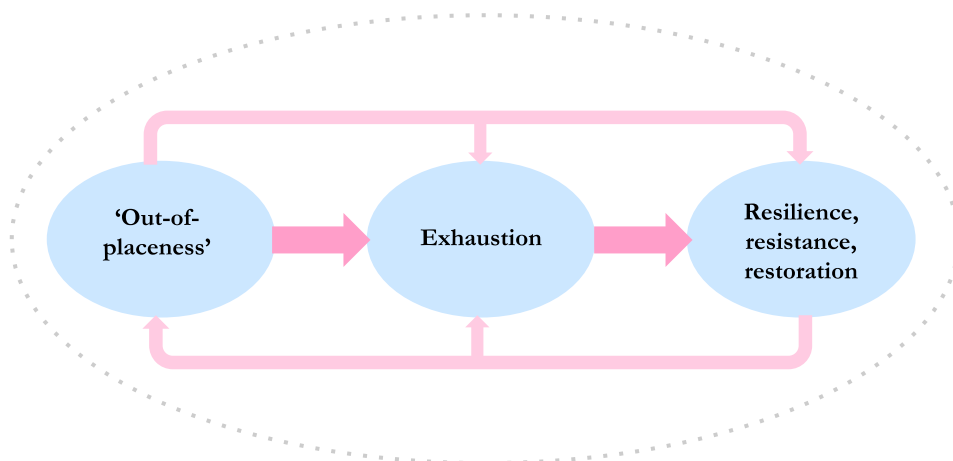


Figure i.i. Schematic illustrating the narrative arc of Part II of the thesis. The dotted line represents that these modes of being in the world are produced with temporal non-linearity and can be both spatially located and ephemeral.

I argue that focussing on the material and social minutiae (often connected in this thesis as ‘socio-material’) of particular spaces and upon specific moments in the events which Karl discusses – a framework loosely encapsulating my *‘more-than-representational’ approach to young trans lives* (see chapter three) – enables the *spatial and temporal geographies* of Karl’s story to be drawn out in-depth. The presence of particular affects and (both human and more-than-human) bodies in Karl’s narrative are important loci around which Karl negotiates his experience of the world: at various points, there are bodies and affects which initiate or mark a threat to Karl’s embodied safety and wellbeing in certain sites, leading him to perform ‘stealth’ in certain public spaces. At other points, the presence of queer and trans bodies (on the screen, at the camp, in G.I. spaces) together with the *atmosphere* co-created and maintained by Karl, his binder, the visibility he experiences, words of affirmation he hears, and other affective relations between himself and the trans-positive environment around him, come to alleviate his dysphoria and allow him to occupy space authentically and with reduced anxiety. We also see the emotional contrast between trans-positive, deliberately-maintained trans ‘safe spaces’, and those wherein the majority of Karl’s everyday life takes place. This spatial disparity can be illuminated from several perspectives, including, as I discuss in chapter five, by focussing on the gaze of others upon Karl that produce him as ‘out-of-place’ and the anticipatory anxiousness which Karl subsequently attaches to certain sites.

Materialities – particularly objects and ‘things’ – are central to Karl’s story and to his negotiations with space and place, and indeed, in this thesis I ask: what potential for reflecting upon the

lives of young trans people is generated through focus on such materials as Karl's hair, his binder, the escalator, the tools he uses to access trans-friendly virtual platforms, and his clothing? Conceptually focussing on *socio-material* minutiae also allows us to see how Karl carves out resilience, resistance, and restoration in certain spaces and at particular times, through mechanisms and spaces discussed in chapter seven. Karl's resilience is present throughout his narration, but he begins developing a space wherein this can flourish in the intimacy of his bedroom, using the anonymity of his screen, and the stories of the trans people it projects, to self-negotiate his identity and drive his access to trans spaces for the first time. As a result, Karl's ongoing maintenance of his resilience, bodily autonomy, and embodied safety – and his adoption of techniques for resistance and restoration – becomes centred in explicitly trans spaces. As I discuss in chapter seven, such 'safe' sites craft an atmosphere generative of positive visibility and affirmation which can be repeatedly accessed by Karl at regular intervals (and affectively drawn on beyond his immersion in the site by recalling them as 'affective archives', as is discussed in chapters three, six, and seven). Ultimately, accessing such sites allows Karl to construct and feel 'positive feelings' toward his gender.

Additionally, Karl's story emphasises the importance of focussing on his experience of *temporalities* and his societal and individual life context. In the context of Karl's narrative, this might involve exploring the accrual of affects and encounters associated with emotions and experiences such as fear and exclusion, the influence of his life history over the development of a trans-positive, affirming, and authentic subject position and sense of self, his relative openness and suppressions, and the relations he constructs with others. Aspects of Karl's story are always-already embroiled in processes of becoming (see chapter three), with both the crafting of futurity, and casting back to past lived experience, present in Karl's ability to cope in and negotiate everyday spaces. At various points, reflecting durative or gradually-accruing temporalities of exhaustion experienced by trans youth, we see familial pressures leading to conforming, moments of transformation, physical health conditions, the embeddedness of depression, dysphoria, and dissociation with differing intensity in Karl's more recent life history, and his ongoing struggle to live through and against societal expectations. And we see both threshold, catalytic spaces and moments in Karl's recent life – signing up for camp, the training day, immersion in safe spaces – and other encounters which take place with a sense of *constancy* – his pre-occupation with others' expectations, anticipation of negative relations and so on – continually impact his experience of everyday spaces. Throughout this thesis, I bring questions of temporality into conversation with young trans people's stories. A key contribution I make is to argue that how young trans people experience everyday life is both spatially and temporally contingent and significant.

Throughout Karl's story, particular bodily geographies also emerge. Indeed, considering Karl's body *as a space in itself* allows us to understand how the emotional, bodily, and physical sensations he

experiences are co-constituted by the life events which he describes, and how his emotional experiences are carried by his body through space and time. Throughout, Karl feels through space and performs with his body differentially in relation to specific events and encounters and, accounting for temporalities, relative to his past, present, and imagined future self (although as I discuss in chapters three and six, this occurs non-linearly and outside of cisnormative conceptions of time; see also glossary). Meanwhile, regarding the extreme dissociation he describes, his body is defined in terms of its *lack* of presence, and the *absence* of felt dimensions. The surfacing of dysphoric and dissociative embodied emotions limits Karl's bodily functions (e.g. dressing, washing, and sex) and leads him to perceive its size and shape at times as 'a floating head' (see other participants' dysphoric accounts; chapter five). At other times, by feeling and being positioned as 'out-of-place' (chapter five), and subsequently living through and embodying temporalities of exhaustion (chapter six), Karl's body becomes a space upon which his self-policing, embodied anxieties, and others' negative gazes and responses materialise and become visible (such as through his matted hair and the feminising of his appearance to avoid others' discomfort).

Exploring Karl's story through the interactions his body makes *within the spaces he encounters* enables us to understand how more-than-human affects and spaces he encounters influence his embodied experience in and beyond particular sites (see chapter three). For example, the bodily freedoms which Karl experiences in the 'safe space' of the camp, which allowed him to remove his binder in a public space, demonstrate how what I refer to in this thesis as affective *forces* influence his individual experience of certain spatialities in particular emotional/affective directions. As I explore in chapter three, this embodied approach attentive to the atmospherics of spaces also emphasises *individuality* of Karl's life experiences. The thesis' focus on the bodily sensations, feelings, and temporalities embodied or encountered by individual young trans people and collectives of trans youth in relation to the affects, temporalities, and socio-material minutiae that make up specific spaces develops an intersectionally-attentive understanding of how trans youth, both individually and collectively, live through everyday spaces, places, and times. This contrasts existing work that focusses predominantly on drawing conclusions about the everyday experiences of trans youth as a demographic.

The following section introduces this thesis' overarching research aims. These objectives develop its theoretical and empirical approach, engagement with young trans people, and its central narrative arc attentive to young trans people's experiences of 'out-of-placeness', exhaustion, and resilience, resistance, and restoration.

i.iv Guiding research aims

In this thesis, I explore *what the everyday looks and feels like for young trans people* and *how these everyday realities can be made visible*. I argue that the accounts of everyday life I develop leads us to more expansive, nuanced understandings of trans lives and politics. This is significant as this research takes place in a discipline dominated by cisgender researchers and less collaborative methodologies (see chapters two and four). I propose three interwoven questions in order to unpack the everyday life experiences and geographies of young trans people in the UK:

1. What are the everyday experiences of young trans people in British society?
2. How are these experiences shaped by particular spaces and temporalities, and how do they unfold and become embodied in certain spaces and times?
3. What are the social, material, emotional, and more ephemeral (less spatially and temporally traceable) forces which govern how trans youth encounter everyday spaces and events?

These questions inform the research aims and ethos of the project, which are in turn underpinned by the following research objectives that develop an intersectionally-attentive approach to exploring queer lives:

1. To explore the everyday life experiences of young trans people aged 14–25 in the UK (see chapters one and two), through a particular focus upon both participants' spatial encounters, bodily interactions and geographies, and negotiation of specific temporalities;
2. To recognise the importance of socio-material specificities of specific spaces (including their materialities and atmospheres, and the agency they hold and exert), bodily geographies, and temporalities in the formation and experience of these realities;
3. To develop a theoretical framework (see chapter three) attentive to social, material, and bodily minutiae, and the ways in which young trans people encounter, feel, and live through particular temporalities;
4. To develop a collaborative, participatory research framework for working with young trans people and organisations which support them that can be adopted as a blueprint in similar research (see particularly chapter four);
5. To inform Gendered Intelligence as collaborative partners and impact wider policy and practice through the voices shared, and creative material developed, by young trans participants.

i.v Thesis contributions

The principal contributions of the thesis are as follows:

1. Offering an in-depth exploration of everyday life as it is lived by young trans people, particularly innovative through its focus upon everyday spaces and bodily experiences and narratives, and the spatial and temporal realities of everyday life (rather than through tropes and negative assumptions pervasive in much research around trans lives);
2. Capturing the everyday spatialities and temporalities of young trans people's everyday life stories;
3. Collaborating with young trans people and building a framework for participatory research enabling storytelling and voice-raising with trans and queer (or otherwise marginalised) youth;
4. Developing geographies of the everyday lives of trans youth by binding more-than representational, intersectional feminist, and participatory approaches to participants' lived experiences, attentive to spatial, temporal, bodily, societal, and discursive specificities and forces;
5. Developing geographers' understandings of the relationship between the unfolding of space, time, and the body.

The thesis conclusion (chapter eight) returns to and expands on these contributions chapter-by-chapter.

The following chapter begins the work of these aims, objectives, and contributions, by grounding this thesis in relation to the social and political context which trans youth commonly experience in Britain. I begin by introducing work that enables me to build broader narratives around trans lives in the UK.

Part I

Introducing the lives of young trans people

Research context: Young and trans in Britain

1.1 Introducing how life is lived by trans people in the UK

How is life lived by trans people in the UK? How do the experiences of trans folk vary between particular spaces? And how are these experiences affected by axes of difference, identity, and bodily specificities? Responding to these questions throughout this chapter allows me to begin unpacking the social, political, and legal fabric of everyday life and its filtration into the lives, bodies, and subject positions of trans people in Britain. To do so, I begin by considering the existing (primarily quantitative) work that seeks to account for trans people's lived experiences. I argue that this contextual information is essential to understand this thesis' political goals. By examining key pieces of existing research I point to the necessity of researching with and understanding the diverse experiences of trans individuals/communities. Most of this chapter's material has never been compiled or examined together; I analyse much for the first time. However, trans voices and perspectives are often absent – and required – to understand and situate young trans people's voices and stories and draw out the spatialities implicit in existing trans research. Understanding these perspectives is this thesis' task.

1.2 Unpacking trans lives in the UK

1.2.1 Overview: Trans people's experiences of the social, political, and legal fabric of everyday life

Over the last two decades, scholars, trans-inclusionary organisations, activists, writers, artists, and policy-makers have increasingly examined trans people's lives in the UK through primarily quantitative/survey-based research that varies in scope, depth, and reach (although some have been supplemented with qualitative research and first-person trans life stories.) These studies' coverage has grown since the Gender Recognition Act 2004 (GRA), which followed a 2002 European Court of Human Rights ruling that the British Government's failing to alter trans people's birth certificates and allow trans folk to marry in their gender breached the European Convention on Human Rights (Burns, 2018; European Commission, 2018; Hines and Santos, 2018).⁹ The GRA allowed trans people diagnosed with gender dysphoria to obtain a birth certificate with the correct gender marker (Burns, 2018), without discriminating against trans people who did not undertake hormone or surgical interventions (Hines and Santos, 2018). However, as this chapter discusses, this legislation is now outdated: it remains pathologizing and intrusive, does not allow trans people to self-determine gender, sets 'standards' of gender performance and behaviour by requiring a Gender Recognition Panel to assess 'gender identity disorder' diagnoses, and does not allow trans youth to apply (Cowan, 2009; Hines, 2010a; Hines and Santos, 2018; Lawrence and Taylor, 2019; Nirta, 2017). As Nirta (2017: 203)

⁹ This legislation made the UK the first European country to permit legal gender recognition without requiring medical intervention (e.g. gender confirmation surgery) (European Commission, 2018); its legislation now lags behind many European countries.

explains, by requiring that trans folk who achieve recognition ‘live in the acquired gender until death’ (UK Government, 2004),¹⁰ the GRA reinforces a ‘solidity of [binary, historically uncontaminated] gender that [cisgender] individuals are not expected to engage with and produce’. Additionally, the legal status of non-binary people under the GRA is severely limited (*Ibid.*). This is paradigmatic of how non-binary folk are treated across socio-political spheres.

The GRA also perpetuates a politics of recognition, with multiple risks attached to non-recognisability, which raises several questions: What happens when trans people are *not* recognised, or not willing to become recognised by the state? What narratives around the ‘right’ kind of trans person, the ‘right’ kind of trans body, and the ‘right’ age at which one can ‘become’ trans, for example, emerge when gender recognition, both legal and social, is societally privileged or dominant in shaping trans policy and public perspectives? And which trans people suffer as a result? Moreover, I argue that successive Conservative governments’ failures to update and reform the GRA (and even threaten to do away with such amendments; see Shipman, 2020¹¹) represents a *stagnation in trans people’s legal rights* in the UK. This stagnation (and threatened deterioration) has left trans people open to hostile, transphobic narratives and social discrimination, whilst discursive challenges to the right of trans people to *exist as trans* are increasing. This context points to how the vilification of trans youth through governmental/political networks is legitimised.

Before 2015, large studies of British trans people’s experiences were uncommon and rarely publicised or engaged with in Government channels. As a particularly ‘hard to reach’ or ‘hidden’ population, it is difficult to engage a representative section of trans people in research (McNeil, 2012). Therefore, the absence of data exploring trans people’s lives has only recently begun to be rectified in the form of larger, more inclusive¹² surveys and research. The number of trans and gender diverse people living in the UK is unknown and has been historically uncertain (Whittle *et al.*, 2007), although the trans population has been recently estimated as 500,000 (GIRES, 2011), 600,000 or c.1% of the UK population (Stonewall, n.d.), and between 200,000 and 500,000 (UK GEO, 2018a).¹³

¹⁰ ‘Acquired’ also falsely implies that trans people alter, rather than confirm or acknowledge the fluidity of, their gender.

¹¹ A *Sunday Times* piece (June 2020) recognised that 70% of c.100,000 respondents to the UK Government’s GRA consultation favoured improving trans rights (Shipman, 2020).

¹² National quantitative surveys have more recently included genders beyond trans men/women, including non-binary folk.

¹³ To begin rectifying the dearth of demographic statistics, the Office for National Statistics (2018) recommended including a voluntary question around gender identity in the 2021 census (although they recommend that only people aged 16 or over should answer). In 2019, it was confirmed that the question ‘Is your gender the same as the sex you were registered at birth?’ will be adopted in England and Wales, with those answering ‘no’ asked to describe their gender in an optional written box (PinkNews, 2019a).

Given their alarming and distressing nature, data highlighting the impact of societal violences levelled against trans people has been more prominent in public/policy consciousness. Much-cited statistics regarding high suicide prevalence in British trans communities include the 84% of respondents to the Scottish Government-funded *Trans Mental Health Study 2012* who had ‘thought about ending their lives at some point’; 48% of respondents to the same study had tried to take their own life at some point (McNeil *et al.*, 2012: 59). A Stonewall (2018a) survey found that 46% of trans respondents (rising to 50% of non-binary participants) had contemplated suicide in the year previous to the survey, compared to 31% of cis LGB+ respondents. Whittle *et al.* (2007) found similarly alarming statistics, with 34.4% of their adult respondents having attempted suicide at least once, and 14% more than twice.¹⁴ In similar findings indicating poor mental health across trans communities, Stonewall’s (2018a) survey found 67% and 71% of trans respondents had experienced depression and anxiety, respectively, in the survey’s preceding year. These and other statistics concerning suicide prevalence have come to influence discursive ‘debates’ around trans live, inform government policy and trans healthcare practice (see e.g. Public Health England, 2015), and have served as resistive tools to contest transphobic discourse and policy. However, I argue that avoiding trans suicidality cannot be the primary focus of efforts to contest societal transphobia; celebrating and affirming the diversity of trans lives must also be prioritised. Indeed, suicidality figures create an imagined discourse of young trans people living unhappy lives and portray trans youth as lacking in agency (I return to questions of agency throughout chapters five-seven). In this thesis, I counter these narratives by revealing the agency and self-determination that young trans people continually demonstrate.

1.2.2 Hate crimes and recent legislation, 2010–present

A spate of legislation affecting trans adults has emerged since the GRA, including the Equality Act 2010. However, progress to improve trans people’s legal status, representation, and wellbeing has slowed under successive Conservative governments and frequent re-appointments of the UK Government’s Minister of Women and Equalities, responsible for overseeing LGBT+ rights and policy. Indeed, the Equality Act offers trans people legal shelter from discrimination only through reference to the ‘protected characteristics’ of ‘gender reassignment’ and ‘transsexual people’. However, as this protection has been tied to *medical* gender confirmation (or to plans for such treatment), some young people, and those not seeking medical interventions, are often seen as excluded.¹⁵ Additionally,

¹⁴ 12% of trans respondents to Stonewall’s (2018a) survey had attempted suicide in the study’s preceding 12 months, compared to 2% of cis LGB+ respondents.

¹⁵ The Department for Education (2014: 17) notes ‘it will be unlawful for schools to treat pupils less favourably because of their gender reassignment and [...] schools will have to factor in gender reassignment’. However, the Department also states that although ‘a pupil will not necessarily have to be undertaking a medical procedure to

exemptions exist for ‘separate-sex’ and ‘single-sex’ services, allowing certain spaces/organisations to refuse service to trans people on (limited) case-by-case bases, whilst allow employers can state that posts are open to people with particular protected characteristics according to ‘genuine occupational requirement[s]’. Similar procedures exist in sport. As the UK Parliament’s Women and Equalities Committee (WEC) (2016) noted, these exemptions open trans folk to overly-intrusive questioning and discrimination. A UK Government Equalities Office (GEO) (2011) plan to improve trans people’s lives was established by the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition Government (2010-2015), although this plan went largely unimplemented (WEC, 2016). Moreover, there arguably remains state-sanctioned policing of gender and trans bodies and identities. Trans people have been asked to ‘prove’ their trans status when claiming asylum, and have been confronted with detention and deportation for non-compliance (Lawrence and Taylor, 2019), whilst trans folk are discriminated against by and within the criminal justice system and carceral spaces (Lamble, 2012, cited by Hines and Santos, 2018).

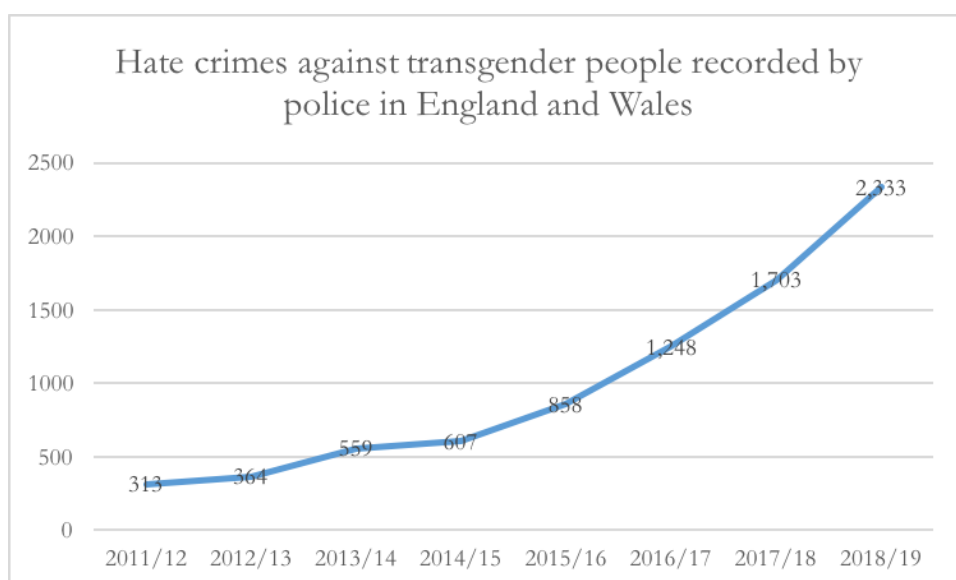


Figure 1.1. Reported hate crimes against transgender people in England and Wales between 2011/12 and 2018/19 (adapted from Home Office, 2019).

In January 2016, the WEC published its *Transgender Equality report* formulated out of evidentiary hearings from those supporting and working with trans communities. The report drew political and popular attention to issues impacting trans people in Britain including transphobia, legal inequalities, and limited and/or delayed access to healthcare and social/sport activities. The report demonstrated that discrimination, for many trans and gender diverse people, had become ‘a reality which many feel they have no alternative but to accept’ (WEC, 2016: 56). At the time of its publication, trans people were highlighting the inadequacy of healthcare provision (e.g. Lewis *et al.*, 2017), whilst hate crimes

change their sex [they] *must be taking steps to live in the opposite gender*, or proposing to do so’ (*Ibid.*; my emphasis). This reinforces gender binary expectations and a legitimised way of being trans.

against trans people had risen sharply (WEC, 2016). Indeed, Figure 1.1 shows that reported hate crimes against transgender people in England and Wales have risen year-on-year since 2011/12 despite under-reporting. Perhaps reflecting the aforementioned hyper-visibility/hyper-vulnerability paradox occurring with particular intensity in the UK (Pearce *et al.*, 2018), there has been a spike in reported hate crimes between 2015/16 and 2018/19. As the following sections show, this bleak trend implying growing societal hostility has continued.

1.2.3 Prominent survey data, 2016–present

The negative life experiences reported by the WEC (2016) have been further elucidated by a growing network of survey-based efforts to document trans lived experience. Amidst a trend of increasing hate crimes experienced by LGBT+ people (Stonewall, 2017a), in a 2016 survey of 871 trans and non-binary people 41% of trans respondents had experienced a hate crime or incident (Stonewall, 2017b); the same figure was repeated for *young* trans people surveyed by LGBT Youth Scotland (LGBTYS) (LGBTYS, 2017). Fewer (16%) cis LGB+ respondents experienced hate crimes over the same period (Stonewall, 2017a). Meanwhile, highlighting barriers and prejudices which impede trans folk in public spaces, 40% of trans respondents reported ‘adjust[ing] the way they dress because they fear discrimination or harassment’, a statistic rising to 52% of non-binary respondents (Stonewall, 2017b), whilst 51% of trans respondents reported concealing their LGBT+ status in the workplace (*Ibid.*).

These austere figures have been echoed in responses taken from the 2017 National LGBT Survey (NLGBTS) (UK GEO, 2018b; 2018c) of 108,100 LGBT+ people aged 16 and over living in the UK, of which 3% were trans men, 3% were trans women, 7% were non-binary and 2% were intersex. Currently, no published work examines the responses of trans people or young trans people to this survey.¹⁶ Multiple data points demonstrate cis privilege and trans marginalisation in LGBT+ communities. For example, trans and non-binary respondents scored their life satisfaction on average at 5.40/10, compared to cis respondents’ 6.48 average, whilst 63.1% of trans respondents reported their comfort being an LGBT person in the UK at 3 or lower on a five-point comfort scale, compared to 41.0% of cis respondents. This disparity is also evident socio-economically, as shown in Figure 1.2 which compares trans and cis LGB+ respondents’ responses. These figures demonstrate that trans liberation and equality in Britain is measurably behind that of cisgender LGB+ people (this finding has been repeated internationally: see e.g. EUAFR, 2014¹⁷; European Commission, 2019). In the following section, I explore datasets that report trans people’s experiences of particular everyday spatial categories

¹⁶ To do so I used the UK GEO *Research report* (2018d) and Survey Data Viewer (2018e). The latter allows users to plot results according to question themes and respondent demographics.

¹⁷ This survey showed that, for example, a majority of trans respondents in 19 of 27 EU countries and Croatia reported that ‘discrimination because a person is transgender is very widespread’ (EUAFR, 2014: 105).

to further examine trans people's everyday life experiences.

| Self-reported characteristic/experience | Trans respondents (%) | Cis LGB+ respondents (%) |
|---|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| Left education after secondary education | 20 | 13 |
| Undergraduate degree or higher | 35 | 51 |
| Income <£20,000/year | 60 | 45 |
| Had a paid job at any point in previous 12 months | 63 | 83 |
| Experience of negative 'incident' in previous 12 months due to being LGBT (involving people respondent did not live with), including: | 53 | 38 |
| a) 'Verbal harassment, insults or other hurtful comments' | 37 | 24 |
| b) 'Someone disclosing that you are LGBT without your permission' | 22 | 12 |
| c) 'Threat of physical or sexual harassment or violence' | 11 | 5 |
| d) 'Physical harassment or violence' | 5 | 2 |
| e) 'Sexual harassment or violence' | 5 | 2 |
| f) Other inappropriate conduct | 26 | 15 |

Figure 1.2. Table showing percentage figures for characteristics and experiences that respondents to the NLGBTS self-reported. Figures are given to the nearest percentage point for both trans people and other, cisgender LGB+ people.

1.2.4 Spatialities: Public spaces, healthcare spaces, and the experiences of more marginalised trans people

Reinforcing that everyday spaces privilege cis people, and often exclude and marginalise trans folk, a large majority (66.5%) of trans respondents to the NLGBTS reported avoiding expressing their gender through such means as appearance and clothing 'for fear of a negative reaction from others'. As I discuss in Part II (see particularly chapter five), such avoidances demonstrate how trans people's *anticipating* a hostile reaction in certain spaces – negative gazes, reactions, discrimination, and so on – may limit their ability to live authentically, openly, and comfortably. Figure 1.3 (adapted from UK

GEO, 2018d: 53) illuminates the rootedness of this anticipated negative reaction and trans people's discomfort in certain spaces.

| Space/place | Trans women (%) | Trans men (%) | Non-binary people (%) | Total (%) |
|---|-----------------|---------------|-----------------------|-------------|
| Home | 32.4 | 38.9 | 50.1 | 44.0 |
| School or educational institution | 35.1 | 45.6 | 51.3 | 46.6 |
| Parks | 54.4 | 46.2 | 56.6 | 54.2 |
| Cafés, restaurants, pubs or clubs | 61.8 | 57.5 | 62.8 | 61.6 |
| Sports clubs or other exercise/leisure spaces | 60.2 | 63.1 | 62.4 | 62.1 |
| Workplace | 60.6 | 53.0 | 71.7 | 65.7 |
| Neighbourhood | 68.5 | 56.9 | 68.1 | 66.1 |
| Public transport | 68.7 | 58.7 | 67.8 | 66.3 |
| Street/other outdoor public spaces | 68.1 | 61.8 | 69.5 | 67.8 |
| Any other public premises/buildings | 67.6 | 62.4 | 69.7 | 67.9 |

Figure 1.3. Spaces and places that trans respondents to the NLGBTS reported avoiding 'being open about their gender identity for fear of a negative reaction from others' (excluding 'other answer given' and 'prefer not to say'). Spaces are listed in ascending order according to total percentage (%) of trans respondents who reported this avoidance behaviour in each spatial category, with separate figures for trans women, trans men, and non-binary people. The three spaces with the highest reported level of avoidance of openness for each gender are shaded; the highest is bolded.

Figure 1.3 indicates that trans people's discomfort with expressing their gender in anticipation of negative reactions from others traverses multiple spatial categories, as I demonstrate is the case for trans youth more specifically in chapter five. The table illustrates that such fears are, for many trans folk, embedded across spaces which might be taken-for-granted as productive of safety and wellbeing, spaces where overt, visible control is prominent, and sites overtly organised according to binary gender expectations/norms. However, variations between trans men, women and non-binary folk's experiences across these sites are also apparent. Indeed, a majority of non-binary people – who formed the majority of trans respondents to the survey and were more likely than trans men/women to be *younger* – reported avoiding openness around gender in all of the tabulated spatial categories. Figure 1.4 reveals variations in trans respondents' reported openness in home spaces, sites that as I discuss in chapter two, geographical literatures have focussed on trans people's experiences within. This figure illustrates, again, that non-binary people reported a significantly higher avoidance than trans men/women respondents even in these taken-for-granted sites typically ascribed as places of safety and comfort (see chapter two).

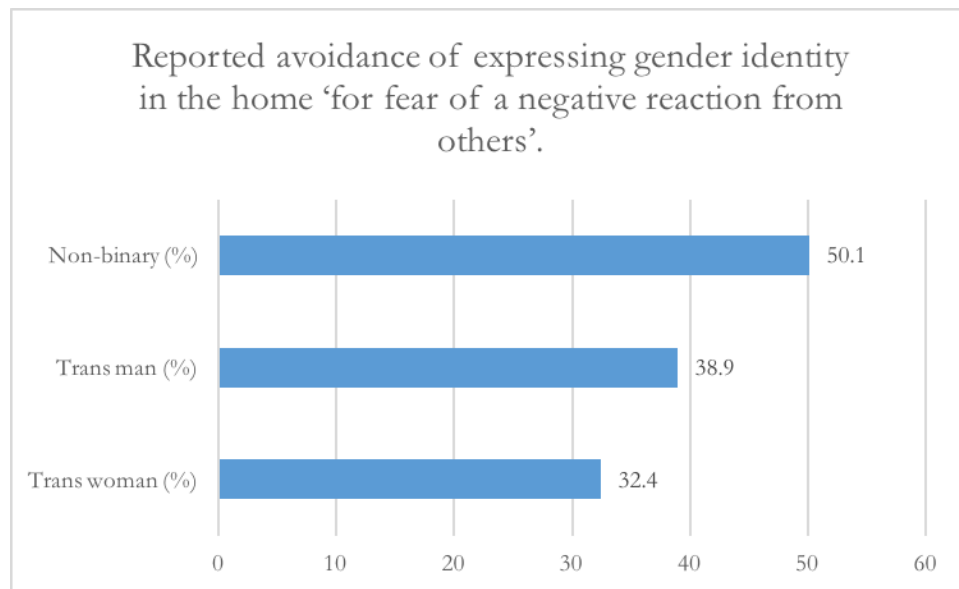


Figure 1.4. *Trans respondents' to the NLGBTS avoidance of 'being open about their gender identity for fear of a negative reaction from others' in the home.*

Further NLGBTS data (UK GEO, 2018b; 2018c) indicated that in the survey's preceding year, 25.9% of trans respondents had experienced 'verbal harassment, insults or other hurtful comments' in the home, whilst 25.9% had their LGBT+ status disclosed to others at home without their permission. Reinforcing the potential significant oppressions of the home for trans and gender diverse people, as geographical/social science literatures have discussed (see chapter two), these figures compare to 25.6% and 13.6% of respondents who experienced the same negative encounters *outside* of the home. Respondents to Stonewall's (2017b) aforementioned survey reported harmful experiences related to home spaces and familial relationships: 14% of trans respondents reported not being 'out' to anyone in their family about their gender identity (rising to 24% of non-binary respondents), whilst 28% reported experiencing domestic abuse from their partner, and 25% disclosed that they had experienced homelessness. Public spaces – as the stories of trans youth in chapters five and six attest – have also been identified as sites of discomfort/exclusion for trans people, such that taken-for-granted movements through and between particular spaces can become difficult or restricted. Indeed, 48% of Stonewall's (2017b) trans respondents reported discomfort using public toilets, whilst 44% avoided particular streets because of a perceived lack of safety for LGBT+ people. I discuss such avoidance behaviours, attaching them to the 'out-of-placeness' and exhaustion trans youth may feel or anticipate feeling in relation to particular spaces, in Part II.

Healthcare spaces – sites that participants frequently discussed in this research (see stories across Part II) – also reproduce spatially-specific forms of marginalisation and exclusion, such that feelings of 'out-of-placeness' and exhaustion become embedded in such spaces. In the UK, austerity, centralisation, and increased waiting times have left 'trans people facing down years of anxiety,

depression and suicidal tendencies’ (Gleeson and Hoad, 2019: 178). Current statistics and voiced lived experiences evidence that national average waiting times for Gender Identity Clinics (GICs) are in breach of the English National Health Service (NHS) constitution requiring treatment within eighteen weeks (BBC, 2020)¹⁸. Meanwhile, binary understandings of gender and problematic approaches taken by General Practitioners (GPs) and others pervade (Action for Trans Health report; UK Parliament, 2019), and a period of ‘real-life experience’¹⁹ is required to be undergone prior to surgeries. In healthcare spaces, the violence of deadnaming (see glossary) and incorrect pronoun use is widespread (Gleeson and Hoad, 2019; Vincent, 2018a), whilst trans patients report being ‘asked intimate and somewhat intrusive questions about their sex lives, held to outdated and offensive stereotypes, and subjected to inappropriate interference in their family lives’ (Action for Trans Health report, UK Parliament, 2019).

In the absence of adequate NHS services and support (BBC, 2020), many trans people have reclaimed agency over their health and medical treatment by, for example, self-medicating or sharing prescribed hormones to ‘secur[e] the gender expression which [they] see fit, by whatever means possible’ (Gleeson and Hoad, 2019: 188). Such practices of ‘state discipline and managed deprivation’, as the stories of participants in chapters five and six attest, increase, rather than stabilise, the dysphoric experience and emotions of trans people accessing hostile healthcare spaces and reduce levels of trans amongst trans communities in the healthcare system itself (*Ibid.*: 186). Non-binary folk in particular are excluded from the dominant discourse of ‘retrograde treatment regimes, old fashioned concepts, and sometimes openly hostile attitudes’ present in GICs (*Ibid.*: 182), whilst trans POC are ‘largely invisible within research and clinical practice’ (*Ibid.*: 183). Reflecting the inadequacy of British trans healthcare, 20.5% of NLGBTS trans respondents (UK GEO, 2018b; 2018c) reported their needs being ignored or not taken into account in public healthcare spaces, whilst 17.3% reported avoiding treatment or accessing healthcare ‘for fear of discrimination or intolerant reactions’ and/or ‘inappropriate curiosity’.

¹⁸ Gleeson and Hoad (2019: 178) cite an average waiting time of 51 weeks before first treatment provision in 2018, noting that ‘lags of two to three years before accessing hormones are a new norm’. In 2020, the BBC (2020) found that despite target waits of 18 weeks, GICs had wait times of between 32 weeks (NHS Highland) and 166 weeks (GIC Belfast): consequently, they reported trans people self-medicating (see also Action for Trans Health report; UK Parliament, 2019).

¹⁹ Referred to by NHS services as ‘social gender role transition’ (NHS England, no date). As Vincent (2016: 137, 216), points out, this period, ‘expected to be permanent and until death in order to be accepted as real, and in order to access gender affirming medical procedures’, is outdated and potentially exclusionary of non-binary people and feminine trans men/masculine trans women, who could be found ‘lacking the clinical criteria for genital surgery in particular’. Gleeson and Hoad (2019) note that although the prerequisite for ‘real life experience’ has been abandoned, it remains *de facto* in place because of the time trans people spend waiting for treatment (likely to be measured in years, rather than months.) Trans people are therefore forced to ‘expose [themselves] to social transphobia without medical or state recognition’ (*Ibid.*: 185).

These experiences are reflected in available statistics: 32% of trans respondents to Stonewall's (2018a) health survey had experienced 'unequal treatment' in healthcare settings, with 48% having experienced 'inappropriate curiosity from healthcare staff'. As Gleeson and Hoad (2019: 178) tell us, postponements to trans healthcare and treatments are often 'sentences to an unliveable life', with trans people becoming lost to seemingly endless waiting times, or unable to survive the structural hostility of the British healthcare system. Indeed, 63.5% and 58.8% of trans respondents (n=553 and n=551) to an Action for Trans Health (UK Parliament, 2019) survey reported that 'waiting for an appointment at a GIC' had contributed to feelings of 'suicidal ideation' and 'thoughts of self-harm', respectively. Gleeson and Hoad's (2019: 179) work, which demonstrates how 'trans people live for months and years at the beck and call of [...] gatekeeping beurocracy, while straining to prove an identity that society would obviously rather did not exist', reminds us that for many trans people healthcare spaces are sites of restriction, fear, and emotional strain (felt by, and exerted most intensely upon the most marginalised in trans communities). The autonomy of trans people seems, then, to be *actively worn away* through these acts of attrition; this can be an exhausting experience (see chapters five and six) that requires trans people to undertake intense emotional, physical, and mental labour to contest and live through agency-limiting and otherwise callously impairing practices and spaces (see chapters six and seven). As transition and healthcare is an ongoing process (and indeed is not a singular procedure) and potentially impacts how trans people are viewed and constructed in public space (such that trans people may be misgendered/deadnamed or experience hostility as a result of not 'passing'; see glossary and stories in chapters five and six), inadequate healthcare regimes in Britain expose trans people not only to 'cognitive impairment, spikes of dysphoria, [and] continual hot flushes, but [also] violence on the streets' (*Ibid.*: 193). In Part II, I recognise that this violence is not merely overt but can be microaggressive or continual, occupying a temporal, spatial, and embodied constancy that accrues and augments over time.

Such phenomena that impede trans people's movements through particular spaces are reflected in specific demographics of trans communities' experiences. For instance, the Scottish Trans Equality Network (Valentine, 2015) reported that significant numbers of non-binary people avoid spaces regulated according to gender binaries: for example, 55% and 42% have avoided public toilets and gyms, respectively, whilst non-binary folk report avoiding leisure/lifestyle spaces at higher rates than trans men and women. These impacts are exacerbated where trans people face multiple oppressions. Indeed, percentages of trans people of colour (POC) engaging in avoidance behaviours outlined in Figure 1.3 are higher than white trans respondents across most spatial categories. For example, 62.0% of Asian/Asian British and 53.9% of Black/African/Caribbean/Black British trans respondents avoid

expressing their gender identity at home, compared to 43% of white trans respondents.²⁰

This section demonstrates the *extent* to which trans people, and their autonomy, agency, and bodies, are governed and policed through societal and governmental demands for recognisability, conformation, and complicity. That said, I do not intend to create or reinforce a singular trans body or figure, highlighting instead societal conditions habitually imposed upon, and experienced by, trans folk in Britain. In the following section, I specifically consider how *young* trans people experience these conditions.

1.3 Young trans people's life experiences in the UK

1.3.1 Overview: *The National LGBT Survey and young trans communities*

A recent proliferation of particularly quantitative work has examined young trans lives, albeit with limited attention placed on the specificity of trans youth experiences and their variation according to axes of difference and identity. However, trans youth voices remain obscured/marginal from most publications and writings, or are only superficially included; as discussed in chapter four, this thesis brings to light these voices through its methodologies, ethos, and analyses.

Statistics indicate the diversity of young trans people in Britain. Figure 1.5 tabulates the simplified gender spread of trans respondents to the NLGBTS, which given the large sample population relative to other studies of young trans people, can be taken as a proxy for the young trans population. Indeed, the survey's data for the gender of trans people under 35 roughly corresponds to the genders of those referred to gender identity healthcare services (UK GEO, 2018c).

| Age group | Trans woman (%) | Trans man (%) | Non-binary (%) | Number of trans respondents |
|------------------------------------|-----------------|---------------|----------------|-----------------------------|
| 16-17 | 10.4 | 38.8 | 50.8 | 2040 |
| 18-24 | 16.4 | 25.7 | 58.0 | 6020 |
| Total trans respondents (all ages) | 26.1 | 22.1 | 51.7 | 14320 |

²⁰ The most common space where POC (except Black respondents) reported avoidance expressing gender was 'any other public premises or buildings'. The modal response for Black respondents was 'in my neighbourhood' (at 70.8%).

Figure 1.5 (overleaf). Reported gender of young trans respondents (age 16-24) to the NLGBTS, alongside figures for all trans respondents aged 16 and over.

Figure 1.5 demonstrates that, in contrast to older trans NLGBTS respondents (more likely to be trans women rather than trans men or non-binary; UK GEO, 2018c; 2018e), a majority of respondents aged 16-24 were non-binary. 87.8% and 90.4% of trans respondents between aged 16-17 and 18-24, respectively, were white. Other studies have emphasised the diversity of trans communities. There is (albeit limited) evidence that trans people are more likely than the wider population to self-report having a disability.²¹ Indeed, 41.6% of trans students in Britain surveyed by the NUS (2014) reported having a disability, while 33% of all trans NLGBTS respondents reported the same, compared to 14% of cisgender LGB+ respondents (UK GEO, 2018d). These figures reflect a broader trend internationally: in the US, 39% of respondents to a 2015 study of almost 28,000 trans people had one or more disabilities (James *et al.*, 2016 cited by DREDF, 2018²²). This diversity establishes a need for intersectionally-attentive research around trans lives.

Statistics quantifying trans youth experiences in the UK paint a similarly bleak picture to that of trans adults (albeit one that is gradually improving). For example, a UK-wide 2014 survey of 956 young trans people found that trans youth had experienced a shocking rate of violence and intimidation: 83% of respondents had experienced verbal abuse, whilst 35% had experienced physical assault (METRO, 2014). Three-fifths (60%) had undergone threats or intimidation (*Ibid.*). Returning to suicidality, the survey found that 27% of trans youth respondents had attempted to commit suicide,²³ whilst 89% had ‘thought about it’. NLGBTS data indicates similarly high rates of self-harm: more than 80% of young trans respondents had self-harmed (UK GEO, 2018e). The Scottish specific context – where I conducted some of my collaborative research (see chapter four) – paints a similar negative life experience: 96% of trans youth surveyed by LGBTYS (2017) had faced mental health difficulties, 22% had left home ‘under negative circumstances’, whilst 41% of trans youth and 51% of non-binary youth had experienced a hate crime in 2016. In these surveys, 72% and 59% of young trans people, respectively, reported experience of self-harm (METRO, 2014; LGBTYS, 2017).

²¹ Although as DREDF (2018: 1) note, trans health research has often treated trans people and disabilities as ‘separate and distinct demographic groups’.

²² Significantly, this report highlighted that a majority of trans ‘adolescents’ had ‘long-term mental health problems’ (59.3%), for comparison, 16.4% cisgender ‘adolescents’ experienced the same (James *et al.*, 2016, cited by DREDF, 2018).

²³ These figures were corroborated in the US context: 29% of trans and non-binary youth respondents to the Trevor Project (2019) had attempted suicide, compared to 14% of cis LGB+ young people.

| Experience | Trans respondents, 16-17 (%) | Trans respondents, 18-24 (%) | Cis LGB+ respondents, 16-17 (%) | Cis LGB+ respondents, 18-24 (%) |
|--|------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| ‘Comfort being LGBT in the UK’, rated 1 or 2 on a 5 point scale of comfort | 22.1 | 20.9 | 12.2 | 9.0 |
| ‘Comfort being LGBT in the UK’, rated 4 or 5 on a 5 point scale of comfort | 30.3 | 34.2 | 47.5 | 54.4 |
| ‘Life satisfaction’, rated 1-4 on a 10 point scale of satisfaction | 49.1 | 40.6 | 24.6 | 19.0 |
| ‘Life satisfaction’, rated 6-10 on a 10 point scale of satisfaction | 36.1 | 46.5 | 61.6 | 70.2 |

Figure 1.6. Table illustrating negative and positive responses by young people, age 16-24 (ignoring neutral responses and ‘prefer not to say’) to questions around everyday life in the UK as part of the NLGBTS. Figures organised according to available age groupings for both trans and cis LGB+ respondents.

Further NLGBTS statistics capturing more generalised perspectives point to more *everyday* experiences of British trans youth.²⁴ For example, Figure 1.6 (using data I analysed from UK GEO, 2018e) indicates that disparities in lived experience between trans and cis LGB+ young people are just as prominent as those between trans and cis LGB+ adults. Indeed, when rating their ‘comfort being LGBT in the UK’ and ‘life satisfaction’, a greater proportion of young trans respondents’ scored their comfort and satisfaction at worse levels than young cis LGB+ respondents. I argue that Figure 1.6 does not only show a stark gap between cis LGB+ and trans young people’s experiences in the UK, but points to a wider crisis of trans youth health and wellbeing indicating that much effort is required to improve their life experiences. In sum, the figure shows the *lived consequences* of a largely trans-hostile society and a shortfall in services, spaces, and advocates for trans youth and their specific experiences.

Crucially, I ask what the cultural prominence of the most alarming statistics, particularly around trans youth suicidality, has served to obscure. In doing so, in this thesis I move beyond emphasising hardships trans youth might have experienced, turning instead to the complexity and diversity of young trans people’s everyday experiences and emotions in relation to particular spaces, bodies, and times (see

²⁴ Further analysis is needed to explore the survey and its significance for young trans lives.

chapter three). While it is crucial that trans youth suicide and self-harm, for example, are given due attention in academic study and media coverage, and the voices of those young people lost to transphobia and societal violence are not erased, I question, like trans writers and academics, the benefits of focussing on such narratives which are not fully reflective of the diverse experiences and demonstratable agency of trans youth shown in this thesis.

Statistics that *do* dominate in reporting and writing around trans youth do not reflect, however, further marginalisation that young trans people of colour (POC), disabled trans youth, non-binary youth, intersex youth, and other members of young trans communities might face due to issues related to further marginalisation, including erasure, increased discrimination, and limited understanding of their genders, bodies, and lives.²⁵ There is an absence of research that accounts for these experiences. The limited existing research that reflects upon the specificity of certain trans youth experiences includes that of the Scottish Trans Equality Network. Perhaps reflecting the specific difficulties that non-binary folk might have ‘coming out’ in such sites where gendered structures and dialogue dominates (Twist *et al.*, 2020), their work highlights that young non-binary people are particularly susceptible to mental health difficulties and may have concerns about sharing their identities in everyday contexts such as workplaces and when accessing support services (Valentine, 2015). Many of the 895 non-binary people the Network surveyed felt more comfortable presenting overtly as ‘trans’ rather than non-binary due to non-binary erasure, with 55% reporting that their bodies had been discussed by others in a way that made them uncomfortable (*Ibid.*). In chapter five, we see the impact of such non-binary erasures and misunderstandings/misrepresentations in particular spaces. I argue that existing data, including the NLGBTS, should be further analysed to account for the specific experiences of trans youth likely to experience multiple, intersecting marginalisations.

1.3.2 *The spatial variation of trans youth experiences*

Quantitative data concerning the *spatial variation* of young trans people’s everyday experiences is sparse. This absence reinforces this project’s timeliness and political necessity as further evidence that examines the relationship between trans youth experiences/embodied emotions and particular spaces and their socio-material dynamics is needed; in chapter three I present a novel framework for exploring this relationship. Here, I examine existing data that highlights trans youth experiences of particular spaces/spatial categories.

²⁵As Pyne (2017: 98-99) powerfully notes, ‘the current context for trans youth [includes] an increase in trans youth of colour being literally “arrested” in urban public spaces [...] as well as a staggering epidemic of violence against young trans women of colour, the arrest of their lives and their time in a more urgent sense’.

1.3.2.1 Everyday spaces

Figure 1.7, drawn again from the NLGBTS, indicates that young trans people (aged 16-24²⁶) experience acute difficulties in being open about their transness *across almost all everyday spatial categories*.

| Space/place | Trans women | | Trans men | | Non-binary people | |
|---|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------------|-------------|
| | 16-17 (%) | 18-24 (%) | 16-17 (%) | 18-24 (%) | 16-17 (%) | 18-24 (%) |
| Home | 59.3 | 45.6 | 55.1 | 40.0 | 71.5 | 58.9 |
| School or educational institutions | 68.3 | 52.2 | 67.5 | 41.9 | 78.6 | 57.4 |
| Parks | 63.5 | 63.8 | 43.6 | 44 | 55.6 | 57.4 |
| Cafés, restaurants, pubs or clubs | 64.7 | 68.2 | 50.5 | 56.4 | 60.0 | 63.9 |
| Sports clubs or other exercise/leisure spaces | 64.1 | 65.2 | 53.8 | 64.3 | 58.2 | 64.9 |
| Workplace | 56.9 | 64.5 | 42.9 | 53.6 | 53.3 | 74.0 |
| Neighbourhood | 68.9 | 71.1 | 54.2 | 54.5 | 66.1 | 69.6 |
| Public transport | 67.7 | 74.8 | 52.1 | 56.8 | 61.3 | 68.8 |
| Street/other outdoor public spaces | 71.3 | 75.6 | 56.9 | 59.6 | 66.0 | 70.0 |
| Any other public premises/buildings | 66.5 | 73.6 | 59.0 | 59.3 | 64.7 | 69.5 |

Figure 1.7. *Spaces and places wherein young trans respondents aged 16-24 to the NLGBTS reported their avoidance of 'being open about their gender identity for fear of a negative reaction from others' (excluding 'other answer given' and 'prefer not to say'). Spaces are listed in ascending order according to total percentage (%) of all trans respondents (including adults) who reported this avoidance at each set of sites. Separate figures are provided for young trans women, young trans men, and young non-binary people. The spatial category with the highest reported level of avoidance of openness for both age groups within each gender is bolded.*

Figure 1.7 indicates that, for many trans youth, *few everyday spaces are safe or inclusive*, such that many such sites become *restricting environments* where openness and visibility around gender is impossible (see participant narratives in chapter five; note that there is no quantitative data that explores trans youth experiences of trans/queer 'safe spaces', sites discussed in chapter seven). For trans youth surveyed, all spatial categories are restrictive to the extent that 40% is the lowest reported avoidance rate (for trans men aged 18-24 in their homes). Perhaps unsurprisingly, given intersections of public

²⁶ Note that young trans people aged 14-15 were not surveyed by the NLGBTS but their voices are included in this thesis.

misogyny and hostility toward trans women, the highest reported avoidance rate is 75.6%, for trans women aged 18-24 in the street/other outdoor public spaces. Young trans women report avoiding openness in public spaces at particularly high rates. Moreover, excluding workplaces, young trans women reported the highest level of avoidance across *all public spatial categories*. In sum, this figure both justifies this thesis' everyday spatial focus and points to the *anticipated* reactions that young trans people come to expect from entering and moving through certain spaces. In chapters five and six I expand on this by exploring spaces wherein trans youth are positioned as and feel 'out-of-place' and subsequently come to feel anticipatory anxiousness and exhaustion toward. In the following paragraphs, I briefly consider further existing data that reinforces my arguments around trans youth, anticipating hostilities, and intersectional differences in how exclusions are experienced/anticipated relative to particular spaces.

1.3.2.2 Schools

A small body of work confirms the difficult experiences that many trans youth undergo in school and education spaces, as alluded in Figure 1.7. Although Whittle *et al.*'s (2007) aforementioned landmark study engaged few young people and included 'young adults' only, in their survey 64% of young trans men and 44% of young trans women reported experiencing harassment or bullying at school, despite the report noting that trans people, at the time, were achieving better educational attainments than the general adult population (*Ibid.*) Recent published work suggests that trans young people's negative experiences in schools have persisted, with trans students' experiences of prejudice and marginalisation often reinforced by individual teachers' responses to 'moral panic' discourse (Armitage, 2020; see section 1.3). Indeed, the WEC (2016) highlighted that binary gender divisions in school endured alongside the pervasiveness of transphobia and harassment of gender diverse students. Their report highlights social, health, and education workers' lack of knowledge around gender (e.g. around bullying, access to toilets/changing facilities, and recording the name/gender of trans young people; *Ibid.*) Participant stories in chapters five and six point to the displacing and exhausting impact of this misgendering. In Stonewall's (2017c) *School Report*, young respondents cited school workers' limited knowledge, inadequate toilets, and education environments' impact on mental and physical health as key concerns. Meanwhile, 27% of trans youth surveyed by LGBTYS (2017) left education because of transphobia. 96% of these leavers experienced homophobic, biphobic, or transphobic bullying in education, whilst 53% of trans respondents rated their school experience as 'bad' (*Ibid.*). 50% of those aged 16-17 and 67% of those aged 18-24 surveyed by the NLGBTS reported that their teachers and other school staff had been not very or not at all understanding (UK GEO, 2018e). As G.I.'s CEO Jay Stewart highlighted in parliamentary evidence to the WEC (2015: n.p.), 'gender-neutral toilets, gender-neutral spaces and gender-neutral language need to flow through many of our institutes of education, right through to higher education'.

1.3.2.3 Public spaces and universities

In public/urban spaces, evidence suggests that many young trans people are at risk of harassment; indeed, Whittle *et al.*'s (2007) study suggested that young trans people experienced more harassment in public spaces than trans adults. Again, although only limited data focusses on young trans people's experiences, little seems to have changed in this regard. As Figure 1.7 suggests, many trans youth feel streets and outdoor public spaces as far from welcoming or affirming, whilst 51% of young trans people surveyed by LGBTYS (2017) did not feel safe using public transport. This lack of comfort in public transport spaces is reflected in Figure 1.7, with over 50% of all young trans men, women, and non-binary folk avoiding being open about their gender across such sites; as the table shows, these figures were particularly stark for young trans women and non-binary people. As discussed in chapters five and six, participants in this research frequently cited public transport spaces in particular as potential sites of exclusion and hostility. I suggest that such high prevalence of avoidance behaviours and feelings of lack of safety are linked to such factors as the construction of public space along binary (cis)gender expectations, and the street harassment of certain trans people. As I demonstrate in chapter five, such factors and spatial dynamics produce young trans people and bodies (particularly those who do not 'pass' [see glossary] or belong to further marginal groups) as 'out-of-place' and result in certain trans youth always-already anticipating 'out-of-placeness'. This constant embodied anticipation and anxiousness becomes exhausting, as chapter six illustrates.

Evidence suggests that trans staff and students (the latter likely to include young people) in Higher Education face 'physical and verbal abuse, prejudice and discrimination, marginalisation and misrepresentation' (UCU/NUS, 2016). For example, a University and College Union (UCU) and National Union of Students (NUS) 2016 survey (UCU/NUS, 2016) found that 41% of LGBT+ staff in FE and HE reported witnessing learners acting negatively towards people because of their trans identity, whilst 47% of non-binary learners reported having 'seriously considered dropping out of their learning'. An earlier survey found that 51% of trans students had considered the same (NUS, 2014). In this survey, 20.6% trans students reported feeling 'completely safe' at University, significantly less than the 36.7% of LGB+ students reporting the same (*Ibid.*). In Stonewall's (2018b) research, amongst other statistics, 20% of trans students reported that they had been encouraged by university staff in the year prior to the survey to hide or disguise their transness, whilst 60% of trans students received negative comments about their identity from other students. 52% had been excluded simply for being trans (*Ibid.*). These statistics are amongst the most comprehensive pointing to young trans people's experiences of everyday life spaces, and suggest a range of events and feelings that broadly align with those of this thesis' participants across chapters five to seven. Armitage (2015) presents his experiences of being a trans undergraduate at my own institution. In this piece, he speaks to both the 'tough'/exclusionary dimensions and the structural transphobia implicit and embedded in university

life, and the University's potential for trans liberation and empowerment through establishing such spaces as gender neutral toilets and building trans networks and communities. This piece – again, broadly reflective of the narrative arc of Part II – points to 'out-of-placeness'/exhaustions embedded in such everyday spaces as the university campus, and young trans people's resilience, resistance, and restoration practices that emerge within and in response to such sites as a result.

1.3.2.4 Healthcare spaces and gaps in data

In healthcare spaces, despite 'gradual shifts in awareness, and increases in the number of people who are tolerant offer[ing] an intuitive and convincing explanation for the large increase seen in referrals to Gender Identity Services for young people' (Vincent, 2018a: 120), British youth are subjected to long waiting times for the Gender Identity Development Service (GIDS), which requires long assessment periods and unfair assessment procedures (WEC, 2016; Gleeson and Hoad, 2019). As there are only two GIDS clinics in England, Gleeson and Hoad (2019: 180) explain:

'[c]loseted trans youth living at home and far away from clinics are obliged to fabricate excuses for regular trips across the country. Often, appointments are at short notice, requiring patients to hurriedly organise logistics and finances. Failure to attend a single appointment can be met with threats to drop patients from the service.'

In GIDS, GICs, and other medical settings young trans people attend, clinical practices often disadvantage younger trans people, who are perhaps more likely to be non-binary (see figure 1.5). As Gleeson and Hoad (*Ibid.*: 184) tell us, '[f]ar from preparing for the health needs of femboys or [non-binary] testosterone micro-dosers, the Clinics are still wrapping their heads around trans women in trousers, or gay trans men who enjoy contouring before a night out.' As narratives of trans youth in Part II attest, the 'out-of-placeness' and embodied emotions that emerge in relation to clinical settings and other spaces where young trans people's agency is not respected, are often carried to, and subsequently embedded in, everyday spaces.

In an effect that I often witnessed during the research, for some trans youth, much space and time in trans/queer 'safe spaces' – sites that I focus on in chapter seven – is devoted to discussing and alleviating negative healthcare experiences and expectations and sharing knowledge and worries around healthcare settings. As discussed in Part II, participants often collectively shared in the negative experiences they felt and exhaustion they accumulated within/around healthcare experiences and settings (see chapters five and six). Many subsequently actively engaged in trans healthcare activist movements such as Action for Trans Health, or queer mutual support groups and fundraising and crowdfunding platforms as mechanisms of resilience and resistance (see chapter seven). As explored in chapters six and seven, such efforts illustrate how certain trans youth craft spaces and practices that alleviate and contest spaces/times of hostility and difficulty and constantly exercise and reclaim agency and mechanisms for self-determination across their lives.

In the following section, I expand on prominent, often hostile discourses that circulate around trans youth and trans people more broadly in Britain, examining how such narratives produce trans youth as ‘out-of-place’ and impact how they experience particular spaces and times in their everyday lives. As chapter three discusses, such discourses consist of *forces* that constantly push against or ‘chip away’ (Ahmed, 2016a) at trans youth and their bodies and subjectivities, and hold potential to contribute to their everyday exhaustions (see chapter six).

1.4 Discourses around trans people in the UK

‘In the UK today [...] permission is constantly being given for transphobic harassment, creating a hostile environment for trans people. Some of this harassment operates through the logic of *stranger danger*: trans people are often positioned as strangers not only as “bodies out of place,” but as threatening those who are “in place.” [...] Just think about [...] terms like “gender extremism,” [that create a] vague sense of menace, borrowing perhaps from racialising discourses [...] [and] terms like “the trans lobby,” to imply a powerful and sinister agent...’

–Sara Ahmed (2019a: n.p., *original emphasis* and my emphasis)

This section considers how narratives and discourse around young trans people have emerged and subsequently filtered into the bodies, subjectivities, and everyday lives of trans youth in Britain. As Ahmed’s words illustrate, because of the growing prominence, legitimisation, and reach of trans-hostile discourses, for many (young) trans people, the UK has become a *hostile environment*.²⁷ Crucially, Ahmed connects this environment to the positioning of trans people as ‘strangers’, as ‘*out-of-place*’ bodies that threaten the ontological gender(ed) safety of cis folk who remain ‘in place’. In chapter five, I expand on both mechanisms and lived consequences of this ‘out-of-placeness’ and the positioning of young trans bodies as threats to the established binary-gendered order that constructs certain spaces.

In a passage that recognises the specificity and intensity of trans-hostile discourses endemic to the UK, Pearce *et al.* (2020: 3) further summarise the multiple, often violent ways that trans men, women, and non-binary people are portrayed/vilified across British public fora.

‘...trans people are frequently portrayed as *monstrous*: a freakish threat to children, to lesbians, to women, to [...] womanhood and/or to the fixity of sex itself. [Trans women] are portrayed as potential sexual predators, or otherwise as Trojan Horse[s] whose access to women’s spaces will enable predatory men to similarly enter those spaces by claiming that they are women. Trans men and boys are [depicted] as damaged or mutilated individuals who have rejected “natural” “female” bodies at the cost of their

²⁷ The ‘hostile environment’ also constitutes policies/measures that attempted to push those in Britain without a ‘leave to remain’ immigration status to ‘voluntarily’ leave. I argue that violence enacted through government policy and societal discourse against trans people operates similarly by attempting to reduce or delegitimise (young) trans people’s visibility and status in public life and space.

reproductive capacity. Non-binary people are often portrayed as fantasists seeking to reject the very “reality” of binary sex and gender.’

This widespread portrayal subjugates trans people, and particularly trans youth, by portraying them as a hostile threat which infiltrates, disrupts, and damages the safety of everyday spaces, and the ontological security of cisgender, binary categories of gender. This is a discursive positioning of trans people as *threats* (to children, to women, to the rigidity of ‘biological sex’), whereby ‘biology’, ‘nature’ and ‘biological sex’ ‘are being used to justify trans exclusion as natural and necessary, as if these categories are not themselves a product of labour, as if we do not have a hand in making and shaping them’ (Ahmed, 2019a: n.p.). Again, this positions trans youth as lacking in agency and ability to self-determine gender and control other aspects of their lives. Indeed, trans youth are deliberately positioned by some as *passive victims of a social contagion* to violent and devastating effect.²⁸ To illustrate how young trans people experience life in relation to such popular/media narratives and misinformation around gender variance, here I work through non-exhaustive themes that participants regularly remarked on: media coverage/vilification, government equalities policy/rhetoric, trans-exclusionary feminisms, and trans/queer-fronted efforts to increase trans youth positive representation/visibility. In the absence of peer-reviewed material and to draw attention to trans voices, I also focus on work by trans activists, writers, and scholars.

A disparity between discourses experienced by trans folk and LGB+ cis people is evidenced by research on social attitudes toward trans people in the National Centre for Social Research’s British Social Attitudes Survey 34 (BSA 34)²⁹ (Clery *et al.*, 2016). Although 82% of its respondents reported being ‘not prejudiced at all’ to trans people, paradoxically only 53% of respondents stated that prejudice against trans people is ‘always wrong’. 4 in 10 people surveyed felt that trans people ‘definitely should’ be employed as police officers and primary school teachers, whilst around 1 in 6 people reported discomfort with trans people using public toilets aligning with their gender (*Ibid.*). Such figures are generational, with 61% of 18-34 year olds stating that prejudice against trans people is ‘always wrong’, compared to 40% of those aged 65 and over. In the EU’s Eurobarometer on Discrimination (European Commission, 2019), 89% of British respondents reported they would be ‘comfortable’ with having a transgender colleague (compared to a 65% EU28 average); 68% reported they would feel ‘comfortable’ with their child being in a romantic relationship with a trans person (compared to a 43% EU28 average). Other studies with smaller sample sizes have indicated Britons’ divided ‘opinions’. For

²⁸ Participants in this research never demonstrated such passivity and as this thesis illustrates, often developed and enacted agency even in spaces where others attempted to limit/remove this agency.

²⁹ This survey incorporated problematic, incorrect approaches to defining trans people. For example, women respondents were asked ‘Please think about a transgender woman - that is a man who has gone through all or part of a process to become a woman. How comfortable or uncomfortable would you be for a transgender woman to use female public toilets?’ (Clery *et al.*, 2016: 98).

example, 49% surveyed by YouGov's (2020) biannual public opinion tracker agreed that trans women are women; 37% disagreed. 56% respondents to a YouGov-PinkNews poll (June 2019) believe that trans people should be able to self-determine their gender as different to the 'one they were born in' (YouGov, 2019). These statistics represent the emotional and spatially-restricting challenges experienced by trans young people, who must negotiate spaces and places wherein those who would seek to reduce their rights to access such sites based solely upon their existence are present. Indeed, several participants described avoiding being their authentic selves in certain spaces because of their awareness of potential public hostility/transphobia.

1.4.1 Media coverage and vilification of trans people and trans youth

'Read how disgusting we are in the press
The Telegraph, People, and Sunday Express
Molesters of children, corrupters of youth:
It's there in the paper, it must be the truth.'
– Tom Robinson Band (1978)

This thesis arrives whilst international and British media coverage of trans lives – and those of trans youth in particular – has been increasingly characterised by misinformation and moral panic. As Jacques (2020: n.p., my emphasis) describes, '[t]ransphobia, constantly amplified by the country's mainstream media, is a *respectable bigotry* in Britain, shared by parts of the left as well as the right'. In other terms, transphobic discourse is increasingly achieving prominence and recognition as a legitimate position across popular/political platforms, with deep implications for trans folk nationally and beyond. In Britain, trans voices have been suppressed, whilst trans youth have been denied platforms to share their life experiences. Media outlets across the political spectrum have become rife with oppositional accounts of trans 'activism', the threatening of cis women's rights and spaces, and false narratives of trans youth being coerced into affirming their gender through surgeries and physical forms of transition.³⁰ As Jacques (2020) notes, such narratives can be categorised into two core 'types of British transphobia'. The first argues that gender is congruent with birth 'sex' traits and is perpetuated by the right-wing, whilst the second, perpetuated by the left, argues that trans women seeking gender recognition conflict with cis women's rights in/to 'single-sex spaces' (*Ibid.*). In Britain, when trans voices are present in media 'debates' around their rights and existence, trans people are typically 'asked to participate in a conversation even though the terms of the conversations are about shutting [them]

³⁰ In an international context, Åkerlund's (2018) work around media representations of trans people found that such representations uphold heteronormativity and cisnormativity through such mechanisms as misgendering. These include presenting trans folk as deviant or 'an alias or act', relentlessly focussing on 'biological sex', binary understandings of gender and masculinity/femininity, and binary-gendered language.

out’ (Ahmed, 2019a: n.p.). Participant Isla (she/her, 18-21) described such mechanisms of transphobic discourse as ‘infectious stuff that you find all over the place... a really toxic media [that] enforces completely false stuff about gender.’ In Appendix A, I discuss the histories of trans representation in British media, introducing the relatively recent history of media hostility toward trans folk (Burns, 2018; 2019a; 2019b; Trans Media Watch, 2012).

Reflecting the extent of discourse levelled against trans people, in May 2019 the Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO), recognising the limited research into press coverage of trans issues, commissioned an editorial standards review (IPSO, 2019). In June 2020, a cross-party group of MPs and LGBT+ figures wrote to the BBC to complain that its news coverage of trans issues is ‘institutionally transphobic’ (PinkNews, 2020). In sum, despite positive shifts in the legal status of trans folk and the relative accessibility of trans and queer spaces in urban centres (although such spaces are likely transient and insecure even within large, liberal cities; Campkin and Marshall, 2017), a climate of hostility towards trans people and ‘trans’ ontologies is now embedded in popular discourse/public opinion.³¹ Since beginning this thesis, I have witnessed these seismic cultural shifts: participants have discussed how they are negatively portrayed, and have spoken to how their experiences are shaped by the force that popular representations exert (see chapters five to seven). As LGBT+ folk (and cis gay men in particular) once suffered under right-wing Government policy and media discourse around the AIDS epidemic from the 1980s,³² trans people are now at the mercy of similar dynamic shifts in how trans equality is framed, worked for, and resisted. Journalist and trans rights advocate Owen Jones (2017: para. 1) captured these repeated histories:

‘Today’s media-driven moral panic over [trans rights] seems like history repeating itself [...] [A]lmost daily articles [target] trans rights and trans people. The tropes are the same. Back then, gay people were sexual predators; a “gay lobby” was brainwashing children; being gay was a mental illness, or just a phase; and gay rights was political correctness gone mad. Replace “gay” with “trans”, and that’s the [current] state of the British press.’

The often hostile, inaccurate media portrayal of trans people in Britain has demonstrably impacted trans people and communities, although no research examining young trans people’s experiences exists. In a survey of 405 trans adults’ experiences of British media and user-generated

³¹ Channel 4’s *Genderquake* (2018) series offers an example of attempts to ‘put the legitimacy of transgender people up for debate’. *Genderquake* is paradigmatic of current media discourse as it presented trans voices and experiences as one of multiple (including significantly trans-hostile) *perspectives* on gender. Despite many prominent trans people refusing to take part to avoid debating the existence of trans folk, Channel 4 justified their format as ‘fair and justified’ (see PinkNews, 2018; open letter in *The Independent*, 2018).

³² This homophobic media rhetoric has been tied to the enactment of Section 28 in May 1988, a clause in British local government law which suppressed discussion of homosexuality in schools.

virtual content³³ 48.5% of respondents found media coverage ‘negative/very negative’ (with 76% overall finding coverage ‘inaccurate/very inaccurate’) compared to 13.5% finding coverage ‘positive/very positive’; 31% reported seeing coverage of trans issues at least weekly (Liu *et al.*, 2017). Trans ‘children’ (terminology used by the text) in particular were cited by respondents as being at the ‘epicentre of media backlash’ (*Ibid.*: 9). As Shon Faye (2017) notes, although trans issues receive increasing media attention, this involves ‘endlessly talking about the same things’ – cisgender people’s moral panics, bathrooms, and negativity around trans women – and are rarely violence against trans people/communities, trans youth, or positive coverage of trans people’s contributions to British society. Faye exposes the consequences of media vitriol: trans lives (and particularly those of trans women, trans BIPOC folk, and particularly Black trans women) are not afforded the humanity, voice, and care which cis folk receive, and become subsumed beneath harmful ‘debate’ and rhetoric (*Ibid.*). With this thesis, I counter hostile discursive narratives by drawing attention to a diversity of young trans voices.

Trans youth have been particular targets of media campaigns of hostility. Coverage of trans youth issues often questions their ability to make informed healthcare decisions, ‘debates’ questioning the realities of their gender, and the ‘social contagion’ narrative, whereby trans young people are said to be succumbing to peer pressure to transition and ‘come out’ (Serano, 2017). Media portrayals of young trans people accessing healthcare are often particularly tense and inaccurate, particularly in the context and aftermath of the aforementioned GRA consultation. Misinformation around gender confirmation surgeries and hormone treatments adopting false understandings of trans youth transitions are common (Vincent, 2018a). These stories persist despite evidence demonstrating that young people wait around 20 months or more (May 2019) following referral for their first appointment at GIDS (GIDS, 2019), whilst trans youth must meet stringent criteria before receiving certain prescriptions (Vincent, 2018a).³⁴ Examples capturing other contemporary trans exclusionary media approaches toward trans youth include a front-page feature in *TES*, a weekly teachers’ newspaper which in May 2019 directed its readers to Transgender Trend, an organisation which advocates for binary-gendered facilities organised according to biological sex and promotes the ‘social contagion’ narrative (PinkNews, 2019c).³⁵ These

³³ This has not appeared in a peer-reviewed context. Positive portrayals of trans people and characters (particularly when the latter are played by trans actors) were cited as the most positive media representation by respondents in this study.

³⁴ These experiences contribute to high dissatisfaction levels trans people experience in healthcare settings. 62% of respondents to Stonewall’s ‘LGBT in Britain’ study who had sought medical gender confirmation care were ‘unsatisfied’ with its timeliness; 41% reported that healthcare staff lacked certain trans healthcare knowledge (Stonewall, 2017a).

³⁵ This narrative, emerging from a 2018 study, proposes that trans youth are subject to ‘rapid-onset gender dysphoria’, and ‘develop’ gender dysphoria because of ‘social and peer contagion’. The paper’s

accounts have also impacted organisations and charities supporting trans youth (see e.g. PinkNews, 2019d). For example, Mermaids – a nationwide charity supporting trans youth until age 19 – was subject to press vilification and scrutiny after receiving a UK National Lottery Community Fund grant in November 2018 (National Lottery Community Fund, 2019). Having been temporarily de-funded (Lawrence and Taylor, 2019), following a review process their grant was re-made.³⁶ This demonstrates how media vitriol can have a lived and material impact on a community-wide basis, actively impacting the provision, accessibility, and financial stability of trans spaces for trans youth.

The following section considers government policy and rhetoric. As I demonstrate in chapter six, the *extended periods of time* over which such changes commonly occur and hostility which emerges around proposed change directly impacts trans youth.

1.4.2 Trans youth and government policy and rhetoric

This thesis was created alongside continual shifts in the UK Government's discourse, policy, and rhetoric around trans people and trans youth. Between 2016 and 2020, five Ministers of Women and Equalities across six periods were appointed (Morgan, Greening, Rudd, Mordaunt, Rudd again, and Truss). I carried out my research against the backdrop of the first Transgender Inquiry conducted by the WEC (2015-16), the first debate on trans issues in the House of Commons (December 2016; Hansard, 2016), the aforementioned GRA consultation (2018 in England), and a protracted period where the consultation went unpublished and trans-hostile movements against reform grew. During this period, trans rights have repeatedly risen to, and fallen away from, high-priority government agendas. Trans communities and organisations have been forced to undertake the collective emotional labour of mounting responses and challenges to ever-shifting and often obscure and obtuse government policy and discourse. During the research, participants talked of their acute awareness of how government policy and rhetoric impacts their everyday lives. For example, young people frequently expressed their experience of difficult periods of 'waiting' that slow, incremental changes to healthcare, equalities, and legal recognition legislation create.

methods/arguments have been widely critiqued by trans people and scientific communities, although the paper's findings are continually cited by conservative media. Transgender Trend has been supported by right-wing media outlet Breitbart, demonstrating 'growing connections between UK trans-exclusionary feminists, far-right media and the US religious right' (Phipps, 2020: 139).

³⁶ The case made against Mermaids reached national press coverage (National Lottery Community Fund, 2019) and represents how anti-trans lobbyists argue that charities supporting young trans people are becoming 'too powerful', or even coercive, with trans youth.

Significantly, in 2018, the UK Government produced an ‘LGBT Action Plan’ under then Minister for Women and Equalities Penny Mordaunt (UK GEO, 2018b). However, as Lawrence and Taylor (2019) note, its policy directives leave certain under-represented legislative areas unaddressed. These include LGBT+ asylum seekers’ rights, LGBT+ rights post-Brexit, and LGBT+ equalities in the UK’s devolved administrations. In 2018 Mordaunt described GRA reform and improvements to GICs as two of three LGBT+ issues ‘which have perhaps for too long been in the too tough in-tray for our society’ (*Ibid.*: 14). The aforementioned *Transgender Equality report* (WEC, 2016), however, has been cited as particularly responsive to trans youth; indeed, G.I. and other trans youth-affirming organisations provided evidence and scrutiny. The WEC (2016) advocated that ‘gender identity’ should become a recognised protected characteristic over ‘gender reassignment’ (thus recognising those who do not wish to medically transition). However, the Government’s response to the report has been lacklustre. For example, responding to evidence on homophobic and transphobic bullying, the government reminded the WEC of its homophobic and transphobic bullying ‘package’ (UK GEO, 2016: 25):

‘We absolutely agree that all young people should be free to be themselves and grow up free from fear of discrimination. We also believe schools should be free to decide for themselves how best they support this, and how they meet the needs of their pupils, in an age-appropriate and sensitive way’.

This approach, tentative to respond to the needs and concerns of trans youth, while placing responsibility for alleviating their negative lived experiences upon schools themselves, perhaps encapsulates the government’s broadly *passive approach* toward support LGBT+ young people and trans youth more specifically.

Some incremental improvements to trans youth rights have been made in certain settings. For example, NHS England and NHS Scotland undertook a trans healthcare consultation and gender neutral language is slowly becoming adopted in healthcare and legal settings (NHS England, 2018). Young people’s experiences of schooling are likely to improve with new legislation requiring that secondary school pupils are taught about gender identity and sexual orientation (previous evidence suggested that 2 in 5 LGBT+ students never receive any such schooling; Stonewall, 2017c), whilst primary schools will be required to teach around family diversity (Department for Education, 2019; Stonewall, 2019). A Government response to a 16,000-strong signatures petition for allowing ‘non-binary, gender non-conforming, gender-fluid and intersex people the right to self-identify’, committed to ‘determining what action it needs to take’ to allow non-binary people to live discrimination-free (UK Parliament Petitions, 2019: n.p.).

However, more recent Government rhetoric around trans issues has deviated from such promises. One of the largest flashpoints of tension in public discourse and dismay and worry in trans communities in recent years has been the aforementioned GRA consultation process and its

aftermath.³⁷ This public consultation, which excluded under 18s in its questioning, left young people open and vulnerable to transphobic and trans exclusionary groups and individuals. Calling for full, autonomous access to recognition for 16-18 year olds, and recognition for under 16s through parental application (or through ‘application by capable child’ as a contingency), G.I. (2018: n.p.) characterised the process as: ‘a missed opportunity to meaningfully explore options for gender recognition with young people whose current and future well-being depends on updates to the GRA, especially in the current climate where increasingly vocal, transphobic rhetoric questions trans people’s very existence.’ As G.I. demonstrate, the exclusion of trans youth from such potentially life-affirming legal and governmental processes leaves them vulnerable to questions around their existence, right to self-determine their gender, and ability to live through everyday life without being continually questioned. Worryingly, in April 2020, Women and Equalities Minister Liz Truss problematically committed to ensuring that ‘under 18s are protected from decisions that they could make, that are irreversible in the future’ and advocated for the ‘protection of single-sex spaces’³⁸ (UK Parliament, 2020: n.p.). Ultimately, despite exposing trans folk to discussion and ‘debate’ around their lives and existence, the only changes made to the GRA were to digitise the application and reduce the application fee (UK GEO, 2020).

In sum, complexities and contradictions surrounding governmental legislation and rhetoric around trans youth present distinct questions: How do the decisions and language choices made at the governmental, legislative scale influence how trans youth experience everyday life? And how do trans youth understand, resist, and seek to live under such conditions? Certain narratives presented in Part II begin addressing such questions. The following section considers these questions further in the context of socio-political movements that seek to exclude and marginalise trans people.

³⁷ Specific issues include expense incurred (to access documentation and/or travel to a potential panel), whilst feedback is required from obscured ‘elders’; those without/who do not desire medical transition are denigrated (see Burns, 2018; Gendered Intelligence, no date). This is no scope for non-binary people or youth under 18 to apply. Significantly, the English and Welsh GRA consultation process did not offer youth opportunities to respond; organisations such as Gendered Intelligence (2018) advocated including young people’s experiences into questions around ‘protected characteristics’ under the Equality Act 2010 and documentary evidence of gender (which young people would struggle to obtain). In Scotland, a majority of respondents agreed that those aged 16-17 should be able to acquire legal recognition of their ‘acquired gender’,³⁷ whilst 62% of respondents supported legislation recognising non-binary genders (Scottish Government, 2018). However, as some respondents problematically proposed that reform will increase risks facing women from men, the Scottish Government announced another round of consultation in June 2019 and proposed that the GRA process will not be fully de-medicalised and that recognition will not be extended to non-binary people (BBC, 2019b).

³⁸ I argue that such narratives villainise trans people and present trans youth as lacking in agency and ability to self-determine gender/make reasoned healthcare decisions. Treatments including hormone blockers currently available to under 18s are reversible and as Vincent (2018: 126) notes ‘do not need to be restricted to only the “most certain” people’.

1.4.3 British trans exclusionary feminisms and other movements' trans-hostile discourse

'It is time for a feminism of the monstrous.'

—Elena Rose (2020)

Coined as a neutral term by feminist blogger Viv Smythe (Smythe, 2018; Williams, 2016) to describe second wave feminist-informed understandings³⁹ of gender as binary and tied to supposed essentialist 'realities' of sexed bodies, trans exclusionary radical feminism (TERF)⁴⁰ has been adopted by certain feminist strands to object to trans people occupying feminist and women's movements and spaces.⁴¹ TERF proponents have sought in particular to invalidate trans women's existence as women (Jaffe, 2018; Phipps, 2020) and reposition trans people's *everyday encounters and activities* as 'invested with malign and rapacious intent' (Phipps, 2020: 105). By presenting trans bodies as 'bodies of fear', TERFs have also aimed to restrict trans women's already well-established and relatively unquestioned access to women-only *spaces*: toilets, women's refuges, single-gender hospital wards, and so on (Hines, 2018). In Britain, TERF politics have seeped into popular feminist discourse,⁴² initiating 'an escalating struggle over public speech' (Stryker and Bettcher, 2016: 6). Geographer Sophie Lewis (2019a: para. 9) argues that in Britain in particular, "TERFs have effectively succeeded in framing the question of trans rights entirely around their own concerns: that is, how these rights for others could contribute to 'female erasure.'" Lewis (2019a; 2019b) exposes the roots of British TERF politics in British colonial epistemologies of gender, race, and Empire, and in the absence of dialogue in Britain around the problematics of white feminism. Hines (2019) links the rise of TERF politics to the increasing and improving visibility and legal status of trans people and movements in British society, the cultural prominence of trans exclusionary feminists, and the ease of transmission of transphobic viewpoints through social media platforms.

The objections of such 'gender critical' (or what we might term *gender conservative*; Ahmed, 2019a) feminists are not new, however: prominent feminist writers/academics have, in work often connected to anti-sex worker movements, marginalised trans people since at least the 1970s (Bettcher and Garry, 2009; Hines, 2019; Phipps, 2020; Stryker and Bettcher, 2016; Withers, 2010). More recently, gender conservative feminist arguments can also be traced to government policy regarding GICs, which

³⁹ However, this framing undervalues the multiple, complex positionalities that feminist people in Britain embody (Withers, 2010).

⁴⁰ Nevertheless, radical and intersectional feminisms continue to advocate for trans inclusivity (Williams, 2016). Many trans exclusionary radical feminists have portrayed 'TERF' as a slur (Jaffe, 2018); Jaffe (2018) has instead referred to TERF politics seeking to tie gender to sexed characteristics as 'AFRET': 'academic feminism radically excising trans people'.

⁴¹ This approach, though often not in direct *opposition*, clearly contrasts transfeminisms (see glossary).

⁴² Certain TERF movements also have links to right-wing, conservative politics and evangelicalism (Gleeson, 2018).

historically required (and in some cases continue to ask) their service users to ‘adhere to traditional ideas of masculine or feminine behaviour as a condition of treatment’ (Jacques, 2018: n.p). In a narrative typical of gender conservative feminisms, Grosz’ (1994) deconstructions of bodily dualisms and singularities in *Volatile Bodies* leads her to refuse to trouble gender binaries. Grosz’ (1994: 207) refusal culminates in painfully transphobic writing wherein trans women (referred to as men) are shockingly presented as unable to ‘even with surgical intervention, feel or experience what it is like to be, or live, as women’. Clearly, this argument, tying women’s experiences to a singular body/bodily experience, re-essentialises sex characteristics. Grosz reiterated her support of these statements in 2014, stating that trans people ‘are making a category mistake when they think that by altering their body chemically or surgically they’re getting the body of another sex’ (Wolfe, 2014: 120). Such ‘gender critical’ feminisms entangled in cis privilege (Ahmed, 2016a) are demonstrably both anti-trans and anti-feminist, as they ‘tighten rather than loosen the hold of the gender system’ (Ahmed, 2019a: n.p.); indeed, gender conservatism is also evident in the policing of cis bodies that do not fit proscribed gender norms, such as those of cis women who are perceived as trans.⁴³ Hines (2019: 155) positions the TERF project as ‘a discursive and material practice that is in breach of the goals of equality and dignity [...] one that runs counter to the ability to fulfil a liveable life or, often, a life at all.’ However, for Ahmed (2016a), only by reactively ‘chipping away’ at institutions and norms reinforced by TERFs – through such embodied resilience and resistance mechanisms discussed in chapter seven – can trans survival and resistance be ensured.

Trans youth are particularly vulnerable to, and impacted by, gender conservative rhetoric. Rising GIDS referrals have been referred to by gender conservative campaigners as a ‘social contagion’ and ‘rush to transition’. Trans youth support groups are portrayed by lobby groups as seeking to control young people’s bodily autonomies and gender identities. These ideas, particularly around the ‘social contagion’ narrative, have even received academic publication in peer-reviewed journals (Serano, 2019). Indeed, I witnessed gender conservatives’ public hostility at a conference designed to support trans youth and disseminate research positively documenting their life experiences (TransForming Spaces, London, October 2018). I arrived at the venue confronted by protesters distributing flyers laden with transphobic stances on gender, loudly spreading hatred and disgust toward the young people present. Distressingly, the conference was introduced with a warning around maintaining the safety and comfort of youth present and conference organisers were forced to form a guarding presence around the venue. Simultaneously, however, I was overjoyed that trans youth voices, displaying the resilience

⁴³ Much non-academic work focusses on this positioning of cis people who do not fit gender norms through transphobic discourse (including cis lesbian butch and masc(uline) women described as ‘out-of-place’ in binary-gendered bathrooms).

and resistance of the young trans community (discussed in chapter seven), continued to be projected, heard, and valued by those present.

Similar protests are now commonplace; some have received national media attention, including a 2018 protest at London Pride conducted by group ‘Get the L Out!’ which argues that trans people threaten cis lesbian women’s rights (BBC, 2018a; Phipps, 2020). Such campaigns often use language that frames trans youth as especially vulnerable to manipulation or as lacking the competency to self-determine their gender. Trans youth, from this perspective, as discussed in chapter three, do not fit into cisnormative/heteronormative, linear conceptions of futurity, and are therefore vulnerable to discourse ‘protecting’ young people. However, the filtering of pervasive British TERF and other trans-hostile politics into young trans people’s everyday lives and embodied feelings/encounters has not been well-documented, particularly around online spaces where harassment can occur with greater frequency. This is despite trans voices documenting the public shaming and misgendering of trans youth, and questions made around their health/legal rights (see chapters five and six). Accordingly, the following section considers efforts within trans communities and by trans allies to increase positive representation of trans youth.

1.4.4 Young trans communities and efforts to increase trans youth visibility

Despite prominent hostile discourse surrounding trans young people in Britain, and funding cuts to LGBT+ youth services in the austerity era (McNamara, 2018), a new ‘trans culture’ of affinity and activism has emerged in response to the concerns and issues discussed in this chapter. As chapter seven demonstrates – despite hostilities and other everyday life difficulties – trans spaces, communities, charities, and movements continue to flourish and expand, enabling trans people’s embodiments of resilience, resistance and restoration. Here, I discuss trans-affirming movements and spaces frequently mentioned by participants (many of whom played roles in organising and maintaining such events and sites.) Many informed my research outlook and methodology.

There are now several Pride events dedicated to, and run by, trans communities, in celebration of trans, intersex and other gender diverse people and their experiences. These events, such as the first Trans Pride London in September 2019, attempt to offer collective solidarities and visibility (see e.g. PinkNews, 2019) through counter-spaces that respond to Pride spaces which can be felt exclusionary by some (as stories in chapter seven attest) and have recently often been infiltrated by trans-hostile protests and encounters. Many participants annually attended residential or day trips to Trans Pride Brighton, the first of its kind in the UK. In 2017 and 2018, I also attended this event and its associated conference which annually grows in size and reach: in field notes, I described one space at the event as a ‘trans space unconcerned with meeting cis expectations which could wait outside for another day.’

Other events such as UK Black Pride and protest movements such as Black Trans Lives Matter have drawn attention to issues faced by BIPOC trans people and offered trans youth opportunities to resist hostile policy and everyday life conditions. Trans people have used online platforms and activist spaces to simultaneously call for such measures as self-referral to gender identity services, and the removal of ‘justification’ procedures, whereby those engaged in healthcare are required to justify their presentation and identity to seek treatment, and to contest limited consultation processes lacking in trans voices and inclusivity.

Other spaces and movements important to participants included Action for Trans Health, an activist group that promotes trans health issues and lobbies for democratic trans healthcare. Meanwhile, virtual spaces offer trans youth opportunities to connect with one another, share knowledge and experiences, and develop representation and empowerment. In chapter seven, I explore such sites as locations of resilience, resistance, and restoration. Other participants at G.I. frequently discussed valuing such spaces as Open Barbers, a trans-inclusive hair salon in London, alongside queer nightclub spaces, virtual spaces including online support/common interest groups and ‘group chats’, and so on. Other young people look to published narratives of trans experience and to trans youth sharing content on social media sites and vlogging platforms including Instagram and YouTube, while others described being overawed by the presence of young trans lives in cultural spaces such as the Museum of Transology in Brighton, which similarly to this thesis focuses on trans voices and collaboration through creative work and representation. Other youth organisations offer similar spaces to that of G.I., although there are regional and urban-rural disparities in access and few youth spaces are trans-led (McNamara, 2018).

1.5 Chapter conclusion

In this chapter, by examining existing research and available data – much of which is analysed and drawn together here for the first time – I have overviewed a spectrum of issues, spaces, and discourses concerning young trans lives in Britain. In doing so, I have troubled the linear ‘getting better’ narrative that broadly persists around trans people and LGBT+ folk (Lawrence and Taylor, 2019). Indeed, I have demonstrated that many trans people in Britain face myriad challenges and concerns that hold the potential to infiltrate most everyday spaces. However, this chapter has also pointed to a dearth of research attending to young trans people’s lives and experiences; existing research has focussed on harmful or extreme events in trans youth lives. By presenting and exploring young trans people’s voices and stories collated through collaborative research, and focussing on the spatial, temporal, and socio-material elements of, and forces influencing (see chapter three), trans youth embodied experiences, this thesis responds to this problematic research gap. In the following chapter, I consider published

academic work on trans lives in the social sciences and in geography, positioning this thesis in relation to existing work in the 'trans geographies' canon and beyond. My work in this chapter provides the basis for engaging with young trans people differently to the work I review.

Examining geographical literatures exploring trans lives

2.1 Chapter introduction: Conceptualising and researching trans lives in social science

In this chapter, I explore how trans people's lives have been conceptualised and researched in the social sciences and in human geography.⁴⁴ In the previous chapter, I indicated that these fields have predominantly focussed on adult trans people's experiences through quantitative and 'top down' methodologies and analyses and have often not deeply engaged with (the often more radical) trans and queer scholars' work. Further qualitative social science approaches that contest research power relations, centralise trans voices, stories, and knowledges, and are attentive to intersectionality are needed to understand trans lives from the perspectives and directives of trans people themselves. I situate my own work alongside the endeavours of trans and queer scholars who produce such research and contest problematic approaches to researching trans experiences. As chapter four also discusses, cisgender social scientists have often conducted research *on* (rather than *with*) trans people without tailoring ethics, recruitment, and researching practices to the specificities of trans communities or particular trans people (Humphrey *et al.*, 2020; Pearce, 2018b; Vincent, 2018c). Consequently, as trans scholars have attested, until recently many social science analyses have (a) been spatially and contextually limited, (b) used problematic, uniformed, or outdated language, and/or (c) uncritically extrapolated trans experiences from those of cisgender lesbian and gay people (*Ibid.*). Furthermore, outside of trans studies and queer sociologies, *young* trans people's voices and everyday experiences have had a limited presence in social science research and geographical scholarship in particular. Throughout this chapter and the wider thesis, I demonstrate the responsiveness of my research and writing to these concerns.

Within geography, I align my work with recent research in the queer geographies sub-discipline which foregrounds trans lives under the 'trans geographies' banner. In this chapter, I position the theoretical, methodological, and empirical innovation of this thesis in relation to this work and that of queer social scientists exploring trans people's everyday experiences. I examine how space has been conceptualised in such research to begin developing my theoretical approach to young trans lives in chapter three, and argue that work remains to ensure that geographical research works *with* and is responsive to or developed by trans people. Before doing so, I first situate my work in relation to the 'children's geographies' sub-discipline, before positioning this thesis relative to trans studies, a broad (set of) field(s) that documents and explores the nuances and dynamics of trans lives, bodies, spaces, identities, and ontologies.

⁴⁴ Note that aspects of this chapter are published in *Geography Compass* (Todd, 2021).

2.2 Situating this thesis relative to children's geographies

In this thesis, my work to explore the everyday geographies of young trans people's lives is adjacent to – and indeed contributes to – debates in the 'children's geographies'⁴⁵ sub-discipline which, in broad terms, reflects on 'differentiations of contemporary childhoods—the social tensions and institutional constraints that impinge on children as they go about their daily lives; the ways in which social constructs such as age, class, race, [and] (dis)ability mesh and mix to (re)configure experience; and how place and space matter in shaping [youth] opportunities, behaviours and realities' (Matthews, 2003: 3-4). Research agendas that have dominated in children's geographies have focussed on familial and intergenerational relations, and both 'which adults and which children win (and which lose) from the current organisation of society' and how 'adults' lives are shaped by the presence (or absence) of children' (Holloway, 2014: 382, 384). I seek to critique and queer these foci, by concentrating on the minutiae of young trans people's everyday lives (rather than exploring their impact on adult/cis lives), questioning the relative lack of (although growing) attention paid to youth sexualities and gender diversities in children's geographies,⁴⁶ and centralising the embodied experiences of trans youth as they articulate them through the 'more-than-representational' approaches of the thesis outlined in Karl's story (see preface/detailed discussion in chapter three). Indeed, through its focus on the minutiae and specificities of young trans people's lives and lived experiences and the ways that they are impacted by structures, events, affects, and forces at multiple spatial, temporal, and political scales, this research is responsive to 'an urgent need for more coherent research on youth geographies [which reflects] the profound ways in which representations, relationships, embodiments and lived experiences of youth are being configured by dynamic contemporary societal and structural conditions' (Smith and Mills, 2019: 1). Furthermore, the thesis – in its focus on young people's stories of trans and queer cultures, spaces, and social movements, and participants' experiences of spaces/times of everyday significance and/or 'out-of-placeness' and sites wherein their agency is limited, removed, or upheld/(re)formed (such as 'safe spaces; see chapter seven) – forms part of a wider move to respond to children's geographies' 'certain reticence to engage with the complexities of youth itself and the contemporary geographies of youth *cultures*' (*Ibid.*: 3, original emphasis). This thesis can be situated particularly close to youth geographies work around 'safe spaces', social activism/political mobilisation, youth mental health and wellbeing, virtual spaces/technologies, and millennial/Generation Y and Z lives (*Ibid.*; Djohari *et al.*, 2018; Jeffrey, 2012; Mitchell and Ellwood, 2012).

⁴⁵ As Smith and Mills (2019: 2) note, only 'very few' academic publications self-define as belonging to a 'youth geographies' subfield rather than the 'children's geographies' sub-discipline. Consequently, there has been a relative absence of work focussed on *youth* lives in geography (*Ibid.*; Valentine, 2019).

⁴⁶ Focussing on young people's diverse genders and sexualities is rarely identified as a priority for children's/youth geographies (see e.g. van Blerk, 2019).

Although many participants in this research would not associate with the term ‘children’ (and indeed many were aged 18 and over⁴⁷), I acknowledge that there is potential for a productive conversation between my work and that of children’s/youth geographies scholars, particularly as many seek to – as I also articulated in my ethos in the preface – adopt intersectional analyses (Rodó-de-Zárate, 2017), highlight youth voices, and raise young people’s agency in research as part of a participatory research agenda (Kraftl, 2013). Relatively recent efforts to engage in non-representational theoretical approaches to childhood and youth – in alignment with the ‘more-than-representational’ approach I take in this thesis (see chapter three) – solidify this potential relationship. Although critiques of work in children’s geographies have, in the past, focussed on its ‘atheoretical’ or theoretically underdeveloped nature (Colls and Hörschmann, 2009), as becomes apparent across the thesis, I find affinity with work that explores the ‘material-spatial-embodied-evental’ aspects of young people’s everyday, banal, even mundane lives and geographies (Alasuutari *et al.* 2020; Horton and Kraftl, 2006a; 2006b) and scholarship that takes non-representational approaches to both theorising the subjectivities, bodies, and political lives of young and to developing non-representational methodological approaches that are somatic, collaborative, and participatory (Mitchell and Ellwood, 2012). Indeed, like scholars who explore youth lives through non-representational analyses, the theoretical and methodological approaches and processes I have undertaken and designed in this research – as I expand on in chapters three and four and throughout Part II of the thesis – attune to the ‘mundane, material, practiced, embodied, affectual, ongoing, contingent, messy, playful and *more*’ (Horton and Kraftl, 2006a: 88, original emphasis) of young trans people’s lives, stories, and self-representations. Building on scholarly efforts which have often sought to emphasise the significance and affective prominence of everyday events and materialities in young people’s lives, I explore why and how the everyday as it is lived by young trans people comes to matter and becomes felt/lived along particular emotional, affective, and embodied lines because of participants’ transness and youth (and occupation of multiple additional intersecting axes of difference) *and* their wider positioning within societal structures and particular spaces and times.

In alignment with my work in this thesis, children’s geographies has, in the last decade and a half in particular, concentrated on young bodies and young people’s embodied experiences as methodological and analytical foci (Colls and Hörschmann, 2009; Horton and Kraftl, 2006a; 2006b; Valentine, 2010), in response to concerns that children’s geographies had paid ‘little consideration [to] the body as a corporeal entity’ nor ‘appreciate[d] the role of embodiment in the processes through

⁴⁷ Although note that several participants described themselves as ‘baby trans’ – a descriptor sometimes used in trans communities/spaces for a person who has just ‘come out’ or otherwise begun embracing/recognising their transness. This descriptor aligns with conceptions of ‘trans years’ and trans ageing (see ‘Trans adults/older trans people and “trans years”’ entry in glossary; Pearce, 2018a; 2018b).

which children participate in social life' (Woodyer, 2008: 349). This work has involved expansion on both 'the movement of [young people's] bodies across, within and outside of spaces, [and] the space of the [young] body itself' (Colls and Hörschmann, 2009) through analyses attentive to bodily materiality, affect, and emotion, and human/non-human relations. Children's geographies scholars have, for example, considered the entanglements of young people's bodies, sensory experiences, and bodily movements in relation to theories of the material and place in museum contexts (Hackett *et al.*, 2018). I find affinity with this work in Part II of the thesis, which continually returns to questions of the intensity and significance of participants' particular experiences or spatial encounters through a recognition of their temporally extended or time-messing impact, felt through the body. As Hackett *et al.* (2018: 487) state, '[a]fter leaving toxic spaces, their impact on bodies and minds, including the embodied residue and the visceral ways of re-making sense of yourself afterwards, can live on for months (or years) afterwards'. Participants' stories in Part II reflect how, for young trans people, this embodied 'residue' emerges (from both toxic and affirming experiences/environments) and becomes continually (re)felt and (re)confronted.

As Holt *et al.* (2019: 126) state of the *Children's Geographies* academic journal, there is a desire to emphasise and recognise 'the vast array of ways that geographies of children and youth can be done and the multitudes of geographies of children and youth that exist.' Despite this assertion and the progress made to recognise a diversity of youth voices beyond the globalised world (*Ibid.*; Jeffrey, 2012), within the sub-discipline there is, problematically, almost a total dearth of research or mention of young trans people (although see Costello and Duncan, 2006) and indeed very little discussion of youth LGBT+ lives with 'little traffic [...] between the two subfields of children's geographies and geographies of sexualities' (Philo, 2011: 126; although see McKinnon *et al.*, 2017), as I discuss remains the case between youth LGBTQ+ geographies and the geographies of sexualities literature. In the remainder of this chapter, I discuss the significance and political importance of highlighting young queer and/or trans voices in geographical research, reflecting on steps that geographers must take in order to reflect the full and [real] diversities and intersections of subjectivities that many queer/trans youth occupy. This is an urgent research agenda that must take place within children's geographies and, as this chapter reflects on, across other sub-disciplinary traditions and emerging research themes. The following section continues situating the thesis relative to another academic body/bodies of work: trans studies.

2.3 Situating this thesis in the context of trans studies

Trans theory and transgender studies emerged in the 1990s⁴⁸ (with limited institutional support) in response to ‘epistemic disconnect’ with feminist and queer studies and their limited conceptual tools for exploring the lived realities of gender beyond the ‘dominant binary sex/gender ideology of Eurocentric modernity’ (Stryker, 2006: 3; see Bettcher and Garry, 2009; Kunzel, 2014; Stryker and Currah, 2014; Stryker *et al.*, 2008; Suess *et al.*, 2014; Valentine, 2007). Prosser (1998), for example, argued that feminist and queer theories/theorists problematically used trans bodies as ‘tropes’ to challenge binaries and develop gender theories. In the 1990s and 2000s, the term ‘transgender’ entered widespread use, the *International Journal of Transgenderism* was founded, and universities began teachings on transgender studies. During this period trans studies emerged and became a diverse body of work straddling multiple disciplines including the social/medical sciences, arts and humanities, and beyond (Kunzel, 2014; Stryker, 2006). As Stryker (2006: 3) describes, early trans studies work led by trans people themselves helped to move conversations around trans lives, both academic and otherwise, from pathologized analyses to intersectionally-informed conversations around trans people’s everyday lived experiences, embodiments, and identities (while maintaining that the gendered body remains where biopower is concentrated; Stryker *et al.*, 2008). Geographers, including myself, are now following trans studies’ *turn to the specificities of particular trans people’s embodied experiences* (Rooke, 2010b).

As Stryker and Currah (2014) explain, trans studies is now a largely autonomous field concerned with the operation, mechanisms, experience, and embodiments of trans people’s *everyday lives* without being exclusively grounded in LGBTQ+ spaces. Largely researched, theorised, and written by trans people with a ‘passionate stake’ in examining ‘injustices and violence that often attend the perception of gender nonnormativity and atypicality’ (Stryker, 2006: 3),⁴⁹ the field develops intersectional understandings that reflect the realities of trans bodies, genders, identities, and *lives* as multiple, diverse, and – in a framing that aligns with my own approach to young trans lives – as continually emerging (Pearce *et al.*, 2020b).⁵⁰ Personal narratives and experiences are shared ‘not only to bring the dire social conditions of trans people to light, but also to explore the autonomous means with which [they] have achieved survival despite the state’ and its violences (Gleeson and Hoad, 2019: 178).

⁴⁸ Valentine (2007) and Stryker and Currah (2014) trace trans studies’ development to Stone’s (1992) ‘Posttranssexual Manifesto’.

⁴⁹ Although Emmett Harsin Drager calls for ‘a more robust history of trans that is not rooted in these binaries of vernacular versus medical and authentic versus inauthentic, but rather is full of messiness, contradictions, disappointments, and unexpected outcomes’ (Chu and Harsin Drager, 2019: 107).

⁵⁰ However, trans studies remains saturated by whiteness with trans people of colour’s lives often incorporated as an addendum, whilst much of its research remains concentrated in the North Atlantic (Stryker and Currah, 2014; Ellison *et al.*, 2017; Vidal-Ortiz, 2014).

Crucially for this thesis' work, trans studies scholars have extensively examined and contested the medicalisation of trans youth, and have refuted and destabilised narratives emergent from dominant understandings of the 'child-body' as always-already incomplete. In doing so they have destabilised trans 'adolescence along with fixed notions of gender identity, sexuality, and selfhood', offering possibilities for 'reconstruction, revision, and remaking' of trans youth subjectivities beyond 'developmental imperative[s]' (Castañeda, 2014; Owen, 2014: 23). This ground-breaking work enables me to explore young trans people's everyday lives without resorting to critiquing and destabilising trans or gender as ontological categories of difference.

As I demonstrate in this chapter, despite tracking the temporalities and spatialities of trans people's lives (see chapter three for detailed discussion) – even if only implicitly – trans studies' conceptual framings have rarely permeated geographical enquiry. Indeed, trans studies scholars have conceptualised queer and trans spaces in their specificities (Crawford, 2015), and have examined how trans subjects and bodies are surveilled, restricted, othered, oppressed, enabled, and augmented across, between, and within particular spaces by multiple actors, mechanisms, and (other) bodies. For example, trans studies academics have highlighted that public/state space in particular constitutes – as discussed in chapter five through reference to mechanisms of 'out-of-placeness' that trans youth in certain spaces – 'a series of architectures [...] designed to keep others vigilant in their surveillance of [trans] bodies' (Crawford, 2015: 19). Meanwhile, the term 'trans' can be considered inherently spatial,⁵¹ as a verb which *does* something to, and *receives* something from, space (although others have problematised the 'verbing' of trans; see Long Chu and Harsin Drager, 2019), with 'transing' constituting a space (re)making 'practice that takes place within, as well as across or between, gendered spaces' (Stryker *et al.*, 2008: 12; see glossary). Furthermore, certain work in trans studies has committed to spatially interrogating the 'locality and specificity' of trans lives and spaces, from everyday spaces frequented by trans folk, to the ever-moving space of the body itself (Crawford, 2015: 20). Trans studies' expansion on *young* trans people's experiences also seems particularly geographical and spatially-attentive. Of some of the most recent publications, for example, Kennedy (2020: 46, my emphasis) examines how trans youth experience moments and periods of 'epiphany' relating to their identity as trans, and argues that such epiphanies are deeply connected to both '*obstacles* to trans emergence on a general level, as well as *resistance* to these obstacles', while Austin *et al.* (2020) explore the 'life saving' role of online spaces in opposition to the lack of affirmation found in spaces of everyday life. These concerns and trajectories align with the thesis' narrative arc in their allusion to young trans people's resilience, resistance, and

⁵¹ As Brice (2020: 665) states, 'trans experience speaks to a longstanding geographical problem – how identities are mapped to bodies – in new and productive ways'.

restoration practices/mechanisms that trans youth continually create in response to everyday difficulties and hostilities.

However, certain trans studies publications have '[set] up a false dichotomy between space and subjectivity wherein space is passive and subjects are active and in control of their world[; one] apparently not shaped by architectural traces of old and new ideologies' (Crawford, 2015: 21). This understanding, highlighting trans studies' relative failure to account for the agency embedded in, or exerted by, space over how trans lives are lived (see chapter three), illustrates the value of geographical approaches – particularly those attentive to socio-materialities – to enlivening existing work around trans people's experiences in space. As March (2021: 466) notes, a 'closer relationship to trans* scholarship also brings geographical research much closer to urgent politics' around trans lives. In this thesis, I therefore argue that undertaking a geographical approach to trans people's bodies, subjectivities, and experiences, and to young trans lives in particular, is a necessary political act that can enliven and enrich existing trans studies (see chapter three for expansion on my theoretical approach). My work also augments trans studies by meeting Chu and Harsin Drager's (2019: 113) call for further trans scholarship that 'refuses both the pomp of antinormativity and the circumstance of the posthuman for something slower, smaller, more tuned in to the ways in which [trans people's] ordinary life fails to measure up to the political analyses [trans studies theorists] thrust upon it.' To this end, this thesis contributes to literature that both explores the spatial and temporal minutiae of trans people's everyday lives in their full diversity and complexity and moves beyond over-theorising trans lives and representing trans people's lived experiences as solely difficult.

In the following sections, I consider how geographers have examined trans people's spatial experiences. I then interrogate the 'trans geographies' sub-discipline, and demonstrate methodological and conceptual absences and failings often perpetuated by geographical research. I consider the relative failure of queer and trans geographies to attend to *young* trans people's lives, and to framings/approaches important to this thesis, including temporalities and intersectionality. This allows me to situate this thesis in its wider disciplinary context and establish its theoretical (chapter three) and methodological (chapter four) innovation and specificity.

2.4 Trans people, gender diversity, and geographical research

Similarly to most academic disciplines, as evidenced by studies of the European academic context (Hines *et al.*, 2018), trans lives and voices have been largely absent from geographical research. Indeed, geographers have often approached trans lives through an 'assumed lived experience that does not actually engage with trans people themselves' (Browne and Nash, 2010: 6). Historically, geographical

work understood trans lives through frameworks co-opted from studies exploring cisgender LGB+ people's lived experiences, without recognising the specificity and diversity of trans people's experiences, knowledges, and spatial encounters. As a result, there is an absence of geographical work exploring both the social and material minutiae and *diversity* of trans lives and the spaces they occupy. As the following sections demonstrate, only recently have these failures begun to be rectified by exploring trans subjectivities and bodies as they are (re)formed through their everyday spatial interactions (Anderson, 2019; Browne, 2007; Browne *et al.*, 2010; Johnston, 2016; 2018; Rosenberg and Oswin, 2015). Given the complexity and multiplicity of trans youth in the UK presented in chapter one, and the diversity of their life experiences and the prevalence of absences in geographical research and its unequal focus upon negative tropes and experiences, this research therefore makes a timely and necessary contribution to the field. This thesis represents one of the first in-depth critical geographical explorations of the everyday spatial/temporal interactions and experiences of trans youth that reflects on the diversity of young trans lives and engages with voices and narratives shared by young trans people through participatory methods they helped shape (see chapter four).

2.4.1 *Trans people and the geographies of sexualities*

Queer geographical study has flourished since the publication of the landmark volume *Mapping Desire* that sought to 'divorce' sexuality geographies from feminist studies (Bell and Valentine, 1995: 11),⁵² with the immediate period following its publication grounding the idea that spaces are never pre-made in the direction of a particular sexual identity but are actively and continually produced along lines of heterosexuality, queerness, heteronormativity, and so on (Bell and Valentine, 1995; Binnie, 1997). A broad body of geographical work under the 'geographies of sexualities' and the cross-disciplinary 'sexualities and space' umbrellas emerged as a result of such efforts (Ghaziani, 2019). Within geography, these umbrella foci (alongside the more progressive and expansive 'queer geographies') have been maintained as the primary means of exploring queer experience of space, such that trans lives and geographies are often peripheral or obscured (see for example Browne and Brown, 2016a; SSQRG, no date).

Until recently, as with other disciplines including gender studies and women's studies (Hines *et al.*, 2018), the geographies of sexualities (GoS) literature largely marginalised or included trans people only superficially, and often adopted problematic approaches to exploring and representing their lived

⁵² Although as Wright (2010: 50-60) charts, the emergence of 'sexuality studies' across academic disciplines has – by presenting an image of feminism as 'homogenous or monolithic [and] unfractured by debates concerning race, sexuality, normativity and essentialism' – occasionally contributed to an 'epistemological violence' positioning feminist writings as anachronistic.

experiences premised upon cis lesbian women's and gay men's experiences and subject positions in queer spaces perceived as exclusively for cisgender lesbian/gay people (Brown, 2012; Casey, 2007; Nash, 2010a; 2011; Rosenberg and Oswin, 2015; Weier, 2019). GoS literatures has prioritised examining the spatialities of homophobia (Binnie and Valentine, 1999) and the 'heterosexualisation' of space (Oswin, 2008), has been intersectionally uneven (Brown, 2012). Moreover, although geographers have understood that everyday spaces are underpinned by heterosexuality, binary-gendered expectations, and normative femininities/masculinities (Browne and Brown, 2016), GoS' focus has been located in urban 'gayborhoods' (Ghaziani, 2019; see e.g. Bain *et al.*, 2015) and implicitly white spaces (Oswin, 2008; Rosenberg, 2015). As such, GoS has understood 'the hetero/homo binary as the primary defining spatial moment' (Nash, 2010a: 584). These foci have led geographers to explore sexuality (rather than gender diversity) as a 'multiscalar activity for developing meaning, power and politics in the most intimate and public of settings around the world' (Wright, 2010: 57). In all, the GoS literature has not focussed on trans people's experiences within everyday spaces dominated by cisgender or trans-hostile norms, expectations, and ideals or indeed those of (other) queer folk who experience life beyond binaries, or are marginalised according to such intersecting axes of difference as race, class, and disability.

Only deep searches of queer geographical literature will find mention of trans people, with most studies being premised upon problematic approaches, such as a desire to include trans experiences in future work, or including only few research encounters with trans folk. In this literature, trans people have often been problematically grouped under the 'sexualities' umbrella. This failing presumes a universality of queer experiences, and has subjugated or erased trans voices within a wider LGBT+ nexus. Efforts to examine trans lives have depicted trans people's genders as 'fluid and ethereal' by referencing performativity (Browne *et al.*, 2010: 574). Crucially, despite constituting an estimated majority of the trans population in the UK (see chapter one), the lives and experiences of non-binary, genderqueer people, and other trans folk who live beyond gender binaries are almost non-existent within geography (Anderson, 2019; March, 2020).

Despite GoS' reluctance to reflect upon trans experiences and engage trans folk, some geographically-informed scholars⁵³ historically attended to trans experiences. For example, trans academic-activist Namaste (1996), contemplating of trans experiences of public spaces and explicitly *trans spaces*, coined the term 'genderbashing' to explore violences and assaults made against queer folk

⁵³ There is an often messy distinction between GoS and *queer geographies*. As Knopp (2007: 22) expresses, the queer geography 'project' has been more explicitly 'deconstructive and critical, and suspicious of certainties, universal truths, and ontological imaginations about the way the world works that are mechanistic or instrumental.'

self-presenting outside of gendered norms. In work that remains resonant with trans youth (as demonstrated in chapter five; see e.g. Mark's story), Namaste (1996: 228) recognised that trans people *must* present and 'live as' a binary-gendered person – i.e. *pass* as cisgender (see glossary) – 'in order to avoid verbal and physical harassment' across multiple spatial contexts. In words that speak to inequalities that persist in LGBTQ+ communities (as evidenced in chapter one/across participant narratives in Part II), one of their participants, a trans woman, fervently exclaims, 'I'm so tired of faggots thinking that they have it the worst. They don't know the half of it! It's not they have to pass everyday for a genetic [...] and it's not like they ever deal with passing and stuff when they whine about violence against them...' (*Ibid.*: 229). Namaste's (2000) later work *Invisible Lives* considered trans people's everyday lives across myriad social settings. Throughout, Namaste (2000) draws out the erasure of trans people and their lives through language and marginalisation within public services and healthcare, and even nationalism, which limits associations between trans folk and citizenship (indeed, citizenship remains reliant on the bodily/embodied politics of gender recognition; Hines, 2010a; Hines and Santos, 2018). This work remains instructional to current scholarship – and indeed influenced this thesis' theoretical and methodological approaches – by arguing against objectivist approaches positioning trans people as 'object[s] of academic discourse' and a uniform, homogenous community and by calling for a diversity of trans people and communities to be *actively engaged* in research (Namaste, 2000: 22).

Two decades on, Johnston's (2018) work illustrates that trans folk still experience such everyday contestations and struggles concentrated in particular spaces: many face difficulty encountering exceptional spaces including borders, and are subjected to state control of bodily autonomy, healthcare, and health rights. As geographers Rosenbeg and Oswin (2015) and DasGupta (2018; 2019) argue, trans refugees receive state-sanctioned violence through carceral power and spaces and hostile, cisgender and gender binary-expecting asylum/immigration regimes. Elsewhere, Knopp (2007: 24) argues *queer geography* is well-placed to 'help with understandings of spatialities of resistance to gender regimes', citing virtual spaces and activism as productive research loci (see chapter seven discussing participants' resistance techniques/spaces). Indeed a body of work has considered the relative inclusivity of LGBTQ+ spaces to trans people (Browne, 2009; Doan, 2007; Nash, 2010; 2011; Nash and Bain, 2007; Rosenberg, 2015). This work tracks such sites' 'essentialist expectations' (Nash, 2011: 203), and their often racialised, cisnormative, and trans-hostile tendencies productive of a *lack* of safety – as several participants attested (see chapter seven, e.g. Anya and Cal's story) – for some trans people. The following section reflects on the emergence of 'trans geographies' (Browne *et al.*, 2010) as a distinct body of geographical work that explicitly explores the spatialities of trans lives.

2.5 Burgeoning trans geographies

A growing body of work focusses on the spatialities of trans exclusion and marginalisation: trans geographies (Brown, 2012; Browne *et al.*, 2010; Hopkins, 2020). Petra Doan's (2010: 635) autoethnographies, telling us that '[f]or the gender variant, the tyranny of gender intrudes on every aspect of the spaces in which we [trans people] live and constrains the behaviors that we display', provide an impetus for this work (see also Brice's [2020] autoethnographic work) and inspired my formulation of this thesis. By describing the inscription and embeddedness of gender norms within most everyday sites as 'gender tyranny', Doan (2010) counters cisnormative/heteronormative assumptions around everyday environments such as the home, which she demonstrates can be infiltrated or *defined* by gender tyranny. To demonstrate this 'tyranny', Doan hones in on everyday moments and spaces in her life where transphobia and transmisogyny have surfaced – many of which are shared by this thesis' participants – including in an elevator, a taxi, the workplace, the classroom, bathrooms, malls, and the home (*Ibid.*). Her narratives also demonstrate how and where trans people's authentic selves cannot emerge authentically because of particular spaces' norms and constraints, but instead – in mechanisms that young people's stories presented in chapter five share – must be altered to maintain personal safety or avoid disrupting cisgender people's comfort (also Namaste, 1996). Doan illustrates both the perils of visibility in trans-hostile society and the personal embodied resilience that emerges in response to this (trans)gender violence, (re)positioning her belonging, and that of gender diverse people more broadly, in everyday spaces. Crucially, reflections that align with this thesis' narrative arc emphasising an 'out-of-placeness'-exhaustion-resilience/resistance/restoration nexus – Doan also illustrates both the perils of visibility in trans-hostile society and the personal embodied resilience that emerges in response to this (trans)gender violence, (re)positioning her belonging, and that of gender diverse people more broadly, in everyday spaces.

Elsewhere, trans geographies work is centred in particular spaces and landscapes (although this work remains concentrated in the North Atlantic; Browne *et al.*, 2010), including binary-gendered spaces such as bathrooms and changing rooms⁵⁴ (Anderson, 2019; Browne, 2004; Bender-Baird, 2016; Cavanagh, 2018; Ridley, forthcoming). This work explores how such sites are felt as violent spaces wherein trans people are 'blamed for the violence enacted upon them when the farce of [the binary] system [they are policed and produced through] is unveiled' (Bender-Baird, 2016: 987). Trans people, this work reveals, are monitored, controlled, and subject to often violent bodily surveillance simply for even entering/existing within such overtly gendered spaces (indeed, other queer people who do not ascribe to gender norms and expectations have also suffered under this system; Ahmed, 2019a). As Browne (2004: 332) argues, this policing occurs through 'genderism': 'often unnamed instances of

⁵⁴ Following Francis Ray White (2018), bathrooms and bathroom politics are a topic that many trans people might consider to be exhausting, or to have been exhausted.

discrimination based on the discontinuities between sex/gender with which an individual identifies, and how others, in a variety of spaces, read their sex/gender.’ Cavanagh (2018: 181) explores how trans folk become viewed as potential sources of ‘child molestation, rape and paedophilia’ and thus experience the worried or fearful gazes and transphobic reactions of cis people in bathroom spaces. Cavanagh highlights how spaces’ affective/material dynamics, binary gender(ed) norms inscribed and learned from early childhood, and harmful/misinformed understandings and discourses perpetuated around trans people, produce trans folk as not belonging (or as ‘out-of-place’), as violent, and ultimately as ‘other’, with catastrophic consequences – as I discuss in chapter five – for trans people’s sense of comfort in everyday environments. Many of this thesis’ participants frequently described the anxious expectations they came to attach to such spaces and, conversely, joys they experienced when ‘passing’ in, and subsequently moving with greater ease through them.⁵⁵

To avoid microaggressions and other transphobic violence many trans folk judge the relative safety of such exclusionary ‘risky spaces’, use alternatives, or avoid binary-gendered spaces altogether (Anderson, 2019; Johnston, 2018). Such experiences are embodied by trans people and others who feel their affects and are (re)inscribed within binary-gendered sites and their architectures and bodies. This emotional embeddedness demonstrates, as I explore more deeply in chapter three, how the socio-material composition of certain everyday spaces holds an affective presence through which particular emotions or expectations, for many trans people, emerge and become stickily attached. As I explore throughout the remaining chapters, the experiential accrual of hostile encounters and atmospheres over time result in certain young trans folk developing emotional or affective anticipatory relationships to particular everyday sites. For example, I discuss how trans youth develop feelings of anticipatory anxiousness and anticipatory exhaustion toward particular spaces in chapters five and six, respectively.

Geographers have also examined trans people’s experiences of other urban and public spaces, including spaces read uncritically as inclusive for all LGBTQ+ folk (Doan, 2007). For example, Misgav and Johnston (2014) expand upon the relationships between embodiments, bodily fluids, disgust, and performances of gender in queer spaces, whilst others have explored how trans sex workers navigate urban spaces (Fernández Romero, 2020a; Sullivan, 2018). Elsewhere, in a rallying call, Doan (2017) consolidates trans women’s experiences in women’s spaces and, again, demonstrates a need for geographical publications to actively raise trans voices. Mearns *et al.* (2019) centralise these concerns by exploring trans people’s university campus experiences, expanding on geographical inequalities which

⁵⁵ Conversely, despite the potential for joy and affirmation that ‘passing’ in such spaces can offer trans folk, some participants also spoke of feeling guilty for conforming to gendered norms or ‘passing’ with ease at (what they might understand as) the expense of their trans friends/siblings.

trans people must negotiate within higher education spaces (for publications on this topic beyond Geography, see Nicolazzo, 2016a; 2016b; 2017). These publications have centralised trans people's stories within literature exploring queer urban lives.

Although 'relatively little [is] said about the specific operation of transphobia and the work it does in terms of people's everyday lives and negotiations of specific places' (Hopkins, 2020: 6), other trans geographies work is situated in more 'everyday' environments (Johnston, 2018), or has explored the practices of trans people's daily lives across multiple spaces and scales, from the body to the transnational/global. This expanding literature has considered older trans women's experiences of workplaces and community support (Hines, 2010b), trans people's 'coming out' stories in Britain and Portugal relative to their social positions (Marques, 2019), and intersectional analyses of trans representations in media (Vine and Cupples, 2016). Geographers have also considered transfeminine people's experiences in carceral spaces (Rosenberg and Oswin, 2015), and trans men's subjectivities and experiences relative to masculinities, race, and racism in the rural USA (Abelson, 2016). DasGupta's (2018; 2019: 14) work situates trans bodies and experiences within transnational political geographies of asylum immigration detention, highlighting how gender binaries are simultaneously violently enforced at (trans)national and bodily scales. By calling for 'understanding[s] [of] how transgender bodies are traumatized and often pushed toward death within the detention cell', DasGupta (2019: 14) explores how immigration detention reinforces sex and gender binaries, whilst arguing that 'trauma endured by the transgender body holds potential for disrupting the national security state'. I develop this understanding, examining *potentialities* emergent through trans people's experiences, by thinking through both the consequences of, and potentialities (for resistance, resilience, and spatial reorganisation) made possible through young trans people's everyday exhaustions in chapters six and seven.

A small body of work explores trans people's home experiences: this literature has considered trans men and transmasculine people's homemaking practices and embodied experiences in home spaces (Andrucki and Kaplan, 2018; Marshall, 2017), and has explored the emotional significance of home for trans people more broadly (Doan, 2010; Johnston, 2018; Schroeder, 2015). This work expands GoS literature emphasising that homes can be both 'space(s) of relentless gender policing and the re-inforc[ing] of heteronormative gender binarism' and sites for queering/transing cisnormative home practices (Choi, 2013: 118; Wright, 2010). Browne and Lim (2010: 628) describe even liberal urban environments as Brighton as both 'accepting, easy and relaxing' and potentially prejudicial, unsafe, and disempowering for trans people. This is a nuanced spatial framing which the authors construct by moving beyond 'oppositional positionings' of queer and more cisnormative, heterosexualised spaces (*Ibid.*; see also Browne and Bakshi, 2013). Helpfully, such trans/queer geographies of the home demonstrate that everyday sites for trans and gender diverse people, as the

stories of trans youth in Part II attest, are not simply solely oppressive or affirming environments, but are often messy in their emotional and embodied dynamics. Geographers should further examine how everyday spaces can therefore both ‘materially, socially and symbolically anchor identities, values, relationships and emotional attachments [...] and] offer protection, belonging and safety’ and produce ‘insecurity, vulnerability and alienation’ for trans people (Marshall, 2017: 183).

Lubitow *et al.* (2018: 1414-1415) develop trans urban geographies by developing ‘transmobilities’ to illuminate both ‘how gender minorities’ routine utilization of public transit may be altered or constrained due to broader cissexist attitudes’ and how ‘negative experiences related to mobility and movement may in turn shape one’s gender performance or gender presentation’. This approach helpfully grounds, in a framing similar to that adopted in this thesis, the co-constitution of trans people’s movements and performances through space in relation to the socio-material and political context in which they are situated at any one moment. The authors also attend to trans folk vulnerable to harassment and transphobia, namely people of colour, disabled trans people, trans women, and non-binary people (*Ibid.*). As Campkin and Marshall (2017: 31) expose, trans people who ‘experience overlapping and intersecting forms of oppression and discrimination (including homophobia, transphobia, racism and sexism) [are] most adversely effected by a lack of access to community-specific spaces’.⁵⁶ Trans and non-binary people are therefore more acutely impacted by venue closures and absences, despite popular attention focussed on the closure of queer spaces for relatively privileged cisgender, white, and gay men (*Ibid.*). These publications highlight the importance of intersectional approaches to exploring trans people’s lives. Fernández Romero (2020a) examines such intersections by exploring of trans and disability activisms in Buenos Aires. A prominent strand within Fernández Romero’s work involves examining the social movements of trans women, *travesti*,⁵⁷ and transfeminine people in the 1980s and 90s, to consider their embodied activisms for inclusion in urban public space. Fernández Romero’s emerging work both grounds the importance of intersectional approaches to trans lives and bodies, given that only particular trans bodies have been imagined as citizens (and other trans bodies are prohibited from accessing citizenship and consequently receive the state violence of immigration systems; see DasGupta, 2019). Crucially, again in alignment with the theoretical approach of this thesis, it emphasises the importance of analysing the materialities of spaces

⁵⁶ G.I. spaces demonstrate this. The organisation is unable, given funding limitations (and the difficulty of communicating the life-saving and wellbeing-maintaining value of their spaces), space restrictions, and urban issues of gentrification etc., to offer a permanent space for trans youth.

⁵⁷ In the South American context, *travesti* constitutes a gender expression, role, or identity that transfeminine people (who typically, but not exclusively, do not identify as trans women) embody (Di Pietro, 2016; Fernández Romero, 2020a; 2020b).

(particularly *public* or *state space*) as holding influence over the extent to which particular trans people are able to live through everyday life with relative embodied freedom.

Other key publications in trans geographies particularly relevant to the ethos of this thesis include those which adopt theoretical approaches which attempt to weave together bodies, materials and social and political forces which bear upon trans people from multiple spaces and temporalities. For instance, Andrucki and Kaplan (2018) focus on materialities of trans men and trans masculine people's homes (specifically photographs and décor) to demonstrate how particular objects contribute to their participants' making-sense of, and making-meaning out of, their 'emergent simultaneous multiplicities and [the] queer temporalities of trans identities' (*Ibid.*: 794). The authors (*Ibid.*) further reflect upon the queerness of the 'constitutive role' which more-than-human objects play in the continual unfolding of trans subjectivities, bodies, and identities relative to space. I develop a similar conceptual thread attentive to objects, things, and artefacts (Tolia-Kelly, 2011) in chapter three and develop a similar discussion that attends to how young trans people draw upon particular materialities to develop resilience, resistance, and restoration in chapter seven.

Johnston's (2018: x) volume *Transforming Gender* also elucidates relations between trans bodies and particular spaces, as she explores trans folk's 'identities, subjectivities, bodily senses, moods, sensations and feeling of being in and/or out of place' in Aotearoa New Zealand. Throughout, Johnston (2018) considers lived experiences in sites such as the home through what I seek to conceptualise in my own work from chapter three onwards as *forces* which bear down upon trans people and their bodies (such as misgendering, surveillance and citizenship, and political context), and seeks to, as I also discuss in chapter three, enliven existing research by bringing the fleshy reality of the trans body to the fore. Significantly, Johnston (2018) offers space to both trans people's experience of alienation *and* belonging in their everyday lives, highlighting the importance of reflecting the full complexity of trans life as often joyful, beautiful, and empowering, in addition to, at various times, exhausting and anxiety-ridden. Crucially, Johnston's work continues to bring the voices of Indigenous trans people's voices into the discipline (see also Sullivan [2018] on the experiences of an Aboriginal sex worker). However, Johnston's work is emblematic of certain trans geographies in its focus on trans experiences of spaces of exception (including borders and airports), employment of outdated terms, and limited reflection on researcher positionalities (Todd, 2020a). Johnston constructs trans people and bodies as 'resistive' or 'activist' through their existence in cisnormative spaces. I argue that such framings – as the stories of participants across chapters five and six attest – risk constructing trans folk as always-already transgressive or disruptive, and as responsible for contesting oppressions and educating cisgender people about gender diversities. As I discuss in chapter five, this positioning can become a significant mechanism producing trans youth as 'out-of-place'. Johnston (2018: 98) also

questions whether ‘gender variant activism’ has ‘become respectable and perhaps devoid of radical disruptive change’. In this thesis, and particularly in chapter seven which explores young trans spaces (including ‘safe spaces’ offered by G.I.), I argue that geographers and social scientists should notice that trans movements and spaces, whether physical or virtual, collective or individual, permanent or fleeting, are *always radical* and disruptive of spatial norms in their offering of life-saving spaces for resilience within, resistance to, and recovery from, cisnormativity and transphobic societal contexts.

2.5.1 *Trans geographies attentive to young trans people*

Despite the advancements of trans geographies, it seems that, unlike in geographies of trans adult lives, much must still be done to draw attention to trans youth experiences and voices. Geographers have not yet considered trans youth in terms of ‘trans years’ (see definition in glossary). Young trans voices often form only a small aspect of queer geographical work (see e.g. Schroeder, 2015). In the limited geographical work exploring trans youth experiences, Jenzen (2017) expands upon trans young people’s ‘digital cultural strategies’ that resist cisnormative internet practices and spaces and everyday transphobia. Such ‘strategies’ reflect the virtual spaces participants used to develop trans spaces and mechanisms of resilience, resistance, and restoration (see chapter seven). Within an analysis of young queer people’s experiences of ‘queering the homespace’ Schroeder (2015) points to both the ongoing non-linearity of queer homemaking and family relations and the potential dangers imbued within queering the home (even those that are shaped beyond the heteronormative, nuclear family). One from four vignettes Schroeder shares is that of a young trans person, Elise: her experiences are multifaceted and range from ‘oppressive’ home-space conditions, to increasingly ‘accepting and supportive’ parents. Although Schroeder’s work represents a progression for queer and youth geographies in its inclusion of a young trans person’s everyday life narrative, it is also symptomatic of a wider trend in queer geographies, which have included young trans voices as an aside or small aspect of their work. Indeed, in Schroeder’s (2015) paper, as with other queer geographical publications, it is unclear how many young trans people participated and a diversity of trans youth perspectives is not captured or presented.

In work that engages more deeply with trans youth, Rooke (2010a: 664) reflects on a participatory art project to consider ‘what a transgendered [*sic*] space might feel like’, grounding several themes related to the experiences, subjectivities, and spatialities of young trans people. Rooke (2010a) also develops understandings – as I also examine in chapter seven – of the spatial organisation, maintenance, and experience of trans ‘safe spaces’ (see The Roestone Collective, 2014), particularly through the bodily freedoms they offer in contrast to everyday spaces. Rooke (2010a) demonstrates such freedoms by describing how participants – similarly to those accessing ‘safe spaces’ in this research (see chapter seven) – began to move with greater ease, and gradually take up more space when in the presence of other trans people, and whilst immersed in deliberately-constructed trans-affirming

affective relations. As I also discuss across Part II in the context of multiple spaces, Rooke (2010b) builds on this work by reflecting on how their young trans participants come to understand their transness through virtual trans spaces such as forums, message boards and chat spaces. In such spaces, Rooke (*Ibid.*: 72) notes, trans youth – in work several participants also described undertaking – are able to ‘receive and pass on embodied (trans)gendered cultural knowledge and form collective identities’, for example on trans healthcare through the sharing of ‘photographs and information on hormone regimes, surgery and NHS procedures, discussing the standard of care and craftsmanship of various surgeons in the UK and beyond’. Crucially Rooke (*Ibid.*: 78) asks what can be learned of the ‘struggles and pleasures of young trans people as they navigate the sexual normativity of schools, care systems and youth groups, [and] liberatory queer identities and medical governmentality.’ In many ways, this question encapsulates much of this project, and establishes the radical, and necessary imperative at its core: to draw attention to the diversity of the difficult/painful and fulfilling, joyful, and liberatory life experiences of trans youth. I argue that it is necessary to insist upon including the latter, positive emotions to foreground the diversity of young trans lives and counter perspectives that seek to invisibilise or discount such modes of being in the world.

With relevance for this thesis’ methodological approaches Rooke (2010b) also focusses on – as I also discuss in chapter four – the possibilities enabled through offering relational workshop/creative spaces as part of research with trans youth. Similarly to the conversations enabled through this thesis’ research Rooke’s (*Ibid.*: 76) participants’ (of which 16 of 18 had not met another trans person outside of virtual spaces) their experiences of such everyday experiences as “‘passing”, relationships with family, friends, coming out, feeling different from the ‘norm’ and negotiating places such as clubs, bars, toilets and public transport.’ By offering a relational, creative space through which young people could share stories and challenge supposed authorities of scientific/medical knowledge, Rooke (*Ibid.*: 71) establishes that such sites and their practices offered ‘a performative space where gendered expressions and trans identities could be reflected upon, worked on and re-worked.’ Rooke’s use of artistic practices/spaces also countered the ‘apparent certainties of science’ that govern trans youth lives, and thus represented – like the research spaces I discuss in chapter four and sites developed by trans youth examined in chapter seven – resistive spaces that oppose/respond to everyday cisnormativity and medicalised oppressions. Although my methodological practices and approaches (see chapter four) did not focus directly on trans identities, a key innovation of this research was its offering of similar creative and collaborative spaces for in-depth discussion, storytelling, and knowledge-sharing. Chapter four demonstrates my commitment to an ethos of storytelling and queer solidarity in both of its ‘cornerstone’ methods: creative workshops and one-to-one in-depth discussion spaces.

2.6 Conclusions: Advancing trans geographies

As this review of the geographic literature reveals, geographical thinking holds radical, under-used potential to illuminate the spatial encounters and interactions of trans people. As is evident in existing literature, geographers' theoretical and methodological toolkits hold the potential to explore *spaces and times that trans people encounter and live through* and the *movements and experiences of trans bodies in such sites*. For example, as March (2021: 10) notes, trans geographies could identify such embodied experiences as dysphoria as intricate phenomena 'triggered' by socio-spatial gendered regimes and registers of cisnormativity, exclusion, and trans hostility. My contribution in this thesis is to offer a methodological and conceptual framework for accounting for these potential research foci, one that is attentive to the specificities and specific experiences and subjectivities of individual young trans people and young trans communities more broadly. By focussing on trans youth lives, I begin rectifying a problematic research gap that has overlooked this demographic in geographical research. In sum, unlike in geographies of trans adult lives, much must still be done to draw attention to trans youth experiences and voices; my work in this thesis marks a landmark step in this direction.

In this thesis, I also call for further geographical research to turn to the minutiae of trans people's everyday lives in their full diversity and complexity, and continue to move beyond representations of trans lived experience as marginal and solely traumatic. In this chapter, I have examined how the methodological approaches toward trans lives adopted in much social science and geographical research has been inadequate in its attentiveness and responsiveness to trans voices and intersectionalities in particular. In chapter four, I demonstrate the methodological potentialities that future intersectional, collaborative geographical research into trans lives might adopt. A key contribution that this thesis makes to the geographical literature is to develop a participatory research approach to exploring the lives of (young) trans people and other queer and otherwise marginalised or hard-to-reach folk. The methodological framework that I set out in chapter four allows me to develop geographical literatures by demonstrating what a methodology attentive to voice-raising, storytelling, and collaboration – three methodological nodes I argue are crucial to adopt when engaging and working *with* marginalised (and particularly young) participants – can look like and involve.

The following chapter sets out how this thesis' theoretical approaches develop an innovative conceptual framework attentive to young trans people's bodies, social, political, and material forces implicit in their everyday experiences, and the *agency* that space holds in formulating such experiences. A further key contribution I make to trans geographies is to explore the *temporalities* of (young) trans lives. As I illustrate in the following chapter and throughout Part II, connecting how young trans people encounter particular spaces to their experience of certain temporalities offers a more nuanced

perspective of (a) how their everyday experiences emerge and are shaped by their individual contexts and (b) how these experiences are felt and embodied relative to the accrual of time. This approach brings trans geographies in conversation with trans temporalities literatures to enable geographers to develop fuller-bodied accounts of trans lives that reflect how their experiences accrue or are felt in relation trans people's pasts, presents, and imagined futures.

Theorising young trans people's everyday lives

3.1 Emergence, force, affect: Introducing the theoretical approach

Karl's story in the thesis' preface demonstrated the importance of and potentialities enabled through focussing on the affects, social and material minutiae, spatialities, temporalities, and bodily encounters of young trans people and their everyday lives. In this thesis I continue this thinking, presenting events in young trans people's lives as continually unfolding to shed light on the ongoing *emergence* of their experiences both through space and time and in relation to social, material, and political *forces* (see section 3.2.1). I do so as to reflect upon the often-unnoticed socio-material minutiae and felt dimensions of young trans people's life experiences, and offering a fuller-bodied account of the spaces and times with(in) which these take place, constitutes a political act that by drawing attention to the shaping and embodied experience of their everyday lived realities can contest and refute dominant narratives which circulate around trans youth. My work in this chapter to establish this 'more-than-representational' approach to trans lives (see section 3.2) constitutes a particularly novel approach that deviates from previous geographical scholarship.

In this chapter, I also push the literature beyond its current, dominant conceptualisation of space as a neutral surface upon which trans youth experience everyday life. To do so, I develop Lucas Crawford's (2015) arguments around the co-constitution of trans people's lives, built environments, and physical architectures. To build on Crawford's (2015) work, I afford *agency* to everyday spaces by recognising that they incorporate specific structures (atmospheric, structural, material, and discursive) which hold the potential to continually exert *force* upon young trans people in particular. By recognising the agency imbued in the socio-material fabric of everyday spaces, I consider how particular interactions and experiences lived through by trans youth— whether transphobic, celebratory, safe, misgendering, and so on — originate and, crucially, *temporally endure* in their affective power. In turn, I examine how these experiences — and affects implicit in their formation — become embodied and embedded within the bodies, subjectivities, and lives of trans youth. This approach allowed me to consider how particular experiences and emotions are carried spatially and temporally beyond the setting(s) wherein they first emerge. I use this framing throughout Part II of the thesis to demonstrate how young trans people feel the affects of, and develop particular anticipatory and/or emotional relationships toward, certain spaces. This approach allows for fine-grained intersectional analyses and an exploration of both bodily and micro-scalar experiences of *individuals*, and the *collective* emotions and experiences which circulate in (sections of) young trans communities.

The bodily capacities, feelings, and affectivity of young trans people — and the language of emergence, force, and affect — echoes throughout this thesis' analyses. Throughout the chapter and beyond, I emphasise how young trans people's bodies (including their form, surfaces, interiors and so

on) – as *spaces in themselves* – interact with (other) everyday spaces, places, and times. This approach, emphasising the fleshy reality and embodied dimensions of participants’ encounters and experiences, contrasts normative conceptions that theorise as though the body (and the trans body in particular) ‘ends’ at the skin (Prosser, 1998; simpkins, 2017). Instead, I follow queer and corporeal feminist work that recognises the reality of human bodies in their leakiness, fluidity, and sensuousness and as loci for power structures, knowledges, and signs where affective forces coalesce and congeal and identity and subjectivity continually (re)form (Longhurst, 2001; Shildrick, 1997). I avoid describing the body as a ‘home’ to avoid ‘relying on the very binary system of gender that trans-embodiment could be challenging’ (Crawford, 2015: 27). Instead, I follow Crawford’s (2010: 519) proposal that we consider the body as an *archive* in recognition of their ‘openness [...] ability to change, move and be constantly erased and supplemented.’ This ‘archival’ approach to conceptualising the body (see also Ahmed, 2019) enables me to recognise how young trans bodies become sites which capture and feel the force of their encounters and of social, material, and political affects and atmospheres. I add further nuance to this ‘archival’ approach by recognising that the body captures, feels, and anticipates its past, present, *and* imagined future experiences and that young trans people’s anticipatory relationships to particular spaces and times are not merely based upon their past embodiments and bodily encounters. In sum, conceiving of the body as continually receiving, living through, and pushing against affective forces allows me to develop more nuanced account of the body’s interaction with spaces and times of the past, present, and imagined future.

3.1.1 Ian’s story: *Experimenting with gender*



Figure 3.1 Ian’s ‘journey’ to school, drawn by Ed.

To demonstrate further the potential importance of the thesis' theoretical approach, I consider another participant's story fragment. Drawn by participant Ed on behalf of Ian (he/him, 18-21) in a creative workshop setting exploring young trans people's everyday 'journeys', the artwork in figure 3.1 allowed Ian to share his story with Ed (see chapter four on methodologies). As part of their exchange, Ian briefly narrated Ed's illustration:

'Ed drew this, my story, which is when I was experimenting with gender I would use the woods as a place I could go and, erm, dress how I wanted on the way to school because no-one else was there, and I felt really safe because no-one else was there. So I would, erm, go in and I would put all of my long hair up in my beanie and I would do my coat up, erm, and I would basically like imagine that I was like the male person that I wanted to be. And then I'd get through this path and at the end I'd have to kind of take all my hair out and erm you know, like un-do my coat and show my skirt and stuff but, yeah I'd do that like every day.'

Ian's story speaks to the *lack* of space to experiment with his gender at school. On the surface, it would appear that this spatial absence is the overriding concern here. However, exploring Ian's story beyond mere *representation* reveals other spatial interactions at work. Consider, for example, the imagined future self Ian constructs in confluence with his clothing and hair; these future imaginaries influence his everyday ritual wherein he covered his body and skirt with his coat, and pushed his hair underneath his hat. In Ian's story, we also see that the absence of other gazing bodies in the wooded area offers Ian an important, if brief and transient, space of safety. In the artwork drawn by Ed, shades of light and dark highlight the concealment and seclusion the trees offer; we see Ian's body placed in the centre of this scene as he habitually experiences a daily time of autonomy, experimentation, and immersion in a positive sense of futurity. Through these observations, we can ask how the affective micro-geographies of Ian's story (including light, spatial seclusion, temporal regularity) and the bodily encounters and spatial and temporal (re)negotiations they enable (here, the covering of Ian's body, and the imaginations and projections toward futurity which emerge as a result) matter for how trans youth experience particular everyday spaces and times.

The following section introduces the thesis' 'more-than-representational' approach. I present the work of Deleuze and Guattari (particularly 1987), and geographical scholarship which has engaged with their canon, as central to the thesis' understandings of the thesis' core concepts, including space, affect, time, and encounter. The concept of *becoming* is introduced to recognise the ongoing unfolding of young trans people's lives through space and time. I then consider questions of temporality, emphasising the importance of accounting for temporal duration and duration in participants' narratives and experiences. The chapter then establishes three key concepts – spatial agency, affective atmospheres, and everyday materialities – as central to exploring participants' narratives and achieving the thesis' aims. Before doing so, however, I want to introduce my conceptualisation of 'affect' to introduce readers to my approach to the emergence and intermingling of spaces, temporalities, forces,

and bodies. Following Deleuze and Guattari (1987) I understand affect as an *in-between force* enacted between bodies (whether human or otherwise) which acts with pre-conscious independence from its subject(s). Accounting for affect(s) allows us to consider how *bodies constantly emerge and are always-already in process*. Indeed, affects, however fleetingly, can alter the biochemical composition of the subject and become felt by the body as they surface through sensation, emotion, and feeling (Brennan, 2004). Trans scholar simpkins (2017: 129-130) lays out how affects influence the unfolding of trans people's bodies and embodiment(s) more specifically:

‘The materiality of embodiment—the body’s own dimension of affectivity—produces a body that is radically open to the nonlinear temporalities of sensation. These sensations are absorbed by the body “prior to” consciousness, which eventually translates sensations into feelings. [...] [T]he radical openness of the body and its ongoing immersion in a wealth of sensation need to be simplified in order for consciousness to perceive, or make sense of, the intensity of massive amounts of sensory input. Further, as consciousness works to make sense of the body’s sensation it does so retrospectively, according to a linear logic that consciousness can comprehend.’

Here, we see that the body is continually immersed in a maelstrom of sensation – of affects – which pre-consciously exert force upon the body. This exposes how affect can work as ‘a sense of push in the world’ (Thrift, 2004: 60); a pre-conscious directive force that influences embodied feelings, emotions, actions, and performativity. These affects are then consciously made sense of when we cognate our affective immersion in the socio-materialities around us as a set of linearly organised, comprehensible spaces and times. As such, examining affect as that which constructs our encounters with, and connections to, other bodies (both human and otherwise) enables us to think through the multiplicity of forces which continually influence the emergence of our bodies, subjectivities, and encounters (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987), and thus our place and position relative to specific spaces, social structures, and other bodies around us. Becoming attentive to affect in the lives of young trans people, then, can bring to light the complex and often subtle ways that trans youth are positioned in specific spatial or temporal contexts or in relation to (other) bodies and specific spaces, events, discourses, materialities, politics, and so on.

3.2 Introducing a ‘more-than-representational’ approach to young trans lives

To reconfigure queer identities beyond binary, heteronormative framings, scholars have called for researchers to develop more nuanced understandings of the affective forces underpinning and influencing queer subject formation and queer life experiences specifically (Shaw and Sender, 2016). These appeals align with developments in non-representational theory (NRT), more recently referred to

as ‘more-than-representational’ theory (MTRT),⁵⁸ a body of work concerned with ‘mundane practices that shape the conduct of human beings towards others and themselves in particular sites’ (Thrift, 1997: 127). MTRT does not prioritise emphasising the ‘uniqueness of the human’ over the non-human (Anderson and Tolia-Kelly, 2004: 673). By focussing on phenomena which ‘may seem remarkable only by their apparent *insignificance*’ (Lorimer, 2005: 84, original emphasis), MTRT emphasises spaces, bodies, and subjectivities as multi-layered and continually (re)constructed through our encounters with (other) people/bodies, places, objects and affects/emotions (Anderson and Harrison, 2010; Colls, 2012; Lorimer, 2005). However, non-representational theories have been under-used in queer and feminist geographies (Colls, 2012; Lim, 2007; Nash and Gorman-Murray, 2017) nor has affect ‘been utilised to explicitly engage with bodily difference(s)’ (Colls, 2012: 433), although more recent work has *alluded* to the potential of MTRT to illuminate the embodied interactions of, and spatial inequalities encountered by, trans and queer folk (Johnston, 2015). With this chapter and my work across this thesis, I contribute to an expanding literature working to rectify this problematic gap and develop a novel framework for exploring the minutiae of queer lives.

3.2.1 Conceptualising ‘force’

With crucial relevance for recognising the *complexities* of trans young people’s embodied experiences and subjectivities, NRT and MTRT scholars have identified a need to ‘further re-think subjectivity in terms of a difference that is not pre-given, oppositional, or hierarchical but rather emerge[nt] from a contextual set of forces and aggregations that take place in, between, across, and through bodies’ (Simpson, 2017: 8). Colls (2012: 439) describes what might constitute such affective forces, and considers how they operate at every spatiotemporal scale to continually (re)shape people and their bodies:

‘Forces [...] operate at a range of scales and intensities. They can pass through and inhabit bodies (metabolism, circulation, ovulation, ejaculation), they are intangible and unknowable and yet are sometimes felt by the body and travel between bodies (fear, hope, love, wonder, hate, confidence) and they are produced by and active in the constitution of wider social, economic and political processes and structures, for example capitalism, democracy, deprivation, emancipation and discrimination.’

Here, we see both the diversity of what might be considered a (set of) ‘force(s)’ with the potential to act upon bodies/subjects, and the potential affectivities, capacities, and intensities of such forces. Colls’ (2012) and Simpson’s (2017) words highlight the centrality of the human *body* in this unfolding of subjectivity, as a surface, locus, or set of points upon, and through which, forces – policies,

⁵⁸ Such theories incorporate/align with ‘assemblage thinking’, which recognises ‘the intersection of the social and the material, more-than-human or non-human presences or actants’ in the ‘formation of subjects and places, [such] that anything participating in the act of constitution can be considered part of its assemblage – including bodies, matter, environments, policies and discourses’ (Nash and Gorman-Murray, 2017: 1524).

materialities, discourses, emotions, other bodies, and so on – interact, surface, and become felt. From NRT/MTRT perspectives, subject formation is not solely spatially-concentrated, however, and is also temporally contingent. Scholars including Probyn (2003) and Barron (2019) have placed emphasis on the development of the subject through life histories and past experiences and an innumerable amount of power structures which fluctuate temporally. This understanding is crucial to this thesis as I seek to complicate simplified, cisnormative notions of temporality (see section 3.4), do justice to participants' stories of their past, present, and future selves (including by recognising the durative nature of particular spaces, events, and affects), and understand how trans youth experience everyday spaces – including their own bodies – both spatially and temporally. With relevance for exploring how trans youth experience particular spaces and times, I draw upon force to consider both (a) how certain affects come to influence, shape, and be felt and/or performed through by trans youth and (b) how young trans people bodies and bodily experiences 'are reconstituted through relations which extend beyond an encounter, folding into other times and places' (Barron, 2019: 8). In other terms, the language of affect, emergence, and force allows me to reflect upon the spatial and temporal duration and significance of particular encounters, events, emotions, power structures, discourses, and so on in young trans people's lives.

By following Deleuze's understanding that subjects become 'enfleshed' through the 'folding-in of external influences and a simultaneous unfolding outwards of affects' (Braidotti, 2000: 159; Lim, 2007), it is possible to shed light on how young trans people's subject positions, experiences, and emotions emerge *in a particular time or place* through the spaces, affects, and atmospheres they encounter, and the affects and emotions that are projected simultaneously and consequently from their bodies and selves. As Colls (2012: 440) explains, interrogating 'how forces operate differentially across a range of spatial scales and locations to produce contingent and multiple subjectivities/differences' allows us to ask what subjectivities *'could be* and thus how [they endure and deplete] within one empirical or theoretical setting'. In other terms, recognising that subjectivities and bodies are always-already open to influence from multiple forces, whether material, political, economic, social, technological, and so on allows us to understand how such forces influence the emergence of subjectivity, the body and positionality in certain spaces or at particular temporal moments. The diversity and specificity of forces and affects that influence trans people and their potential *temporal* unfoldings is captured by simpkins (2017: 127):

'At the core of trans* temporalities are a host of everyday concatenations (tuckings, pullings, bindings, wrappings, prickings, gesturings, speakings, clothings, paddings, strappings, comportings, bearings, lookings, posturings, assertings, spacings, affectings, insertings, thrustings, givings, moldings, shapings, framings) and more stable unities (histories, socials, medicines, policings, cultures, biologies, bodies, politics) – all of which are relevant in varying ways to different trans people.'

Here, Simpkins offers a conceptual ‘way in’ toward exploring how the specificities of trans people’s everyday affective lives emerge and are encountered through particular forces that are particular to trans folk in their intensity or in the specific ways that trans people experience their affective dimensions. Using this framework to understand how the lives and subjectivities of young trans people are shaped in varying ways by the affective contents of particular spaces and times, then, becomes premised on both exploring the myriad *influences* which influence their specific experience, and their individual and/or collective emotional or affective *reaction* to these influences within the context of specific spaces, times, events, and encounters. Crucially, again, this ‘more-than-representational’ framing can emphasise particular, specific intensities and affects (whether, for example, a material object, political discourse, feeling, or an event, atmosphere, and so on) as significant in the production of young trans people’s emotions, bodies, and life experiences.

Despite this work, NRT/MTRT scholarship exploring the affective geographies of marginalised people’s lives has – similarly to geographies of trans lives (see chapter two) – perhaps problematically maintained subjectivity and identity as its core focus. Indeed, ‘more-than-representational’ queer scholarship has focussed its attention upon how sexual (and to a lesser extent, gendered) identities form relative to forces emergent and felt in certain spaces. This focus is captured by Nash and Gorman-Murray (2017: 1526), who note that the possibilities for re-thinking *sexualities* under ‘assemblage thinking’ emerge in part from the idea that:

‘[i]dentity and subjectivity are not pre-given but are a ‘sexuality/gender’ coming into being through the viscosity of bodies, non-human actants, objects, ideas, capital and constituting, we can hope, a proliferation of sexualities and genders that are nevertheless unbounded, while tentatively (and recursively) formulated in and through place.’

I argue that this focus on the ‘proliferation of sexualities and genders’, whilst opening opportunities to think through the *diversity* of gendered and sexual identities does not, however, focus attention on how – contrary to my novel work in this thesis – queer *embodied experiences* of specific spaces emerge, become felt, and endure across space and time. This is a failing that has, in certain contexts, reinforced trans *identities*, rather than the entanglement of lives, spaces, time, and bodies of and encountered by trans people, as a primary geographical research focus. In other terms, in its turn to the minutiae of young trans people’s embodied experiences through MTRT and its recognition that ‘trans’ is the sole affective register that influences trans subjects and bodies (following Crawford, 2010), this thesis’ theoretical work is particularly distinct from geographical work that has gone before. In the following sections, following geographical and trans scholarship descendent from Deleuze and Guattari, I set out my approach to exploring the nuances and embodied experiences of young trans people’s everyday lives as they are shaped ‘in the thick of worldly experience’ (Haynes, 2012: 57).

3.3 Re-thinking queer and trans everyday life

3.3.1 *A descent from Deleuze and Guattari: The bodies and subjectivities of trans youth as 'minoritarian'?*

The conceptual malleability of Deleuzian work (Colebrook, 2000) has resulted in its presence across diverse disciplines including geography (Bonta and Protevi, 2004), and feminist and queer studies (Buchanan and Colebrook, 2000; Nigianni and Storr, 2009). Queer scholars, for example, have developed a 'new queer methodology [...] which draw(s) on the Deleuzoguattarian philosophy of positive forces and affirmative actions: [...] an ontology of becoming [...] of open futurity, in terms of virtualities and not mere possibilities' (Nigianni, 2009: 8). This section draws out these queer and feminist Deleuzian ontologies in the context of young trans people's life experiences.

The possibilities offered by Deleuze and Guattari for re-thinking queer life and the lives of oppressed and marginalised groups (referred to in their work as 'minoritarian' peoples) are encapsulated by Olkowski (2000: 106), who notes that Deleuze's attention to *multiplicity* offers us the understanding that:

'there are no fixed bodies [...] but instead voices, senses and selves that are several; [...] intensive vectors that are the assemblages that produce minoritarian groups: the oppressed and prohibited, those in revolt or on the fringe, the anomic, those [living] outside or against the rules.'

Olkowski's recognition of the *intensity* of forces and affects which 'produce minoritarian groups' speaks to how minoritarian bodies (i.e. the bodies of trans people and the more-than-human bodies and actants with/through which they are co-produced) are produced as particularly attractive or sticky loci for particular affects, such as those implicated in positioning trans youth as bodies 'out-of-place' (see chapter five). This focus on intensity reveals how the forces which act upon/against and work between minoritarian people (such as many young trans people), their bodies, and the more-than-human bodies which they interact with, often *push with a force greater or more intense* than that felt or experienced by those facing less marginalisation. Moreover, multiplicity, as Kemp (2009: 161) argues, 'shatters' the supposed pre-existent 'unity' of the subject, to demonstrate that subjectivities are 'contingent upon a shifting body [...] a constant rearrangement of the self which exceeds the ideality of a stable and unified "identity"'. This approach, presenting selves, subjects and bodies as processual, as always *in flow*, is useful for (re)conceptualising queer lives, given that subjectivities are not tied to the body as a stable material object nor to 'enforced social categorisations based on anything so crass as mere anatomical sexual difference' (*Ibid.*: 161-162). The radical intensity and power involved in embodying queerness is captured throughout *The Queer Nation Manifesto* (1990), a text distributed amongst the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP) group at New York City Pride 1990. As one section of the text articulates (censorship per original text; *Ibid.*: n.p.):

‘Being queer means leading a different sort of life. It’s not about the mainstream, profit-margins, patriotism, patriarchy or [assimilation]. It’s not about executive directors, privilege and elitism. It’s about being on the margins, defining ourselves; it’s about gender-fuck and secrets, what’s beneath the belt and deep inside the heart; it’s about the night. Being queer is “grass roots” because we know that everyone of us, every body, every c---, every heart and a-- and d--- is a world of pleasure waiting to be explored. Every one of us is a world of infinite possibility.’

My reading of Deleuze and Guattari enables me to draw attention to such queer embodiments and queer possibilities and potentialities, particularly through the thesis’ focus on time and temporalities and on young trans people’s spaces and embodiments entrenched in affects of resilience, resistance, and restoration (see chapter seven). I explore such possibilities and potentialities enabled through the embodiment of young trans subjectivities and living through such uncomfortable bodily states as exhaustion over long (or seemingly endless) periods of time in chapter six.

3.3.2 *Becoming and emergence*

The potential of Deleuzoguattarian thinking for exploring young trans people’s everyday lives is encapsulated further through Deleuze and Guattari’s conceptual turn toward becoming, a concept emphasising the often involuntary instability and continual emergence of subjects and the social, material, and political forces in which they are entangled. In other terms, subjects and bodies are never organic, pre-existing ‘wholes’ but, instead, are constructed through continually-shifting elements which interact with one another with varying degrees of intensity; these elements may act beyond their original intent or purpose.⁵⁹ One’s subjectivity and body is therefore *processual*, and, as we have seen, continually emergent through interaction with unfolding affects and forces (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987).⁶⁰ As a result, Deleuze and Guattari present the human *self* as ‘an assemblage that scatters and reconvenes, a composition ever on the move’ (Shukin, 2000: 146; Greenhough, 2010). From this view, subjectivity ebbs and flows as life unfolds, it is built as one encounters space, place, and time.

But what potential do ideas of emergence and becoming hold for exploring young trans people’s everyday lives? The notion of becoming is not new to trans scholarship, nor am I the first to use the language of becoming and emergence to explore trans lives (Garner, 2014; Kennedy, 2020; Pearce *et al.*, 2020b; Rooke, 2010b; simpkins, 2017). For example, Kennedy (2020) focusses on young

⁵⁹ Consider, for example, how political discourses influence subject/body formation. An elemental approach to becoming would recognise the influence which, for example, societal hostility to trans people holds over their spatial interactions, alongside other forces.

⁶⁰ I am careful not to say that a subject is *produced* here. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) emphasise the complexity of becoming; no singular action/subject is the result of one plateau of becoming; becomings continually intensify one another to produce the subject which they ultimately cannot be removed from.

trans people's experiences of moments of 'epiphany' paradoxically produced through processes and discourses which delegitimise trans people to complicate the emergence of trans ontologies and trans subjects and to highlight – as I also hope to – the *agency* of trans folk in achieving this emergence (in contrast to bodies that passively receive hostile affects). Meanwhile, as Garner (2014: 30) notes, becoming can be applied to refute discourse which presents trans bodies as 'unnatural'. As *all bodies* are continually emergent through their becomings/encounters, bodily differentiation cannot be premised upon assumptions around sex(ed) characteristics and the supposed 'construction' of a trans body in opposition to cisgender bodies which, following notions of becoming, we can see are also subject to continual 'body modification' through affect and force (*Ibid.*). However, as Owen (2014: 23) notices, the notion of becoming, particularly when applied to trans youth, can risk reinforcing a 'developmental narrative' which locates 'moments of transition, change, and rebellion in adolescence and [...] moments of arrival, stability, and conformity in adulthood', a cisnormative linear temporal framework that could position trans youth as merely engaging in rebellion or youthful gender(ed) experimentation. Indeed, as March (2021: 460) notices, trans scholarship has identified 'the risk in uncritically emphasizing liminality, fluidity and becoming to the exclusion of trans* subjects whose lives are not characterized by the free-wheeling "shape-shifting" presented in some unnuanced poststructuralist deconstructions of gender'. To avoid such traps, Owen proposes generating 'more varied and complex [...] possibilities for bodily experience and gendered subjectivity [by examining] the contingency of any subjective arrival whether it be normative or trans-identified' (*Ibid.*). I follow this proposal by not simply focussing on the *transness* of participants' experiences but instead on the full diversity and significance of their everyday experiences in forming their subjectivities, bodies, and everyday spatial/temporal encounters. This approach – what March (2021: 461) terms approaching liminality first-hand, from an explicitly trans* perspective' - allows me to avoid 'detach[ing] [...] subjectivity from the lived realities of individuals [...] [and] [over]emphasis[ing] on transience, uncertainty and process [...] foregrounding fluidity and becoming at the expense of the very tangible lives of people'.

The following section develops my conceptualisation of young trans lives further, turning to *temporality* to consider how recognising the non-linearity and messy/durative temporalities of queer and young trans people's everyday lives can develop a more nuanced understanding of the linkages between their experiences, subjectivities, bodies, and spaces they encounter. Through this focus on the temporalities of young trans people's everyday lives, I aim to avoid what March (2021: 461) describes as 'los[ing] the real, embodied person through [non-representational theory's] focus on partiality, incompleteness and relationality.'

3.4 Attending to young trans temporalities

‘There is something very queer about the way I experience time. [...] The past rushes up on me with the urgency of the present. The future creeps out of crevices, leaking into the now. The future and past are intimately entwined, the present produced in their merging. [...] The present is disconnected, disorientated, unmapped.’

—Clementine Morrigan (2017: 50) describing experiencing time as a trans person who has endured trauma and abuse

Temporality, from a Deleuzian perspective, concerns the ‘becoming of things’. As Elizabeth Freeman (2010: 7) puts it, time both “‘binds” flesh into bodies and bodies into social’ beings. Attending to how participants experience time can therefore augment understandings of how particular spaces, subjects, and bodies emerge for and are felt by them and can indicate how young trans people’s experiences and emotions surface, endure, and are carried between spaces. NRT/MRT approaches have been used to highlight the complexities of time as beyond-chronological and the influence of, for example, individuals’ life histories over the unfolding of their presents (Barron, 2019). Indeed, temporality has received great attention from queer theorists (see Dinshaw *et al.*, 2007; Freeman, 2010; Muñoz, 2009) in queer theory’s ‘temporal turn’. This ‘turn’ has moved queer activism from merely considering queer people, bodies, and practices such as those of trans youth as (dis)belonging spatially, but also as disruptive and destabilising of heteronormative timelines (Freeman, 2010; Pyne, 2017).

Queer and feminist theorists have sought to deconstruct notions of linear time entrenched in discourses of whiteness, racism and western capitalism,⁶¹ which do not speak to the temporal non-linearity associated with occupying particular subject positions and bodies such as those of queer folk and mothers (Fisher *et al.*, 2017; Shildrick, 2010).⁶² Many such works have incorporated personal stories to portray individualised queer/feminist experiences and understandings of time. For instance, as trans scholar Halberstam (writing as part of Dinshaw *et al.*, 2007: 182, my emphasis) describes:

‘Queer time for me is the dark nightclub, the perverse *turn away from the narrative coherence of adolescence-early adulthood-marriage-reproduction-childrearing-retirement-death*, the embrace of late childhood in place of early adulthood or immaturity in place of responsibility. It is a theory of *queerness as a way of being in the world* and a critique of the careful social scripts that usher even the most queer among us through major markers of individual development and into normativity.’

⁶¹ Morrigan (2017: 53) presents such ‘straight time’ (Muñoz, 2009) as a ‘colonial heterosexual construct [...] dependent on child abuse and gendered violence’. For example, as Pyne (2017: 97) discusses, Freud’s ‘temporal logic’, which portrayed queer as immature and ‘developmentally delayed’ as ‘borrowed from the rhetoric of scientific racism’; other discourses representing the ‘arrested development of the homosexual’ were drawn by scientists based upon the ‘imagined “primitivism” of African American minds’.

⁶² As Halberstam (2005: 6) notes, these also constitute heteronormative, capitalist ideals and ‘temporal frames of bourgeois reproduction and family, longevity, risk/safety, and inheritance’.

Occupying and living through queer time, for Halberstam, allows heteronormativity to be rejected, whilst theorising queer time allows us to understand queerness as a ‘way of being in the world’ that queers the linear life course and attends to the *lived realities* of how LGBTQIA+ folk experience time and queerness. It is the spatial and temporal ‘ways of being in the world’ particular to individual young trans people and collectively held by trans youth as a set of communities that I expand on in this thesis. However, to date trans people’s temporal experiences have only relatively recently been widely engaged in trans scholarship (Pyne, 2017) to develop possibilities for re-thinking trans people’s entanglements with(in) time and temporality. As Amin (2014: 219, my emphasis) notes, ‘[a]ttending to the ways in which transgender experiences are constituted by [and] yet *exceed* normative temporalities promises to do justice to the complex ways in which people inhabit gender variance.’ I seek to develop this argument, contending that attending to the temporalities of trans young people’s life experiences – by attending to futurity and non-linearity in particular – can, like other elements of my ‘more-than-representational’ approach – develop nuanced insights into the significance of particular events, spaces, and embodied emotions in young trans people’s everyday lives.

3.4.1 Futurity

Notions of futurity have dominated queer theorists’ conceptions of LGBT+ people’s life experiences and conditions. For example, much has been made of the differences and dialogue between the ‘idealist utopian’ visions of queerness and futurity employed by José Esteban Muñoz and the catastrophising visualisations of the anti-relational Lee Edelman⁶³ (Daniel, 2010). Here, I focus upon Muñoz’ arguments around futurity to think through certain temporalities as they intersect with young trans people’s lives. In *Cruising Utopia*, Muñoz (2009: 11) proposes the notion of ‘queer futurity’ – one in which the future is conceptualised as ‘a site of infinite and immutable possibility’, where ‘queerness is always in the horizon’ – to present queer bodies as always-already oriented toward utopic future imaginaries and orientations. Muñoz argues that queer folk must map or *cruise* for utopia by re-animating elements of life which *could become* utopic and working to ‘to desire differently, to desire more, [and] to desire better’ (*Ibid.*: 189). Muñoz calls for us to focus on the *energies* involved in embodying queerness to do so. The *collective* harnessing of such energies with and between different queer people, Muñoz argues – as we see in young trans people’s stories throughout Part II of the thesis – brings the anticipatory into the present, one wherein a ‘collective temporal distortion’ (*Ibid.*: 185) can take place. Working toward this distortion involves understanding that queer lives are shaped by temporalities

⁶³ Such visions in Edelman’s (2004) work, involving abandoning dominant narratives of the symbolic ‘Child’, have been critiqued by other queer theorists, including Muñoz, for obscuring ‘the complex lived experiences of *actual children*’ (Morrigan, 2017: 51, my emphasis). Others have critiqued the assumed whiteness and non-disability of Edelman’s ‘Child’ (*Ibid.*).

other than (or beyond) ‘straight time’ (*Ibid.*: 186). Recognising non-linearity, which presents ‘queerness as a temporal arrangement in which the past is a field of possibility in which subjects can act in the present in the service of a new futurity’ (*Ibid.*: 16) is a temporal formation that surfaces throughout Part II in relation to participants’ often messy/complex relationship to their past, present, and imagined future selves and experiences in certain spaces.

With crucial implications for considering the resilient, resistive, and restorative practices and spaces that trans youth conduct and access in response to ‘out-of-placeness’ and exhaustion (see chapters six and seven), Muñoz recognises that utopias and celebratory spaces and conditions can be created out of the less-than-utopic conditions of the present. However, given that, as chapter one demonstrated, societal conditions for young trans people in Britain are potentially regressing or stagnating, or as subsequent chapters demonstrate, individual young trans people might lack spaces and support networks in which to construct positive everyday lives across all spaces and times, positive, utopic queer futures cannot always be aimed for. In other terms, the rejection of the conditions of the ‘here and now’, as Muñoz proposes for all queer people, is not always possible. Often, as I also show in Part II, certain trans youth often live through and orient toward a queer futurity which, if not utopic, is *enough* simply in that young people can *live with* the here and now and craft stability and (self-)affirmation from present everyday conditions. My project with regards to futurity, then, is to recognise how young trans people – as both individuals and collectives – draw upon their life histories, past and present experiences, spatial contexts, and encounters they feel as significant to shape or orient toward their futures. This approach allows this thesis to both explore the role that futures play in young trans people’s negotiations of their past and present experiences and encounters and recognise how young trans people live through and encounter future-oriented temporalities with a particular intensity or focus (in ways that are unique to individuals or to particular collectives of trans youth), evidenced for example in certain participants’ making-present of future conditions described in chapter seven.

3.4.2 *Non-linearity*

In popular and public discourse, trans people are assumed to occupy a normative, trope-like temporality, one of ‘the traumatic past, the intervening present and the hopeful future’ (Fisher *et al.*, 2017: 3). Such discourses have produced trans subjects as ‘liv[ing] in what Deleuze and Guattari would refer to as *Chronos*, or, the linear and regular temporality of the clock, the calendar, and individual human subject’ (Crawford, 2015: 92). This supposed linearity has positioned trans folk as also occupying ‘disjunct time, in which an assignment at birth is retroactively rejected, and a present embodiment is understood as needing to become otherwise in the future’ (Chen and cárdenas, 2019: 475). Israeli-Nevo (2017: 48) lays bare the hypocrisy of such cisnormative temporal conceptions, arguing that trans people are marginalised and dislocated from ‘cis linear temporality [when they] are

dissociated from [their] bodies, identities and close ones’, and encouraged to ‘put [their] trust in the distant future’. In other terms, trans people are problematically presumed to embody and occupy an atypical (yet trans-specific, uniformly-experienced) relationship to their pasts, presents, and imagined futures in which their past experiences must be rejected, their present conditions must be merely endured, and their future encounters must be imagined with feelings of hope and positivity. As a result, theorists of trans temporality have sought to queer such assumptions (Crawford, 2015: 92), particularly through autobiographical narratives (Amin, 2014). For example, returning to language that recognises linkages between time and space, trans scholars have conceptualised transness not as a one-directional ‘crossing from one location to another’ through linear time but instead as ‘a multidirectional movement in an open field of possibility,’ one wherein ‘time and its direction become more fluid’ (Chen and cárdenas, 2019: 473). In this work, and throughout this thesis, trans people’s experiences of space and everyday life become negotiated through a ‘temporality of feeling rather than order’ which ‘exceeds the limits of easily identifiable form’ (Crawford, 2015: 92). In other terms, I follow participants’ own articulations of their lived, felt, and embodied experiences of space and time, many of which do not adhere to cisnormative understandings of time which may not, for example, recognise the time-messing nature of conditions such as ‘out-of-placeness’ and exhaustion, nor the temporal reconfigurations that trans youth (re)make through their resilient, resistive, and restorative practices, embodiments, and spatial contexts.

Dominant discourses of temporality result in trans people who experience conditions such as dissociation and dysphoria – conditions that can contribute to young trans people’s ‘out-of-placeness’ – being told by those misinformed about or hostile to trans lives to ‘resist’ this nexus, and strive for a linear, supposed ‘normalcy’ in their experience of time (Israeli-Nevo, 2017; Morrigan, 2017). Doing so, such dominant discourses presume, will secure their inclusion in society’s (and indeed the state’s) understandings of how (white, heteropatriarchal, binary-gendered, and cisnormative) life should be lived (Chen and cárdenas, 2019). However, such temporal expectations are not applied equally to all trans people. For example, through dominant discourses some trans folk (e.g. trans women of colour), are rarely associated with a positive futurity, or even a possible future at all (Amin, 2016, cited by Fisher *et al.*, 2017). Crucially for this thesis, such disparities also link to the historical framing of time applied to trans *youth*. Indeed, dominant discourses surrounding young trans people – including those discussed in chapter two – are ‘shot through with discourses of time’ (*Ibid.*: 103), with the first available gender clinics, for example, being ‘devoted to averting a trans or queer future’ (Pyne, 2017: 102). Referring further to healthcare spaces, how gender confirmation treatments for trans youth are understood reflects paradigms that young trans people’s experiences of temporalities are often represented through. For example, as Pyne (2017: 103-104) discusses, trans youth gender confirmation is often variously described as ‘a race against time’, in terms of averting trans suicide, and through the problematic ‘image

of a future abject trans adult' wherein future employment and reproductiveness, for example, are seen to be limited by denied access to puberty blockers. Such temporal arguments are used to both support and challenge trans youth, who thus become presented variably as, for example, not being at 'the right time' for their transition (to connote innocence/uncertainty), or as 'ahead of their time' (connoting their maturity/ autonomy) (*Ibid.*: 109). Furthermore, as axes of difference impact how certain trans people's transitions are understood and framed societally, relatively 'privileged and subaltern' young trans subjects emerge through the false linear transition time narrative (Fisher *et al.*, 2017).⁶⁴

With further relevance to understanding young trans people's experiences in particular *spaces*, simpkins (2017: 125) explains that temporalities encountered by trans people are intrinsically tied to material embodiment which, as we have seen, continually emerges non-linearly as a set of always-enmeshed and embodied 'past-present-future becomings'. This understanding crucially allows us to recognise that such non-linearity is 'entirely unique for each body' (*Ibid.*: 126). In turn, this recognition of the unique temporalities experienced by each young trans person and young trans body allows me to connect the unfolding of individual young trans lives, and individual young trans people's continual negotiation of their past, present, and future selves and experiences to their societal conditions, spatial contexts, life histories, significant encounters, embodied emotions, and so on. Morrigan (2017) sees this temporal complexity and diversity, similarly to Pyne (2017) and Halberstam (2005), as not something to be problematised (as perhaps those with cisnormative expectations around time would expect) but, again, as a 'way of being in the world' to be embraced, particularly given its offering up of possibilities for understanding and encountering the world differently.⁶⁵

Crawford (2015: 93) notes that '[n]ew temporalities of time and feeling are needed if we are to think of gender as something active and always in the making.' In this thesis, I want to take this polemic further, to suggest that non-linear temporalities experienced and crafted by trans youth must be accounted for when exploring young trans lives and the specificities of their bodies, subjectivities, everyday spaces, encounters, and events. To begin working towards this, in this section I have argued that accounting for temporalities, and the duration of particular moments and spaces in young trans people's lives, enables us to examine the *significance* of particular experiences and encounters, such as those involved in producing young trans people's 'out-of-placeness' or exhaustion. Attending to the affectivity of such temporalities as a force that plays a role in the emergence of young trans lives allows

⁶⁴ Such trans youth include neurodiverse or autistic youth who might have their transition 'delayed' if *they themselves* are deemed to have been somehow 'delayed', privileging those regarded, particularly by medical practitioners, as 'able-bodied and able-minded' (Pyne, 2017: 111).

⁶⁵ In Morrigan's (2017) story, for example, this alternative 'way of being in the world' is apparent through the affirmation of their past experiences of violences/trauma, and their aspirations toward 'just futures'.

this thesis to unpack how certain young trans people's everyday lives become shaped by the temporalities they encounter, endure, negotiate, and create. By specifically focussing on *young* trans people's experiences of temporalities in relation to particular spaces, events, and encounters, I add further nuance to the trans temporalities literature which has thus far mostly applied temporality to trans adults⁶⁶ – my work is both informed by, and further informs, this body of work.

In the following section, I outline three key concepts which – alongside emergence, force, affect, space, and temporality – continually inform this thesis' theoretical approach and allow me to explore young trans people's lives through the 'more-than-representational' framework I have set out thus far. The key concepts that underpin my analyses and each participant's story are: (i) spatial agency, (ii) affective atmospheres, and (iii) materials and materialities.

3.5 Overall theoretical approach: Three key concepts

3.5.1 (i) *Highlighting agency imbued in everyday spaces*

In my work to add further nuance to how *space* is considered and conceptualised in literatures exploring young trans lives, I have been inspired by Lucas Crawford's architectural scholarship. In work resonant with Geography's recent engagement with the materialities of architecture – physical buildings, dwellings, and bricks and mortar – and their logics and semiotics (Tolia-Kelly, 2011), in *Transgender Architectonics* Crawford (2015) comments on theoretical divisions that persist between scholarly work on architectures and queer spaces. Crawford (*Ibid.*: 21) argues that '[a]ccounts of queer space that do not engage in the aesthetic history and aesthetic life of architecture [risk] enforcing a false division between architecture (as merely a neutral setting) and subjects (who wholly animate the space and give "it" meaning).' Here, Crawford suggests that too often, trans and queer folk and their experiences of queer spaces – and other everyday spaces which they themselves queer/trans (see glossary) – have been separated from the materials and matter of space itself, which is presumed to hold no agency and only limited influence over encounters, emotions, and bodily movements that take place within.

This 'false divide between building and user' is illustrated through such overtly (binary) gendered/cisnormative sites such as bathrooms, spaces which – as discussed in chapter two – geographers have developed nuanced spatial understandings of, particularly regarding their exclusionary/gendered dynamics. As bathroom spaces have become 'monolithic symbols in the

⁶⁶ Although following Pearce (2018a: 62) 'chronologically younger trans individuals may be considerably *older* in trans years than chronologically older trans people', and thus distinctions between trans adults and trans youth can be temporally messy and should not solely focus on age.

geography of transgender', they have been positioned in most existing analyses as sites which 'merely set the stage for pre-existing subjects rather than intervene in their production' (Crawford, 2012: 60). Only visibly gendered architectural materials – door signs, dispensers, sanitary bins, and toilet ceramics – are presumed to be the most significant structures of such sites which result in them becoming, for trans people, challenging environments to navigate (*Ibid.*; Ahmed, 2019a, 2019b; see also chapter five). To avoid such a limited understanding, Crawford (2015: 19) proposes a radical alternative: to view 'architecture as an inherently gendering and [transing] project, and to consider transgender as an unavoidable spatial, even architectural, activity'. In other terms, Crawford proposes that we consider trans bodies and architectures as co-constitutive of space, suggesting that existing literature exploring trans lives remains premised upon the idea that trans subjects and bodies move through spaces as though they were simply passive surfaces upon which social encounters take place. Architecture, from Crawford's perspective, constitutes a key force which shapes (or enforces/destabilises) gender norms; the presence of *trans* folk in particular spaces also becomes architectural by destabilising the cisnormativity and binary gender expectations embedded in the space's materiality. One's experience of space is felt in relation to the architectures which surround them; trans folk's reactions to and encounters within space are therefore dependent on the mutability and inclusivity of the space and its material contents and components to – as we will see in Part II – the presences, movements, embodiments, and interactions of trans bodies. And, in turn, architectures come to be shaped by the presence of trans bodies which might, in the case of binary-gendered or trans-exclusionary settings, come to resist, push against, or re-form the very matter of space. My 'more-than-representational' approach to young trans people's everyday spatial encounters augments this thinking by exploring how young trans people alter the *affectivity* and *atmosphere* of particular spaces through, for example, their presence as potentially 'out-of-place' bodies and/or resistive and resilient subjects that actively attempt to queer, trans, or increase the inclusivity/'safety' of particular environments.

In work that resonates throughout Part II, Crawford (2010: 519; my emphasis) outlines how trans people's embodiments of affective memories and imaginaries of particular spaces or events become, for those recalling such phenomena, imbued within particular spaces' architectures:

'...while such features as dark hallways or unmonitored washrooms are only risky [to trans folk] because of the violence in our gender-normative culture, the way in which fear manifests itself in the body in those moments is often not in terms of these seemingly neutral architectural features; that is, we are accustomed to thinking that we are afraid of people and not of *built features*. However, because fear and humiliation are surely much more complicated affects than simple responses to bodily danger or insult, *it is often unavoidable to fear (or, conversely, desire) certain built structures themselves*. In this way, buildings can become *virtual archives of affect*, where people's shared *memories and affective experiences of particular architectural features define a site* as much as anything else. All of this is

to say that moving through certain spaces makes us tap into our own archives of emotional experience.’

In this excerpt, Crawford establishes that anticipatory emotions and affective responses such as fear and desire are at least partially produced through, and subsequently embedded within, architectures in which such responses originated or were felt. From this perspective, emotional responses like fear permeate into the socio-materiality of space, such that architectures become ‘archives of affect’. From this perspective, feeling the embodied force of fear, safety, and other affective conditions when encountering such sites is not simply the product of the events which took place there before, but the materiality/socio-material minutiae of the space itself. Specific experiences that certain trans folk might embody (for example, living through dysphoria, or being read or gazed upon as ‘out-of-place’ relative to binary-gendered norms and cisnormative expectations; see chapter five) means that certain everyday spaces are always-already structured to exclude or marginalise certain trans people. Following Crawford, moving through such spaces results in the *embodied anticipation* of a particular emotional response to the materiality of space itself. I expand on the emergence, felt dimensions, and consequences of young trans people’s embodied anticipations toward particular spaces – particularly anticipatory anxiousness and anticipatory exhaustion felt in relation to certain places – throughout Part II of the thesis. As we will see, in an argument that connects to my thinking around non-linear temporalities and affective atmospheres (see section 3.5.2), young trans people often continuously *recall and relive the affective archives of particular spaces*. As a result, trans youth may, for example, feel particular emotions related to their previous encounters in such sites (such as ‘out-of-placeness’ or exhaustion), anticipate similar experiences and embodied emotions when re-encountering these spaces, or attempt to call upon or (re)generate the affective conditions of certain, more affirming spaces as a mode of resilience, resistance, and restoration.

Crucial to Crawford’s argument is that there is a *trans specificity* to continuously experiencing, recalling, and anticipating certain spaces through their architectural affective archives, whether this specificity is felt broadly across trans communities, by collectives of trans youth, or embodied only by individual young trans people. In other terms, there is a particular *transness* to constantly being engaged in variously (as we will see across Part II) anticipating, avoiding, performing through, and alleviating the affects of previous spatial envelopments and socio-material encounters. I argue that this constancy of affective archive recalling, (re)negotiation, and (re)generation is undertaken with particularly acute intensity and regularity by certain young trans people, including most participants in this research. This specificity, whereby spaces become felt in a particular direction because of ones’ transness or queerness, is seen in other geographical work. For example, Brown’s (2008: 916) autoethnographies of gay cruising encounters in public bathrooms, which discusses the sensual and sexual affects of, and

men who have sex with men's (MSM)⁶⁷ affective responses to, spaces 'not constructed with cruising in mind', demonstrates this. As Brown (2008: 926) tell us,

'By being in this space [public toilet used for cottaging] at this time, each man establishes a diverse set of relationships with the objects that surround him—not just the other men's bodies, but the stained ceramics of the urinals and the floor tiles, the faded shine of the [...] hand-dryers, the broken sinks, the air (heavy with the smells of stale urine, fresh sweat and amyl nitrate).'

Here, we see where the intricacies and minutiae of the bathroom's architectures and the bodily movements it contains coalesce to *queer* the bathroom space in a particular direction for MSM. In other terms, an affective archive, for men accessing the space for such purposes, builds both within and around the moving bodies of others in the space and through the ceramics, tiles, metal and air, which produce a particular spatial tone or atmosphere experienced by men seeking sex. This affective specificity which emerges out of particular architectures and materialities can be extended to trans young people and the spaces they access. For example, as the story that later opens chapter five illustrates, a young person experiencing a fearful encounter in a public transport space might continually anticipate encountering this site along lines of anxiety and fear, where coping mechanisms must be introduced to alleviate the bodily reactions stimulated by both recalling and (re)encountering the socio-materialities of the space. This continual, prolonged temporal production initiates what we will see is an embodied accrual of 'out-of-placeness' and ultimately exhaustion. Again, other spaces such as 'safe spaces' designed to affirm and align with young trans people, as I demonstrate in chapter seven, might produce a different kind of bodily reaction, one of embodied comfort, resilience, and a desire to repeatedly access and recreate the affective archives and affirming embodied and socio-material dimensions such sites offer (see chapter seven). In summary, I develop Crawford's arguments, moving them beyond *architecture* toward recognising the significance of social, bodily, and material minutiae involved in the unravelling and experience of young trans people's everyday lives. I argue that by recognising the *agency* which space holds (with varying degrees of intensity according to each encounter/temporal accrual) over trans and queer life experiences – and the temporalities over which the force of this agency is repeatedly felt – it is possible to demonstrate how young trans people's everyday embodied experiences become attached to specific and significant affects and socio-materialities of particular everyday spaces.

To further develop this spatial specificity, deepen understandings of young trans people's entanglements in the agency of spaces, and consider how the felt dimensions of certain spaces emerge

⁶⁷ 'MSM' includes cisgender and trans gay, bisexual, pansexual men and men of other sexual minorities, including straight men who engage in sex with men.

and envelop trans young people specifically (whether [sub]consciously, individually, and/or collectively), in the following section I introduce the concept of ‘affective atmospheres’. I argue that thinking through the everyday experiences of trans youth through this ‘more-than-representational’ concept allows for more subtle understandings to emerge around the transmission of affects between young trans bodies and subjects, and the spaces, events, and human/more-than-human bodies they encounter.

3.5.2 (ii) *An atmospheric approach to young trans people’s everyday lives*

‘An atmosphere can be how we inhabit the same room but be in a different world.’

–Sara Ahmed (2014a: n.p.)

The affective atmospheres concept encapsulates ‘pull[s] or [...] charge[s] that might emerge in a particular space which might (or might not) generate particular events and actions, feelings and emotions’ (Bissell, 2010: 273). Atmospheres are continually forming moods, ambiances, feelings, and tones which envelop and act upon/with bodies, whether these endure in space, are fleeting and/or ephemeral, or spatially-located momentarily. As such, thinking through atmosphere allows us to both conceptualise *collective* feelings (Anderson, 2009; 2014; Ash, 2013; Bissell, 2010; Duff, 2016) and the continual formation of *individual* subjectivities and emotions that atmospheres form ‘beyond, around, and alongside’ (Anderson, 2009: 78; McCormack, 2008). As phenomena which *condition* through affect and are *conditioned* through their formation (Anderson and Ash, 2015), atmospheres allow us to unpack the interwoven multiplicity and assemblage of emergence, force, and affect, given that they constitute a ‘force-field’ wherein ‘affects, sensations, materialities, emotions and meanings’ are embroiled (Edensor and Sumartojo, 2015: 253). Thinking atmospherically, then, allows a ‘thick’ description of space to be made, one which augments this thesis’ approach to spatial agency and the specificity/individuality of embodied experience, particularly as such approaches speak to the ‘material-affective relations that constitute the quality, feeling and experience of being “immersed” in particular sites and affects (Adey *et al.*, 2013: 300). As a result, with relevance for expanding upon the everyday geographies of trans youth, accounting for affective atmospheres has allowed geographers to ‘explore further the relationship between space and bodies and, specifically, how *changes in the constitution of a space, whether in its characteristics or in the bodies within it, alter the affective experience of these spaces*’ (Shaw, 2014: 88, my emphasis). In other words, by attending to atmospherics of particular spaces and times we can illustrate how changes to the social, material, affective, political, and emotional constitution of a space as experienced by trans youth can alter their bodies, subject positions, and embodied experiences in and beyond that site or moment.

Geographers have shed light on the form, boundaries, emergence and operation of affective atmospheres, despite these qualities being difficult to gauge given their porosity and ephemerality (Anderson and Ash, 2015). In this work, to emphasise their contribution to collective moods and individual emotive/bodily responses, atmospheres have been variously conceptualised as ambiguous (Hitchen, 2019), as having misty, hazy, gaseous, or vapour-like qualities (Anderson, 2009; McCormack, 2008), and as a ‘thickness in the air’ (Ahmed, 2004: 10). As a transmission of feeling through space, then, atmospheres can emerge spontaneously and contagiously (Bissell, 2010) or be deliberately engineered to produce particular emotional or affective responses (Edensor and Sumartojo, 2015; Lin, 2015; McCormack, 2008), or as affect-controlling mechanisms (see chapter seven). Crucially for this thesis, atmospheres may or may not be felt by those present in a given space where others are enveloped by a particular atmosphere (Bissell, 2016; Hitchen, 2019), or may impact only at the level of the hormonal (Brennan, 2004). As such, certain spaces’ atmospherics might, for example, *only* be felt by young trans people (or felt more intensely by trans youth relative to others), be deliberately engineered to produce a particular response (e.g. calm, safety, affirmation, joy, and fear) in trans youth or by young trans people, or emerge for certain trans youth as a consequence of particular planned or unplanned encounters or events.

Demonstrating how atmospheres are felt by and influence those who encounter them, recent scholarship has examined how atmospheres are *completed* around bodies they envelop when they become sensed or felt, *seeping into the embodied position of those who feel them* (Hitchen, 2019). In narratives that resonate with young trans people’s stories, Ahmed (2004; 2014a) describes, for example, her body becoming ‘tensed’ when immersed in a particular atmosphere of whiteness hostile to the raced shape and form of her body (see chapter five for further discussion). Demonstrating the spectra of embodied positions which affective atmospheres can induce, Adey (2013: 293) notes that ‘[a]tmospheres [can] carry us away in their buoyancy and lightness, or, conversely, they may sink us, drowning us with heaviness, lethargy, or exhaustion.’ My project here is to consider how trans young people might experience such emotional and bodily effects after their immersion in particular affective atmospherics attached to particular spaces, bodies, events, and materialities. Crucially, this approach must involve asking how certain atmospheres come to solely (or largely only) envelop and *stick to* trans people and youth in particular (whether as communities, individuals, or groups that experience spaces along other intersecting lines of difference). In turn, this approach allows me to give conceptual language to my thinking around the agency of architecture, space, and temporality, and to recognise how young trans people themselves can generate their own affective atmospheres to (re)make space along more comfortable, affirming, or overtly trans lines.

Recent research has extended the concept of atmospheres to recognise their emergence from more-than-human bodies through, for example, new spatial formations such as technology and virtual spaces (Ash, 2013), and has understood them as sensed and produced through/by animals and scents (Lorimer *et al.*, 2019). However, human geographers remain primarily interested in their more-than-human *materialities* and such materialities' influence over lived experience (*Ibid.*). In my reading of texts interrogating atmosphere, I have rarely encountered language that encapsulates the spirit-like, life-animating pull of atmospheres that align with how many young trans people describe their encounters with(in) certain spaces, bodies, and socio-materialities. I want to propose that atmospheres are that which, using the language of spirituality '[p]ervades and broods above / Changes, sustains, dissolves, creates, and rears' (Brontë, 1846), to suggest that they can occupy the position – spatial, temporal, and otherwise – of a life-force in themselves. This is not to suggest that 'even our most intimate feelings do not really belong to us but are an effect of the body's encounters with others' (Åhäll, 2018: 41), or that young trans people's experiences of everyday spaces and times are solely beyond their control. While I agree many atmospheres physically and psychologically impact people 'without their consent' (*Ibid.*), it is not the case that there is no human agency involved in the unfolding of an atmosphere-body-subject relationship – indeed, young trans people's narratives often suggest the opposite. Such thinking enables me to emphasise the agency that young trans people can draw on in certain settings or in relation to other bodies to generate or draw from particular affective atmospheres, as is, again, evident across participants' stories in Part II. A second layer of atmospheric thinking which requires further elucidation is the influence of atmospheres over queer lives,⁶⁸ and indeed in this thesis I work toward recognising how atmospheres emerge out of queerness and/or transness. In the following paragraphs, centralising young trans lives, I think through what a *queering* (or indeed a *transing*) of affective atmospheres might look like and offer up.

I have been particularly drawn to the idea that atmospheres, whether enveloping individuals or collectives, hold affective memories which become stickily attached to their ephemeral form as their force(s) come to act upon, and become felt in and across, the bodies of those they envelop (Closs Stephens *et al.*, 2017; Hitchen, 2019). Hitchen (2019: 6, original emphasis), discussing the atmospherics of Government-imposed austerity as it filters down to those it affects, describes how these memories are embedded within atmospheres and the assemblages and structures which underpin them through mechanisms that recalls the emergence of affective archives:

[A]s atmospheres re-emerge they bring with them a memory of previous envelopments. This is not to suggest that atmospheres ever re-emerge in the same affective state, but

⁶⁸ Although Nay (2019: 74) discusses trans politics in the Global North/West as shaped by 'an atmosphere of discomfort— an unease with and suffering from current legal regulations for gender-nonconforming people as well as the deadly violence against trans* people—that in turn reinforces colonial and imperial hierarchies.'

rather that the subjects enveloped within it – that make up and complete the atmosphere – have a particular affective memory of what it *feels* like. [...] Yet, whilst the individual subjects do shape this atmospheric memory [...] this memory is by no means limited to the subject; rather, it is a memory that emerges precisely from the relationship between the eminent elements and apprehending subjects.’

Although Hitchen describes the surfacing and embodiment of atmospheres felt by people encountering austerity, she offers further insight both into how Crawford’s affective archives might come to function for trans people in certain sites, and how non-linear trans temporalities figure in this atmospheric memory-space-body nexus. In Hitchen’s words, we see that as a subject is embroiled in an a particular atmosphere, memories of ‘previous envelopments’ also come to the fore, shaping their experience of the space in union with the pressures and forces exerted by the atmosphere(s) they feel in that space/time. Therefore, atmospheres not only emerge from the socio-material matter of a given space, but affective archives, emotional structures of feeling which, as we have seen, become imbued within such matter. I argue that trans people’s atmospheric encounters with particular spaces are perhaps often more complex or intense than Hitchen (2019) presents: as I discuss throughout chapter six, everyday spaces for young trans people can be shaped by entanglements with ones’ past, present, and future encounters with a given space, and life trajectories more broadly. As discussed in section 3.4, such thinking allows me to reconcile the spatial and temporal: it is not just memories of ‘previous envelopments’ that are important for exploring young trans people’s everyday experiences, but other temporalities including the gradual accrual of previous spatial encounters and imagined future lived experiences in particular spaces or times.

I have also been influenced by the idea that atmospheres are not experienced evenly (Hitchen, 2019), and are experienced differentially by individuals even when enveloping collectives of people (Bissell, 2016; Tolia-Kelly, 2006). Indeed, as discrete phenomena, multiple atmospheres can cohabit a space without affecting one another (Anderson and Ash, 2015; Thibaud, 2002, cited by Adey *et al.*, 2013). For instance, Ahmed (2004: 10) describes experiencing atmospheres distinct from others circulating in a given space, noting occasions where she ‘assumed other people were feeling what [she] was feeling, and that the feeling was, as it were, “in the room”, only to find out that others had felt quite differently.’ This effect, whereby subjects undergo differing experiences of the felt dimensions of an atmosphere, or even the sensation of an atmosphere being completed around themselves to begin with, I argue, is exacerbated when certain bodies and subjects are othered, marginalised, or read according to multiple axes of difference. Thus, as I demonstrate in this thesis, trans youth can experience atmospheres that are not present for others (e.g. cisgender folks) in particular spaces, whilst individual young trans people might feel the presence of atmospheres (or indeed generate atmospheres) that other trans youth do not, according to their life histories, immersion in particular socio-materialities, or embodiment of intersections of marginality, difference, and identity.

Research has not yet conceptualised trans people's experiences of space in this direction, although scholars including Divya Tolia-Kelly (e.g. 2016; 2017) and Ahmed (2014a) have powerfully illustrated how race and whiteness impacts upon the atmospheric dynamics of spaces. For example, Ahmed (2014a) describes experiencing the atmospheres of certain spaces as 'walls' which seem to harden at her mere entrance to the space as a woman of colour, demonstrating where the entry of marginalised people's bodies can cause an atmospheric disturbance, which in turn increases the discomfort of the marginalised subject. As Ahmed (*Ibid.*: n.p.) explains,

'I think whiteness is often experienced as an atmosphere. You walk into a room and you encounter it like a wall that is at once palpable and tangible but also hard to grasp or reach. [...] When you walk into the room, it can be like a door slams in your face. The tightening of bodies: the sealing of space. The discomfort when you encounter something that does not receive you.'

In this excerpt, Ahmed captures both the paradoxical nature of atmospheres as 'personal-collective; material-ethereal; palpable-elusive [and] contingent-engineered' (Lorimer *et al.* 2019: 28-29) and the potential violences which atmospheres can enact upon those who are enclosed by and come to feel them. In this extract, Ahmed does not perform any action which results in the emergence of the hostility which descends, cloud-like around her. Similar to my discussion of trans youth lives in chapter five, the atmosphere, instead, is emergent out of the discomfort which *other* bodies come to embody around her presence, the product of a socio-spatial order which privileges whiteness and excludes people of colour. When writing this section, I heard the same 'door[s] slam[ming]' in my participants' stories, often, as in Ahmed's story, in the subtle bodily movements of others around them, or conversely in more overt action made against their bodies. I thought of how participants were, as in Hitchen's (2019) research, slowly worn down by and eventually exhausted by their immersion in certain spaces wherein they experienced exclusion and discrimination (see chapter six), and other times when they were uplifted, lightened by the presence of other trans people and allies, a heavy atmospheric weight replaced with another, lighter atmosphere of overt transness, affirmation, and solidarity (see chapter seven).

How, then, can we account for the atmospheres which particularly envelop (or *only* envelop) trans youth? Countering the dominant portrayal of atmospheres, and the bodies which cultivate, receive and feel them, as neutral in their envelopments (Anderson, 2014), the starting point to answering these questions lies in Ahmed's (2010: 125; also 2014a and 2014c, my emphasis) idea that 'we may walk into the room and "feel the atmosphere", but *what we may feel depends on the angle of our arrival*. Or we might say that *the atmosphere is already angled*; it is always felt from a specific point.' Ahmed's recognition of the 'angles' which individuals embody provides insight into how atmospheric conditions are emergent from and felt according to the bodily specificities of individuals and subjects, allowing Ahmed (2014c: n.p) to

recognise the *individuality* of ‘worlds they inhabit’. This perspective allows us to ‘offer a description of a body that is not lined up, or a body that is not at home in the world’ (*Ibid.*) – and account for how a body becomes positioned as and comes to feel as ‘*out-of-place*’ (see chapter five) – by understanding how bodies and subjects experience atmospheres which exist outside of the dominant felt experience of a given space, or conflict with dominant atmospheres felt by those whose affective relationship with the space is one of relative comfort, stability, or neutrality. This tension is often an effect of atmosphere which queer folk continually (re)embody in the everyday, given that, following Ahmed’s (2004) earlier work, heteronormativity directly impacts the surfaces of (queer) bodies through socio-materialities and discursive/performative practices and norms. As Ahmed (2004: 145) declares, ‘[c]ompulsory heterosexuality shapes bodies by the assumption that a body “must” orient itself towards some objects and not others, objects that are secured as ideal through the fantasy of difference.’ Here, Ahmed (2004) proposes that queer bodies which are understood as being ‘outside’ of heteronormativity (and as I argue in this thesis, *cisnormativity*) must orient their movements and performances of self through space along more normative lines (i.e. by limiting the visibility/tangibility of their authentic selves), such that ‘[c]ompulsory heterosexuality diminishes the very capacity of bodies to reach what is off the straight line’ (Ahmed, 2006: 91).

To demonstrate further the processes by which particular, marginalised bodies and subjects become othered through atmospheres, Ahmed draws on bell hooks’ observations of the atmospherics of feminist support groups which, again, ‘noticeably change when a woman of color enters the room [...] becom[ing] tense, no longer relaxed, no longer celebratory’ (hooks, cited by Ahmed, 2014c: para. 15). Ahmed (*Ibid.*: my emphasis) spatially locates these bodily and atmospheric tensions, and conceptualises the harnessing of atmospheres for purposes of exclusion and marginalisation:

‘It is not just that feelings are “in tension,” but that the tension is located somewhere: in being felt by some bodies, it is attributed as caused by another body, who thus comes to be felt as a part from the group, as getting in the way of its organic enjoyment and solidarity. The body of color is *attributed as the cause* of becoming tense, which is also the loss of a shared atmosphere. We learn from this example how histories are condensed in the very intangibility of an atmosphere, or in the tangibility of the bodies that seem to get in the way. *Atmospheres can thus become techniques for making spaces available for some bodies, and keeping others out*: how better to exclude people than by inviting them in but making them uncomfortable.’

Here, we see not that ‘an atmosphere that is light for some might be heavy for others’ (Ahmed, 2014a: para. 22), but that a *space* that is light for some is produced as heavy for others as a technique for exclusion and the reinforcement of bodily norms. As I illustrate in chapters five and six, it is the body of the marginalised or ‘out-of-place’ person that is read as the source of atmospheric discomfort, despite the exclusionary socio-material structuring of many spaces where such atmospheres originate. In Part II, I demonstrate where and how young trans people and their bodies become read as

disruptive, or are understood as dissipating the ‘shared atmosphere’ of neutrality which I suggest exists for those less marginalised or seen less as ‘get[ting] in the way’.⁶⁹ I develop Ahmed’s (2004) arguments on heteronormativity to reflect upon the ‘compulsory’ tendencies enforced by space to consider the atmospheric seepage of cisnormativity and hostility into young trans people’s bodies and subjectivities. This ultimately allows me to develop an understanding of how weariness and exhaustion experienced by trans youth develop through their continual atmospheric immersion in everyday environments (see chapters five and six), and how resilience, resistance, and restoration come to be crafted in spaces which offer more supportive atmospherics (see chapter seven). In other terms, I argue that the dominant affective register which persists across most everyday spaces, at times, precludes trans young people from embodying an authentic self and experiencing bodily comfort whilst encountering such sites (see chapter five).

As Hitchen (2019) and Ahmed (2014b: 15) suggest, atmospheres can *linger* in space and time, and become ‘a trace of what a body leaves behind’. In this thesis, I want to take this further, to consider how atmospheres (whether positive, negative, neutral or more emotionally-complex) come to persist or (re)surface for certain young trans people in particular spaces or in relation to their previous affective and atmospheric envelopments. The following section continues this thinking, by honing upon and separating out specific items, objects, materials, and matter which, when assembled with(in) other affective bodies and registers, exert a similar affective force within young trans people’s everyday lives.

3.5.3 (iii) *Accounting for young trans people’s encounters with objects, things, and artefacts*

‘From hormones to prosthetics and campaigning t-shirts to lipstick – what brings the objects [in the Museum of Transology] to life are the personal stories of hope, despair, confidence and desire. Trans lives have often been hidden, ignored, misunderstood and forgotten. At times challenging and provocative this exhibition [of objects/artefacts] gives voice to the reality of trans lives.’

–Description of the Museum of Transology (Bagshawe, 2017), Brighton Museum
(July 2017–January 2020)

What potential is offered up by focussing upon the materials and matter which trans young people encounter and interact with in the everyday? The above quote describing the Museum of Transology, a collection of everyday items donated and narrated by British trans people to illuminate their life histories and sense of belonging in museum/archival settings (Tseng, 2017), encapsulates the potential

⁶⁹ Although, again, this varies according to interacting intersectional factors which impact their embodiment of relative privilege: trans young people’s body shapes/sizes, race, gender, sexuality, age, ability to ‘pass’, and so on.

offered up by capturing trans people's stories and life events through objects and 'things', which constitute one of many branches of materiality (Rose and Tolia-Kelly, 2012). This significance is reflected in recent calls for scholarship to explore specificities of trans lives through engagements with trans people's relations to and understandings of mundane materialities and practices (Andruki and Kaplan, 2018). To work toward this goal, I follow theoretical stances emergent from Geography's 'materialist turn', which attends to the 'livingness' of the everyday material world and its embodied politics (Rose and Tolia-Kelly, 2012; Whatmore, 2006). This involves considering matter and material ephemera/bodies⁷⁰ as – like the socio-materialities, spaces, atmospheres and various other forces reviewed thus far – *active agents* which hold their own capacities for affect which can be enacted and felt when connected to other bodies. Such thinking can account for the significance and emotions which become stickily attached to particular materialities for young trans people in relation to particular spaces, times, and spatial/bodily encounters.

By exploring the matters and materialities which trans young people encounter, I seek to avoid pitfalls in geographical work which Tolia-Kelly (2011: 153, original emphasis) notes has been limited in political outlook and critique, 'leaving a *surface recording*, a description, a mapping or illustration of materialities'. To address this failing, I not only consider what the matter and materialities present in participants' accounts *are*, but also focus on what these matters *do* by examining 'the processes whereby materialities achieve specific capacities and effects' in shaping their lived experiences (Anderson and Tolia-Kelly, 2004: 672). This constitutes an MTRT approach of 'vital materialisms' which presents the human and more-than-human as 'material configurations [...] integrated, co-constituted and co-dependent' (Tolia-Kelly, 2011: 154). To specialise my focus upon young trans subjects and materialities, I follow simpkins (2017: 126), to explore the 'dynamic movement underlying both trans* and matter suggest[ing] their mutual imbrication – a mutual imbrication that trans*es materiality' (see glossary on 'transing'). In other terms, part of my approach involves considering how matter becomes felt along queer and trans lines and/or assumes an inherently trans(ed) or queer(ed) nature through trans young people's affective encounters. A second aspect of my approach recognises that potentially 'everything' can be(come) materialities which 'make up the social' (Anderson and Harrison, 2010: 14). However, I primarily focus upon materiality and matter primarily through participants' everyday interactions with loosely-defined 'objects, things, [and] artefacts' (Tolia-Kelly, 2011: 157).

⁷⁰ As Rose and Tolia-Kelly (2012: 5) note, materialities can be 'temporally and spatially unfixed', such that examining their affective influence must involve examining 'rhythms, forms, textures and the value of memory-matter engagement'. In other terms, an approach to exploring the significance of matter must incorporate affective, embodied memories and experiences embedded within/around particular materialities, and must understand matter beyond the representational, for example by considering the emergence of material histories through accounts of lived emotion and perception.

In geography and the social sciences, the importance of objects, things, and artefacts in young trans people's lives have rarely been explored outside of home spaces (e.g. Andrucki and Kaplan, 2018), although researchers have examined other styles and qualities of materiality in trans and queer life, including the agency of non-human, biological matter in producing queer and trans bodies (Elliot, 2010; simpkins, 2017). As discussed in Part II, 'things' identified as important by participants are many and varied; some are spatially-attached and align with traditional understandings of material objects, others are more ephemeral, individual, or occupy more transient temporalities and spatialities. Certain 'things' participants discussed included restrictive materials co-producing negative affect and emotion, and impeding authentic embodiments and movement through space. Other materialities, conversely, offered bodily freeing qualities, whilst others held less binary structures of feeling. Some objects and 'things' participants referred to were, as Ahmed (2007: 154) discusses, objects in the sense that they are 'styles, capacities, aspirations, techniques, [and] habits'. Matters and materials afforded importance by participants include (chosen and ordered randomly): clothing, binders, testosterone, books, tattoos, fiddle toys, signage, packers, bathroom doors, foliage, flags, hair, headphones and music, playlists, signage, firewood and ash, pamphlets and flyers, online and social media spaces, notebooks, writings, drawings and sketches, passports and travel documentation, toilets, artwork, books, a crucifix, scars and scarring, sunglasses, and pronoun/name pins. Focussing attention upon the significance of such objects, things, and artefacts allows me to develop of a framework that focusses upon the *force* of the material – demonstrated through the (affective) presence and prominence of objects, things, and artefacts in participants' stories – in shaping young trans people's encounters with(in), and movements through, bodies and spaces. In the following paragraphs, I set out how I achieve this.

As simpkins (2017: 130) notes, if we understand human embodiment and the embodiments experienced by trans people as 'incorporat[ing] the nonlinear, tangibility of incorporeal dimensions, then normative understandings of the concreteness of materiality also require modification'. Such modification is also needed to avoid accounts of encounters of matter and materiality becoming 'surface geographies'; descriptions that ignore the inherent *vitality* of material 'things' (Tolia-Kelly, 2011). To do so, I follow Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) vitalist drive to present the world as 'composed of various materialities constantly engaged in a network of relations' (Bennett, 2004: 354); in other terms a co-existence of materialities which constantly intermingle on the same 'plane of immanence' (Anderson and Harrison, 2010: 14).

In Part II, I adopt Sara Ahmed's queer phenomenological approach that argues that bodies are shaped by their orientations toward objects (Ahmed, 2006; 2007). Indeed, Ahmed's (2010: 27) work advises that we avoid assuming that 'the relationship between an object and feeling involves causality: as if the object causes the feeling'. Instead, Ahmed understands that '[t]he object of feeling lags behind

the feeling’ and it is only the case that we attach ‘proximity’ to affects and objects through habit: this habitual construction of objects and materials means that we perceive them as ‘feeling-causes’, and our understanding of the object as the feeling’s origin is affirmed when we ‘feel the feeling we expect to feel’ (Ahmed, 2010: 28). Temporally speaking, as I have already argued is the case with young trans people’s emotions regarding and movements through spaces/architectures, objects become imbued with what Ahmed (2010) terms ‘anticipatory causality’: the *anticipation* that an object itself will initiate an affective response ‘in advance of its arrival’ (*Ibid.*). I argue that these anticipatory relationships build through – as discussed throughout Part II in the case of trans youth – young trans people’s constant (re)interaction with, and subsequent embodiment of, particular materialities’ affective dimensions. This is an accrual of embodied emotion that builds relative to a temporally-contingent accrual of affect, and past, present, and imagined future events/encounters. Indeed, Ahmed (2006: 88) notes that the arrangement of objects, their relative distance to the subject perceiving them and to other objects, are ‘signs of orientation’, arguing in later work, for example, that objects which stimulate joy or pleasure ‘take up residence within our bodily horizon’, a process which co-creates subjectivity (Ahmed, 2010: 24). Conversely, ‘in rejecting the proximity of certain objects, we define the places that we know we do not wish to go, the things we do not wish to have, touch, taste, hear, feel, [and] see, those things we do not want to keep within reach’ (*Ibid.*). Following this logic, trans youth, like others, are *directed towards* objects that we anticipate will cause happiness, or a positive affective response and therefore *directed away* from objects which we anticipate will cause anxiety, tension, unhappiness or another negative affective reaction (although less binary affective responses to objects are also possible). As discussed in chapter seven, materialities that trans youth gather and interact with often help produce/stabilise their development and accessing of spaces and practices of resilience, resistance, and restoration.

Ahmed (2019a, 2019b), using the example of a toilet door sign designating the *use of the space* behind it as for cisgender women, describes how certain objects become imbued with affective gendered directives that impact how certain trans people such as those without ‘passing privilege’ (see glossary) experience certain everyday spaces:

‘A [door sign] is often a use instruction: it tells you *who* should use *what* door. The signs are of course not referring not to the toilets themselves as men or women but to the users of the toilets. You might go that way, open that door, because of who you understand yourself to be, but still be told you are using the wrong door because of how you appear.’

Here, as I discuss in chapter five, through socio-material structures and their associated socially-constructed meanings that are augmented through repeated use and performed gendered norms, we see that bodies that do not align with socially prescribed gender norms are read as obstructing the supposed ontologically pre-given use of particular spaces. Ahmed (2019b) uses different bodies’ experiences of doors to illustrate that when objects and things become attuned to particular people and

bodies, or seen as for their use, there is an unjust ease of movement for the accommodated, and a contraction in the things and spaces available to those who are hindered or restricted, such as young trans people in many everyday spaces. If, following Ahmed, we understand that societal norms direct our bodily movements toward objects which come to have affective registers privileging cisgender and heterosexual subjects/bodies (obvious, well-recognised examples from the geographical canon include binary-gendered bathroom signage, documentation, gyms, hospitals, workplaces, and so on), objects which come to hold queer(er) affective registers move out of sight, out of the way of the queer body's orientation to space. As such, young trans people may constantly encounter objects, things, and other materialities that contribute to their ever-building 'out-of-placeness' in everyday spaces, and find it difficult to access or reach more affirming materialities or affects in such sites. This reflects the importance of material-focussed practices involved in the (re)making of multifaceted trans 'safe spaces', as discussed in chapter seven.

In sum, this thesis explores everyday material engagements of young trans people by emphasising the affective importance which certain objects, things, and artefacts come to hold for certain trans youth. Again, such thinking reconciles spatial and temporal elements of young trans people's lives, as important objects, things, and artefacts come to hold material and/or affective significance in young trans people's spatial encounters and in their experience of non-linear, future-oriented, or accruing/durative temporalities.

3.6 Chapter conclusions

This chapter has outlined the thesis' 'more-than-representational' approach to exploring young trans people's everyday life experiences and has brought together previously disparate literatures traversing trans studies, queer and feminist theory, geography, architectural studies, and the broader social sciences. In sum, the theoretical approach I have developed – driven by my empirical/methodological approaches and by my goal of capturing and examining participants' voices through more nuanced perspectives – is attentive to notions of emergence, force, and affect, and young trans people's experiences of/engagements with temporalities, agency embedded in space, affective atmospheres, and objects, things, and artefacts. As such, it both pushes at the limitations of previous conceptual frameworks and works to analyse trans experiences differentially to how geographers have previously pursued research with trans people.

This chapter argues that adopting MTRT – currently holding under-used potential for expanding upon trans/queer lives in geography and beyond – can allow scholars to develop fine-grained, intersectional analyses of the everyday lives of both individual trans youth and collectives of

young trans people. My adoption of the MTRT-informed language of emergence, force, and affect – concepts tied to the *becoming* of trans lives, bodies, and subjectivities and the spaces and times they encounter – radiates throughout the thesis. This language allows me to illuminate how the position(s), experience(s), or emotion(s) of certain young trans people emerge both from spaces and times that each individual young person lives through, and affectivity projected simultaneously from their self and body. Moreover, this framing sheds light on the *intensity* of particular forces and their affective significance in young trans people's lives and their engagements with their pasts, presents, and imagined futures. Accounting for young trans people's experiences of temporalities, particularly the affective duration or accrual of particular moments and spaces in young trans people's lives, enables me to further examine the *significance* of particular experiences and encounters they narrate. This temporal focus, novel in trans geographies, allows me to consider how trans youth cast between their past, present, and imagined future experiences, and is significant in my examination of how their experiences of 'out-of-placeness' (chapter five), exhaustion (chapter six), and resilience, resistance, and restoration (chapter seven) emerge, endure, accrue, and are sustained.

In this chapter, I have also drawn on and developed Crawford's (2010; 2012; 2015) work to recognise the significance of socio-material minutiae involved in the unravelling and experience of young trans people's everyday lives to emphasise the *agency* that spaces can hold and exert over such experiences. Following Crawford, I argued that the socio-material composition of everyday spaces acts as a set of forces that result in young trans people anticipating and encountering particular spaces along certain embodied emotional lines, such as those associated with 'out-of-placeness' and exhaustion. This focus on the agency and affective force imbued in space – often encountered and recalled by young trans people through affective archives attached to certain spaces and past, present, and future encounters in particular sites – brings notions of the spatially and temporally-constitutive force of particular socio-materialities into trans geographies.

By becoming attentive to young trans people's experiences of affective atmospheres, an approach novel to trans geographies, I argued that accounting for (and queering/transing) spatial atmospheric conditions offers opportunities to explore both young trans people's collective feelings and the emergence of individuals' subjectivities and embodied emotions. My novel queering of atmospheres asks how certain atmospheres come to solely (or largely only) envelop and *stick to* trans people and youth in particular. Focussing on how young trans people experience or produce affective atmospheric conditions in particular spaces also offers opportunities to consider how individual trans youth or groups of young trans people experience spaces along intersecting lines of difference. Crucially, this focus avoids universalising young trans people. In terms of the thesis' narrative arc, this atmospheric approach to young trans lives allows me to explore, for example, how young trans people

experience and embody affects and events associated with ‘out-of-placeness’, become exhausted in and by particular spaces, times and socio-materialities, and generate alternative or more affirming atmospheres as a mechanism of resilience, resistance, and restoration.

In a final theoretical contribution, this chapter has also emphasised the importance of focussing upon materialities which trans youth encounter and interact with in the everyday. By exploring young trans people’s engagements with particular ‘objects, things, [and] artefacts’ (Tolia-Kelly, 2011: 157) in my research practices (see chapter four) and throughout my analyses of participants’ stories, I not only focus on what important materialities in participants’ lives *are* but also – as demonstrated in Karl’s story (see preface) – consider their significance in (at least partially) producing participants’ ‘out-of-placeness’ and exhaustion and enabling participants’ alleviation of these conditions. This thinking opens a space to establish how trans youth become close to or distant from certain objects relative to their embodied emotional experiences in particular spaces and in relation to certain temporalities they live through or anticipate encountering/enduring.

3.6.1 Linking the ‘more-than-representational’ theoretical approach to collaborative methodologies

In the following chapter that concludes Part I of this thesis, I outline methods and approaches I adopted to work with trans youth and collate their stories. Before continuing, I want to briefly explore how adopting a participatory ethos elicited stories that align with the MTR theoretical approach discussed in this chapter. MTRT-grounded research has rarely explored the lives of marginalised people, and has remained largely apolitical and inaccessible for individuals and communities engaged as participants in such studies. As Vannini (2015: 324) states, ‘non-representational scholarship is [...] not [yet] sufficiently concerned with power, injustice, and politics [...] not reflexive enough [to recognise] its own intertextuality and citationality; not consistently clear and accessible for all; and not conceptually coherent on issues of agency, non-relationality, obduracy, and subjectivity.’ Similarly, efforts to engage with non-representational approaches in children’s geographies have been critiqued for ‘their general inattention to enduring axes of social difference and their inability to explain the persistent nature of these power differentials’ (Holloway, 2014: 382). Other scholars have noticed that MTR-grounded research often assumes, like previous theoretical approaches to exploring trans youth experiences, a universal experience with little attention paid to individualised emotions and intersectional identities and embodiments. Although a small number of MTR scholars research individualised/autoethnographic experiences, certain MTR scholarly work has yet to speak to how particular group’s collective and individual experiences of space can both vary and interweave (Anderson and Ash, 2015).

In the following chapter, I explore how I developed a methodology that prioritised and projected individual and collective trans youth voices and experiences through a participatory/creative research praxis. Additionally, I reflect on my exploration of participants' in-depth stories by becoming attentive to what Ahmed terms 'feelings of structure', and indeed to the theoretical approach I have developed. The following chapter reflects on how the methodological and theoretical approaches I take in this thesis work in tandem.

4

*Researching with young trans people:
Collaboration, voice-raising, storytelling*

4.1 Chapter introduction

In this chapter I draw out the trans-inclusive and collaborative methodological and epistemological approaches I used to engage and work with young trans people aged 14-25 through eleven creative workshops and nineteen one-to-one sessions. My focus on collaboration, voice-raising, and ‘storytelling’ and ‘story-sharing’ through innovative, participatory action research (PAR) method(ologie)s and close co-operation with Gendered Intelligence (G.I.), represents an original contribution to trans studies, queer and trans geographies, and other social science approaches working with trans youth. Through trans youth voices and ethnographic-style field notes, in this chapter I (a) contribute to a growing geographical literature considering methodological engagements with marginalised young people, and (b) situate this research as impacting literature that draws out the politics and emotions of research with(in) trans communities and spaces, particularly as a cisgender (and queer) researcher. These contributions allow me to encourage geographical researchers committed to trans liberation and uplifting trans voices – and those researching with(in) trans communities, and countering hostile and transphobic narratives currently perpetuated around trans people – to undertake intersectionally-attentive research that explores trans people’s lived and embodied experiences. This research, I argue, should not focus solely on narratives of harm and misfortune nor become concentrated in spaces of hostility, but should also turn toward affirming and even mundane experiences and spaces reflecting everyday lived realities while empowering trans voices and upholding ‘safe spaces’ for their projection. Throughout the research, I focussed on the *richness* of research encounters and the stories told within them rather than concentrating on developing an expansive list of participants. However, 96 participant engagements took place as part of the research (certain participants took part multiple times.)

Trans communities have recently been subject to a wave of social science research, much of which has been carried out by cis researchers. This has resulted in considerable research fatigue and wariness in certain trans communities and spaces. As a cis scholar, I have been highly aware of these challenges, wanting to avoid problematic approaches that dominate existing research *on* trans communities. To achieve this, I drew on a growing body of research written by trans and queer scholars to create a methodology that collaborates and works in-depth *with* trans young people to place their voices and experiences at the fore. In this chapter, then, I consider the value of collaboration and participatory research through my responsiveness to the concerns and desires of young trans people, from the input of gatekeepers in formulating the methods used, to its projected modes of dissemination, and think through the relative diversity of my participants. I further expand upon spaces in which the research took place, namely London and G.I. spaces, and a space for LGBTQIA+ youth in Scotland. Through my multifaceted role as researcher, ‘guest (co-)facilitator’, *ally*, and safeguarder, I

also played a key role in both crafting and maintaining the research sites (which had to be maintained primarily as ‘safe spaces’) and ensuring the wellbeing of young people was maintained both within these sites and beyond (in terms of the research’s impact on their everyday lives.)

This chapter, unlike the rest of the thesis, constructs a particular story about myself in relation to my positionalities and my participants, research spaces and encounters, and collaborators, to demonstrate the process of my decision making and ethical nuance. This approach allows me to decentre myself in relation to young trans people’s lives and stories in the chapters that follow. In the chapter, I think through ethical dilemmas and difficulties I negotiated as a queer cisgender researcher and reflect upon (a) the history of the ethical process behind this research and the role of G.I. as gatekeepers, (b) my decision to avoid participants’ parental consent to maintain their safety, and (c) other techniques for ensuring the safety, wellbeing, and enjoyment of participants in research spaces and beyond. I ultimately grapple with the discomfort of never fully being able to understand the extent to which my privileges impact participants and spaces of research. Furthermore, sadly I recognise that I will never be able to reflect in words the level of emotional labour that trans youth who participated offered me. Their stories and comradeship, and the emotional intimacy of our research encounters, were untranslatably rich, particularly as a result of what I term ‘queer solidarities’ that I attempted to embody and exude throughout the research.⁷¹ Although I do reflect on my experience of anxiety in the field, I also sit with the discomfort of being unable to fully reflect the labour of crafting spaces of safety and solidarity through varied methods in which I hope young trans people were able to voice and feel like their authentic selves. In sharing my participants’ stories, I acknowledge that ‘rather than representing lives, I am re-presenting stories that have been presented to me [and thus] see myself [...] as a gatherer and teller of stories’ (Heckert, 2010: 53).⁷²

Throughout the chapter I also address potential absences of my research by turning to emerging debates in participatory research practice and exploring dangers associated with over-emphasising a ‘collaboration’ label. I also seek to stress the value of ‘storytelling’ and ‘story-sharing’ methods and spaces as means through which to empower and offer young trans and non-binary people opportunities to reflect upon, celebrate, and develop resilience in relation to their experiences in their own words and means of self-representation. I do so by focusing upon the two cornerstone methods I employed, namely *creative workshops* with young trans people and (what I have termed) *one-to-one sessions* with individuals recruited within these workshops and beyond (see sections 4.5.2 and 4.5.3,

⁷¹ This queer solidarity is apparent through, for example, my story-sharing, adoption of queer storytelling methods, use of queer language, and so on (see section 4.4.2).

⁷² Throughout, following trans researchers’ expertise ‘participants’ experiences are presented as extended visual and verbal narratives, positioned [...] to ensure participants speak first and for themselves’ (Marshall, 2017: 186).

respectively). The following section begins this work by examining the tendencies of much social science approaches to research around trans lives that have primarily involved working through top-down research approaches that do not respond to trans people's experiences or preferred means of engaging in research. I do so to illustrate how my research challenges and is responsive to the problematics I identify.

4.2 Addressing problematic research approaches, research fatigue, and mistrust toward researchers in trans communities

There are multiple ethical risks associated with researching in marginalised communities and trans communities/spaces in particular. Recognising that they can never be eliminated entirely, this section introduces my efforts to help mitigate those risks. As chapter three demonstrated, despite the large 'gaps' and inequalities that persist in research around trans lives in geography and beyond, social science research around trans lives largely remains premised on problematic approaches that are insensitive or empirically and ethically weak. As I have shown thus far, cisgender social scientists have tended to focus their research *on* (rather than *with*) trans people, or have extrapolated cis LGB+ experiences onto trans people without tailoring their ethics or recruitment and researching practices to the specificities of trans communities or particular groups of trans people (Jourian and Nicolazzo, 2016; Pearce, 2018a, 2018b; Vincent, 2018a, 2018c). Furthermore, as of 2017 'no research on the application of ethical standards in [the trans] population exist[ed] within social and psychological research' (Adams *et al.*, 2017: 166, cited by Vincent, 2018c). My collaborative ethos and use of participatory method(ologie)s, tailored to the specific needs of young trans people and sensitivity to recruiting and researching with trans youth ethically and with queer solidarity, responds to these concerns and attempts to more closely align with the scholarship and research practices of trans academics researching trans lives. As explained in chapter three, although intersectional approaches to researching trans lives attentive to under-researched aspects of identity and subjectivity are urgently needed, (cisgender people's) research around trans folk has largely focussed on the experiences of white, non-disabled trans people and trans folk who are less 'hard to reach'. My research is not exempt: although I did recruit relatively large numbers of non-binary youth, few participants were BIPOC or trans women, despite efforts to recruit such youth (see list of research encounters; figure 4.7 and 4.8). The embeddedness of my research within spaces for young trans people (see section 4.3) meant that I was limited to researching with young people who attend such spaces and services and by such constraints and relative privileges as my subject position (i.e. as a white, gay, non-disabled, young cis man) and physical and ontological distance from the 'field', both in real terms and in terms of my cisness.

As Vincent (2018c) explains, many cisgender social science researchers have demonstrated limited knowledge of trans histories and linguistics beyond medicalised discourse, have rarely attempted co-produced research sensitive to the emotional labour trans people are required to contribute, and have shown little attempt to be transparent about their project's aims with trans people. Many cis researchers have also failed to understand how the figure of 'the researcher' can be apprehensively constructed in certain trans communities and spaces. Particularly damaging and hypocritical has been certain cis researchers' presumption that they will be able to access trans spaces or have displayed 'a demeanour that trans people should be grateful that the researcher has taken an interest' (*Ibid.*: 111).⁷³ In this work trans people have often been objectified as 'objects or instruments of analysis', with their knowledges and experiences discredited (Radi, 2019: 49). Trans communities are thus often subject to ill-conceived requests for participants and may subsequently feel exhaustion, frustration, distrust, and wariness when interacting with underinformed (and particularly cisgender) academics (*Ibid.*; Rooke, 2010; Vincent, 2018c). Throughout this chapter, I outline how I continually reflected on and responded to these problematics and concerns to develop research sensitive to my participants' lives, experiences, and desired means of working. I discuss my careful approach to establishing collaborations with trans community organisations, my ongoing responsiveness to young people's stories and contributions, and trans leaders' continual input into the project through collaboration with trans community organisations. I think through my commitment to prioritising trans youth voices and on my status as a potential intruder in trans spaces who certain young trans people may have perceived differentially (and indeed I acknowledge that I can never be fully aware of how participants felt about my presence.)

Furthermore, I argue that much research around trans lives has been dominated by 'traditional' research methods – static and structured interviews, questionnaires and surveys, and so on⁷⁴ – that rarely allow trans folk to articulate their stories and experiences in ways that they feel are appropriate or helpful. I note that researchers have often ignored the empowering and even joyful experiences that trans people have experienced or can craft in certain research settings using particular methods they themselves choose (see e.g. Humphrey *et al.*, 2020). Moreover, a significant proportion of social science analyses have been limited to a small number of spaces and contexts, and have used problematic, uninformed, or outdated language, or (as described in chapter three) have extrapolated trans experiences out of those of lesbian and gay folk (Vincent, 2018c). Throughout this chapter, I articulate my attentiveness to the nuances of queer and trans language, sensitivity to young people's self-

⁷³ I experienced this when a potential participant contacted me to relay their discomfort with a cis person researching in trans spaces. G.I. responded on my behalf, communicating my understanding and that of the organisation.

⁷⁴ I do not seek to critique such methods outright, but argue that a greater diversity of methodological approaches that feel relevant to, or are driven by, trans people themselves are needed.

articulations, and my crafting of collaborative spaces that allowed participants to choose the means through which to share stories – including those of joy, affirmation, and happiness, alongside those of difficulty and hostility – that they themselves chose to tell. I also reflect on how my ‘embodied situatedness’ (Rooke, 2010c), particularly as a queer person, intersected with my approaches and participants’ potential perceptions of the research.

As Humphrey *et al.* (2020: 166) note, the ‘systemic, ideological and structural violence’ of cisgenderism (see glossary) and pathologisation remain dominant across most disciplines that have researched trans lives. Indeed, cisgender people’s research around trans lives in particular is often *tokenistic* with little effort made by certain researchers to embed themselves in trans spaces or communities: as Cabral (2006, cited by Radi, 2019: 53) tells us, cis academics have often presented their forays into trans research as though charting ‘virgin and unnamed territories, waiting to be discovered, broken and colonized’. Research around trans people often contains problematic language, excludes people of less well-known genders, is only minimally intersectional (or erases intersections of identity/embodiments), or overrepresents the most ‘visible’ trans populations (Humphrey *et al.*, 2020; Radi, 2019; Vincent, 2018c). Consequently, as alluded to in chapter three, trans researchers have noted that certain studies (again particularly those conducted by cis people) have sadly focussed on ‘trans lives to benefit only academic discourse’ (Humphrey *et al.*, 2020: 175; Vincent, 2018c). Reflecting such issues, Radi (2019: 52) states that the dominant methodological and epistemological approaches and framings used to research trans lives has instilled a ‘history of epistemic violence’ – one that I have actively sought to avoid contributing to from project design to dissemination. I do not wish to over-emphasise the originality of this research, recognising that trans scholars and people have relentlessly worked to explore everyday life issues both in academic contexts and beyond. Throughout, I demonstrate how I responded to the concerns of trans scholars and my collaborators to develop collaborative and *trans inclusive* research that advanced trans equalities and raised young trans voices throughout (Morgan and Taylor, 2016: 7; see Jourian and Nicolazzo, 2016).

In the following section, I explore the decision-making and practical steps I took to implement and enhance a trans inclusive and collaborative approach by becoming embedded in trans spaces and working *with* young trans people through multiple mechanisms including spaces and practices of in-depth engagement and storytelling and story-sharing. In doing so, I outline how my preparatory work and research ethos responded to the concerns I have discussed here. In section 4.4, I expand on dilemmas I faced when gaining ethical approval to research, work with, recruit, and gain the informed consent of trans people and more marginalised trans folk specifically (in this research trans youth).

4.3 Building collaborative relationships and addressing initial ethical concerns

4.3.1 *Building relationships with Gendered Intelligence and the Scottish organisation*

From the offset⁷⁵, I wanted to embed myself and my PAR practice in an organisation working for and with young trans people. To this end, entirely trans-led and staffed Gendered Intelligence stood out: through deep research about their working practices in 2014 and 2015, I knew how passionate and strong they were in defending and creating spaces for young trans people (see preface); since then, I have been at times overwhelmed by the level of care and affirmation they offer service users. When designing the project and applying for research funding, I held multiple email and telephone calls with G.I.'s CEO, Jay Stewart. To fully explain the research design, my proposed supervisor and I held video calls to explore what the research might look like, how it might impact trans youth, and its potential benefits for G.I.'s service users. I also travelled to London during the research design stages to meet with Jay and to familiarise myself with the organisation. Understandably, Jay was keen to discuss my motives for researching young trans lives. He was perhaps surprised that I did not have a personal, emotional story (aside from my own queer history) but rather wanted to conduct research that would benefit the organisation, its young people, and fill a problematic and glaring 'gap' in the literature – one which, as we have seen, did not often afford young trans people space to voice their own experiences, resorted to problematic language, and unduly focussed on negative experiences such as suicidality. With Jay, as with participants in later stages, I was also open about my own queerness, experiences as a young gay man, and desire to embody a queer approach to my research that would involve an attempt to embody and emanate queer solidarity at every stage. I was keen to stress my adoption of a *participatory* ethos and my desire for the research to be collaborative, iterative, and responsive to young trans people throughout.

As figure 4.1 shows, by embedding the research within G.I. spaces in London and by following the organisation's guidance, I could seek input from trans facilitators and people with a stake in young trans people's lives, tailor my research practices to fit the policies and practices of the organisation, and offer a diverse group of trans youth opportunities for *active participation* in the project (Humphrey *et al.*, 2020). I am mindful to avoid over-emphasising the 'collaborative' label as Nicolazzo (2017), Namaste (2009), and Radi (2019) notice is prevalent in much research around trans lives (and indeed research claiming to be fully participatory), as the confines of the PhD – particularly my distance from the research sites,⁷⁶ and my subsequent inability to develop long term contact with all young people – did

⁷⁵ I began planning this research in 2014 (in its current form from 2015).

⁷⁶ The research involved regular travel between field sites in London and Scotland and Durham in North East England.

not allow participants to *fully* define the research questions, collect their own stories, or conduct analysis or dissemination (see Namaste, 2009; Radi, 2019).

During the research design phase, I held many conversations with G.I.'s leaders and youth workers about the purpose of my research and what had brought me to it, what the research might look like and involve, the spaces it might create, and where the voices, stories, and creative work of participants might travel. I was also interested in emphasising my hopes that the research and its practices and spaces would benefit both young people attending research sessions and the organisation alongside trans policy in the UK more broadly. Although these were difficult issues to think through ahead of the empirical research stage, framing the project as a collaboration with G.I. enabled me to think through my own positionalities and situatedness, ethical concerns related to collaborating with young trans people (particularly those under 18), and the research methodologies along more practical lines. I could also begin reflexively interrogating my shifting positionalities in trans spaces and the driving forces of my research praxis. Regular dialogue between myself and the organisation's leaders ensured that I was putting potential future participants' needs and concerns (and those of wider trans communities) at the forefront of my work. Collaboration with G.I. also enabled practical advantages of mutual benefit to myself, the organisation, and its young trans service users. Figure 4.2 illustrates many of these important research practicalities enabled through collaborative partnership. Many of those listed are also directly relevant to my later collaboration with the Scottish organisation.

Figure 4.1 (below). Practicalities, organised roughly chronologically, of researching with(in) Gendered Intelligence and creating new G.I. spaces of research and enjoyment (much of these practicalities relevant to collaboration in Scotland).

| Researcher engagement and practicalities: practical steps as part of research design and execution | Advantage to research/organisation |
|--|---|
| Trans Awareness Training course | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Received training certificate in working with trans communities and using appropriate language etc. |
| Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check and certificate | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Could gain DBS certificate through G.I. Undertook separate Protecting Vulnerable Groups (PVG) check in Scotland. |
| Embeddedness in G.I. safeguarding mechanisms and ability to follow guidance/practices for working with trans youth | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ability to follow G.I. safeguarding pathways and practices. Made use of this on a small number of occasions to request youth workers ‘check in’ with young people who became upset/detailed traumatic experiences in research encounters. Ability to gain G.I. input and approval on consent procedure, participant information sheets, and consent forms. Ability to work with young people unable to get parental consent (see ethics section). |
| Recruitment pathways | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Able to recruit online, G.I. social media and email lists, through youth groups, and through youth workers following data privacy guidelines and minimal identifying information when not present (see recruitment and ethics sections). Ability to recruit those who attended G.I. residential spaces specifically. |
| Adopting role of ‘guest facilitator’ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ability to attend young trans community spaces and events, co-facilitate these events and my own research spaces without responsibility of safeguarding (other youth workers always present in group spaces⁷⁷). |
| Ongoing contact/conversation with organisation leaders, youth workers, community leaders, etc. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ability to seek input on the organisation’s priorities to feed into ongoing research design. Could gain nuanced insight into current issues facing young people that G.I. are regularly in contact with and insight as to how research sessions had been received. Could gain up-to-date knowledge on running an organisation for trans youth in societal hostility and turbulence. |

⁷⁷ Field note extracts (27/01/2018) indicate how this worked in practice: ‘We agreed that [youth worker] would follow any young people out [if they left the session] and “check in” with them if they became withdrawn. Throughout the afternoon, I noticed [youth worker] regularly kept their eye out for signs that a young person had become upset or distressed.’

| | |
|--|--|
| (cont.) Attendance at existing G.I. spaces and events | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ability to familiarise myself with G.I. workers, develop rapport with youth workers and leaders, and understand G.I.'s finances and structures. ○ Ability to meet with and talk to young people early in project. ○ Could develop a deep understanding of the workings of G.I. spaces (including their 'safe space' policies and practices e.g. signing in, signposting youth facing difficulties, opening circles, pronoun and name introductions, toilet spaces, etc.). ○ contribute my labour and time to the running of spaces, events, and research activities that trans youth could choose to attend (i.e. through creative workshops at existing community spaces). ○ Develop understanding of research practices appropriate for trans youth who attend G.I. spaces. |
| Creation of new creative G.I. spaces as lead or co-lead/facilitator | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ability to follow G.I. practice, with the support of youth workers, to create safe and supportive research spaces that embedded and mixed fun activities with research encounters. ○ Able to meet with large and small groups of young trans people and trans youth individually in London (see table of research). ○ Reciprocal, mutually beneficial arrangement whereby youth workers' time and the hiring of research spaces paid by organisation in return for my creative workshop facilitation and support in running space. |
| Ability to immediately and directly 'give something back' to young trans people and G.I. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ability to offer young trans people spaces for discussing everyday life issues, and to reflect deeply and creatively on emotional experiences not normally offered by the organisation⁷⁸. ○ Offer of free of charge to attend multiple creative and supportive spaces and opportunities to meet diversity of other young trans people across research programme (see table of research). G.I. benefits from being able to co-run creative spaces during school holidays etc. with reduced cost and research element of organisational interest. ○ Introduction of youth to G.I. and its support mechanisms (i.e. for young people that had never attended G.I. prior to research spaces.) Offer of feeding into each successive research space and encounter and contributing to knowledge-making around young trans lives. |

⁷⁸ Several participants described how the research offered opportunities to discuss everyday emotional experiences that G.I. activities did not normally focus on.

4.3.2 *Further preparatory work*

To advance the research and further familiarise myself with G.I. and its young people, I attended a ‘Saturday Session’ for young people in Leeds in Spring 2016 before beginning the project in earnest. I took part in activities with the young people and was first introduced to G.I. youth space practices, including ‘pronoun arounds’, closing circles, and breakout spaces.⁷⁹ It was in this space that I *fully* realised the importance of being open about being cis in trans spaces.⁸⁰ In October 2016, I began the PhD and started planning the research in greater detail, maintaining regular contact with G.I. leads in London. Prior to the start of the research proper in January 2017, I began working with Finn Greig, G.I.’s Youth Service Lead. I presented Greig my ideas for the initial project spaces and talked of how we could ensure they would be of mutual benefit to young people. We discussed the consent procedure, the presence of youth workers, my role in the trans space, and so on, and I sought input on project information sheets and consent forms. I attended a community ‘Saturday Session’ for Hallowe’en in 2017 and annually attended G.I.’s end of year fundraising events⁸¹ which included performances and readings from their young people. Throughout the research, when I could travel to London or when events coincided with my time researching there, I went along to G.I. social events including community Saturdays, staff and volunteer events, and so on. My research appeared in G.I.’s annual end of year reports on the charity’s impact and their work with young people.

Collaborating with G.I. enabled me to embed one-to-one and small group work, and recruitment for such engagement, within G.I. spaces throughout 2018. I worked with Greig and Jamie Pallas, the organisation’s then Communications Lead, to develop both virtual and in person recruitment and book spaces at organisation’s offices. The first creative workshop space, centred around clothing, was to take place at an already existing ‘Saturday Session’ (in section 4.5.2 I explore the creative workshops in detail content). Several further workshops took place in half term holidays to allow young people to attend on weekdays over a period of days and to enable young people to meet and socialise with one another for more than one session at a time. Two blocks of such workshops incorporated an evening activity – bowling and the cinema – that young trans people were chaperoned to and I helped lead.

⁷⁹ ‘Saturday Sessions’ are community spaces which all trans youth aged 8-25 can attend. ‘Pronoun arounds’ and closing circles are integral to G.I. – they involve sharing names, pronouns, ice-breaker activities, story-sharing, and sharing what young people will take from the session. My research spaces took place in a separate room so that only those aged 14 or over could attend.

⁸⁰ For example, my field notes reference participants asking whether I was cis or trans.

⁸¹ I described one early such event as ‘poignant [...] [because I felt] fully part of the organisation and integrated in the work they do [but also because] Jay read aloud a letter the charity had sent the family of a recently passed young trans person. The family had chosen to support G.I.’s work.’

Later in 2018, to diversify the research and expand its focus beyond London and the lives of participants who in the majority were from the South East, I decided to develop a second collaboration. In June 2018, I approached a large LGBT+ organisation in Scotland⁸² that held a youth group for young trans people. Our collaboration and its practicalities and spaces, although on a smaller scale and over a shorter timescale with a more structured plan of creative workshops that took place weekly over five weeks (see figure 4.7) was similar to that with G.I. Indeed, the workshops took place in a youth work space in an urban context, I used similar creative and participatory practices, and a youth worker familiar with the young people was always present. However, there were key differences in the working practices of this organisation and G.I. For example, the organisation's youth work sessions in Scotland are less structured. Young people attending the services are, as youth workers and leads told me, from more 'disadvantaged' or working class backgrounds; almost all were white. The youth workers at the organisation, although LGBT+, were cisgender. However, the Scottish organisation's youth services occupy a permanent, comfortable and clearly LGBT+ themed space. In contrast, G.I.'s youth spaces take place in a community space that is repurposed for trans youth work (for example, by re-labelling toilet spaces as 'for everyone', decorating the space for young trans community events, and repurposing a computer room as a quiet space – one that would double as my workshop setting when workshops overlapped with 'Saturday Sessions'.) Figure 4.2 illustrates some key differences between the research at G.I. in London and in Scotland with the Scottish organisation, in turn demonstrating certain advantages of expanding the research beyond London.

| Research characteristics | Primary research locations | |
|------------------------------|---|---|
| | G.I./London | Scotland |
| Research encounters overview | 5 creative workshops ranging from 2 hours to 2 full days; 17 one-to-one sessions (additional one-to-one sessions recruited separately to G.I.). | 1 creative workshop with a large group of trans youth; 5 weekly creative workshops with 3 heavily invested participants. |
| Participants | Diverse. Trans women, men and non-binary people. Trans men and non-binary folk perhaps overrepresented but representing average attendance of G.I. spaces. Predominantly residing in London/South East although some participants travelled from Northern England/further. Several trans people | In large workshop – trans women, men and non-binary people, less diverse, largely white, from more 'disadvantaged' backgrounds; in weekly workshops – all white, all under 18. In weekly workshops – 2 non-binary youth, 1 trans man all aged 14-17 and residing in Scotland. |

⁸² I remind readers that this organisation is not named to ensure the anonymity of the small number of participants engaged through the group.

| | | |
|---|---|--|
| | (cont.) of colour. All three age ranges represented (14-17, 18-21, 22-25). | |
| Research spaces | Various. Community centres (both regularly and irregularly used by G.I.), G.I. offices and hired meeting rooms, a hired LGBT+ community space, a café, recreational spaces. | A permanent space for queer youth at an LGBT+ organisation in an urban setting. |
| My role in research spaces | Lead researcher; co-facilitator; safeguarding role to signpost issues to youth worker. | Lead researcher; co-facilitator; safeguarding role to signpost issues to youth worker. |
| Organisation's support in research spaces | Presence of 1-3 youth workers at each workshop; available support and nearby presence at one-to-one sessions organised through G.I. | Presence of 1 or 2 youth workers at each workshop. |

Figure 4.2. Table illustrating key differences between research at G.I. and in Scotland and demonstrating key advantages of expanding the research beyond London

Before beginning the workshop series in Scotland in earnest, I held a creative workshop to familiarise myself with the organisation, its working practices, and the young people who regularly attend the trans youth service. In both G.I. and the Scottish organisation's spaces, I made sure to continually seek the permission of young trans people to be present in their space through differing techniques. I introduced myself and the research in easy-to-understand language, leaving plenty of space and time for questions and concerns, whilst in all group settings the young people could also approach trans youth workers or facilitators to voice any thoughts or potential discomfort. I ensured that my voice was never prioritised in any research setting, and a separate quiet space was always available. In group settings, I always made sure to stage a conversation or activity around what a cis researcher entering their space meant and felt like for potential participants. After this session first session in Scotland, in which I collated 19 young trans voices, I worked closely with three participants aged 14-17 with different backgrounds/experiences in five further structured workshops.

By following the youth work policies and practices of G.I. – including their rules and conventions around pronouns, and introducing and closing the space– I could ensure that the safety of the space (both atmospheric and practical) was maintained. Appendix B shows a conversation excerpt from a 'pronoun around' 'closing circle' that I led, in collaboration with a trans youth worker, to demonstrate how I brought G.I.'s conventions into my own research practice. The conversation illustrates how, for example, such practices leave space for participants' pronouns/names to change during the research session, thus ensuring inclusivity for gender fluid folk and those experimenting with gender, names, and pronouns (Humphrey *et al.*, 2020). The conversation also demonstrates the malleable dynamic of research spaces and my offering of space and time for quiet withdrawal. In the conversation, Maxi (they/them or he/him, 14-17) alludes to the value of the project in its offering of

storytelling spaces that explore everyday life in contrast to discussion spaces focussed on negative experiences and medicalised discourse:

‘I’ve said this before but I’ll say it again, I think that this idea of like everyday lives as a trans person is really good because usually like being trans is like centred around, I’ve said this a lot but a lot of the time when you discuss being trans it’s a lot about like erm, issues with medical transition and stuff like that. And I think discussing being trans like that is very like you know clinical, and we don’t think about how it affects us socially and in the outside world and how it affects us in our life, really. So yeah I think it’s really interesting to talk about that.’

However, Greg’s (he/him) description of the workshop themed around online spaces speak to the emotional difficulty some experienced during the research, suggesting that it was not always a fulfilling opportunity: ‘[it] made me think again about like the negative stuff that happens on the internet, because I know it happens but it’s just when I’m actually forced to like *remember* it again, it’s like, [*sounds defeated*:] “oh.. yeah look at all that shit stuff that exists in this wonderful thing that has helped me for so many years”, so yeah.’ Greg’s words serve as a reminder to researchers of trans lives that even ‘everyday’ themes can lead to the surfacing of distressing emotions or trauma. In the following section which considers my responses to the complex ethical issues posed by this research, I expand on mechanisms I put in place to negotiate such emotions and challenging encounters. I expand on my decision to avoid seeking parental consent for participants aged under 18, and offer a detailed account of the ways that I sought to further ensure the safety and wellbeing of participants.

4.4 Preparatory work to address ethical concerns

As Vincent (2018c: 102) explains, ‘[r]esearch with transgender participants necessitates ethical nuance, due to both the problematic history of trans research and the marginalised status of trans communities worldwide’. However, very few publications have addressed the nuances of recruiting and researching and working with *young* trans people specifically (Humphrey *et al.*, 2020). This section outlines the practical mechanisms I enacted to ensure participants’ informed consent, safety, and wellbeing.

4.4.1 Ensuring participants’ safety and wellbeing

Throughout the research I worked with young trans people aged 14-25. In England, Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) clearance is required to work with those under 18; this clearance was sought through G.I., whilst my research in Scotland necessitated obtaining a Protecting Vulnerable Groups (PVG) certificate. I also undertook G.I.’s Trans Awareness Training regarding trans identities and safeguarding young people. A Gendered Intelligence youth worker was present in creative workshop spaces at all times and participants were asked to consent to each research encounter they chose to take part in. For example, young people who chose to contribute such materials as artwork or writings to

the project via email were required to complete a second, specially-tailored consent form (see consent forms, Appendix C). When participants did not consent to an aspect of the workshop or one-to-one session, they could still take part in the session for their own enjoyment (e.g. to discuss issues with other young trans people or for catharsis) but their contributions were not used (in such cases, an audio recording was not taken and they retained their creative work.) I discussed verbally with each participant what their contributions could be used for before they completed consent forms. Participants were asked to explicitly consent to their materials produced in the workshops and one-to-one sessions and transcriptions of recorded conversations being used for the PhD research and G.I. social media and other fora, alongside other research outputs including presentations and publications. Young people were asked to explicitly consent to audio recording, and their participation in workshop spaces and one-to-one sessions was not dependent on being recorded. To maintain anonymity, I refer to participants using only an age range (i.e. 14-17, 18-21, and 22-25) and the pronouns they used in the research encounter concerned. When the issue of consent was raised, I discussed my role as a dual researcher and facilitator and ensured that each young person understood both what it meant to participate in research, and procedures around withdrawal and wellbeing in the research space. Participants were encouraged to debate key themes such as privacy, respect and safety, and my presence in the space (including as a cisgender researcher, or as a 'newcomer' to their space); in workshop settings I embedded group activities that discussed consent and my position as a cis researcher. Participant information sheets that participants could retain were individually tailored and adjusted for each research session to ensure participants fully understood each setting; sample sheets are available in Appendix C. Participants were given time to carefully read and digest these sheets and their associated consent forms in each research encounter they attended;⁸³ these forms were sent ahead for virtual encounters. In all research settings, I read the sheets alongside participants and actively confirmed their understanding of each aspect of the research they consented to, clarifying where appropriate.

When planning the research, I recognised that exploring emotional issues and experiences in research sessions could raise emotions of pain, anxiety, and sadness or lead to the surfacing of (past) traumas. To mitigate this risk, I verbally confirmed that young people were comfortable with discussing each broad topic. In workshop settings, following G.I. practice, youth were asked to use verbal 'content warnings' to alert other young people to potentially 'triggering' or emotionally-sensitive discussions. Before, during, and after workshops at both G.I. and the Scottish organisation I talked with the youth

⁸³ I placed the consent forms around each research space's table ready for participants to arrive. Participants were required to read the Information Sheet and complete the consent form at each research encounter they attended.

worker present to discuss any safeguarding issues they anticipated or other concerns that arose during the research space; this worker could then elevate any concerns following organisational practice. A quiet space for youth to withdraw to, featuring a background/back-up activity, was provided at workshops and most one-to-one sessions; young people could withdraw to this quiet area at any time and could be supported by the youth worker present. Crucially, G.I. leaders' approval was sought when designing workshops and one-to-one sessions (including participant information sheets and consent forms). Furthermore, all activities could be stopped at any point and replaced with an alternative research activity or activity initiated by the youth worker present in the space, although this situation never arose.

The ESRC asks researchers to consider several ethical and safeguarding procedures when designing research and consent procedures with young people (ESRC, n.d.). I demonstrate how I addressed these points in Appendix D. This appendix provides further detail on mechanisms I put in place to think through and respond to youth vulnerability, power relations, participants' understandings of the research and its outcomes, and data protection. In the following section, I continue exploring participant wellbeing and safety by explaining the rationale behind my decision to avoid seeking parental consent for participants aged 14-17 and mechanisms I adopted to ensure all participants could offer informed consent.

4.4.2 Seeking the informed consent of participants under 18

During the research, I engaged a particularly marginalised group of trans young people who largely use support services and spaces to alleviate concerns which pervade in their everyday lives, including as part of their family lives and home spaces.⁸⁴ As such, seeking parental consent for the participation of participants under 18 was neither feasible nor preferable and I could not assume that directly offering details of the research to parents/guardians would not compromise the safety and wellbeing of participants at home or in similar spaces. Had I done so, those who could not provide parental consent would therefore have been problematically excluded from participating. Crucially, trans youth may not be fully or even partially 'out' as trans to their parents or guardians. Asking for parental consent might 'out' them against their will, potentially increasing the likelihood of unsafe or threatening conditions for them outside of the space of research.

⁸⁴ For example, certain participants cited through their words, stories, and artworks incidents including parents' misgendering or lack of understanding of (trans)gender diversity, a need to be secretive or discreet regarding discussions around gender and 'coming out' as trans, and worries around negative consequences of being 'outed' as trans.

Academic literature has understood that parental consent can be waived in certain specific contexts, particularly for adolescents (generally referred to those aged 13–17), and particularly when the safety and wellbeing of young people could be compromised by the consent process. Indeed, Kennan (2015), in a systematic review of literatures examining parental consent, and McLaughlin (2015) for the National Children’s Bureau, explore this issue. Although parental consent is generally considered an important safeguarding technique for the majority of youth research, Kennan refers to the needs and experiences of youth ‘on the margins’ (i.e. those marginalised by wider society as a result of aspects or intersections of their identities, bodies, and subjectivities) to explain instances where seeking parental consent is neither preferable nor feasible. Both Kennan and McLaughlin refer to the *prohibiting* nature of seeking parental consent; pursuing this can inhibit youth from participating, particularly when it is in the interests of the young person to remain private and in control of disclosing aspects of their identities, such as in studies exploring sexuality. McLaughlin notes that adults can seek to encourage or prohibit young people from being involved in research. Requiring consent in such cases can deny opportunities for participation; this, as Kennan (2015: 89) states, may silence ‘those already marginalized and most in need of being heard by the very nature of the circumstances they find themselves in.’

I argued that it was in the interest of participants aged 14-17 to remain private as I could not risk implicating young people in potentially dangerous/threatening situations which could arise as a result of being identified by parents or guardians as a participant. Indeed, Kennan (2015: 89) notes that a particular challenge ‘posed by the parental consent requirement is that it can unduly exert adult power and influence over a young person’s decision to participate in research.’ Additionally, requiring parental consent could have unduly produced findings which reflected only the lives of those with supportive parents or guardians. As Kennan (*Ibid.*) notes, such outcomes can impact the integrity and representativeness of the research, as participants with ‘parents who are easier to access and reach’ would be overrepresented. In reality, many young people involved in this research were primarily engaged *because* of their marginalisation in everyday life settings (particularly those who regularly attend support groups), including, in some cases, their negative experiences at home and in familial relationships.

Young people themselves chose to attend any research setting, reflecting Kennan’s (2015: 87) observation that undue ‘focus on protection can fail to respect the competence of youth’ to consent. Indeed, certain participants chose to take part in certain aspects of sessions, and to avoid others (such as audio recording), and I offered time at the start and end of each session to discuss each aspect of the consent process directly. I was clear that young people could ask questions (and indeed withdraw their contributions) at any time during the session, whilst time was allocated to discuss with myself and, in

the case of group workshops, the trans facilitator, the implications of consenting. This, alongside either group or individual discussions around ‘what it means to consent to research’, and intermittent verbal reminders regarding what their contributions will be used for (and ensuring their comfort with this), meant that youth competency was increased to its fullest potential, and that participants were best placed to understand the nature/procedure of consent.

Furthermore, participants regularly demonstrated an advanced knowledge of issues including gender, healthcare practices, and trans communities and activism. Participants cited frustrations with having to educate both those whose professions require a good understanding around trans issues, and those who hold influence over their everyday life experiences, including parents, clinicians, policy makers and so on. Participants also cited frustrations with situations and spaces where agency was removed from them to make informed choices, or is afforded instead to adults who hold power over their subjectivities (including their bodies, modes self-expression, life experiences, and identities.) I therefore argued that removing young people’s ability to consent to different aspects of the research which they see as beneficial to themselves by involving parents as consent gatekeepers, could have exacerbated this frustration and removed trust which participants placed in myself and the project. I wanted to avoid understanding participants as vulnerable, passive, and lacking in the power and understanding to make informed decisions (Boyle, 2003, cited by Humphrey *et al.*, 2020). Appendix E shows G.I. CEO Jay Stewart’s contribution to the Ethics Committee supporting this stance on parental consent.

The ESRC (n.d.: n.p.) offers researchers guidance regarding parental consent and best practice for researching with children and young people, noting that ‘[r]esearchers should consider whether mature children can confirm consent without adult approval; for example, there may be circumstances where seeking consent from parents could jeopardise the research [...] researchers will need to regard the potential risk to the participants of the research as a priority’. This waiver is further supported by the Gillick principle, which the National Children’s Bureau note can be invoked to justify that ‘those under 16 years old who are assessed as having sufficient knowledge and understanding of their own wishes can override parental consent’ (McLaughlin, 2015: 18). Although it was a long and difficult process to successfully communicate my worries to the Ethics Committee,⁸⁵ I argued that seeking adult consent for young trans people would be inappropriate. I referred to the Gillick principle to argue that, by seeking parental consent, the *right to confidentiality* of the young person – and subsequently their potential safety and wellbeing – would be compromised. My research was ultimately successful in

⁸⁵ As Humphrey *et al.* (2020) note, ethical review panels, as with every aspect of research, can be embedded with cisgenderism or assumptions around best practices for working with marginalised groups including trans people.

achieving the waiving of parental consent for LGBT+ youth aged under 16; this is a relatively rare occurrence (Humphrey *et al.*, 2020).

In some research settings, I argue that my practices for seeking continual informed consent *actively contributed* to certain research encounters and to bolstering mutual trust and reciprocity. I contended that establishing young trans people as best placed to determine their participation (and indeed every aspect of how they described themselves), illustrated my understanding of their need for cis allies to recognise their agency and ability to self-identify and make decisions against an everyday life backdrop where, for many, this can be routinely impeded (see participant stories in chapters five and six). I also note that the extended and ongoing consent procedure contributed to the atmosphere of ease I felt in research spaces, as the following field note excerpt demonstrates:

‘I was gratified when Karl told me that I created an atmosphere which put him at ease and described how he doesn’t often feel comfortable sharing things, but did somehow with me. I think fully explaining the consent procedure, and how I will guarantee anonymity, helped with this. I really went into depth both before and during our conversation, particularly when Karl seemed a little uneasy about sharing both his own stories and those of other trans youth he knows. I was sure to explain that when transcribing stories wherein the participant could be identified, I will delete and alter certain details which, while not detracting from the story centralised through the participants’ narrative, will remove any likelihood of identification.’

Here, Karl’s initial unease around sharing his life story was alleviated by discussing consent, where his words could travel, and my own queerness and stake in the research.

In the following section, I continue to reflect on my preparatory work by considering strategies I used to recruit participants.

4.5 Recruitment strategies

As with other aspects of my research, my participant recruitment approaches necessitated mutual trust, the provision of ‘safe spaces’, and commitment to trans allyship and social justice. As such, recruitment was an *ongoing process* that I had to continually return to and negotiate between myself, the diversity of participants and their needs, field sites, gatekeepers, and others implicated in the process. I wanted to ensure that my recruitment not only allowed me to raise the voices and stories of young trans people, but ensured a diversity of trans youth voices were represented in the research. Given the wariness trans youth might have had around participating, and the difficulties of recruiting for research that primarily took place hundreds of miles from me, I attempted multiple recruitment strategies (see figure 4.3) to varying degrees of success. Ultimately, G.I.’s involvement in communicating and operating aspects of recruitment proved the most successful approach.

I attempted to recruit for the project by handing out flyers at G.I. events; this had limited success. I also advertised the research both personally and through G.I. through platforms including social media (both myself and G.I.'s), flyers, verbal communication, and email advertisement. Participants' sign up data for most workshops was handled by G.I.. Recruitment for several one-to-one sessions at G.I. focussed on eliciting potential participants' experiences of G.I. spaces, and particularly G.I.'s residential camp space, a spatial focus suggested by G.I. to further their knowledge of their service users' experiences of both regular events and residential spaces. This focus, allowing young people to offer their thoughts and stories around spaces of G.I., brought forward many potential participants; indeed, the number of potential participants for this research strand exceeded the space and time I had available to meet with them in London. In Scotland, I devised posters to be placed in the organisation's youth space and the organisation recruited using their email list on my behalf. To increase the representation of young people aged 14-19, these sessions were advertised as being for this age group (see figure 4.4).

Half term Project

15th-16th February 2018



Over February half-term Gendered Intelligence is running a two-day zine-making project with James Todd, a researcher from Durham University, for **trans, gender diverse and questioning young people aged 14-24**.

There are only 20 spaces available - book yours via [Eventbrite](#).

The two-day project from 15th-16th of February will include lunch each day, followed by an afternoon workshop and an evening trip to bowling (Thursday) and cinema (Friday). To sign up, you should be able to attend both days.

If you are aged 14-17, we need consent from your parent/carer for you to take part in the project. Once you have registered on [Eventbrite](#), please ask your parent/carer to email Finn Greig at finn.greig@genderedintelligence.co.uk before Wednesday, 14th of

James is working on an exciting research project over the next couple of years which involves collaborating with young trans people from GI on some creative projects. Together, we'll be thinking about everyday life through artwork, drawing, building, performing and lots of fun activities.

About the Workshops

Over the two days we will be making a zine together. Activities will include storytelling and sharing through art/mini creative activities, mini-interviews in groups, and putting together the zine. We'll be looking at what it means to move around as a trans person in public space - using public transport, airports, walking, specific journeys e.g. to/from GI/school and what it will take to improve transport and increase safety.

There are only 20 places available. [Please book your place via Eventbrite](#). To book, you should be able to attend both days.

Daily schedule

Thursday

- Arrive at 1.30pm for pizza lunch
- 2.30pm-5.30pm: Workshop
- Evening: Trip to Rowans Finsbury Park bowling until around 8.30pm
- (Parents/carers collecting young people should meet outside the bowling alley between 6.15 - 8.30pm)

Friday

- Arrive at 1.30pm for pizza lunch
- 2.30pm-5.30pm: Workshop
- Evening: Trip to cinema to see Black Panther (rating 12A) - cinema and finishing time TBC



Over half-term we are offering two opportunities for young people to work with James Todd, a researcher from Durham University to tell their own stories in their own words.

1. Wellbeing Workshops, 29-30 May

On 29-30 May James Todd, a researcher from Durham University, is running a creative workshop for trans, gender diverse and questioning young people aged 14-24 with Gendered Intelligence.

This project will involve two afternoon workshops exploring themes related to health and wellbeing. Think sport and exercise, exams and school or university, body and mind, relationships, and healthcare. Activities will include sharing and storytelling of experiences through different creative forms in a supportive and fun environment. Everyone is welcome!

2. One-to-one drop in sessions, 31 May - 2 June

Are you interested in telling your own story, in your own words? Alongside these workshops, James is also running some one-to-one drop in sessions. These sessions will involve working individually with James to think about the everyday life experiences which are important to you as a young trans person. In the session, you will work creatively with James to make sure that your voice and stories are heard. This will be an engaging way to collaborate in a project which works together with young trans people to explore your day-to-day life experiences.

When signing up, there is an opportunity to indicate themes you are interested in, and any ideas you have for working together.

- Any preferred methods of working (e.g. artwork, informal chats, photography, creative writing, and so on)
- Anything you would like to bring along to show or discuss (e.g. objects important to you, a piece of clothing, photographs you have taken, artwork or poetry you have produced...)
- Themes relating to everyday life you would like to cover in the session with James (e.g. relationships, clothing, healthcare, being online, getting around - the possibilities are endless!)

If you are aged 14-17, we need consent from your parent/carer for you to take part in the project. Once you have signed up, please ask your parent/carer to email Finn Greig at finn.greig@genderedintelligence.co.uk before 9am on

We will not provide lunch so please bring your own packed lunch. However, there will be snacks.

Hi there! Thank you for your interest in signing up for (or finding out more about) a one-to-one session exploring young trans 'everyday life' with James Todd. I'm really looking forward to meeting you!

These sessions will last around an hour and a half, and will take place at Gendered Intelligence on Pentonville Road, King's Cross on:

Friday 7 December (afternoon/early evening)
Saturday 8 December (afternoon)
Monday 10 December (afternoon)

You must be 14 or over to take part.



| First name ONLY | Pronoun(s) | Email contact | Preferred day(s) | 'Everyday life' themes/ideas that might interest you | Happy for James to email you to arrange a time? |
|-----------------|------------|---------------|------------------|--|---|
| | | | | | |

Figure 4.3. Three selected materials demonstrating differing recruitment strategies (note that G.I.'s parental consent requirements differed from my own).



Figure 4.4. Poster displayed at Scottish organisation and circulated through their email lists to potential participants aged 14-19 (organisation's details redacted).

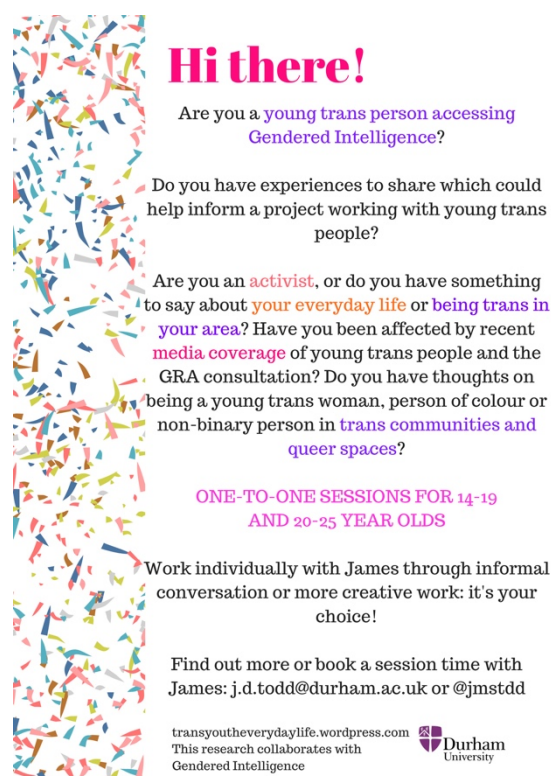


Figure 4.5. Sample recruitment document aimed at trans women, trans people of colour, and non-binary folk.

In mid 2018, I noticed that participants across all settings were predominantly trans men and non-binary folk (loosely mirroring G.I.'s service user pool and the demographics of young trans respondents to the National LGBT Survey; see chapter one), and thus began focussing recruitment strategies toward particularly marginalised or underrepresented young trans people (including young trans women, non-binary people, and people of colour [POC]⁸⁶; see figure 4.5). To do so, in recruitment materials I noted my particular desire to hear and raise the voices of such groups, and asked that certain recruitment materials be read at G.I.'s COLOURS youth group, a trans POC-led group for young trans POC aged 13-24. Several potential participants responded to this call. Tom (he/him, 18-21) explained the intersectionality-informed reasoning for his participation and response to a call for POC participants:

‘Especially when I think of being POC in relation to being trans, I feel like it’s such a *specific experience* that such a small amount of the population has and even then mine is even more concentrated because it involves my family. [...] [My close family] was very split down the middle [regarding transition] and shows the extremes of how a trans issue can go in relation to religion and culture [Tom is from a Muslim family], and that sort of thing, so I think my experience in particular can be quite useful to know about, so I figured I’d like to share it.’

Although several participants recruited through other methods were trans women and trans people of colour, ultimately given the constraints of PhD research, these populations are problematically underrepresented.

By beginning to explore my collaborative research ethos, the following section begins to move beyond the practicalities of my preparatory work.

4.6 Research ethos: Storytelling, story-sharing, and queer solidarities

4.6.1 *Storytelling and story-sharing*

Throughout the research, I afforded participants with varied opportunities and spaces for storytelling and story-sharing, which became research styles that foregrounded my methodological choices and research ethos. Through the participatory methods I employed, participants told *multiple kinds of stories*, including collective narratives built through story-sharing and comparison with other young trans people in creative workshops, individual, in-depth stories across all research events and spaces, and visual/creative story representations. As Cameron (2012) explains, geographers have a long history of engaging in storytelling as a mode of knowledge-sharing and creation and recognising the potential of

⁸⁶ I note here the potential problematic of grouping ‘women’ with a collective and expansive ‘people of colour’ category, acknowledging that I should have avoided an approach that could be read as attaching ‘woman’ to white women whilst subsuming non-white women ‘within a racialised homogenised Other’ (Johnson, 2020: 1).

telling/hearing stories to bring to light the specificities of individuals' experiences. More recently, storytelling has become valued as a means of expressing the 'more-than-representational' and evoking the bodily, the tacit, and the atmospheric/affective dynamics of people's lives (*Ibid.*). Yet '[s]tories do not simply represent [...] they affect, they move' and evoke embodied experiences (*Ibid.*: 581): my aim in offering participants opportunities to share their stories was to encapsulate each of these dimensions.

Crucially for this research, for Valentine (2008; 2016: 4) employing *storytelling-focussed methods* in participatory research enables marginalised young people 'the chance to turn the tables, to relate their story to others [and] celebrate and promote the history and experiences of their varied and constantly shifting community in their own words and images.' This viewpoint illustrates the liberatory and resistive potential which orienting methods and research spaces toward storytelling offered many participants (Jourian and Nicolazzo, 2016). Focussing on storytelling also enlivened my queer approach to the research. Indeed, for me, queering the research and recruitment meant building relationships of solidarity and developing platforms to empower young trans people to work at their own pace to share their voices and tell their own stories. My focus throughout was on prioritising young trans voices, offering opportunities for young people to articulate their views and experiences to one another, and affirming young people's self-articulations. To do so, I offered participants diverse means through which to tell their stories, and encouraged the transness of their histories and imagined futures to come to the fore. In section 4.5 I set out how maintaining such a storytelling ethos worked practically and specifically through the two cornerstone methods of creative workshops and one-to-one sessions.

Throughout the research, each space was constructed to enable young trans people's stories to be shared and heard. Certain stories focussed on one event, others on an object, time, or space, while others traversed a life history. Some emerged as fragments through group conversation, spilled out in a lengthy, monologue-like oral history, or were brought to light only through specific questions or prompts. Throughout this research, all such styles of storytelling (and more) took place. In some cases, young people shared such intimate, private life histories that they had not previously told; in others, young people collectively laboured in piecing together their similar experiences or shared only story 'snapshots' of particular objects, encounters, spaces, or times in their lives. Some participants had already collated their stories through diaries, photographs, collections, artwork, and creative writing prior to (or specifically for) this research; others had not yet reflected on the intimate details of their life history or even considered why their stories as young trans people might be worth telling or sharing. For some participants, their stories were heard for the first time by another trans or queer person.

Importantly, my ethos of storytelling meant that when a particular conversation that deviated from the project's aims was taken up in any setting, I was careful to allow this to 'breathe' to ensure

participants used the space and time for self or collective catharsis or to discuss experiences they might not otherwise be able to in everyday settings. I was careful to allow these conversations and activities to ensue without interference from myself as an intervening researcher. I made sure to indicate to young people that they were in control of how the session was run, activities they could select to take part in, or the discussion points that were raised. I continually sought feedback and input on the direction of each subsequent research session through activities such as participatory diagramming, collective reflection (without my voice dominating), and other ‘feed-forward’ methods. For example, an introductory activity in a workshop session might have allowed young people to identify key themes which were then prioritised according to outcomes which the young people themselves desired from the session, whilst pre-designed activities were structured to allow young people to select multiple, individual interpretations and ways of working. For instance, a ‘storyboarding’ activity allowed young people to self-interpret the activity. Both workshop and one-to-one sessions included an activity that allowed young people to identify themes they would like to cover and ‘ways of working’ that could be used in further sessions. This approach allowed the research themes to emerge according to the needs and views of participants. For most one-to-one sessions, young people were asked to complete a form which included questions around what they wished to discuss or bring along to the session. Our conversations were largely unstructured involving minimal planning beyond ‘mind maps’ I created for each individual session based on young people’s forms and (in the case of encounters wherein I had previously met the participant) previous research settings to use as conversation prompts rather than fixed structures (see figure 4.6).

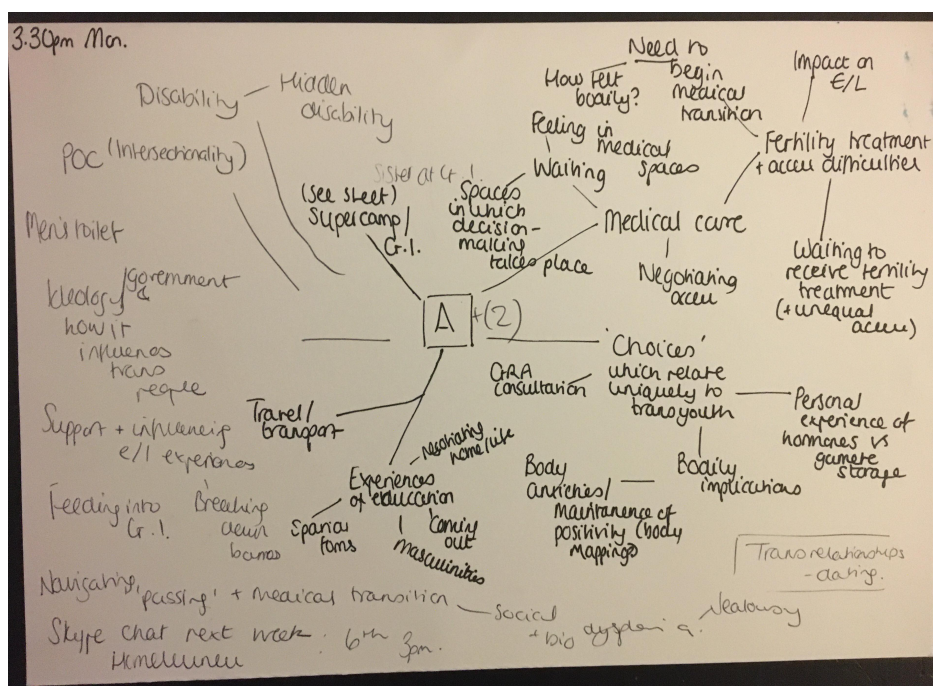


Figure 4.6. ‘Mind map’ notes, individually tailored to the participant, created to plan for storytelling at a ‘one-to-one session’. I also made notes throughout sessions to further prompt or continue discussions.

Carefully and subtly framing questions posed to trans youth and developing participatory methods focussed on the minutiae of their experiences also enabled me to begin drawing out the interaction of social, material, temporal, and bodily phenomena. Consider this field note excerpt:

‘In the interview, we focussed on many topics, but what stuck out was the conversation we held around shopping spaces, and the story which Osh told about shopping for men’s clothing for the first time. I encouraged Osh to think about the space more dynamically, introducing discussion around touch, and the embodied experience of [shopping] spaces, and I think this translated quite well. Osh also brought along some things they had collected which they felt were important to their experience of camp space and everyday life – camp dust, artwork books which they add to daily, and a hoody. As with other participants who have introduced life experiences through objects important to them, talking about the significance of these objects offered a way into exploring the spaces they are attached to in more depth.’

This excerpt demonstrates a small number of techniques I used to draw out aspects of young people’s stories and by moving their storytelling beyond surface recollections toward recalling the nuances of embodied experiences. Indeed, through the focussed discussions I had with Osh through the objects they brought for discussion, I am able to reveal the affective memories embedded in objects and story fragments that become *artefacts* that enable the young person to draw out how they felt in a particular time or space, or in relation to a particular atmosphere. Often such artefacts became vessels of young trans people’s histories that allowed participants to speak to the ongoing influence of particular spaces, places, events, times, objects, or encounters in their everyday lives.

4.6.2 *Queering the research: Queer solidarities*

A key component of my research ethos involved queering the research (see Browne and Nash, 2010), and conducting it along feminist lines. In practice, this meant, for example, recruiting by informing potential participants that the research would be conducted according to their terms and choices and, again, making a commitment to sharing my own queer stories and histories with participants and knowing when to step back and relinquish control of conversations so that trans voices took priority over my own. Embodying a queer approach also meant developing, as Rooke (2010c: 35) explains:

‘a methodology that [paid] attention to the performativity of a self which is gendered, sex[ed], sexualised, classed and generational in the research process [...] [and] working from an honest sense of oneself that is open and reflexive. This queer reflexivity [...] offers the possibility of articulating the relationships between researcher/writer and the texts we produce, the possibilities of knowing and the worlds we construct in our writing.’

Rooke (2010c: 31) reminds us further that ‘[q]ualitative social research is filled with interpersonal encounters, haptic human connection, closeness, understanding and interpersonal engagement.’ I often

found that the richest moments shared in research encounters happened when I told my own stories, or when participants and I discussed our shared or similar experiences as queer folk. These included our experiences of coming out, feeling constrained in/by certain spaces, repression and oppression, crafting and accessing queer spaces, and reconciling with our queerness in our youth. I often also talked with participants about our shared experiences of anxiety or mental ill health. These conversations emerged organically, for example, in relation to participants' own experiences of weariness and anxiousness, in the hope that sharing my own story offered opportunities for both participants and myself to feel at ease with one another, and comfortable in the space enveloping us. Here, although important, my aim was not merely to advance participant reciprocity (and indeed I want to trouble and queer 'rapport' between myself and participants), but to develop a space through which stories, lived experiences, and bodily narratives could emerge with fluidity and mutual trust.

Story-sharing as a mode of queer reflexivities enabled *queer solidarities* between myself and participants to take shape, as this conversation excerpt between myself and Harry (he/him, 14-17), a participant still in school, demonstrates:

Harry: I just feel like it's a bit hard to make friends with some of the guys in a way... I feel a bit... pressured.

James: Is that getting easier when they're getting a bit older as well?

Harry: I think maybe but I remember like when I was in the younger classes I was friends with more of the boys than the girls, but now it's kind of like *shifted* which... hm.

James: See, I had at school as well because, like everyone knew that I was gay. So I had lots of guy friends when I was little, but then I got to like 13, 14 and suddenly they didn't want to hang out with me anymore.

Harry: I don't know why but when I'm around certain guys, like certain kinds of guys that act certain kind of ways, I kind of feel like a certain pressure to say something but I'm a really awkward person so like but like "should I say something? What should I say? Hmm can't think of anything. Oh well let's just be awkward and quiet"... yeah.

This excerpt demonstrates how I organically integrated fragments of my own queer history into research conversations. This queer story-sharing served to stimulate Harry's further reflections and demonstrate our mutual queer understanding. Such actions, alongside my demonstration of the knowledge I held around trans issues and politics (and willingness to learn from young trans people) and active recognition of the fight that cis LGB+ folk must undertake to bolster and improve trans rights, formed my approach to engendering queer solidarity.

Several participants took part at pivotal moments in their lives. For example, some participants were just ‘coming out’, others were only ‘out’ to those in G.I. spaces. Some were experimenting with different pronouns or trying particular pronouns for the first time⁸⁷. A small number had never knowingly met a trans person before attending research spaces. Others were taking exams, experimenting with relationships, leaving home for the first time and looking forward to independence. A small number had been made homeless; others were estranged from their families (although the majority described receiving varying levels of support from families from occasional contact to full-throated allyship.) Almost all participants who described seeking or imagining a ‘transition’ (whether medical, social, or otherwise) felt they had not completed this. A small number of participants took part on pivotal days in their lives. Phil (he/him, 22-25), for example, timed their attendance at a ‘one-to-one session’ purposefully with a significant event:

‘Phil arrived at the venue with a large suitcase, about to go on a journey. I caught him at on incredibly poignant day: Phil had, earlier that afternoon, left a note to his parents in his bedroom at home explaining that he is trans. He was moving back to his University accommodation where he lived in a household of queer folk and trans people and was using this as an opportunity to ‘come out’ via a letter. I was worried about the implications of this for our meeting, and I was conscious that Phil would be feeling increased levels of anxiety, so I tried to begin our chat cautiously. Phil, on the other hand, seemed to launch into conversation, so much so that it was difficult to find the right point at which to get the consent forms filled in.’ (Excerpt from field notes)

Phil’s story exemplifies the *transient* or *anticipatory* period and state in which most participants described themselves as living through (see chapters five and six). I felt that my role, when confronted with such stories, was not merely to act as a researcher but to extend queer solidarity however I could.

The following sections move beyond discussing my preparatory work and research ethos to explore the core methods and spaces I created and enacted in collaboration with participants during this research. Before doing so, in figure 4.7 and 4.8 I offer thorough tables detailing the research encounters I conducted.

⁸⁷ I explicitly told participants to use any or multiple pronouns they felt comfortable with (and indeed I explicitly told participants they could change pronouns at any point). In creative workshops, following G.I. practice everyone present created and wore their own name and pronoun badges.

Figure 4.7 (below). Details of creative workshops.

| No. | Date | Overall theme | Indicative activities | Session length | Location | Age ranges covered |
|------------|----------|---|---|----------------|--------------|---------------------|
| 1 | 27/01/18 | Clothing | Body/clothing mapping (both individual and group-based), group discussion, 'performing' the body maps, 'brainstorming' ideas for future research, flash evaluation board | 2.5 hours | London, G.I. | 14-17, 18-21, 22-25 |
| 2 (Part 1) | 15/02/18 | Transport and 'getting around' | Concept-mapping, diagramming potential changes, Zine-making: Storyboarding, creative writing, artwork, illustrating one another's stories, oral histories, mapping 'journeys' | Full days | London, G.I. | 14-17, 18-21, 22-25 |
| 2 (Part 2) | 16/02/18 | Transport and 'getting around' | | | | |
| 3 | 12/04/18 | Online spaces | Collectively diagramming online spaces, individual 'map'/art making, group discussion, brainstorming 'everyday life', sharing in pairs/to the group | 4 hours | London, G.I. | 14-17, 18-21 |
| 4 | 29/09/18 | 'Escapism' and escaping | Considering the meaning of 'escaping', producing an 'escapism map', discussion | 2.5 hours | London, G.I. | 14-17, 18-21, 22-25 |
| 5 (Part 1) | 27/10/18 | 'Waiting' / creating a workshop for young trans people(*) | Group discussion, group participatory diagramming, reflection and feedback in pairs | 1.5 hours | London, G.I. | 14-17, 18-21, 22-25 |
| 5 (Part 2) | 28/10/18 | Body positivity | Group discussion, group participatory diagramming, individual diagramming, individual feedback | 1 hour | London, G.I. | 14-17, 18-21, 22-25 |

| | | | | | | |
|----|------------|---|---|---------|----------|---------------------|
| 6 | 03/09/2018 | 'Times of the day' | Individual writing/drawing task, participatory diagramming, group discussion (unrecorded) | 2 hours | Scotland | 14-17, 18-21, 22-25 |
| 7 | 15/11/18 | 'Being young and trans in Scotland' | Group discussion, participatory diagram | 2 hours | Scotland | 14-17 |
| 8 | 29/11/18 | 'Coping mechanisms' | Group discussion, participatory diagram | 2 hours | Scotland | 14-17 |
| 9 | 6/12/18 | 'Queering the map' 1: Mapping our bodies | Group discussion, reviewing participatory diagrams, body mapping | 2 hours | Scotland | 14-17 |
| 10 | 13/12/18 | 'Queering the map' 2: Mapping ourselves | Body mapping (cont.), developing timelines of self | 2 hours | Scotland | 14-17 |
| 11 | 20/12/18 | 'Queering the map' 2 (cont.): Mapping ourselves | Group discussion, timelines of self (cont.), place-mapping | 2 hours | Scotland | 14-17 |

Figure 4.8 (below). Details of one-to-one sessions.

| No. | Date | Name(s) (pseudonym) | Age | Pronoun(s) used in session | Length | Location |
|-----|-----------|-----------------------------|---------------|--|-----------|------------------------|
| 1 | May 2018 | Mark | 18-21 | He/him | 1.5 hours | London, G.I. |
| 2 | May 2018 | Adam | 18-21 | He/him | 2 hours | London, G.I. |
| 3 | May 2018 | Ed | 18-21 | He/him | 2 hours | North East England |
| 4 | July 2018 | Axel and Wren | Both 22-25 | He/him and they/them, respectively | 2.5 hours | Online via Skype |
| 5 | Oct 2018 | Séan† | 18-21 | He/him | 1.5 hours | Online via Skype |
| 6 | Oct 2018 | Isla† | 18-21 | She/her | 2 hours | London, G.I. |
| 7 | Oct 2018 | Kane† | 18-21 | He/him | 1.5 hours | London, G.I. |
| 8 | 22/10/18 | Karl | 22-25 | He/him | 3 hours | London, G.I. |
| 9 | 23/10/18 | Ross | 22-25 | He/him | 2 hours | London, G.I. |
| 10 | 23/10/18 | Osh | 18-21 | They/them | 2.5 hours | London, G.I. |
| 11 | 23/10/18 | Phil | 22-25 | He/him | 1 hour | London, G.I. |
| 12 | 24/10/18 | Jón | 18-21 | He/they /something else (Jón's words) | 1.5 hours | London, G.I. |
| 13 | 20/11/18 | Jack (first one- to-one) | 18-21 | They/them | 1.5 hours | Online via FaceTime |

| | | | | | | |
|----|----------|--------------------------|---------------|------------------------------------|------------|------------------------|
| 14 | 7/12/18 | Wes | 22-25 | He/him | 1.75 hours | London, G.I. |
| 15 | 7/12/18 | Billie | 18-21 | She/her | 1.5 hours | London, G.I. |
| 16 | 8/12/18 | Jack (second one-to-one) | 18-21 | They/them | 1.5 hours | London, café near G.I. |
| 17 | 8/12/18 | Frances | 18-21 | She/her or they/them | 1 hour | London, café near G.I. |
| 18 | 11/12/18 | Anya and Cal†‡ | 14-17 & 22-25 | They/them and he/him, respectively | 2 hours | London, G.I. |
| 19 | 30/08/19 | Tom | 18-21 | He/him | 2 hours | London, G.I. |

† Denotes that participant was recruited in the first instance to discuss a specific G.I. space.

‡ Denotes that I did not make an audio recording due to the preference of a young person; extensive notes, based upon participatory diagrams produced in the session, were made instead.

4.7 Core research methods and spaces

4.7.1 *Introducing cornerstone method/space one: Creative workshops*

During the initial planning stages, in consultation with G.I., I devised the loose term ‘creative workshops’ to describe PAR spaces that I would construct for participants to engage in discussion, creatively represent their everyday lives, meet other trans young people, and have their voices and stories heard. My aim in creative workshops was to create, in the words of researchers exploring participatory practices with non-binary people, ‘a space where people get it’ (Furman *et al.*, 2019). In other terms, with creative workshops I wanted to develop sites where young trans people could feel affirmed, respected, with their voices and stories heard and taken seriously by those present. Each of these spaces was a rich, expansive experience that traversed multiple themes and involved young trans people communicating shared and individual experiences through mixing participatory and social research methods (see Brooks *et al.*, 2020). Such creative methods were used to evoke the ‘more-than-representational’ (Vannini, 2015) aspects of young trans lives and engender storytelling spaces (Valentine, 2016) to offer ‘opportunities for [young] trans individuals to actively participate without placing a burden on them’ (Furman *et al.*, 2019: 2). I ensured this active participation (see also e.g. Wilkinson and Wilkinson, 2018) by, for example, tailoring the research methods I employed to the young people present, working with individuals within group spaces in addition to the group at large, and by encouraging young people to adapt activities to suit their own needs or stories.

Throughout, young people brought their knowledge and experience to the fore whilst I acted as a facilitator to, again, avoid becoming/occupying a directive or ‘intrusive research voice’ (see Mannay, 2016: 41). As figure 4.7 shows, given space and time constraints,⁸⁸ some creative workshops were shorter bursts of activity in which I struggled to cover everything that participants wished to discuss or work around, whilst others became slower-paced spaces that allowed young people’s stories to unfold more organically. Two workshop series that ran over school holidays incorporated evening activities at a bowling alley and a cinema. Some participants attended multiple sessions, others both workshops and one-to-ones, whilst some participants attended only one workshop. Throughout, young people constantly surprised me with their articulateness, creativity, and desire to contribute to sharing and furthering knowledge around trans lives. Figure 4.7 illustrates the breadth of methods and depth of discussion, conversations, storytelling and story-sharing that the workshops held.

⁸⁸ This was particularly the case for creative workshops that took place at G.I.’s aforementioned ‘Saturday Sessions’, which took place over between two and three hours in a small room adjacent to the main space.

In this section and that describing one-to-one sessions (section 4.5.2), it is not my aim to depict all methods I used, nor all creative workshops, but rather to offer readers a sense of the atmosphere created in workshop spaces, the breadth of methods/approaches used, and participants' engagement in planned (and unplanned) activities. Through creative workshops, I was guided by my aims to:

- (1) Develop safe, supportive, and malleable spaces with multiple creative possibilities for young people to consider and (re)present their own lives and imaginaries, and reflect on and discuss their experiences with other trans youth;
- (2) Explore broad 'themes' around everyday life (see figure 4.7) to promote reflection both on specific experiences in particular spaces and times and wider life histories and trajectories;
- (3) Use methods for voice-raising, storytelling, and story-sharing appropriate to participants' ages, skills, desires, and embeddedness in trans youth spaces;
- (4) Continually respond to young people's discussions and views to re-shape research encounters to better reflect and represent participants' lived realities;
- (5) Promote a heightened engagement in the project, noting a mostly poor level of collaboration and attentiveness to trans voices in much existing research (particularly that conducted by cisgender scholars);
- (6) Work closely with youth work leaders to maintain participant wellbeing and safeguarding practices.

4.7.2 Facilitating creative workshops

Each creative workshop blended conversational and artistic methods to elicit participants' experiences through embodied, dynamic means. Visual and creative social methods I employed included artwork, zine-making, object show and tell, body mapping, storyboarding, and various forms of participatory diagramming and mapping, alongside impromptu one-to-one conversations and more structured group discussion (either in small groups or between the entire group), collective reflection, and one-to-one conversations with myself. In their malleability, these creative and visual methods became 'powerful medium[s] for self-expression beyond the bounds of one's body or the categories thrust upon [trans youth] by society' (Furman *et al.*, 2019: 2). Following Bagelman and Bagelman's (2016: 365) writing around zines as a proxy for my creative practice, I used these methods to allow trans youth to 'viscerally [reveal] the layered politics of [their] everyday li[v]es [and] bring attention to how [they] live and interact with one another' and those around them. Such creative methods offered also trans youth means to creatively share their voices with each other and, following an action research agenda, those with a stake in their lives, including facilitators of G.I. sessions and those in Scotland (see Houh and Kalsem, 2015). As participants signed up for or chose to attend each session, the theme and creative

approaches of which were advertised in advance when recruiting, they were well-prepared for the topics of discussion and ways of working I had planned. For all workshop spaces, I developed PowerPoint slides that I could display on my laptop or on a screen to allow participants to follow (or contribute to, develop, or deviate from) the current discussion topic or method(s) of working.

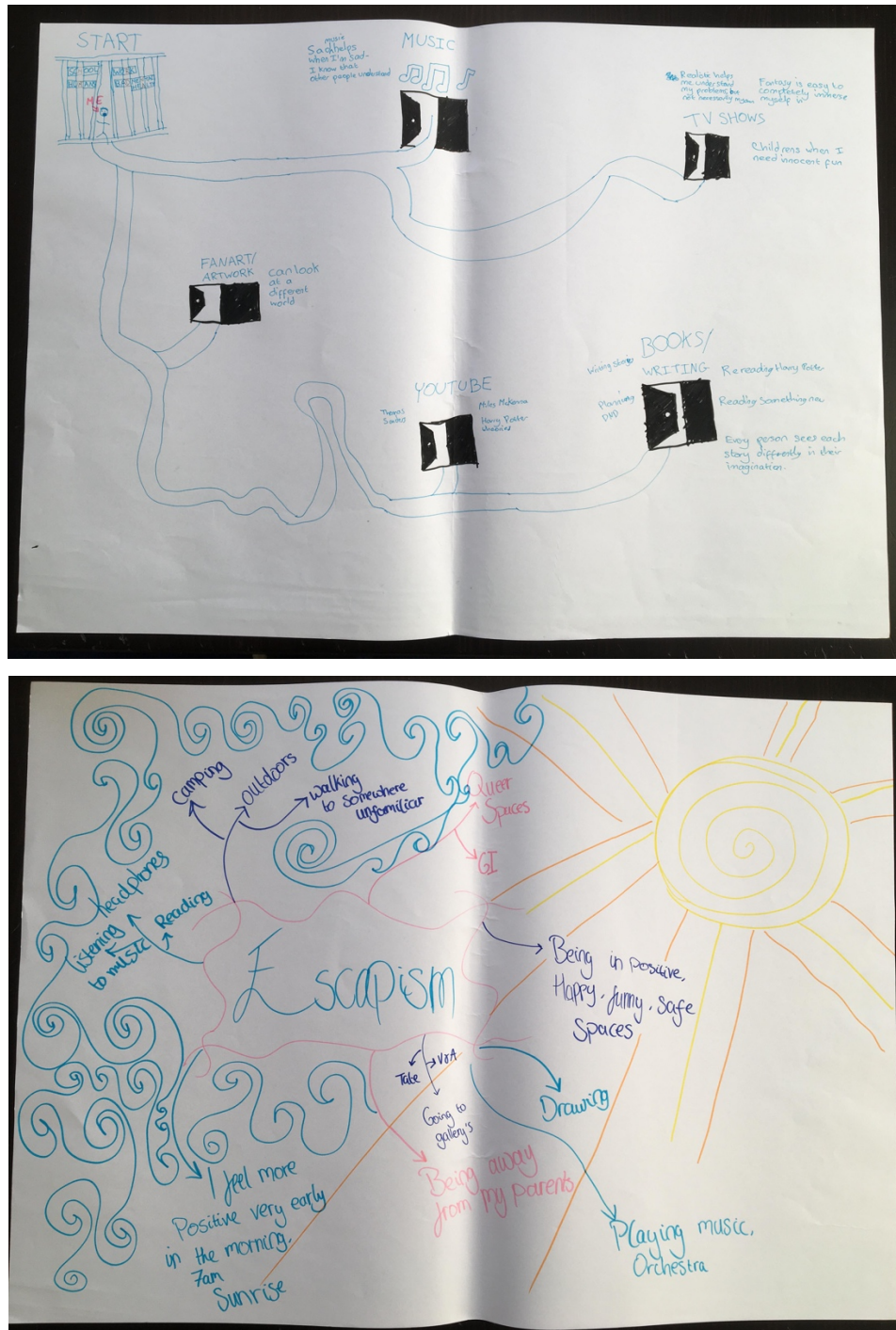


Figure 4.9. 'Escapism maps' produced in escapism workshop by two participants.

Each workshop began by following G.I. protocol for trans youth spaces. This included an activity following practice in youth work and youth research (Furman *et al.*, 2019; McNamara, 2018) wherein I facilitated, alongside the trans youth worker, an activity in which young people established ‘rules’ for working comfortably in the space with one another. Workshops typically continued with individual and group reflections through a range of methods on the loose theme. For example, to introduce the workshop on ‘escapism’, by reflecting on the prompt “What is ‘escapism’ and what does it mean to ‘escape’ or to ‘be free’?” and questions including ‘What is important about ‘escaping’? Is there such a thing as an escape ‘toolbox’ you can draw on when you need it?’, participants wrote and drew on small cards what the term ‘escapism’ – one raised in previous workshops – meant to them. This allowed participants to consider spaces and times they used to ‘escape’ from everyday realities, begin a discussion around events and encounters that might produce an emotional need to ‘escape’, and ultimately, alongside group and individual discussion, produce creative ‘maps’ of escapism that they could present and discuss with one another and to the wider group (see example in figure 4.9). Figure 4.10 shows prompts that participants were shown while creating and discussing their ‘maps’. In another example, to introduce the workshop exploring ‘online spaces’, I devised a participatory diagramming activity that participants could contribute to collectively or individually. This activity introduced the spatial elements of virtual life, and allowed participants to begin thinking more deeply about their experiences in/on virtual space to contribute to an individual art map activity (see figure 4.11) and lengthy group reflective discussion. Similarly, in a workshop around ‘times of the day’, I had produced piles of shuffle cards that showed particular times, days, and so on: participants were free to write, draw, or discuss where they might be at that time, how they might be feeling, or recall a particular event or encounter. As my field notes recall,

‘I asked questions which helped them to reflect [on their experiences] a bit further e.g. drawing out experience of bus journey to school - why music? what listening to music on? what are you avoiding? why needing the time to focus alone? This discussion allowed them to connect the time of the day to different times/the deeper meaning behind their encounters. Before long, they began sharing some more in-depth stories.’

Creating an 'escapism' map

Spider diagram, storyboard, actual map, an imagined place, creative writing... **A mapping of our 'toolboxes' of escape methods...**

What the map might show:

- Where do you escape to?
- Who do you think about in connection to 'escape' or 'escaping'?
- What can you use to escape?
- Do you think about any significant life events in connection with 'escaping' or 'being free'? Any times of the day?
- What might you be looking to 'escape' from?
- Important places, people, objects, spaces...

Figure 4.10 Prompts participants were shown while creating and discussing their 'escapism maps'.

Theme: Being young and trans online

- ▶ Throughout the session, keep thinking about:
 - ▶ Your activities online as young trans people
 - ▶ The resources you access online
 - ▶ How your activities online or in virtual spaces help you to think about your identity, body positivity and so on... And where this might not be so helpful, too.
 - ▶ How you represent yourself online and how you communicate with others
 - ▶ The dangers and safety issues involved with using virtual spaces as a young trans person
 - ▶ When and where you access your devices, and why certain times are more important than others
 - ▶ Themes, apps, sites, devices and resources which are important to you
- ▶ Think about how your stories could help other young trans people, or draw attention to issues which young trans people face, or help you to think through your own way of relating to yourself
- ▶ Sheet- online spaces and what we use them for. Materials and devices.

Art-map activity!

We are going to use some creative materials to produce art 'maps' of the online sites and spaces we use.

Looking to visually show your experiences online. Just some of the things we can think about:

- ▶ Connections between different sites, friends, people and communities
- ▶ Dangers, safety concerns of being young and trans online
- ▶ Showing and representing your body and identity online
- ▶ Socialising with others and other trans people
- ▶ Themes, apps/sites/spaces important to you
- ▶ Images representing your life on social media
- ▶ Sites you have found important as a young trans person (for advice, for friendship, and so on)

Things to think about

- ▶ Think about how you feel, felt or might feel, what/who you see, and place yourself and your experiences on the map (labels, arrows, diagrams and so on...)
- ▶ Try to include some written word, images, people/characters, emotions, and lots of colour!
- ▶ Could it incorporate other designs? The tube map, streets, technology
- ▶ Give your map a title and some words which tells the reader what it represents and why it's important to you



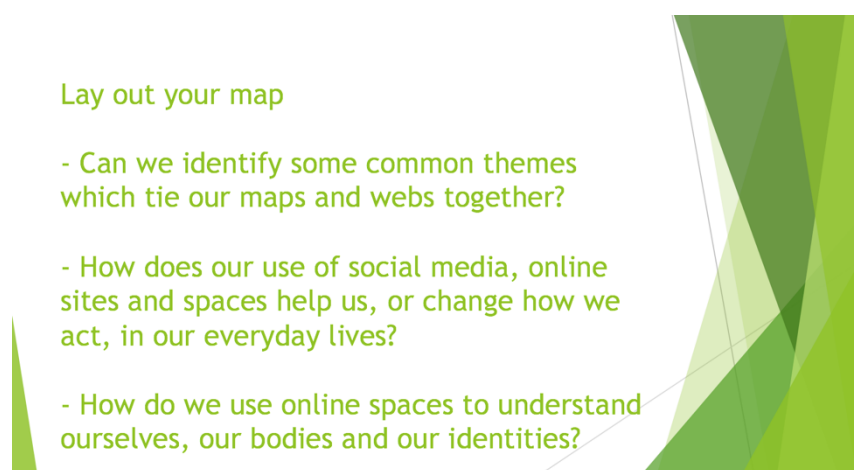


Figure 4.11 (above and overleaf). Key slides showing aspects of the progression of the 'online spaces' workshop.

A range of other activities were built into the 'main body' of each creative workshop. Group discussion was perhaps the most prominent and lengthy of these activities. These discussions took many formats, but were typically entirely unstructured conversations that followed on from or fed into other activities and allowed young people time and space to reflect on what they found important or nascent to discuss. Importantly, in most workshops such discussions deviated from the main theme when young people shared experiences and knowledge around trans issues, or the trans facilitator offered insight from their own experiences. In some workshops, group discussions were facilitated through the creation of participatory diagrams that documented the conversation and its key points, both aiding participants to construct their thoughts and provide a visual record of their ideas (see for example figure 4.12). These diagrams were often used in later sessions to stimulate discussion or remind participants of – or introduce new participants to – past conversations, or laid on tables or pinned to walls later in certain workshops to serve as visual prompts for group discussion or for binding stories to particular broad or collective themes. In other settings, following skills developed in pedagogical settings, I asked participants to reflect and discuss particular themes in pairs or small groups in order to feedback ideas and experiences to the wider group, who could then establish connective or disparate themes. This approach represents how I built opportunities for participants to establish and connect both individual and collective voices and stories in workshop settings.

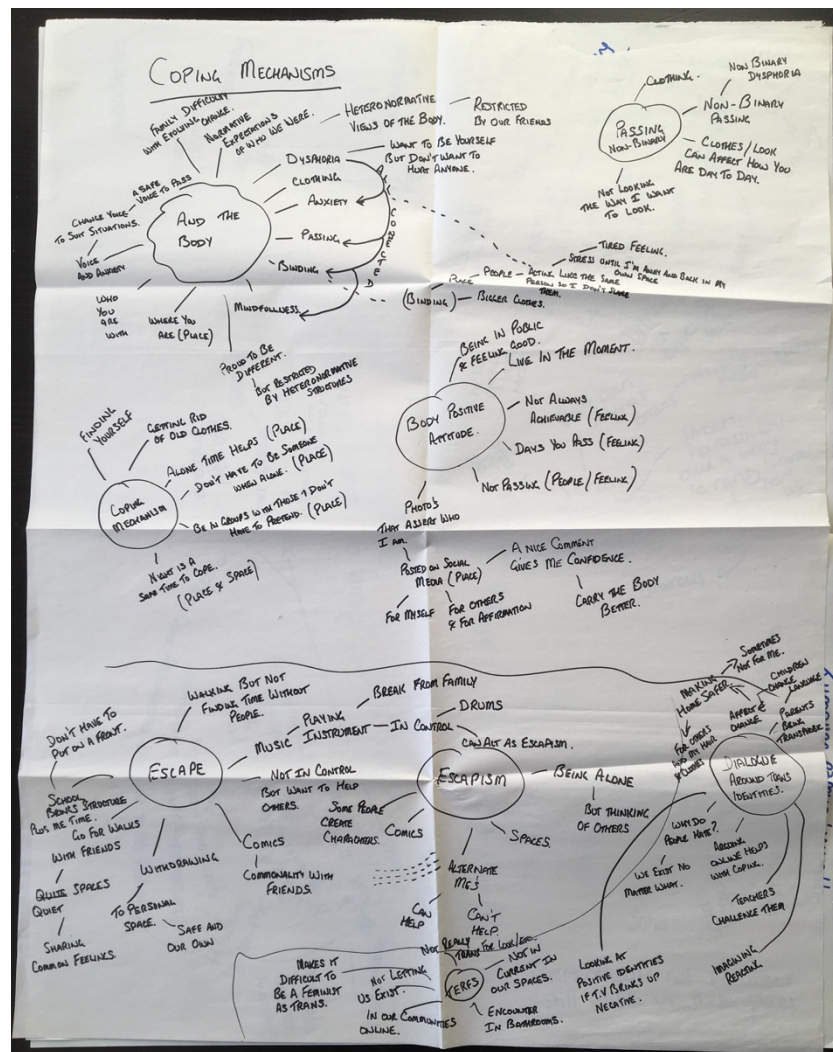



Figure 4.12 Example of a participatory diagram produced to record and facilitate group discussions.


Following feminist-participatory research practices, body mapping (see de Jager *et al.*, 2016) – a means of recording and exploring ‘thoughts, feelings, emotions, and vulnerabilities through artistic expression on a canvas that is [typically] a body’s outline’ (Furman *et al.* 2019: 3) – became a particularly important and well-received core method employed in several workshops. This method allowed participants to explore particular surfaces and spaces of their bodies, alongside their bodies’ capacities, desires, and capabilities, and bodily difference(s), connecting these to embodied emotions, sensory aspects of feeling, and particular spaces, encounters, materialities, objects, and life events without being limited by verbal and textual forms of data collection. When used, body maps thus became storytelling devices and ‘springboards’ for connecting and discussing the embodied elements of participants’ lives (McCorquodale and DeLuca, 2020). Body mapping was particularly useful method of researching with trans youth specifically given their potential therapeutic and empowering benefits (*Ibid.*; Skop, 2016), and their offer of a creative and embodied method of exploring the surfacing and emergence of particular emotions and embodied experiences in relation to the geographies I focus on in my

theoretical framework (see chapter three) such as other bodies, internalised emotions, affective atmospheres, societal pressures, and other such forces. As Furman *et al.* (2020: 2) describe, body mapping can ‘visually capture the nuances of gender diversity’ in ways that are ‘difficult to verbally articulate’. Figure 4.13 illustrates how participants were guided through the process of producing a body map during a workshop in Glasgow, while figure 4.14 offers examples of body maps produced during the first creative workshop themed around clothing, illustrating a range in participants’ use of detail, bodily focus, imagery, and breadth and depth of stories told. These figures demonstrate the diversity of body maps produced by participants, and the malleability of my research methods in that participants could choose how to respond to the particular method or tailor it to fit their particular story. This illustrates how my research approach equipped participants with the skills necessary to represent their own lives in ways that felt appropriate to them.

STARTING POINTS

1. Draw an outline of a body (yours, that of a trans friend, something more generic, etc.) – on A4/outline on big sheet
2. Visualize some key emotions – where in the body do you draw power from? Are there particular places where anxiety is located? Where dysphoria comes from?
3. Add some key experiences which come to mind without too much thought – times of feeling anxious/confident about self, places where you’ve felt ‘out of place’ ...





4. Add some marks, scars and sites of pride – places of emotional/physical hurt, things you’re proud of/excited about, things that say ‘the most about you’
5. Represent a favourite item of clothing
6. Creating a slogan which reflects you and your journey

FURTHER BODY MAPPING PROMPTS

- Where can we locate some of the experiences we’ve discussed on and around bodies?
- How might our bodies feel or move when faced with certain situations? Or with certain emotions (anxiety, tension, rage, humour)?
- Certain spaces, places or sites we might associate with a particular aspect of the body? Or how we are able to dress/move more freely in certain places?

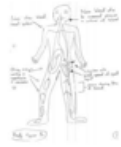
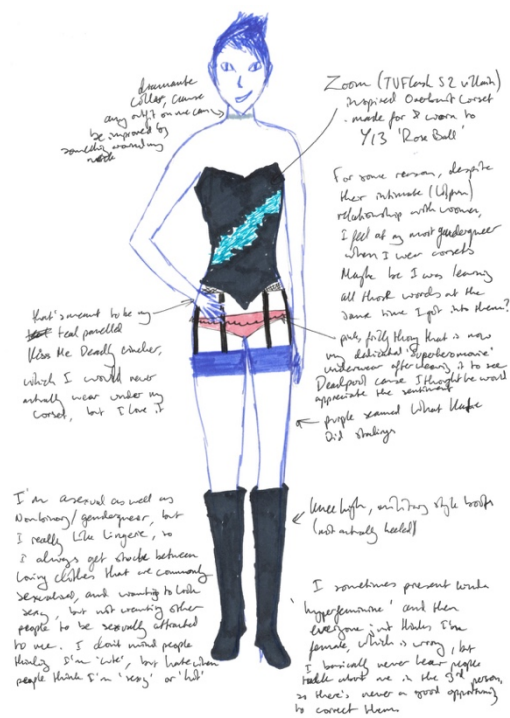


Figure 4.13. Example slides used to introduce participants in Scotland to ‘body mapping’ and to begin constructing body maps.



JUMPER



This H&M jumper cost me £7 from Oxfam!
It's a Medium & doesn't quite fit me as well as I'd like it to, but it's a lovely jumper. I wore it at a date and I wore it hanging out with my friends too & it makes me feel like Rivers Cuomo at his peak emo phase.

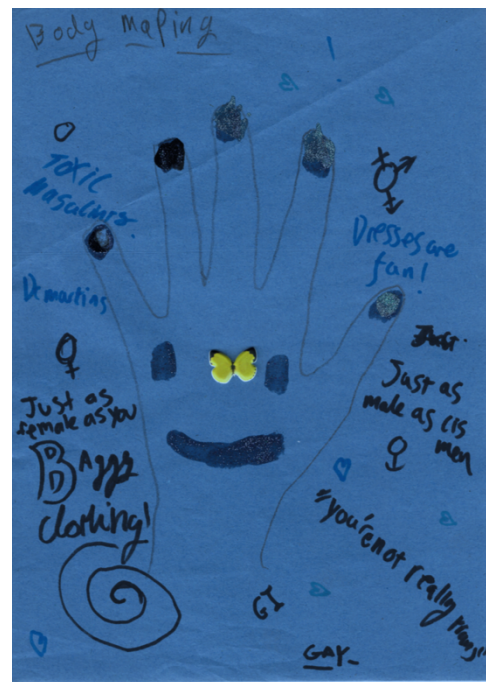


Figure 4.14. Examples of body maps produced during clothing workshop, illustrating the diverse ways of expressing bodies and embodied emotions used by participants.

I employed other creative and participatory mapping and visual methods across several workshops. For example, when creating a collectively produced zine of participants' 'journeys' as young trans people in a workshop around 'transport and getting around', participants were asked to create 'maps' of their experiences of doing so. Reflecting the malleability of workshop spaces, the maps that were produced were, again, diverse in both the breadth and depth of stories they told and diversity of

narratives they allowed participants to narrate verbally and visually (see for example, Adam's journey, chapter 5; see also figure 4.15). Another activity in this zine-making workshop asked young people to tell their stories of travelling/journeys to one another, before creatively representing each other's stories, sharing these with the group, and presenting them for inclusion in the final zine. Participants used storyboarding to document particular or typical journeys in particular spaces or times, illustrating their emotions, bodies, thoughts, and feelings in relation to particular surroundings, journeys, objects and materials carried and interacted with, and (other) bodies. At points across this workshop, participants also collectively diagrammed their thoughts and views on transport and 'getting around', and on changes they desired to increase the trans inclusivity of transport infrastructures, discourse around trans youth and trans bodies, and so on, to improve their experiences of travel and urban movement. These diagrams were then 'interviewed' collectively by the group, again generating individual and collective knowledges around young trans life that went beyond travelling to reflections on other connected emotions and spaces. Creative works produced in this workshop – the zine cover, a storyboard produced to illustrate a 'journey', and a piece of artwork illustrating a participants' emotional experiences while travelling - are shown in figure 4.16. These methods and others appeared across other workshop spaces, such as in the 'abstract mapping' activity I devised for the 'escapism' workshop, and in letters that participants wrote addressing key figures in their lives (such as a letter from a child to a parent), or describing crucial events. Throughout all workshops, subject to each individual participants' consent, I recorded particular conversations⁸⁹ and encouraged participants to discuss the process, decision-making, and stories behind their creative work. Participants regularly explained their creative work to the wider group who discussed and responded with their own thoughts and stories (Furman *et al.*, 2019). This building of collective and individual narratives of everyday life that move beyond the initial structuring theme of each workshop demonstrates expansive and wide-ranging responses that storytelling and story-sharing methods generated.

⁸⁹ In both workshops and 'one-to-one sessions', such impromptu recording was carried out using my mobile phone in order to limit technological intrusiveness and to reduce the formality and rigidity of the encounter.

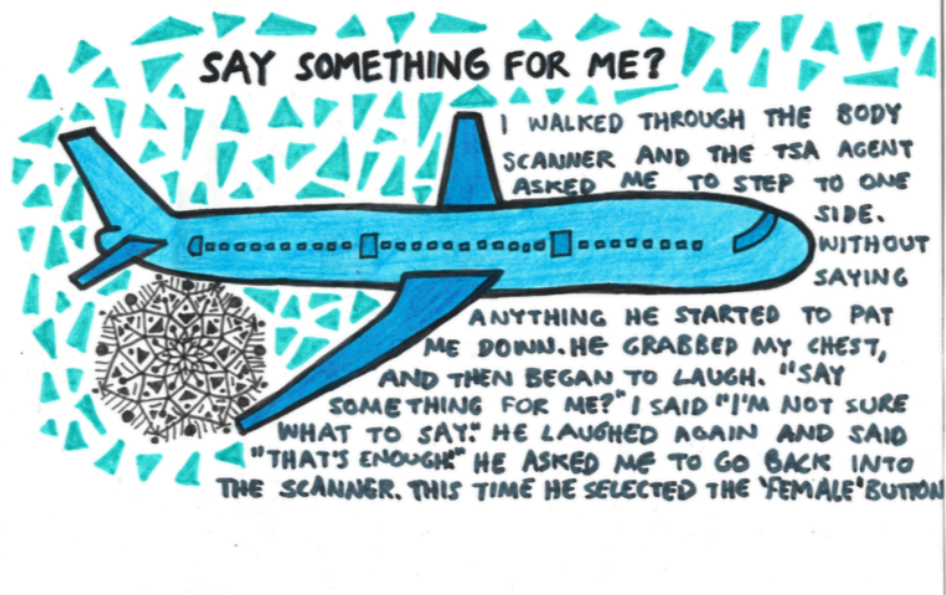


Figure 4.15. Artwork produced by participant demonstrating the freedom participants had in responding to, and developing, each workshop's malleable agenda.



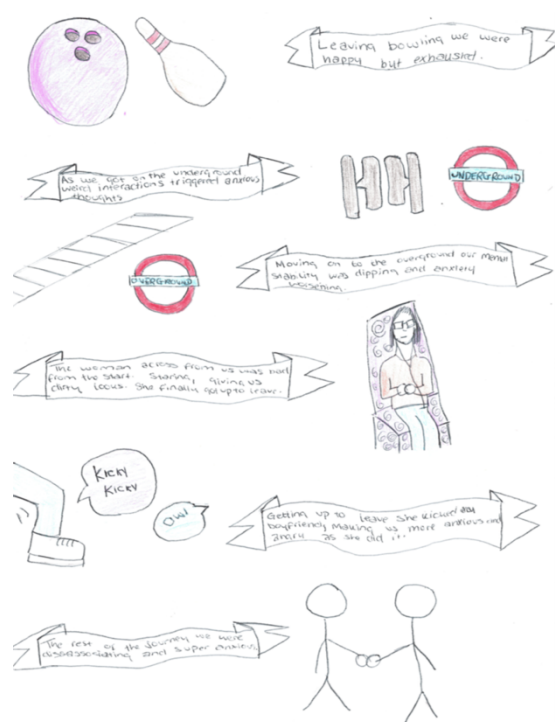


Figure 4.16 (above and overleaf). Cover of zine produced in 'transport and getting around' workshop (top/overleaf); a storyboard produced in as part of the zine-making aspect of this workshop (bottom left); artwork illustrating a young trans person of colour's emotional experiences while travelling (bottom right).

To close each workshop, together with the trans youth worker present, I staged a conversation or activity around what participants had taken from, enjoyed, or found difficult or distressing about the workshop or the discussions and activities it generated. I refer readers again to Appendix B to demonstrate how I followed G.I. conventions to close each research encounter and maintain trans inclusivity. In several workshops, I also introduced an activity whereby participants were invited to discuss, draw, or write their thoughts on themes the project should continue with across both creative workshops and 'one-to-one sessions'. I also sought their feedback and ideas on the methods and creative activities I had engaged. This activity ensured that participants' concerns were the main driving force of thematic/methodological decisions and that their stories informed workshops or one-to-one encounters that followed.

In the following section, I turn to the second cornerstone method of my research: 'one-to-one sessions'.

4.7.3 *Introducing cornerstone method/space two: 'One-to-one sessions'*

With G.I., I devised the term 'one-to-one sessions' to describe research encounters akin to in-depth, participatory, or active interviewing (see Holstein and Gubrium, 2004). These nineteen sessions blended unstructured and semi-structured conversations tailored to each individual participant (see figure 4.6). Multiple participatory research techniques were used to elicit participants' life stories such that many provided intimate biographies and/or oral histories of their lives and imagined futures. Typically, the time allotted for each encounter (limited by my distance to field site and the booking of rooms at G.I.) rarely felt 'enough' in the sense that participants often wanted to continue conversing and the richness of their stories often did not feel fully unspooled. By adopting one-to-one sessions as a core method, I aimed to:

- (1) Offer opportunities for young people to talk intimately and at length about their everyday lives and everyday issues, and explore specific spaces, stories, or times not given attention or precedence in other settings;
- (2) Allow participants to reflect on past experiences, folding these into their current situation and imagined futures;
- (3) Create participatory, one-to-one settings that allowed young people to make decisions on conversation topics, introduce particular themes or stories, and use language and stories they themselves chose, whilst breaking barriers and deconstructing power relations between myself as researcher and young people as 'participants' as much as possible;
- (4) Share my own stories, demonstrating queer solidarities, at appropriate times and to appropriate levels;
- (5) Work closely with youth work leads to maintain participant wellbeing and safeguarding practices.

In this section, using field notes recorded after each 'session' (and often briefly during breaks in our conversations), I detail some of the strategies I used to aid participants in expressing and developing their stories.

After general introductions and conversation, I generally opened most sessions by asking participants what had brought them to the space and to taking part; I began others by asking about participants' relationship to G.I. and G.I. spaces and how long they had been accessing the organisation's services. Such introductory questions provided space and time for participants to decide what to reveal and how to direct the conversation beyond. Participants were also asked, via an online form or through email communication (depending on age/recruitment pathway), what they wanted to discuss in advance. For example, my field notes describe how participant Phil used the online form to tell me 'he would like to cover spaces like his Uni home – a many-bedroomed house filled entirely with

queer occupants – his LGBTQ society, and other queer spaces.’ The majority of sessions were simply unstructured (aside from an initial sketch of themes that I could possibly cover), dialogue-driven, and conversational, and as such I felt that they constituted a co-produced emotional labour, as the following field notes from a one-to-one session embedded within a series of G.I. workshops demonstrate:

‘We came to sit in a room with low, comfortable seats and began reflecting on the day [of workshops I created]. We talked through Jón’s artwork, and they told me that although they love representing his thoughts and stories through art, the events of the week [workshops etc.] had made him tired and drained and their thoughts a little foggy. We decided, then, to simply focus on having an in-depth conversation. [...] The session was one of the best one-to-ones I had yet had and we arranged a way to keep in touch so Jón could send artwork and thoughts [...] I later asked him whether they might like to design a cover for the thesis.’

This excerpt demonstrates how I responded to participants’ own needs at the outset and during each one-to-one encounter and the mechanisms I built for additional participation in the project beyond the session.

Participants were also asked to bring along objects significant to their everyday lives (see chapter three on ‘objects, things, and artefacts’) to tell their stories through, if they felt comfortable or inclined to do so. Demonstrating the trust participants placed in me and the research, some of these objects were deeply personal; several participants remarked that they had never shown them to anyone before. A field note excerpt speaks to the emotional depth attached to materials that some participants brought, and my own emotional response to their presence:

‘Much of the discussion was framed around the things the young person had brought along – diaries bursting with artwork, poetry, mental health management technique sheets, even hour-by-hour diaries which documented his hospitalisation... I was overwhelmed by the talent and creative mind at work in the poetry and writings in particular, and found this fascinating to frame our conversation around.’

Other participants brought or showed clothing, photographs, artwork collages, materials collected from G.I. and G.I. spaces, materials related to transition (broadly conceived⁰, and so on. My encounter with Adam, who brought a wealth of artwork recording his perspectives on his life, masculinity, body, childhood, and so on, was particularly emotional; I felt overwhelmed by the level of detail, nuance, and unfiltered emotion his work portrayed. My field notes record my thoughts on this session:

‘Well, that was amazing. Adam brought some genuinely visually-arresting, thoughtful and inspiring artwork, and I found that the time passed so quickly as we paced through our conversations. Discussion was largely directed and framed by the young person. He seemed to settle in quickly to the pattern of showing me his images and creations, while telling his story. I felt it was brave to give up such a vulnerable and often painful narrative, all told through his work – self-portraits, poetry, artwork - that had been an

emotional labour to produce. Throughout, I got the sense that he really had a deep story to tell, one which he seemed to enjoy sharing.’

Through this excerpt, it is clear that storytelling through objects offered participants opportunities to develop understandings around embodied, intimate elements of their lives, and conjure more visceral perspectives on certain spaces, events, and life histories. Touching (when invited) and being close to participants’ objects also increased my emotional proximity to their stories and although I cannot know how participants internally responded to showing me their objects, I felt their presence deepened our relationships and queer solidarities and intimacies.

Many conversations revolved around crucial spaces, events, or moments in participants’ lives. Such moments were mostly introduced spontaneously by participants, before I encouraged participants to think through particular elements, relate their examples to other stories or to wider social/political forces, or to consider the importance of the event/space in question in their life history. I drew out the nuances and spatial elements of such stories by encouraging participants to, for example, recall how they felt in their bodies, think about the material elements of the spaces around them, and reflect on the wider significance of the encounter(s) being described. The following field notes demonstrate an example of techniques designed to draw out the nuances and significance of particular spaces and events:

‘What I really liked about this interview, despite initial unease [...] is how much our conversation coalesced around “key moments” from Ross’ recent life history. I loved how Ross reflected on really intimate moments from the beginning of his transition only a few years previous – including his story around the first time he heard himself referred to with he/him pronouns in a G.I. space – connecting these to his growing comfort around his transness, bodily comfort, and increasing ease of passage through significant spaces in his life. I led the conversation such that, together, we thought about key questions they raised: what significance did they hold in his life story thus far? How did he experience them in a very visceral, body-focussed sense? How did they change how he moved through space? It was fascinating to see how he then connected such experiences with his general level of comfort now, and his privilege as a young trans man who can “pass” in public space.’

This focus on the minutiae of experience also contributed to my understanding of the affective, atmospheric, embodied and material aspects of participants’ stories.

Three sessions were conducted online using Skype and FaceTime; these sessions allowed participants to choose where to participate from. These sessions had a different rhythm and level of sensory and bodily connection to other research encounters (Adams-Hutcheson and Longhurst, 2017). Nevertheless, participants and I found ways to connect through the screen and materialities of their

homes. As I explain in the following field note excerpt, our bodily and spatial connection, though unstable, remained (albeit through alternative forms of affectivity) throughout the encounter:

‘I felt like I had been into Axel and Wren’s home. Even though we were physically distant, senses of touch and texture came through the screen as I paid close attention to how Wren leafed through of a theatre programme of a trans-themed play they had attended, and to how Axel laid his fingers over the drawing of a feminine rendering of their body in artwork that had been subsequently been scrubbed out in deep, dark shades. However, we were also disrupted through the artificiality of our connection emphasised in the ruptured connection, and the reduction in speed of the visuals and the disconnected bodily movements and spoken words that the screen subsequently projected.’

Here, we see that through virtual interviews I could enter these participants’ home-space, which they had sought to make visibly trans and queer. I was able to get a visceral sense of important objects in their everyday lives and sense the emotionality of certain experiences by being introduced to key materials and carried through different rooms of their home. Although I used field notes to reflect on the ‘less embodied’ experience of other virtual interviews, in these settings I still maintained a rich and deep conversation around key moments in participants’ lives.

The level of emotionality in ‘one-to-one sessions’, however, occasionally became overwhelming and difficult to negotiate my position in the field site/in relation to the participant. Some aspects of conversations were difficult to navigate or emotionally exhausting, as I experienced with a participant who cried, who also became upset around, as my field notes record, ‘imagined future breastfeeding and bodily autonomy/physical transition’, which I felt difficult and ‘found that I needed to conclude the conversation with general chit-chat, comfy, easy-flowing conversation.’ Other encounters involved participants communicating traumatic events or experiences throughout our conversations. As I noted referring to a particular ‘one-to-one session’:

‘I found it a fine line to tread between occupying a position of “counsellor” and that of a researcher: I think it’s about knowing when to “step back” and let the young person tell their story with minimal interference. I tried to make sure he felt like the space was crafted for him, that his voice had a prominence and value in the room, and that I would aid with this in any way I could.’

By focussing on queer solidarity over productivity I could afford participants space to voice their stories at their own pace and thus craft a more authentic encounter that would put both myself and participants at ‘ease’ (Harrowell *et al.*, 2018; Todd, 2020b).

4.7.4 *Ethnographic observation and other research*

To bolster the two cornerstone methods, I engaged in what Bissell (2010: 273) terms ‘autoethnographic participatory observation’ at G.I. spaces and events, and at the two Trans Pride festivals I attended in

Brighton. Following researchers using ‘observant participation’ as a method which celebrates the embedded positioning of the researcher-subject in the spaces and social phenomena they explore (Moeran, 2009), I took notes in a stream of consciousness during my immersion in, and immediately after leaving, each site. Although these field notes allowed me to explore my interactions with people present in these spaces and with their affective social and material fabric, I was also able to reflect on my shifting positionalities and situatedness (Butz and Besio, 2009). These notes were used only to document my thoughts and to explore my relations to the organisation and its service users, and do not appear in the thesis.

I also planned several strands of research that I did not follow through to maintain young people’s stories and voices at the forefront of this work. I attempted to recruit ‘gatekeepers’ – trans people responsible for the provision of spaces and services for young trans people, to elicit their views on young people’s life experiences and their immersion in trans spaces. I completed one such interview with a community leader before abandoning this research component; their words do not appear in this thesis. Similarly, I began recruiting parents of young trans people, again in collaboration with G.I. and the leader of the organisation’s parents support group, but ultimately decided not to proceed with this research.

In the following section, I expand on the reflexive focus of this chapter by exploring my constantly shifting positionality as a cis researcher in relation to my participants and the young trans communities in which I became (transiently) embedded. In doing so, I begin thinking through reflexive reflections on my cisness, my relationship with participants, and my own mental health that I developed during and following the research.

4.8 Conducting research with(in) young trans communities as a cisgender scholar

James: How about talking about this kind of stuff [everydayness/mental health etc.], do you think it helps?

Mark: Mm, yeah

James: Like in this kind of [research] setting—

Mark: Yeah its nice because you only get to talk about this stuff in therapy, and that’s, er, therapy but it doesn’t really come up in conversation much. It does when you’re with other trans people and you can have a good rant to each other but like its quite nice when there’s someone who’s not just in the trans community

James: How does it feel to talk to me about it? Like, as a cis person who you've never met, and you know, who has a vague connection to G.I. but–

Mark: It feels quite nice because it's like it normalises it. I haven't had to be like "there's this thing called *trans*", I haven't had to do a 'trans 101' so it's quite nice it's like, "oh right, it's a normal thing," yeah

–conversation excerpt from 'one-to-one session' with Mark (he/him, 18-21)

In 1997, trans philosopher Jacob Hale (1997, cited by Radi, 2019: 52) suggested fifteen 'rules' for cisgender people who write around trans lives: Radi identifies the most 'conspicuous' as: 'Approach your topic with a sense of humility: you are not the experts [...]. Transsexuals are. ... Interrogate your own subject position. ... Don't erase our voices. ... Don't totalize us. ... Don't uncritically quote non-transsexual⁹⁰ "experts"'. Although I have made clear that much research conducted by cis scholars has not heeded this advice, it was my focus and priority throughout this research to do justice to such principles.

Long Chu and Harsin Drager (2019: 104; also Prosser, 1998) argue that when cis scholars enter the field 'arguments for bodily autonomy, the radical potential of body modification or even worse [...]' arise. Through my research practices, I hope I avoided contributing to what Radi (2019: 59) terms 'the inventory of epistemic violences' often committed by cis scholars 'self-subscribed to emancipatory and radical epistemological projects'. Indeed, while I write of empowering participants and developing supportive research spaces, I do not wish to associate my research with my own 'emancipatory fantasies' as a cis person (Radi, 2019: 57) – in other words to become another embodiment of cissexism – and (hope) I am aware of its and my own limits as a relatively small project and as an individual cis researcher, for example. Throughout this project, I have constantly (re)reflected on my positionalities, my ability to make claims about young trans lives, and the level of reciprocity and collaboration I could truly offer participants. I am sure that I fell short at several times and when compared to how I set out to 'give back' to trans youth who contributed so much to this research. Crucially, acknowledging the influence which my cisness held over the research and my participants involved recognising that I could not always understand how my cis privilege impacted (Galupo, 2017). Practically speaking, I attempted to ensure that young trans people's voices and experiences were prioritised through any means that I could. I hope that they shine through in this thesis.

Research relationships should be regarded as a 'continuum' of power relations, iterated through each research encounter from project design to dissemination (Bhopal, 2000). Clearly, power

⁹⁰ Note this language dates from 1997.

imbalances between myself and participants pervaded throughout, for example through my leading of activities and conversations, relative age to some participants, and my possession of recorded data and subsequent capacity to choose which perspectives to present in this thesis. A major concern during the research was my positionality and its shifting nature in relation to participants and their perceptions. Although I ‘cannot lose sight of other aspects of the self beyond gender and sexuality’ in my positionalities/situatedness (Browne and Nash, 2010: 17), I hoped that my ‘embodied situatedness’ as a young, gay, queer person, my knowledge of trans issues, and my ‘shared understanding’ of aspects of queer life helped participants to feel they could be open about their lives with me (Rooke, 2010: 33). Nash (2010b: 137), a cis lesbian researcher working with trans people, notes that ‘both the nature of the field and [her] insider/outsider status shifted considerably not only during the course of individual interviews but across interviews and throughout the research process’. Nash (*Ibid.*: 141) was read at times by participants as sharing ‘experiential sameness’, although this status ‘became increasingly fragile and open to re-definition’ throughout her research and the spaces it entered. In my work, though my queer and gay subject position might have both offered supposed ‘insider’ knowledge and opportunities (i.e. ‘experiential sameness’), such as shared (past) experiences of heteronormative space and a lack of adherence to spatial and societal expectations, and made visible my ‘outsiderness’ manifested through, for example, my always-already incomplete knowledge of trans embodied experiences, this assessment is too narrow. My engagement with participants complicates the overly-simplistic ‘insider’/‘outsider’ binary paradigm which persists in social science work engaging marginalised people and queer folk more specifically (Gorman-Murray *et al.*, 2010: 100). This ‘insider’ position, often reduced to ‘sharing the same identities’ as research subjects (Valentine, 2002: 117), privileges specific facets of subjectivity and identity such as shared views and understandings (Dowling, 2005).

However, I argue that it is not simply enough to think through my position or ‘outsiderness’ as a cis researcher, or my relative ‘insiderness’ as a queer person myself, or someone sharing age, class, whiteness, mental health concerns, and so on with certain participants. Indeed, there are many ways that researchers can relate to or interact with potential participants, some of which we can never be fully aware of, or even hope to fully interrogate. Moreover, there is an increasing recognition in the literature that supposes that one can never make a forthright claim to ‘insider’ knowledge, as through our intersectional identities we occupy both ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’ positions simultaneously (Gorman-Murray *et al.*, 2010; Nash, 2010b; Valentine, 2002). Thus, it is important to reconfigure approaches to ‘insider-outsider’ binaries, with relative ‘differences’ between researchers and participants becoming contingent on factors such as research space, participants’ and my own embodied emotions, and the research methodologies (Gorman-Murray *et al.*, 2010). Participants themselves might have

(re)positioned me according to any number of factors, most of which I can never be fully cognisant of, particularly whilst ‘in the field’.

However, despite this complex ‘experiential sameness’ and ‘insider-outsiderness’ and the potential for understandable research fatigue, discomfort, or lack of trust around cis researchers in trans spaces or communities (Pearce, 2018; Vincent, 2018c), participants frequently told me that that they appreciated the solidarity I displayed, my knowledge of trans issues and affirming languages, the care in which I treated them and their stories and their spaces, and my attentiveness to their needs and concerns. By being up front about the fact that the research was iterative and partially designed with their stories at the forefront of my research practice and methodology when recruiting, I hope that I allowed participants to feel assured that they were part of the decision-making process. Again, I also shared my own queer stories which participants occasionally draw on to develop their own storytelling. In many ways, my position should be looked upon and informed by this additional layer of understanding and solidarity I attempted to constantly embody. Without this commitment to my participants and to trans allyship and justice, I could not have felt comfortable engaging in this research. However, my awareness of these dynamics and participants’ feelings about my presence and the research and its authenticity and intrusiveness is, by nature, always-already incomplete.

4.9 Experiencing and embodying anxiety in the field

In a published article in *Gender, Place and Culture* (Todd, 2020b), I argue that my experience of generalised anxiety disorder constitutes just one of many forces implicated in the unfolding of my subject position in research spaces. One of the most difficult-to-overcome anxieties I faced in the field was related to the necessity of doing justice to the communities and spaces I was researching in. These anxieties were compounded by emotional exhaustion I experienced while researching participants’ lives: at the time, I found it difficult to put into words how I was feeling after hearing certain participants’ stories of trauma or anxiety. I discuss this here because I am committed to furthering a greater recognition of the body’s entanglement in research sites as exhausting environments and the researching body’s relations with participants’ subjectivities and bodies (Wainwright *et al.*, 2018). Amongst other emotions, I worried about not being able to meaningfully ‘give back’ to participants. Ruth Pearce (2020: 813-814) writes of researching her PhD on trans healthcare as a trans woman, telling us that ‘encounter[ing] stories of loneliness, fear and mistrust [...] medical neglect, abusive language, and sexual assault’ in her participants’ stories of trans healthcare, led to her ‘growing sense of exhaustion and distress as [she] immersed [herself] in trans community discussions and media reporting of trans issues’ and inability to develop ‘objective distance’ from such events. Though of course, my experience as a cis researcher is markedly less intense than Pearce’s, given my own embodied distance

from such experiences, it was nevertheless an emotional labour to hear, record, transcribe, analyse, write around, and (re)present such stories, one which I am perhaps only just grappling with. I often found myself hearing participants' traumas, ill health, loves, and joys and becoming internally emotionally overwhelmed with embodied emotion whilst performing the stability of a capable researcher and listener.

4.10 Conclusions: An innovative approach to researching with young trans people

In this chapter which concludes Part I of this thesis, I have laid out how I responded methodologically and ethically to the questions posed by my theoretical work and research objectives. In doing so, I introduced my innovative, collaborative approach for researching with young trans people. I traced my initial thinking around the need to develop collaboration with a trans-led organisation to ensure that the research was responsive to both their needs and concerns and the needs and desires of participants. The embeddedness of my research in trans/queer spaces ensured that I could follow the policies and practices of G.I. and the Scottish organisation, signal my commitment to demonstrating queer solidarities and alleviating understandable research fatigue and mistrust toward cis scholars, and focus on building mechanisms and methods for collaboration, voice-raising, and storytelling. Although expanding the research into Scotland increased the geographical diversity of the research, I have pointed to the perhaps (relatively) limited diversity of my research participants, in that the majority were white and either trans men or non-binary people.

In the chapter, I have also been one of the first academic researchers to examine and address the ethical nuances required when researching with young trans people specifically. I described how this research engaged a particularly marginalised group of trans youth who largely use support services and spaces to alleviate concerns which pervade in their everyday lives, necessitating the waiving of parental consent for participants aged under 18. This safeguarding measure recognises the competency and agency of individual participants, ensures that no participants were excluded by their everyday life circumstances, and potentially bolstered mutual trust and reciprocity. Meanwhile, my focus on storytelling methods ensured that *multiple kinds of stories* could be told by participants, with my work to draw out the spatial and bodily minutiae of participants' narratives being significant in moving stories beyond mere representation to wider significance. Focussing on storytelling also enlivened my queer approach to the research. Indeed, for me, queering the research and recruitment meant building relationships of solidarity and developing platforms to empower young trans people to work at their own pace to share their voices and tell their own stories. My emphasis on prioritising young trans voices, offering diverse opportunities for young people to articulate their views and experiences to one

another, and affirming young people's self-articulations, and organically integrated fragments of my own queer history into research conversations, allowed me to demonstrate queer solidarities with participants. Throughout the chapter, I also interrogated my subject position and situatedness in relation to research spaces and my participants. I attempted to begin queering 'insider-outsiderness' by reflecting on my 'experiential sameness' (and lack thereof) relative to participants, my demonstration of queer solidarities, and so on. I have demonstrated a methodological and ethical framework for cisgender scholars to draw on and develop further in future research with trans people.

In creative workshops, the first cornerstone method/space I devised, I blended PAR methods with group and individual discussions and support from trans/queer youth workers to develop 'a space where other people get it' (Furman *et al.*, 2019): sites where participants could have their voices and stories heard through diverse collaborative means, creatively represent their everyday lives, and meet and socialise with other young trans people. These spaces offered 'opportunities for [young] trans individuals to actively participate without placing a burden on them' (*Ibid.*: 2) and allowed participants to tell and share their stories in embodied, dynamic ways (more so than static research methods that dominate research into trans lives; see chapter three) that fit their preferences and narratives.

Meanwhile, my use of what I and G.I. termed 'one-to-one sessions' – in-depth, largely unstructured interviews – offered participants opportunities to tell their stories in a more deeply biographical manner than in creative workshops. In 'one-to-one sessions', participants often developed both oral histories and in-depth reflections on particular moments, events, and spaces important to them and/or their (past and imagined future) life trajectory. Although some aspects of particular one-to-one researcher encounters were emotionally exhausting and an emotional labour, for both myself and participants, I hope that with this method I allowed participants to develop accounts of their own selves that they would not otherwise be able to or feel comfortable doing. In sum, with these cornerstone methods I developed an innovative framework for researching with young trans people and marginalised youth. In doing so, although power balances pervaded throughout my research and I could never be fully aware of how my cis privilege impacted participants or research spaces (Galupo, 2017), I hope to have avoided contributing to extractive and/or violent research often perpetuated by cisgender scholars of trans lives. I encourage other cisgender researchers of trans lives and scholars working with marginalised youth more broadly to develop further the group-based researching practices outlined here.

In Part II of this thesis, I explore participants' stories, narratives, and creative work, following an empirical thread of thinking developed out of my methodological and theoretical approaches. In

chapter five, I expand on participants' everyday embodied experiences by considering how young trans people are positioned, and come to feel, 'out-of-place' in particular spaces or at particular times. In chapter six, I explore participants' narratives of exhaustion, an embodied experience that I argue often emerges through this 'out-of-placeness' and creates temporalities and spatially-contingent affects and atmospheres of exhaustion that dominate in many young trans people's lives. In chapter seven, I consider young trans people's creation/access of spaces and embodied mechanisms of resilience, resistance, and restoration (RRR). I argue that such practices often arise as a result of the 'out-of-placeness' and exhaustion that is a daily reality for many trans youth. As we will see, this 'out-of-placeness'-exhaustion-RRR nexus constitutes a non-linear feedback loop that many young trans people repeatedly encounter and must continually (re)negotiate (see figure 4.17).

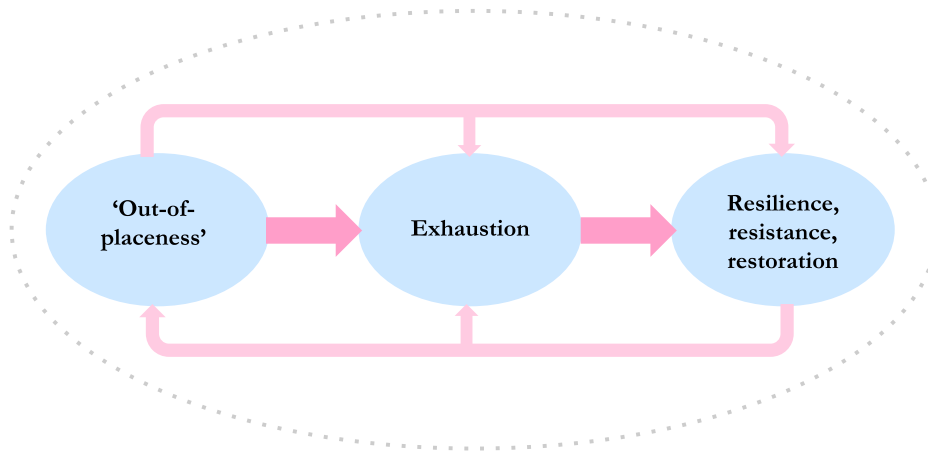


Figure 4.17. Schematic illustrating the narrative arc of Part II of the thesis. The dotted line represents that these modes of being in the world are produced with temporal non-linearity and can be both spatially located and ephemeral.

Part II

Exploring young trans people's stories and narratives

Experiencing and embodying ‘out-of-placeness’

5.1 Introducing young trans people's 'out-of-placeness': Mark and Craig's stories



Figure 5.1. Storyboards created by [above:] Craig (he/him, 14-17) illustrating his 'journey' in the London tube, and [below:] Adam (he/him, 18-21), illustrating his experiences using public transport.

James: So has there been a time on the tube when you've sort of had to really... try and bring yourself into the calm zone?

Mark (he/him, 18-21): Erm yeah, I got punched on the tube. I was passing through [the tube station] one stop away from home and I knew these boys were gonna punch me, like I just knew. But I was completely terrified so I was just frozen as the two of them got up and one of them just turned around and [was up] in my face. And I just knew they were gonna punch me, like I just knew it. And like riding home and walking through [my London borough] was the scariest walk of my life. I was like 'well if they punch me, everyone could punch me, like someone's just gonna kill me'. [*nervously laughs*] Yeah I find trains really difficult now. [...] I was just sitting there listening to music [...] And they were going 'is that a girl or a boy', they were pushing my chest. Yeah he was like pushing my arm away to see if I had a chest. And yeah it was really fucked up. [...] it was quite late at night. But there were two people in the carriage who were kind of looking at me and not doing anything. But when they punched me they immediately jumped off the train and came up to me and were like 'woah are you okay, do you want us to call the police?' and I was just like 'they've been bullying me for half an hour!! And you haven't done anything and now I've ended up being punched and now you're doing something?'

Mark's story requires little elaboration on the painful, overt transphobia he experienced and embodied in and beyond the tube, while Craig and Adam's storyboards illustrating more everyday forms of anxiety attached to transport spaces (figure 5.1) speak without analytic interference. However, through these stories, several themes emerge about the *nature of everyday spaces*, and the hostile affective atmospheres they can spark for trans youth specifically (see chapter three). In these participants' stories we see multiple forms of embodied everyday fear and anxiety, including those where an overtly violent act causes a ripple effect of negative consequences which are augmented and embodied and carried beyond the space, as in Mark's narrative. As Craig and Adam's storyboards illustrate, these emotions might emerge when gradients of expected transphobia and gendered violence become woven together with the gaze and embodied presence of potentially hostile other passengers,⁹¹ shades of light and dark, perceived loneliness, and space's enclosed nature. These affective dynamics result in the young people imagining and anticipating future impacts and consequences associated with travelling, such that they must invent coping strategies, and relief is only experienced once they emerge from the space and are 'alone at last'. Crucially, for all three participants, the public transport space becomes associated with negative memories and experiences and a dislocating feeling of what this thesis terms '*out-of-placeness*'. Following Sara Ahmed, I argue that because of their accrual of 'out-of-placeness', Mark, Craig, and Adam feel an uneasy discomfort in their bodies, which, similarly to other narratives presented in this

⁹¹ I find it particularly evocative that Adam's artwork represents other passengers' bodies as greyed-out presences that turn toward/close in on him as he waits for the embodied relief of arriving at the 'last stop'.

chapter, becomes *stickily attached* to the tube *space*. After their movement through the space, through affective atmospherics, embodied emotions and memories, and the agency held by such sites, its socio-materialities – (other) bodies, corridors, carriages, and so on – absorb and perpetuate this spatially-contingent violence and exclusion. Consequently, the tube becomes a site of restriction and embodied fear, a place in which emotional discomfort –felt, experienced, and subsequently held by the body – becomes the *anticipated norm* for particular trans youth. As I will demonstrate, this ‘out-of-placeness’ constitutes a set of experiences that, for many young trans people, is a daily reality. Certain habitual movements or encounters – taking the tube, using public toilets, entering a classroom, or moving through a public space – thus become, for certain trans youth, fraught with potential for emotional and embodied disturbance, disruption, and violence.

In Mark’s story in particular, the operation of embodied othering and privilege⁹² is overt in the absence of support from other bodies: their solidarity is granted only once a threshold of violence has crossed, sparking collective action. The socio-material fabric of the space’s platforms and trains exerts force on the young people’s ability to pass through space smoothly and freely, and leads to them developing a negative anticipatory emotional relationship with spaces of public transport which I term *anticipatory anxiousness*. This anticipatory anxiousness is captured in figure 5.2, with the young person who created the artwork demonstrating the impact that feeling anxiety or ‘worry’ toward particular bodies, spaces, and events can have on young trans people’s embodied emotional ease (in this case, such that the participant avoids dressing ‘how they want to’ to avoid others’ judgement.)

⁹² This privilege might manifest, for example, as a result of being read (or ‘passing’; see glossary) as cis. Embodied privilege is both attached to particular bodies and spaces and one means through which discomfort becomes stickily attached to particular bodies. Embodied privilege in this sense is *relative*, as certain bodies inhabit and encounter privilege according to multiple, intersecting lines of difference.



Figure 5.2. 'Same person, different day': a young person's artwork (name and pronouns unrecorded) produced in a workshop themed around clothing.

Such stories, and others wherein young trans people have described experiencing a lack of belonging in particular everyday spaces,⁹³ raise several questions: How do young trans people come to be positioned as and subsequently feel 'out-of-place' in certain everyday spaces? What does it feel like to be young and trans and to experience and embody this 'out-of-placeness'? And what toll does continually experiencing 'out-of-placeness' exact upon young trans people, their bodies, subjectivities, and life trajectories? In this chapter I respond to these questions, focussing on misgendering and deadnaming (section 5.4.1), others' hostile gazes (5.4.2), and bodily and social dysphoria (5.4.3), as non-exhaustive examples of relatively common modes of 'out-of-placeness' experienced by my participants. Experiences that fall under these broad categories were regularly remarked on by most participants; some had come to normalise or anticipate such experiences.

The following section explores Sara Ahmed's work to begin developing a conceptual language to examine participants' experiences of 'out-of-placeness'.

⁹³ I consider a lack of belonging as a condition of, rather than synonymous with, 'out-of-placeness'.

5.2 Conceptualising ‘out-of-placeness’

Throughout this chapter, I turn to Sara Ahmed’s work exploring the formation and positioning of black and queer bodies (Ahmed, 2000; 2004; 2006; 2007; 2010; 2012), and the ‘feminist killjoy’ figure (Ahmed, 2010; 2017; 2019), and the discomfort they feel in everyday places,⁹⁴ to explore how young trans bodies are continuously positioned (and subsequently recognised) as ‘out-of-place’. As Nirmal Puwar (2004: 8) notes, there is a *mismatch* between certain spaces and bodies, such that (supposedly neutral) everyday spaces are never ‘blank and open for any body to occupy’. Ahmed (2019b: 60, my emphasis) draws on this understanding to remind us that ‘[y]ou have a fit when an environment is built to accommodate you[;] [y]ou are a misfit when there is an *incongruous relation of your body to thing or body to world*.’ In other words, one becomes and feels ‘out-of-place’ when the affective and socio-material composition of spaces they occupy and move through, bodies they encounter, and wider political/discursive forces they are impacted by do not align with, are hostile to, or do not expect, their body or its presence in a given space. Such mechanisms produce trans youth and their bodies as *incongruous* to everyday, cisnormative spaces in particular.

Following Ahmed, certain bodies become ‘out-of-place’ by being continually positioned and read as disruptive of norms and spatial equanimity. Their mere presence within, and entering of, particular spaces activates ‘a whole series of processes which signal that they are “space invaders”’ (Ahmed, 2019b: 10; Puwar, 2004). In other words, when a body is read or constructed as disruptive of social norms, (other) bodies and affects present in everyday spaces react to signal their ‘out-of-placeness’. Such bodily expectations thus become ‘somatic norms’ (Puwar, 2001; 2004) inscribed within/around particular spaces and subsumed by the bodies of those positioned as ‘out-of-place’ in these sites. This mechanism initiates what I term the ‘out-of-placeness’ feedback loop (illustrated in figure 5.3), which recognises that *those that are positioned as ‘out-of-place’ come to expect to feel ‘out-of-place’, thus increasing their feelings of ‘out-of-placeness’*. I argue that such language illustrates that non-normative, ‘minoritarian’ bodies do not simply lack in qualities that might signal their belonging. Instead, they are both subtly and overtly societally, socially, and spatially-reinforced as disruptive, dissident, and somehow harmful to regimes/affects of structural power designed to *always-already privilege and expect the*

⁹⁴ Ahmed returns to several key places including the university, queer and feminist spaces, virtual and physical (dis)connected spaces of complaint, and the home. These spaces feel relevant to trans youth as they align with both spaces wherein they might navigate visibility and transphobia, and queer/trans spaces which might offer respite, resilience, and solidarity, augmenting – as chapter seven discusses – their capacities to move through sites where they might experience ‘out-of-placeness’.

arrival of the most privileged bodies: variously those of, for example, white, non-disabled, cisgender, male, non-working class, and/or straight folk.

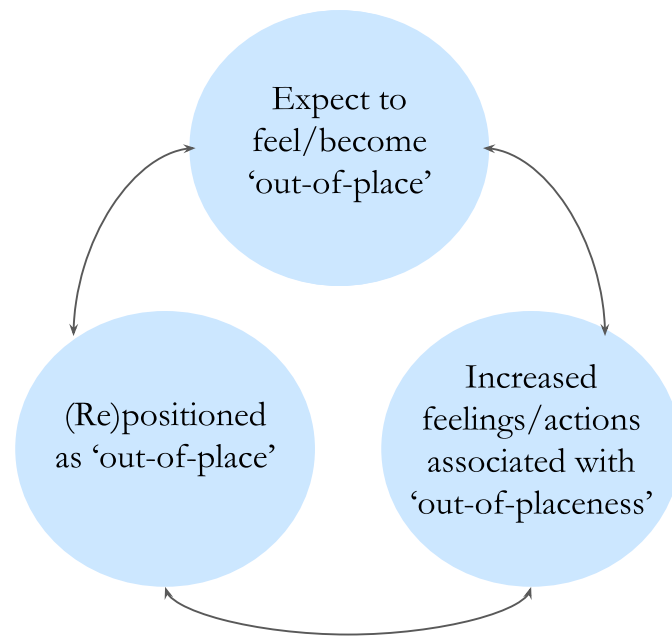


Figure 5.3. Simplified schematic illustrating the feedback loop of ‘out-of-placeness’, which shows how particular bodies and subjects are positioned as, and come to feel, ‘out-of-place’ in particular spaces or at certain times.

In contrast, bodily normativity is comfortable for those able to inhabit it, as they sink into and extend the shape of the space around them such that lines between the body and the socio-material world become blurry (Ahmed, 2004). For Ahmed (2019b: 43) spaces and institutions can be ‘well-worn garments’ in that they have often ‘acquired the shape of those who tend to wear [them] such that [they] are easier to wear if you have that shape’. Ahmed (2007: 158, 163) addresses this normative bodily experience by attending to how whiteness functions in certain spaces:

‘...whiteness may function as a form of public comfort *by allowing bodies to extend into spaces that have already taken their shape*. [...] Those spaces are lived as comfortable as they allow bodies to fit in; the surfaces of social space are already impressed upon by the shape of such bodies. [...] So spaces extend bodies and bodies extend spaces. The impressions of the surface function as traces of such extensions. The surfaces of social as well as bodily space ‘record’ the repetition of acts, and the ‘passing by’ of some and not others. [...] To be not white is to be not extended by the spaces you inhabit. This is an uncomfortable feeling.’

Here, Ahmed highlights that those privileged within and by particular spaces have already acquired contours that such sites and the bodies they contain (both human and more-than-human; see chapter three) demand of them. Others more marginalised, like trans youth, who may not ‘fit’ within such normative conditions, come to both feel and *expect* the embodied discomfort that nonconformance

within such sites and their atmospherics can cause. This is an ongoing affective process intensified and embedded in particular spaces and times, and upon/within the bodies of the ‘out-of-place’ through repetition and habituality. We see this, for example, in Craig’s storyboard, in the responses and gaze they expect from the passenger, and in Mark’s statement that he ‘find[s] trains really difficult now.’ As I demonstrate in this chapter, trans youth often cannot move or feel through everyday spaces with embodied ease. Instead, as in Mark and Craig’s stories, trans youth might acutely *feel* and *rub against* the bodies, materialities, and cisnormative structures of everyday spaces, which do not ‘fade into the background’ but often become discomforting strata that impede, or make uncomfortable, their movements through and presence within particular places.

Thinking through trans people’s experiences of *feeling* ‘out-of-place’ (if not being *positioned* as such) across everyday encounters and spaces is not necessarily a new approach. For example, Halberstam (2005) explores trans people’s experiences and sense of *dislocatedness* from the spaces they move through and occupy, while Doan (2010) outlines how she avoids drawing attention to herself and her transness, using strategies including whispering in public restrooms and avoiding ‘idle conversation’ with those who might be invested in maintaining gender binaries. Meanwhile, Johnston’s (2018) work considers, for example, how language, power, and socio-cultural norms are formed and felt in everyday sites to create power regimes that exclude trans people and construct their bodies as not belonging in particular sites.⁹⁵ I argue that I offer a more nuanced conceptual perspective than Johnston’s relatively rigid approach which does not account for the varied embodied experiences trans folk might hold at various times relative to intersectional axes of difference. Additionally, I further augment such existing approaches by expanding on young trans people’s *temporal* experiences of ‘out-of-placeness’. As simpkins (2017: 139, my emphasis) describes, discussing trans experiences, ‘the [...] feeling of being out of place is [also] an indicator of *time being out of joint*’. In particular, I argue that the implications of experiencing and embodying ‘out-of-placeness’ augment and build iteratively through time each time one feels and/or is positioned as ‘out-of-place’. Consequently, I attend to how affects and atmospheres implicated in ‘out-of-placeness’ are carried by the body beyond the space(s) in which they were first produced or felt.

Returning to geographical literatures, in conceptual and empirical work that resonates with this chapter, ‘placelessness’ – rather than ‘out-of-placeness’ – has been a useful term that has allowed geographers to be ‘disruptive of neat and tidy binaries of spatial belonging’ (Wright, 2010: 59).

⁹⁵ Johnston (2018) also recognises how friendships, solidarities, and resilience practices are formed by trans people out of being or feeling ‘out-of-place’ (a thread that I also follow in chapter seven).

Geographers, including in geographies of sexualities work, have traditionally conceptualised this ‘placelessness’ – both a description of a place and a feeling – as the antithesis to being and belonging in place; ‘an absence or a lack rather than [...] an embodied experience or practice that *is* or *does* anything’ (Knopp, 2004: 130, original emphasis). Appendix F presents a brief literature review of this work on ‘placelessness’, demonstrating that it has typically not done enough to examine either the (intersectional) specificity of bodies/subjects and their encounters and interactions with(in) the socio-materialities of everyday sites, or the queer temporalities involved in being produced as ‘out-of-place’ (see chapters three and six). Furthermore, trans people and their everyday bodily belongings remain marginal in this work.

To continue developing my conceptual approach, the following section considers Ahmed’s work in greater depth to explore how certain young trans bodies are *continuously positioned* as ‘out-of-place’.

5.3 Being and becoming an ‘out-of-place’ body

In this section, I explore language that Ahmed uses to examine how ‘out-of-placeness’ emerges and becomes stickily attached to certain bodies, including those of certain young trans people. The following table (figure 5.4) illustrates terms Ahmed (particularly 2004, 2007, 2010, 2012, 2017, 2019b) uses to explore the emergence of this uncomfortable stickiness and its associated embodied affects. These terms emphasise the vast, messy nexus through which bodies can emerge as ‘out-of-place’. Each term tabulated is relevant to at least one of my participants’ stories.⁹⁶ The table’s three rows demonstrate (a) how certain bodies might be (intentionally or otherwise) positioned as ‘out-of-place’ (row a), (b) how these bodies might experience places in which they feel ‘out-of-place’ (row b), and (c) how such bodies might (consciously or subconsciously) react to these emotions and embodied states (row c).

⁹⁶ Note, however, that the table should not be read as though these mechanisms and responses work chronologically or linearly. Indeed, Ahmed’s work describes how felt dimensions of discomfort in particular spaces, in turn, increase ones’ discomfort and ‘sticking out’ as deviant from structural, institutional, societal, and spatial norms.

| Outcome | Mechanisms and descriptors (non-exhaustive, no particular order) |
|--|--|
| (a) Bodies emerging as ‘out-of-place’ | Negation; violence; expectation (of causing discomfort); norms and ideals; noticeable arrival; refutation; arrival (of a body into space); technologies of concealment; agency of (white, straight) bodies; institutional habits; institutions as collectives/orientation devices; routine, habituality, and accumulation; reachability of objects (in proximity to bodies); directions (within reach of the ‘out-of-place’); cultures of silence; occupation of the structural position of guest (within a space); doors; walls; questions/questioning (as stopping devices); compulsory heterosexuality; public comfort (of heterosexual, white bodies that ‘take the shape’ of everyday spaces); causing discomfort (to other bodies); (not fulfilling) expectations (of who/which bodies will turn up); failure (to fit); sticking out (from whiteness, compulsory heterosexuality); repetition (of the passing by of some bodies and not others); hyper-visibility; demands (for bodies) to ‘pass’ [i.e. conform] |
| (b) The emotional, embodied, and felt dimensions of ‘out-of-placeness’ | Discomfort; disorientation; labour; feel(ing) noticeable; (lack of) motility/mobility; a ‘fidgety feeling’; receding; restlessness and uneasiness; awkward fit; work and ‘political labour’ to maintain the comfort of (privileged) others; sticking out; being a ‘sore point’; feeling categories you ‘failed to inhabit’; what is in the background/unnoticed (for/by the comfortable) gathering in front of you; arriving <i>after</i> others |
| (c) Responses to being positioned as ‘out-of-place’ | Collective action; desire; resistance; refusal (to promise/to fulfil); displace(ment); kill(ing) joy; becoming a killjoy; complaint; withdrawal; emotional work (‘to make others comfortable even though you have already made them uncomfortable’); avoidance; the ‘world opening up’ |

Figure 5.4. Selected phrasing Ahmed uses to describe what it means to become and feel like an ‘out-of-place’ body.

Figure 5.4 shows only a fraction of ways that bodies may emerge as ‘out-of-place’, and embody, feel, and respond to this ‘out-of-placeness’. However, particularly significant is the *similarity* of such mechanisms (in terms of their function and affect), their *familiarity* to those of us who have experienced marginalisation in everyday spaces, and their *pervasive layering* (i.e. their presence in multiple forms across multiple spaces, the effect of which builds over time). The *similarity* and *pervasive layering* of these structures, intensities, bodily encounters, atmospheres, tensions, walls, and other mechanisms, and the

unconscious and conscious *familiarity* with which they are encountered by the ‘out-of-place’, serve as intense affective forces that permeate most everyday, urban, or state spaces (albeit with varying intensities) in which one feels or is positioned as ‘out-of-place’. As this chapter explores further, Ahmed’s language enables us to examine, for example, how trans youth might be constantly questioned, feel the emotional force of entering a room and causing an atmospheric disturbance, or ‘stick out’ from compulsory cisgender expectations/norms in particular space-times.

As shown in Figure 5.4 (row b), ‘out-of-placeness’ is a disorientating, temporally messy experience that leaves remnants on the body’s surfaces and interiors. Indeed, as we have seen Ahmed (2006; 2007) describe, the atmospheric conditions of particular spaces can create ‘impressions’ on bodily surfaces that might be fleeting or more permanent. This language allows me to further emphasise that *the more that trans youth experience ‘out-of-placeness’, the more that their body feels or shows the toll of being a body ‘out-of-place’*. For example, certain participants described hunched shoulders, anxiety and fear, and other bodily withdrawal mechanisms as they constantly felt ‘out-of-placeness’. The bodily labour and toll involved in ‘out-of-placeness’ is described Ahmed (2018: n.p.) who notes, ‘[f]itting becomes work for those who do not fit; you have to push, push, push; and sometimes no amount of pushing will get you in.’ As Ahmed (2019b: 64) further argues:

‘If a world has not been built to accommodate you, it takes much more out of you to do the same thing compared to those who are accommodated. [...] You can be used up by what you need to do in order to complete a simple task.’

For trans youth, becoming ‘used up’ might mean, for example, feeling the strain and exertion borne out of efforts to align with, or ‘pass’ within, cisgender norms, such that they become exhausted (as chapter six explores). However, Ahmed’s work also acknowledges the radical potential of not belonging for (re)forming and resisting their life experiences and conditions. From this perspective, although embodying ‘out-of-placeness’ can lead to withdrawal, avoidance, and emotional labour, the condition can also offer a politically queer way of not-belonging with potential for re-making space or developing queer kinship/solidarity (Ahmed, 2019b; as chapters six and seven also examine).

In the following section, I draw attention to how ‘out-of-placeness’ is felt and experienced as an iteratively-building *continuous presence* by trans youth, one embedded within spaces they encounter in the everyday. Throughout, I link this presence to temporality as the intensity and specificity of ‘out-of-placeness’ described by trans youth demonstrates that its affects can be produced and felt as immediately forceful and acute and/or gradual and durative.

5.4 Young trans people's stories of 'out-of-placeness'

For participants, the continuous presence of 'out-of-placeness' originates from everyday embodied emotions connected to interwoven forms of everyday violence and exclusion, including misgendering, others' hostile gazes, and the cisgender/binary-gendered or trans-hostile affective atmospherics of certain everyday spaces. For example, Ian (he/him, 14-17) described negative experiences that have become everyday by describing his need to find spaces and times for 'escaping in day-to-day life like erm when things get too much or I keep getting misgendered, or [have had] a serious harassment in a male bathroom.' Ian told me these experiences constituted 'nothing that's report worthy, but I get a lot of comments and all that jazz.' Here, emotionally and physically intense experiences – 'serious harassment' and 'getting misgendered' – are marked as unremarkable or 'day-to-day', a sign that for Ian, and others like him, being overtly positioned as 'out-of-place' can become commonplace, even habitual. Through such experiences, for many trans youth, 'out-of-placeness' forms an unstable yet almost permanent embodied presence. For example, Freddy (he/him, 14-17) described his experience of being 'stealth' (see glossary on 'passing') and 'constantly on edge' at school, to avoid being 'outed' as trans. This became, in his words, an anxious tension he feels 'inside himself', 'like a bomb waiting to go off'. Witnessing the negative experiences of another young trans person at his school previously 'outed' as trans solidified Freddy's resolve to remain secretive/'stealth' about his transness in school. Here, we see that *some young trans people are made to feel 'out-of-place' as a result of the 'out-of-placeness' endured by other trans youth*. The knowledge that others have experienced transphobia, exclusion, or hostility can be how particular spaces become associated with such embodied tension for particular trans youth.

In the following sections, participants' stories demonstrate that such high(er) frequency experiences can become so normalised that they might be only subconsciously felt. These experiences play a large role in constructing trans youth and their bodies as 'out-of-place', and in influencing their constant embodiment of 'out-of-placeness'. The first section turns to misgendering and deadnaming (see glossary) as specific experiences of two often public, visible, and/or more overt mechanisms of young trans people's 'out-of-placeness'. For many participants, recalling deadnaming and misgendering, as with many negative life experiences, was an extremely emotionally demanding task. I hope that by presenting and thinking through a small number of participant voices describing this violent set of experiences, I do justice to their emotional labour.

5.4.1 *Misgendering and deadnaming and introducing spatially-contingent 'out-of-placeness'*

Most participants spoke about having experienced the violence of misgendering or deadnaming at some point during our contact. Here, I explore how misgendering and deadnaming are tools

positioning young trans people as ‘out-of-place’ through forces imbued in and meaning attached to language. Often this linguistic violence is internalised by trans youth, who might come to experience feelings of ‘out-of-placeness’ in spaces where misgendering/deadnaming took place or commonly occurs. As Mearns *et al.* (2019: 5, citing Storrie and Rohleder, 2018) describe, repeatedly mentioning a deadname ‘can convey hostility, while perpetuating heteronormativity; combining into an oppression damaging to both physical and mental health.’ Indeed, misgendering is typically thought of in discourses of ‘political correctness’ as merely about language, naming, and gendering, whilst misgendering and deadnaming are often assumed to be microaggressive. I ask what violence these framings obscure, and propose that misgendering and deadnaming create (or contribute to) atmospheres of exclusion and ‘out-of-placeness’ attached to certain bodies, spaces, and materialities. These atmospheres and associated embodied emotions build through time and are not, as the following stories show, attached to one particular event or encounter. This accrual is felt by the body and is realised through the positioning of young trans bodies in particular spaces that become imbued with anticipatory anxiousness.

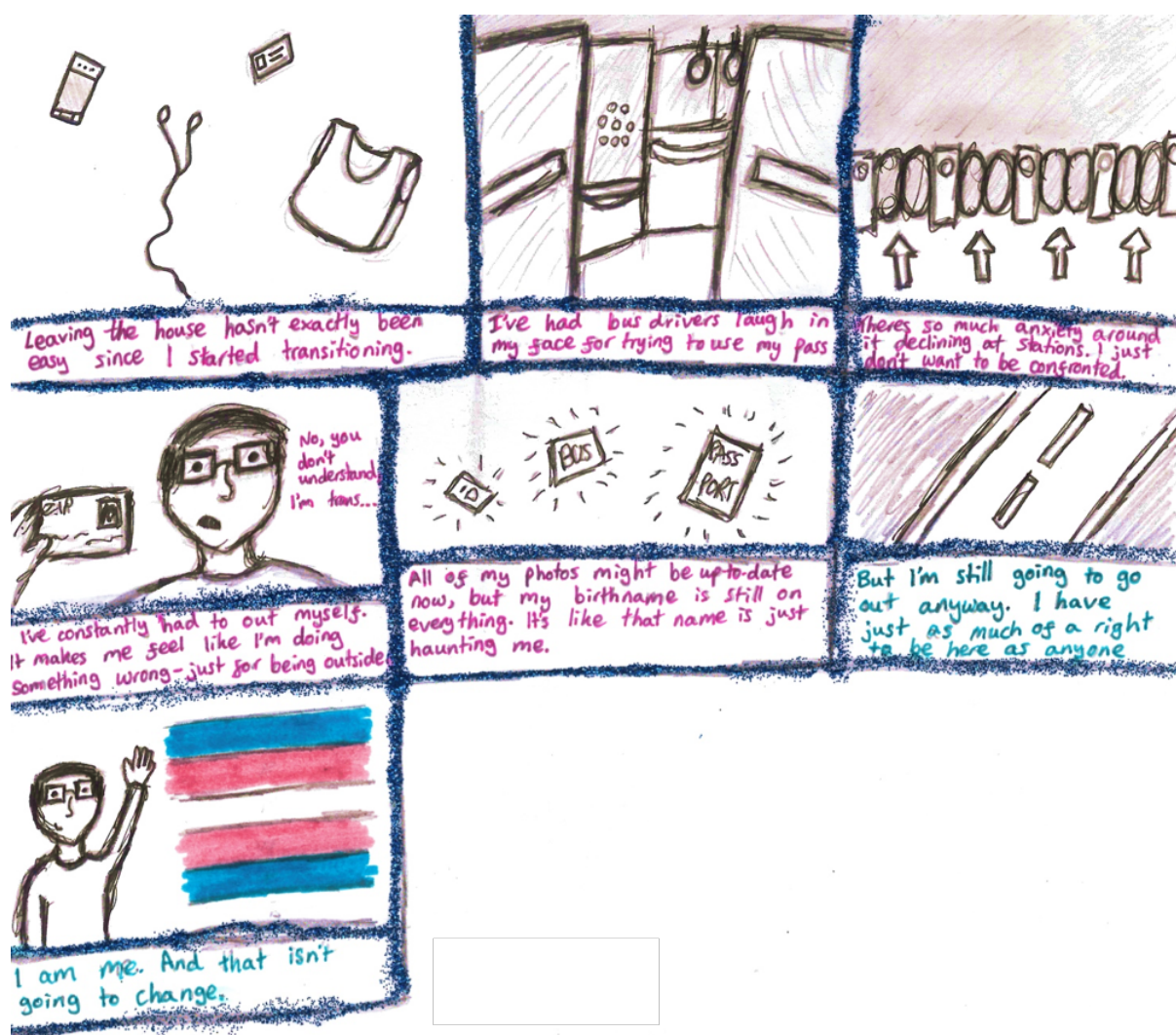


Figure 5.5. 'I have just as much of a right to be here as anyone': Eden's storyboard.

Eden's (he/him, age unrecorded) storyboard shown in figure 5.5 demonstrates several of these themes and speaks to the thesis' narrative arc (see figure i.i, preface). In the storyboard, Eden describes finding 'leaving the house' and travelling through London difficult since beginning his transition. Bus drivers openly 'laugh in [his] face' when he shows his pass, while he 'constantly' outs himself when being misgendered or surveilled because his birthname is present on each of his travel documents, an act that places him at risk to potentially hostile others. Consequently, Eden's embodied anxiety builds and coalesces around certain sites and temporal moments with greater intensity: automated barriers, ticket stalls, and bus corridors are presented in his storyboard as – as other participants also described – points where he anticipates confrontation or misgendering (such sites and times were discussed as places and moments of intense negative experience by many: see, for example, Figure 5.6). These experiences ultimately leave him 'feel[ing] like [he's] doing something wrong – just for being outside,' in other terms feeling 'wrong' *for being visible as a young trans person in public space*. Here, the role that misgendering plays in positioning trans youth as 'out-of-place', and conjuring feelings of 'out-of-placeness', is clear. We see the affective anxious entanglements that misgendering and subsequently 'out-of-placeness' come to hold with particular places and certain material things: a bus pass, a barrier, a bus driver's cabin (see also Figure 5.6), such that Eden feels 'so much anxiety' around his pass declining – a process that involves 'constantly out[ing]' himself. It is in the always-already unknown yet palpable and anticipated potential for misgendering to occur whilst moving through spaces of everyday life and particularly those wherein cisnormative expectations exist and gender is policed with greater intensity, then, that 'out-of-placeness' can form as a continuous 'haunting' presence, as Eden describes, for many trans youth. Those early in social/medical transition processes and not (yet) 'passing' (see glossary), like Eden, might feel this violence more acutely. Yet Eden's story also reflects resilience and resistance that trans youth develop even when experiencing such anticipatory anxiousness and 'out-of-placeness' (see chapter seven): in particularly resistive words, Eden asserts that he is 'still going to go out anyway', and that he 'has just as much of a right to be [t]here as anyone.'



Figure 5.6. 'I can't accept this as it is wrong': a young person's (pronouns and age unrecorded) artwork.

Many participants described feeling the effects of misgendering and deadnaming more acutely when it was perpetuated by those they knew or felt they should be able to trust, including friends, family members, educators, healthcare practitioners, and even other trans people. For example, Cal (he/him, 14-17, POC), Osh (they/them, 18-21), Eilidh (she/her, 22-25), and Julian (he/him and they/them, 14-17) spoke in a workshop on 'escapism' about their frustration around cis people's knowledge of pronouns and the violence of their misgendering, linking language choices to embodied emotions:

Cal: It's really annoying whenever you're like "these are my pronouns" and they're like "ooh I'm going to get this wrong, so don't be mad at me"

Osh: Oh my God the number of times I've had to be like [that] to my dad, and he's like "what! it's going to be really annoying to call you this" and it's like "it's really annoying for me when you *call me this!* [a deadname]"

Eilidh: [*sarcastically*] "how difficult for you"

Osh: [*sarcastically*] "Sorry it's soooooo difficult for you to learn to use a pronoun"

Cal: Yeah it isn't about you [those misgendering]

Julian: It's such a small change in the language and it really *massively* effects how we *feel*

Osh: He's [my dad] like "oh yeah sorry I'm gonna mess up loads" and I'm like "have you considered *trying* before you *apologise*?"

Cal: [...] [on apologies:] When people are like "oh my god I'm *so sorry*" I just feel like I'm an *inconvenience* to everyone. You get like, I feel like I never correct my parents when they get my name wrong or when they get my pronouns wrong. And my mum started getting my pronouns wrong recently, she'll say like "oh I love my little girl" or something and I'll be like "hmmm" and she'll be like "*oh I'm so sorry*" and I'll be like "please move on."

Julian: They're just reminding you of the horror then [when (over)emphasising their apologies]. One thing that I've found when my parents were trying to get it [pronouns and names] right is that I would correct them every single time and sometimes they'd get annoyed [...] but I said "if I tell you every time then you'll remember better", I'm not saying I'll disown you, it's not that, I'm just saying "it's he." That way, if I don't challenge them and they keep forgetting that they're doing it, but if every single time that they get "he" they get it in their heads.

Osh: Also if you allow them to do it [misgender you] then they'll get kind of used to it, and try and do it themselves

Julian: And quite often they'll say [...] "I haven't misgendered you in weeks!" And I'll be like "well actually you misgendered me today, I just didn't say anything."

This group's conversation speaks to the diversity of ways that misgendering can occur and be felt. For example, Cal's feeling as though he is 'an *inconvenience* to everyone' speaks to how mechanisms of 'out-of-placeness' such as misgendering work by, following Ahmed, positioning trans youth as causing discomfort to others/within certain spaces. Consequently, Cal acutely feels the effects of 'failing' to inhabit a cisnormative identity. The *force* of misgendering as a marker of 'out-of-placeness' is thus revealed: here both misgendering and overt apologies that direct attention toward the young trans person in question are forceful mechanisms which disrupt the flow of conversation, and the ease of movement of the misgendered person through space. The others' stories demonstrate the emotional labour involved in negotiating or resisting such consequences, living with misgendering as a repeated violence that those perpetuating do not understand, and receiving overt apologies (the latter which hold potential to draw further attention to the young person's 'out-of-placeness'). Young trans people's ease of movement through space (particularly those who do not 'pass'), then, can be subject to others' respect for correct gender markers.

Throughout the research, non-binary participants in particular told of experiencing misgendering and deadnaming as common/intense experiences that shaped their experience of spaces and contributed to feeling, as Rhys (they/them, 14-17) describes, for example, ‘really uncomfortable, [...] really unsafe and [that] no one knows how to handle it’. Misgendering, for non-binary participants in particular, was an experience coupled to others’ policing of other markers of gender and identity, and to the attempted removal of young non-binary participants’ agency and autonomy to make decisions about their self-presentation and how they were referred to by others in certain spaces. As Jack (they/them, 18-21) described of their experiences of misgendering in school:

Jack: Because I’m non-binary I felt like I was treated as a binary guy when I’m not. Like my headteacher... she, she... I had to ask permission to wear shorts when it was summer [...] my parents emailed in and I got an email back being like “yes Jack can wear long shorts to the knee because Jack *cannot* wear long dresses or skirts”. And that really... irked me, because why *can’t* I wear dresses? It’s not that I’m physically incapable [...] but she shouldn’t even reinforce these male stereotypes on me, when you know I’m not identifying as a man, when you know I’m identifying as non-binary, people can wear whatever they want, so can men [*laughs*] it was quite frustrating. And she was like you can only wear it when it’s necessary due to the heat [...] it just didn’t make sense, why can’t I just wear what makes me comfortable? I’m not going to come in like short shorts. I don’t know there’s a lot of bullshit around school uniforms, especially when it comes to trans students. Uhm. And like my head’s not great, I help out on a school panel, on an open day thing and she misgendered me in front of the whole audience, she called us a group of girls and I was like “great, thanks” [*laughs*]. She misgendered me in front of my parents on parents’ evening and I walked out.

Through Jack’s story, and those of the group above, we see that the impact of misgendering is often unconfined to a single moment/event: for example, Jack’s headteacher’s misgendering impacts their life in multiple ways, with masculine gender roles and expectations placed upon them despite their openness about being non-binary. This constitutes an erasure built around trans-hostile assumptions and misinformation around what it means to be non-binary that even limits the clothing Jack can wear at certain times. The misgendering Jack experienced, and their subsequent frustration, denied their lived realities as a non-binary person and limited their comfort in normatively banal spaces.⁹⁷ We also see,

⁹⁷ However, one participant, Michael (he/him, 14-17) told me that certain experiences of misgendering can sometimes paradoxically produce feelings of *passing*. Michael encountered “TERFs in toilet spaces before [he] started transitioning”, describing this as ‘I feel kind of transphobic feeling like [this] [but] it was very empowering experience for me, I was like “wow, someone is thinking that I’m a dude trying to be a woman” and I was like “*now, that is what I’m trying to do in this space, I’m a dude and I’m trying to be a woman*” and it was kind of ‘you got me there!’ Michael also noted that misgendering can also be perpetuated by trans folk, saying ‘at the same time in some spaces recently I’ve been misgendered by trans women as a trans woman, and I’ve kind of thought like

again, how misgendering and the ‘out-of-placeness’ it induces can take multiple forms with varying degrees of intensity – from private communication, the repeated misgendering of a parent in the home, to public misgendering ‘in front of [a] whole audience’. By drawing attention to the stories of young people who, like Cal, described feeling ‘like an inconvenience to everyone’ or similar when insisting their pronouns be used correctly or told of having to consistently and repeatedly (re)educate others about their pronouns and gender identities, we see that repeated denials of young people’s ability (and agency) to define themselves and have their name and pronouns respected can develop presence or feeling of ‘out-of-placeness’ that iteratively builds in young people’s lives. In a particularly cruel paradox, throughout the research, participants described feeling that a burden is placed on them and trans people more widely to constantly educate those who misgender them, ironically including those responsible for their care and wellbeing. This responsibility, whilst seemingly affording agency to young trans people to articulate their own realities or knowledge of gender diversity, can initiate or increase ‘out-of-placeness’ as they become, following Ahmed, subject to questioning and ‘stopping devices’ that require young people to engage in emotional/political labour to maintain the comfort of privileged others who initiated the ‘out-of-place’ mechanism. Indeed, being responsible for educating others can result in young trans people becoming a ‘sore point’ in space, and acutely feeling the gendered categories they (however momentarily) ‘failed to inhabit’. Moreover, participants’ voices here also emphasise the link between pronoun usage as a marker of respected gender and particular embodied emotions. The group of participants conversing felt themselves being uncomfortably positioned as a *spectacle* within particular spaces, and/or being regularly ‘remind[ed] [...] of the horror’ of misgendering, as a result of being singled out through overt apologies.

Participants cited that they developed a particular, often fearful or anxious anticipatory relationship to *spaces* they had been misgendered or deadnamed within (see also chapter seven). The following excerpt from a conversation with Rhys (they/them, 14-17) illustrates this anticipatory anxiousness:

James: And does that [referring to earlier conversation where Rhys described being repeatedly deadnamed by a specific teacher, and receiving sarcastic and public comments from fellow students, despite continually raising concerns and correcting the teacher] change your relationship to that teacher’s classroom?

Rhys: Yeah, definitely because I don’t feel as comfortable and safe in [that] class [...] it was uncomfortable enough for me being like “hi I would like to be called by this name” and stuff like that, not that older people are gonna be un-educated and stuff, but she

“huh, that means that I look like I’m trying to be feminine rather than my more feminine features are a more natural thing.”

[that teacher] was definitely less educated than other people that I'd spoken to and I think that, I could definitely *feel* her judging me and I could definitely *feel* her making it quite a big deal in her head. And when she'd refer to me, she'd be like "you you you and Rhys" and be like "ha ha ha I got it right" and I'd be like "that's ok this week, but maybe don't do it for two months in a row like"

Youth worker, Scottish organisation (cisgender, she/her): Does it make you feel anxious in certain classes, like you don't wanna go?

Rhys: It definitely does. I've got classes where I don't wanna go and there's been others where I don't think they're gonna take it well and I don't feel safe, like, especially my [subject] class, I don't feel comfortable with telling [that teacher]. I'd feel really *unsafe* and feel like she'd be like, she'd not take that well whatsoever

James: So when you're in that classroom, what's that feel like?

Rhys: It's that thing of *dread*, like when they're doing the register, it's just that thing of that *shit feeling* for the rest of the period. And like y'know it's the same thing again with the rest of the class, with the teachers calling you like 'deadname' everyone else calls you deadname and stuff like that. And in classes like that you just get anxious that someone will call you your *actual* name because the teacher's gonna be like "ooh why are they calling you like that?" You know? So it definitely feels like less... safe, some classes feel less safe, and some classes I just don't look forward to class, not because I don't look forward to [learning], but because I know that it's less safe or as inclusive as a space, as the rest of the class.

Here, the atmosphere of particular classroom spaces changes according to how Rhys is gendered and named; the classroom wherein they are deadnamed becomes one that is "less safe or as inclusive", compared to their fellow cis students' experience. That Rhys is singled out as a focal point for attention by particular teachers, tense that their trans status will be revealed to a particular teacher, is such that particular classrooms become associated with an embodied 'dread' and 'shit feeling' co-produced through both previous experiences and the knowledge that certain environments lack in safety relative to others. The spatial embeddedness of these embodied emotions speaks to how 'out-of-placeness' can become affectively grounded in particular sites.

Other participants spoke of school spaces in particular as sites wherein such feelings of 'out-of-placeness' became entangled in affective atmospheres attached to the social and material fabric of classrooms, changing rooms and toilet spaces, sports fields, and corridors. Sammy and Rhys for example, described attaching fear to a particular bathroom space for disabled people at their school – a closed-in space attached to a corridor that had been repurposed as gender neutral facilities. In a story that speaks to the embeddedness of 'out-of-placeness' in an everyday space such that it becomes unusable, Sammy told me:

I saw [cis 'boy' students who seem to 'guard' the toilet] all hanging out there and I thought "right, teacher's out there so if something happens here she'll see." And as I left, I could just *feel their eyes* and I was like "I'm just gonna keep my head down and go as fast as I can" and I feel like that's... no longer a *safe space*."

Rhys described the impact of such events on their ability to use the space:

"I'm yet to use that toilet [... as] it's *constantly* surrounded by those kind of people and even though that's supposed to be a safe space for us to kind of go and just feel more comfortable, it just... it's sad that that safe space has been taken over and [we] feel uncomfortable now. [...] the only time I would use it would be during class when there's no-one there because I just... don't think I could handle what happened. [...] [but] if the teachers asked the boys to move I think that would kind of create more of a stigma for that, because like in assemblies when it was first announced that we were getting gender neutral toilets it was those boys that were all like *laughing* and stuff like that like "that's so stupid and stuff." And so if they had been told to move away from the space they always went to, to make us feel more comfortable, it would just be the same thing like [*in mimicking, deeper voice*]: "oh that's so stupid, why should we have to move for them?""

When sharing these stories that convey the operation of anticipatory anxiousness and 'out-of-placeness', Sammy and Rhys conveyed a particular weariness. Indeed, we witness the 'out-of-placeness' that emerges around the toilet space – even one deliberately constructed to be safe for trans – through an atmosphere of discomfort emergent from the presence of potentially hostile others, the frustrations that the participants attach to the space, and its enclosed nature. Moreover, there is seemingly no pathway to (re)securing safety and comfort in the space, as the young people – drawing upon a past experience whereby they were subject to laughter and became, following Ahmed, the 'sore point' in the assembly – anticipate a further hostile reaction from those 'guarding' the space. Such sites are significant in that they are structured through binary gender expectations and they are sites where young people's agency is actively restricted/controlled. Such sites are also those wherein young people's movements are subject to teachers' and other students' surveillance, and are often narrow/'tight' spaces offering limited room for constructing escapisms (see chapter seven). Yet the affective atmospheres the young people experiences in the classroom and bathroom, and that envelop trans youth in other sites are, as discussed in chapter three, experienced unevenly (Ahmed, 2010; Hitchen, 2019; Tolia-Kelly, 2006): others who do not feel the same affective atmospherics of 'out-of-placeness' may not even notice the dread/anxiousness that Rhys and Sammy feel. It is Rhys' and Sammy's 'angle of arrival' (Ahmed, 2010: 125) – their *transness* and non-binary gender (amongst other axes of difference) – that becomes crucial in the production of exclusionary atmospheres in such everyday spaces.

Returning to misgendering and deadnaming, for several participants, encountering such exclusionary atmospheres produced through such practices had a deep-seated *bodily impact*, particularly when repeatedly encountered. Phil (he/him, 22-25) for example, told me that 'once I've been

misgendered, my heartrate increases and I sort of feel *very angry* at the world.’ This ‘out-of-placeness’ bodily impact is *exacerbated in particular spaces*, particularly those co-created through bodily surveillance and institutional power. For example, participants described that when accessing health services, both misgendering and embodying particular gendered subjectivities or engaging in particular everyday life activities seen as incongruous with particular gendered expectations or with young people’s autonomy resulted in the denial of particular healthcare treatments. Consider the following conversation between young people discussing their experiences of the Tavistock gender clinic in London:

Eddy (pronouns unrecorded, 14-17): At the Tavistock, I got asked “do you watch trans YouTubers?” and at some points I’ve been like “yeah I do”. Just because I love feeling that there’s someone, somebody else out there who’s like me. But because of [saying] that they ended up prolonging my hormone blockers, and I still haven’t got them, because they were like “you’re copying them, we want you to make your own path”. But I’m like “what if my path is the one that they [the vloggers] have, what if it is?” [...]

Marty (he/him and they them, 14-17): *[interrupts:]* At the end of the day, people don’t decide that they’re trans because of trans YouTubers [...] A lot of people who know who they are, it’s because *they have this suspicion* [that they might be trans]

Eddy: It’s also the fact that the Tavistock, and other doctors I’ve been told by older trans people from G.I. and other places, that even if they want top surgery without going on testosterone, they won’t do it if you’re not on testosterone. And the Tavistock, [...] are telling these people that you can’t make your own path, to only then meet doctors when you’re over 18 who are telling you that *there actually is a path*. And so I’m now being denied the one thing in life that I want so much because I watch other YouTubers – where is the logic in that? And [they’ve] now put this logic in my mum’s mind but *I do* [want the treatment] and it’s like *nobody listens to me* [...] My first set of clinicians, one of them has left the service for the year [...] the other one has left too, so I’ve had to *[palpable frustration:] explain everything to them over again* so [...] the first eight sessions I had were useless! [...] So not only am I educating people in general life I’m also educating these clinicians who have *power* over my life. [...] I’ve been a tomboy till I came out and I was only a tomboy because I didn’t know what the term ‘trans’ meant. *And that’s 15 years of knowing who I really am* and I come here with a waiting list of *two years* [only] for you to deny me [...] And they say “and the course of actually getting hormone blockers takes eight months” and I’m like “so I’m *already gonna be 16* by the time I’m on hormone blockers, I’m not gonna get them before I’m 17 now”. I don’t wanna wait until I’m 18 because *[very emotively:] I want top surgery more than anything else in the world, I want that more than testosterone* and the doctors won’t allow it, and it’s *sooo* frustrating.

Andy (he/him and they/them, 14-17): Erm we went to another [clinic] after doing more research, and I was like “OK I’m 16, I’m at the age of informed consent, I’m gonna take medication that stops this happening so legally I’m allowed to do this, and you do have to help me with this.”

Eddy: I'm fed up, I've been in this service [Tavistock] since I was 13, now I'm 15 and you've just finished my assessment because I've had all these changes and it's like "this is not my fault!" And you're not listening to me because on the off chance I might be non-binary.

Marty: You don't wanna be non-binary at the Tavi!!! [The doctor] made me sit there for half an hour, explaining what being non-binary meant. I told them [I was non-binary] when I was at the Tavi—

Dea (they/them, 14-17): *[interrupts:]* I just didn't tell them!!! I was like "no I'm trans masc"

Marty: —And I regret that immensely, and now they're like "what's your gender?" every time and I'm like "it's the same."

Eddy: I will never go back to presenting femininely, even if I was to be non-binary, I would always want to be misgendered masculine rather than feminine. *[As if talking to a clinician:]* "There is a 99% chance that I will never regret medical changes, [yet] you're listening to this 1% that's telling me I *might*."

[omitted discussion around how gender and presentation and treatment are tied together by the Tavistock]

Marty: Someone came into our Tavi group and said "don't tell them you're non-binary", [...] The cis woman who was running was like "you should be honest" *[group laughs incredulously]* and it's like *[as if talking to the cis woman, very emotionally:]* "No, I'm sorry, you don't know what this is like... If you want us to be honest, then listen to us!"

This conversation illustrates how young trans people are often made to feel 'out-of-place' through misgendering and lack of trust in their ability to self-determine their gender, even in settings which should support their wellbeing and affirm their gender. In Eddy's story, for example, engaging in online content around trans issues, despite the virtual platform YouTube offering the ability to feel 'that there's someone [...] else' like them, is taken as a sign of their uncertainty or incapacity and is used to justify limiting their bodily autonomy. In other terms, we see a tension between the two places involved in Eddy's story: with the Tavistock clinic being a site of 'out-of-placeness', and YouTube – a virtual space where information around trans topics is disseminated to trans people by trans people – becoming a safe vehicle for Eddy to develop a sense of belonging. Eddy's powerful speech also further emphasises that trans youth are often asked to constantly advocate for and defend themselves even to those who hold power over their bodies, lives, and their authentic/comfortable movements (see chapter six). This involves, as Eddy describes, both 'educating people in general life' and educating

those such as ‘clinicians who have *power over*’ their everyday life experiences within and beyond sites of institutional power. Following scholarship on trans temporalities (see chapters three and six), we also see that time scales until treatments are offered – and the increased likelihood of feeling *in place* – are stretched, particularly when altered by external, ever-changing actors who can place barriers and restrictions in front of the progress and linearity of (potentially life-saving) treatments.

It is significant that such ‘out-of-placeness’ occurs in medical/institutional spaces. Indeed, the conversation also sheds light on the violence exacted as a result of the affective atmosphere and shared trans knowledge⁹⁸ that circulates around, and is collectively experienced by trans youth in relation to, particular medical/institutional spaces such as the Tavistock clinic. Interestingly, we see these affective associations with spaces build through a generational knowledge-sharing dynamic between older trans people who have experienced difficulties (or successes) in particular healthcare settings, for example, and trans youth entering or encountering these spaces. The participants’ immersion in trans community discourses around such sites, and their own past experiences, lead to their low expectations of medical spaces and clinical experiences. As trans health scholar Ben Vincent describes (personal communication, 2020), in trans healthcare settings “‘only’ being misgendered gets positioned as “‘good” relative to being denied, discharged, [and] pressured into genital examinations.’ In other terms, in a framing that ignores young trans people’s testimonies and the gradual accrual of ‘out-of-placeness’ and exclusion, misgendering and deadnaming are often positioned as not particularly violent or concerning. Nevertheless, conditions within such sites left these young people and others who voiced similar concerns throughout the research feeling that misgendering themselves would optimise their experiences of a transnormative (see glossary) clinical setting to access treatment or avoid extended periods of intrusive questioning.”⁹⁹ For example, Marty and Dea describe themselves as trans men or transmasculine rather than non-binary to access treatments faster (reinforcing the relative privilege which binary trans youth might occupy relative to some non-binary young people even in trans-oriented spaces).

Throughout the research, young trans people displayed and discussed their understandings of knowledge that their clinicians typically struggled to grasp: in this case, that being non-binary is not necessarily tied to particular medical transitions/confirmations, and that their needs may be

⁹⁸ Here, I am referring to both knowledge that (young) trans people have and share, and knowledge about trans issues and how trans people experience certain spaces, that depends on trans lived experience.

⁹⁹ I am grateful to trans health scholar Dr Ben Vincent for their advice and help in developing my thinking on medical spaces here. Crucially, Vincent understands that ‘gatekept care *cannot* create an environment where trans candidity is possible.’

indistinguishable from certain trans men or women.¹⁰⁰ Indeed, the group laughed at the cis practitioner's suggestion that they 'should be honest' in such settings in the knowledge that doing so, according to Vincent (personal communication), would risk being associated with identities that have less clinical precedence (and thus 'clinical uncertainty'). Here, in an argument that speaks to the extended, durative temporalities of 'out-of-placeness', potential 'out-of-placeness' that arises through misgendering is *consciously endured* to secure future bodily and spatial comfort and anticipate future feelings of belonging or 'in placeness'. Again, I argue that such actions constitute acts of resilience within, and resistance to, regimes of bodily control and biopower exerted by professionals including those described in the conversation which (if not always consciously) limit the agency of trans youth (see chapter seven for further discussion around such resistance and resilience mechanisms).

In a further example of the violence of misgendering in institutional spaces, Mark (he/him, 18-21) described a particularly extreme experience in a mental health unit. His story, in contrast to other narratives I have presented, emphasises a distinction between everyday and exceptional forms of displacement:

'...the first night, I had a nurse who was meant to be coming in and checking on me, like they failed me in lots of ways but, with the gender stuff she kept misgendering me. And I said to her "you're misgendering me, I've *TOLD* you I'm not a girl" and she just laughed. And there was no access to an advocate, there was no access to a trained person for LGBT+ stuff it seemed, so when I said I just needed to get out, "I need to discharge myself" they said they would section me and it was just this massive thing of me basically... I just refused to use the toilet until they let me go, and they were worried about my kidneys. So, it ended up with me kind of being discharged early because they couldn't find anywhere appropriate for a trans person.'

Here, Mark experiences a loss of agency as a result of being repeatedly misgendered despite his repeated calls for recognition as a trans man. His only avenue to reclaim power and autonomy lost through repeated misgendering involved an extreme, overt act of bodily withdrawal. Other aspects of Mark's story, however, speak to healthcare practitioners' insistence that Mark embodies his male gender, through such mechanisms as inappropriate, intrusive questioning that do not address his healthcare concerns and, as we have seen in other young people's narratives, limit his agency and ability to self-determine gender.

Mark connected his experiences in the mental health unit to other spaces where he bears a 'constant [feeling of] trying to prove yourself':

¹⁰⁰ Vincent notes that binary trans people are often constructed in clinical settings as 'straightforward' in terms of both assumed social trajectories and medical treatments.

‘Especially the gender clinics, having to prove yourself there is ridiculous. Like my bank card didn’t say ‘Mr’ on it [...] and they were like “well you’ll have to have that changed by your next appointment!” and I was like “why!?” [...] they’d thought I’d deliberately not put ‘Mr’ on it, meaning I’m not sure about my gender identity. So they’re always looking for evidence that you’re wrong. [...] [My doctor] doesn’t want to talk about [my genetic health conditions] she just wants to talk about exactly what type of sex I have and it’s like “How is this relevant!?” [...] the first time they asked about my sex life I was 14 [...] In any other situation that would be like completely inappropriate but it’s like it’s “OK, you’re trans, we’re allowed to be inappropriate”. I have a lot of pent-up hatred of GICs [...] I came out of my last gender appointment crying. And they said they [didn’t] want anyone to come [with me] either. [...] They said that [...] we don’t want you to be influenced by anyone else. So I had to travel to Nottingham on my own. I [emailed them about my health conditions], [told them that] I really need someone to travel with me and they were like they can’t come into the appointment. Another thing is the fertility thing. If you choose not to have the fertility thing, you’re demonised, you’re yelled at for hours. They say to you, “you’ll want that choice when you’re 30” and you’re like “I’m trying to make that choice now and you’re not letting me!” I just left the building and immediately started crying. I was standing at the station having a panic attack thinking “that was the most horrible experience of my life” and a week later I was hospitalised. And I definitely think there was a link. I think that that did trigger a suicide attempt because it was just so overwhelming.’

Here, Mark describes systematically being broken down within medical spaces and through institutional power dynamics, a temporally-constituted accrual of misgendering violence, lack of care, and loss of agency that causes Mark to embody the emotional and painful outbursts of panic attacks and ultimately leads to a suicide attempt. Mark’s transness is used to justify inappropriate, intrusive questioning, denial of Mark’s gender realities, and other systems of ‘having to prove yourself’. Similarly to the earlier collective conversation around the Tavistock clinic, Mark’s story is emblematic of encounters that other young trans people are subject to others ‘looking for evidence that [they are] wrong’ about their gender, self-determination, and other aspects of identity and selfhood. This repeated denial creates an atmosphere that circulates around and within spaces wherein such experiences take place, a set of dynamics that co-creates the anticipatory anxiousness – or as in Mark’s story, exhaustion (see chapter six) – that young trans people attach to certain spaces.

The following section builds on the themes developed here by thinking through how (predominantly cisgender) others’ hostile gazes can be drivers of young trans people’s ‘out-of-placeness’.

5.4.2 Encountering others' hostile gazes

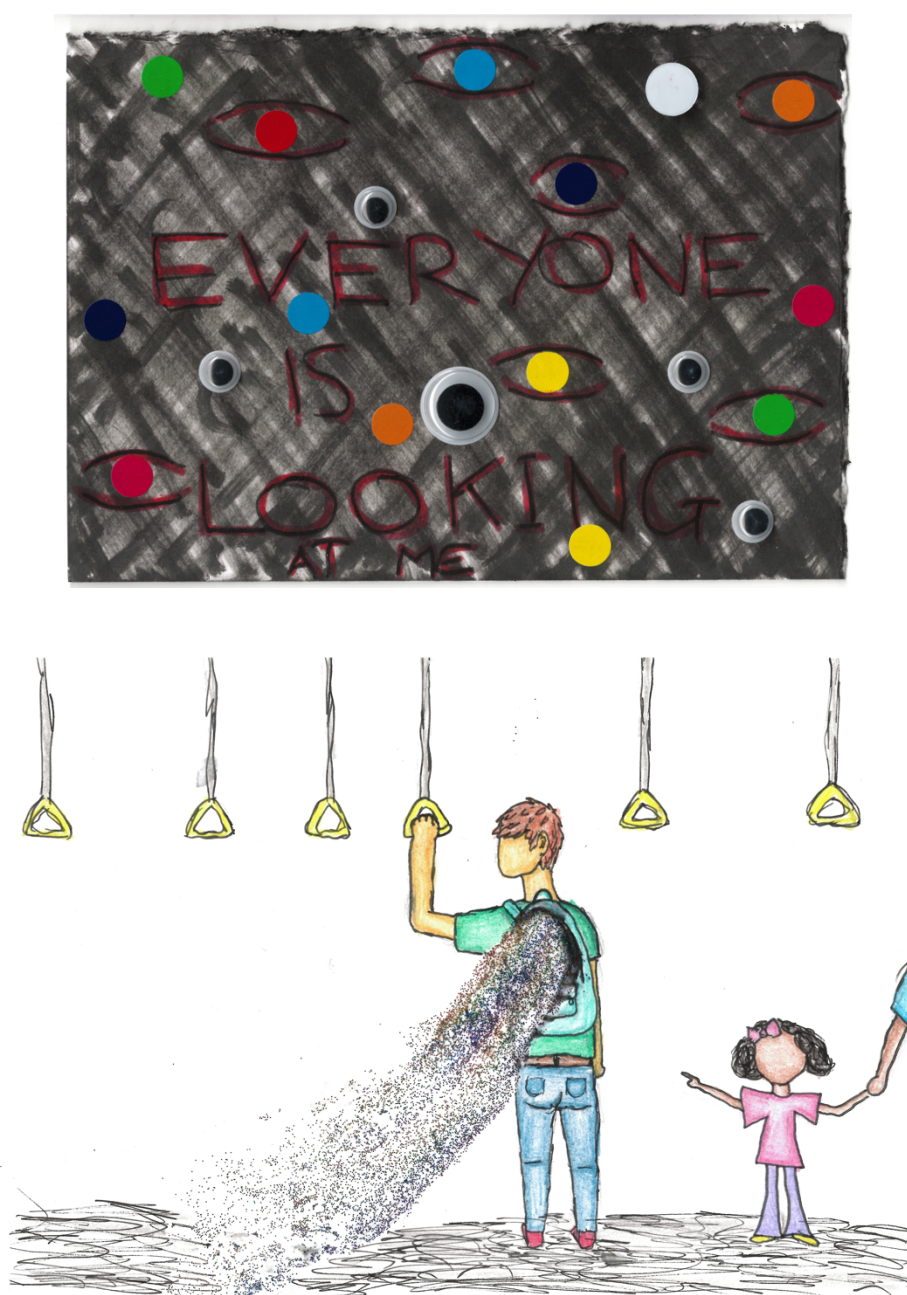


Figure 5.7. [Above:] 'Everyone is looking at me': a young person's (name and pronouns unrecorded) artwork, [below:] young person's (name and pronouns unrecorded) artwork showing their experiences while travelling.

Throughout the research, as we have already seen in the stories of several young people, participants described feeling often negative, antagonistic, and otherwise hostile *gazes* others directed toward them in everyday spaces (whether real or imagined) that produced feelings aligned with 'out-of-placeness'. I use 'gaze' here to refer to how young trans bodies are policed, surveilled, and made (in)visible through embodied reactions and watchfulness (whether conscious or otherwise), anxiety attached to (anticipated

or felt) hostile gazes, and the hyperawareness and hypervigilance, and desire to become invisible, which those receiving hostile gazes embody (Mearns *et al.*, 2019; Singh *et al.*, 2013). Such gazes are formed through power imbalances between particular bodies and subjects (Urry and Larsen, 2011). Here, I suggest that hostile gazes, as a form of embodied discrimination, can vary in intensity and can be produced collectively, publicly (i.e. when originating from multiple bodies and subsumed/radiated by the surrounding socio-material context), and individually (i.e. when directed toward particular trans youth from individuals/groups). Throughout this section, I explore participants' experiences of (a) what I term *anticipated gaze* – a gaze of hostility that many trans youth come to expect or imagine will occur in certain spaces and times through, for example, temporal and embodied accrual of past experiences, and (b) the *active gaze* – directly feeling the force of others' transphobia. I argue that both forms hold an often constant embodied presence for many trans youth and work in tandem through anticipatory anxiousness as mechanisms of 'out-of-placeness'.

Kane (he/him, 18-21), a young person who travelled with his partner to live in the UK, discussed experiencing others staring at him 'up and down', encapsulating how it feels to *fear* and anticipate the consequences of others' hostile gazes:

Kane: I used to get really bad about it, like: [I'd think] 'they're gonna hurt me, they're going to follow me home, they're going to like say something and I just won't be able to handle it.'

James: What do those fears feel like?

Kane: Yeah it was just really *scary* especially when I first came here [to the UK], and my partner would be at work and I wouldn't work and we were living [in a hostel]. And it was like I couldn't stay in the room all day and I had to go somewhere and explore [outdoors but] the only person I knew would be at work. I was really scared that someone would hurt me or rob me and sometimes I'd get looks and I'd be like "are they looking at me because I'm trans or because I'm young and I'm fresh meat? *Why are they looking at me?*" And just like I had thought at one point that like, I was like "I'm gonna get murdered here". Like I'd go back to the room and kinda chill there for a bit. Now that I've been out and about a bit more it's really good... [*talks about how he has crafted a positive space at home and by visiting safe spaces wherein he could 'be whoever I wanted to be when I was there'*]

In Kane's story, we see the deep-seated impact that fearing being visibly trans in public space, and the consequences of this visibility, can exact. As a result of the 'looks' he received, and the violence he imagined and anticipated would occur as a result, Kane repeatedly questioned others' gazes and subsequently restricted his movements in public space. However, a theme of resilience in spite of 'out-of-placeness' continues here: Kane develops coping mechanisms – accessing spaces that alleviate his worries and fears and developing a more positive home environment – to live with everyday conditions

wherein hostile gazes can be expected. Indeed, Kane later told me he now lives by a mantra of ‘not caring’ whether people will stare at him – rationalising the gaze as just a gaze to move beyond feelings of insecurity – even using a trans-themed sticker on his phone to publicly reveal himself as trans. However, I argue that the ability to develop such resilience is a question of relative privilege attached to socioeconomic conditions, living an urban life, and perhaps being a white trans man: Kane later described that he could only develop this resilience once moving beyond the hostel environment and moving to London. Here, we see that the mobilities enabled and restricted at times through the presence of hostile gazes, and the subsequent ‘out-of-placeness’ they exact, vary according to intersectional differences and relative privilege within young trans communities and between young trans subjects. Such privileges are rarely accounted for in academic literature.



Figure 5.8. ‘Travelling in London’. Young trans feminine person’s artwork produced in ‘body mapping’ exercise.

Kane’s story can be compared to the young trans feminine person’s (name and pronouns unrecorded) artwork in Figure 5.8. Their work grounds the idea of transphobic, trans-exclusionary or otherwise hostile gazes in producing young trans people as ‘out of place’. Using writing and imagery,

the young person illustrates how they feel that ‘[p]eople don’t make me feel comfortable to be me...’ while travelling in London, and shows themselves subject to public assumptions around gender performance policed through particular gazes. Indeed, the quotes present on the artwork – including ‘you still look like a woman’, ‘why are you wearing eyeliner’, and ‘I assume you’re appealing to men who want to be with a woman’ – illustrate, again, how gender binaries are both expected and reinforced by potentially hostile others while young trans people move through public space. These quotes also reflect the repeated and seemingly constant questioning (or imagined future questioning) participants described being subject to in their everyday lives, particularly when appearing or performing in a manner not normatively associated with markers of binary gender or masculinity or femininity. The artwork also alludes to problems certain young trans people experience in other spaces, such as while dating within LGBT+ communities. Indeed, other participants cited cis gay men as potentially exclusionary folk expecting a normative, *passing* body. Using a set of embodied practices I discuss further in chapter seven, the young person in the artwork, however, maintains their resilience within, and develops resistance to, these norms and the public gaze of hostile others by maintaining their beard and projecting to their future self, living through space authentically using clothing as a marker of selfhood and identity. In doing so, they *subvert the hostile gaze* in order to reduce ‘out of placeness’ (central image).

As with Kane, who described anticipating hostile gazes within hypermasculine spaces, other participants talked of expecting such gazes when in contact with particular individuals or groups, again most commonly cis men. Several participants described altering their behaviours ahead of contact with cis men to avoid potential conflict, in essence to alleviate the effects of ‘out-of-placeness’ around such bodies. As Rhys (he/him and they/them, 14-17) described:

‘Yeah cos it gets to the point where you’re like like you’ll look at people that are like. Like you know the typical cisgender boy of our age, the kind of outfit, the kind of joggies and the North Face hoody and the trainers and stuff, and I’m like “I don’t wanna wear that, but when I’m in spaces with people that are the type of people that are gonna wear those sort of clothes I sort of *wish* that I was wearing that even though I’d be really uncomfortable.” So it’s like ... because I just feel like, it’s weird because I don’t *dislike* being *different*, I don’t dislike like standing out or anything but when it comes to people our age, I don’t know what it is, it’s just like... it feels different, it feels like suddenly I don’t like standing out, looking different to everybody else because I feel unsafe. Or I feel like people aren’t gonna want to talk to me, or people are gonna judge me or like I dunno. I just kind of, I feel like I want to make myself more uncomfortable to make them more comfortable because I don’t like the thought that like *my existence* is making them uncomfortable. Which is *ridiculous*, it’s so stupid but it’s just like the automatic thing. Like I don’t want *extra eyes* on me so if I’m like thinking I look–, or I like this outfit and then I’m hanging out with those kind of people I’m like “haaaa I

don't like this outfit anymore.” Yeah I find like I act like them and dress like them and just like make them more comfortable which is quite stupid because they probably don't even recognise. But it's just so prominent in my head that I'm like 'I need to not act different to them', you know.

In this story fragment, Rhys speaks to a similar effect to the young people who misgendered themselves in clinical settings to avoid experiencing a more intense experience of 'out-of-placeness'. To avoid a particularly intense hostile gaze from cis men who might place 'extra eyes' on him, he 'act[s] like them and dress[es] like them' to increase their comfort in space. Rhys' story demonstrates again how the (anticipated) actions of cis people to uphold cisnormativity and gender binaries and visibilise and ostracise those who transgress such norms, leaves certain young trans people feeling 'out-of-place'. Rhys, careful to avoid 'the thought that [his] *existence* mak[es others around] them uncomfortable', 'feel[s] like [he] wants to make [themselves] more uncomfortable' – by 'not act[ing] different' – to increase others' comfort. In other terms, this self-regulatory performance of normativity both paradoxically increases his comfort in space (as a result of others' hostilities being suppressed/avoided) and increases their own internal feelings and embodied emotions associated with 'out-of-placeness'. Rhys engages in such practices of quasi self-othering and conformity, through clothing and bodily actions, as a resilience and survival tool to both remove the potential for cis people's discomfort and to avert their hostile gaze and seek respite from the surveillance of cis men. However, the spatial comfort this paradoxically affords Rhys reinscribes cis privilege in particular spaces and establishes young trans people as bodies and subjects that must always-already conform to cisgender norms to avoid the affective transmission of hostility. In other words, an outcome of this system is that *young trans people are always-already charged in many settings with alleviating their own feelings of 'out-of-placeness'.* Ironically, this means that *trans youth must work to become 'out-of-place' in order to feel less 'out-of-place'.*

In the following section I reflect on a third mechanism involved in the emergence of 'out-of-placeness' for trans youth by focussing on participants' experiences of social and bodily dysphoria – a set of embodied experiences that has rarely been approached through a geographical lens. I ask whether dysphoria can be spatially located, or understood in terms of its emergence and flourishing in certain sites, at certain times, or in relation to particular actors/socio-materialities. This approach allows me to conceptualise participants' dysphoric experiences as both contributing to, and emerging from, their experiences of 'out-of-placeness'.

5.4.3 Introducing bodily and social dysphoria

Dysphoria is a complex term with multiple meanings and discourses. A surface, perhaps outdated description that does not typically align with participants' testimonies might understand dysphoria as discomfort/distress experienced by a person related to their gender, and its incongruence with their sex

assigned at birth. ‘Gender dysphoria’ (GD), meanwhile, is a diagnosis used in clinical settings for a person who is not comfortable with this sex assignment. In this section, to avoid pathologizing trans people by associating dysphoria solely with transness, I distance my analyses and participants’ stories from such conceptualisations used in healthcare settings (see Pearce, 2018b).¹⁰¹ As Moon (2020: 198) notes, medical practitioners using ‘the voice of authority’ potentially ‘procure the trans body as demonstrating the authority of a “real” cisgender body’ by problematically attaching certain meanings to trans people’s dysphoric experiences. I refute essentialist narratives of trans people occupying the ‘wrong body’ which are used to project certain tropes around trans people, except where participants use this terminology themselves (in this research, no participants used this or similar terms to describe their experience.) The ‘wrong body’ narrative often presumes or reifies binary gender and bodily fixity rather than fluidity, and separates ‘materiality (the body) and subjectivity (the self), implying that these are separable things rather than being inherently inseparable’ (Engdahl, 2014: 268).

Demonstrating the geographical components of dysphoric emotions, March (2021: 462) notes that dysphoria can be ‘understood as an experience of discomfort and sense of dissonance that can exist between one’s gender, body and space, essentially a kind of placelessness within oneself.’ Similarly, simpkins (2017: 139) describes the condition as inherently involving feeling ‘out-of-place’ where and when, for example, ‘the original imposition of sex and gender on the body conflict with its contemporary expression’. Dysphoria, from this perspective, often occurs at *moments at which past, present, and future memories and bodily realities coalesce*. In phrasing in alignment with several participants’ descriptions, dysphoric feelings can emerge or be forced upon trans folk ‘at random times and in random places, and surface even years after transition is ostensibly complete’ (*Ibid.*). For these reasons, as Morrigan (2017: 56) describes, dysphoria ‘can feel like being “outside” of time, and even reality’. Fournier (2014: 121) describes how such disorientating or dislocating feelings and affects might be connected to a dysphoric experience:

‘Gender dysphoria is [a] moment of leakage, when the face you see in the mirror is not a face for you anymore, when a supposedly familiar landscape is blurred by the transposition of gender-signifying marks from one milieu to another, when the socially determined coordinates of familiarity-identity-gender no longer add up to a legible (legitimate) pattern, when materiality itself escapes the frame of representation, because this frame is built on gender binarism.’

In this section, I argue that there is much value in exploring dysphoria through a geographical lens, by understanding, for example, its spatial (dis)locatedness and bodily tenets, and how it influences, is felt, and accrues in relation to temporalities. Here, noting that dysphoria is ‘highly

¹⁰¹ Indeed, cis people may also experience dysphoric feelings tied to gender or other aspects of their bodies, selves, and lives.

underexplored’ in geography (March, 2021: 462), I bring new knowledge to conceptions of lived and embodied dysphoria through such a geographical approach. In doing so, I continue advancements made in geographical and trans scholarship that have understood dysphoria as ‘a complex social phenomenon, triggered by a plethora of forms of aggression, violence, marginalization, disciplining, harassment, and by a spectrum of highly gendered environments which must be navigated’ constantly (*Ibid.*: 464).

My participants understood that dysphoria was connected to other forms of trans exclusion or ‘out-of-placeness’, or that dysphoric feelings provided a *foundation* for other negative (or positive) emotions or encounters, as is evident in the following excerpts from group discussions between Rhys, Sammy, and Michael. The first illustrates the interconnectedness of dysphoria to other mechanisms of ‘out-of-placeness’, in contrast to moments of passing that bring about gender euphoria that holds long-ranging implications for mental and bodily wellbeing:

James: [*Referring to PowerPoint slides showing discussion themes:*] So I’ve sort of picked out a few themes that people were talking about er in the last session and [before]. I’ve got dysphoria, passing, mindfulness, body positivity, binding, and feeling anxious, they’re all quite diverse. So is there one that feels more relevant, there?

Rhys: They all kind of tie in with dysphoria because when you pass, your dysphoria lessens, like for [just that time] that time, like [passing] makes you feel really good and positive and stuff like that. [So] in terms of binding and stuff like that, that goes in with dysphoria like if you’re trying to bind and then you pass when you’re doing it, you’re like ‘oh right cool so that’s working’.

The following second excerpt furthers this theme, by emphasising how dysphoria is often emergent out of a web of social relations and other life experiences:

Rhys: [*referring to a participatory diagram and map of themes and discussion from the previous session:*] like there’s one thing that’s such a big part of trans people’s lives can lead to so many other things, be that positive or negative, like, the fact that dysphoria’s just one part of it, and like actually dysphoria’s *here* and there’s so much stuff underneath it that comes with it, like I think that’s quite important to recognise [dysphoria and the body] enter it a lot

Michael: Obviously dysphoria is caused by one’s body, I think all of those connected things kind of lead to everything else because dysphoria, anxiety about one’s body is what leads one to lead [*sarcastic voice*] “the trans life” in the first place. [*laughing*] And then [dysphoria] causes all the kind of things where you need to places to escape and forms of escapism and that’s why if you are trans then you need dialogue around trans identities. [...]

Rhys: Yeah it all stems from dysphoria, doesn’t it

Michael: Not necessarily like physical dysphoria but like feeling *different* and feeling excluded

This extract also speaks to the nature of dysphoria, like many mechanisms of ‘out-of-placeness’ for young trans people, as initiating a *ripple effect* of both negative and positive experiences and encounters. Dysphoria, from this perspective, becomes a glue that binds and intensifies negative experiences such as transphobia, fear in public spaces, and bodily anxiety. However, we also see that dysphoria creates the conditions for positive experiences through which ‘out-of-placeness’ can be alleviated: as Michael describes, experiencing dysphoria can, for some, lead to the creation of ‘safe spaces’ or spaces for escapism (see chapter seven).

I discuss the remaining dysphoric stories of participants through two distinct, interwoven forms of dysphoria that participants described, namely *social* dysphoria and physical/*bodily* dysphoria (see also Brice, 2020). I refer loosely to *bodily dysphoria* as ‘distress a trans person may experience due to aspects of the body itself’ (Vincent, 2018: 62; rather than a more fixed definition supposing a direct dislocation between *gender* and the material body), whereas I use the term *social dysphoria* to describe dysphoric experiences emergent from social interactions, encounters, and atmospheres that produce young trans people as ‘out-of-place’. This distinction is clear in the previous conversation excerpt, in which Michael and Rhys differentiate between ‘physical dysphoria’ that emerges from the self and ‘feeling different and feeling excluded’, a feeling akin to social dysphoria implicated and continually emergent out of affects that produce young trans bodies and subjects as ‘other’.

The distinction that some young trans people make between bodily and social dysphoria is clear in the following conversation between myself and romantic partners Axel (22-25, he/him) and Wren (22-25, they/them). In Wren’s story, their dysphoria and bodily discomforts are typically tied to such actions of external outsiders as misgendering and more general societal and social conditions, whereas Axel’s dysphoria more commonly emerges out of witnessing currently-unattainable positive representations of trans people deeper into transition:

Wren: So my like physical dysphoria isn’t really a main problem I have, it’s not really a strong problem, or something that I struggle with that much. So I kind of came at it from a perspective that uhm er, like the problems that people have with their bodies matching up with their gender came from like an *outside perspective*, with people looking at them, misgendering them based on their body. So like, as I didn’t really have that like physical dysphoria kind of like experience, it just meant that from quite early on I had not a disconnect, but I was [already] starting to remove body from gender, and that sort of thing. Not to say that people who have dysphoria are not doing that, but yeah...

Axel: For Wren it's more social dysphoric, like being when people say like 'ladies' and stuff.

Wren: Yeah that's what causes more problems for me, coming from an external input rather from within myself.

Axel: [...] for me, it's more like realising the first way I knew I was realising I had physical dysphoria, and was just really uncomfortable. In like body and stuff. And so er, thinking about how watching [trans people further on in their transitions on] YouTube [on one hand] makes me feel, it's really kind of *bittersweet* because it's oh that, it makes me really *happy* because I could look like that one day but it [also] makes me feel really bad that I don't look like it *yet*. But it just makes me, it gives me really strong feelings.

Here, we see that Wren's dysphoria is tied to particular moments where they do not 'pass' from the perspectives of external others. Axel's dysphoria, conversely, is tied to complex emotions entangled in his imaginations of a future self, brought about through encountering audiovisuals of trans people further in a transition process. As other participants attest, these distinct forms of dysphoria are implicated in a wider system of 'out-of-placeness' when they arise, or are carried between, particular spaces..

Although Karl (he/him, 22-25) speaking collectively, notes that he feels young trans people's 'biggest fight is [their] own dysphoria', crucially, some trans people do not experience any form of dysphoria (or experience dysphoria only at intervals). Indeed, certain participants spoke also of gender *euphoria*, which might constitute or emerge from the experience of gender affirmation, happiness in ones' gender or body, or the celebration of queerness, the erotic, gender fluidity, transness, and so on (Barker, 2020). In words that resonate with the stories of young people involved in this research, Barker (2020: 162) writes of gender euphoria as 'occurr[ing] in moments when I have viscerally reclaimed some of those lost – or disowned – selves which I mostly left behind in my [earlier life].' It is politically important to understand how dysphoria can be used to police 'transness', with the expectation that trans folk always experience dysphoria leading to notions that gender can be judged by external others and can create invalidation of those who do not experience dysphoria (see Finch, 2015). Furthermore, such Eurocentric and medicalised notions of GD can frame trans folk as fundamentally disordered or always in distress (*Ibid.*). Indeed, dominant discourses around dysphoria associate transness with distress, uncertainty, and other negative emotions rather than acknowledging trans people's ability to self-determine and understand their gender irrespective of dysphoric experiences. Dysphoria might also be used by those hostile to gender diversity and trans healthcare for trans youth to portray young trans people as uncertain of their gender or to construct trans youth as lacking in knowledge or ability to determine gender. As Wes (he/him, 22-25) explained, referring to how

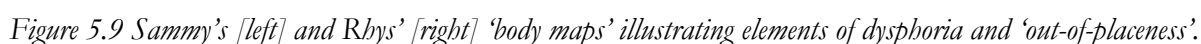
dominant discourses around trans are weaponised against trans folk, and trans youth in particular in online spaces:

‘it’s becoming more and more *acceptable* to be quite hostile to trans people [...] it’s got to the point where they’re saying that trans people don’t exist [...] ...suddenly they change the goalposts to something else they care about, and it’s like “oh like [we’re worried about] children”. And then it’s like “rapid onset gender dysphoria”, it’s all this stuff, so you just realise after a while, it’s not that they have these genuine concerns and they’re just a bit misinformed, it’s that they will use anything they can to devalue and devalidate trans people’s lives.’

In this excerpt, we see that Wes, like other participants, felt that hostile/misinformed discourses that circulate around trans youth and dysphoria are actively deployed by certain individuals and collectives to ‘devalue and devalidate’ their experiences. Such narratives filter into and achieve a permanent affective presence in virtual spaces – even those algorithmically constructed through individual preferences – such as those Wes describes.

In the remaining excerpts, I focus both on moments of dysphoria brought about through acts of potentially hostile others, deep-rooted feelings of embodied dysphoria that emerge from and are connected to a multiplicity of past, present, and imagined future experiences, and those that arise from feeling incongruous or ‘out of step’ with spatially-embedded societal expectations. I suggest that dysphoria – as an influencing force underpinning feelings of ‘out-of-placeness’ – operates on multiple, intersecting spatial and temporal planes, the interaction of which is complex and often obscured, even from trans youth perspectives. Feelings of social dysphoria and subsequent ‘out-of-placeness’ are no less real or intense than internally emergent and confronted bodily dysphoria (which might also paradoxically be shaped by societal expectations and negative experiences.) Indeed, the stories of young trans people attest to the often highly limiting nature of social and bodily dysphoria with any number of negative impacts on young trans people’s everyday lives. I also argue that dysphoria can also paradoxically produce mechanisms of *trans recognition* whilst acting as a system of *trans oppression*. For example, vocalising dysphoria might, for some trans youth, produce validating reactions from others or lead to the creation of trans spaces or forms of trans solidarity and connectedness (see chapter seven). As Billie (she/her, 18-21) explained, referencing dysphoria and not ‘passing’ as a trans woman, ‘sometimes I think, “OK, [people] see me as a guy, *I don’t care*. My friends in G.I. *love* me, they see me as a trans woman, or just a *woman* in fact without the word *trans* in it”.’

To continue exploring how dysphoria functions as a set of mechanisms that induce ‘out-of-placeness’ for trans youth, I want to return to Sammy and Rhys’ stories. In a group workshop they, alongside Michael, were creating ‘body maps’ (see chapter four) which speak to dysphoria and an array of experiences linked to ‘out-of-placeness’ (see figure 5.9).



James [to Sammy:] What about yours [*reading from body map*] ‘what is around me’... what’s this arrow pointing at there?

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squeaky. And I really hate having to walk across classrooms and such, especially when people are sitting down, just because of the sound. And I can feel people's eyes on me, which I can understand, like people aren't [necessarily] looking at me like 'oh what are you doing?' but it's just like looking to see where the noise is coming from. But that makes me feel like people are looking...

In this excerpt, and in Sammy's artwork, we see their spatial-altering experience of dysphoria laid bare. In the art piece, phrases such as 'you can't escape me', 'deep breaths', and 'keep to a [heart] beat', along with the clouded brain, separation of the torso from the legs, emphasised heart, lungs, and other organs, body surfaces, and imagined/felt body lines that indicate flashpoints of emotional intensity illustrate how dysphoric feelings are felt by, and performed through, (aspects of) their body. Sammy's powerful words also speak to the impact of ongoing dysphoric feelings in terms of their relationship to and embodied (dis)comfort within certain spaces. Describing themselves as 'feel[ing] like I'm taking up such a big place' when 'walk[ing] in a room' evokes Ahmed's thinking around the hypervisibility of 'out-of-place' bodies, the atmospheric change the 'out-of-place' feel they cause when entering certain spaces, and the discomfort trans youth are made to feel they are causing to others with their presence. Indeed, Sammy describes feeling that their body is too large and takes up 'such a big place' because of the bodily tension they feel and their anticipation (based upon previous experiences) of receiving hostile gazes and creating tension amongst others. Sammy thus self-polices the sound their shoes make, and worries that others' gazes will be directed toward them, paradoxically increasing their feelings of dysphoria and 'out-of-placeness'.

Rhys' artwork tells a similar story to Sammy's in its highlighting of particular body parts and surfaces – shoulders that are 'too small', hips and thighs that are 'too big', and the feeling of an 'exploding' chest and 'uncontrollable' brain – they feel dysphoric about or where flashpoints of emotional intensity are situated, and illustrates how such bodily dysphoric feelings connect to other forms of social dysphoria and feelings associated with 'out-of-placeness'. In Rhys' work, again, we see emotions that both emerge from and reproduce 'out-of-placeness' (although there are allusions to mechanisms of alleviation; see blue text): including 'hurting others by being yourself', 'shame', 'stress', and 'feeling "different"'. These emotional experiences, alongside Rhys' internally and externally produced social and bodily dysphoria, lead to a sense of emotional uncontrollability, fear, and an overwhelming *fullness*. These emotions lead Rhys, like Sammy, to wish to 'downsize' and draw attention away from their body and presence in particular spaces (as opposed to queer spaces, and sites where Rhys can exercise 'control' which produce for them more positive embodied and emotional experiences).

Rhys' story also highlights the embeddedness of 'out-of-placeness' produced through dysphoria in particular spaces and at particular times, as the following conversation fragment demonstrates:

James: So [are] there times where the dysphoria is really raised or places where that might have the potential to come about?

Rhys: 'There's definitely times when dysphoria's [worse] especially if you're not out to people, and then they're calling you a different name and you have to act a certain way or look a certain way around them, that's definitely very dysphoria-inducing. Or I think that genuinely you just wake up sometimes and you just feel bad all day, like you do that and you just feel bad about yourself no matter what you're trying to do, like you'll see something that you don't like and stuff like that. But so I think it is kind of like sometimes it does depend on where you are and who you're with but then sometimes it's just your brain you just get unlucky and no matter what you do you're like 'I look terrible today' and it's like ughhhh...

Here, we see Rhys highlight where and when they feel forced perform a version of themselves that does not reflect their gender to maintain their safety or to avoid 'outing' themselves as trans. This experience, in turn, comes to worsen their experience of dysphoria, such that both an internal sense of bodily dysphoria is compounded by the pressures of external others. As other young trans people attested, this mechanism can create spaces wherein their performance of gender contrasts and often increases a sense of dysphoria, and thus 'out-of-placeness'. Ironically, this 'out-of-placeness' can emerge at times where young trans people are actively attempting to alleviate such feelings and increase their feelings of belonging in certain spaces.

To explore Rhys' and Sammy's stories further, I return to Ahmed and her description of the emotional and atmospheric disturbance that the 'out-of-place' might encounter when feeling hyper-visible. Ahmed (2007: 159) notes that the bodies of people of colour, in everyday spaces constructed through expected and pre-given whiteness, 'stand out when they are out of place', a positioning that in turn re-inscribes the space's whiteness. When this feedback loop is repeated it becomes habitual and both cognitively anticipated and pre-consciously expected by the body. Ahmed (2014e: n.p.) explores the emotional outcomes of living through this system of being made to feel like a disturbance when entering particular spaces, such that those *positioned as an imposition* come to *feel through space as an imposition*:

'You can feel alienated, you can feel like an affect alien [...] You might feel an imposition when your arrival requires that others withdraw from a shared intimacy. You might feel an imposition because your arrival prevents others from entering that intimacy. When an adjustment has to be made, because of your arrival, it is an uncomfortable feeling.'

Sammy's dysphoria both operates and is increased along similar lines. From this perspective, trans bodies might become 'affect aliens' both within spaces that seem always-already designed to impede

their movements through them, and in relation to cisgender, trans-hostile, or heteronormative bodies (both human and otherwise) that ‘withdraw’ from their ‘shared intimacy’ in the presence of the ‘out-of-place’ trans person or people. Sammy becomes ‘out-of-place’ through dysphoria, their anticipation of the reactions of hostile others, such that they feel their body occupies too much space. Again, Sammy and Rhys’ use of ‘downsizing’ attempts to alleviate this. As Rhys told me:

‘that’s kind of what I try and do when I feel out of place I kind of try and *feel smaller* and *look smaller* and that’s when I like start to wish that I wasn’t wearing such bright clothing and stuff like that. Cos it’s like, I’m just trying to be as small as possible.’

Such attempts to draw attention away from themselves – as visibly trans, as a potential outsider, or as a potential locus for hostility – were performative behaviours that several participants described engaging in. Similarly, participants also developed mechanisms of spatial/embodied withdrawal, including using such materials as headphones and fiddle toys for deep, sensory distraction from anxieties imbued in everyday spaces, or engaging in ‘character creation’ for a similar embodied withdrawal from emotions and encounters I argue are aligned with ‘out-of-placeness’.¹⁰²

Other participants’ dysphoric experiences, including that of Jón (he/they/something else, 18-21), led to them experiencing feelings and performances of spatial and bodily *detachment*, which I argue constitutes a less conscious mode of ‘out-of-placeness’. As Jón explained:

Jón: Quite often, like with dysphoria and everything, I tend to become very dissociated. As like a coping mechanism. And so I tend to feel very detached from my body a lot of the time. And so it’s not very much like a, a physical thing. I’ve always ever since being a kid had a very, very strong imagination. And I’ve always just kind of like imagined myself in other situations and imagined how I perceive myself and how I would like to be and stuff [...] it’s a very much like a living in my head kind of thing. It’s very much like a not like a physical weight [...] [*laughs*] but erm almost like an *emptiness* and that kind of detachment, almost. Cos you’re constantly like trying to reach the thing that you’re waiting for, but it’s... you’re waiting for it, it’s like a *lack* of something

James: And that feeling of waiting for something and having a lack like within you, how does that change how you like go about in day to day stuff, like does that mean you interact with people differently when you feel dissociated, for example, does it make you interact with *yourself* differently when you feel dissociated, as well?

Jón: Erm I tend to... erm dissociate more when I’m talking to other people. When I’m by myself I keep very very quiet, and... erm kind of like try and like obtain the kind of self that I’m waiting for and stuff. But... when I talk to people, I think it does have a huge effect. A lot of social situations, I come away from feeling quite negative about.

¹⁰² As Osh told me, ‘Making characters and making storylines means that I can get out of my own life and into something else that I have more *control over*.’

Thinking that maybe I'm being perceived wrong or differently to how I would like to be. Even, that doesn't have to be like *gender* wise, even just how I am conversationally, or anything. And I come away from that and I usually feel crappy about it but I'll be like "oh future me will be able to do that, cos future me can do anything like" [laughs]

Here, we see that, like Karl who described thinking about himself 'like a floating head' (see preface), Jón establishes dissociation – 'a living in [his] head [...] [that feels] like an *emptiness* and that kind of detachment' – as an internal coping mechanism that allows them to mentally detach from a physical/cognitive presence in particular spaces where dysphoria arises. This dissociation is a form of 'out-of-placeness' that Jón, as a young trans person, enacts and feels particularly when in social contact with certain people. Like many other participants, Jón also alleviates the effects of this regular 'out-of-placeness' by projecting to an imagined, more stable future self. This story highlights, again, that 'out-of-placeness', for certain trans youth, is not always a condition emergent from others' hostility, but can be produced through internal self-questioning and negative embodied emotions (however such emotions are often produced in reaction to hostility or transphobia or anticipatory anxiousness connected to imagining such scenarios could arise.)

5.5 Chapter conclusions: The constancy and multiple mechanisms of 'out-of-placeness'

'[T]he ever-moving local space of the trans body [...] instead of settling into a locality, throw[s] into upheaval the selves of those it meets.'

—Crawford (2015: 21)

In this chapter, I have examined young trans people's experiences of continually being positioned as 'out-of-place', and subsequently feeling and (re)embodying the dislocating affects of 'out-of-placeness' within a breadth of everyday spaces and times. My engagement with Sara Ahmed's work allowed me to develop a conceptual language that can be used to recognise how young trans people and bodies emerge as 'out-of-place', and experience and react to this spatialised and embodied 'out-of-placeness'. This reading, in turn, enabled me to consider my participants' experiences of misgendering and deadnaming, encountering others' hostile gazes, and experiencing bodily and social dysphoria as non-exhaustive ways that they experience and embody 'out-of-placeness'. In doing so, this chapter has examined how trans youth *continually* become and feel 'out-of-place' within and beyond, for example, everyday spaces and times that are not affectively structured to expect the presence of (young) trans bodies, moments of overt and microaggressive transphobia, exclusion, and/or violence, and sites associated with more habitual and/or subtly atmospheric exclusion felt only by particular trans youth.

Moreover, as participants' stories attest, many trans youth are often continually reinforced as though they are spatially disruptive (despite participants being amongst the most intelligent, insightful, and warm young people I have ever met). For example, participant narratives indicate how trans youth might constantly experience questioning and disbelief around their transness/gender, continually feel the emotional force of entering a room and causing an atmospheric disturbance, or regularly feel as though they 'stick out' from or become a 'sore point' within compulsory cisgender expectations/norms in particular space-times. Moreover, this chapter demonstrates how trans youth – whilst often positioned as though lacking in agency – can be paradoxically placed as responsible for alleviating their own 'out-of-placeness' through, for example, avoiding certain spaces, attempting to 'pass' and/or limit their authentic selves, and educating/confronting others who misgender/deadname them or otherwise perpetuate hostility and exclusion. In a cruel paradox, trans youth must often conform to cisnormative and gendered norms to avoid encountering hostile or displacing affects: in other words, often they must work to become 'out-of-place' (for example by embodying and performing through and inauthentic self) in order to feel less 'out-of-place'. These are some of the ways that hostile, uncomfortable, or otherwise dislocating affective atmospheres can be sparked for and felt by certain trans youth in particular spaces or moments. In this sense, and through the similarity and pervasive layering of 'out-of-placeness'-producing affects across many everyday sites, young trans people's experience of 'out-of-placeness' can, again, become stickily attached to certain space-times toward which they may subsequently feel anticipatory anxiousness. Through such experiences, for many trans youth, 'out-of-placeness' and anticipatory anxiousness toward particular affects, spaces, events, bodies, and so on can form an unstable, constantly (re)surfacing embodied presence. In the following chapters, I examine how this feedback loop and its temporally-obscured end points can both initiate exhaustion and become (at least temporarily) relieved through mechanisms and spaces of resistance, resilience, and restoration.

Crucially, although this chapter has recognised how 'out-of-placeness' may form a temporally constant presence for certain trans youth and that feeling 'out-of-place' can often be conditioned through such mechanisms as anticipatory anxiousness before it is even felt, I also understand that the condition is embodied and carried between spaces at differing intensities and registers (and, as chapter seven indicates, it may be alleviated through practices/spaces of resilience, resistance, and restoration). This chapter contributes to trans scholarship in geography by (i) discussing the everydayness of occupying an 'out-of-place' body, (ii) offering a spatial lens on conditions and experiences such as misgendering and dysphoria, and (iii) indicating the value of temporal perspectives on exclusion and marginality through its conceptual adoption of anticipatory anxiousness and notions of the embodied accrual of 'out-of-placeness' over time. My analyses also understand that spatial categories matter in

accounts of ‘out-of-placeness’. For example, the chapter has considered how certain trans youth are limited in their ability to enact agency and/or self-determine or embody their authentic selves in public, institutional, medical, overtly-regulated, and binary gendered/cisnormative spaces in particular.

6

Exhaustion

6.1 Introducing young trans people's exhaustion and its temporalities

'The biggest thing that lowers our quality of life is society's reaction to us, especially hostile reactions. And even, they don't have to be hostile, it can be the fact that we're not financially, we're in a country, we're in a situation where we need to pay for our healthcare and our transition, if trans people want to transition medically, cos there's so many ways to be trans. So even things like financially not being able to pay for that, family not accepting you, all these different things. Like government not having laws to protect you. Even with Trump right now, he's not trying to repeal laws, he's not focussing on the small things. He literally right now wants to repeal the *existence* of trans people. So erm with all that going on and that isolation we often feel [anxious]. It's not surprising [that we feel anxious] and I don't think it's [because of our own self-acceptance], I don't, people they like to use that argument of people who are against [us], [they say] "look at the suicide rate, it's so high." I think when you break it down psychologically, the acceptance of ourself[ves] it's never [what causes] those issues.'

—Karl, describing social and political forces working at multiple scales that can exhaustion and influence young trans people's everyday/intimate encounters.

As I have thus far alluded throughout the thesis, many young trans people are exhausted by their spatial surroundings and encounters; they are *continually more than tired*. Their exhaustion – often borne out of their experiences of 'out-of-placeness' and encountering a multiplicity of potential hostile forces, as Karl's words illustrate – is a condition tangible in many of their stories, and the way they hold their bodies; it can be palpable even in 'safe spaces' crafted and maintained specifically for them (see chapter seven). In alignment with the anticipatory anxiousness we have seen young trans people might feel toward settings wherein they feel 'out-of-place', such exhaustion (re)creates feelings of *anticipatory exhaustion* toward particular events or spaces, such that trans youth might feel *already exhausted* by the force of their potential (or imagined/recalled) affective registers and social/material composition.

As we have seen thus far, and as Karl's words above attest, in the UK young trans people's exhaustion is often shaped by a backdrop of change to, and turmoil in, societal conditions and discursive hostility experienced by trans people (see UK context discussion, chapters one/two). As I have shown and as participants' narratives have demonstrated, trans *youth* often bear this societal turbulence, hostility, and spatially-embedded violence acutely. Indeed, participants' stories indicate how the condition of exhaustion, for many trans youth, surfaces, becomes felt, and is (re)embodied continually across everyday spaces, places, and times. In this chapter, I trace the forces implicated in the spatial and bodily emergence and fixity of exhaustion in young trans people's lives to the binary-gendered and trans-hostile socio-materialities of everyday spaces, and spatially-reinforced embodied practices which often erode their agency and contribute to their 'out-of-placeness'. After conceptually queering exhaustion to better attend to the specificities of trans youth, I demonstrate how exhaustion is

not only embodied and experienced individually through its seepage into trans youth bodies and subject positions, but is also collectively held (and negotiated/resisted) within young trans communities and spaces, such as those of G.I. and those that trans youth develop themselves.

Engaging Gilles Deleuze and Sara Ahmed, I also examine how trans youth subjectivities are (re)made and potentialities are enabled when exhaustion is felt and embodied, highlighting participants' individual and collective agency and their ability to develop or harness mechanisms of trans and queer empowerment. This repositioning allows me to both complicate academic work that positions exhaustion as the removal of possibility and continue tracing how young trans people's resilience, resistance, and restoration practices, and 'safe spaces' they access and maintain, demonstrate this paradox, an argument that chapter seven more fully develops.

In this chapter, I also focus on *temporalities* that exhausted young trans people live through, advancing existing conceptualisations of exhaustion by illuminating its non-linear, indefinite, and slow temporalities and exploring participants' experiences of a constancy of trans-hostile affects and encounters which appear or are felt as temporally-unbounded. Common experiences shared by participants that allow me to explore the temporalities of their exhaustion include their descriptions of how exhaustion sets in as a result of *continually performing an inauthentic self*, by living through 'long day[s] of being what other people want you to be' that induce a *weariness* and a *wearing away* of myriad aspects of their everyday lives, including their bodily autonomy, selfhood, self-assurance, and wellbeing. Exhaustion's temporalities were also visible in participants' experiences of *extended periods of waiting* (including, for instance, for delayed medical care or simply for change to arrive), which constitute a set of experiences that reflect the *temporal constancy* bound up in exhaustion. These stories, amongst many others, demonstrate exhaustion's *extended and messy temporal lineages associated with anticipating future life experiences*. I observe that these temporalities constitute both a *function of lived exhaustion* and, perhaps paradoxically, a *set of potentialities* that in certain contexts can be enacted and drawn upon by particular trans youth. Section 6.5 explores participants' stories demonstrating the complex temporalities I argue exhausted bodies and subjects, like trans youth, encounter, occupy, and endure. I focus on key temporalities of exhaustion experienced by participants, namely *constancy and onslaught* (section 6.5.1) and *waiting and temporal unboundedness* (6.5.2). To demonstrate these conceptual threads, in the spirit of my method, I begin from the exhausted account of a young trans man, Adam.

6.2 Adam's story

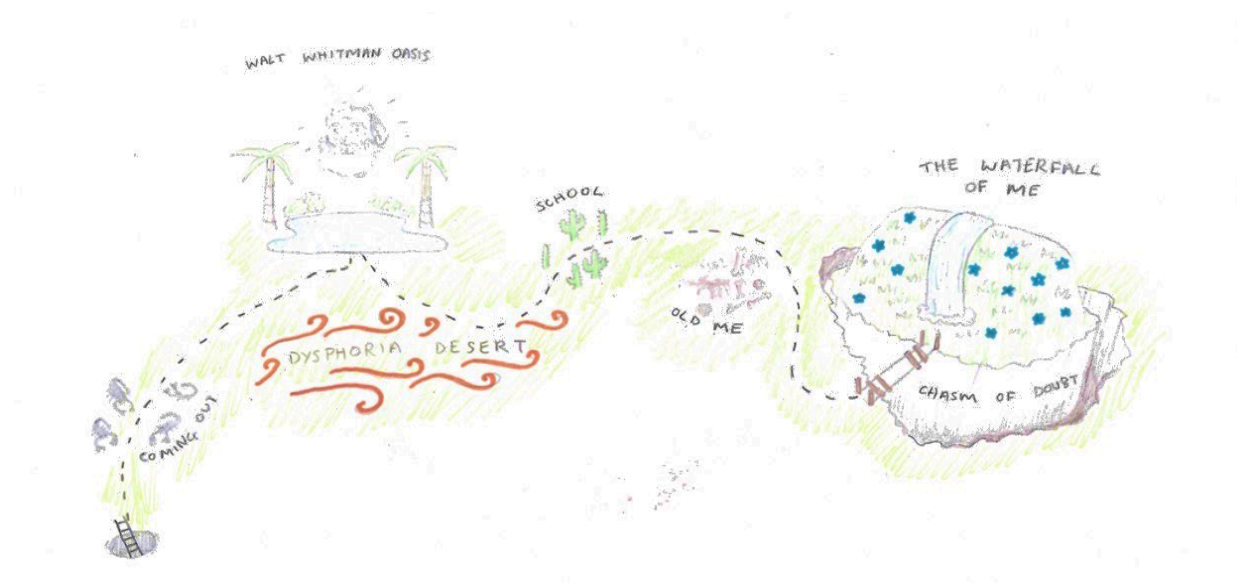


Figure 6.1. 'Journey map' drawn by Adam, showing his past, present, and anticipated future life course.

I first met Adam (he/him, 18-21), a young trans gay man, at the workshop I created to explore participants' experiences of transport and 'getting around' as young trans people in the UK. The workshop, involving two days of creative and storytelling activities at G.I., was the first explicitly trans space Adam had attended; the young people present were among the first other trans and gender diverse people Adam had encountered. Throughout the workshops, after engaging in creative group work around transness for the first time, and following his interactions with myself, the youth worker present, and the other young people, Adam increasingly projected his growing ease and embodied relief into the room.

During the first afternoon, participants were creating abstract 'maps' of a 'journey' they had taken. I found myself sitting alongside Adam. Glancing over his work (see figure 6.1), I was surprised that his chosen 'journey' projected his anticipated life course (unlike most others whose work reflected, for example, others' hostile gazes and reactions, difficulty breathing, dysphoria and dissociative experiences, and relative exhaustions and embodied relief experienced and embodied while moving through public space). I asked him to tell me its story. In his reply, Adam described feeling that as a young trans person he faces a 'battle... where you have to go through all these little tests and then you get somewhere'. Expanding, he talked of his experiences of 'coming out' as trans, his everyday engagements with spaces and society and the brief space-times of relief he crafts amongst its onslaught. Tracing the artwork with his fingers, he continued to unravel its story:

‘Well something like er when I first came out to my family, their response was very negative, so the coming out process has actually taken *years* rather than one conversation. So it was a fight for a long time. It’s a constant process. So, once I’ve got through that then... me now, [*referring to the drawing:*] I’m now in this dysphoria desert but there’s an oasis of me finding other people like me. So someone like Walt Whitman, I can read his poetry and feel a connection, feel the relief. I compare [those experiences] to being in a desert and finding water. But [in the background] there’s all these cactuses which are school, it’s a long tiring trek through painful things where I’m constantly being misgendered by people, people forgetting my name, people laughing at me. So after that, there’s this like bridge, and it’s like a broken bridge that I can’t get past right now. And then there’s a chasm of doubt. I imagine myself right there at the moment because I’m still at the stage where I’m like is being transgender even *real* like is it even a *thing* or is it like a delusion? But I know that once I get over that doubt I will get the paradise of being happy with myself and having the life that I wanna have.’

Adam and I met later in the year for a one-to-one interview to discuss his life experiences and art practice. As he showed me a portfolio of creative work, his experience of a long-held weary exhaustion filtered in and out of our conversation. Referring to self-negotiating his transness (see glossary) in early life, Adam told me that although he lacked the language to articulate his embodied feelings, ‘I knew I was trans because I was *deeply, deeply unhappy*, not cos I wanted to be anything different but because I was horrifically unhappy and it was the only explanation’. In the interview, Adam expanded upon his experience of embodying transness, describing his everyday experience along lines of ‘loss and time’, both of which he described as ‘really important to me... emotionally, poetically, or whatever’. He added that he ‘experience[s] transness as a feeling of *loss*. And basically just a feeling of homesickness [...] [of having] a phantom body, that you should have that you don’t have’, leading to him ‘feel[ing] like I’m carrying around loss all the time’.¹⁰³ Consequently, Adam described the experience of time (both for himself and trans youth collectively) as ‘huge and [...] a healing thing but [it’s something that] also reminds us of who we were and who we didn’t want to be’. Adam voiced *anger* with this ‘loss and time’ nexus and its connection to his experiences of dysphoria when compared to the relative ontological and bodily security of many cis folk:

‘...there’s anger as well. [...] You walk around feeling like *everyone else gets to walk around being fine*, why aren’t I fine? Why does that happen? And I first had that when I was depressed and nobody else seemed to be depressed. [...] And... the anger I feel towards some cis people [...] I’m talking about like the man on the street, just a person, who hasn’t done anything wrong. But you can’t help but feel like ‘*how come you don’t even have to think about it?*’ Like, you wake up in the morning and you’re in a body that makes no sense. And you can’t help but be angry and confused.’

¹⁰³ Although other participants/trans youth might not describe their lives in these terms.

Amongst conversation around his drawn-out, difficult ‘coming out’, Adam showed me his artwork and poetry. Capturing again the presence of weariness and frustration in his life, his work included a poem about ‘the shape of the female body as a landscape of absence and longing, and feeling lost in that landscape [which] doesn’t have this one plant that I actually want, it doesn’t have gay male identity, that’s taken away from it’. We took turns reading lines from the poem. Taken by its viscerality, I breathily repeated extracts that revealed the emotionally violent and exhausting experience of his dysphoria that, as the previous chapter discussed, often surfaced unexpectedly (simpkins, 2017).

6.2.1 *Examining temporalities of exhaustion experienced by Adam*

Although Adam’s story does not represent every young trans person’s life or bodily experience (indeed, no singular narrative could ever capture the diversity of his nor other young trans people’s everyday lives), it speaks to many of the layers of challenges, frustrations and, ultimately, exhaustions some trans youth might experience in the everyday. Reflecting upon the *temporalities* which exhausted young trans people and bodies might experience or be forced to negotiate through Adam’s story, the constancy and layering of frustrations which contribute to his weariness can be better understood: once one ‘fight’ is over, others—his being misgendered, his own grapples with identity and bodily dysphoria—come to the fore. We see the temporally unbounded nature of Adam’s drive to live through an authentic self, and exhaustions bound up in anticipating future events. Adam’s ‘long tiring trek through painful things’, whether a result of the actions of external forces, reinforced by his own internal voice, appears to have no mitigating pathway or end-point. Here we see how exhaustion induces slow time, a slowness that results in him ‘waiting’ for life conditions to improve, for negative experiences to pass and positive spaces to be created or accessed/available, whilst largely subject to understandings and actions of (potentially hostile or misunderstanding) others, and of societal cisgender/gender-conformant expectations. Adam’s story also reflects the *bodily implications* that arise from being constantly exhausted and subject to agency-limiting encounters. His words speak to both the emergence of exhaustion through the body and its surfaces (in the ongoing experience of bodily dysphoria and anxiousness) and the subsuming of exhaustion into his body, which carries his exhaustion through and between his everyday life experiences and spaces wherein these take place.

Adam’s ‘trek’ can be understood as figuring in the disorienting temporal non-linearity he lives through as a result of occupying a young trans subject position and body (see chapter 3). Adam continually casts back and forth between his past, present, and imagined future selves and experiences, at least partially because of his exhaustion and conditions that create and maintain its place in his subjectivity and body, through flashbacks, intrusive thoughts, ‘body memories’ and other time-messing mechanisms (Morrigan, 2017). In this chapter, I continue to argue that as challenges to young trans

people's right to exist are increasing through societal and political forces which filter to the micro, embodied scale, positive, utopic futures (*cf.* Muñoz, 2009) cannot always be oriented towards by trans youth. I continue to demonstrate that trans youth experiencing exhaustion in their daily lives often orient toward futurity which, if not utopic, looks to be *enough* in that young people can *live with* the present and craft stability within everyday life conditions. Furthermore, Adam's story reflects the potential and affirmation that can be made out of exhaustion, with the safe 'oasis' he creates, his accessing of a trans 'safe space', and his immersion in creative practices representing potentially life-saving spatial and temporal interruptions to exhaustion's temporalities. These themes are explored further in the following chapter.

6.3 Reconceptualising exhaustion

6.3.1 Overview: '*A whole lot more than tired*'

'At the same time that one builds a life the pressures of its reproduction can be exhausting.' (Berlant, 2011: 116)

In this quote, Lauren Berlant reveals the essence of exhaustion by thinking through the bodily sovereignty reclaimed by weary bodies subject to the threats of capitalism in their desire to eat for pleasure rather than for health. Exhaustion, from this perspective, is the condition created when the maintenance of a stable everyday life causes one to embody and feel an ongoing depletion and exertion of energies, will, and drive. It is when everyday battles continually fought to preserve this stability are no longer sustainable, an experience initiating a wearing-away that sees the body's physiologies and capacities impeded. It is, in sum, becoming 'a whole lot more than tired' (Deleuze, 1995: 3). Thinking through exhaustion and forces implicated in its emergence, then, is to measure the structures exhausted subjects and bodies 'are up against' (Ahmed, 2013: n.p.), such as those which, as detailed in chapter five, produce the 'out-of-placeness' that many trans youth experience.

We are said to be living in an 'age of exhaustion', a social, cultural and political phenomenon induced by capitalist and austere economics, pervasive and ever-encroaching technology and communications, mistrust across the political spectrum, social abjection and marginalisation, and even mass anxiety about the sustainability of human existence (Ahmed, 2010; Berlant, 2011; Neckel *et al.*, 2017). Yet social researchers and theorists have struggled to think through exhaustion as a mood, condition, or spatial tone. In the volume *Burnout, fatigue, exhaustion*, however, Neckel *et al.* (2017) helpfully describe exhaustion as a condition both societally diffuse and individually-experienced. Exhaustion, they argue, is characterised by excessive exertion and bodily 'fatigue, lethargy, and weakness', with a mental manifestation through symptoms including 'weariness, disillusionment,

apathy, hopelessness, and lack of motivation' (*Ibid.*: 5). For the authors, 'the condition of being drained [...] connects individuals, social classes, growth-oriented capitalism and the ecosystem into a crisis-ridden constellation' (*Ibid.*: 3), suggesting that exhaustion is a condition which filters horizontally across society.

I argue that this supposed 'connection' across people and bodies forged through exhaustion, and the dominant understanding of exhaustion as a complete exertion, presumes a universality of experience, a flattening of the embodied emotions and actions bound up in being exhausted. This universalisation does not consider the varying *intensity* of exhausting experiences which occur according to bodily and social differences and exclusion, such those experienced and embodied by young trans people. Furthermore, focussing on the societal-wide experience of exhaustion, I contend, suppresses the narratives of those, including trans youth, continually subject to an onslaught of destructive forces and everyday violences. Consequently, dominant understandings of exhaustion have not left conceptual space to think through the *specificities* of the bodies, subject positions, and spatial/embodied interactions of those living through exhaustion. It is the specific experiences of young trans people that animate my reconceptualisation of exhaustion that follows.

6.3.2 *Challenging exhaustion as initiating the absence of possibility and potentiality*

'My vulnerability is not merely a passive state of receptivity, of being formed as a body by hostile ideas – it is equally an act of resistance, a refusal to submit. Strength comes from knowing that resistance and vulnerability have always gone hand-in-hand.'

–Sage Brice (2020: 673)

As Wilkinson and Ortega-Alcázar (2018: 157) point out, throughout the literature, exhaustion and similar conditions have been 'positioned as the antithesis of political action, where individuals are slowly worn down until they no longer have the strength to resist'. For example, in thinking through corporeal vulnerability, Harrison (2008: 424) places exhaustion as an aspect of 'phenomena which intimate the end of intention and action and which trace a passage of withdrawal from engagement'. Even Deleuze (1995), in his reading of characters in Samuel Beckett's work presented in the essay 'The Exhausted', understands exhaustion as undermining, even removing, ones' ability to 'possibilite'. From this perspective, exhaustion makes it impossible to orientate oneself toward possibilities, with exhausted people forced to 'press on, but toward nothing' (*Ibid.*: 4). This conceptualisation obscures the agency exercised and resilience crafted by exhausted people and their bodies to maintain stability within, or resistance to, exhausting everyday life conditions. Indeed, existing work has largely represented exhaustion as a condition lacking in potential and energy, as 'something without value', with exhausted or weary bodies understood as 'hopeless, stultified, [and] withdrawn' (Wilkinson and

Ortega-Alcázar, 2018: 163). This theorisation, which directly contrasts with the experiences of participants in this research, has served to shame or further marginalise those experiencing fatigue (*Ibid.*). As Gorfinkel (2012: 316) notes, ‘fatigue is not necessarily antithetical to action, agency—it can sit adjacent to it or coexist with it, even if fatigue drags or delays action’. In other terms, experiencing and embodying exhaustion does not inherently impede one from drawing upon their active agency to enable a liveable life or conditions like gender euphoria.

I argue that conceptualisations of exhaustion have not gone far enough to think through practices and embodiments of resilience, resistance, and perseverance as modes of life that also emerge when a body or subject feels or becomes exhausted. Instead, I propose to develop a different conversation: building on Wilkinson and Ortega-Alcázar’s (2018) work, I consider the potential *productivity* of, and *potentialities* enabled through, feeling exhausted and embodying exhaustion. To emphasise the emergent potentialities of exhaustion, I both interrogate and align with Deleuze (1995), by refuting his presentation of exhaustion as the condition lived through when possibilities become impossible, and aligning with his recognition that exhaustion is implicit in the emergence of new subjectivities. My reading of Deleuze (1995) is thus: to have exhausted all possibilities (a status he understands exhausted bodies occupy), is a fleeting subject position that sits atop a precipice: when pushed so far by the conditions of exhaustion that potentiality cannot seemingly be grasped, a becoming, a transformation, and a drive to propel things forward, emerges in the exhausted subject. As Ahmed (2013: n.p.) describes, ‘shattered’, ‘diminished’, or ‘depleted’ subjects develop the means ‘to restore, to replete’; they ‘find ways of becoming energised in the face of the ongoing reality of what causes their depletion’. As trans youth voices demonstrate, this (re)making of the subject is far from entirely negative and vulnerable. The emotionally and bodily stabilising practices trans youth craft, and the spaces they access and maintain for rejuvenation and resilience in response to exhaustion, demonstrate productivity from adversity. Young trans people’s ability to persist in defiance of forces which induce weariness and exhaustion establishes their active agency in creating positive, fulfilling life conditions, even whilst subject to forces which induce exhaustion and seek to suppress these efforts. Indeed, this theorisation of active agency aligns with geographer Sage Brice’s (2020: 673, my emphasis) understandings of particular trans embodiments/subjectivities relative to social vulnerabilities, such as that of the radical femme (‘a gender-based political aesthetic’; Brice, 2020: 674), which ‘reminds us that it is possible to engage with [...] vulnerability as *a radically transformative force of potential* [...] an operative force that can be *emphatically and defiantly activated*.’ Brice (*Ibid.*) elaborates further:

‘Radical femme and trans experience [...] remind us that it is precisely by mobilising our vulnerability as subjects – through radical invigoration of diverse practices including, but not limited to, gender expression, care, empathy, solidarity, queer “family,” vigilance, and defiance – that we exceed the constraints of anxious solitude and enact

the full transformative potential of our relations with a milieu. Seen in this light, coming out, or the taking on of an explicit identity, is not primarily an act of individual self-expression in the liberal mode, but rather the expression of an ontological commitment to practising vulnerability.'

Throughout the thesis, readers have and will bear witness to the 'diverse practices' of queer solidarity, space-making, and care that Brice discusses and that participants' used to alleviate 'out-of-placeness', exhaustion, and other associated conditions/emodied experiences.

6.3.3 Developing geographies of exhaustion: Spatial shrinkage and extended temporalities

Geographers are well-placed to continue conceptualising the co-constitutive, reinforcing relationship between space(s) and exhausted bodies and subjects. As Deleuze (1995: 10) notes, while implying that living through exhaustion limits, or removes, one's ability to engage with, and craft potential out of the *spaces* they encounter, 'the consideration of [...] space gives a new sense and a new object to exhaustion: to exhaust the potentialities of any-space-whatever'. Recent efforts to think through the spatialities of exhaustion have arrived as geographers are increasingly examining the experience and emotional politics of moods and bodily states emergent out of marginalisation and exclusion. Recent publications have explored weariness and endurance in the context of neoliberal austerity (Hitchen, 2016; Wilkinson and Ortega-Alcázar, 2018), and embodied emotions emergent through the geographies of sexualities (De Craene, 2017b; Gorman-Murray, 2017). Helpfully, recent geographical work has conceptualised facets of exhaustion relevant to the lives of trans youth. For example, Hitchen and Shaw's (2019) work around experiences of austerity and financial precarity argues that those exposed to the affects of austere economics face a *physical shrinkage* of their everyday life-worlds, particularly through a contraction in the number and diversity of spaces available and accessible to those most marginalised by austere policy. I argue that this shrinkage of welcoming, affirming, or accessible spaces open to particular people, such as trans youth, as we have seen, also takes place when *spaces themselves* become restrictive, exhausting environments for those enveloped by marginalising affects and hostile atmospheres that emerge and are felt (perhaps only) by specific individuals and/or communities. As Deleuze (1995: 10) articulates, '[s]pace enjoys possibilities as long as it makes the realisation of events possible'.

Wilkinson and Ortega-Alcázar (2018: 158) have complicated understandings of weariness by exploring the condition as 'a messy paradoxical state, a scene of exhaustion and endurance, diminishment and fortitude, decay and aliveness'. This understanding demonstrates that exhausted people and bodies can live through spaces and times of everyday life through seemingly paradoxical states. This is reflected in trans youth lives: burnout, resilience, resistance, despair, worry, anxiety, exhaustion, frustration, and perseverance are often bound up and lived through simultaneously or in

close spatial and temporal proximity because of the exhausting embodiments and conditions of everyday life. I am also inspired by Wilkinson and Ortega-Alcázar's (*Ibid.*: 156) turn to the 'slow and steady deterioration' and 'slow violence and everyday endurance' which welfare cuts bring about in those who they most affect. As Esther Hitchen (2019) articulates, austerity therefore initiates a lived temporality that is not inextricably bound to a particular moment or 'cut', but is an ongoing condition with a completely obscured end-point or resolution. This approach allows these scholars to reflect upon temporalities of exhaustion, in their highlighting of 'durational everyday forms of slow suffering, those moments where violence is experienced as *continuation rather than an eruption*' (Wilkinson and Ortega-Alcázar, 2018: 156, my emphasis; Gorfinkel, 2012).

These understandings of exhaustion's extended temporalities highlight that exhaustion emerges and takes root in the bodies and subjectivities of marginalised people when they experience affects of 'out-of-placeness' with such frequency and constancy that they become part of the ever-unfolding fabric of everyday life. The *intensity* of exhaustion is exacerbated iteratively, therefore, by the frequency of the affects and encounters that induce it. As Ahmed (2014d: n.p.) tells us, suggesting that weariness and exhaustion occupy a rhythmic, cyclical and violent pattern which builds force as its events accumulate: 'We can be exhausted by what we come up against. / And then we come up against it again.' This incrementality resonates with trans lives in particular, with Ahmed (2016a: 27), in words that speak to several stories this thesis has thus far explored, comparing the discourse currently levelled against trans people across many societal layers to a 'volume switch [...] already stuck on full blast'.

Exhaustion, then, is lived through the embodiment of a slow temporality and an *endurance of time* induced by the constancy and regularity of marginalising, violent affects. I argue that this slowness is lived through and embodied by trans youth as exhaustion becomes a constant presence in many of their everyday lives. I also refute the Deleuzian conception of exhausted bodies as draining the potentiality of spaces, by recognising and highlighting affirming and life-saving spaces that are radically (re)made by and for trans youth to interrupt exhausting life conditions, and continue this conversation throughout this and the following chapter. The following paragraphs explore what conceptually queering exhaustion should involve, to account for the specificities of young trans people's everyday experiences, and the varying *intensities* through which their exhaustion is felt and produced.

6.3.4 *Queering exhaustion through Sara Ahmed*

A limited body of work in Psychology and mental health studies has begun to examine queer people's experiences of exhaustion, typically framed in terms of burnout or 'minority stress' felt as a result of experiences including microaggressions and more overt violences (Cyrus, 2017). 'Minority stress' refers

to ‘psychosocial stress derived from minority status’ and is premised on the idea that marginalized people are ‘subjected to chronic stress related to their stigmatization’ (Meyer, 1995: 38). Like much literature examining the lives of LGBT+ people, this literature has tended to focus upon cisgender lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) people’s experiences (e.g. Meyer, 1995; Toomey *et al.*, 2018), whilst a small body of work has been concerned with the intense ‘minority stress’ experienced by LGB people of colour in particular (Cyrus, 2017). For example, Vaccaro and Mena (2011: 358) explore compassion fatigue – ‘a level of emotional and psychological distress and deterioration that goes beyond burnout’ – experienced by queer activists of colour who continually advocate for LGBT+ siblings whilst simultaneously experiencing multiple oppressions. Meanwhile, Nicolazzo (2017) has explored the ‘burden’ of ‘pulling gender out of the shadows either by practicing or by educating others about trans* genders’ on US college campuses, connecting this to the experience of neoliberal academia to think through how their participants were ‘overwhelmed’ or ‘feeling tired, worn out, or exhausted’ from this continual practicing-educating cycle. This work, emphasizing the exhaustion experienced when one continually occupies a position of defense or advocacy for queerness (whether to educate others or resist harmful narratives), resonates with the lived experiences of my trans young participants, including those directly engaged in activist efforts. Accounting for compassion fatigue as figuring in exhaustion also provides a means to recognize the experiences of a majority of trans people who must continually inform others (including cis LGB folk) about trans issues and rights, and continually occupy a position of defence relating to their right to exist as trans people.

Despite the existence of literature exploring the prevalence of fatigue experienced by trans youth undertaking this continual defence and advocacy, studies of trans-specific experiences of ‘minority stress’ or exhaustion have been more limited (although see Nicolazzo, 2017). However, some studies have conceptual and empirical relevance to this research. Rood *et al.* (2016: 152) explore, for example, the *anticipatory element* of ‘minority stress’ as it is experienced by trans folk, in their focus on trans people’s everyday ‘expectations regarding the likelihood of stigma being enacted’ upon them because of their transness. Their participants reported everyday expectations and experiences of fear, violence, discrimination and internalized fear and shame, particularly in spaces organized according to binary expectations of gender; several reported their experience of embodied exhaustion – tightness in their bodies and ‘feeling shaky’ – as a regular occurrence linked to their expectations of rejection (*Ibid.*). Non-academic queer folk writing about their own lived experiences have also communicated ideas around ‘queer burnout’. For example, trans person Fairchild (2019: n.p.), describes experiencing ‘battle fatigue’ following their response to attacks which arrive in their life and in the wider trans community ‘in endless waves’ from multiple sources. As Fairchild tells us, elements of this fatigue specifically occur when trans people end up ‘devot[ing] so much thinkspace to qualifying their existence to a society that

simply wishes they would cease to' (*Ibid.*). Yet queer fatigue does not simply originate through overt assertions of queer/trans selfhood and right to exist, but also through the masking or suppression of queer/trans difference and identity. Recent media attention has focussed on the 'code-switching' practices of LGBT+ folk and people of colour (POC), to highlight the exhausting effort required to 'tone down' or 'blend in' to particular spaces or social settings to avoid causing discomfort to themselves or to avoid conflict with less marginalised bodies in particular spaces (see BBC, 2018b; *Vice*, 2019). As writer Madeleine Holden describes, for 'trans people, especially precarious Black trans women, the stakes are particularly high: [c]ode switching is literally a matter of life or death' (*Vice*, n.p.) The following paragraphs explore what a conceptual queering of exhaustion, one that accounts for such experiences and others undergone by young trans people more specifically, might look like.

To begin queering exhaustion, I turn to Sara Ahmed's articulation of the origins and impact of lived and embodied queer exhaustion and strain. Reinforcing that fatigue and weariness are shaped by repetitive actions and events involving marginalisation and exclusion, Ahmed (2004: 147) considers how queer 'tiredness' can set in:

'Queer subjects feel the tiredness of making corrections and departures; [and] the pressure of [insistence, presumptions, and demands] [...] No matter how "out" you may be, how (un)comfortably queer you may feel, those moments of interpellation get repeated over time, and can be experienced as a bodily injury; moments which position queer subjects as failed in their failure to live up to the "hey you too" of heterosexual self-narration.'

Here, Ahmed emphasises that events and actions which seek to position queer folk as 'other' or 'failed' in relation to assumed and dominant heterosexuality (and expectations of binary cisgender identities), can become a violence that becomes *subsumed into the queer body*. As Ahmed (2013: n.p.) later viscerally describes, by engaging Audre Lorde, such oppressions 'can be experienced as weather [...] press[ing] and pound[ing] against the surface of a body', with oppressed subjects and bodies surviving the exhaustion this pressuring creates by 'hardening' to withstand the force of what they come up against. By understanding that when such encounters or experiences of everyday structural violences are repeated or (re)lived a *tiredness* emerges in the queer body as a 'bodily injury' that builds incrementally, Ahmed adds further credence to understanding exhaustion as an extended temporal state. Indeed, the language of injury, bruising and bodily subsuming through the skin, reinforces the scarring effects (felt and realised both emotionally and bodily) of queer marginalisation, exclusion, and othering through structural/institutional affects.

To develop these ideas further in the context of young trans lives more specifically, I want to draw on Ahmed's *anticipatory exhaustion* concept, which operates similarly to the anticipatory anxiousness

I discussed in chapter five. Anticipation, as Adams *et al.* (2009) understand, involves living through the present by actively (and perhaps dissociatively) orienting toward the future. As Adams *et al.* (2009) explain, and as was alluded to in the previous chapter, being ‘out-of-place’ in relation to the space-times of the present may spark feelings of dread and exhaustion toward future events and encounters which might become imbued with particular emotions, such as fear or anxiety¹⁰⁴, before they have taken place. I argue that young trans people experiencing such emotions might arrive at such future events or spaces *already exhausted* by the force of their potential (or imagined) affective registers and social and material composition. For example, Ahmed explains how those embodying the position of a ‘feminist killjoy’, given their heightened awareness of misogyny and structures which impede women and their bodies, develop such an anticipatory exhaustion toward future events. Indeed, Ahmed (2017: 55) understands that:

‘Feminism heightens consciousness of there being lines at all and thus requires us to make decisions when before decisions might have been made before us, or even without us. Sometimes we are tired or we experience an anticipatory exhaustion: we line ourselves up to avoid the consequences of being out of line because we have been there before and we can’t face it anymore. And then when that line unfolds, other things happen along the way. Other times we might realize: we are willing to pay the costs of not being in line because getting in line would compromise too much.’

Here, Ahmed tell us that holding feminist knowledge and living a feminist life increases ones’ awareness of ‘lines’ of power, exclusion and misogyny; to fall into line, to occupy the societally-expected position, is to avoid an exhaustion that you are aware is immanent should you move toward advocating for yourself and others.

As trans people experience the onslaught of everyday violences directed at them as an ‘everyday relentless hammering at the house of trans being’ (Ahmed, 2016a: 28), I argue that their anticipation of hostility in particular spaces operates similarly. As I heard testimony of and witnessed in this research, some young trans people, exhausted by the pressures exerted through everyday encounter, can often choose to sink into space, conform, or otherwise avoid conflict which arises through others’ understandings of their transness (although this sinking into space can also constitute a radical falling out of line: to survive and exist as a young trans person is a radical embracing of their authentic self, and a refuting of societal cisgender expectations.) As Ahmed (2017) explains, feminists experience exhaustion as ‘diversity workers’; trans youth might experience this emotional ‘work’ along similar lines merely because of their transness or other ways in which they are othered (such as those described in chapter 5), with their difference being constructed as unpalatable, unacceptable, and too far outside of

¹⁰⁴ Ahmed (2004) understands that fear is a condition that, when repeatedly lived through, ‘slides into’ the longer-term state of anxiety.

societal norms (gendered or otherwise). The policing of this difference, and exhaustions experienced as a result, becomes exacerbated further still for particularly marginalised or visible trans folk, including trans women, people of colour and those who do not ‘pass’.

By thinking through what it means to embody a feminist way of life, Ahmed also describes how exhausted people often choose to fall out of line, knowing they will undergo exhaustion, in their willingness to ‘pay the costs of not being in line’ and avoid compromising their selfhood and values. For example, as Ahmed (2017: 122, my emphasis) explains, trans people might have to repeatedly ‘insist’ to be heard, to have their preferences respected: to avoid this insistence, and inhabit a ‘desire for a more normal life does not necessarily mean identification with norms, but can be a desire to avoid the exhaustion of *having to insist just to exist*.’ We see here that exhaustion can emerge as a consequence of living authentically. As many trans youth engaged in my research demonstrated, the value of embodying this authenticity (by, for example, ‘coming out’, presenting an authentic self through hair and clothing, refusing to conform to societally-enforced gender norms, and other means of escaping ‘gender tyranny’; Doan, 2010) can become more important than its potential consequences for their mental and physical wellbeing or long-term stability and survival as trans people, whether they seek to be defined by their transness or otherwise.

For many trans youth, to be exhausted, then, is to be presented – as I discuss in chapter seven – with opportunities to fall ‘out of line’ and to *create new lines and alignments* for resilient, resistive, and restorative ways of being. Trans youth surviving in their visibility or even their continued existence in cisgender-regulated everyday spaces, resilient in their formation of networks and communities out of hardship and hostility, and persistent in their maintenance and (re)making of trans spaces and everyday spaces alike, illustrate this radical, expansive, and *queer* potentiality. In the following sections, I draw upon the conceptual threads I have developed thus far, bringing exhaustion’s temporalities in conversation, again, with a small fraction of trans youth narratives. First, I turn to the *constancy* or *onslaught* of trans hostility and agency-limiting encounters as a temporal dimension that trans youth describe experiencing in their daily lives.

6.4 Young trans people’s stories of exhaustion and its temporalities

6.4.1 *Constancy and onslaught*

Rhys (he/him and they/them, 14-17): I feel so *full of variables*.

James: What do you mean by [that], Rhys?

Rhys: It just feels like *I can't just live* because I've just got *so many things I need to think about before I can do that*. Like there's so many things I think about every day. And so many like, I don't know. [...] I just constantly feel like I'm gonna *overflow*. I just constantly feel like there's no more space for *anything*. And at one point I'm just gonna explode because there's so much there. [...] And like it kind of scares me to be honest. It just feel like I'm out of control with my own head. I don't control what's in it and it just kind of appears and it's scary. [...] It just feels really hazy. [...] Because I *can't* focus on anything. It feels like everything's just there but it's in a big massive mess and I can't untangle it.

—Conversation between myself and Rhys

Wes (he/him, 22-25): The last year [...] it's just been *relentless*, it's just been absolutely awful. [...] every now and then I've realised that what's coming out of the GRA [Gender Recognition Act] consultations¹⁰⁵, it kind of would seep into how I would perceive myself and erm, like, I don't know... it was just really, yeah, it was just really awful. [...] But yeah [*struggling to speak*:] ...like in the last year, I have gone through periods of being just so down, because when people are just hating you so much for just *being*, it's quite hard. And, erm, even just *stupid things*. I mean, I've erm, you know since I've come out as trans I've dated and it's been all like fine, but er, in the last few, I guess kind of six months or so, I've suddenly become *very anxious* about that type of thing. And I think I've realised, I think it's because I've read so many of these like, these people on Twitter kind of saying like, you know, 'who would date that', you know, that sort of thing. [...] (*deep in-breath*) because a lot of the time when you read what other people say, they don't just say like "Oh, I feel like this about a certain issue," they're like, "*all* people feel like this." [...] Erm, it is tough.

—Wes' reflections on the 'relentless' year he experienced prior to our meeting

During my time researching with trans youth, almost all participants conveyed a sense of weariness emergent from the constancy of, for example, negative experiences they were facing, the anxious, dysphoric or fearful internal dialogues they frequently negotiated, and the regularity of encounters which seemed deliberately designed by those perpetuating them to limit, or even remove, their agency and autonomy. For example, young people regularly described being faced with persistent misgendering and arbitrary gatekeeping across myriad spaces, experiencing 'stifling environments' (wording of Michael, he/him, 14-17) across everyday sites including home and educational spaces, and continually negotiating the mental hardship of social and bodily dysphoria in their many forms. Meanwhile, many participants described feeling like their '*existence* is making other people uncomfortable' (wording of Rhys), and talked of being constantly pre-occupied with anticipating others' potentially hostile gazes

¹⁰⁵ See chapter two.

(see chapter five). For example, Frances (she/her or they/them, 18-21) described feeling constant pressures to wear ‘what other people think [she] should wear’ as ‘like a cage’, tying this ‘caged feeling’ that ‘makes [her] feel very tense, in the shoulders’ to spaces where, in her words ‘I’m not in a position to be “out” [...] when I’m at church, when I’m with some relatives, or some people, in most places.’

Facing the incomprehensibility, pervasiveness, and onslaught of so many ongoing external and internal forces, as demonstrated by Rhys and Wes in the above interview fragments, led many participants to convey a sense of being anxious about potential future events, constantly *worn down*, and sometimes unable to generate ‘ways out’ of the exhaustion this wearing away created. Wes and Rhys’ narratives reflect how the temporal constancy and relentlessness of trans-hostile affects, practices, and forces ‘seep into’ or slowly *creep* into aspects of young trans people’s subjectivities, including their bodily comfort, mental wellbeing, self-perception, and ability to self-affirm. This wearing away of young trans bodies and subjects reflects the slow violence that the constancy of transphobic hostility can exact.

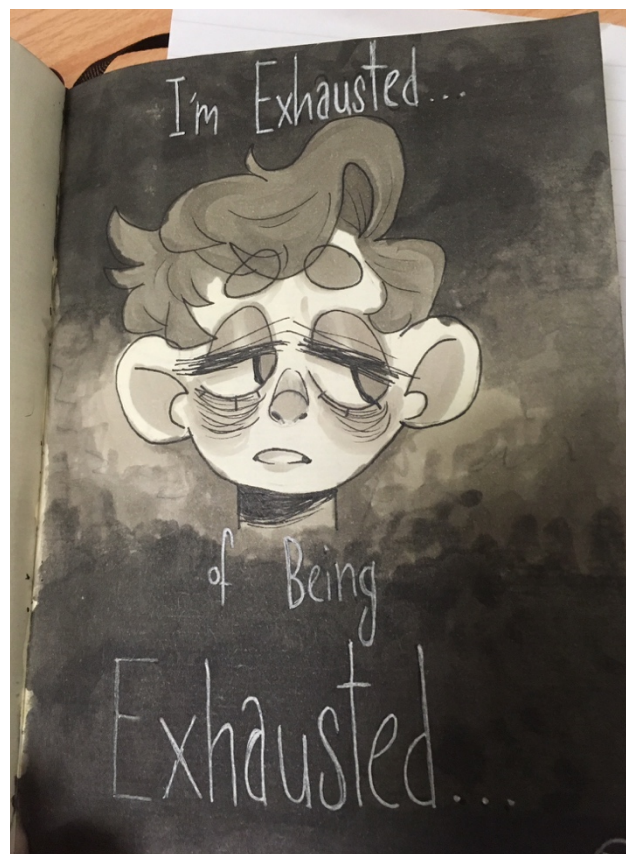


Figure 6.2. Osh's artwork showing their exhaustion; part of a set of two pieces (see figure 6.3).

The exhaustion felt through facing and receiving a *constancy* of affects that wear away, or contribute to the experience of spaces along lines of embodied anxiety and intense tiredness, was

reflected by many participants. Osh's (they/them, 18-21) life story exemplifies this (see figure 6.2 showing their artwork they carried in one of multiple scrapbooks to both the one-to-one session and spaces of everyday life). After describing how they have '*held back* from coming out at work' in order to avoid 'hav[ing] to explain [trans] and become an educator there and [then] have some people disagree with it and some people *make my life more difficult* when I'm there,' we held the following conversation:

James: What are you imagining in your head when you think about this kind of stuff?

Osh: I don't *even know* because if you look at the amount of shit that's been going on with like *everything* at the moment, fucking like everything, *so much shit* has gone down hill. Even in London, it's not just the US, it's everywhere now. Erm like.

James: Especially because of the GRA stuff giving them [transphobic/hostile people] a voice.

Osh: It's given them a voice. And like stuff on the tube. My friend like saw posters up and it was just.... you know, that's *really scary*. I already have intrusive thoughts and I have a lot of problems with catastrophizing everything so my brain goes 'if they don't like you they could *stab* you for all you know, like you don't know what's going to happen.' So like um I've held back anything like that. I've held back like even like *smaller* parts of my personality, just like the things I'm interested in, I hold back on. And the things, like how enthusiastic I am about things, I've done that most of my life.

James: Does that holding back have an element of exhaustion?

Osh: Oh *hugely*. I'm *perpetually* tired. I'm perpetually like so, so, so tired just in general because I'm constantly *monitoring* what I'm saying and how much, like how I'm coming off.

In this excerpt, we see Osh perform a similar 'shrinking' to that of Rhys and Sammy in the previous chapter. For Osh, the 'perpetual' nature of their tiredness leads them to 'hold back' elements of themselves, and 'monitor' their language use in terms of both breadth and amount. Furthermore, we see their already existing mental health concerns – catastrophising and intrusive thoughts – become exacerbated by the constancy and onslaught of exhausting affects. Their self-portrait, completed with heavy lidded eyes, tired lines and dark shading, shown in figure 6.2, alerts us to the reality and intensity of their situation.

In our conversation, I asked Osh about the spatial origins of their exhaustion. Their words strengthen my argument that for many young trans people, exhaustion forms a continuous presence with few clear spatial and temporal boundaries:

James: [Are] there certain places you feel that exhaustion way more [than] in others or is it more like a constant presence?

Osh: It's more like a constant presence. It's, it's a constant presence but there's a variation depending on who I'm with and in what social context I'm in, 'cos OK, like at work there's a need to be professional [...] whereas like I'm at home or with my girlfriend I'm pretty much just like lowest gauge and I'll talk about whatever I want, like it's fine. But if I'm at home with my parents, I'll only mention that maybe a little bit, and I won't go into detail on it [...] I'm *always monitoring* how I come off because I know that when I come off in a way that's unlikeable, or controversial, I'll take a stand on political things I don't agree with overtly. But I don't wanna come off in a way that people could pick holes in, basically, so.

James: And that self-monitoring, does that extend to the way that you portray yourself or hold yourself in life situations

Osh: Literally in *every* situation. Like I'll, I, for friggin', up until I was about 16 I would just fake opinions on things [...] just immediately and I wouldn't form my own opinions

James: What about in terms of the way that you like hold your body like in spaces...

Osh: Oh yeah, if it's a space where I feel like I am *under threat* or I'm like, or if it's a space in which I feel like I'm criticised which is hard for me but I'll like *cave inwards* on myself, I won't make eye contact with them as much as possible, I'll look at the floor, I'll look away, I'll look up, I'll keep everything sort of down and submissive

James: Is that sort of like burying the transness as well?

Osh: Hugely.

In this excerpt, it is clear that although Osh's exhaustion forms a constant embodied presence impacting their performance of self, gender, and transness on an ongoing basis (such that they self-monitor in 'literally every situation'), there are certain spaces where this exhaustion, or indeed their anticipatory exhaustion, varies in intensity. It is both the breadth of exhaustion and its entrenchment in Osh's everyday life *and* its variation in intensity that should capture our attention. In an argument that follows throughout most young trans people's stories in this research, it is the interaction between the most exhaustion-producing experiences and those that operate at lower, or more subtle emotional levels, that produces exhaustion's pervasive presence in the everyday lives of trans youth.

Certain young people experienced the constancy of exhaustion-inducing affects and encounters with a particular intensity as they simultaneously faced a constancy of multiple oppressions along intersectional lines of race, disability, age, sexuality, and so on. Certain participants were aware of relative embodied privileges they held relative to other young trans people who might experience 'out-

of-placeness' and exhaustion with particular frequency/force. As Tom (he/him, 18-21), a young trans man of colour told me:

'I walked into [supermarket chain] just across [from home] and the first thing I saw was the front page of [a newspaper] saying "Transgender sex beast, xyz..." like whatever [...] this is directly across from my accommodation and thank *goodness* I'm not 100% a visible trans person, but I know there are other people in my accommodation who are. Like, and I know that [they have been attacked there]. I know of [incidents] of trans female friends, always, being attacked or kicked or just you know had nasty words said to them. So it's like *here's the problem*, first of all, it's right across the road being sold in the supermarket for a penny. So it absolutely does filter into my life and it's greatly upsetting. [However] I do have the privilege of being able to compartmentalise it because realistically I *don't* face a huge amount of discrimination *specifically* for being trans, cos I have that privilege of being able to just fly under the radar and be pretty much as invisible as I was before [but] it effects my friends, and that affects me, and it could very well affect me on a really bad day. It's... completely heart-breaking, really... I mean, what else can I say about it? It won't even have just been in that one [supermarket chain] will it? It will have gone out to all of them. Anywhere I could be walking, somebody could be walking with that newspaper, I could be walking with a trans friend who is a lot more visible than me...'

Here, the force and violence of trans-hostile discourse is laid bare. Tom's words describing confronting such overt discourse near to his home attests to the felt dimensions of this violence and its seepage into his life. The spatial distribution of the newspaper, and its presence across his city, is a cause of anxiety and deep upset. However, as a 'not 100% visible trans person', Tom is also acutely aware that other young trans people – perhaps young trans women or young people with less passing privilege (see glossary), those who are positioned more regularly/intensely as 'out-of-place' – are likely to suffer even worse consequences, even physical violence and overt, public discrimination. In our 'one-to-one session', Tom described the exhausting nature of this awareness, and his worries and anxieties for both himself and for his young trans friends who do not occupy the same relative privileges. Tom's reflection that the trans-hostile newspaper could appear anywhere also emphasises the spatial pervasiveness of potential danger, hostility, or violence. It is clear, therefore, how exhausting the anticipation of confronting such transphobia or trans-hostility can be.

In a further example, Cal (he/him, 14-17), a young trans person of colour (POC) talked to me of misgendering he received from other cisgender POC (both queer and straight), marginalisation he experienced within queer POC communities, and his difficult home and school life experiences wherein he, his body, and his self-expression were restricted and controlled by parents, teachers, and others. Such experiences contrasted to being regularly affirmed in G.I. spaces. His story demonstrates how affects and social encounters inducing exhaustion can, for many trans youth, infiltrate into almost all everyday life spaces:

‘Cal described feeling as though he “can’t get it right” in certain, if not all, settings, and felt he faced *scrutiny in all spaces* – whether trans, queer, everyday, or otherwise. We delved into this scrutiny further, and Cal described feeling as though he is often “seen only as trans”, because of his visible transness, and went into depth about the stress this places on him in the everyday. He also described experiencing street harassment as he is seen as “a rarity” – a body which visibly deviates from the norm – because he is queer, trans, and a person of colour (POC). He talked of the “verbal violation” he has experienced as a result, and again about the anxious feeling of being “on edge” because of the constancy and overwhelming nature of this scrutiny and overt hostility.

‘Cal spoke at length of his school experiences, describing them as “painful”, and his stories painted an endurance, a labour, and a deep-set frustration. He told us that “being trans at school is a full time job”, talking of the excessive scrutiny he experiences from those present in the school environment, and their lack of knowledge or support around issues he faces. After talking of his health difficulties, bruising he was experiencing while binding, and his experience of dysphoria, he told me of his difficult family relationships. For him, G.I. had provided something to fall back on, a safety net, a place to retrieve guidance in the absence of familial support.

‘A residential visit to the countryside for young queer people of colour, involving queer story-sharing, muddy walks, and crafts, allowed Cal to feel “five days of being mentally well, and feeling positive and relaxed”; indeed, for him, the trip created spaces that felt *even more safe* than G.I. However, “coming down” from being embroiled in such a utopic place caused anxiety to set in, and I could tell from his deep breaths when discussing this, that it was persisting. Ultimately, he described the residential as a “glamourized version of life”.’ (Field note excerpts, 11 December 2018¹⁰⁶)

Through these fragments of Cal’s story, we see both the constancy of hostile affects and encounters, and their layering according to lines of social and bodily difference through which he experienced othering, exclusions, and the continuous and multifaceted denial of his selfhood and lived reality. His body and subject position – at various times too trans, brown, or queer for the spaces he encountered – led to his receiving such hostile affects with particular intensity and regularity. Yet Cal’s story also represents – as discussed in chapter seven – the potentially life-saving nature of services and spaces provided by G.I., and other trans and queer ‘safe spaces’ offering spaces for restoration and repletion (Ahmed, 2013) more broadly. Spaces of G.I. and those for queer POC offered Cal, as with many participants in my research, the material and affective dynamics in which to develop potentiality and to persevere in spite of his ongoing difficult life conditions. The level of embodied safety and

¹⁰⁶ I wrote detailed field notes based upon extensive participatory diagrams constructed with young people in the workshop after this session as one participant did not wish to be recorded. The diagrams incorporated the phrasing of the young people.

comfort Cal experienced while in the longer-term space for queer POC, however, complicate this exhaustion-potentiality paradox further. Indeed, because their quasi-utopic atmospheres and dynamics offer a ‘glamourised version of life’, the embodied anxiety and exhaustion Cal experienced when re-engaging in everyday activities and spaces, returned with a sharp affective intensity that deepened his general sense of weariness.

Cal’s experiences resonate with other stories shared by trans youth, although most noted the positive, life-saving consequences of being embroiled in exclusively trans spaces as, for example, ‘somewhere where you can just *breathe*, even if it’s just for a few hours’ (Kane, he/him, 18-21) including those of G.I. and more informal/ephemeral activist spaces, both of which become sites of resilience, resistance, and restoration (i.e. from exhaustion and ‘out-of-placeness’; see chapter seven). For example, Séan (he/him, 18-21) described his experience of returning from a residential space constructed for, and occupied by, trans people celebrating the diversity of gender, to the constancy of misgendering as a dominant force in their everyday life. Séan told me:

‘As soon as I spoke to cis people [again] in the real world I had those questions [around the existence of trans youth] again, and I had people misgendering me again [but now] I feel less able to accept defeat with it. So I’m a little angrier, and I’m a little bit quicker to ... snap at people if they’re transphobic at this point.’

Here, and throughout our conversation, Séan, like many participants, described his anger at spaces of everyday life dominated by cisgender expectations, and the actions of trans-hostile cisgender people, as being particularly acute as a result of his immersion in a space where questions around the existence of trans youth and misgendering were absent. This story fragment reflects, again, that the constant temporalities of exhaustion can (re)produce subjects that are no longer willing to merely receive hostility, but are prepared to collectivise and resist, drawing upon energies and affects crafted and experienced in trans ‘safe spaces’ to do so. The atmospheres, practices, and affects of such sites lodge as embodied memories, forming a bodily archive of potentials that make possible the generation of altered, more positive, or affirming, future encounters. The spatial origins of embodied potentialities for trans folk are also examined by Crawford (2010: 519; 2015), who describes their emotional expectations or responses to spaces as permeating into the materiality of specific sites, to the extent that physical architectures become ‘virtual archives of affect’, whether hostile, fearful, affirming, or otherwise. From this perspective, the embodied force of a place is not simply the product of events which took place there before, but of the materiality of the space as an active agent. This understanding counters research that examines trans experiences as though spaces were neutral surfaces which play no role in embodied experience within or beyond particular sites.

6.4.2 *Waiting and temporal unboundedness*

'I tend to see [...] waiting as the only thing keeping me from being my *ultimate self*.'
—Jón

Participants often described the experience of *waiting* as a particularly exhausting experience that suffuses many aspects of their everyday lives. As Eilidh (she/her, 22-25), reading from a participatory diagram that summarised the thoughts of a small group of participants on the theme of 'waiting', described:

'So what have we got? ... There's things we wait for, waiting to be old, blood results, yeah that's a big one, waiting for others to get their shit together [*everyone laughs*], err, [waiting for] the Tavi [*collective groan*], the GRA consultation [*everyone laughs*], doctor appointments slash referrals, errm blood tests or results again, and family support.'¹⁰⁷

This partial list of experiences involving young trans people continually waiting demonstrates not only the *extent* to which waiting is imbued in the activities and spaces of everyday life for many trans youth, but how their experiences are interwoven within societal, governmental, and discourse-related forces over which they can exert limited control or influence. As Eilidh explained in a group workshop themed around 'waiting' as trans youth:

'Yeah, I feel like, thinking of sort of the medical route again, when you go to a referral you do that one moment and then you're sort of expected to just... *wait* until you get the next bit of information, could be maybe six weeks before your appointment, it could be at any stage. Um... so I was thinking about like sort of *layers* of waiting that we have as well. And in waiting for an appointment, you're also waiting for the system to change, you're also waiting for the government to change how they approach the whole situation, you're also waiting for [so many other things]...'

Here, we begin to see how waiting for trans youth often works as an ongoing exhausting temporality, the end point or resolution of which is obscured. The emotional force and violence of this waiting is exacerbated by intersecting and overlapping '*layers* of waiting' that often simultaneously originate from multiple sources and are concentrated in multiple spaces.

We also see in Eilidh's words that waiting often emerges in relation to unknown or imperceptible sources, with the vagueness of 'waiting for the system to change' exemplifying how waiting for young trans people is often simply the constant embodied condition of waiting for multiple factors that might improve ones' everyday life to fall into place. For many young trans people without easy access to such spaces or mechanisms as healthcare (or even those with such access), it feels unlikely that this constancy will recede within a recognisable timeframe. Even when the source of

¹⁰⁷ The 'Tavi' refers to the Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust, one of only two Gender Identity Development Service (GIDS) clinics in England.

waiting is clear ('the government', for example): these sources and mechanisms tend to be those which young trans people exert little to no control over or are subject to ever-changing political volatility or are reliant on public or governmental goodwill. This obscurity and emotional intensity while waiting can be exacerbated by certain processes, as Jón (he/they/'something else', 18-21) explained:

'It's especially like how when waiting is *such a lonely process*, especially when it's one that's completely devoid of communication, then you end up very, very alone. So to be able to turn to other people [using a trans-led social media chat function] in similar boats and be like "aahhhh my doctor hasn't communicated to me" or whatever, and other people can go "ughh same", then suddenly it's still shit, but it's not a lonely process, there are other people going through similar things, and you can talk about them.'

Here, we see that even when extended wait times that are imposed on *collectives* of young trans people (for example, NHS waiting times, waiting for legislative change, and waiting between sessions at G.I.), because of the often fragmented or singular means in which they are communicated and put in place, they are felt and experienced *individually*. This individual absorption of affects related to waiting and delay that many trans youth are accustomed to puts pressure on individual young trans people and their bodies to bear the additional load and emotional stress of uncertainty and obscurity. However, as Jón alludes to, young trans people often craft collective responses as a solution to individually experienced exhaustion related to living through extended temporalities. The young people in Jón's story develop a flourishing space to share or re-shape their experiences of waiting and associated exhaustion. I explore such resilience practices and spaces in greater depth in the following chapter.

Other participants described experiences of waiting that were less temporally unbounded but just as exhausting, including Cal (he/him, 14-17) speaking in a different group workshop to that aforementioned). In the workshop participants were drawing and writing on cards what the term 'escapism' meant to them. I asked Cal about his thoughts:

James: What about you, Cal? What kind of things did you put?

Cal: Erm I put down being self-aware of my situations like where I am. So like just, recently I've been like "I don't wanna go to school and I don't wanna be here" [although] like I have to be here technically by law. [Though I do] feel like I'm *able* to be there even though I really don't *want* to be there. And again with like being at home, I don't wanna be here but I *have* to be here, because I have to have somewhere to live. And it's kind of like, there are some things I can't change, they're situational right now but you know next year that won't be my situation, like I'll be at uni, be able to move out. But like, things I *can* change, like I don't have to do any extra that I don't wanna do, I don't have to like, I get to go and hang out with my friends if I want to. As soon as school ends I change my clothes and go hang out with my friends and do something like erm, I went to the London Queer Fashion Show, that was so fun. [...] And just like recognising the things I can't change and the things I *can*, and so like I can't change thoughts that are in my head, but I can change how I react to them [...] just like tryna

be in like spaces where I like feel *safe* and I can *laugh* and not feel stressed out. And feeling like there's noisy, chaotic spaces where I [have to] put on like this mask [makes] me feel really awful.

James: And is that [being able to move out, etc.] making you feel better about thinking about the future as well?

Cal: Yeah, like erm acknowledging that my situation is *temporary* is helpful cos I'm like "in 6 months time my situation will be different, I'll be getting my study leave, I'll do my A Levels and then I won't be in this situation." And so like that anticipation and waiting *sucks* but it's like I'm *waiting for something* and that's ok. [...] there's so many things in my life that are situational and won't be there next year. Like next year I'm like saving up money so I can go to an adult gender clinic, my parents won't pay for me to go, [*sarcastically:*] lovely people [*sighs deeply*] When I'm 18, I'll get the other opportunities which will make me feel better which I don't *have now*, and I'm just counting down the days when I'm not at school, or I don't have to live at home any more...

In this excerpt, we see Cal's exhaustion, its connection to his caregivers, and its embeddedness in the spaces he is present in the most: home and school and other 'noisy and chaotic spaces' that dominate in his everyday life. We see the emotional burden of disguising his transness that Cal is forced to almost constantly confront and feel. Cal conveys his exhaustion and frustration with his current situation and the limited agency he has to change its conditions, although he displays remarkable resilience in 'feel[ing] able to be there' in spaces wherein he is unable to live authentically and reacting positively and constructively to negative or exhausting 'thoughts that are in [his] head'. Unlike the other young people's stories featured thus far, as he is 'waiting for something' – situations, spaces, and times that will allow him to live more authentically and with greater happiness – the situational and *temporary nature* of Cal's exhaustion emergent out of waiting is clearer, and he has crafted a pathway to a positive futurity that he can 'count down the days' remaining until aspects of it arrive. In this sense, his exhaustion is about *enduring* the conditions of the present in order to reach a time of greater autonomy, independence, and 'other opportunities' that he is unable to have now. Perhaps for this reason, Cal describes waiting as *anticipation*. I argue that Cal's positioning of waiting as anticipation is a radical reframing that exists both because of and in spite of events, spaces, and encounters that attempt to dampen his fortitude. This endurance involves, for Cal, like many young trans people, the recognition that he is able to cope by crafting positive experiences out of his negative life situation – attending queer spaces, immersing himself in trans collectives and spaces, changing into clothes he feels more comfortable in wherever possible, and so on. This radically reaffirms the constant presence of young trans people's *agency* which often actively flourishes as a result of experiencing and embodying exhaustion.

Extreme frustration and weariness emergent from limited control over everyday life conditions was captured by many other participants who referred to their experiences in an array of spatial contexts. For instance, Mark (he/him, 18-21), whose weariness with facing with the violence of deliberate and persistent misgendering, and the ongoing role this played in his life, structured much of our story-sharing. After sharing stories of his experiences of being read as a woman, and being misgendered in everyday spaces such as banks and nightclubs where notions of binary gender often dominate with greater intensity, Mark told me:

‘I was put in an inpatient unit a few months ago, and in there I had just endless misgendering. Like my care plan just said ‘she’ all the way through and I was like ughhhh. I was like ‘I’m already in a state and now you’ve handed me this care form which misgenders me throughout it’, [*becoming angrier*] ‘I don’t have the ENERGY to fight that battle. I had to have a massive argument with the ward manager, and it’s like I’M REALLY NOT WELL,’ I shouldn’t be having those kind of arguments.’

Mark also shared his experience of meeting young trans man Paul in the unit, who Mark described as being ‘just misgendered in EVERY care form. And just... was too ill to fight it, they were calling him she, every time.’ Mark continued:

‘I ended up on a female ward because I didn’t have any fight left in me, and I was like “I can’t actually fight this battle” but the second you say that, you let them, you end up in shit situations. I think it’s that kind of *finding* someone else in the same situation as me, for me it was finding Paul and both of us going this isn’t OK, we’re going to get through this and stand up to this. And that gave us both kind of the willpower and *energy* to fight it, to be like it’s not OK.’

Mark’s story demonstrates, again, that spaces and services that should work *for* trans youth can become dominated by practices which subject them to needless tension and anxiety, the constancy and temporally-unbounded nature of which results in an exhausted young trans subject emerging. In Mark’s story, although trans youth are obligated to produce change and advocate for their own healthcare, Mark’s agency is in practice eroded through a lack of understanding amongst those overseeing and providing care, whose misgendering is pervasive. This constant limiting of agency and self-determination, spurs and co-creates a deeply-set exhaustion, a vicious cycle which limits the health benefits of the medical space in which Mark was placed. It is only through sharing in the labour of countering exhaustion with Paul, of playing the system together and ‘standing up’ to the caregivers in order to maintain health and wellbeing, that Mark could draw upon new ‘willpower and energy’ to create potentiality and orient towards a future that is well.

6.5 Chapter conclusions: Trans youth spaces, bodies, and subjectivities in the context of exhaustion

Throughout this chapter, I have explored a small number of participants' stories of the felt and embodied experience of everyday exhaustion. I have examined these stories to consider how their exhaustion surfaces and becomes embodied during the onslaught of myriad forces acting against (and felt differentially by) young trans bodies and subjects. Throughout, I have argued for a reconceptualisation of exhaustion, one which places emphasis on the *specificities* of the bodies, subject positions, and spatial interactions of those living through the condition, rather than assuming a universally-held experience. My reading of Deleuze (1995) in particular has allowed me to argue that young trans people who continually experience and embody exhausting life conditions can, paradoxically, (re)claim agency, (re)make space, and produce new, affirming connections to(wards) spaces, bodies, communities, and future events and encounters. These spatialities and potentialities are explored in the following chapter.

Significantly, I have also reconceptualised exhaustion by illuminating its non-linear, messy, and often prolonged temporalities, observing that these temporalities constitute a function of lived exhaustion whilst making possible its potentialities. The extended, durative, and messy temporalities of exhaustion experienced by young trans people are many and varied: in this chapter, I have demonstrated the bodily implications that arise when trans youth experience a slow constancy and a messy casting back and forth between past, present, and future experiences they are likely to experience with greater intensity than cisgender people. Examining these temporalities, I argue, sheds light on the myriad embodiments and modes of living that emerge when particular individuals, such as young trans people, are affected by the hostile, wearing, or agency-limiting forces implicated in exhaustion. The temporalities of exhaustion align with those of 'out-of-placeness' in terms of their extended duration, gradual accrual, and messiness. In the following chapter, I continue this narrative thread attentive to temporalities by recognising the resilient, resistive, and restorative practices and spaces that young trans people create and draw upon to alleviate or craft stability within the spatial and temporal conditions that 'out-of-placeness' and exhaustion bring about. I argue that much work remains to fully examine the temporal conditions which young trans people live with and negotiate in their everyday lives.



Figure 6.3. Osh's artwork showing their resilience; part of a set of two pieces (see figure 6.2).

Young trans people's stories of exhaustion reflect continuous and multiple forms of *wearing away* they might experience, with potentially damaging consequences over their constantly forming subjectivities and experiences underpinning this subject formation, including their agency, self-affirmation, dysphoria, and mental wellbeing. However, by queering exhaustion, following Sara Ahmed, I have made the case that to receive the violence and onslaught of exhaustion-inducing forces, is to be given opportunities to embody the potential to *create new lines and alignments* for living through hostile everyday life conditions authentically and purposefully. Young trans people's stories attest to the hopeful, resilient, and persistent capacities of young trans people, trans communities, and trans and queer spaces to survive and *flourish* within hostile and exhausting life conditions. Osh's artwork in Figure 6.3, a companion to Figure 6.2, viscerally demonstrates this flourishing. Indeed, their work draws attention to their celebration of their body and transness: a process of self-love that radically exists in spite of the actions of trans-hostile others that attempt to limit young trans people's ability to live authentically and contentedly.

By emphasising the *possibilities* and *potentialities* created through embodying an exhausted body and subject position, I have begun to highlight the importance of radical (if paradoxical) restorative and resilient practices, and 'safe' and trans-affirming spaces such as those offered by G.I. or those created by young trans people themselves that they access, create, and maintain during times of exhaustion. I argue that the temporalities of exhaustion, far from initiating a falling-away of self-affirmation, can hold the potential (for particular trans youth in certain contexts) to induce radical *flourishing* and (re)making

of trans youth subjectivities and bodies. Indeed, throughout each story fragment presented, trans youth demonstrate their ability to survive and embrace their transness and authentic selves. In the following chapter, I also argue that the work and spaces of organisations like G.I. will require continued, augmented support to ease the flourishing and affirmation of trans youth in the increasingly trans-hostile conditions of contemporary society. I contend that we cannot unbind exhaustion, like ‘out-of-placeness’, from resilience, resistance, and restoration, and it is both the spatial and temporal conditions lived with, and affirmative practices and spaces generated by, marginalised individuals and communities that should capture our attention when turning to exhaustion.

Spaces and practices of resilience, resistance, and restoration

7.1 Chapter introduction: Entanglements of resilience, resistance, and restoration

‘You will need resilience in abundance as the roadmap is unfolded.’

–Emily Brothers (2017: 95) in *To My Trans Sisters*

How do young trans people manage the feelings of ‘out-of-placeness’ and exhaustion that have poignantly emerged in their stories in earlier chapters? In this chapter, I indicate how my participants engage in practices and spaces of resilience, resistance, and restoration (RRR) to counterbalance those often overwhelming affects and atmospheres. In doing so, I develop a spatial and temporal account of such practices and spaces, broadly applicable to other queer/marginalised folk, that speaks to how they are experienced by young trans people as interwoven *modes of being in the world*. I argue that resistance and restoration should be considered as equally important as resilience – a condition already well-recognised as significant by certain queer and feminist literatures – in exploring how marginalised people negotiate difficult everyday life conditions. In the chapter, I ask: What are the resilience, resistance, and restoration (RRR) mechanisms and spaces created and drawn upon by trans youth in their everyday lives? How do these mechanisms and spaces respond to everyday ‘out-of-placeness’ and exhaustion? And what significance do they hold in young trans people’s everyday lives, encounters, and imagined futures? In doing so, I further emphasise young trans people’s agency and ability to improve their everyday life conditions. I also highlight the (often life-saving) importance of trans/queer ‘safe spaces’ and organisations such as G.I.. As such, this chapter responds to calls for further qualitative studies of empowerment and resilience mechanisms used by LGBT + people (Craig, 2015), trans folk (Singh *et al.*, 2011), and trans youth more specifically (Singh *et al.*, 2013; 2014).

Many conversations during the research focussed on self-empowerment, escapism, and everyday practices of discord and defiance. As such, I came to understand that (a) constructing and occupying a bodily and subject position of *resilience*, (b) developing agency reactive to, and both actively and subconsciously *resisting*, hostile others, structures, and discourses,¹⁰⁸ and (c) crafting and accessing

¹⁰⁸ Feminist approaches to resistance seek to incorporate everyday actions, re-purposing them as radical and potentially culture-shifting in the face of patriarchal, misogynistic structures (Mountz *et al.*, 2015). Note how Ahmed (2000: 159; my emphasis) refers to resistance: ‘If she does not *speak her resistance*, then how can we hear her? How can we *listen out further*? How can we listen carefully?’ Here, Ahmed implies that resistance incorporates active, conscious action (speaking out) forcing a change (others hearing struggles) whereby others can, in Ahmed’s words, ‘listen out’ to their resistive act. Resistance, through this understanding, is a conscious strategy which involves a will to be heard, to contest, or to enact change. However, young trans people’s RRR often constitute more subconscious emotions and affects.

‘safe spaces’ and practices for *restoration* (and indeed resilience and resistance),¹⁰⁹ were central actions and embodied positions – even if subconsciously/fleetingly – in most participants’ lives. Through participants’ stories, it became obvious that each modality of RRR was deeply intertwined and, temporally speaking, like ‘out-of-placeness’ and exhaustion, formed a *continuous presence felt and (re)formed through affect, atmosphere, and socio-materialities*. As conditions constructed in response to ‘out-of-placeness’ and exhaustion, RRR constituted primary drivers of spaces and moments of joy, affirmation, and solidarity.

Recognising the non-hierarchical and deeply entangled, co-constitutive nature of resilience, resistance, and restoration, I refer to the conditions as ‘RRR’ as a novel means of recognising their interconnectedness and the multiplicity of ways that trans youth and marginalised folk in similar positions contest and generate positive life conditions within general societal hostility and individualised experiences of ‘out-of-placeness’/exhaustion. This chapter focusses on participants’ collective and individual efforts to, for example, generate everyday wellbeing and comfort, improve trans youth visibility and voice-sharing/raising, develop and communicate more expansive understandings of gender and transness (to one another and to cis others), grow skills/confidence, validate, affirm, and demonstrate solidarities with one another, share/disseminate trans knowledge, create and access trans and queer spaces (both virtual and physical), and *enjoy and live through everyday life authentically*, whether or not they focus on their youth or transness. In contrast to discourse portraying trans youth as, for example, uncertain or in receipt of a social contagion (see chapter one), almost all participants found joy in their transness but, likewise, did not always focus on ‘being trans’ as their defining identity or embodiment – even when practicing RRR – in every space or encounter.

I next explore existing conceptualisations of resilience, outlining how I situate this chapter within, and expand, this literature (section 7.2), before turning to young trans people’s *everyday embodied practices* of RRR (7.3). I then examine *spaces of RRR* by focussing on young people’s experiences of G.I. ‘safe spaces’ (7.4). In doing so, three core modes of trans youth RRR emerge: young trans people fostering and experiencing RRR together, RRR as an ongoing, continuous process which forms a backdrop in participants’ everyday lives and their negotiation of temporalities of ‘out-of-placeness’/exhaustion through RRR practices, including orienting toward (their) futures. Although each

¹⁰⁹ Restoration is less well-recognised in queer resilience literature. My conception of restoration is inspired by Black feminist work on (spaces of) self-care and geographical work on spaces as therapeutic landscapes and ‘enabling places’ (e.g. Laws, 2009; Lea, 2008). I argue that such sites offer restoration and respite from everyday difficulties/hostilities, in turn enabling other forms of resilience and resistance both spatially and temporally within such spaces and beyond.

interwoven ‘R’ is discussed throughout, restoration is predominantly dealt with in section 7.4, which discusses how G.I. spaces offer trans youth particularly restorative and formative experiences.

7.2 Conceptualising young trans people’s resilience, resistance, and restoration

As *resilience* has often been constructed in the social sciences as the primary mode of negotiating hostility/marginalisation, this section specifically examines how resilience has been conceptualised. I then consider recent queer and feminist research which influenced my own framework that also recognises resistance and restoration as significant in such negotiations. By reflecting upon resilience and the specificity of trans youth experiences, I position RRR as often existing and emerging beyond ‘strength from adversity’, ‘growth out of crisis’ and ‘struggle and desire’ tropes. I also introduce non-linear temporalities and futurity to the literatures I review, considering what an RRR framework offers for conceptualising responses to everyday spatial, temporal, and embodied conditions such as exhaustion and ‘out-of-placeness’. This temporal – rather than strictly spatial – approach offers insight into how RRR spaces and strategies are maintained and encountered over time, and allows me to consider how RRR enable trans youth to negotiate the temporalities of such conditions as exhaustion and ‘out-of-placeness’ and construct and project toward particular futures.

7.2.1 ‘Struggle and desire’: The stagnation of resiliency concepts

In the social/environmental sciences, resilience has been typically conceptualised through frameworks including communities’ capacities to respond to extreme events, although the literature has recently begun to consider – as discussed in chapter six – *potentialities* paradoxically generated by detrimental circumstances and experiences, including processes of adapting/forming structures promoting growth and evolution (Cover, 2013; Craig, 2015; Folke, 2006; Hall and Lamant, 2013; Wilson, 2017). Resilience has also been tied in social science literatures to modern, neoliberal life, by aligning the experiences of individuals, communities and groups with market logics/socio-political crises (Hall and Lamant, 2013; Sools and Mooren, 2012). However, dominant understandings of resilience have stagnated, presenting resilience as practices and experiences including ‘crafting normalcy, affirming identity anchors, maintaining and using communication networks, putting alternative logics to work, and legitimising negative feelings while foregrounding positive action’ (Buzzanell, 2010: 3). More recently, human geographers have moved from social resilience models to notions of individual and ‘community resilience’ whereby social systems ‘reorganise, change and learn in response to [threats]’ (Wilson, 2017: 4). This focus has re-produced problematic ideas including that resilience and vulnerability are oppositional (*Ibid.*), and that resilience practices congeal around significant events (e.g. Craig, 2015) and indeed solely past and present temporalities. Indeed, I am critical of work that has problematically

associated resilience with ‘healing’ and ‘growth out of crisis’ tropes (e.g. Walsh, 2003) and individuals’ ‘innate’ ability to adapt to ‘challenging environments’ (Singh, 2013: 692): this literature agrees that resilience (and I argue therefore also resistance and restoration) always-already emerges from ‘struggle and desire’ (Flynn *et al.*, 2012: v). However, I find affinity with others’ work, such as that of James (2015), whose cultural feminist approach notes that individuals’ resilience is tied to *society’s* resilience capabilities to argue that ‘overcoming’ damaging experience(s) might allow individuals to increase the *liveability* of life (*Ibid.*). In this framework, those unable to improve this liveability increase their marginality future, a feedback loop that, as argued in previous chapters, reflects how ‘out-of-placeness’ and exhaustion are upheld and reproduced.

In the context of LGBTQ+ youth health, resilience has been positioned as ‘buffering negative effects that may lead to poor health and mental health outcomes’ (Craig, 2015: 271). This framing is solidified through scholars’ appeals to healthcare and youth practitioners to boost young LGBTQ+ people’s resilience (Scourfield *et al.*, 2008). This essentialist model, viewing queer folk as ‘fundamentally resilient’ (Cover, 2013) and framing LGBTQ+ peoples’ resilience as existing ‘in the face of adversity’, is rarely fully theoretically realised and has not recognised the significance of temporalities. Moreover, I argue that concentrating on ‘adversity’ does not reflect many young trans people’s everyday lives, which are not solely composed of hardship/distress. As already demonstrated in chapters five and six, trans youth may develop RRR mechanisms and spaces in reaction to (or in *anticipation* of) more durative, subconscious, or spatially-specific accruals of hostility or difficulty.

7.2.2 *Conceptualising resilience, resistance, and restoration to better reflect young trans people’s lives*

In this section, I draw on existing work to consider how RRR mechanisms/spaces can be developed to better reflect young trans people’s lived realities. Certain literatures reveal the transformative potential of RRR practices/spaces over how ‘life is lived’ by trans youth (see Flynn *et al.*, 2012). Through this work, I want to emphasise the *place-based* facets of RRR.¹¹⁰ To this end, I focus on connections between trans youth and their everyday landscapes, and the *collectivity* of trans youth RRR in, for example, trans and queer ‘safe spaces’ including those provided by G.I.. Young trans people’s experiences can also be reflected through resiliency frameworks incorporating feminist work that considers questions of agency (Flynn *et al.*, 2012), embodiment (Ahmed, 2017), and relationality (Hartling, 2008). By recognising structures and hierarchies which privilege and impede individuals and communities – in phrasing that reflects my adoption of a framing attentive to the specificities of individual trans youth and their life

¹¹⁰ I have been influenced by Indigenous scholarship, which appreciates connections between land(scape) and the continuity of indigenous life/cultures relative to violence and trauma (McGuire-Kishebakabaykwe, 2010).

contexts – Flynn *et al.* (2012: ii) present resilience ‘not as fundamentally psychological, but rhetorical, relational and contextual’. Similarly, Hartling (2008) introduce ‘relational resilience’, which considers how the condition forms through and within relationships, noting that – similarly to how I have demonstrated ‘out-of-placeness’/exhaustion operate – *with each resilient act, an individuals’ capacity for resilience is augmented*. From this perspective, resilience accrues and is enhanced through practices of self-worth, empowerment, and connection to others. Such feminist perspectives recognise the *processual* nature of resilience rather than its ‘psychological or social propert[ies]’ (Flynn *et al.*, 2012: ii). This focus on the gradual accrual of resilience represents a need for researchers to better attend to the *temporal* aspects of RRR. I argue that this focus on *process* must account for social, spatial, and material shifts which impact and spur resilient, resistive, and restorative *ways of being* that build over time. These temporal dimensions are reflected in young trans people’s stories, which highlight how they constantly practice/embody RRR through everyday embodied practices and by accessing/cultivating spaces which boost agency or augment RRR capacities that aid in their negotiation of past, present, and future experiences and selves.

Sara Ahmed (2017: 189) further enlivens resilience by exploring the toll exacted by occupying a ‘feminist killjoy’ subject position, arguing that resilience constitutes negotiating power structures through which marginalised folk must ‘be willing to bear more; [and] be[come] stronger so [they] can bear more’. Understanding that certain trans folk more specifically are subject to constant ‘rebuttal’, Ahmed (2016a) notes that trans people continually experience systems ‘constantly chipping away at [their] being’ (a metaphor for exhaustion also used by Berlant, 2011). This constitutes a ‘hammering’ against their right to exist (Ahmed, 2016a), the constant questioning of which, as I have demonstrated, reinforces young trans people’s everyday ‘out-of-placeness’. These framings allow me to recognise how such structures as cisnormativity demand that trans youth work harder and harder to live with societal oppressions and discrimination. From this perspective, resilience emerges as a ‘technology of will’ through self-governance of ourselves as bodies subject to external forces (*Ibid.*), through an affective dynamic that throughout this thesis I have argued often directly impacts trans youth with acute intensity. Indeed, Ahmed understands resilience as partially emergent through exposure to – as I have demonstrated is the case with many participants– *continuous* pressures (such as those implicated in ‘out-of-placeness’) exerted upon bodies and their strengths and abilities to withstand such external forces. However, as participants’ stories attest, the constant conscious and pre-cognitive labour of crafting and embodying RRR practices – and not merely ‘bear[ing] more’ but finding ways to live authentically through each RRR modality – is, unlike exhaustion, hostility, and transphobia, often an *unacknowledged* yet spatially and temporally constant presence in young trans people’s everyday lives.

By recognising how systems and structures ‘chip away’ and ‘hammer’ against trans people, Ahmed’s (2016a: 22) also alludes to how trans people’s engagements with practices of *resistance* emerge:

‘[Experiencing] hammering is to be given a hammer, a tool through which we, too, can chip away at the surfaces of what is, or who is, including the very categories through which personhood is made meaningful—categories of sex and gender, for instance, that have chipped away at us.’

Here, Ahmed reinforces that to continually receive everyday violences – and, I argue, to be constantly positioned as ‘out-of-place’ – is to be paradoxically given means of adopting mechanisms of *resistance*, as chapter six discusses (although I argue that mechanisms/spaces of resistance also pre-empt potential difficulty or emerge in response to more gradual accruals of conditions such as ‘out-of-placeness’). From this queer perspective, repeatedly receiving the ‘hammering’ of transphobic/exclusionary violence instils a *deeper* sense of determination and resistance (and I argue a more determined strive for spaces and practices of resilience and restoration in addition). Constantly feeling and becoming positioned as ‘out-of-place’, and continually embodying exhaustion, then, is as I demonstrated in chapter six, to be provided with potentialities for *resisting* that nexus, of (temporarily) *disrupting the non-linear cycle of ‘out-of-placeness’ and exhaustion* (see figure i.i, preface). I argue that although young trans people’s RRR does not always originate from everyday violences but also from a need for such experiences as joy, affirmation, solidarity, connection, and shared experience, *RRR mechanisms and spaces – including those of resilience and restoration – also consist of ‘hammerings’ that can both resist and fundamentally improve their collective and individual everyday conditions.*

Other academic work has considered how *queer* resilience operates – it is from this work, that of Ahmed, and scholarship around restorative spaces (see footnote 105), that guides my specific approach to trans youth RRR. For example, Follins *et al.* (2013) describe a queer ‘resilience paradigm’ incorporating exposure to threats/adversities, and positive adaptations which LGBT+ individuals and communities construct in response. For example, the authors refer to Black LGBT+ communities finding comfort in ‘fictive kin’, and, similarly to a small number of participants in this research, queer non-family members assuming familial roles (*Ibid.*).¹¹¹ Meanwhile, Scourfield *et al.* (2008) identify resilience in young LGBT+ people in practices including developing strength, skills, and capital through resisting discrimination, countering discourse producing them as ‘unnatural’, and escaping to safe places/people. Again, this work reflects a discourse portraying LGBT+ people and youth as embodying ‘fundamental resilience’ (Cover, 2013) or an inherent survival proclivity (Craig, 2015). This paradigm presents queer youth resilience ‘not [...] as adaptability but the strength to tolerate and, effectively, “wait out” a bullying environment’ (Cover, 2013: n.p.). From this perspective, then, queer

¹¹¹ For example, Mark described cultivating a ‘queer family’ in the absence of supportive family members.

bodies and subjects are always-already responsible for their own advocacy, self-worth, wellbeing, and defiance through endurance and toleration. My work develops this approach by positioning the condition as an *aspect* of RRR strategies continually invoked by young trans people even when not contesting such harsh everyday realities and expanding on how RRR operates spatially and temporally.

Queer research examining resilience has also engaged *trans* people more specifically. Singh *et al.* (2011; 2013; 2014) identify key ‘resiliency themes’ from their adult participants’ narratives – including self-determination, self-worth, advocacy, community, developing a sense of hope, and engaging with role models. Meanwhile, Singh (2013) engaged young trans POC to explore how transphobia, racism, and resilience intersect, identifying social media, finding a ‘place’ in young LGBT+ communities, self-advocacy skills, and evolving self and others’ understandings of gender and race as particularly important. Crucially, these themes are relevant to my own participants’ lives and appear to recognise resistance and restoration as at least as significant as resilience. Moreover, in this literature, *trans youth* are positioned as creatively ‘resilient social change agents [who] likely develop resilience *prior to and during* their engagement with discriminatory systems’ (Singh *et al.*, 2013: 213, my emphasis). This is a particularly useful framing for this chapter as it alludes to ongoing, non-linear temporalities that I argue are both attached to, and a driving force behind, RRR spaces and practices developed and accessed by trans youth. Such durative, slow temporalities of RRR link to my conceptualisations of anticipatory anxiousness/exhaustion in chapters five and six, in that RRR strategies often become performed and embodied in *anticipation* of encountering hostile, exhausting, or disorienting affects, atmospheres, bodies, and spaces as a consequence of ‘out-of-placeness’/exhaustion. We might expect RRR strategies to emerge in the wake of hardship, but – as Singh’s work notes – they also emerge prior to and during engagements with discrimination and hostility.

I now focus on how trans youth continually weave RRR practices into their everyday lives in response to such conditions, temporalities, and embodied experiences as ‘out-of-placeness’ and exhaustion. Rather than capturing trans youth RRR as solely reactive to ‘struggle and desire’, I recognise the continual emergence of RRR as a mode of being in the world that surfaces alongside the challenges, joys, and complexities of young trans people’s everyday lives. I build upon literatures I have reviewed by focussing on the specificities of trans youth RRR, recognising the interwoven, temporally constant/messy and spatially-contingent nature of RRR, and bring diverse trans youth voices/lived experiences of such mechanisms and spaces to the fore. The theoretical framework I established in chapter three aids in this work, particularly through my focus on affects, atmospheres, socio-materialities, and temporalities of RRR.

7.3 Embodied practices of resilience, resistance, and restoration

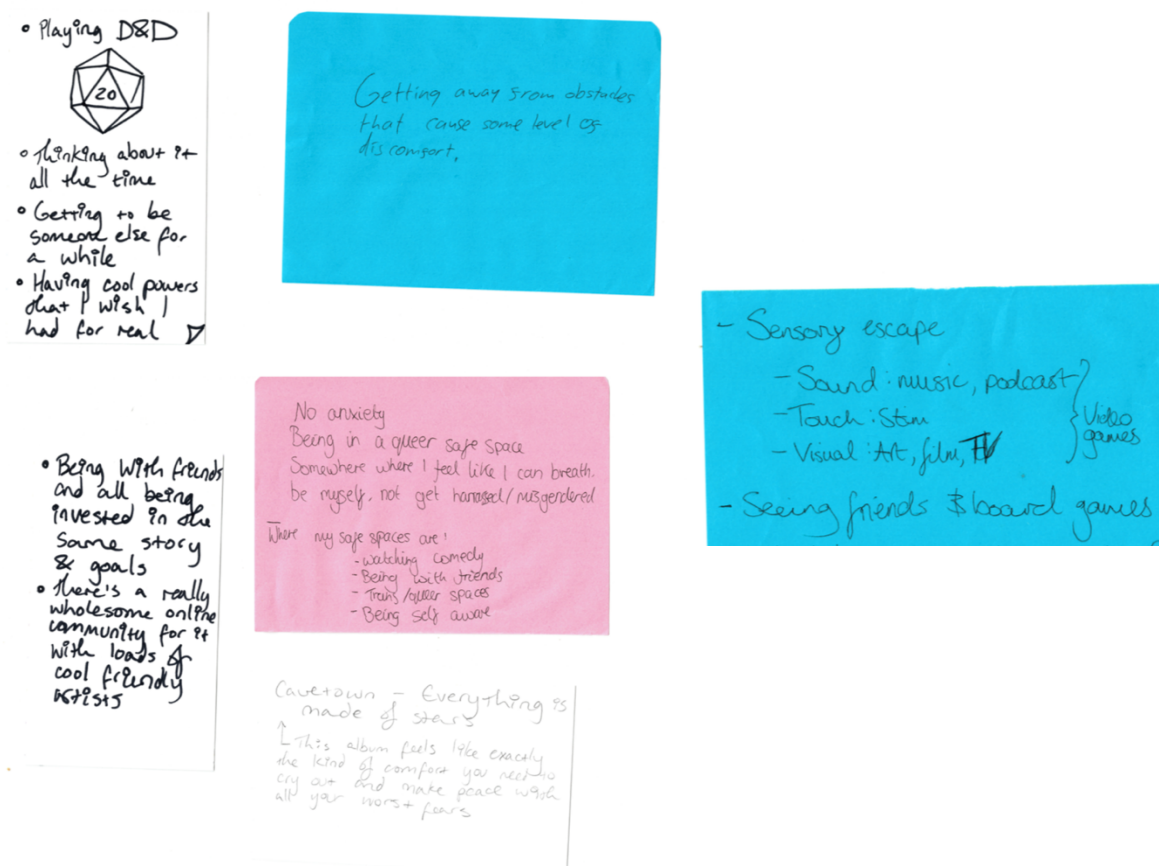


Figure 7.1. Selection of participants' thoughts on 'escapism', illustrating some of their RRR practices.

In words resonant with young trans people's stories across this section, and the temporalities of RRR I discussed in the previous section, as Flynn *et al.* (2012: iv) tell us, resilience entails 'ongoing responsiveness, never complete or predetermined.' Here, I focus on young trans people's creative, emotional, and temporally-durative *embodied practices* of RRR. Although many such practices are spatially-contingent, certain participants spoke more of, as in Billy's (he/him, 18-21) words, 'the *what* rather than *where*' of RRR mechanisms such as 'body positivity' strategies that focus on the temporally *continuous practice* or embodied nature of such strategies more than their locale – this section concentrates on such practices.

Throughout this section, rather than focussing on how modalities of RRR differ from one another, I intentionally collapse each RRR element together to recognise the interwoven nature of RRR practices and their co-constitutive nature (i.e. such that resilience, resistance, and restoration messily bleed into, and indeed enable, one another to flourish). I begin in section 7.3.1 by exploring how

participants engage with, as discussed in chapter three, ‘objects, things, and artefacts’ – materialities and material remnants – to continually develop such embodied RRR mechanisms. This discussion is later continued in the context of material-focussed RRR practices associated with trans ‘safe spaces’.

7.3.1 *Affective and emotional connections to the material: Developing everyday forms of RRR for protection and shielding*



Figure 7.2. Fragment of participatory diagram illustrating material-focussed ‘things that help’ participants while travelling.

Throughout the research, participants described continually building RRR through bodily and performative connections to material objects, artefacts, and things (see chapter three on socio-materialities), in mechanisms that make sense of and (re)negotiate their life situations, trans/queer temporalities, and everyday spatial surroundings/encounters (Andrucki and Kaplan, 2018). Embodied connections to material ‘things’ participants described include their collections of, encounters with, and proximity to small objects (such as fiddle toys, headphones, notebooks/art books, and journals) carried to facilitate a smooth passage through or distract from potentially hostile or oppressive spaces/bodies, remnants collected from G.I. spaces and carried throughout everyday life (such as ‘affirmation notes’ written by young trans friends and fellow service users, ash from the organisation’s residential camping trips, G.I.-branded clothing, letters, and so on), binders and other clothing items, even the unbroken circle arrangement of chairs that characterised the beginning/end of G.I. group spaces and make possible the sharing of intimate everyday life stories (see figure 7.3). Participants also described developing what might be termed *queer/trans orientations* to materiality and space (Ahmed, 2006) to pull

closer objects that can create a *queer affective field*: a way of being where trans youth, for example, can continually *trans* materialities and, in turn, spaces in which they are embedded (simpkins, 2017; see glossary) and achieve bodily closeness to matter which enables their safe and comfortable passage through everyday spaces and times. For example, Axel (he/him, 22-25) described collecting ‘lots of physical things’ with ‘A’ motifs, doing so (in his words) ‘to make it feel like [Axel] is actually my name [as] when you’re pre-transition it’s one of the ways to show your identity without transitioning yet, [a] way to assert your identity [that] makes you feel like actually it *is* normal [to be trans], it’s not in your imagination, and it makes you feel that you are *living* how you feel a bit more.’¹¹² Sara Ahmed argues that our *queer uses* of and for such material objects are not only important for resilience but draw attention to how we attach meaning to them, and their durative affective importance, even when such objects are physically absent and only recalled through memory. As Ahmed (2017: 236, my emphasis) notes, ‘the point of [our survival] kit is not just what we put in it; it is *the kit itself*, having somewhere to deposit those things that are necessary for your survival.’ Indeed, examining participants’ materialities associated with RRR practices allows me to illuminate their queer stories and histories of survival and joy, euphoria, and affirmation. Here, I focus on participants’ uses of materialities for RRR and everyday forms of affective protection and/or shielding from such events and encounters as violences, ‘out-of-placeness’, and exhaustion.



Figure 7.3. Unbroken circle of chairs that characterise opening and closure of G.I. spaces. (Note that this image was taken at a creative workshop and not at G.I.’s regular youth space/events which attract many more trans youth.)

¹¹² This narrative of engaging with material objects to assert one’s gender to oneself was reflected by other participants. For instance, Phil (he/him, 22-25) told me he collected and displayed objects related to his transness around his home, to remind himself (in his words) that, ‘no it’s not in your head, this is who you are’ in contrast to time spent ‘question[ing] whether for me being trans is all in my head or whether it is actually who I am’.

The following excerpt allows me to explore these protective dynamics further:

Cal: I carry around headphones with me and listen to music and stuff, like I have loads of different playlists, I just choose one and then you can like put it on shuffle. And like especially school when people are approaching me and stuff, it's a bit of a defence mechanism, sometimes it's like....

James: So [...] what is that actually blocking out?

Cal: [...] using it to create my own secret identities, well not really that secret but like you know. Erm and that's kind of it. And it's all different people coming towards me and different *shields*, so I'm in my own head and that helps me to combat anxiety sometimes, which is nice, creating that space but within my head.

Cal (different conversation): And then [I wear headphones] anywhere with my parents, I just find being around them really anxious, even if they're not doing anything or saying anything, just their presence gives me anxiety [...]

Here, we see Cal's (he/him, 14-17) create alternative soundscapes to generate a 'defence mechanism' or *shield* almost akin to a parallel space or alternative embodiment that he can occupy to negotiate difficult situations created by the approach of others and his internal (anticipatory) anxieties. This mechanism represents how young trans people can create internal, deeply individual RRR practices and (re)develop potentially hostile or difficult spaces into ephemeral 'safe spaces' that might, as with Cal, only exist fleetingly and mentally, but come to hold a physical presence or alter/(re)form a spaces that one moves through such that the body can relax or, to adopt Ahmed's language (see chapter five), 'sink into' space. I argue that such ephemeral or fleeting 'safe spaces' build in strength the more that they are created and accessed. Moreover, such engagements draw into question which space young trans people are actually occupying when conducting such practices. I propose that there is a duality of space at work here, such that trans youth like Cal often occupy multiple spaces – that they are physically present in and such fleeting, alternative atmospheres they craft as RRR mechanisms which become individually-experienced RRR spaces that, following Ahmed, trans youth can comfortably 'sink into'. This spatial duality constitutes a mechanism of protection that, for many participants, becomes a mode of being in the world that requires a continual engagement with objects and things that can develop such protections in response to or in anticipation of particular events/spaces.

Such *bodily-calming and affect-controlling mechanisms* produced through sensory engagement with objects and things were reflected by many participants who described such experiences as 'deal[ing] with anxiety and the thing with anxiety is often like, shutting down outside' (name/pronouns unrecorded), including Mark. In chapters five and six, we saw the particularly acute misgendering that Mark was subject to, and his painful experience of healthcare settings, experiences that led to his

continued embodiment of (often particularly intense and painful) ‘out-of-placeness’ and exhaustion. A month prior to our engagement, Mark left a mental health service and had, in his words: ‘home care for two weeks [...] every day [where] it was a new two [carers] and every day I had to say “can you stop calling me a she?”’ Mark had also recently ‘dropped out of college’ and felt he did not ‘have any structure to [his] days’. Much of our conversation focussed on his RRR practices in response to both his experience of particularly intense events of hostility and more everyday, durative encounters of ‘out-of-placeness’. Mark jokingly described himself as a ‘bit of a hoarder’ and throughout our conversation I sensed his deep emotional connections to material things. To the ‘one-to-one session’ space Mark brought scrapbooks, notebooks, and creative writing, lists of music and charts monitoring his water intake, his record of cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), and even a zine he had created. In the following excerpt, Mark recalled his response to his experience of violence on public transport that opened chapter five:

James: [*responding to Mark*] How does music help with like getting around, and things like that?

Mark: Massively, because if I’m sitting on the train, my brain’s like they’re looking at you, they know you’re trans, they’re judging you, they’re gonna attack you and it’s like [*laughs*] if I have my headphones in it’s like ‘ahh right, I’m listening to this, it’s fine’. It’s like it’s a calming thing.

James: Do you have anything else that’s like a distraction like that? For like the tube, bus?

Mark: Erm [*digs around in bag*] I’m sure I’ve got it with me – things like a tangle toy [*moving tangle object around, before digging around in bag again*] [...] but yeah and I have a lot of things to hold [...] Sometimes you could take massive bags of everything you could possibly need but you’d end up taking... everything

Returning again to this thesis’ conceptual language, the objects that Mark draws on both distract from painful or fear-laden situations of anticipatory anxiousness and exhaustion and *disrupt the affective atmosphere* of the train that only Mark feels. By engaging with the physical presence of ‘things to hold’ and so on, Mark is able to halt atmospheres of ‘out-of-placeness’ and exhaustion, for example, and ensure that *an atmosphere of RRR* can ‘complete’ around (Hitchen, 2019) and affectively calm or distract his body from its otherwise anxious state. Such atmospheres may only be temporally transitory but become significant and potentially life-enriching in certain spaces where young trans people feel, as discussed in chapters five and six, particularly acute (anticipatory) anxiousness or exhaustion.

In a more exceptional story than that describing such everyday interactions with materialities, Mark described how he crafted relief from carrying the burden of witnessing ‘alarming, stressful, [and]

difficult' things while in the mental health unit, telling me that 'being able to write down what had happened was like.. oh I'm not carrying that any more, it's in my book, it's recorded, I don't have to keep dwelling on it'. A zine he created detailing his experience in the unit, allowed Mark to (re)establish control, in a setting where power and agency was absent or removed from patients. Again, through embodied engagement with materialities and creative practices, Mark developed a sense of groundedness, ensuring that he could live through the intense situation with feelings of control and stability. This act of self-knowledge and documentation constitutes a mechanism that interweaves resilience (within the space and atmosphere of the unit), resistance (to/against the conditions of the unit), *and* resistance (to regimes of biopower and bodily control). The temporally-durative nature of this interwoven RRR practice and other mechanisms Mark crafted ensured his ability to survive within and live well beyond the space.

Returning to more everyday experiences, other young trans people cited headphones, books, and other objects such as sunglasses that distract from space or create a protective physical barrier with other bodies and materials. For example, Axel described using sunglasses as a physical barrier or boundary of protectiveness subsumed into an act that responds to anticipatory anxiousness attached to feeling the 'out-of-place' effects of not 'passing' as a man. However, Axel's story illustrates protective RRR mechanisms differentially to those of Mark, in that Axel's are created in *anticipation* of a particular experience in a particular space, whereas Mark's respond to events in real time. In sum, such material-focussed and protective practices ultimately (aim to) reduce the bodily effects of being embroiled in (potentially) hostile or difficult to negotiate spaces, and consequently alleviate the risk of encountering emotions associated with 'out-of-placeness' and exhaustion. Recalling Ahmed's (2006) thinking around queer orientations to objects and things, this suggests that there is a particular way of being young and (visibly) trans that is linked to specific means of relating to particular things: one that allows protective atmospheres and diversionary tactics to emerge in response to or in anticipation of these emotions. Indeed, the material objects participants discussed throughout the research often enable them to distance themselves from the oppressive atmospheres of a given space or moment. Perhaps paradoxically, the strategies participants develop around such objects also constitute a self-imposed mechanism by which trans youth can *become 'out-of-place' as a strategy for resilience*.

In the following section, I consider examples of a broad set of practices that I term 'embodied moments of escapism and RRR'. By developing such moments, trans youth can create similar opportunities for RRR more specifically focussed upon embodying an alternate sense of self or more intensely/acutely diverting the body from a particular space or encounter.

7.3.2 Embodied moments of escapism and RRR

The prior section considered one mode through which trans youth might escape from uncomfortable and oppressive settings and times. In contrast, this section discusses how trans youth escape *into* more inclusive spaces and potentials through particular embodied RRR strategies. For example, several participants described escaping to particular spaces, whether real or imagined, to negotiate difficult or anxiety-provoking encounters or spaces. For example, many participants described ‘escaping’ or enduring particularly anxiety-provoking spaces and encounters through sensory immersion, using such objects as headphones and music¹¹³ to, for example, ‘stop sensory overload and overstimulation’ (Greg’s words). As Eilidh (she/her, 22-25) told me, ‘escape for me can easily be like a sensory thing [...] *sound* is really an escape for me [...] when things are overwhelming, I’ve got that sound cancellation switch on my headphones [...] it’s like “goodbye world, I’m closing off for a little while”.’ In a further example, Isla and Eilidh, describing ‘escapism maps’ they produced in a creative workshop, told me:

Isla: I started off [asking myself] what do I do when I’m escaping in my own head [...] I just kind of picture something and kind of, it’s as if I have a painting in my head, I just look at it as if it has been painted. And that’s kind of what I’ve done here. And this is actually just... so you know, if you’re in a forest and you look up, and sometimes like the trees completely avoid each other. So each of these is supposed to be a bit of tree.

Eilidh: It’s meant to be like the feeling of being in nature for me, so like I like tried to capture sensory stuff, so I’ve got like my headphones on, I’ve got my eyes, and then escape for me is just looking down or looking at the sky, or being in the woods. So I guess it’s like the nature aspect of escape, in a very basic way. It’s all about that feeling of light coming through and leaves and shining down [...]like that’s such a *grounding* thing for me, to be *in nature*, and there’s not people around and you just focus on that moment

Here, Isla and Eilidh, like other participants, discuss creating imagery and imagined spaces to escape to. This embodied practice speaks to the how escapism can be produced by young trans people within, or in response, to most spaces or encounters in order to (re)form such settings as positive, affirming, and enabling environments. The natural elements they discuss provide a conscious focal point through which to project away from – and thus escape – potential hostility or negative encounters.

Describing a similar escapism mechanism, a small number of participants spoke of creating or embodying a character in order to embody an alternate sense of self that allows them to maintain resilience within particular spaces or to construct a more authentic self. This represents an RRR

¹¹³ Reflecting their importance for certain young trans people, particularly neurodiverse youth, G.I. offers young people materials for sensory distraction at their youth spaces.

mechanism that young people described using to resist gendered language and negative discourses thrust upon them, and escaping to spaces (however ephemeral) where for the (at least partial) embodiment of their authentic self. This practice allows trans youth to, for example, engage in restorative acts of self-affirmation and resist gendered power dynamics embedded in particular spaces.

Kane, for example, told me:

‘I found portraying my life through these weird short films [about struggling with his identity] was really *good for me*, it was a stepping stone in my whole identity thing because Kane was actually a character that I played. And I’ve become that character in a way. I also changed my name on Facebook to Kane about a year ago and it was like really weird because no-one called me by it, and then I got obsessed with like games. Like *Sims* or like anything where I [could] make my own character, I got obsessed with, like I was like, “oh yeah I’m gonna make myself a boy and it’s gonna be great” and I played a game, don’t even remember what it was, but you could talk to people. And people would be like “how are you?” and I’d be like ‘I’m good’ and like eventually it’d come up, “are you a boy or a girl” and I’d be like “oh, I’m a boy”. And I’d just talk as though I was just a cis guy and that was really good for me but also [...] I didn’t like doing it because [although] I felt so *free* people didn’t know anything. Like I even got Grindr at one point, like I’m in a relationship [...] [my partner] knew I had Grindr and he was like “what are you doing?” But I literally got Grindr to see if I’d pass as male and just to see how far I’d go before being caught out or something. And I didn’t get caught out. [...] Like it just felt good to be able to pass, [...] felt good for gay guys to kinda flirt with me a little. I didn’t flirt back so. Wasn’t cheating. But like I just... I’d do a lot of those weird things for time to time. When I go back to [country migrated from] I’m going to start my own safe spaces in my home town [...] going to start my own G.I. thing.’

Here, we see Kane engage in character creation and character embodiment in order to relieve everyday tensions and live through his gender and authentic self that he would otherwise be unable to do so. Repeatedly confirming his gender with others on such virtual platforms, and passing as a man, enabled him to ultimately ‘become [the] character’ he performed in relative safety and privacy online. Such practices create the space for emergent potentials; the space to imagine alternatives to the present that have not yet been brought into being. Moreover, in a mechanism that other participants described, engaging in the anonymity and virtual potentialities offered by online platforms/spaces including social media sites allowed Kane’s feelings of freedom to increase iteratively with each encounter such that he could eventually move through physical spaces as his authentic self. Other participants’ descriptions of experimenting and taking risks in relatively ‘safe’/supportive virtual environments emphasise the possibilities that online spaces can offer for escapism and, more broadly, everyday and relatively easily-accessed RRR.

This experience of escape through embodiment of a character was similar to that of Osh, who described acting in plays, telling me:

'I never realised how much of it was an escape for me from my own *identity*, until I came out as trans and I realised that being a different character was like *so liberating* for me because it (laughs) meant that I *didn't have to think about my gender*, I didn't have to think about me, I didn't have to think about how I was presenting myself, because a character has a *costume*, they have *lines* and that's how they behave, and that's *it*. That is the end of story and you're *sorted*. [...] when you get into something that's really expressive like that, you take on *their* emotions instead of having their own, so you're completely out of yourself and you're *as* someone else [...] Making characters and making storylines means that I can get out of my own life and into something else that I have more *control over* and that's really nice.'

Osh's story demonstrates how they took on the emotions of others/characters to escape their everyday (gendered) realities, craft alternative spaces, and become 'completely out of' themselves. Their performance of 'tak[ing] on [the] emotions' of a character allowed them to create distance from their 'own identity', such that they could both escape from (or avoid 'think[ing] about') or tentatively confront/experiment with their gender. This performance of an alternative (rather than authentic) self offered Osh the ability to (re)establish agency, in contrast to everyday spaces wherein this is likely to be limited, however indirectly.

Other participants found more ritualistic, regular modes of RRR and escapism, including Ed (he/him, 18-21), one of the only participants who described their spirituality/religion as significant in developing spaces to aid their negotiation of their everyday life situations. Throughout our conversation, Ed described exclusions he had experienced in the Church and his wider everyday life. Despite experiencing a personal 'calling to the priesthood', he described lack of affirmation and endlessly fulfilling consistent, unrealistic expectations and barriers around legal and bodily transition/confirmation placed upon him from Church leaders. I asked him about his spiritual routine, and he told me:

Ed: I think it's a *grounding* experience [...] to have a daily routine of prayer [...] morning prayer, evening prayer and then night prayer [...] To have that grounding routine every day, to set that time aside and I'm not going to be thinking about these things. Cos actually they're out of my control. [...] in the days when I'm like I have nothing to say cos I'm so angry, if I can just go through the motion with what's written on the page, compared to a day I'm feeling like I actually want to express what's going on, then it's open to that as well

James: And how about the body experience of prayer as well, like the soothing, therapeutic process, perhaps?

Ed: I think more than the prayer, it's the routine that is bodily. You relax into it, and you're like, ok this is coming back to a safe place. You relax and actually it feels like down time. Erm yeah. I just. It's so natural that I don't really think about it as a what's

happening during prayer? [...] in the seven months I've been on testosterone, the physical changes, although I hear myself every day, when you look at a video one day on testosterone, there's a huge difference, erm, and I've had to get used to my own voice in prayer. Because actually it's still the same voice that I had in there a year ago, but actually when I talk, it's completely different. So [I ask] 'what's the voice that God knows?'

James: Has that changed your relationship to prayer?

Ed: I enjoy spoken prayer more now. Because it's actually it's like 'oh this is *my* voice, rather than *a* voice'. But at the same time when it broke, I was embarrassed 'cos I was, people are gonna hear the difference, and what are they gonna think? And it takes away from the prayer for others, erm, but it's not about that. It's about my own personal path. So that's been the biggest change, transition wise, for my prayer life, is knowing that actually I'm more confident in praying because it *feels like my voice*.

Here, Ed describes creating an intimate, personal *space* which he can develop and access with reliable regularity. This regularity and ability to rely on the spiritual experience and the bodily 'routine' of 'coming back to a safe space' can be used to 'ground' him, alleviate his 'anger', and allow him to negotiate and regularly escape difficult situations he is presented with, built up through the repeated agency-limiting, intrusive, and lack of understanding of Church leaders and others. This embodied practice of everyday escapism can be understood as a ritualised practice of all aspects of RRR, as he continually develops and builds resilience through prayer, resists the narratives of those hostile to his presence in religious spaces, and creates a regular, deeply embodied space of restoration within and around his body through the 'bodily', submerging/immersive, and habitual experience of prayer. Although Ed's vocal change also leads to self-questioning ('what's the voice that God knows?'), ultimately creating the habituality and space of prayer allows him to develop a personal affinity to his voice and a renewed self-confidence as a result. This self-confidence and vocal assuredness (re)solidifies his relationship to individual prayer and the 'personal path' he attaches to this experience.

Several participant stories attested to how young trans people might also project toward their *future* life experiences and conditions through RRR practices of escapism, such as in Cal's story of anticipating moving away from home, and Mark's narrative or orienting toward a future of being well, in chapter six. Geographers have considered how futures are anticipated and enacted in the present and have sought to present the future as a state which *exceeds* the present and our present knowledges, in recognition that 'geographies are made through the constant folding of futures into the here and now' (Anderson, 2010: 778). This work indicates that futures can hold a presence enacted and anticipated in the present through pre-emption, precaution, and preparedness (*Ibid.*). In addition to my exploration of future temporalities throughout this thesis, futures have also been considered in literatures exploring

trans and queer people's resilience, such as in hopeful futures constructed in the face of prejudice (Singh and McKleroy, 2011), and managing times of stress and discrimination by cultivating hope and future wellbeing (Cover, 2013; Singh *et al.*, 2011). I contribute to this literature by thinking through how young trans people's RRR practices, mechanisms, and spaces enables them to (re)negotiate their past and presents and bring about/orient toward positive futures.

Several participants described engaging in creative or (self-)expressive work that imagined or negotiated potential future selves. For example, before showing me self-portraiture he had more recently begun, Adam (he/him, 18-21), showed me portraits of men, particularly 'male poets and male dancers' he had drawn from a young age as, in his words, 'the only way I had to try and connect with men and try and try and like... visually... get it [...] to study them and understand them more.' This practice formed a method of escapism in his earlier everyday life, whereby he could imagine a future self and explore his gayness and transness. Wren (they/them, 22-25) told a similar story about writing poetry as 'a way of externalising what is going on in my head [...] not just ruminating on the past and present, but creating *who you want to be* and what you want from your future'. Several participants described engaging in similar practices, which I argue make present an imagined future through a self-exploration of the present and past. For example, Kane described keeping a transition journal, in order to 'look back to where I used to be and where I am now' and project toward futurity.

In the following section, I continue exploring young trans people's RRR mechanisms and spaces by examining participants' engagements in social activism and advocacy.

7.3.3 *Social activism and advocacy*

Singh *et al.* (2011) tell us that seeking out activism, being involved in activist movements, and mitigating the negative effects of oppression for *other* trans people can become resilience strategies; I want to argue such activism can, for some trans youth, constitute an everyday, continual means of experiencing and embodying each RRR modality. Indeed, such activism constitute an overt method of 'hammering' (at, for example, cisnormativity, others' hostility, or societal apathy to trans youth) that Ahmed discusses. Mark described activist movements as 'the other community for trans people' (in addition to 'safe spaces' such as G.I.). In a story that resonates with other participants' experiences of community work, Mark described his work with an organisation (not named for anonymity) that supports trans youth through healthcare procedures and spaces. Mark told me that this work involves, for example, 'dealing with people who email [us] going "I can't access this service, can you come along with me?" and then going along to hospital appointments with someone or just taking someone to the GP'. This story reflects how young trans people, particularly in urban centres with large(r) LGBT+ communities,

often provide their own makeshift services for mutual support, drawing on co-created knowledges and practices in the absence of more formalised, funded networks, and taking on a burden of care and health and wellbeing responsibilities, which Mark described as ‘tiring’. Given his previous traumatic experience of healthcare settings, I asked him what it is ‘like to be on the other side of things’ by offering others support. He contrasted his experiences as a patient to those as an advocate:

Mark: Erm, it’s funny cos it’s kind of you’re know *exactly* what [the young person’s] experiencing and it’s strange how you just dress up smart and you go along to someone’s GP appointment you’re taken much more seriously than them. Because the second you’re named as an advocate, it’s like “oh right... well we’ll listen to you then” and it’s weird, it’s really weird

James: Do you get to go inside the appointment room?

Mark: Yeah. But when you go for yourself, you don’t get listened to. But if you go for someone else you get listened to. Because if you know your stuff, you know the referral, you have the papers in front of you, they just take you, they listen yeah. So it’s. I do that a lot for friends. Cos I did the advocacy training with [organisation redacted]. So I know all of the things you have to know to advocate for someone for trans healthcare. So just people I come across in the community who are like ‘I’ve got to go to my GP about this but I don’t know enough he’s just been turning me down’ you can just do that for anyone

Here, Mark describes using knowledge and experiences from his own experience of trans healthcare, to aid other young trans people to access healthcare settings and spaces and have their voices heard. Taking on this burden, although ‘tiring’, provides Mark with a sense of community and stability in his everyday life:

Mark: And it’s really exciting when someone gets somewhere like my friend has just started HRT and I went to the GP with her to get her referred to the Tavistock and she was 12 at the time. And her mum didn’t want to go with her because she was really afraid and I took her to the GP. And it’s cool cos like I’ve seen her starting that process, and she’s on oestrogen, and her family now accept her and they’re now like “thank God you did manage to get her started early” and it’s just really, it’s nice to see that happen [...] it’s amazing how the people with so little opportunity and so much oppression are able to do the most for each other

James: How can you link your activism to everyday life and mental health?

Mark: Community. Because it’s hard to engage your local community as a trans person. Like I live in [London borough] and they don’t really want trans people. I tried to get involved in a food bank in [London borough] and I was involved for ages but it’s so transphobic. It’s just like you can’t even be part of your local community [...] [talking about religious, older age of volunteers who ‘don’t like trans people’] and I still volunteer with them because I really want to be involved with them, I really want to be involved in my local community, I want that but it’s not possible so you can get you can

get that community from activism. Which every day is a massive positive because you have things you can do to fill your day which are with other people, you get a sense of community and a sense of people having your back and that's kind of really important, definitely [...] instead of days gone by where it's like *I have done nothing*

Although Mark embodies responsibilities and must gain knowledge to provide a service that is lacking or absent, this advocacy work allows him to develop an individually-felt sense of community and contribute to collective nurturing, and demonstrates how young trans folk, as often particularly marginalised people, are able to craft conditions for others so that they may experience everyday spaces and encounters with reduced exhaustion or 'out-of-placeness'. Such work becomes an RRR mechanism that is more collective than individual, as Mark reclaims agency previously lost to him, resists the structures that contributed to his previous oppression and spaces such as the food bank where his presence was rejected because of his transness, and eases other young trans people's movements through spaces significant in their lives.

Other participants described engaging in similarly selfless (although albeit emotionally or physically difficult) acts which ultimately increased their ability to both individually and collectively generate and feel RRR. For instance, Ed, living away from large urban centres with larger trans populations, also described creating, holding, and fundraising for spaces for young trans people in his local area. In a story that spoke to other young people's community and mutual aid initiatives, he told me:

I started a binder¹¹⁴ drop in. And so getting in contact with binder companies and having a collection of all sizes and saying if you can't afford a binder, come and try one on, and it's yours for as much as you can pay. And for some people that's an absolute lifeline, at the point of suicide. And you're like, it can't be hard to organise that at a local level. I've had people from [around the region] [...] I have a group of trans Facebook friends who in their initial stages of coming out were like "I just can't afford a binder" erm and all of the kind of binder recycle companies are in the US [...] it's only in this last year that a UK one has started and it's still 40 quid for something that someone will wear every day. And so I saw that and I was like can I get in contact with people, have a look on eBay... [...]and there are all these people in the UK who didn't have [the option of importing at expense] so were buying cheap ones from Amazon and eBay which weren't safe, that were the wrong size and will crush and break ribs. And you think... that's not OK.

Here, we see Ed provide a 'lifeline' for other young trans people with his 'binder drop in'. This story reflects how young trans people – including participants in this research – organise to ensure equal

¹¹⁴ Several transmasculine participants noted the potential life-saving benefits of binder wearing. For example, Ed told me that wearing a binder 'was life changing [...] Cos I was like "I'm not gonna live my life constricted not breathing properly." [...] it's a life changing moment and as uncomfortable as it is every day, if it makes you go outside rather than staying in, it makes it worth it.'

access to materials that can maintain resilience and ensure comfort in both perception and presentation of self, resisting economies and structures which limit young trans people's ability to feel such comfort. In sum, the activist and advocacy work of certain trans youth represents their RRR in their sharing in collective solidarity. This solidarity initiates, facilitates, and is part of RRR. Indeed, Mark linked his activism to his development of a queer family composed other young queer people who collectively 're-create that [family] dynamic' that he would not otherwise have.

7.3.4 Section conclusion

In this section, by focussing on young trans people's creative, emotional, and temporally-durative *embodied practices* of RRR, I have drawn together each modality of RRR. I have presented the importance and use of RRR by trans youth as (a) mechanisms of barrier-making within and shielding from everyday affects that certain trans youth may find difficult in particular spaces/times, (b) modes of both *escaping from* uncomfortable or oppressive settings and times and *escaping into* spaces and practices of inclusivity and affirmation, and (c) methods of developing social activism, advocacy, and sharing in the positive outcomes that RRR can produce. In the following section, I continue this trajectory by focussing on more formalised *spaces* – those (relatively rare) organised by community leaders and organisations – that stage, produce, and enable embodied practices of RRR which almost all participants had experienced or developed a relationship to. To do so, I explore trans 'safe spaces', namely those of G.I., and their durative, often *life-saving and life-changing importance* in participants' lives. This focus also allows me to continue exploring the spatialities and temporalities of young trans people's RRR.

7.4 Formalised 'safe spaces' of resilience, resistance, and restoration

In simple terms, following The Roestone Collective (2014) I position 'safe spaces' as spatial solutions offering opportunities for security, inclusion, and RRR, and are often cultivated as sites for 'safe(ty) from' and 'safe(ty) to' in response to everyday spaces structured through unequal power relations of cis/heteronormativity, classism, racism, and so on. As this section demonstrates, "'safe spaces" are not fixed "places" but ongoing, evolving, dynamic relationships that emerge through [...] active interaction with(in), through, and alongside the material and social world' (Djohari *et al.*, 2018: 354). Despite their importance, research has paid inadequate attention to the emotional weight and lived experiences concentrated within and around such 'safe' sites (*Ibid.*; Lewis *et al.*, 2015; The Roestone Collective, 2014). As I argued in my MA research, the *affective potential* of 'safe spaces' relative to their socio-material components or their influence over RRR practices/experiences has not been fully considered. My work argued that emphasising the 'co-constitutive relationship between the atmospheres which circulate in 'safe' sites and the bodily encounters they might influence [demonstrate how] being embroiled in a

queer ‘safe space’ might augment one’s capacity to affect and be affected differentially to everyday sites [such that –] although in many cases ‘safe spaces’ function as *temporary* spatial interventions [... –] the dynamics of ‘safe spaces’ might continue to affect those attending such sites’ even after their immersion’ (Todd, 2016). However, the acceptance, embodied comfort, and empowering/affirming feelings that *queer spaces* – often akin to or composed of elements that construct ‘safe spaces’ and sites that participants described valuing – generate has been inferred throughout the literature (see e.g. Boulila, 2016; Hardie and Johnston, 2016; Misgav, 2015; Valentine and Skelton, 2003).¹¹⁵ These feelings often surface visibly and audibly. Indeed, for example, Sammy (they/them, 14-17) described having ‘different voices’, and feeling able to project their authentic voice in the Scottish youth space, compared to everyday spaces where their ‘body just takes over’ and results in them projecting themselves differentially across most everyday spaces. Here, I continue addressing the interrelationship between, and significance of, the content and consequences of queer, trans, or other ‘safe spaces’.

In the following passage, English and Stewart (2020: 182) describe the specific value of G.I.’s ‘safe spaces’:

‘Seeing [what] trans-affirmative spaces – such as Gendered Intelligence – provide to young people figuring out what their future dreams are is something to behold. When they’re able to fully be themselves, you can see such a wild difference. Loved and supported trans young people turn into loved and supported trans adults in front of our eyes.’

Here, it is *spaces and practices of affirmation* that G.I. offer – already alluded to throughout this thesis and particularly in Karl’s story (see preface) – that I focus on. The work of youth workers and young trans people, craft and uphold G.I. spaces – and other trans (‘safe’) spaces like it – as sites of particularly acute RRR where ‘*people get it*’ (Mark’s phrasing). I argue that the dynamics and practices that young trans people feel and draw from in G.I. spaces enable many to continue accessing such sites as affective archives (Crawford, 2010; see also chapters three and six), in turn allowing them to feel and practice RRR across their everyday lives. In this sense, G.I. spaces operate as a spatial and temporal oasis punctuating of everyday life conditions that trans youth develop – in contrast to everyday sites imbued with ‘out-of-placeness’/exhaustion – particular *positive anticipatory relationships* toward. Indeed, many participants – particularly those negotiating acutely difficult everyday life scenarios – described their knowledge of future immersion in G.I. spaces, or other trans and queer ‘safe spaces’, as central to their ability to variously enjoy, contest, endure, queer and find gratification across their everyday lives. Although I cannot communicate the extent that participants valued, enjoyed, and felt deeply and

¹¹⁵ However, experiences of queer space are, as I discussed in chapter three, not universal and vary according to intersectional axes of difference. Indeed, queer ‘safe spaces’ can function as both inclusive and exclusionary for individuals or groups within queer communities (Casey, 2007; Canning, 2015; The Roestone Collective, 2014).

emotively connected to G.I. spaces and workers, I hope to express their fundamentally life-enriching potential.

7.4.1 Gendered Intelligence spaces as landscapes of RRR

Throughout the research, participants recruited via G.I. told stories of their experiences in G.I. and other ‘safe spaces’ that spoke to how they accessed such sites to develop resilience, resistance, and/or restoration in reaction to everyday life events, from particularly violent encounters, mental health concerns, a desire to meet and develop friendships with other trans youth, and myriad other situations and concerns. As Karl’s story in the thesis preface demonstrated, G.I. spaces and the trans-affirming practices, socio-materialities, and bodies they contain, and the mutual care of G.I. workers/youth, were instrumental in his self-affirmation, ‘coming out’, alleviation of bodily dysphoria, sharing in everyday emotional labours, authentic occupation/movement through space, and so on. In the preface, I linked these outcomes to, as also discussed in chapter three, the *transing* of space and affective atmospheres felt by certain trans youth in G.I. and other similar trans/queer ‘safe spaces’. As such, I characterised G.I. spaces (although not emotionally universalised) as sites of safety, freedom, and visibility that trans youth can regularly access, such that they become key threshold spaces and times in young trans people’s everyday lives that can alleviate other weary temporal constancies (such as those associated with ‘out-of-placeness’ and exhaustion.)



Figure 7.4. Participant’s artwork illustrating the safety of the G.I. residential camp space.

In the following sections, I focus on G.I. spaces as particularly acute and/or affectively durative landscapes of RRR, a dynamic that reflects their value to trans youth. In a dynamic that speaks to the restorative or therapeutic nature of ‘safe spaces’ more broadly (Todd, 2016), I witnessed and heard

testimony that spoke to how trans youth leave G.I. settings – during which they are immersed in affirming and trans-led and developed affects – *restored*. As I will demonstrate, this restoration in particular endures temporally and spatially beyond young people’s immersion in the space and provides a reassuring cognitive presence throughout young people’s everyday lives. As Adam (see Adam’s story, chapter six) described of his hopes for his engagement with G.I.: ‘I really want G.I. to become an oasis [...] it can be a relief and [...] support, and not [worrying] about the desert outside, just for a bit [...] because everyone treats you the way you want to be treated.’ Such dynamics – however temporary – allow positive future experiences to be imagined and constructed, and particularly difficult encounters in spaces beyond G.I. to be resisted or endured more easily.

To establish the multifaceted value of such ‘safe spaces’ as those of G.I., I present the following conversation fragment around G.I.’s annual camping residential, a trans-only space that participants who attended – citing its significance within and influence over their wider lives – frequently described as transformational. After discussing the camp’s physically enclosed/isolated nature, I asked:

James: What is it like to feel... Is it almost like you’re not exposed there?

Marco: Yeah, I mean it’s like just... I don’t know, I mean like transmasculine people didn’t feel the need to wear a binder because it was dark, because you were in a trans space and you know people are gonna gender you correctly [...] And, I don’t know, I felt like I could [...] wear whatever I wanted, because I was around people who weren’t gonna say anything

Sachin: Yeah, ‘cause you do have to feel like, ‘cause out in society you do have to feel like *you need to be the right kind of trans* all the time, but like when I was at camp, I think after realising I was trans that was the first time that I’d gone out without wearing a binder.

James: What about camp making you feel more confident afterwards?

Sachin: Yeah, absolutely. That’s actually a thought that I had at camp that really stuck with me where I was like I had such a good time and I thought like *the Andy I am at this camp is the Andy I want to be all the time* and when I came back, that was my biggest priority: to become that person, who I knew I was, in this space. [*With intent:*] I wanted to bring that into my everyday life. Because that was honestly the happiest I had ever been. Even though I cried a *tonne*!

Sachin’s story resonates with other participants’ narratives, which describe the almost utopic conditions of the camp – and indeed other G.I. spaces – in terms of the freedoms they offer, and their long-lasting affects that bolster the confidence, assuredness, and mental wellbeing of trans youth who attend. Narratives like Sachin’s uncover the *bodily freedoms* which trans youth might experience in such carefully-constructed, trans-affirming ‘safe spaces’. Marco clearly establishes links between the impact of the

darkness, the presence of other trans people, and the sharing of trans knowledges to emphasise his feelings of freedom to wear whatever he wished, while for Sachin, the removal of societal, gendered expectations which pervade throughout most everyday spaces, allowed him to remove his binder for the first time. Participants repeatedly shared similar stories reflecting such bodily freedoms which in turn speak to the restorative potential of trans ‘safe spaces’, such as in Andy’s (he/him and they/them, 14-17) account:

‘I present as a cis boy at school which is really stressful and I’ve said a lot of the time that I feel like a criminal on trial and I know I’m guilty. And so being here, it’s like relaxing, it’s not like people are trying to look into me and I’m not constantly on edge... Like I go to the toilet at school and I’m like “wait! Does my pee sound feminine?” How stupid is that? [...] But I guess it’s in my head, and it’s stupid, but here [at G.I.] it’s like *nobody cares* and it’s just nice to like relax and not have to be constantly *on guard*’.

Here, we see the bodily freedoms that trans ‘safe spaces’ can offer, even to the extent that Andy does not need to self-regulate their body’s presence (as they do in toilet spaces at school, for example). The absence of a feeling of being ‘constantly on guard’, which as discussed in chapter five is linked to everyday ‘out-of-placeness’, can be a relaxing and restorative experience. When regularly accessed as a space-time of restoration – as other participants attested – G.I. spaces become, following Duff (2011) and drawing from health geographies, ‘enabling places’ that allow trans youth to feel restored/reinvigorated ahead of their re-engagements with everyday spaces that structure their lives inbetween their accessing of G.I. and other trans ‘safe spaces’. This effect is also seen in Sachin’s story, in that the atmosphere of ‘safety’ is carried beyond the site of the camp itself, such that the space becomes an affective archive to develop practices which ensure that the emotions and freedoms he experiences – which are linked to each element of RRR – are maintained beyond the space and its socio-materialities.

Such restoration and resilience mechanisms enabled by drawing upon G.I. spaces as affective archives were also evident across many participant narratives. Returning to Mark’s story, the following conversation excerpt is paradigmatic of many participants’ relationship to such sites, and indeed reflects Karl’s narrative (see preface). As Mark explains, the longer-term nature of the G.I. residential camp space makes it particularly significant in his negotiation of everyday spaces and encounter, and maintenance of RRR beyond his immersion in that and other similar ‘safe spaces’:

James: [...] what about controlling mental health [...] day-to-day?

Mark: Going to G.I., having that kind of structure, yeah that helps... a lot

James: What’s the space of G.I. like to you?

Mark: *[grinning, audible happiness:]* It's just such a safe place, it's... I'm going on 'Super Camp'¹¹⁶ in Summer. And that's the one thing I'm really looking forward to. I've gone for the last two years and [...] all year I've just been, "well, this is shit, but I've got camp I summer, like that's gonna be good" *[laughs]* And the one... *highlight* of my year [is] actually when you get to *live* that safe space, as opposed to when you just go and... *leave*. [At camp] you don't have *any* of the challenges you normally have. You don't have to worry about meeting new people because everyone's trans and nobody is going to discriminate against you or misgender you. Like you don't have to worry about trusting workers to look after you because they're all trans and they'll all respect you. And I don't even have to worry about my name because a lot of the time, someone'll ask my name and I'll have to say [initial] because they, they won't get stressed about my gender. Whereas if I say [name redacted], they're like ... 'weird name for a girl' and it's that horrible conversation. But you don't have to worry about that, and you get *fed* and you, you get looked after, and someone sorts out your meds for you and it's *brilliant* *[laughing out of joy]* And you get to make friends and you get to spend time with those friends, which is good.

James: So tell me what an average day at camp is like.

Mark: Erm, I don't tend to sleep on camp because I'm so excited to be [there]. So the last camp, and the camp before, it was three days, this one's gonna be longer. Erm, three nights and four days. So I stayed awake for four days. And the average day is like. The night worker would take me to collect fire wood at like four in the morning and we have breakfast at like seven. We do lots of circles, like pronoun circles and erm... just circles just to see how we're doing, we do temperature checks all the time. Like if you're feeling bad, someone *knows* and someone can do something to help you. And it's... it's kind of not like anywhere else because of that, you're not expected to just be happy all the time. Like, last time I cried for two days straight because I was just overwhelmed with how amazing it was. [...] Anyone would just look at me and I would burst into tears and it was like "oh I'm actually allowed to feel emotion..." and it's, it's absolutely amazing. And we have meals together and it's just, it's *really* special.

James: Do you think something like happens there you know that you can take away and feel... *refreshed*?

Mark: *[breathes out]* Definitely.

Although Mark's story demonstrating how important G.I. is to him is set at the camp – a longer-term space offering opportunities to fully '*live* that safe space' relative to more transient or fleeting 'safe spaces' – it speaks to the ongoing impact of being embroiled in trans-affirming site. Indeed, more regularly-held spaces of G.I. such as its monthly community space provide Mark with 'structure' to manage his mental health throughout the year, whilst the camp space offers a more intense, long-lasting

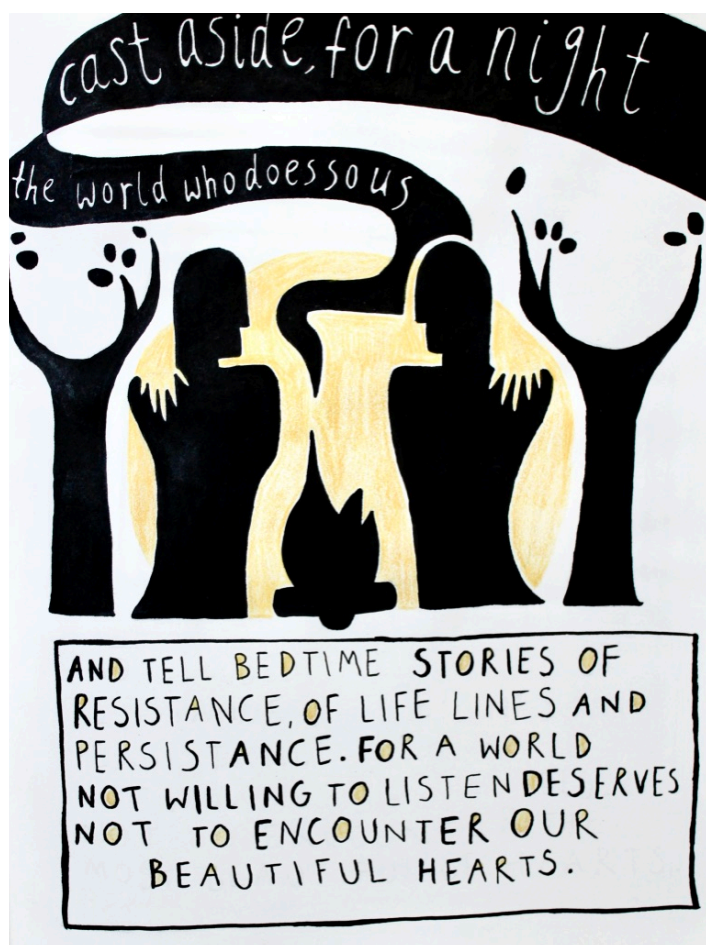
¹¹⁶ A larger camp than usual, inviting a wider age range of trans youth.

affective archive that Mark can draw upon to develop productive outcomes linked to RRR across the year. Accessing both G.I. settings enables Mark – a young person who does not have a positive relationship to his imagined future, to have a set of positive experiences – not having ‘*any* of the [normal] challenges’, not worrying about discrimination, misgendering, or even gender or naming in general, and trusting the respect and validation that youth workers offer – events and encounters that constitute restoration in particular (an experience that, in turn, also enables trans youth to engender resilience and resistance) – with reliable regularity. I argue that such outcomes are made possible through the atmospherics created in, and felt differentially by trans youth in, G.I. spaces. In this case, continually working to (re)form such affirming atmospheres constitutes how RRR is maintained and produced. In Mark’s account of the camp space that also reflects other participants’ accounts and my own observation of more regular G.I. spaces, we see how such atmospheres build up and endure through embodied practices, including those that are materially-focussed (collecting firewood, cooking), centred around intimacies (drawing bodies together through ‘circles’ and so on), and/or designed to ensure that respect and affirmation is maintained (pronoun circles, temperature checks, and mutual emotional support). These embodied practices, alongside the closed-off, trans-only, and deliberately *transed* space of G.I.¹¹⁷ cultivate this distinct atmosphere that becomes transferred beyond the space. Through these atmospherics and embodied practices, we see how G.I. spaces become landscapes of RRR malleable to individual young trans people’s needs and desires.

My discussion of G.I. spaces as landscapes of RRR thus far is captured by Jón’s artwork (figure 7.5, overleaf) illustrating the camp space and their description of its creative process. In the art piece, we see the camp space – as the stories of trans youth across this research attested – as a site of exception and exceptional affirmation, one that allows the everyday world that ‘casts aside’ trans youth, and is unwilling to listen to their stories and voices, to be itself, if only transiently and fleetingly, ‘cast aside’ itself. Through Jón’s artwork and words, the intense emotional value of G.I. spaces and their nature as *sites of resistance* is solidified. Indeed, Jón characterises trans youth coming together and the (re)making of space as trans as a ‘revolutionary act of existing together’. This phrasing reflects both the emancipatory potential of trans youth ‘existing together’ and the overt resistive act against societal hostility and cisnormativity (or events of ‘out-of-placeness’ and exhaustion that individual trans youth experience) that overtly existing visibly as a young trans person can constitute. The *bringing together of young trans people as a diverse, visible community* that organisations and spaces like G.I. offer exacerbates this mechanism of resistance. Reflecting on trans youth narratives of the importance of G.I. and the

¹¹⁷ G.I. spaces contain affects/materials constructed along explicitly trans lines, such as inclusive toilet signage, pronoun badges, trans flags, and similar ephemera.

Scottish organisation, I argue that the affective force involved in accessing, experiencing, and sharing in this community of young trans people as a young trans person in turn further exacerbates their ability to self-generate RRR mechanisms and spaces. Moreover the poetic language of ‘revolution’, ‘resistance’, and the ‘beautiful hearts’ of trans youth speaks to how such sites in their radical force and power embodied by trans youth present, come to make possible their ‘persistence’ and ‘life lines’ beyond the space. In the following section, I continue presenting G.I.’s trans ‘safe spaces’ as landscapes of RRR, by focussing specifically on how their dynamics as ‘enabling places’ allow trans youth to develop particular orientations to time and negotiate particular temporalities that otherwise influence their everyday lives.



‘[When drawing this piece] I was taken back to [G.I.’s] camp where we had our trans only space, sharing stories around the fire and perfecting the revolutionary act of existing together. It felt something of power to dismiss the rest of the world just for a little while, to give the rest of the world a taste of its own medicine.’

Figure 7.5. Jón’s artwork illustrating the G.I. camp space, and brief description of its creative process.

7.4.2 Gendered Intelligence spaces as enabling particular temporal negotiations

In this section, I demonstrate how the camp space, and other G.I. sites, are not – contrary to surface opinion – artificial or *temporally* fleeting (even if they are *spatially* fleeting), but rather endure and often grow in their catalytic significance to young trans people even after long periods of time have elapsed.

Consider the following field note excerpt from a ‘one-to-one’ session with Anya (they/them, 22-25) and Cal (he/him, 14-17):

‘Anya and Cal wove a positive narrative when describing G.I. spaces and those of the COLOURS group [space for young trans POCs run by a non-binary adult POC]. They described the various sounds in the main youth space for the entire young trans community – the loudness of people excitedly meeting with friends, of sharing experiences and socialising, almost as though the time spent in a bubble of transness would pass by too quickly. I was struck by how this resembled my early thoughts around the youth centre and its busy, collective, overt and proud *trans*/queer tone. Cal spoke of G.I. “role models” and of the power of seeing “grown” trans people, gaining an understanding of their lives, and being able to imagine a positive future as a result of their presence and visible “strength”. Anya and Cal described being at G.I. as like gaining “a breath of fresh air” and their stories in the space reflected this positivity [...]. In contrast to the sensory-overload of the G.I. ‘Community Saturday’, they described the COLOURS group along more tranquil lines as ‘calmer’ and ‘chilled’, and told me about valuing the smaller, more intimate group which allowed more time for each young person’s voice to be heard. Perhaps only five or six would regularly attend COLOURS. Cal told me about going as the space is constructed around “feeling more heard” and developing a personal/intimate connection to the POC youth worker and other trans youth POC there. The young people agreed that the space was “flexible” such that they could withdraw what they needed from the space.’

Here, we see how Anya and Cal understand and experience the affective atmospherics of trans ‘safe spaces’ and their importance for enabling particular temporal negotiations. In their stories, the *soundscape*s of G.I. spaces reflected its collectivity, the importance of its close and busy nature and the *urgency* with which certain young trans people encounter such sites. I witnessed this effect when present in G.I. spaces and seeing trans youth eagerly meeting old and new friends, conversing and catching up with G.I. leaders, and continuing conversations in person after a month long separation from one another. I linked this affective and emotional intensity of G.I. spaces to a prevailing trans and queer spatial tone, one which I argue enables the flourishing of RRR practices and mechanisms. In this excerpt, Anya and Cal also emphasise the importance of, again, the presence of older, adult trans ‘role models’ as enabling their constructing of a positive imagined future self, with their ‘breath of fresh air’ phrasing speaking to the spaces’ restorative atmospherics. Cal, like other participants, considers his ability to imagine positive futures as a direct consequence of ‘safe space’ immersion and his ability to regularly connect with older trans people who represent his imagined future stability and alleviate his familial difficulties. Further still, the COLOURS (now TPOCalypse) youth space for young trans POCs provides both participants with opportunities to have their voices heard and their specific experiences as young POC accounted for, in contrast to the main space wherein certain voices may become lost or unable to be shared despite their inclusive practices. The importance of this space challenges any notion of a universal experience of trans ‘safe spaces’ and their RRR ethics. Indeed, although the

regularly-held, cross-community spaces of G.I. provide Anya and Cal with many opportunities for RRR, engaging with other young trans POC in a more intimate setting specifically crafted by and for trans POC is of paramount importance in light of Anya and Cal's specific experience of normative whiteness and the exclusionary practices other queer spaces (see Anya and Cal's story discussed further in section 7.4.3).

The following story told by Ross (he/him, 22-25) further emphasises how trans 'safe spaces' such as G.I.'s can enable young trans people to negotiate their *present* life conditions. In a narrative resonant of Karl's story (see preface), Ross began telling me of his initial contact with G.I.:

'...I found out about G.I. through [...] [social media] in the early stages of my transition, finding resources online was the only access I had to that, really. Because there's nothing really tangible where I live. Erm so I saw [G.I.] being advertised and I wasn't actually out [then], it was sort of getting involved with the first camp that was the catalyst to throw me out into the world and facing stuff. Erm so yeah, it was a very complicated time because I had to drop out of university and move back home and erm... find some kind of meaningful [reason for] getting up each day. Erm so I was working in retail and finding it hard to devote the time to you know build myself up and look in on the problems that were building up [...] I was still presenting as female to work and family and everything. And I was in what I would consider to be a lesbian relationship with another woman. And obviously feeling very uncomfortable about gender and things like that.'

Through Ross' words, we can see how such trans 'safe spaces' become, as he describes, necessary 'catalyst' or *threshold spaces* for both RRR and wider everyday life transformations that disrupt certain everyday life difficulties. For example, Ross, as Karl and others discussed, having limited access to resources in his local area and daily life, facing particularly difficult life events (e.g. leaving university, ending a relationship, struggling with mental health, and 'feeling very uncomfortable about gender'). It is the desire to seek out affirmation and create RRR mechanisms to alleviate the 'problems building up' that led Ross to begin accessing G.I.. Ross continued his story by telling me:

Ross: When we went to the prep day [...] erm, that was the first time that... I asked people to refer to me with different pronouns and a different name, and even if I hadn't then gone to camp, that experience in itself, I think, would have been enough for me to think "actually that felt so much more comfortable than everything else I've had for the last 20 years". And then obviously being, being able to then the extent to that two three or 4 days, just really just closed safe space [...] Because it's just that one bubble physically there's nothing else around you don't really come into contact with any cis people by and large. And everyone you know that has got some kind of experience that you can share so I think there's a lot of unwritten unspoken communication that happens when you're in that sort of space and, erm, and it was I can't describe it as anything other than *life-changing*. As soon as I got home from the camp I, I told my parents that "this is it."

James: They knew that you had gone to camp?

Ross: they knew that I was going, erm, I think they knew that it was obviously trans-related but I didn't think that they knew my thoughts on how I wanted to go forward [...] I had those 4 days where people called me Ross [and I thought] "I don't want to go back to a world where people don't call me Ross". [...] I'm very lucky because I basically had them support the same day that I broke up with my girlfriend or rather she broke up with me because our identities no longer matched up which was... Quite painful to me and I think it had been a factor [in my] struggle to come to terms with identity for so long. [...] To then [...] remove myself entirely from what I thought was my part in the queer community so to move from lesbian space to trans space and also the fact that I was no longer going to be identifying as a woman, that I was going to be identifying as a man, what does that mean with future sexual partners? So it was a very anxious time and quite *emotionally-charged* erm... but it had to happen. And I know now with obviously hindsight that it was necessary for my future happiness so it was really all down to those four days that I spent with G.I.

Here, we see that, as almost all participants with deep relationships to the organisation attested, G.I. provided an initial series of affirming encounters that recognised Ross as his authentic self, such that the space itself felt 'much more comfortable than everything else [he experienced in] the last 20 years', an atmospheric dynamic that established a chain of 'life-changing' events – 'coming out' and affirming his gender to his parents, ending his relationship, 'mov[ing] from lesbian space[s] to trans space[s]', ending his 'struggle to come to terms with identity', and subsequently anticipating his future more clearly. These encounters and experiences both constitute RRR mechanisms and have the effect of enabling Ross to construct RRR beyond his immersion in the 'safe space' itself. Like many other participants, Ross links this affirming RRR dynamic to its distance from 'contact with any cis people', its isolated nature as a 'bubble' of transness, and the shared experience of trans youth – particularly restorative forces and affective dynamics that structure the space as explicitly trans and affirming. As other participants' narratives [attested], encountering these restorative atmospheres for the first time became a life-altering experience that they both continue to hold as significant threshold moments in their lives to date and draw upon as a catalyst for embarking on wider life changes, such as 'coming out', gradually living more authentically and openly, and making efforts to uphold trans 'safe spaces' as sites of RRR for other young trans people. Such atmospherics enable the emergence of an 'unwritten spoken communication', which other participants described along lines of emotional connection, bodily closeness and freedom, and a shared sense of joy in experiencing a trans space-time not structured by cisnormativity. In all, Ross' story attests to the enduring affective force of G.I. spaces and other trans 'safe spaces' like them, such that the enabling and threshold dynamics of G.I. spaces – evidenced through the longer-term (albeit temporary) camp space in particular – were 'life-changing' and 'necessary for [his] future happiness.' Again, we see that the trans 'safe spaces' such as those provided

by G.I. are not *temporally* fleeting. Instead, their catalytic significance can endure and augment for long periods of time after young trans people's engagements with the space as a trans 'safe space'. This duration, again, speaks to their importance in young trans people's negotiations of past, present, and future temporalities.

Other participants told stories that spoke to the affective force of G.I. spaces as sites that enable trans youth to construct and orient toward positive futures. As Sachin (he/him, 14-17, POC) told me:

'I never knew any trans people before I came to G.I. which was [*sounds disbelieving*] *last September* [...] Yeah. So, a couple of months ago and that was like [...] the first time I felt like I might have like, a *future*? Because before that it was just like I don't know, I didn't know anybody in real life who was trans and like I knew [people] on the internet but those aren't like, you know, they're not like people you can hang out with and talk to and see, uhm, but yeah before that it was like I don't know, I felt like a freak. [...] I felt like a huge weirdo and [like] nobody would ever love me and I thought nobody could ever stay in my presence... And I just thought I was the worst thing in the whole world and then I met a whole bunch of trans people and people were like *nice* and *happy* and [...] I had fun, and I *laughed* and it was like, it was *a lot* in the beginning, [it] was a lot to get used to, actually. [...] After G.I. I started putting in effort in my life and then I started going to counselling and now I'm on like medication to help with stuff and like *I'm doing great* and it's like, it's [happened] over the course of a couple months, which is *soo. crazy*. Because there's this huge road of just garbage! And then you get here and it's just awesome. Uhm, yeah.'

In this account, the significance of trans 'safe spaces' like G.I. as *often representing/enabling a threshold toward positive change* in young trans people's lives is laid bare. Sachin explains that accessing G.I. spaces and meeting other young trans people there – whilst immersing in the practices of restoration and resilience such sites are structured by – allowed them to understand that they had a possible future for the first time. In contrast to virtual spaces wherein they felt an emotional/emodied disconnect, meeting other young trans people at G.I. became a key moment in crafting this imagined future. Similarly to Ross' narrative, the space of G.I. became a threshold/catalytic or 'enabling' place that allowed Sachin to create a pathway to access mental health support and put in 'effort' in his wider life. This stark shift toward more affirming everyday life experiences and stabilising mental health – an experience mirrored in other' participants narratives – speaks to the *intensity* of being embroiled in a space dominated by trans youth and transness for the first time. As we have already seen, the embodied presence of other young trans people and being validated by a collective of people for the first time as ones' authentic self, constitute experiences that many participants constructed their broader everyday lives around. G.I.'s 'safe spaces' often spur virtual spaces of mutual support and friendship such as social media pages and 'group chats', wherein young people continue engendering practices of resilience and

restoration in particular including developing feelings of closeness and collectivity with other trans youth, such that, for example, they can ensure that ‘in some ways the camp is still going’ (Séan’s words). Representing their potential for enabling resistance, other participants described holding conversations around activism, advocacy, and mutual aid in these online spaces emergent out of G.I. and other trans ‘safe spaces’. Several participants also described working collectively to provide their own virtual support networks and supportive spaces in the absence of those which exist in real time/space, or to ensure the maintenance of RRR during potentially difficult ‘in-between’ periods of immersion in G.I. spaces and other trans/queer ‘safe spaces’.

In the following section, I continue thinking through how RRR practices are maintained in trans ‘safe spaces’ by focussing on the materialities of G.I. spaces, using the conceptual framework attentive to objects, artefacts, and things established in chapter three that I applied to young people’s material engagements beyond ‘safe spaces’. The following section builds upon my arguments to think through young trans people’s articulations of the specific importance of materialities attached to ‘safe spaces’ and their atmospheres.

7.4.3 Materialities of Gendered Intelligence spaces – Objects, artefacts, things

Throughout the research, participants frequently described materials and remnants they engaged with and/or collected from G.I. spaces and the organisation’s camp space in particular, including fiddle toys, artwork and crafts, chairs constructing the monthly ‘community Saturday’ space’s group circle, bottles filled with camp fire ash, social media ‘group chats’, notebooks filled with affirmations, clothing, and so on. It is clear that such objects, artefacts, and things become deeply meaningful ephemera through which young people can withdraw resources to connect with others, craft solidarities, and develop positive relationships with(in) more everyday sites which would not normally be experienced as affirming. As I discussed, cultivating these moments of ‘safety’ and resilience in times lacking in ‘safety’, for many young trans people, simply becomes subsumed into the realities and mundane, banal practices of everyday life. As Séan (he/him, 18-21) told me, ‘I kind of always carry camp with me. Like my patch with like little mementos from camp [...] Even if it were not to happen next year, I feel like I still carry that with me.’ Carrying this patch and the mementos ‘around all the time’ allowed Séan to embody the ‘confidence and freedom’ that the space and its affective atmospheres opened up for him, demonstrating the temporally enduring nature of the camp and its embodied legacy. As he described:

‘I realised it had been so many years since I’d felt that confident, especially since like coming out. And I’d kind of forgotten what it really *felt* like. So [the space]... kind of showed me that I *can* be confident and relaxed, and I *can* do these things. So I’ve kind of taken to trying to be more confident in everyday life. [...] some of the conversations we had, and some of the advice that we were given was ‘*you are able to take up space*, you

deserve to be around as much as cis people’. And all of that stuff. And so all of the kind of advice I got through other people and the kind of validation that I got, I’m able to tell myself, you know, these people said this, *so many people* said this, they’re correct. *I know* that I deserve to be here as much as anyone else. And I know that I can come across how I wanna come across and all that. So, yeah. [...] I’ve found that I *pass* more in general [after being at the camp], erm like very recently I’ve started hormones. But straight after camp I had days without being on hormones and stuff, and before most people felt that I was a girl and would gender me in that way but I think that because I had more confidence, I came across a little bit more male, a little bit more masculine...’

In this story, Séan is able to transfer the space of camp and its *affirming affects* and emotional experiences beyond the setting itself through the materialities he carries and draws upon. Those materialities represent a pathway to an affective archive that Séan, as other participants described, can draw upon to remind himself of his validity and visibly/audibly assert his authentic self. This story also reflects other participants’, in that it speaks, again, to the intensity of G.I. spaces and exemplifies dynamics of certain queer/trans ‘safe spaces’ more broadly. For example, the affirmations of other young people and G.I. youth workers that re-assert Séan’s ability to ‘take up space’ – an experience often denied to trans youth – speak to the impact of the validations that G.I. spaces exude. Crucially, Séan speaks to a life transformation that is shaped by such validations, such that he is able to generate and feel spatial comfort across everyday spaces through embodying a heightened confidence, linking this to ‘passing’ (see glossary) and becoming more comfortable in his transness.

Other participants’ stories of the materialities they felt close to in G.I. spaces further attest to the embodied emotions that such sites enable, such as in Phil’s (he/him, 22-25) story:

‘A lot of us said... how *alien* the concept of normal life felt after a week away from it [at super camp] and that we all wanted to take a piece [...] away from us [...] I did that by taking away my G.I. super camp hoody, by taking away my trans pride flag with my screen print, by taking away ash from the fire, and [a youth worker] collected flint [...] and handed it out and I’ve still got it with me, [it’s] displayed in my bedroom and is incredibly important to me [...] because it links to super camp and it links to a space that [is] I want the world to be like.’

Here, we see Phil collect materialities from the camp space, like other participants, to recall its utopic conditions in everyday spaces such as the bedroom. Moreover, his desire to collect objects and things from G.I. spaces further evidences the deep emotional attachment which participants described feeling toward trans ‘safe spaces’ as landscapes of RRR. Phil described, like Mark and other participants, using materialities in more intensely embodied ways to recall and make present trans ‘safe spaces’ like the camp, an experience that in turn makes reliving and recreating the RRR practices such sites engender:

‘[discussing his ‘camp booty’:] [my housemates that attended] super camp, [we] got our [camp-themed] hoodies whilst we were burning ivy [at home], so that we had the smell of camp back on our hoodies, because I think that smell of camp fire [...] it has two

meanings, so campfire smell now means I'm *safe*, I am incredibly safe, I am around people that... they accept me and know me, and I can be myself, but it also means that [...] I am *prepared* for the world around me [...] as though [...] the weight of the world is kind of holding me up, and making me the strongest person I can be, and that I have got the fight in me to continue. You've got the warmth of your hoody, but the smell of that fire circle, it brings you back into that safe space with all of the people, with all of the camp leaders and hamlet leads and village leads around you. And you can kind of almost picture that you're in that fire circle, that you're *back* at that campsite. Erm... and [*becomes teary*:] I don't think there's *words that can describe* how safe I felt in that camp. I... I think a lot of people that were on that camp would agree with me that there really aren't the words. [...] I felt that super camp [was] a *moment in history* because I think, erm, it is still the biggest group of [young] trans people that've ever come together, all in one space.'

This story attests to how particular trans youth experience the emotional and affirming *intensity* of certain trans 'safe spaces' such as those G.I. provide. Indeed, the sensory aspects of the camp – its warmth and smells – are captured both physically and metaphorically through objects like the hoody, which are used to remember and recreate its dynamics of safety and acceptance. Phil describes drawing upon this sensory intensity as allowing him to feel a range of emotions related to all three elements of RRR, including feeling '*prepared* for the world around [him]' (demonstrating resilience), and that [they] 'have got the fight in [them] to continue' (indicating resistance and restoration). Such feelings are also recalled by casting between memories of the site and the positive present and imagined future it has spurred and enabled. Meanwhile, the phrasing 'moment in history', like Jón's artwork, speaks to the radical nature of G.I. spaces in their deliberate affective construction as overtly trans and their subsequent distance from cisnormativity. However, such stories also indicates the relative privilege that trans youth that can easily access such sites (due to everyday life support, relative proximity, ability to travel, and so on) occupy and embody. Moreover, as the following section demonstrates and as certain stories have already alluded, such 'safe' sites are not experienced equally by all trans youth.

7.4.4 *The intersectional experience of 'safe spaces' as safe and unsafe*

In this section, I follow literature discussed in chapter three that recognises that there are, even for trans youth specifically, no universalised experiences of queer spaces and that 'safe spaces' more broadly can be contested or even felt as 'unsafe' (see The Rosetone Collective, 2014). This reflects how *spaces* of RRR may only allow RRR mechanisms and practices to emerge or be felt as positive or effective for those relatively privileged within their atmospherics, reinforcing that queer/trans 'safe spaces' can be individually experienced as politically- and emotionally-contested sites. Consider the following excerpt from my encounter with Anya and Cal:

Cal described experiencing misgendering from another queer POC at Black Pride, using this to speak to the marginalisation of trans youth within queer BAME communities

and events. Cal described returning again and again to these experiences, ‘dwelling’ on them in a way that removed his enjoyment of the event, which was replaced by an ongoing sense of frustration that even spaces designed to be inclusive for queer POC can be damaging. While voicing his frustration, Cal seemed weary and audibly/visibly exhausted. We then discussed London Pride. Cal and Anya found that this was a queer-positive space but also one that fetishized young POC, and was exclusionary of those who deviate from the cis, white, gay ‘expectation’ that dominates in the space. We also discussed how those hostile to trans youth are not excluded from the space and other queer space, and are often visible presences. I was struck by the comparison between Cal’s discussion of queer spaces – with his heavy, in-drawn, even laboured breaths when describing London Pride, to Ria’s (a white participant) earlier, which had been filled with positive, excitable anecdotes, even when describing the actions of a TERF fringe group. On the participatory diagram produced during the session, Anya and Cal annotated the phrase ‘safe + unsafe’. Both raised persistent and harmful assumptions around LGBT+ POC’s families circulating young trans and queer POC even in queer spaces. Cal noted that such racist view presented Asian families as backward and conservative, with this ‘non-acceptance’ narrative presenting Jewish, Asian, and those from older generations or Muslim heritage as ‘hardline’ and ‘strict’. We discussed the postcolonial histories behind and difficulties created by these narratives, particularly in terms of being read as ‘other’ to supposed LGBT+-friendly whiteness. In their stories, queer and trans POC bodies moved with a sense of freedom and celebration in certain queer spaces before facing anxiousness either in the same spaces or in everyday life beyond...

Here, we see that even spaces that are designed as landscapes of RRR for queer/trans folk, or to promote trans youth inclusion/affirmation, can become, paradoxically, *landscapes of exclusion*. During our time together, in contrast to such sites as the COLOURS group for young trans POC (see section 7.4.1), Anya and Cal described a range of spaces that became imbued with such exclusionary dynamics that induced, for them, feelings of ‘out-of-placeness’ and deeply embodied exhaustion (tangible, for example, through Cal’s ‘heavy, in-drawn, even laboured breaths’). Their stories, as young trans POC, demonstrate how ‘safe spaces’ must account for the specificity of experiences that young people embody and encounter in their everyday lives and for potential multiple oppressions they may contest in their wider everyday lives. Following Ahmed (2007), it could be argued that the affective dynamics of particular queer/‘safe’ sites can assume or reify whiteness and other privileged axes of difference, to the detriment of the experience of young people such as Anya and Cal, or other participants.

Other participants described experiencing similar exclusionary dynamics in supposedly queer ‘safe spaces’, including Tom (he/him, 18-21), a young POC who connected his transness to encountering hostility at LGBTQIA+ Pride events, telling me, for example:

‘...every time I went to London Pride, I felt like “I’m in a gay man’s space” [...] it’s important to recognise who still has the furthest to come to achieve equality and equity and [...] I had this one really odd moment [at Pride] where some performers were lip-

synching to a song that was like “I don't want a boy who thinks he's a girl” [...] it was like “you couldn't have picked another song, do I have to hear those lyrics while I'm in the middle of London Pride?” Not to mention the TERFs thing [vocally and visibly being hostile to trans people and contesting trans rights] as well, [*sarcastically:*] that was fun. [...] I called them over [...] and said to them “why are you doing this?” [...] [after engaging with them via email] they told me they see me 100% as a woman [...] at this point I'm not even, these are fantasy land people. I don't experience life as a woman, I'm treated like a man. [...] I can walk alone at night and feel fine, that's 'cause I'm a man, it wouldn't happen if I was a woman. I live my life as a man, I'm perceived as a man, so what about that does not qualify as a man? [...] for me if you say you're a man, you're a man, and that's it. [...] they're questioning the [...] reality of people *existing and living* in a certain way, [it's] mind-boggling, really.’

In this excerpt, Tom describes feeling excluded from what are constructed or portrayed as inclusive events for LGBTQIA+ communities through the privileging of certain queer folk (such as cisgender gay men), a lack of sensitivity and care toward trans people (being confronted with transphobic lyrics), and the overt violence and misgendering of gender conservative activists. In this sense, this story reflects other participants' narratives, in their recognition that many queer spaces that are intended to facilitate all forms of RRR for queer communities often exclude or marginalise trans people and/or become spaces that actively impede their access to queer forms of RRR and community. Although participants rarely described such exclusionary dynamics pervading at G.I. – and indeed recognised the lengths which G.I. workers went to account for diverse experiences (particularly those of neurodiversity, race, and gender) – other less formalised spaces for queer/trans youth were cited as potentially exclusionary and ‘unsafe’.

7.5 Chapter conclusions

This chapter has discussed young trans people's often unacknowledged experiences of practices and spaces of resilience, resistance, and restoration – three interconnected and continually co-constitutive modes of being that trans youth constantly practice, often to offset the affects and atmospheres of experiences including ‘out-of-placeness’ and exhaustion. In doing so, I have critically engaged with literature exploring resilience, and have argued for an expansion of the term, one that (a) attends to the spatial and temporal dynamics of negotiating and responding to particular life events or embodied conditions, (b) considers resilience alongside interwoven conditions including resistance and restoration, and (c) accounts for the specificities of people performing and embodying such practices. A key contribution I make to this literature is to recognise that the interwoven modalities of RRR constitute a *way of being in the world* that reflects the active *agency* of trans youth and others who continually practice RRR. My feminist and queer reading of young trans people's RRR embodiments bring to light how restoration and resistance intersect with resilience. This approach, and my

attentiveness to space, time, and bodily experience enlivens most existing paradigmatic approaches to resilience (Follins *et al.*, 2013) that primarily focus on the condition's health and wellbeing benefits and its emergence from 'struggle and desire'.

My attention to *temporalities* of RRR further solidifies these contributions and continues this thesis' theorisation of the relationship between space and temporality. There are multiple times and temporalities at play in this chapter – including futurity, duration, and continuity – that emphasise young trans people's RRR spaces and practices as operating on, and responding to, particular temporalities and emotional/affective intensities. Indeed, participants gave voice to the durative and gradually-accruing nature of RRR practices and spaces that are shaped by the often enduring, prolonged, and messy temporalities of 'out-of-placeness' and exhaustion. This chapter's spatial and temporal focus also emphasises that 'safe spaces' experienced and practiced by trans youth are wide-ranging, from momentary, fleeting encounters centred around the body (such as character embodiment and atmospheric shielding techniques), to regular, community-centric or even 'retreat'-like spaces (including G.I.'s community and camp spaces, respectively). They are also carried with and embodied by trans youth, and *endure* through such mechanisms as young trans people's recalling of prior sensory engagements with(in) 'safe spaces' and engaging with particular materialities including objects associated with/collected from G.I. sites.

Through my research methods and spaces, it became clear that RRR practices and spaces allow young trans people to negotiate their past, present, and imagined future selves and experiences. For example, alongside their immersion in 'safe spaces', young trans people might project toward their *future* life experiences and conditions through embodied RRR practices/mechanisms including escapism, shielding, adopting alternate embodiments, and activism/advocacy – modes of being that allow trans youth to escape from 'out-of-placeness' and exhaustion and escape into more (self-)affirming or inclusive affects. These and other mechanisms of RRR (including those focussed on and emergent from particular materialities) constitute continual, often habitual practices that respond to encountering the constancy of hostile or harming affects. This argument, which further emphasises the necessary constancy of RRR for many young trans people, is particularly novel and pushes the literature beyond conceptualising resilience as merely initiating 'a return to a previous state of equilibrium' (Flynn *et al.*, 2012: iii). Indeed, both formalised 'safe spaces' and more fleeting spaces that trans youth create build in strength and affective potential as they are continually (re)created and accessed, recalled, and embodied.

The young trans people I worked with adopt *bodily-calming and affect-controlling* modes of RRR through their connections with objects, artefacts, and things. These act as mechanisms of protection

and engage in temporal (re)negotiations by developing queer/trans atmospheres and affective fields. This chapter has shown how such material objects and attachment to them are crucial for disrupting difficult affective atmospheres and allowing trans youth to (re)establish agency and control, and *trans* space (see glossary). In this sense, in order to feel comfortable in particular spaces, trans youth must become deliberately ‘out-of-place’ as a RRR strategy. This effect was illustrated through, for example, Mark transformation of spaces of violence into sites of calm and stability, and Phil’s continually recalling and making-present of the G.I. camp’s affirming affects. In sum, participants regularly made use of materialities to engage in each RRR modality in a manner that reflects the interwoven nature of RRR itself.

In addition to material objects and artefacts, *landscapes of RRR* can be as crucial and significant trans youth. Participants’ moving stories illustrate how trans ‘safe spaces’ like those of G.I. can become catalytic and enabling sites of often *life-saving importance*. Such stories demonstrate how G.I. spaces – as life-enriching trans ‘safe spaces’ – operate as particularly restorative spatial and temporal oases that punctate/disrupt difficult, weariness-inducing everyday spatial and temporal conditions such that, in contrast to spaces discussed in chapters five and six, trans youth often develop *intensely positive anticipatory relations* toward future immersions in these sites. Stories such as those of Sachin, Mark, Andy, and Ross illustrate the almost utopic emotional weight that certain participants attach to G.I. spaces and leaders. Indeed, G.I. spaces both (a) offer trans youth skills and techniques for RRR and (b) allow their RRR to build through accruing exposure to inclusionary, supportive, and affirming activities and atmospheres.

My exploration of formalised ‘safe spaces’ begins to rectify a research gap that has not fully examined the intense emotionality and threshold importance of ‘safe spaces’ from the perspectives of those – including trans youth – accessing such sites. Moreover, by attending to the atmospherics of RRR, I have emphasised how RRR space-times – including those that are only fleeting or experienced by individuals – are felt on a deeply embodied level and/or surfaced deliberately in certain settings to ‘complete’ around (Hitchen, 2019) and shield or divert young trans people from hostile events and encounters. This atmospheric approach reveals how such sites and times are – in a thread of thinking first established in chapter three – continually recalled and (re)made as affective archives by young trans people. It is the atmospheres created and felt by trans youth and the multifaceted *transing* of space in trans ‘safe spaces’ that enable young trans people to produce and maintain each modality of RRR spatiotemporally beyond such sites (although Anya, Cal and Tom’s stories also indicate how certain folk might not experience the RRR potentials of ‘safe spaces’ in certain contexts according to intersectional axes of difference/privilege.) As Jón’s artwork (figure 5.7) so powerfully communicates,

G.I. and other trans 'safe spaces' can constitute radical spaces that not only sit in opposition to cisnormativity and hostility but make it possible for trans youth to carve out and orient toward affirming presents and positive futures.

Conclusions

8.1 Exploring the everyday lives of young trans people: An ‘out-of-placeness’–exhaustion–resilience, resistance, and restoration nexus

By establishing novel and innovative ways of working with young trans people and reflecting on their diverse everyday lives through collaborative research with Gendered Intelligence, this thesis represents a *set of beginnings* for academic and geographical engagements with trans youth. Participants’ stories and histories radiate within and around this thesis and will continue long after its submission. With this thesis, I encourage researchers – particularly those invested in queer, trans, and feminist knowledge-making – to offer platforms to, and follow the expertise of, trans voices and experiences. Indeed, this thesis marks one starting point from which the flourishing of work exploring young trans lives and studies committed to trans liberation in geography and beyond can take place. In this conclusion chapter, I explore the contributions this thesis makes to academic research and beyond by examining the contributions of its narrative arc (section 8.1), novel conceptual approach (8.2), and innovative methodologies (8.3). I then outline the thesis’ core contributions to trans geographies and the geographical discipline (8.4) and to trans studies (8.5). I conclude by reflecting on the importance of creating space for, and making visible the stories of, young trans people through research (8.6).

Through Karl’s story at the thesis’ outset, I asked what the everyday looks and feels like for young trans people, how their everyday experiences vary spatially and temporally, and how it might be possible to make these realities visible. By responding to these questions, particularly through its narrative arc developed across the thesis, this research has developed fuller and more novel and nuanced accounts of young trans people’s everyday lives than any previous geographical study or intervention. As figure 8.1 (repeated from figures i.i and 4.18) reminds the reader, this narrative recognises three non-linearly interconnected modes of being in and experiencing the world that – as has been clear since Karl’s story – my participants often repeatedly encounter and (re)negotiate: ‘out-of-placeness’, exhaustion, and resilience, resistance, and restoration (RRR). Exploring these modalities emphasises how young trans people – both individually and collectively – variously experience, embody, endure, accrue, rub against, slide into, push against, resist, enjoy, and *continually emerge* through the forces, affects, atmospheres, societal conditions, socio-materialities that co-construct spaces and times of their everyday lives. In sum, paying attention to young trans people’s articulations and creative representations of these modalities through the unique and novel queer and feminist theoretical framings I employed and collaborative methodologies and research spaces I developed has captured what no geographical research project has thus far managed. Crucially, the thesis has shared the everyday stories, emotions, embodied and bodily experiences of young trans people as told and shared by trans youth themselves. The methodological and conceptual approaches of the thesis are politically

significant as they draw attention to aspects of young trans people's lives that are often overlooked or suppressed, whilst engaging trans youth in collaborative research which prioritises and upholds their voices, spaces, knowledges, and communities above all concerns.

As figure 8.1 indicates, much like other aspects of young trans people's lives, their '*out-of-placeness*', *exhaustion*, and RRR *often bleed into one another* and continually emerge as a messy, sticky, and uncomfortable embodied experience. This messiness often contributes to their experiences of feeling spatially, temporally, or bodily dislocated, at least in their experience of particular contexts in the present moment. Despite this spatial and temporal messiness, here I again artificially separate each modality to (re)establish the significant contribution that each makes to studies of young trans lives.

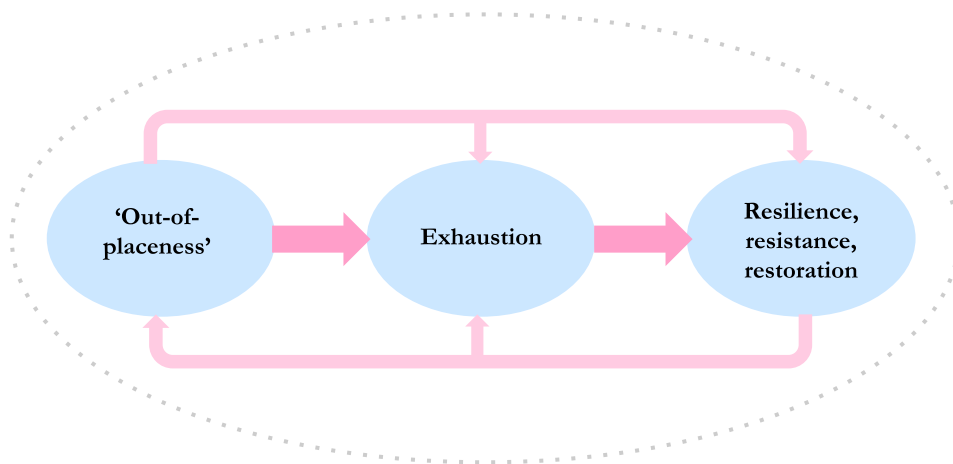


Figure 8.1. Schematic illustrating the narrative arc of Part II of the thesis. The dotted line represents that these modes of being in the world are produced with temporal non-linearity and can be both spatially located and ephemeral.

8.1.1 Contributions of chapter five: '*out-of-placeness*'

In chapter five, I examined what it means to be young and trans and constantly become positioned as 'out-of-place' and, in turn, continually experience and (re)embody 'out-of-placeness'. I focussed on misgendering and deadnaming, others' hostile gazes, and bodily and social dysphoria, as non-exhaustive examples of relatively common modes of 'out-of-placeness' experienced by participants. My focus on dysphoria is particularly important given its 'largely uncharted' nature in human geographical work (March, 2021: 464). In the chapter, I began my first deep reading of Sara Ahmed's work to develop a

conceptual language that allowed me to explore how trans youth become ‘out-of-place’ in spaces and moments that are not affectively or socio-materially in alignment with – or are affectively structured to not expect the presence of – trans bodies, and young trans bodies less still.

Participants’ stories across chapter five attested to what it feels like to constantly rub against, and become dislocated from, particular bodies, socio-materialities, and other political/discursive forces. In turn, such stories revealed how hostile affective atmospheres can be sparked for and felt by trans youth specifically in certain everyday spaces and moments, a reading that allowed me to recognise how participants may feel anticipatory anxiousness around and toward such spaces and times. This anticipatory anxiousness, as participants’ stories attested, describes how young trans people constantly expect to become positioned as ‘out-of-place’, and thus encounter and perform through particular spaces with a heightened awareness of their ‘out-of-placeness’. Such mechanisms initiate a feedback loop (illustrated in figure 5.3) that speaks to the embodied accrual of affects associated with ‘out-of-placeness’. This non-linear ‘loop’ recognises how trans youth that are positioned as ‘out-of-place’ come to expect to feel ‘out-of-place’, thus increasing their feelings of ‘out-of-placeness’. In a related argument, participants’ stories also indicate how ‘out-of-placeness’ becomes stickily attached to certain spaces and times as they recognise the similarity of ‘out-of-placeness’-producing affects and feel the force of their pervasive layering across many everyday sites. The continuous presence of ‘out-of-placeness’ thus emerges through its dual nature as often immediately forceful and acute and/or gradual and durative. A key finding of chapter five recognises that both temporally-constituted forms of ‘out-of-placeness’ can endure and are often (re)embodied and felt long after trans youth first encounter them.

Participants’ stories also illustrated how ‘out-of-placeness’ can function by positioning trans youth as causing discomfort to others – often with their mere bodily presence – in certain spaces. In the chapter, we saw that trans youth – whilst often positioned as though lacking in agency – are paradoxically placed as responsible for alleviating their own ‘out-of-placeness’ through, for example, avoiding certain spaces, attempting to ‘pass’ and/or limit their authentic selves, and educating/confronting others who misgender/deadname them. In a particularly cruel paradox, trans youth must often conform to cisnormative gendered norms to avoid encountering hostile or displacing affects: they must work to become ‘out-of-place’ in order to feel less ‘out-of-place’.

In a further contribution, chapter five conducted one of the first geographical studies of the emergence and embodied experience of social and bodily dysphoria. Through participant stories, the chapter gave voice to young trans people’s dysphoric feelings and their connection to the ever-present

potential for dysphoria-inducing affects to surface and trigger emotions and bodily states connected to ‘out-of-placeness’. This thesis’ attention to the geographies of dysphoria (see sections 5.4.3/5.4.4) is significant as geographers have not previously taken account of how it feels to experience dysphoria in certain spatial settings, nor have researchers recognised the condition’s affective and embodied dimensions relative to space, time, encounters, affects, and atmospheres. This work on the experience of the dysphoric body and self should feed across academic literature on trans embodiments and indeed trans geographies and the geographies of sexualities.

8.1.2 Contributions of chapter six: *Exhaustion*

Chapter six continued the thesis’ narrative arc by exploring how young trans people experience embodied emotions and temporalities associated with and emergent from exhaustion – a condition often borne out of constantly experiencing and embodying ‘out-of-placeness’. Ahmed’s anticipatory exhaustion concept, cognate to anticipatory anxiousness, highlighted how young trans people might experience or arrive at certain spaces *already exhausted* by the force of their potential (or imagined) hostile or difficult affective/atmospheric registers and socio-material composition. By exploring the temporalities of exhaustion, the chapter illustrated how, for example, certain trans youth endure a temporal constancy of trans-hostile affects and encounters which appear or are felt as temporally-unbounded, continually perform as an inauthentic self, endure extended, frustrating, and seemingly boundless periods and mechanisms of waiting, and/or repeatedly (re)negotiate and untangle their past, present, and imagined future experiences with a particularly acute intensity. Adam’s story exemplified such temporalities, as he continually casts back and forth between his past, present, and imagined future selves and experiences through multiple time-messing mechanisms, as a result of his ‘out-of-placeness’ and exhaustion.

The novelty of this chapter’s theoretical approach and its contributions to thinking around geographies and temporalities of exhaustion is extended through its attention to the *varied intensities* of exhausting experiences felt along intersectional lines of embodied/social difference and the specificities of young trans people’s bodies, subject positions, and spatial/embodied interactions. My reconceptualisation of exhaustion was also made possible through my reading of Deleuze and Ahmed to emphasise the condition’s *potentialities*. Such potentialities are evident through how trans youth (re)make their subjectivities and carve out affirmation and joy from exhaustion’s durative temporalities. Indeed, participants’ stories demonstrate how embodying and encountering temporalities of exhaustion can allow young trans people collectivise, resist, and (re)create spaces that are more affirming of trans youth. Focusing on these potentialities again centralises young trans people’s agency and their acute ability and determination to embody their authentic selves, even in every settings where – as the thesis

has demonstrated – can subtly or overtly (attempt to) wear away at such modes of being. Being a visible young trans person, internally (or outwardly) embracing transness, (re)making and accessing trans ‘safe spaces’ and communities, celebrating others’ transness, and projecting to a positive future self are only some of the further radical and recurrent ways that trans youth access such radical, expansive, and queer potentialities.

8.1.3 Contributions of chapter seven: Resilience, resistance, and restoration (RRR)

In chapter seven, I completed the thesis’ narrative arc by expanding on its emerging themes of hope, resilience, and persistence and the capacity of young trans people and trans communities/spaces to constantly flourish despite potential ‘out-of-placeness’ and exhaustion. This chapter considered how trans youth negotiate these conditions and orient toward authentic, affirming, validating, joyful, and *trans(ed)* embodiments, practices, and spaces through RRR – a multifaceted mode of being in the world that often forms a constant spatial and temporal presence in young trans people’s lives as practices, mechanisms, and spaces they repeatedly create, uphold, and access. My spatial and temporal conceptualisation of RRR that collapses resistance and restoration – relatively overlooked conditions in queer resilience literatures – into and alongside resilience, pushes the literature beyond resiliency tropes and paradigms such as ‘struggle and desire’ and ‘growth out of crisis’ and recognises that with each act/embodiment of RRR, individuals’ and communities’ capacities for RRR become augmented. Although structures of hostility, exclusion, and marginalisation require trans youth to work harder and harder to live through and contest such dynamics (following Ahmed, 2016a), this can be how trans youth come to ‘hammer’ against (*Ibid.*) – and resist, develop resilience relative to, and seek restoration from – such events and affects as those that initiate and emerge from ‘out-of-placeness’ and exhaustion. Moreover, chapter seven also explores how RRR spaces and mechanisms are maintained/encountered in particular spaces and over time, particularly in relation to young trans people’s orientations toward their anticipated futures. In doing so, the chapter continues uncovering young trans people’s active agency, deviating from academic norms that focus on trans youth lives in terms of discrimination, victimhood, and violence. Although young trans people’s experiences of RRR and other affirming or joyful practices and experiences are rarely acknowledged by the literature, this thesis goes some way toward rectifying this problematic and calling for future research to recognise and expand on young trans people’s RRR, collectivisations, ‘safe spaces’, and agency.

Participants’ stories of RRR – like their narratives of ‘out-of-placeness’ and exhaustion – reflect another key contribution that this thesis makes to studies of young trans lives. In chapter seven, we saw how participants practice RRR through bodily/performative connections to material objects, artefacts and things to, for example, develop bodily-calming and affect-controlling mechanisms, distract from

anticipatory anxiousness and exhaustion, and disrupt atmospheres of hostility and ‘out-of-placeness’. Moreover, participants’ stories demonstrated how queer and trans orientations (Ahmed, 2006) that participants hold to particular materialities and spaces can become shielding devices that generate parallel spaces, alternative embodiments, and protective atmospheres and/or allow *escape from* challenging spaces and moments. Meanwhile, embodied practices trans youth conduct for RRR – such as imagery-creation, immersion in imagined spaces, character-creation, creative and (self-)expressive work, and forms of habitual escapism – allow them to *escape into* inclusive spaces and potentials. Participants’ diverse social activism and advocacy, meanwhile, constitute a more overt form of resistive ‘hammering’ that allows trans youth to variously reclaim agency, provide and share services and knowledge with one another, (re)create family dynamics, develop forms of solidarity and collectivity, and so on. Such advocacy work (also illustrated in stories across the thesis) can develop communities and community spaces and allow trans youth to, again, orient toward futures where such practices are unnecessary. However, these activisms also again highlight how trans youth are placed as responsible for alleviating their own ‘out-of-placeness’ and exhaustion, providing services that are lacking or absent, and for bearing certain burdens so that other trans youth will not have to.

Chapter seven also makes important contributions to developing geographies of ‘safe spaces’. As with other aspects of this thesis, trans youth narratives of their ‘safe space’ experiences attest to how such sites and times – from ephemeral, fleeting, or individually moments that constitute protective mechanisms to more formalised and regular sites of ‘safety’ – build in strength as they are repeatedly created and accessed. Indeed, through the *transing* of space and affective atmospheres, ‘safe spaces’ – demonstrated through the acute affective power and potential of G.I. spaces – often become key threshold, catalytic, and durative spaces and moments that enable trans youth to alleviate the effects of temporal non-linearities and constancies discussed across the thesis, including by developing alternate orientations toward futurity. ‘Safe spaces’, as chapter seven indicates, endure as that trans youth can draw upon and (re)surface them as ‘affective archives’ to provide reassuring cognitive/embodied presences and replicate their bodily freedoms and affirming atmospheres in certain moments. However, my attentiveness to intersectionalities also demonstrates how ‘safe spaces’ as particularly acute sites of RRR are not felt equally by all; indeed, the stories of participants such as Tom, Anya, and Cal illustrate how certain queer spaces, for example, can exclude or marginalise particular trans youth and prevent their access to their RRR benefits.

Finally, chapter seven also allowed me to give space and voice to the life-changing significance of Gendered Intelligence (G.I.) and the Scottish organisation to trans youth with whom I worked. Participants’ stories indicate that G.I. and its community and residential spaces that draw together

young trans people are often experienced as utopic, anchoring spaces and times that trans youth develop the most positive, celebratory, and passionate anticipatory and emotional relationships toward. The reverence that participants with connections to G.I. felt toward the organisation's workers, spaces, and activities, and the urgency that many participants encountered their sites with, pays tribute to their ability to develop places that are affectively and emotionally intense in the most affirming and 'safe' ways possible that celebrate young trans people for who they are. The spatial and temporal focus of this thesis allows me to illustrate G.I.'s enduring status as a particularly significant, often life-saving and life-changing, space and time for young trans people.

8.2 Theoretical contributions

Through its novel 'more-than-representational', feminist, and queer conceptual approach attentive to trans scholarship, this thesis makes significant contributions to theorising the emergence and lived realities of young trans people and their bodies and lives in geography and beyond. In its focus on the minutiae of everyday embodied experience, and the emergence of young trans people through social, material, and political forces, my approach has been political in its refuting of what we have seen are hostile and/or misinformed narratives currently persistent around trans youth. Again, the thesis' focus on trans youth *lives* as told and shared by young trans people deviates from previous norms in geography, which has concentrated on the formation and ontological status of trans identities and avoided exploring – as I have done in this thesis – how (young) trans lives, spaces, bodies, and times are entangled and co-constitutive.

To achieve these contributions, chapter three develops a 'more-than-representational' framework that adopts notions of emergence, force, and affect to understand how trans youth become positioned relative to, and subsequently experience and *become* through specific spaces and times (and the encounters, discourses, socio-materialities, and politics they are structured by). Throughout the thesis, I draw upon force as a particularly valuable framing that can place emphasis on the affectivity, significance, and intensity of particular, specific affects, atmospheres, socio-materialities, and bodies to understand how young trans subjects and bodies 'are reconstituted through relations which extend beyond an encounter, folding into other times and places' (Barron, 2019: 8). Such affective theorisations attentive to forces and becomings are not new to trans scholarship, although as I discussed in chapter three, 'more-than-representational' approaches have been under-used in feminist and queer geographies and this thesis responds to a recent call for more nuanced understandings of the affective forces underpinning and influencing queer subject formation. This thesis thus represents a blueprint that queer and feminist geographers exploring marginality and bodily experience in certain

spatiotemporal contexts can draw upon. Meanwhile, the thesis' conceptual originality is deepened by its tying of 'more-than-representational' approaches to participatory and collaborative research praxis.

The thesis' focus on temporalities of young trans people's everyday lives also represents a significant contribution to queer and trans geographies. Throughout the thesis, participants' narratives have demonstrated the importance of focussing on the durative, non-linear, and future-oriented temporalities that young trans people encounter, endure, live through, actively embody, and orient toward. This temporal focus – inspired by trans temporalities scholarship in particular – represents a further conceptual approach that attends to the significance of particular events, spaces, and embodied emotions in participants' continual negotiation of their past, present, and imagined future selves and in producing particular conditions such as 'out-of-placeness' and exhaustion. This temporal focus also allows the thesis to refute discourses hostile to the autonomy and agency of trans youth (see chapter three; Pyne, 2017).

Chapter three also established three key concepts that underpin the thesis' conceptual approach and theoretical contributions. In the first, I drew upon Lucas Crawford's (2015) architectural scholarship to recognise the *agency* held and enacted by particular spaces (and their socio-materialities) over young trans people's everyday experiences. This focus allows the thesis to consider how particular socio-materialities come to exert force upon and through particular spaces and times as they are encountered by trans youth. In the second, I consider how young trans people experience and generate affective atmospheres attached to particular spaces, bodies, events, and socio-materialities. Furthermore, my queering of affective atmospheres examines how certain atmospheres are solely sparked, 'completed' around (Hitchen, 2019), and/or subsequently attached particular trans youth. As my discussion in section 8.1 indicates, this attentiveness to atmospheres can produce understandings around how trans youth might experience and embody atmospherics (whether exclusionary, affirming, or otherwise) that contrast to the dominant affective (cisgender) norms in particular spaces. Queering atmospheres also allowed the thesis to consider how trans youth can become particularly exhausted by particular affects, become positioned as disturbing or disruptive of normative atmospherics, or draw upon/(re)embody certain atmospheres attached to particular contexts. Finally, chapter three also set out a pathway attentive to how certain materialities – particularly 'objects, things, [and] artefacts' (Tolia-Kelly, 2011: 157) – come to hold affective and forceful capacities felt or enacted by trans youth. By exploring how participants attach significance to such materialities, I develop a framework for considering how they influence young trans people's experiences of 'out-of-placeness' and exhaustion, and how trans youth work to alleviate these conditions through materially-focussed RRR mechanisms.

8.3 Methodological contributions

Across this thesis, and in chapter four in particular, I have made significant contributions to methodological thinking in geography and to developing a methodological framework for working with young trans people and other marginalised youth in the social sciences. Specifically, my research demonstrates (a) what innovative participatory, collaborative research approaches can bring to work with young trans people and young people more broadly, (b) how a diversity of participatory research spaces – particularly creative workshops and ‘one to one sessions’ – can be brought together and practiced, (c) how cisgender researchers can develop research around trans lives in sensitive, nuanced ways that acknowledge and move beyond ethical and positionality-related challenges/difficulties, (d) how researchers can develop participatory research that attunes to the ‘more-than-representational’, and (e) how it is possible to collaborate and develop close, enduring research relationships with external organisations such as G.I.. The thesis also develops an ethical framework that importantly allowed participants aged 14-17 to contribute without seeking parental consent; a relatively rare occurrence in LGBTQIA+-related youth research and fields such as children’s geographies. In this sense, this PhD provides a blueprint for how other social science researchers can design and implement participatory research with (young) trans people, with youth/marginalised folk more broadly, and with(in) collaborative organisations.

Very few research publications have examined the nuances of recruiting, researching, and working with young trans people specifically. In chapter four, drawing on trans researchers’ expertise and the knowledge of organisations including G.I., I outlined the research fatigue and wariness that many trans folk and trans communities may feel around researchers and cisgender scholars in particular, many of whom develop work on ‘trans lives to benefit only academic discourse’ (Humphrey *et al.*, 2020: 175). I explored how I developed a research focus on collaboration, voice-raising, and storytelling/story-sharing through participatory research method(ologie)s to alleviate these concerns. By embedding my research and co-operating closely with G.I. and the Scottish organisation, and thus integrating closely into the organisations’ workings and operation and adopting a multifaceted role as researcher, ‘guest (co-)facilitator’, ally, and safeguarder, I developed one of the most community-oriented and emergent pieces of research focussed on trans lives in geography and young trans lives in the social sciences. Indeed, the methods and spaces this research created allowed participants to reflect on their lives and share their stories through their own means of self-representation whilst offering research/collaborative spaces of benefit to G.I. and the Scottish organisation. These approaches allowed participants to take part without the constraints of assumed vulnerability and passivity they are often associated with in everyday contexts.

The cornerstone methods of this research – creative workshops and ‘one-to-one sessions’ – ensured that participants could share *multiple kinds of stories*, only a fragment of which have been shared throughout this thesis (such stories include collective narratives, group conversations, deeply personal and intimate stories and life histories, visual/creatively represented stories, and narratives built around a singular events/objects). This diversity reflects the malleability of each research space, in that participants could share the nuances of their embodied experiences through means that felt relevant to them. Creative workshops in particular became sites where participants were affirmed and respected and could interact with other trans youth to actively participate. ‘One-to-one sessions’, meanwhile, created a space of particularly acute intimacy and individuality that allowed participants to share detailed biographies in a safe and supportive space.

Crucially, both ‘cornerstone’ research settings constituted spaces that allowed participants to discuss their everyday lives and themes that are often not given precedence or attention – such as those that move beyond focussing on their trans identities – in their wider lives or in academic research. By demonstrating queer solidarities and allyship, prioritising participants’ voices, and occupying the multifaceted position of researcher, ‘guest (co-)facilitator’, ally, and safeguarder, I could work toward collapsing power relations, queering and destabilising power relations, and avoiding inauthenticity and extractive mentalities as a researcher. Indeed, by developing a deep and reciprocal collaboration with G.I. that responds to their needs and concerns and those of their young trans service users, I have been one of a growing number of researchers committed to avoiding both the ‘epistemic violences’ that cis researchers often impose upon trans communities and spaces even when committed to participatory/emancipatory processes (Radi, 2019: 59), and everyday violences committed by cis folk and through cisnormative practices in everyday life. Overall, the collaborative relationships I have developed, and my resilience in maintaining their reciprocities throughout, serve as a model for future researchers invested in collaborative, voice-raising methodological approaches.

8.4 Contributions to trans geographies and the geographical discipline

As set out in chapter two, I position this thesis within the burgeoning ‘trans geographies’ canon. Crucially, as the most detailed piece of geographical research to focus on young trans people’s lives to date, my research adds spatial and temporal nuance and specificity to work exploring what it looks and feels like to be young and trans in Britain and in everyday life contexts. My *approach to space and time* is also significant in its depth and reach, particularly as trans geographies remain focussed on trans people’s experiences of spaces of exception. Indeed, my following of young trans people’s encounters

and engagements within all everyday spaces from the habitual and mundane to trans ‘safe spaces’ has not been attempted previously. As I set out in sections 8.2 and 8.3, my methodological and theoretical approach marks a novel mode of exploring the everyday geographies of marginalised and hard-to-reach people. More specifically, this research also constitutes one of the few pieces of geographical research to incorporate and reflect upon the experiences of non-binary people and other folk who live beyond gender binaries (Anderson, 2019; March, 2021).

Beyond this thesis’ work, I call for further geographical research to expand on the minutiae of trans people’s everyday lives in their full diversity and continue to move beyond representing trans lives as solely marginal and traumatic (see also section 8.6). To continue moving trans lives from the discipline’s margins, geographical researchers must grapple with their existing, intersectionally-uneven approaches and ensure that their research works *with* and is responsive to or developed by trans people. Geographical research must move beyond its lack of representativeness of, and low engagement with, the full diversity of trans communities, its problematic language, and often superficial engagement with trans spaces and movements. Work remains to raise the voices and narratives of non-binary people, BIPOC trans folk, and other further marginalised trans people in geographical analyses, whilst geographers must become more attentive how such categories as difference, age, terminology, and space operate and intersect in relation to trans lives. We should also challenge the field of trans geographies as dominated by cisgender researchers such as myself, and should more deeply integrate trans researchers’ work – including trans studies scholarship – into geographical analyses. In order to inform the work of those contesting hostilities toward trans people and committed to trans liberation, geographers must continue this work with urgency.

This thesis also impacts the geographical discipline beyond the specific experiences of trans youth, particularly via its contributions to geographical explorations of exhaustion, dysphoria, and ‘out-of-placeness’. Indeed, the thesis pushes the boundaries of current geographical scholarship which does not regularly consider the potentialities and affective capacities imbued within exhaustion and its embodiments. By taking a ‘more-than-representational’ and temporally-attentive approach to exhaustion, the thesis is able to more directly situate the condition and its emergence/felt dimensions within and around particular spaces, bodies, and life trajectories. Meanwhile, the thesis’ approach to dysphoria is particularly significant as, again, geographers have yet to fully grapple with spatially, temporally, and bodily dislocating and messy affects and effects associated with embodying the condition (March, 2021). Participants’ stories, which attest to the diversity of ways that dysphoria emerges, becomes felt, and stickily attached to particular sociomaterialities and temporalities, reflect the condition’s varied intensities, affective dimensions, and emotional consequences. I argue that these

dimensions are not always specific to the experiences of (young) trans people (although certain dysphoric emotions – whether internal or external in origin – are explicitly linked to participants’ position as trans), but can also become experienced by those whose subjects and bodies are marginal(ised) or made to feel ‘out-of-place’. Meanwhile, this thesis’ reflections on ‘out-of-placeness’, and its spatial and temporal stickiness/pervasiveness, force/intensity, and immediate/gradual emergence and duration (see also section 8.1.3) are significant in developing a geographical conceptual framework for exploring discomfort experienced by certain marginal(ised) subjects and bodies. Again, in conversation with the work of Sara Ahmed, this framing and the narrative arc of the thesis develop a conceptual language that recognises both how marginal(ised) people might experience and embody the consequences of their affective or sociomaterial nonalignment and positioning.

8.5 Contributions to trans studies

This thesis’ extensive, in-depth focus on the experiences of (chronologically) younger trans people contributes to studies of trans lives which remain primarily focussed on older generations. In chapter one, I conducted close and comprehensive analyses of under-researched, multi-scalar quantitative and qualitative data, policy documents, academic literature, and media representations that examine/evidence (young) trans people’s lives. My novel compilation and examination of existing research and evidence around trans lives and societal hostility toward trans people in the UK – particularly emergent out of trans people’s responses to the National LGBT Survey – demonstrated a stark disparity between cisgender LGB+ and young trans people’s experiences in Britain and evidenced a crisis of trans youth health, wellbeing, and exclusion/marginality. This chapter, alongside the narratives shared throughout the thesis, evidences the lived consequences of a largely trans-hostile society and a shortfall in services, spaces, and advocates for trans youth and their specific experiences. Throughout the thesis, I also demonstrated the political importance and urgency of research that moves beyond solely emphasising hardships trans youth experience and turns instead to the complexity and diversity of young trans people’s everyday experiences.

Through ‘more-than-representational’, participatory, and characteristically geographical lenses/approaches, this thesis has explored the spatial, temporal, socio-material, and bodily minutiae of young trans people’s everyday lives in their diversity and complexity and has avoided over-theorising or over-emphasising identity, trans, and gender as an ontological focus. Crucially, through the contributions set out in this conclusion, I have established ways to avoid the ‘false dichotomy between space and subjectivity wherein space is passive and subjects are active and in control of their world’ that Crawford (2015: 21) problematises. This thesis makes the cases that geographical approaches to young

trans lives can constitute politically pertinent modes of responding to the urgency that the present moment requires of those us committed to trans liberation and celebrating the gender euphoric and otherwise everyday experiences of trans folk. Indeed, in this thesis, from Karl's story, through my in-depth exploration of trans lives in the UK, to the thesis' methodologies, conceptual approaches, and narrative arc, I have captured *a moment in time that scholars have not yet reflected on* – one that we have seen is a time of often intense focus on young trans lives and change in how trans youth are viewed, understood, contested, and advocated for within wider society, particularly in Britain.

8.6 Creating space for young trans people, making visible the everyday lives of trans youth

To begin concluding the thesis, I want to briefly reflect on the importance of creating space for young trans people in research. As I outlined in chapter four, the research spaces I created and (co-)facilitated enabled young trans people to (a) come together and spend time reflecting both on issues and stories they felt were important to them and (b) experience space-times where their transness was celebrated and affirmed (and crucially often not made hypervisible or a spatial focal point). Although, again, I can never be fully aware of the impact this research had on its participants, I do not wish to understate the value and potential generated by creating space for young trans people to be heard, swap stories, develop friendships, and embody their authentic selves on their own terms. I want to advise other researchers, particularly those who endeavour to engage with the stories and voices of trans youth, to take forward and build upon this ethos of (co)creating spaces for participants to be around one another and indeed other trans/LGBT+ facilitators and mentor figures. Doing so, as I often witnessed during this research, can generate positive, affirming experiences that can be somewhat radical and significant in young trans people's (and indeed other marginalised participants') life histories. Even such small acts, I argue, go some way toward allowing academic research to become 'part of a wider fight for collective survival and social justice' and to embody what Pearce (2020: 821) terms a 'methodology for the marginalised'.

I want my final reflections to focus on the political urgency of research that makes visible the everyday lives of young trans people. As this thesis has often reflected, trans youth – particularly in Britain – are subject to an onslaught of societal and structural hostility, misinformation, and exclusion. Yet trans communities and spaces, and young trans people themselves, continue to flourish. It therefore follows that much work remains to be done in order to counter, move beyond, and build upon the current social and political moment experienced by trans youth. As I have demonstrated across this thesis, and as my participants' stories have attested, young trans people's everyday lives are

made up of much more than mere endurance of the present. Rather, the stories shared across the thesis reflect young trans people's everyday agency, gender euphoria, community-formation, friendships, allies, social movements, relationships, and much more. Indeed, as part of this research, young trans people told and shared stories of their school lives, experiences at university, of experiencing homelessness and feeling at home, of love and support, of their interests, and of frustrations and joys. Amongst countless other narratives, they shared their Pride stories, their 'coming out' histories, stories associated with their queerness, their transness, their parental and romantic relationships, and their desire to move away from being recognised as solely trans. In short, young trans people involved in this work shared and reflected on the everyday fabric and minutiae of their lives. It is their stories – whether mundane, emotionally intense, spatially and temporally (in)significant, or otherwise – that researchers of trans lives must highlight and give space to. It is my own deep hope that trans people – whether young people, scholars, community leaders, advocates, or general readers – will find that this thesis contributes, in however small a way, to deepening knowledge and understanding around the everyday lives of trans youth. Indeed, this thesis works for and is dedicated to the liberty and euphoria of young trans people.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Further detail around the histories of trans representation in British media.

Until recent years, trans scholar and legal advocate Christine Burns (2019a) characterises media coverage of trans issues as ‘not particularly hostile’ reporting that was historically cemented in the 1950s and 60s with high-profile, public ‘outings’ of trans folk including April Ashley and Michael Dillon. Burns (2019b) draws attention to the community-generated press archives of Press for Change, a campaign group instrumental in trans rights legal advocacy (Burns, 2018), noting that coverage of trans adult and youth legal recognition and healthcare milestones in the late 1990s and early 2000s received mostly sober, factual coverage from *The Times*, a now well-known platform of transphobia and false narratives around trans youth. Only the relatively rare infiltration of American radical feminism led to the characterisation of trans people as ‘dangerous or predatory’; even the GRA passed with rarely hostile press attention (Burns 2019a). Nevertheless, the Trans Media Watch group made a submission to the Leveson inquiry into press standards, ethics, and culture in 2012, noting three main themes of misrepresentation of trans lives: “trans as fraud”, “trans as undeserving” and “trans as deviant” (Trans Media Watch, 2012: 1). However, Burns (2019a) notes a greater shift in 2015 and 2016 onwards toward trans-hostile publications and articles, with only limited attention to trans voices, recording around 130 articles published in *The Times* alone with editorial lines of negative coverage and the suppression of trans voices and expert clinicians and legal practitioners. As Burns (2019a) writes in her testimony regarding an employment tribunal case of a trans woman former editor of *The Times*:

‘What shocked trans observers in 2017 was that editorial standards appeared to have been suspended in this sphere. This is underlined when the basis for many stories was later established to be false. False interpretation of statistics about trans prisoners and offending. Unbalanced reporting of the nature of the proposed changes to the Gender Recognition Act, presenting only a one-sided pejorative view of the implications. False insinuation about the leadership of the trans [youth] charity Mermaids — even after the Heritage Lottery Fund had reexamined plans to award a grant to them in 2018.’

Similarly, trans writers and scholars including Barker (2017) and Serano (2017) have noted a clear increase in stories wherein trans people are ‘blamed’ for threats to women’s spaces and rights and public order more broadly, whilst stories debating the existence of genderqueer and non-binary people and trans women in particular have become commonplace. Support for streamlined gender recognition has become a metric against which British political candidates are scrutinised; the Labour party leadership election of 2020 saw trans rights become flashpoints of division and hostility (Jacques, 2020).

In widely publicised instances, in March 2019, *The Economist* published the headline ‘Should transgender people be sterilised before they are recognised?’ (PinkNews, 2019b), whilst *The Guardian*

(2018a) published an editorial in which concerns around so-called ‘male bodied’ people in women’s spaces were legitimised, and trans women’s rights were presented as colliding cis women’s (multiple pieces gaining widespread attention have followed; see response letters to Suzanne Moore; *The Guardian*, 2020.) Exposing the British-specific context to such debates, an editorial published in response by *The Guardian*’s (2018b: para. 6) American editors argues that the original piece’s ‘unsubstantiated argument only serves to dehumanize and stigmatize trans people.’

Barker (2017) and Fisher (2018) have tied the rise of such narratives to UK Government announcements of forthcoming changes to the GRA and a GRA public ‘consultation’ (July-October 2018 in England and Wales; November 2017-March 2018 in Scotland). A particular incidence of transphobic media coverage in December 2019, featuring an interview between journalist Emily Maitlis and Liberal Democrat MP Dr Sarah Wollaston (*Newsnight*, 4 December 2019) led me to submit a complaint to the BBC, which contextualises what is at stake for trans people in hostile media discourse:

‘I am writing to complain about the way that trans people were discussed on the *Newsnight* programme on 4 December 2019. The questioning and rhetoric of Emily Maitlis when interviewing Dr Sarah Wollaston was transphobic and potentially threatening to trans people, who are already marginalised and excluded in society. The language used by Maitlis, and her association of trans people to rapists and threatening behaviour towards women is unacceptable. It is also factually inaccurate. Under the terms of the Equalities Act 2010, trans people and trans women already have the legal right to access single sex spaces if they are undergoing any form of transition, have transitioned, or intend to transition. This is not up for debate. The Liberal Democrats’ manifesto, which Maitlis was supposed to be scrutinising, simply seeks to offer trans people the legal right to amend their birth certificate without intrusive or overly medicalised processes. This was not discussed by Maitlis.

‘Trans people will be hurt by the potential elevation of discourse levelled against them as a result of Maitlis’ words on the *Newsnight* programme. At a time where discursive challenges to the right of trans people to simply exist are increasing across most media and national platforms, it is inappropriate that trans rights were debated in this way, with no trans voices present. This moral panic is most acutely felt by trans youth who experience the most prominent and violent discourse around their transitions, in addition to non-binary folk, trans people of colour and other marginalised people who are also trans.’

Appendix B

Excerpt from a 'closing circle' that I led, in collaboration with a trans youth worker, demonstrating how I brought G.I.'s conventions into my own research practice.

Other facilitator: So mine is, I'm still using the name [name], she/her and they/them pronouns, I did this today. It's my social media between three main things, which is the crumbling tower of Facebook, the Twit-van and the whatsapp village and how they all relate to the [online spaces] I have access to: activism, social situations... It also relates to the TERF highway, which is blocked. And... I'll send it this way

Dea: Erm, Dea, they/them. I don't really know. Like, I guess that it's just kind of interesting to think about being trans and being online and stuff. Cos I don't normally think about them... together. Yeah.

Maxi: Erm, Maxi they/them or he/him, maybe, I don't know. I found today erm really interesting, as you probably noticed, I ceded from the group a little bit. Found my own little independent city-state, erm. And I did a thing about erm a Facebook group that I'm in, that I really like and I have my own *Facebook family*, I've actually listed them on Facebook as my family now. I have a Dad that's like four years older than me, I don't know how it works but it does (laughs). Erm, yeah. Just that it was really [...] I've said this before but I'll say it again, I think that this idea of like everyday lives as a trans person is really good because usually like being trans is like centred around, I've said this a lot but a lot of the time when you discuss being trans it's a lot about like erm, issues with medical transition and stuff like that. And I think discussing being trans like that is very like you know clinical, very like and we don't think about it affects us socially and in the outside world and how it affects us in our life, really. So yeah I think it's really interesting to talk about that.

Other facilitator: Do you wanna show the thing that you've made?

Maxi: Yeah it's just little doodles of like people so that I can like remember, they probably don't look like them at all, I've just written out a little bit about... Then then I realised that the group has 5 letters, and the trans flag has five stripes. There's a surprising number of trans people who are in it for a group that's meant to be about music, it's really cool. So. Anyway...

Greg: Hi, I'm Greg, he/him pronouns, ermmm I made this [shows] but I feel like I could have added more, but I was blocked [inaudible], I tried. But it was interesting because it made me think again about like the negative stuff that happens on the internet, because I know it happens but it's just when I'm actually forced to like *remember* it again, it's like, [sounds defeated] 'oh.. yeah look at all that shit stuff that exists in this wonderful thing that has helped me for so many years', so yeah

Eddy: Oh, hi, I'm Eddy, he/him. Ummm I made a picture of underwater, don't really know why. There's a diver and a lot of paint and I went from there. It was preeetty good though. And I also did this by accident, yeah.

Andy: Erm yeah, Andy, he/him, erm I kind of explained what mine was anyway but erm. I thought it was good because my time online I spend quite different to a lot of people compared to a lot of people online cos I don't have like group chats or anything because I just I'm not interested, it's annoying. So it was good seeing stuff from that perspective as well.

Oliver: Erm, Oliver, he/him. I... it's good to see other people's sort of perspectives on like being trans cos I don't like interact much online. Yeah

Other facilitator: [...] thank you everyone, this has been a really cool session, every has been really honest, really present. And... yeah I feel sort of privileged to be here. It was nice, that's kind of the feeling...

James (me): Yeah I feel kind of similar. So James, he/him, and erm yeah... I think that like it's been really good hearing your stories and your experiences, and it's been a lot of different things that I didn't expect to hear, they've come up again and again, so that's kind of showed that they're like really prominent issues and that shows that they're things that people should be focussing on but they're just *not*. And while I find that really great to hear, it's also really frustrating cos I, I don't really know what to do with that yet, I think I need to process that. But it's just been really good, and I really enjoyed the day, so thank you.

[Wrapping up sessions. Asking whether happy to keep things made. 'if you want to take a picture or anything, now is the time'. Is it ok to keep things? 'no that's absolutely fine, I really like it'. Talking about not being allowed to directly contact the young people with facilitator/ethics dilemmas.]

Project Information Sheet for 'online spaces' workshop, April 2018.



Project Information Sheet

Hello and welcome to the workshop!

This session explores some key themes relating to your 'everyday lives' as young trans people – the session will mostly focus on social media and online spaces and what these mean to you. In the session, we will do some creative activities together in order to produce some work which **could be published and used as part of my PhD research project** (you will be kept anonymous at all times), including:

- Discussing a range of issues relating to everyday life and your use and understanding of online spaces such as Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat and so on;
- Creating images, writing stories, and engaging in creative activities which allow the projection of our own voices (including a 'map-making' activity);
- Contributing your own stories in audio form to the research project (recorded by James).

We will also discuss your views on designing some one-to-one sessions with James, to take place later in the year and you can choose to sign up to these sessions.

There will also be a quiet space to take time out, and there will be plenty of opportunities to work with friends.

This session is part of a larger project exploring everyday life experiences of young people accessing Gendered Intelligence services.

The things we create in this workshop will be used by me in write-ups of the project. Please remember that you are guaranteed full anonymity at every stage of this workshop (meaning I will never use your name or something that could identify you in my writing), and you can choose to not take part at any time. **Your contributions will be used in my research and its outputs (such as in articles, blogs and presentations) with your consent, and I will take audio recordings with your consent at various points.** A Gendered Intelligence youth worker will be present at all times during the session.

I have provided you with a **consent form** which I would like you to read carefully. This lets me know that you are happy to take part in the workshop. You do not have to consent to be audio recorded.

Researcher: James Todd (Geography Department, Durham University)

Email: j.d.todd@durham.ac.uk

Please get in touch with me at any time if you would like to talk about the workshop or the project further.

Project Information Sheet for 'transport and getting around' workshop day two.



Project Information Sheet

Hello and welcome to the zine-making workshop!

This session explores what it means to move around as a trans person in public space. In the session, we will do some creative activities together in order to produce a zine which will be published by G.I. and used as part of my PhD research project (you will be kept anonymous at all times), including:

- Discussing a range of issues relating to transport and 'getting around';
- Creating images, writing stories, and engaging in creative activities which allow the projection of our own voices;
- Taking part in 'mini-interviews' which will be recorded by James;
- Contributing your own stories in audio form to the research project.

There will also be a quiet space to take time out, and there will be plenty of opportunities to work with friends.

This session is part of a larger project exploring everyday life experiences of young people accessing Gendered Intelligence services.

The things we create in this workshop will be used by me in write-ups of the project. Please remember that you are guaranteed full anonymity at every stage of this workshop (meaning I will never use your name or something that could identify you in my writing), and you can choose to not take part at any time. **Your contributions will be used in a zine circulated through Gendered Intelligence and used in my research with your consent, and I will take audio recordings with your consent at various points.** A Gendered Intelligence youth worker will be present at all times during the session.

I have provided you with a **consent form** which I would like you to read carefully. This lets me know that you are happy to take part in the workshop. You do not have to consent to be audio recorded.

Researcher: James Todd (Geography Department, Durham University)

Email: j.d.todd@durham.ac.uk

Please get in touch with me at any time if you would like to talk about the workshop or the project further.

Project Information Sheet for creative workshop series in Scotland.



Project Information Sheet

Hello and welcome to these workshops exploring everyday life! I'm so excited to be working with you.

In these sessions, we will be exploring some key themes relating to your 'everyday lives' as young trans people. During the workshop, I will explain more about what this means and how we will work together.

In the sessions, we will do some creative activities together in order to produce some work which **could be published and used as part of my PhD research project** (you will be kept anonymous at all times), including:

- Discussing a range of issues relating to everyday life and experiences of being young and trans, focussing on stories, places, events, people and places that are important to you;
- Creating images, writing stories, and engaging in creative activities and discussions which allow us to share our own voices and experiences;
- Contributing your own stories in audio form to the research project (recorded by James).

Each session will follow on from the themes, ideas and activities of the previous workshop. There will also be a quiet space to take time out, and there will be plenty of opportunities to work with friends. **The workshops will take place with [redacted] in [redacted] on these dates in 2018: 15 November, 29 November, 6 December, 13 December and 20 December.**

This session is part of a larger project exploring everyday life experiences of young trans people.

The things we create in this workshop will be used by me in write-ups of the project. Please remember that you are guaranteed full anonymity at every stage of this workshop (meaning I will never use your name or something that could identify you in my writing), and you can choose to not take part at any time. **Your contributions will be used in my research and its outputs (such as in articles, blogs and presentations) with your consent, and I will take audio recordings with your consent at various points.** Another youth worker will be present at all times during the session.

I have provided you with a **consent form** which I would like you to read carefully. This lets me know that you are happy to take part in this workshop.

Researcher: James Todd (Geography Department, Durham University)

Email: j.d.todd@durham.ac.uk. Please get in touch with me at any time if you would like to talk about the workshop or the project a bit more.

Appendix D

Addressing ESRC youth research guidelines

Youth vulnerability

ESRC guideline: *[Researchers should consider] 'Children's potential vulnerability to exploitation in interaction with adults, and adults' specific responsibilities towards children'*

I addressed youth vulnerability in several ways. Research in workshop, group settings (to date solely with G.I. but in future in collaboration with other trans youth charities) took place with a trans facilitator present, who managed the introduction and conclusion of each group. This facilitator took a primary role in safeguarding, and chaired a safeguarding discussion between myself and any other facilitators both prior to and following the session. The facilitator was always a trans adult who had experience in both youth work and working with vulnerable, young populations, and also held specific and detailed knowledge of trans issues. In G.I. spaces, they had also been trained directly by Gendered Intelligence. I always discussed the sessions, session outcomes, and any safeguarding issues with the lead youth worker, ensuring that they were comfortable with the way that sessions were run and the outcomes that they generated.

To date, one-to-one sessions and interviews took place at the office space of G.I., and, in the case of young people over the age of 18 recruited through other means, on Skype or in a location of the participants' choosing. In one-to-one sessions at G.I., a G.I. worker was available to introduce themselves to each young person who attends; they were also available nearby should any issues have arisen.

Both one-to-one sessions and workshops provided a quiet space for withdrawal or contemplation. A quiet, creative activity was available at workshops, and a youth worker was available to attend to the young person(s) concerned. I was clear in one-to-one sessions that the young person was free to withdraw at any time, and the conversation or activity is directed by them.

Power relations

ESRC guidelines: *[Researchers should consider] 'The differential power relationships between adult researcher and child participant, and how this may affect the child's right to withdraw or decline participating in research; The role of adult gatekeepers in mediating access to children, with associated ethics issues in relation to informed consent'*

The role of adult gatekeepers (and the specific needs of trans youth) in relation to seeking informed consent was largely addressed in chapter four. Consent forms and participant information sheets, along with visual aids such as Powerpoints were designed and/or approved with the input of both Gendered Intelligence and/or the Departmental Ethics Committee, and were designed to be easily understood with opportunities to decline specific aspects of participation (particularly audio recording). Separate consent forms were used for workshops, one-to-one sessions and for activities where young people may contribute further to the project (see attached consent form examples.)

Power relations implicit in withdrawal/declining and granting permission to participate were addressed by providing a discussion space and at the beginning and end of each research encounter to discuss 'what it means to consent to research', including time for group discussion of the consent form procedure (in the case of workshop sessions). I was also open about my own LGBT+ identity, and provided space for discussion of my cisness and how this might impact young people's concerns regarding disclosure and sharing stories. I also shared my own stories and experiences throughout every research encounter. Power relations were also equalised through constant re-affirmation of the idea that the space and activities associated with the project are designed to raise participants' voices, and that the space of research is designed not for the sole purpose of research itself, but also to provide a place of safety, inclusivity and collectivity. This involved incorporating activities which are not used for research purposes, and ensuring that young people are comfortable with simply attending the space for enjoyment (and are therefore free to take away any creative outputs and decline to contribute them to the project). The verbal aspects of consent with participants also allowed for important discussions around particular ethics including my own cisgender identity, feelings around contributing to 'research', maintaining anonymity inside and beyond the space, and so on.

Youth understandings of research and outcomes

ESRC guidelines: *[Researchers should consider] 'The expectations of the child participants and their parents/gatekeepers and whether the involvement in research is meaningful for the children; The children's understanding of the purpose of the research and what they are contributing to; Whether the information on the research and requested tasks is provided to the children in an accessible way; Incentives and compensation for participation for children and young people, and how this may affect the principle of voluntary participation and freely-given informed consent'*

Research activities were outcome-oriented and young people were made aware that their knowledges, voices and stories are valued by myself and others with interest in the project. Research workshops and one-to-one sessions were approved by Gendered Intelligence, who sought to ensure

meaningful outcomes for their young service users. I made sure to indicate to young people that they were in control of how the session is run, what activities they might select to take part in, or the discussion points that are raised. For example, introductory activities in workshop sessions allowed young people to identify key themes which were then prioritised according to outcomes which they desired from the session. Pre-designed activities were structured to allow young people to select multiple interpretations and ways of working. For example, a 'storyboarding' activity may be drawn in comic strip-style alongside a recorded conversation, or through a written 'letter to' a specific person or actor.

Participants arrived at one-to-one sessions after giving an indication of what they would like to discuss, or after discussing materials which they bring along.

When a particular issue which is received well by the group arose, I was careful to allow this to 'breathe' as a focal point for activity or discussion. For example, several workshop sessions deviated from the main theme of the session to diverse topics including healthcare, relationships and so on. I was careful to allow these conversations and activities to ensue without interference from myself as 'researcher'. Participant information sheets and consent forms were easy-to-read and, again, I was careful to discuss each aspect of the forms with participants. This included emphasising with participants their right to withdraw or decline participation, or aspects of participation, particularly audio recording. Indeed, there was no requirement to contribute to the research in any form when taking part in the session; I always stressed that sessions were designed for young people to access a safe, supportive space through which to reflect on everyday life issues. Finally, both workshop and one-to-one sessions included an activity that allows young people to identify themes they would like to cover and 'ways of working' that could be used in further sessions. This allows the research themes to emerge according to the needs and views of participants.

There were no material or monetary incentives for taking part in the research. Instead, emphasis was placed on the value of participation through raising voice, and opportunities to communicate narratives to others with an interest in listening to trans stories, or developing policy from such stories. There was no requirement to contribute to the research in any form when taking part in a session. Emphasis was placed on the session itself as a space to explore the issues at hand, and I was careful to continually remind those who are present of their ability to indicate to either myself or another G.I. worker should any discomfort arise.

Data protection

ESRC guidelines: *[Researchers should consider] 'Whether data deposit has been explained appropriately and in a way that children can understand; Legal requirements of working with the specific population (including Disclosure and Barring Service clearance); Providing information on potential disclosure and breach of confidentiality and the reasons that this may occur'*

I was clear with young people that their contributions remain confidential throughout every stage of the research process both verbally and in writing on participant information sheets. Their names were never used in the research, and pseudonyms were always used in transcriptions and write-ups, and I asked that no creative work made reference to names or spaces through which the young person can be identified. Similarly, the names of organisations, places and so on which young people refer to with the exception of G.I. were either removed or given pseudonyms in transcriptions, write-ups and outputs. Audio recordings were deleted following transcription, and artwork and transcriptions on paper were kept in a locked cabinet. The depositing of data was discussed whilst young people completed consent forms, and I was clear that their names would never be linked with their work or narratives.

DBS clearance was been sought through Gendered Intelligence themselves, and I carry my DBS certificate to every research encounter and space, even when working solely with over-18s. I carried my DBS clearance to all sessions. In Scotland, I received Protecting Vulnerable Groups (PVG) clearance.

Appendix E

Jay Stewart MBE, CEO and co-founder of Gendered Intelligence contributed the following response to the Ethics Committee regarding parental consent procedures (email communication, 12 August 2018):

‘We obtain parental consent from all of our under 18s to attend GI youth sessions through our membership scheme, although we do this in a way that does not out them to parents if the young people have not shared their trans status or that they are questioning their gender identity.

I would say that some young trans people have difficult relationships with their parents but not all. We do have very good relationships with many of the parents of our young members. We get to know them either when they drop them off or when they attend the Saturday sessions for parents and carers. I think the argument should also be around giving young people autonomy to make decisions about whether to participate in research and not infantilise them by seeking parental consent.

If there is any vague reference to safeguarding our young people, I would say that at Gendered Intelligence we take safeguarding very seriously.

Our Designated Safeguarding Lead has done the following training:

Child Protection Training, Designated Safeguarding Lead update training, NSPCC, 2017
Organisational development coaching with a focus on the way I lead policies and practices related to support for students, Institute of Group Analysis, 2016
The Prevent Agenda, MASHEIN, 2016
WRAP (Workshop to Raise Awareness of Prevent), Harrow Council, 2016
Child Protection Training UK, Safeguarding Children level 3
(Designated Safeguarding Lead), 2015

If James ever felt concerned about any of our young members, we have good policies and procedures that James has been inducted to.’

Appendix F

Brief literature review on 'placelessness'

In early geographies of sexualities work, scholars employed the language of 'placelessness' to conceptualise such experiences as the embodiment of bisexuality as 'a place at the margins' of gay and lesbian landscapes (Bell, 1994). Indeed, Bell (1994) understood that bi folk experienced such sites as though they were merely 'tourists' passing through their homonormativities. In contrast, Knopp (2004) argues that the experience of 'placelessness', when understood as offering potential active material and embodied agency, can become a useful term for thinking through the experiences of LGBT folk who might find solace in the 'experience and practice of placelessness [as] dispen[sing] enormous amounts of both pleasure and emotional/ontological security' to marginalised or subjugated subjects.

A wealth of geographical research has examined mechanisms through which certain bodies are produced as, and subsequently feel the effects of, being 'out-of-place' across everyday spaces. This work has implied a normatively regulated place from which certain differences are positioned as 'outside' or 'beyond'. For example, research has focussed on the bodily 'outsiderness' certain people and bodies might feel as a result of being racialised and/or gendered, experiencing the affects of racism, sexism, and/or cissexism in academia and academic spaces, or embodying mental ill health (see for example, Ahmed, 2007; 2012; 2017; Caretta *et al.* 2018; Doan, 2010; Johnson, 2019; Todd, 2020b; Tolia-Kelly, 2017), with such practices of bodily exclusion and discipline occurring across multiple, intersecting axes of bodily and social difference and oppression (Oliver and Morris, 2019; Todd, 2020). In terms of exploring queer experiences of everyday sites, geographers have considered the 'out-of-place' experiences of queer and racialised people and their bodies (DasGupta and Dasgupta, 2018), the experience of occupying 'out-of-place' or uncomfortable bodies in queer spaces as research sites (for example see Bain and Nash, 2006; De Craene, 2017a on sexualised queer research spaces), and queer belonging (or 'non belonging') and embodied comfort (and discomfort) and safety (and lack thereof) in queer spaces, particularly through analyses of the racist discourses of queer spaces (Browne, 2009; DasGupta and Dasgupta, 2018; Goh, 2018; Held, 2015; 2017; Nash, 2010a; 2011; Rosenberg, 2015). This work demonstrates, for instance, the extent to which 'having the "right" body and wearing the "right" clothes becomes important in lesbian and gay spaces in order to gain a sense of comfort' (Held, 2015: 37), and has introduced the notion of the 'queer unwanted'; those 'pushed out' of queer sites because of their practices, dynamics, and bodily appearance and shape (Binnie, 2004; Casey, 2007).