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## Sci:identity Evaluation Report: Evaluating Phases One and Two

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## Contents

1.	<i>Acknowledgements</i> .....	3
2.	<i>Introducing the Sci:identity Project</i> .....	3
2.1.	<i>The Sci:identity Team</i> .....	4
2.2.	<i>Background, Project Aims and Phases</i> .....	5
2.3.	<i>Why Think About the Science of Sex and Gender?</i> .....	6
3.	<i>Evaluating Sci:identity</i> .....	9
3.2.	<i>Developing the Evaluation Framework</i> .....	11
4.	<i>Evaluation Findings</i> .....	12
4.1.	<i>The Impact of the Project: Working with Art and Science</i> .....	12
4.2.	<i>Educational Impacts</i> .....	12
4.3.	<i>Social Impacts: Increasing Social Capital</i> .....	24
5.	<i>Pedagogical practice when working with young trans people</i> .....	27
5.2.	<i>Workshop Structure</i> .....	28
5.3.	<i>Pastoral Care</i> .....	28
5.4.	<i>Creating a Safe Creative Space</i> .....	29
6.	<i>Conclusions and Next Steps: Building on the Lessons of Phases One and Two</i> .....	34
7.	<i>Appendix 1: The Zine</i> .....	35
8.	<i>Appendix 2 Individual Impact Matrix</i> .....	47
9.	<i>Appendix 3 Monitoring Information</i> .....	50
10.	<i>Bibliography</i> .....	51

## 1. Acknowledgements

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## 2. Introducing the Sci:denity Project.

*“Saturday morning, 9.20am on the steps of Central School of Speech and Drama, we meet 14 new people who will astound us with their energy, commitment, focus and creativity. By the first break, we are a group. We have established a collective ‘contract’ to know how we want to work, and we’re working. Sex, Gender, Science...what do they mean to us? What are some of the narratives that brought us all to this project? What aspects of the arts do we want to explore & develop? We think about the 10<sup>th</sup> of June, even at this stage. There are EIGHT days to learn, listen & create work.... Then we all go for dinner.” (Sci:denity Team)*

Between March and June 2006 18 young people got together with the Sci:denity team at Central School of Speech and Drama for a short series of weekend workshops which sought to explore the science of sex and gender through creativity. These workshops were remarkable in many ways. It was the first time, to our knowledge, that young transgendered and transsexual people from across the UK have had the opportunity to meet together in ‘real’ space and time. It was the first time young trans people have had the opportunity to explore and interrogate the specifics of the medical and scientific models of sex and gender. Finally the project was a notable unique opportunity to work with professionals from the arts, social research and medicine. This report offers an account of the ‘lead in’ period and the ‘creative engagement’ phase of the Sci:denity project. It identifies the impact of, and the lessons emerging from this early phase.

## **2.1. The Sci:identity Team**

### **2.1.1. The Evaluation Team**

**Dr Alison Rooke:** Researcher, Centre for Urban and Community Research, Goldsmiths College.

Alison is the research specialist on the project and she has overall responsibility for implementing a coherent and holistic evaluation methodology. Alison's PhD research focussed on sexual and gendered identities and marginalisation. Alison also has extensive experience in research and evaluation including researching arts and community development, regeneration and health. She has worked with colleagues developing an arts evaluation toolkit for regeneration practitioners addressing issues of arts based inclusion programmes and their impact. This work included the development of a toolkit for evaluation of the social impact of the performing arts. She is particularly interested in participatory action research and evaluation. also Alison is currently working at Goldsmiths College as a Research Officer for the Centre for Urban and Community Research and she is also a lecturer on the MA Photography and Urban Cultures at Goldsmiths.

#### **Ben Gooch**

Ben is the evaluation assistant on the project. He graduated from King's College, Cambridge University with a BA in Social Anthropology in June 2005. He specialised in gender and his research paper on trans narratives in relation to the Gender Recognition Act scored one of the highest first class marks. Ben is a research associate at Goldsmith's CUCR with expertise in gender, specifically trans issues. At GALOP, London's leading LGBT hate crime charity, he manages the Linking London's LGBT Forums Project forming partnerships between LGBT community members and voluntary/statutory agencies concerned with LGBT communities. Ben also provides trans diversity training to Metropolitan Police recruits on an ongoing basis. Ben is committed to trans activism and sits on the management committee of FTM London, a social support and information group for female to male trans people.

### **2.1.2. The Delivery Team**

**Catherine McNamara:** Central School of Speech & Drama, University of London.

Catherine is the Project Co-ordinator, responsible for the planning, co-ordination and delivery of all phases of the project. Catherine is Deputy Head of Studies within the Postgraduate School at Central School of Speech and Drama, and the Course Leader of the MA Applied Theatre (Drama in the Community & Drama Education). These responsibilities involve teaching and researching within the fields of theatre, education and community arts. Catherine is also the project manager for an ongoing TransVoices project. which began in June 2004 and has engaged approximately 30 trans men in practical voice work. Catherine's PhD explores the ways performance can constitute trans masculinities both in the every day, and within live art. Catherine is a qualified drama teacher and has previously worked in secondary and further education sectors, teaching drama and performing arts with the 11-18 age range.

**Jay Stewart.**

Jay is the film maker and film workshop facilitator on the project. He delivers visual arts and film making workshops and is responsible for the documentary film as well as leading outreach workshops in Phase 4. Jay's PhD engages in performance and video art and theories around the materiality of bodies in relation to trans narratives. Jay is currently the Chair of FTM London, a membership organisation for female to male transgendered and transsexual people. He is a freelance practitioner and recently facilitated a week's film making project for PACE.

**Liselle Terret:** Central School of Speech and Drama, University of London.

Liselle has 15 years' experience as an applied theatre practitioner and teacher, and her work has included facilitation and co-ordination of arts projects in formal and informal education and community arts settings in and outside of the UK. She was Senior Education and Youth Office at the Half Moon Young People's Theatre, London for four years where she initiated and managed many education and community arts projects. She was Acting Education Director of the Unicorn Theatre (for Children), London from 2002 to 2003 where she facilitated curriculum-based drama residencies in Southwark schools. Liselle is also an experienced community theatre director and has devised and directed performances within a wide range of theatre and community contexts. Liselle is presently a lecturer in Drama, Applied Theatre and Education on BA and MA courses at Central. She recently collaborated with a Kenyan community theatre company, with a group of undergraduate students to develop a project with children in rural Kenyan schools.

**Rosie McGowan**

Rosie has just completed her MA in Applied Theatre (Drama in the Community & Drama Education) at Central School of Speech and Drama, choosing to focus her dissertation on Theatre and Youth Theatre in Singapore, where she now lives and works. Rosie is currently a freelance drama practitioner and has just been appointed Associate Artistic Director of Buds Youth Theatre, Singapore. She works with young people of various ages, in various settings, creating work with them in an artistic manner. Although just starting out in a recognised professional capacity, Rosie has been working in the theatre for the last 18 years taking on performance, production and directorial roles. Rosie was on placement with the Sci:identity Project where she worked in collaboration with the project team, and specifically Liselle Terret, working with the live performance group, creating self-devised pieces.

**2.2. Background, Project Aims and Phases.**

The Sci:identity project runs over a 12 month period. It consists of four distinct phases: lead-in; creative engagement (workshops and exhibition); reflection and development and an outreach programme. From the outset the Sci:identity project has had four specific aims. These are:

- To increase public engagement with medical and biochemical knowledge of what male/female "sex" is and how sex is assigned i.e. chromosomally, hormonally etc.
- To develop and extend creativity and expression through an inter-disciplinary arts project with young people in order to engage with complex ideas of sexed and gendered identities.
- To establish a forum for discussion around bioethical concerns related to issues of sex determinism.

- To carry out embedded, participative evaluation.

### **2.2.1. Phases One and Two: Lead in and Creative Engagement**

The lead-in phase of the project consisted of the recruitment of participants for the project and the invitation of professionals willing to take part in the project by offering science lessons, discussion sessions or interviews. The creative engagement phase of the Sci:denity project ran between April and June 2006. This phase sought to explore participants' understandings of the relationship between the science of sex and sexed identities. It culminated in a multimedia and performance event of the young people's artwork. This was attended by an invited audience of 86 people together with the team and the participants.

### **2.2.2. Phase Three: Reflection and Development**

This phase consists of writing, reflection on the learning so far, production of this evaluation report and making the documentary to be used in Phase 4

### **2.2.3. Phase 4: Outreach Programme and Dissemination**

Phase 4 takes workshops into approximately 16 community settings, each time working with an average of 12 trans and non-trans youth and their youth workers/ teachers between October 2006 and February 2007. The project team will visit a range of groups such as those working in secondary schools, Further Education colleges and LGBT youth groups and organisations in and around London and across the United Kingdom. Participatory workshops which use the film as a stimulus will be offered. The workshops will be tied into the curriculum or the organisation's focus in one of several ways. A 'menu' of options will be provided such that an institution or group can select the most appropriate workshop for their needs. The learning from the project will be used to create a final evaluation report together and a supporting information package. Using these the project will be disseminated to a wide range of audiences including regional and national LGBT organisations, film festivals, academics and researchers, arts and educational professionals with an interest in evaluating the impact of creative interventions on understandings of science and social exclusion.

## **2.3. Why Think About the Science of Sex and Gender?**

Phases one and two of the project worked with a group of trans youth in an exploration of biological understandings of sex. It considered emerging understandings of sex differences in the brain, hormones and their effect on behaviour, chromosomes and their function, hormonal and surgical sex reassignment and the consequential range of moral & ethical issues that are raised in relation to these.

The sex which one is assigned at birth sets us on a course for life. The biological shifts that take place during adolescence in relation to sex and gender are critical to our understandings of ourselves, our place in the world and future life trajectory. The Sci:denity project was established with the aim of opening up discussion of these aspects of medical science. Some early questions were: How do young people understand biochemistry when the context is their own and others' bodies? Is gendered behaviour due to gendered norms or

hormonal factors? In an age when gender roles are being re-defined can we re-define sex? Historically we have understood sexed identities through medical and biological frameworks. Gender, on the other hand, considers the cultural phenomena or life experiences of how people attribute masculine and feminine characteristics to themselves and others. Sex is defined in various ways. Medical professionals do not consider the biological karyotype when assigning a new born baby with its sexed identity. If we appear male i.e. have male genitalia, we are labelled 'male'. Is this science? Has all the evidence been gathered? What if the newborn's external sex organs do not match the karyotype? Biochemical sex is defined by the absence of the Y chromosome. The main sex hormones are testosterone and oestrogen. These powerful substances make profound changes to our physiology. Do chemicals make us who we are? A transsexual may be born with XX chromosomes, have female genitalia, but will *feel* male. As a result of this, he may take hormone therapy and/or have surgery so that his body is aligned with the feeling.

Transsexuality might be viewed as a trope for the relationship between scientific and medical worlds, and all sexed identities. Just as the worlds of science and medicine continue to develop their knowledge of sex and transsexuality, trans people themselves carry out their research into the science of sex in the knowledge that as these are the bodies of knowledge they will potentially choose to navigate. Through each transsexual's life s/he will encounter various medical practitioners, from experts in the specific fields of endocrinology and surgery to psychiatry. Medical practitioners are faced with making ethical decisions when negotiating their treatment of a young trans person. The current guidance is contained in the General Medical Council and the *Harry Benjamin Guidelines on the Treatment of Transsexuals (2005)*, and in regard to the treatment of young people, these suggest caution. Concerns include decisions as to whether to administer only reversible treatments such as hormone blockers to the trans adolescent rather than irreversible treatments such as hormone administration and surgery. Simultaneously, growing awareness of transsexuality means that increasing numbers of trans people are wishing to change their sex at a younger and younger age. While the medical profession tends to delay treating young trans people, there exists a practice of self-diagnosis and self-medication. Young people are opting out of the existing medical framework and understandings of trans identities. Furthermore, increased global communication has led to drugs (steroids) and surgical procedures becoming widely available to those that can afford them. It is at this nexus, between medical discourses of transsexuality and a growing understanding of trans as a social identity, that this project lies.

### **2.3.1. A Note on Terminology**

Throughout this report certain terms used need explanation for the sake of clarity. 'Trans' is the term used in this report to include transsexual and transgendered people. 'Transsexual' is a medical term used to refer to a person who identifies as a gender different from that which they were assigned at birth. Transsexuals usually undergo a medical process of sex reassignment through the use of surgery and the administration of hormones. 'MtF' refers to male to female trans people while 'FtM' refers to female to male trans people. 'Transgender' is a term used to describe a person who feels that the gender assigned to them at birth is not a correct or complete description of what they feel. Transgender can be used to describe a wide range of gender expressions which are a variation from the norms of society (for example including masculine or 'butch' women, feminine men, cross-dressers). Genderqueer is a term which describes someone who identifies as a gender other than "man" or "woman," or someone who identifies as neither, both, or some combination thereof. In relation to the male/female genderqueer people generally identify as more "both/and" or "neither/nor,"

rather than "either/or." Some genderqueer people may identify as a gender and some see it as a third gender in addition to the traditional two. The commonality is that all genderqueer people are ambivalent about the notion that there are only two genders in the world. 'LGBT' is an acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans.

### **2.3.2. How We Did It: The Science**

The Sci:identity workshops, which formed the creative engagement phase, addressed the scientific and ethical issues surrounding trans identities through a combination of training, creativity and three science sessions. These took place over the four residential weekends at Central School of Speech and Drama in London. The first 'science lesson' was a presentation by Terry Reed from the Gender Identity Research and Education Service (GIREs) which summarised existing scientific understandings of sex and gender. This science lesson offered a detailed explanation of sex cell activity, the relationship between chromosomes and hormones and how they affect the body and brain and included information on atypical sex differentiation, chromosomal anomalies and intersex conditions. Following the presentation the science of sex was debated, questions were asked and the group reflected on the information offered. The following weekend the participants were trained in interview techniques by the Goldsmiths team. They then went on to formulate their questions for the following:

an endocrinologist (Dr Andrew Levy, University of Bristol, Laboratories for Integrative Endocrinology and Neuroscience)

- a GP and gender specialist (Dr. Richard Curtis, London Gender Clinic)
- an older trans man and artist (Davis Musgrove)
- an older trans woman (Claire Jenkins )

These questions were then turned into four interview schedules which were used in recorded interviews conducted by the participants over the subsequent weekends.

### **2.3.3. How We Did It: The Creativity**

The understanding and critical awareness that was gained in the process described above was developed and critiqued through a series of creative workshops. Over the four residential weekends between 22<sup>nd</sup> April and 31<sup>st</sup> May 2006 the creative workshops allowed the participants to express and explore their understandings of the biomedicine of sex and transsexuality through a range of creative practices. These included film making, photography, performance, painting, sculpture, creative writing, and music. The group formed into three distinct creative sub-groups: performance, filmmaking and visual arts. This culminated in an arts event and exhibition showcasing participants' work on the 10<sup>th</sup> June 2006. The event was attended by an audience of 86 people which included young people, parents, friends, people working with young people, representatives from LGBT organisations, and academics (see section on the exhibition, page 21).



### **3. Evaluating Sci:identity**

The process of evaluating the project was participative and embedded within phase one and two of the project. The participative evaluation was developed specifically to capture the learning and good practice of such an innovative project. One of the criticisms of evaluation research is that an ‘outsider’ evaluates a project or programme with little understanding of the realities of people’s lives, only asks the questions that they have decided they want to ask and interprets the answers using their own perceptions. This can mean that the results are biased and miss some of the most important aspects of a programme or project. In addition the experience of ‘being researched’ can feel disempowering. At the heart of the participatory evaluation of Sci:identity was an understanding that the evaluation should be a part of the project process and an opportunity to reflect together on the process, learn from that reflection and take that learning into the next phase of the process in the recognition that the knowledge and experience of the staff and participants was crucial for developing models of good practice for working with trans youth, for developing creativity and for understanding the science of sex and gender. Another important aspect of the participatory evaluation was a recognition that the evaluation should be engaging and interesting for all the people who take part, offering a range of formats for engaging with the evaluative process.

Through workshops and discussions the participants and staff team agreed the terms of the evaluation together. Staff worked with the evaluation team to discuss the impacts of the project and agree ways of measuring that impact, while the young people, in workshops and in online spaces discussed what they felt the successes of the project and the main lessons of the programme are for future initiatives of this type. In this context the evaluation philosophy of evaluation was to:

- Hold up a mirror to the project process.
- Identify the strengths and weaknesses of the experience of the project.
- Create a sense of transparency within the project’s process by keeping a record of events.
- Feedback the results to participants in the project.
- Feedback the results of the evaluation to other interested stakeholders.
- Identify models of good practice within the process.

#### **3.1.1. Evaluation Methods**

The evaluation was an ongoing part of the project. In this way we were able to build on early lessons to maximise the learning of all participants and stakeholders and to inform the delivery of the project. The evaluation allowed participants and the delivery team to reflect on early lessons and to build these into later stages of the project (and the evaluation itself). The evaluation also examined how staff and participants’ learning, understandings and perceptions changed in the process of their participation in the project as well as softer outcomes such as an increase in confidence and an ability to speak up. The learning gained from undertaking the project and its participative evaluation highlights the importance of biochemistry and medical knowledge within social and cultural contexts. Increased understanding will enable a broad range of people to consider the complexities of sexed and gendered identities, and the bioethical issues of this subject area. The evaluation team facilitated a series of evaluation workshops throughout phases one and two, which offered a space for debate and reflection. The evaluation also used visual media; so for example, video recording of the project was

part of a process of participatory evaluation *and* part of the creative engagement. Facilitated reflection workshops were used to inform the evaluation *and* were included in the subsequent documentary. The following methods were employed in the evaluation process:

- Evaluation team attending and taking part in workshops.
- Evaluation sessions with staff team.
- Group reflection in evaluation workshops with young people throughout the process.
- Encouraging staff and young people to use Sci:identity log books, which were handed out at the start of the project, to record their reflections, creative ideas, questions and observations throughout the project.
- Posting evaluation questions on the Sci:identity weblog and analysis of posts.
- Analysis of video footage.
- Attending the exhibition.
- Dialogue with professionals involved in the project.
- Dialogue with the parents and carers of participants.

### **3.1.2. The Log Books**

The participants were given log books at the start of the process. These were used as a creative and reflective space for participants to write down their thoughts, make sketches, develop ideas and questions and reflect on their participation. The log books were used in the sessions and between the sessions. Some participants found them useful and used them a lot, others less so. The evaluation team then conducted log book interviews asking participants about their log book content and the ways that they had used them. Considering the quite intense and often sensitive nature of participants' reflections of the project, the log books provided a way of taking a bit of the project home. Many of the participants used the logbooks as a bridge between the sessions, writing up their thoughts, ideas and reflections on the journey home after the weekend workshops. One participant explains how he used his here:

*"The log book is a really good idea for any project – even if they don't want to share it, it's a good place where, even if it's just a doodle, you can let something out. Even when you're doing something like this, which is quite full on, 2 full days, that it's important to have that kind of outlet, that's personal, if you want it to be, and closed if you want it to be. And to do the evaluation later on at the end it's really hard to remember what happened; you can go back to your thoughts."*  
(Participant N)

### **3.1.3. The Blog**

The evaluation also used a web log as a dialogical space between the sessions. This was a space where the staff team could post up questions, suggestions and messages and participants could respond. The blog was a useful evaluation space and a virtual project space which was used between the project sessions (see <http://scidentity.blogspot.com>).

### 3.1.4. Monitoring

The participative evaluation also includes regular monitoring processes required by the Wellcome Trust to account for the use of resources. This is a normal requirement for the use of charitable and public funds. The project team have kept a record of numbers of people attending, number of sessions run etc. This produces *quantitative* information

## 3.2. Developing the Evaluation Framework.

The early stages of the development of the project identified a range of potential impacts of the programme. The evaluation was broad and adaptive in its scope. However, building on the project aims, the staff team along with the evaluation team developed a framework which was used to think through the extent to which the project was achieving its aims and objectives and as a framework for identifying the impact of the project on individual participants. (See Appendix 2). There were particular challenges in finding ways of evaluating both the impact of participation in art and creativity *and* evaluating learning outcomes. The evaluation framework connects with earlier work which has been carried out in order to develop ways of evaluating the social impact of the arts. Arts practitioners committed to the social and economic development of their communities are increasingly identifying a need for wider recognition of the potential and value of the arts, in addressing social exclusion. Crucially, there is (a) a need to articulate the value of this sort of work in a language understood by both those working in the area of social inclusion and social care, and for funders and arts practitioners, and (b) a need for more robust methods of evidencing this value in a way that is user-friendly for practitioners, meaningful for the broader social inclusion sector, and in particular those working with young trans people. The evaluation matrix developed for the Sci:identity project sought to produce a user-friendly evaluation toolkit. CUCR has considerable experience of qualitative participatory evaluation. In particular, we have a wealth of experience in working to share qualitative research skills with participants and in using the arts (particularly the visual arts) in social research. Some specific questions for the evaluation were:

- How can we quantify the impact of participation in performing and visual arts on the individual participants? What might the key indicators be? What methodologies might be used?
- How can we quantify the impact of participation in performing and visual arts on the wider audiences of the project? What might the key indicators be? What methodologies might be used?
- What in particular are the 'soft' impacts of the project in the lives of the participants?
- How can we undertake evaluative research about non-verbal forms of expression? What are the most useful tools?

With these questions in mind, in dialogue with the delivery team we developed a series of indicators which sought to evidence the creative impact of the project. The creativity which was at the core of the project involved a level of confidence and risk-taking. This in turn is transferable to other spheres of participants' lives, helping to build their human capital and thus contributing to their wellbeing and social participation. The model of practice within the project was one of recognising and valuing the creative practice that already existed within the group. For example, by recognising skills and then supporting participants to perform before an audience. Arts projects have an ability to break down boundaries and build cohesion. The model of inclusion evidenced in Sci:identity was found in the way the project brought together young trans people across the UK into an educational and arts space of high cultural capital, both

literally, through bringing them to CSSD, and through including them in the cultural art form of contemporary performance. This constitutes an expanded cultural geography, a geography of inclusion rather than exclusion. This geography of inclusion clearly contributes to building understanding and celebration – across lines of difference.

## 4. Evaluation Findings

### 4.1. The Impact of the Project: Working with Art and Science

The project provided a valuable opportunity to examine scientific models of sex and gender and a chance to examine how creativity provides a valuable space to explore science. The combination of the science lessons together with the considerable time, expertise and resources of the project allowed the participants to engage in creative activities which offered a way to critique current scientific and medical concepts of gender, sex and specifically transgender and transsexual identities (or in the words of the medical profession 'conditions'). The learning which emerged from such a fruitful combination is broad. In order to capture this breadth and the wider impacts of the project, the evaluation framework identified four key aspects of the project's impact on individuals. These were the creative, educational, personal and social impacts of the project. These impacts will be discussed in the next section. We will then go on to discuss the distinct features of the pedagogical practice which was at the heart of the project, and finally set out some early lessons emerging from the project.

### 4.2. Educational Impacts

#### 4.2.1. Individual Educational Impacts

The individual educational impacts of the project were many and varied. They included learning about:

**Science:** Specifically the way science produces knowledge of sex and gender and the scientific models of sex and gender. Participants learnt about endocrinology and neuroscience and the current state of play in trans health research.

**Research Skills:** All participants were taught interview skills by the Goldsmiths research team. They also formulated questions and carried out and recorded group interviews with professionals and older trans people.

**Art Theory:** Participants explored representations of sex and gender in art and considered how to 'read' art in preparation for making their own work for an audience at the exhibition.

**Communication Skills:** Participants discussed the concepts at the heart of the project, gained the terminology and language to be able to express themselves and share their understandings of sex and gender. They regularly reported back to the rest of the group on the progress of their creative groups, negotiated with the staff team and participants, set their own targets and engaged in planning for the workshops.

**Creative Production.** Participants learnt about art, performance, sculpture, exhibition curation, IT skills and how to produce a zine. In these processes participants gained and shared a wide range of skills. So for example, one participant who had never operated a

computer before made a short film using the software package 'Final Cut Pro'. Many of the performance group had never performed in public before, and here, performed in Central School of Speech and Drama's Embassy Theatre to an audience of around 100 people.

*"Communication skills...Erm...[I learnt] how to use a video camera and upload pictures from a digital camera to a computer. Before then I just left it to friends to do for me. I also had to practice making my voice carry." (Participant A)*

#### **4.2.2. Critical Science Education or "You'll find the answer, then you'll find the question's changed" <sup>(1)</sup>**

The participants came to the project with varying degrees of knowledge of the science of sex and gender. The team established a 'baseline position' in the first weekend by working in small groups producing 'venn diagrams' to prompt discussion and develop some clarity about the perceptions of, and differences between sex and gender and the role of science. This exercise revealed that some participants had quite extensive understanding of the science of sex and gender. For example, they knew about karyotypes, chromosomes and hormones, whilst others did not. This was demonstrated later in the first weekend when GIRES gave a talk on the science of sex and gender. This session and subsequent discussions revealed the mixed ability within the group. So for example, one participant stated, 'Yes but we all have testosterone and oestrogen' demonstrating some knowledge of endocrinology, whereas another asked 'If you are born a boy will you always be an XX or will you be an XY?', demonstrating a lack of knowledge about chromosomes. The post-presentation discussion session provoked some sophisticated questions and self-assured level of critique of some of the concepts offered in the presentation. So for example, one participant stated:

*"I found the informational talk rather too long and boring and biased as hell. Between us all I think we could have given a far better, more informational and more rounded talk." (Participant A, Sci:identity Blog)*

Whilst others found the talk very informative and helpful in finding ways of explaining gender and sex difference:

*"I think I knew quite a bit already. I learnt quite a bit about intersex stuff from the presentation we had on the first weekend, which I think gave me a bit more perspective on the scientific sex-related stuff. I think I could use a lot of the information in getting other people to better understand being trans, since I have a more rounded view of it now." (Participant C)*

*Several participants stated that the significance of science and medicine to their lives as trans people was not made explicit enough at the beginning of the project and that they could have benefited from a fuller explanation of the theoretical underpinnings of the project and a clearer explanation of the project aims and objectives from the outset. It was not until*

<sup>1</sup>. Taken from participant's blog

they had had an opportunity to reflect on the project, reading drafts of the evaluation report and reflecting on their participation, that they understood the reasons for focussing on science and medicine. Instead they had been under the impression that the science was less important than the art.

### 4.2.3. Young Researchers

It is worth noting here that some of the participants came to the project having already done considerable independent research into the medical and scientific information about sex and gender in the process of exploring and becoming informed about their sex and gender identities. Furthermore, four of the participants were already responding to medical understandings of sex and gender as they were either being referred to, or were already clients of, gender identity clinics. On this journey they had already encountered medical and psychiatric practitioners in the process of being diagnosed as 'gender dysphoric'<sup>(2)</sup>. Almost all of the participants had done considerable research into transsexuality (mostly through use of the internet) in the process of self-diagnosis and seeking out peer support. However, the structured space of the science lessons, the interviews and the subsequent responses to these offered a unique opportunity to be able to formulate questions about current medical understandings of trans identities, to put these questions to professionals working with gender and sex and to develop an informed critique of current medical models of trans-identities. The questions posed to the GP, who now works as a gender specialist, were a way of attempting to open up the typical transsexual journey. They focussed on the order of treatment (e.g. Is it possible to have a hysterectomy before taking testosterone?). These questions can be understood as a reflection of the shared learning within the project.

What do you feel you have learnt about the science of sex and gender so far in the project? *"Where do I start! – as I already said, lots of terminology and facts about hormones, brain sex, and scientific points of view in relation to transsexuality - but more importantly and more interestingly, how science is a social construct (albeit a long established one) which is always changing and adapting to personal experiences and social movements. And if it isn't, IT SHOULD BE! So not to always accept science as gospel!"* (Participant N)

The professionalism of the project and the stakeholders who contributed, alongside the dialogue and peer education which the project facilitated, was a valuable learning space. This was contrasted with the difficulties of relying on the internet when researching information about trans issues. The following text which two participants wrote for the zine (which was produced as part of the exhibition) encapsulates some of these difficulties:

*"I've been trying to research effects of T<sup>(3)</sup> but the internet is, as usual, a minefield of conflicting information. In fact, one site went on about how it increases risks of breast cancer if I don't get 'em chopped off (which I wouldn't, they're teeny anyhow), and another one said the exact opposite. Oh, and the internet doesn't really say much about hormones etc (which is where I keep on going in my head with this, every time I think about it. Scary), or genderqueers".* (Participant I)

*"I consider myself a newly 'discovered' transboy as I only came out in February of this year. I am pretty new to everything, all the new terms and information makes my head hurt. Most of my research has been through various TG sites on the internet. Different websites say different things, but nothing beats meeting a transperson in person and talking to them. I got to do that this weekend and I am very happy I met the guys here, as it helps me divert text and websites into real life experience". (Participant H)"*

Furthermore, the science was not easily available to those participants even when they were part of genderqueer social networks. As a participant explains below:

*"I've been out for ages and I've met loads of trans people. I've been clubbing and stuff, but [the project] brought more information towards the technical side of things, cause I've never really gone into it and like chromosomes and everything, and that's what like the project has brought to me. [T]he science bit was done well, the presentation that the lady came in and done was really good, really informative"(Participant J)*

During the second weekend workshop the group learnt interview techniques and formulated questions. Much of the learning from the science lessons was focussed on devising an interview schedule for the interviews with an endocrinologist and a GP/ gender specialist , an older trans man, and an older trans woman. These questions formulated by the group also demonstrated significant understanding of the science of sex and gender and a questioning attitude to the relationship between the various models of sex and gender employed by psychiatrists, endocrinologists and GPs. So for example the interview with the endocrinologist Dr. Andrew Levy included questions about the extent to which behaviour and qualities associated with femininity and masculinity are due to hormone levels:

*"Is it true that testosterone enhances qualities that are considered stereotypically male, for example loving/tenderness decreases, attention span shortens?"*

This session also asked sophisticated questions about hormones. Such as:

*"If you take testosterone how and when does it effect your oestrogen production and levels?"*

These questions revealed an already well-developed understanding of the kinds of scientific knowledge a trans person will need when navigating the science of sex and gender throughout their transition. Young trans people encounter a range of medical professionals throughout their transition and each has quite specific scientific models for understanding sex and gender. The participants were aware of, and somewhat critical of, these differing frameworks and the potential influence on their lives. This was also apparent in the following question:

*"What (if any) is the relationship between a GP, Psychiatrist and an endocrinologist when treating a trans person. Do your professional frameworks for understanding gender and (trans) sex overlap? How?"*

And for the endocrinologist:

*“What is the relationship between theories of hormones and theories of brain sex? Does endocrinology endorse ‘brain sex’ theories?”*

The GIRES session examined the neurological research evidence base for arguing that there are differences in male and female brains (and that trans people may have a male brain in a female body and vice versa). Although this offered a case for understanding transsexual experience, it was also felt by some that this reified distinct male and female sexes. Some of the work that the young people were producing was a critique of a distinctly gender binaried world. Hence the following response from this participant who identifies as genderqueer:

*“I hope that when I die they look at my brain and find that it's neither male nor female and then I'll feel...justified for all of this. I don't think science has a good relationship with trans people, I'm wary of things being biological and 'curing' us - just let us do what we need to be happy in our own skin and everyday lives, just like everyone else” (Participant A)*

The interview schedules devised by the young people and the responses from Dr Richard Curtis, Dr Andrew Levy, and the two older trans people gave the young people a valuable, open and engaging space to discuss their specific questions and concerns. For some of the participants the investigation into the existing state of scientific knowledge revealed how little is actually known about trans and potential long-term effects of hormone therapy. As the following statement illustrates:

*“I did learn some new stuff, I also thought about some old stuff in a new way. I learnt a lot about the lack of scientific/medical understanding about sex, or rather, that understanding became less of a concept and more of a reality. It has driven me to learn more about sex and intersex”. (Participant J )*

Another theme in the learning about science was the development of a critique of medical ethics in relation to the diagnosis and treatment of transsexuality, as the following quote illustrates:

*“I've pondered how gender and transition relate with other body modifications (piercings, tattoos, cosmetic surgery) because to get your tits enlarged you just need money, but to get them cut off you need a gender shrink. That's bloody weird! Where do you draw the line between someone who wants non-genital cosmetic surgery and someone who wants genital cosmetic surgery? Why is one more of a problem for society than the other? Why does society require that we have an either/or gender?” (Participant A)*



*"I don't particularly think science has much of a place, because while the GIRES woman was on about 'brain sex', Dr Levy didn't think much of it. I think there's got to be more evidence over a longer period of time for there to be a proper link established. However I think it could be dangerous if a 'trans gene' or such was found, because then there's always the possibility of parents wanting to have a 'normal' child and abort a child solely because of it's 'trans' status". (Participant A)*

Similarly the group formulated the following question for a GP and gender specialist :

*"How do you feel about the rightness and wrongness of a person's transition? How do you feel about having the responsibility of making decisions about a person's transition process"?*

#### **4.2.4. Wider Educational Impact**

The educational impact extended beyond the group, and had an educational impact on the staff, the professionals who came into contact with the project, the parents and friends of trans people, and the wider exhibition audience. So for example, Jay Stewart, a trans man himself and facilitator on the project, commented:

*"I benefited from the scientific investigations as much as the young participants. It empowered me to speak to these experts as an equal and not as a patient, which is what I have been. It was great to engage with how science gets produced – through evidence gathering and experiments in the lab – and to critique the authoritative voice in which it operates.."*

Another example was when the endocrinologist, who was interviewed by two young people, stated that the questions were well thought out and actually revealed how little empirical research is available on the health of trans people. The older trans woman who attended a question and answer session commented that the participants were a really articulate, advanced group and she was astounded by the ways they were making use of the opportunity to learn and develop their understanding. The exhibition was also an aspect of the project which had a wider educational impact.

#### **4.2.5. Creative Science.**

One of the key features of the Sci:identity project was the ways in which the participants engaged in 'scientific creativity', that is, that they were not passive recipients of scientific information, but rather science and art were things that they did and things they made use of in the workshop space, and beyond. An early session on gender in art explored theories of representation and the ways in which the meanings of gender and sex in art are uncertain and open to interpretation, in contrast to science. (It is worth noting here that six of the participants had already had some arts and music education and training at school or college). The young people's creative work communicated complex understandings of the science of sex and gender. Some of the themes that emerged in the participant's work included: a critique of a science and medicine which produces the coherence of sex and gender and the communication of the far reaching consequences and difficulties of living as a young trans person in a gender binaried social world. This was exemplified through some of the art work. Early discussions about the exhibition lead to the creation of the 'grey area', an area in the exhibition

which worked to undo gender binaries. Installations included a large toilet cubicle covered in comments that the participants had heard when being seen to be entering the 'wrong' toilet, a collage titled 'buying into gender' showing gendered consumer goods, an installation titled 'undoing gender', with two videos projected onto screens, and a sculpture of gender stereotypical clothes which had been subject to some destruction and modification. Similarly the artistic space opened up an alternative to scientific paradigms. Rather than sex being a matter of certainty found in verifiable evidence of scientific facts, art offered the opportunity to communicate the humanity of trans. So for example early sessions which focussed on representations of sex and gender in the media and art made it apparent that art offers an ambiguous space where meaning is produced through creative practices and the various readings of those representations.

#### **4.2.6. The Uses of Autobiography.**

Much of the work in phase one drew on autobiographical experience as both a critique of the science of sex and gender, and as a creative resource. Participants courageously drew on their own life stories to communicate with humour and pathos the experience of being young and trans. The themes of the exhibition reflected the young people's concerns, passions and experiences. These included, 'passing (4)', relationships with family and friends, coming out, feeling different from the 'norm' and negotiating places such as clubs, bars, toilets and trains. Appendix 1 includes the text from the exhibition zine produced by the young people which also provided the text for some of the performances, installations and films. The use of autobiography in the art work produced nuanced representations of trans. While the medical paradigm for understanding transsexuality (enshrined in the *Harry Benjamin Standards Of Care for Gender Identity Disorders (2001)*) is a fixed way of being with a predetermined treatment route and life path, the art work focussed on the participants' own experience of transsexual and transgender identities as a variety of different journeys and potentialities.

#### **4.2.7. Working with Creativity to Interrogate Science.**

The creativity at the heart of the project opened up a space to respond to science through a range of creative means. This was demonstrated throughout the project but perhaps best illustrated in (Liam)'s work. After weekend one (Liam) expressed some ambiguity about the science of sex presented that weekend. He wrote the following in the blog:

*"the most challenging aspect of the weekend for me was the science talk and the thoughts and feelings it always evokes in me when biology is mentioned."* (Liam, Blog entry) .

However, by the end of the creative engagement phase he had used these feelings to open up a space to critique the authority of science by making a short film based on an encounter with medical understandings of sex and gender which occurred when he approached his GP to ask to be referred to a gender identity clinic. He explains what happened here:

4. 'Passing' refers to being read in public as the gender one feels oneself to be , and or not being read as being trans. Hence an FTM man will wish to 'pass' as male. There is considerable debate within trans communities about both the term passing, as it implies being read as what one is not. There is also considerable debate regarding whether one should wish to pass rather than being a visible trans person

*"My doctor called it the gender determination department. When I said to him no it's the gender identity clinic, and he didn't know any of the doctors names, so later on I wrote 'To Dr Richard Green' on it."*(Liam)

He describes his experience of the appointment here:

*"So I talked to him about things and he immediately turned away from me and listened to me, but pretended to fiddle about on his computer and stuff, and then eventually he wrote this: 'This 22 yrs old asked me to refer her as she has not been feeling fully female, as felt more male gender in her physical and mental activities. Her menarche started late 14, and her sexual organs showed reasonable development. She denies any hirsutism, would you kindly see her for further investigations"*

(Liam) had a negative and frustrating experience with this initial approach to his GP. From the content of the letter, it seems that the GP had no knowledge of transsexualism and may have referred (Liam) for investigations into whether he was intersex. (Liam) then took this letter with the intention of reworking it until it made sense to him, as he explains here:

*"I'm gonna read [the letter his GP wrote] out and change it and change it and change it until it's completely relevant to who I am, not to how my doctor with his ignorance had to write it. I'm going to adapt it and change it 3 or 4 times, each time changing it a bit more to suit. There will be a progression; cause that's what a transition is; from what's not acceptable/ not real to a better place."*

*"There's going to be a voice over with imagery; shaving on a beard then plucking it off. I'll be playing with gender visually. A close up of me is enough to make people question gender. If that's on there as a visual the letter isn't isolated. It will be with visuals; that's important because if I'm in the video shaving you can be more challenging."*

This critique of scientific authority through creativity was an ongoing theme in the workshops and exhibition. So for example, in discussions about the exhibition, the visual art group had mentioned they would wear 'white coats like scientists' when welcoming people to the exhibition, and would stamp the hands of the audience with a male or female symbol as they entered the exhibition

#### **4.2.8. Humanising Science through Creativity. 'It is the X chromosome which makes us human'**

One of the themes to emerge within the creative work of the participants was a response to the 'authority' of scientific knowledge and medical professionals in relation to trans identities. The exhibition clearly communicated the way in which trans people are human, working against both a medical model of trans and the more sensational representations of trans people in the media. As the following response to the exhibition illustrates:

*"Unlike a television documentary the bare facts of human experience could not be switched off or ignored. We felt like participants in the event, particularly in the grey area where images, sounds and experiences assault the senses. Performers laid themselves bare with experiences it hurt to imagine, sending us away still thinking and talking about what*

*we'd seen long into the next week. Indeed, some of the performed items sizzled with a mixture of comedy and tragedy worthy of professional pieces. Clearly the group has real talent. Because the show is built on autobiography the audience can go some way to experiencing how it is to be a trans youth, with the inevitable move away from the 'Trisha Show' mentality of thinking trans people are freaks. The whole evening toyed with our prejudices and inevitably left us feeling difference must be celebrated and affirmed in the beautifully positive way the group itself was able to do."* (e mailed response post exhibition from Kirsty and Debbie).

The workshop spaces offered an opportunity for young people to take responsibility for creative production, to act with responsibility and motivation, to negotiate with staff and their peers, take some risks, test the personal boundaries and enter into dialogue with others. So for example, differing views were expressed over the various weekends, specifically in the working contract session when rules and codes of conduct were discussed, in the post science lesson discussion and through the use of personal narratives in the art work and performances. In this way understandings of trans within the group were opened up. This positive risk taking was evident in the ways in which participants tried out new skills, explored their own gender identity, explored their creative skills and critically reviewed and contributed to each others' creative work.

*"I think it's ace that we all gel as a group and can bounce ideas off each other"* – (Participant A, Scidentity Blog)

Risk taking was also evident in participants beginning to play with gender in developing their critique, for example by trying on and subsequently burning clothes.

*"In terms of the work produced I feel creatively i contributed most to the zine, as I wrote a few things for it as well as doing the editing with Participant B. i like to think the writing ideas for the zine we came up with gave some means for others to work creatively as well with their writing".* (Participant C)

and also evident after the project exhibition was over:

*"Well, editing the zine has been something I haven't done before and something I hope to continue in hopefully editing the FtM London newsletter with participant B. I hadn't imagined I'd end up doing that before, and hopefully it will be a positive experience. I also think I want to start actively writing a bit more about trans stuff, since I hadn't really given myself the opportunity to do so before i knew we were doing the zine. I think it's a good way to express certain feelings around it."* (Participant C)

This positive risk taking was one example of an impact of the project which was transferable to other spheres in participants' lives. In policy terminology it is a way of that individuals can build their human, cultural and social capital thus reducing isolation.<sup>5</sup> Another theme that emerged from the workshops was the way that participants were able to enhance and improve or re-engage with some of the skills they already had. It is worth noting that for many of the participants this was the first time they had performed in public.

#### 4.2.9. The Impact of the Exhibition

As discussed throughout this project, the exhibition in June 2006 had a wide range of impacts, including an increase in the knowledge and understanding of the audience, the impact on the families and friends of participants, raised awareness of trans issues and the creation of a space where narratives of trans people were humanised. The exhibition was evidence of and testament to the dedication of the participants in that they achieved so much in such a short time. It was the culmination of phases one and two of the project. The working atmosphere of the creative workshops was one filled with humour, warmth and dedication. This endured in spite of difficulties such as performers not being able to be there at last minute due to difficult personal circumstances, illness, etc. The quality of the work that came out of the workshops and exhibition, and the subject matter, was also testament to the extent to which the participants seriously explored quite painful and difficult areas with great courage and honesty. Several participants discussed the impact of the exhibition on their families and friends. While some parents of participants found the exhibition a moving (and sometimes difficult) experience it did enhance people's understanding of the experience of trans youth. Several participants reported that their parents began to address them by their preferred name and pronoun after attending, in recognition of their child's trans identity. After the exhibition, participants recognised that they could have an impact on people's perceptions of trans people as the following quote illustrates:

*“Also speaking to people at the exhibition about what they've found interesting or learned FROM US was really insightful .It made people think. [ I It was about realising that people can come round to our point of view, and can accept us if we just spell it out to them ” (Participant A)*

Feedback from people attending the exhibition showed how the event was stimulating and educational. It demonstrated that the event was successful in getting the audience to rethink gender and sexuality and increased their understanding of what it means to be trans:

*“The remark that most struck me from the show was (Liam)'s during the panel Q and A session when he said something along the lines of: “we want to have the right to perform whatever identity we choose”. In true applied theatre-style, I suddenly felt exposed to myself, struck ‘eureka-like’ by an objective sense of the nature of! It dawned on me how amazingly empowering it is / or would be to truly have that performative choice. Of course we all select our ‘performative’ identities within a range of prescribed acceptability, according to existing social and cultural norms, perhaps pushing the edges of the frame where we can.”*

The exhibition also included a guest book which the audience were invited to write in. The following are a few examples of the entries:

*“Brilliant! It made me think!”*

5. 'Risking' or the capacity to take risks is a key element in enterprising behaviour, as increasingly recognised in government economic development policy (e.g. in the recent Local Enterprise Growth Initiative), is the capacity to take risks. Creativity, as it is understood by arts practitioners, is also in part about a risk-taking capacity. This can be illustrated by the ways in which participants not only developed the skill of a new art form but also the capacity to take risk in their personal lives. This risk-taking behaviour fostered through creativity is transferable to other aspects of life, as an element in enterprising behaviour. See also the Knowledge EAST Creative Impact Project: a position paper and users guide ( Ben Gidley and Alison Rooke, Goldsmiths College ) for further discussion.

*“Wow! What an amazing evening – I am humbled and completely blown away by the courage of these young people, who are braver now than I will ever be in my late 30s. More power to you, you rock! “*

*“Absolutely amazing, very empowering – well done to all those involved and keep up the good work. Hope to see our next event! Please keep in touch, I would be very interested in future developments. Thanks for a super evening” (Same Sex Domestic Violence and Hate Crime Worker)*

*“Well done, enjoy the rest of the project, I hope some of the excellent film and writing gets out to schools, to spread the message and help young people be more understanding and less phobic”. (Parent of FTM and member of Mermaids)*

*“I am glad {name} was able to participate! Its been a very positive experience for us all – and it was a great show” (Participant’s Parent)*

The audience included people of a variety of ages and backgrounds. One 14 year old young man made the following comments in a brief post show interview which point towards the issues at stake in the project’s potential educational impact:

*“I thought it was really insightful into other people’s lives. They don’t tell you about how transsexual people feel in school, like you don’t really hear about it. [if it was in school) I think most people would understand.” Personal Impacts*

#### **4.2.10. Understanding Science/Understanding Ourselves.**

One of the themes to emerge during the project was the way in which the participants used and worked with the science of sex and gender in understanding the complexity of sexed and gendered identities:

*“I think it has made me feel less like the female assignment and characteristics I have make me female. I think once you shed the ideal images of what a man and woman should be away it’s easier to accept your own body, when you realise there is no clear line. It’s like ok, I’m a short, unusual guy, and there’s lots of them about and not all of them are even trans! The challenge becomes less of an internal battle (mind vs matter), more of a process of getting the recognition of who you are! I think I will mostly be taking my learning further” (Participant B)*

The diversity of the participants’ own gender identities and the dialogue and risk taking between the individuals in the group also contributed to a deepening of the understanding of sex and gender and the specifics of transgendered and transsexual identities. Some participants identified as FtM, some as MtF and some as gender queer. Each brought their own gender expression and understanding

of trans-sexed and transgendered identities to the project which in turn led participants to think about their own identity as the following quotes illustrate:

*Has your understanding of what trans means changed over the course of the project? "I think it has. By being much more aware the non-transsexed identities that 'trans' encompasses. I think meeting the non transitioning members of the group helped make that much more real. I'm also a bit undecided now as whether someone has to identify as trans to actually be trans. Or whether trans can encompass them anyway. Now when I meet other people who are not transsexed but have cross gendered expressions, it gives me pause. I might include them as trans, but then they might not want that label, so they still belong there? I don't know, it's something I've been thinking about anyway. I've also been thinking about the trans men and women transition and then go stealth and reject the trans label and how they fit into trans [ ] being in a trans environment and hearing other trans people's opinions for so long makes you think about these things".*  
(Participant B)

*"I expected to feel a bit weird initially 'cos I'm not transitioning via surgery/hormones like it seems like the vast majority of everyone else is so I didn't think I'd feel as accepted and liked as I did. Speaking to a few leaders and participants about my own lack-of-gender path was freeing because I was understood and not ridiculed or misunderstood. I could also relate to other people saying their bodies went the wrong way at puberty or social expectations didn't fit with their view of themselves."*(Participant A)

*"Probably the most challenging thing for me was that it was the first time I'd met other transpeople, and that I met, what, 15 of you at once. But I also think that was a really good way to be introduced because there was such an overwhelming variety of people, all with their own opinions and ideas and styles .It completely shatters all the stereotypes that people have about transpeople because everyone there was just so different."* (Participant P Sci:identity Blog)

The personal impacts of the project were also wide reaching. Many of the participants spoke of gaining an increase in self-confidence through their participation:

*"I've had an increase in confidence and I feel like I've made some new friends and got closer to those I already knew on the project. It's generally made me feel a lot better about myself and gender stuff, which is quite an achievement".*  
(Participant C)

This increase in confidence is a personal impact which has consequences that reach far beyond the project, enabling participants to take positive risks, build up trust, and have faith in their capabilities and increase their social and cultural capital. This is remarkable considering the lack of confidence felt by some participants at the outset. The workshop space offered a temporary space and time to experience support, respect and a space to explore gendered and creative expression without fearing judgement or ridicule. The personal gains increase from experiencing this space included an increase in trust:

*"I trust people more. I'm more willing to be nice to people and understanding of their issues (trans or not). I've also found that I'm pretty good about confidently relating to groups of strangers and not being too timid to express my feelings"*  
(Participant A)

Several had subsequently taken on new personal challenges. After feeling a sense of comfort in the workshop space, one participant described how they had gained the confidence to present in a chosen cross-gendered expression in other spaces where more binaried gender expressions were the norm. S/He then went on to apply for (and succeed in getting) a job which s/he describes here:

*"I have gained confidence in presenting myself as myself, and today I actually went to a job interview not presenting as one gender or the other - and I got the job! I've now got the guts to just relax and stop worrying about whether people will think I'm transsexual or a butch dyke, and that in this PC world they'll just look at what I can DO"* (Participant A)

*"I've just got a temp job working on a playscheme for the summer with 4-11 year old kids and I've got some good art/craft ideas and also practical considerations from the project which I expect will come in handy! I've enjoyed watching you all and learning from you. I still want to end up being a youth worker because I think I've learned some good things to pass on".* (Participant A)

Another participant came out as trans during his time on the project, choosing a male name and asking to be addressed with a male pronoun for the first time:

*"Being part of this amazing project has given me SO much confidence with everything to do with my transness. I was so scared and felt so alone before it but now i know that there is help and that I am not alone. I have started to talk to my close family about it and tell more friends about it. I have also started to act more like 'me' and dress more like me. It's fab!"* (Participant K)

### **4.3. Social Impacts: Increasing Social Capital**

From the first creative weekend it soon became apparent that there was great value in providing a space where young trans people could come together in a group where they were with other trans people and workers who had an understanding of trans identities. The social impact of the project was two fold. Firstly there was the social impact of the weekend workshops themselves, and secondly, there was the social impact on families and friends.

#### **4.3.1. Social Impact on individuals**

Many participants spoke of the value of coming together with other trans people and the increase in confidence that they experienced in this space. As well as learning some of the language to be able to communicate their experience and identity as trans people. Participants have discussed the extent to which meeting a lot of young trans people for the first time, in a group, was both intimidating and stimulating.



What are the most important things you have got out of this project? *"The chance to be entirely yourself for the duration of the weekends, to not have to hide anything or be worried about being misunderstood. That for me has been the most important thing I think and has contributed to a massive surge in confidence, in being myself and being out , [ ] Actually the most important thing I've got is friends".* (Participant B)

Although there is a substantial virtual trans community and scattered support networks, each of these have their limitations for young trans people compared to contact with other trans people in 'real' time and space. The value of this real space was contrasted to the limitations of cyber space:

*"To have a real conversation about anything and for anything to actually feel real it has to be face to face. You can say you are a trans youth all you want on the internet but if it doesn't actually enter your real life, your real space, how are you actually getting anything out of it? The internet only stays a really valuable resource for so long, after a while it has to be to something more. I think that was something really good about the project, there's not really many trans people, and there are even less young trans people, and they are so scattered across the country that it is really impossible to actually meet anyone. Without the project we would never have come together."* (Participant C)

One of the advantages of coming together as a group and building up friendships over time was that some of the issues that may be a tension in other non trans interpersonal spaces were not an issue here. Hence transness could be taken as a given and the conversation could move on to other points of discussion:

Do you feel less isolated since taking part? Have you been more in touch with Trans support organisations? Other groups on-line or not? *"Ermm I have I suppose, in that it's nice to have trans friends, and get to know the people I knew previously better. I already had contact with other groups/ online spaces. But getting a youth perspective is so much more relevant and rewarding, and talking about trans things 24/7 doesn't give you half as much as eating out with people your own age who know what's going on weirdly enough! You don't even need to talk about trans issues, I think just hanging out uninhibited with other guys/girls is a learning experience in itself, one I can't really explain, but it can't be beat and I hope lots more trans youth get a chance to experience it."* (Participant B)

Several participants spoke of experiencing a sense of comfort and ease over the Sci:identity weekends which they had not experienced for a significant time before the workshops.

*"I have felt a bit more positive about being trans since the project though. I think that's just come from being in a space where I can be confident in myself as a transguy and positive about the experience of being trans in general. I felt a lot less nervous about people 'finding out' afterwards, 'cause it doesn't seem like that big a deal anymore".* (Participant C)

Throughout the life of the project, participants built up friendships and working relationships which continued outside of the workshop space. As many participants were spread across the UK this was sometimes through the internet, and at other times involved helping each other out with accommodation, going to support groups together, visiting each other's towns, meeting socially and travelling

together. One of the effects of increased confidence for participants was a reduction in isolation, making new friends and being better able to adapt to group and community situations. So for example when one participant was asked about work:

*Has participating in the project changed the way you relate to them? "Yeah I actively try to make other people question gender and other things they take for granted, like...when I met some new work colleagues in Manchester and I was in charge of the group, I could tell they were like 'well YOU weren't what we were expecting!' but I didn't say anything to unpuzzle them, because it's not my fault. I'm not gonna apologise for who/what I am unless I've done something I feel is wrong. I have the confidence and encouragement to present as a boy-looking-person called (name) and for once THEY can deal with it, not ME." (Participant A)*

These explorations led to new self understandings:

*"I think I realised that with a little motivation I can do more than I thought I could, really hope I take that lesson away." (Participant B)*

#### **4.3.2. Wider Social Impact on Families and Friends**

The social, personal, creative and educational impacts of the project overlap and intersect. The educational impact of the project also had an impact on families and young people took the learning about science home to their friends and family. The science offered a way to talk about trans identities, using scientific and medical information and explanation, thereby removing identities from a question of choice.

*Has being part of the Sci:identity Project helped you to talk to family and/or friends about being trans and/or trans issues? " Yes, in a way. My vocabulary to explain and express my ideas about trans and being trans are always changing, and developing. So naturally a course about trans identities and science is enhancing that vocab, especially the really scientific terms that I can never remember but totally have written down in my logbook, somewhere". (Participant P)*

*"I don't know, I think it has started more of a dialogue with them. I've thankfully lost a lot of the shame that was holding me back, and it has created lots of chances to discuss it with my parents. It's made it more of a reality for my parents, and hopefully it has made them re-evaluate me and see me in a new context? More confident etc.. I'm not trying to spare them from my maleness anymore." (Participant B)*

This was ongoing throughout the life of the creative engagement phase and culminated in the exhibition when participant's brought friends and family along to the opening night. Parents' feed back during the exhibition and in subsequent conversations was also positive. At the exhibition several parents discussed how their sons' or daughters' behaviour had changed for the better both at school or college and at home. Parents of participants fed back that they had gained new understandings of trans through the participation of their children.

### **4.3.3. Widening Horizons**

The Sci:identity project was a unique and valuable opportunity for a group of what are often termed 'hard to reach' or 'vulnerable', young people to meet each other face-to-face for the first time. Following on from participation in the project, several participants went on to expand their cultural horizons. This included crossing some thresholds they might not have done prior to taking part. Some examples were travelling to London to participate, and subsequently, travelling to new towns and cities to visit fellow participants, attending Euro Pride in London for the first time as an out trans person, (after a bursary was arranged to enable the youth to attend), going to other trans events and trans-friendly spaces, such as Transfabulous (an international festival of transgendered art held in London in June 2006 where some of the Sci:identity work was exhibited) and Enigma (a trans people's swimming club) . Attending trans and LGBT events may be an indicator of increased social and cultural capital as participants found out about these events or spaces and/or felt more comfortable about entering them. Participants went on to take learning from the project out into their own social and cultural lives.

*"I'm trans officer at my University's LGBT group, so I think I'll be trying to take some of the work from Sci:identity there if possible, before I wasn't so keen to create an understanding there". (Participant B)*

New working relationships continue and new project ideas are developing, so for example, two of the participants plan to make an application for funds for a residential weekend for trans youth which they hope will take place in Spring 2007..

## **5. Pedagogical practice when working with young trans people**

### **5.1.1. Recognising Experience as a Creative Resource.**

While the project's focus from the outset was learning about the science of sex and gender, the staff team were aware that the participants brought rich experiences, opinions and their own research to any discussions of sex and gender that took place in the workshops. Much of the work of the project was one of creating a space where discussions and creative explorations could flourish by recognising and drawing on these experiences. The first weekend was designed in order to provide a space where these matters could be explored with purpose and an element of structure. This included physical warm up sessions, participants mapping out figuratively and in words their own time lines and the exploration of some of these narratives through performance.

One of the earlier lessons to emerge from the project was the extent to which all except one of the young trans people were coming to the project from social situations where their transgendered and transsexual identities had been the source of some difficulty in the life at home, school or college. It is worth noting here that four of the MtF participants were currently, or had been, in the care of social services or other care organisations. This may point towards the potential for young trans women to enter the care system,, and reveal possible differences between the experiences of young transwomen and those of young trans men. In practical terms this demanded that the staff team act with sensitivity and skill when working with young people who had had a particularly difficult time prior to coming to the project. This recognition became part of the pedagogical practice of the project, recognising that the learning and creativity at the

heart of the project was filled with meaning for participants. This also brought challenges in terms of the practicalities of running the project on a day to day basis i.e. this meant that one participant could not attend the first weekend as she had to travel with a carer (who could not make the journey at the required time). The presence of carers (due to child protection requirements) also added to unanticipated project costs.

The staff worked hard to build relationships of trust and ensure that the workshop space was one in which young people could find a way to express themselves with creativity, honesty and dignity. This ethos offered a space where participants could draw on past experiences as resources which they could bring to the project and work with creatively in their exploration of their experience of being trans. As one member of the staff team explained, this was a process of keeping them in the project, 'holding them and enabling them while not wrapping them up in cotton wool'. As discussed above, the participants expressed an interest in much of the creative work being based around the autobiographical, and this meant that sometimes in the process of working, participants chose to step out of the workshops due to the emotional intensity of the work that they were doing.

## **5.2. Workshop Structure**

Although the project achieved a great deal in a short time, several participants felt that if the project were to be repeated it would be better to have the nine contact days run over a residential week. One advantage of the four-weekend structure was that it allowed participants to go home and reflect on the workshops and, in some cases prepare songs or visual material, to bring along to the next workshop. Participants felt that the 10am to 4pm period was too short and that a weeklong project would have allowed for more creative output and critical reflection. It is worth noting that leaving the gender safe and creative space the project offered was experienced with difficulty for some participants. Many participants discussed how it was very unpleasant to leave the validating space of the workshops and return home at the end of the weekends.

*"It's a nasty shock leaving that safe environment and going in to a challenging one again that looks at you and see's something else. It was severely unpleasant going home sometimes. And I know, speaking to (name) she said, "I want to stay in there because that's the life that I want and life can't be like that" .It was deeply disturbing for me as well. I remember going home the first time and thinking, "I am glad there are three more weekends of that 'cos that was fantastic". I will really miss it " (Participant A)*

## **5.3. Pastoral Care**

The need for overnight pastoral care became apparent early on in the creative phase as the staff team realised that the participants staying over in a local hotel would need considerable supervision to ensure that they got sufficient rest in order to participate the next day. There were some tensions around the residential aspect of the project. Some of the participants who lived in London wanted to stay in the hotel with those who were being accommodated and on occasion, tried extremely hard to do so, against the instruction of staff. The participant group who were staying overnight was a mix of under and over 18s. In order to address these issues, a pastoral care worker was employed to stay at the hotel from the second weekend onwards to attend to any eventualities, and to ensure that the

residential aspect of the creative weekend continued to provide the safe and well managed space that characterised the workshops. Two lessons emerged from this aspect of the project. Firstly there is a need for structured social activities in the evening, to further explore the matters that had been worked on during the day, and to offset the possibility of getting engaged in less positive activities. Two of the weekends contained this kind of activity, but not all four.. Another lesson that emerged from this phase of the project was the need to gather more background information on participants in order to gauge their support needs and potential problems. This may require more liaisons with care workers, youth workers etc. This would not be due to a desire to exclude young people from participation, but rather to ensure that the staff team were able to fully support any participant and address their needs. Two incidents led to participants being asked to leave the project (in one case, excessive underage drinking, while another two participants were involved in damage to a hotel room.) This was clearly a negative experience for the participants involved but it also served to highlight the very particular individual needs that some young people have and the team agreed that striving to gather even more background information from the participants themselves, and from care workers and/ or parents would potentially minimise these situations.

### **5.3.1. Enabling Creativity and Initiative.**

The ways in which the workshop time was organised allowed the participants to take initiative in the planning process and development of the project. By the end of the first weekend three creative working groups had been established. This allowed participants in each working group to organise and plan their own work, and work as a sub-group towards the overall project deadlines. The ethos guiding the staff team in this space was one of asking each of the groups what they intended to achieve, when they wanted to achieve it by and then working adaptively and flexibly in order to enable participants to achieve the targets they had set themselves. The looming deadline of an exhibition with an invited audience lead to some small tensions between respecting each individual's creative and reflexive process and the knowledge that they would need to produce some art within a short time. Furthermore, the pressure of working with focus in specific groups took away from potential creative collaborations across the groups. Several participants, reflecting on the project expressed a regret that they did not get an opportunity to collaborate with participants in other groups.

The mixed ability within the creative groups also presented challenges for the practitioners. Due to the nature of their art work participants within some of the groups were working alone. Sometimes this lead to the practitioners feeling that they were 'spread too thin' doing lots of one-to-one work. However, the sub-group space also facilitated a great deal of creative energy. One participant described how he, after being inspired and encouraged by group discussions, went home and wrote a song between weekends one and two.

## **5.4. Creating a Safe Creative Space**

One of the remarkable features of the project was the way in which it opened up a space which was conducive to creativity.. At the heart of this pedagogical practice was a desire on the part of the practitioners to open up a safe space to explore creativity, drawing out the participant's strengths, and working to enable the contribution of all on their own terms, within their own limitations.

This was done thorough by working to the following principles:

#### 5.4.1. Establishing a Working Contract.

From the outset the staff team together with the participants worked together to agree a working contract. The working contract set out the ground rules for the rest of the project. This space was facilitated throughout the life of the project by revisiting the working contract at the start of each weekend and taking any new participants through the contract. It was also established by confronting inappropriate behaviour in an appropriate way. This did mean that three participants were asked to leave the project due to inappropriate behaviour (as mentioned in 4.3). Through these means a clear ethic of respect was held in place by the staff and participants. The working contract included:

- Addressing people by the pronouns and names they chose.
- Punctuality and readiness to work.
- Agreeing acceptable language (most participants were uncomfortable with the word 'tranny' and some felt it was too closely associated with a 'seedy' side of sexuality. The term transgender was preferred. The word queer was also discussed with varying degrees of comfort about its use).
- Listening and not interrupting.
- Not judging others.
- Confidentiality .
- Consequences (those participants who broke the contract were challenged and in some cases asked to leave the project. This strengthened the boundaries of the project space).

#### 5.4.2. Encouraging Creativity.

Rather than judging creative outputs the focus was on encouragement, exploration and experimentation. This was a process of trying ideas out, seeing if they worked, and seeing what they lead to. This approach developed into a playful approach to art with an underlying grounding in communicating the meaning of the project through creative working. As the following quotes point towards

*"Well I'm an art student; I think it was good to have communication rather than skilful execution as a priority."* (Participant B)

*"I never get to do art now because I've left school and I don't have the means to pursue art related stuff elsewhere as I didn't do anything like that for A level. I really liked having the opportunity to do stuff like that again, because I always have enjoyed it. I think I most enjoyed having the means to actually use some of the stuff I wrote about being trans (in the zine), as well as being able to do stuff like destroying clothes for 'artistic purposes!'"* (Participant C)

This practice opened up a space where the science of sex and gender could be explored through self expression. As this participant explains:

*"I've never really had the opportunity/encouragement as an adult or child to use things other than words to express myself with, or on a youth work project to do something other than sports. I guess I learned that I can enjoy new things like painting and posing for the camera and be a child again!" (Participant A)*

#### **5.4.3. Ongoing Dialogue Between Staff**

One aspect of practice that was central to the smooth running of the project was that of the staff team meeting at the end of each day to check on what had gone well, matters arising and interpersonal issues as well as discussing some of the practical aspects of the project. This was a valuable space for the staff team considering the intensive nature of the group and the one to one work. It enabled the staff and evaluation team to monitor progress, make decisions about how to best facilitate the creative ideas (like deciding to bring in an artist to work with the art group, thus injecting some teaching of a new process of making work); and carry out continuous monitoring of individual needs, (for example, after something had been disclosed to, or observed by one staff member). This space also meant that all of the team were considering the final curation and production of the exhibition at each stage, leading to a coherent event.

#### **5.4.4. Working Adaptively: Enabling the Absent to be Present**

The membership of the participant group changed over the creative period. Several participants were not able to attend for the full period due to personal circumstances (which included parents withdrawing consent, prior commitments, revision for examinations and being excluded). The staff team were keen to ensure that all of the young people who wished to take part had the opportunity to do so. This meant that new participants were allowed to join the project throughout the creative engagement project, so new participants replaced those who could no longer attend. In terms of the project's aims, this meant that as many young people as possible had a valuable opportunity to participate. While new participants brought diversity and their own unique contribution and diversity, the loss of previous participants made it hard for the group in terms of the progression and development of some of the creative work. This was particularly the case with the performance group. However, it is worth noting here that the new people were quickly accepted into the group and 'hit the ground running' when working creatively within the established ethos of the project. This did present further challenges for the staff group as they had to work adaptively in order to allow all of the participants to get the most out of the workshops. One practical example of this was the way that participants and staff ensured that the input of one participant who could not be at the final exhibition event.. His moving performance piece which was about his relationship with his parents was kept in the running order and it was performed by other participants and his absence was acknowledged.

#### **5.4.5. Creating Safe Gender Space**

The working contract established a space in which the participants could express, discuss and explore their gender identity with safety and creativity from the outset. It was interesting that the first response to the request for suggestions of things that should be included in the working contract was pronouns. Following this the participants then stated their name and which pronoun they preferred to be addressed by. For some participants it was the first time that they were using a name and a pronoun in their preferred gender in real space and time. This was a valuable validation and led to a space of peer support experience as the following conversation illustrates.

*“(Name) said to me at the end of the project, I am going home now and I am not going to get called ‘he’ for months and months. Obviously someone can call you he on the internet but it is not the same as that real experience that you are wanting to have.” (Participant N)*

*“Yes It gives you validation, when you meet other people in your situation, because not only can you have the words, but get tips on haircuts, binding and where to buy shirts and stuff. You can’t get that on the internet, like someone saying that doesn’t suit you. You need to buy different jeans” (Participant A).*

Putting pronouns in place from the start was important to this validation. In the process of the project some participants chose to change their name and choice of pronoun for the rest of the project. This spirit of not being judged due to one's gender expression was maintained throughout.

*“[W]hen you’re allowed to express yourself more and more as who you are, it becomes more apparent who you’re not and who you weren’t when you were trying to act a different way. So having this full weekend where you can just without question be yourself and be who you are was a first for me. Like I’ve gone to bars where for the night I can be who I wanna be – I’ve got friends who know me as who I am, but they still don’t know the gender thing yet, don’t know the sex thing yet, they just know who I am, the pronoun stuff grating. But being here, for like a solid two days and being completely in this space is like one of the first times for the longest period of time that I’ve been able to do that, and feel better and better about it, and it being more comfortable with me” (Participant N)*

*“I was pleased that we sorted out stuff about words people were comfortable/uncomfortable with right from the start, as often I do find certain things even within trans spaces make me uncomfortable, and so that helped a lot”. (Participant C)*

#### **5.4.6. Negotiating Consent**

As the Sci:identity project dealt with issues of trans identities and many of the participants were ‘coming out’ as trans or were ‘out’ as trans to a few people but not to the general public, the issues of consent in the use of images and anonymity was one which required a great deal of consideration throughout the life of the project. For this reason considerable time was given to discussing the various levels of consent involved in the various stages of the project. So rather than participants giving consent to have their image used once at the start of the project, the project involved four levels of consent in order to ensure a sense of safety. These four levels were differentiated to include using the images and footage within the exhibition on June 10<sup>th</sup>; for the purposes of the evaluation, within presentations to interested organisations; and within a film shown to community groups.. Attention to this issue ensured that the whole of the process could be filmed and footage could subsequently be used in various ways in the process of evaluation, publicity and the documentary. Consent was renegotiated, often on an individual basis with particular participants at the point of making and screening the project documentary to various audiences during the outreach phase of the project. Clearly these matters are important when working with trans youth and any other group that may not be ‘out’ as trans or identifying as trans in other aspects of their lives.



#### 5.4.7. Parental Consent and Confidentiality

The issues of parental consent was negotiated throughout the project. One of the tensions in the project was between the team's desire to give young people the opportunity to take part and the necessity of parental consent for young people under the age of 18. The team insisted that young people get their parents' or carers' permission to attend. The team was aware that several young people would not be able to get parental consent if their parents knew the nature of the project and its concern with transsexual and transgender identities. In order to be able to move ahead and facilitate involvement, the project team, in discussion with participants, obtained consent from carers, youth workers and support workers when parental consent could not be obtained.

To summarise then, together these practices established the creative, dialogical and educational space of Sci:identity. It is worth returning to participants' voices to show what this work allows:

*"I like the fact that rules about listening to each other and appreciating each others ideas were made early on as well, because it meant no one was afraid to say what they felt. I felt really comfortable around all the staff as well which helped, even though most of them weren't trans or anything."* (Participant C)

*"I was really pleasantly surprised that people treated me as an equal... because I'm used to being patronised by everyone, even people younger than me. It was great to have people listen to what I had to say... in contrast to everyone telling me to shut up at school every time I try to say anything that challenges the norm."* (Participant P, from Sci:identity Blog)

## **6. Conclusions and Next Steps: Building on the Lessons of Phases One and Two**

As discussed at the start of this report, the next phase of the project consists of a community outreach programme. This will be an opportunity to communicate the lessons and messages of the project to a wider audience. The programme will include participatory workshops using the film as a stimulus in educational workshops. The film will be used together with educational materials to communicate the themes of the project and to facilitate discussions. The workshops will be held across the UK with school and college groups in relation to aspects of AS/ A Level Biology (Human), and AS/ GCSE Citizenship curricula. Workshops or post-show discussions will be held with Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transsexual (LGBT) youth groups. A summary of this report will be available to all participants involved in the outreach phase. The film and supporting information will also be available to regional and national LGBT organisations..

Clearly the Sci:identity project has lessons for good practice for professionals working with young trans people. Some interested parties may include carers working with trans youth, youth and community workers already working with LGBT and non LGBT youth groups and LGBT organisations seeking to work with younger LGB and Trans people. Examples of voluntary and community sector organisations include Freestyle, Schools Out, the Albert Kennedy Trust and Stonewall Housing, in addition to local authorities, education departments and authorities, the police service, mental health organisations, medical practitioners and primary care trusts. It also has lessons for those working in education such as teachers, trainee teachers and Classroom Support Assistants, and those working in continual professional development. Some of this work with trainee teachers has happened already at CSSD on the PGCE Drama & PGCE Media Studies courses, and a number of members of the Metropolitan Police Service worked with the Sci:identity Team during the launch event for the London LGBT Youth Council. Clearly, if viewed as a pilot the project contains a blueprint for some potentially exceptional work.

## 7. Appendix 1: The Zine

Below is the participants' writing which was turned into a 'zine' and distributed at the exhibition at the end of phase 2. It is included here in order to let the participant's experiences to be communicated in their own words.

### **Your Aborted Son**

Mother, I never was your daughter  
And if I'm so much better  
Then why do I fear my own reflection?  
Deformed, disfigured, mutilated  
I am over-developed and mutated  
Jealous of the ignorant, aborted  
I'm alien to my own skin

Will you dig the scalpel in to my sick and repulsive skin?  
Come on, take this body and turn it into something lower than I am  
Let the needle cripple me, I'd rather die than live complete  
Cut and stab and rip and tear, slice me until I become your aborted son

Brother, I never was your sister  
I renounce beauty to join the ranks of the ugly  
I give up the stage to become a lower race  
Doctor, please complete my abortion  
I am looking forward to becoming scum  
Make me deficient, make me diseased  
I strive to evolve into incompleteness

Will you dig the scalpel in to my sick and repulsive skin?  
Come on, take this body and turn it into something lower than I am  
Let the needle cripple me, I'd rather die than live complete  
Cut and stab and rip and tear, slice me until I become your aborted son

### **Untitled**

i think it was a monday when  
those words sprang out of the page

and i saw my face appear in the text  
the masquerade just crumbled in the wind  
oh i've lived a thousand lives since then

i tried so hard to help you understand  
but you just cried so i just held your hand

don't tell me that i'm not old enough to know  
the one thing that i have always known  
and no one's dead so why're you grieving?  
you say i'm in denial when you're the one who won't believe me  
you're so blinded by love that you don't even see me

don't say that i have made a choice  
when i was wronged before i even had a voice  
born under artificial lights  
an unsolved murder in the middle of the night  
i never was your daughter but i'll always be your child

### **Untitled**

Left, right and centre  
Like everyone i want to feel loved.  
I want to tell you all my secret.  
I want to unlock the doors and let you into my world.  
My thoughts.  
My feelings.  
I want to share it all with you.  
No.  
I can't.  
You on my left.  
You will think I'm 'weird'.  
I see the way that you look at 'them' in class, on T.V and on  
the  
streets.  
You hate the 'weird'.  
You only like 'normal'.

What's that?  
If i told you you would hate it.  
Hate me.  
I'm in the car.  
On the way to our house.  
You on my right.  
Mum.  
Dad.  
I did not choose this, it's just who i am.  
I wish i could just sit on your lap, suck my thumb and shower  
you with  
kisses and cuddles.  
No.  
I can't.  
The wall between us is too thick, too strong.  
Your eyes are trying to see me more clearly and I'm fading away  
from  
what you want me to be.  
I'm in my room.  
My space.  
You behind me.  
You move as i do.  
Imitate every single thing i do.  
I slouch.  
You slouch.  
I flick my hair to the side.  
You flick your hair too.  
I can't escape from you.  
We have our happy days yeah, but the bad ones aren't worth  
mentioning.  
I look at you and get scared.  
You look wrong to me.  
Don't look at me like that.  
I wish i could just switch you off and smile.  
I'm asleep.  
Dreaming.

You in front of me.  
Please understand me.  
See the tears fall and wipe them dry.  
See me slowly fall and pick me up and embrace me tightly.  
Say it does not matter.  
Focus on me in here and not out there.

### **Untitled**

Me and Barbie

Ollie: Name?

M: Michaela

Ollie: Age?

M: 17

Ollie: Birth Place?

M: Liverpool

Ollie: Sex?

Ollie: Sex? (Ollie get more and more angry that M isn't replying)

PAUSE

Ollie: Sex?

PAUSE

M: OK – I do like having sex.

PAUSE

M: This is my story. (Lights come up)

### **Untitled**

When I was 10 // it started. // I liked playing with Barbies and loved Pyjama parties. //

Me and my friends played with Barbies. // We dressed them up, // made up stories, they got married, divorced, they ripped each others heads off. That's what happens in marriage innit. // They shared a house, they shared a bed.

Barbie is living in a penthouse suite – she's so rich, the lucky bitch, and Ken has arrived in his flashy sports car – to pick her up - that Ken, who does he think he is!! Barbie is wearing a gown – one of them frilly ones // and they are going to a ball. It's their first date.

They kiss, they get married, they share a bed. They bite each others heads off. Just the normal things.

The pyjama parties we had. // We would do our nails; we put on face masks, we did our make up, we looked so gorgeous..... and we talked about boys. Just the usual. All my friends were girls, we would have a laugh, we'd go to the cinema – four of us girls. They didn't judge me; to them I was one of the girls. What lovely girls. But, I spent the last 5 years knowing I was different, and not what people called // the norm. Bastards.

I knew there was something different about me; // I didn't want to climb them trees - they rip your pants and break your nails. Bloody disgraceful! Some people think you're a freak. But at the end of the day they are the ones that are the freaks. I felt weird, but I realised that they were the ones that were wierd I wasn't fully accepted by some people – they were the arse-wipes. They would look at me funny; give me dirty looks; make me feel dirty and dead. PAUSE. The most horrible feeling was not knowing why I was different.

When I was 15 everything started to make sense. // You see, I fell in love with a boy called Luke. // He was funny, happy gorgeous, cute, but he turned out to be one of those arse-wipes. Surprise, surprise. I thought we clicked, I wanted to be with him.// But he fucked around with my head. So I had to get rid of him.

I then went through a stage of depression. I couldn't get out of bed. I felt dead down and shit. I had no life left in me, no more will to fight.

It took the real love of my life to pull me out of my depression. My sister Ange. She is my rock, but most of all she does not judge me. She has always been there; she was the only one I could turn to. She's my world.

But now I couldn't give a toss about what people think! // I go into shops and buy girly things. // Last Friday I went and bought my first and surely not my last knickers and bra set. I was all made up.

### **Untitled**

I've been through a lot of things, some good, and some bad, the majority because I'm put under the trans label. But I don't regret my life. I put myself through half of the trials in my life because of my internal conflict with society- but I can put that down to a process of maturity, I needed to go through those to learn/ deal/ cope with who I am. The rest were society's struggle to accept that people ARE different, but that it doesn't make them bad or wrong. That's just life experience isn't it. Everyone goes through that.

I can't change who I am. I've tried so hard. You think I wanted to be transsexual? I tried really hard to be a girl, but no matter what I did it always came back that I was living a lie. I am James. I am a guy. Nothing will ever change that. No birth certificate can prove me wrong.

On the 3rd weekend of the Sci:identity project, (name) drew a beard on me. I left it on all day, until the train pulled into Leeds, no one looked at me weird. It felt really cool! I'd drawn beards on me before but I've only wore them in public once or twice because I was worried bout how they would all react! ( James)

You're just jealous because I'm going to have a bigger cock than you!

### **Untitled**

When you look at me,  
What do you see?  
A he, a her,  
Or just a he she?

Stop with the boxes,  
    Forget the labels.  
Don't try to get me,  
    Just accept me.  
I don't need approving,  
    Or 'funny' vicious words.  
I am still human,  
    And never forget it.

### **Barriers**

It's weird how people react sometimes when you tell them. The first person I ended up coming out to was this girl who I had only known for a few months. But when I told her, she refused to accept it, saying how feminine I was and all these dumb things. It was pretty much because she had a crush on me-as-a-girl and refused to see me as a guy. It took her months and months to even start using the correct name and pronouns, and even after I'd known her for more than 6 months since coming out and only about 3 before, she still kept messing it up. So I started calling her Jeff and 'he', and magically, I witnessed a transformation. She was using the right name and pronouns all the time from then on.

I've been trying to research effects of T (and also, how precisely the campest boi you've ever met tries to explain to a gendershrink that no, ze's not a girl, and no, ze's not a guy, but could i prettyplease have some hormones now thanks very muchxxx?) but the internet is, as usual, a minefield of conflicting information. In fact, one site went on about how it increases risks of breast cancer if'n I don't get 'em chopped off (which i wouldn't, they're teeny anyhoo), and another one said the exact opposite. Oh, and the internet doesn't really say much about hormones etc (which is where I keep on going in my head with this, every time I think about it. (Scary), or genderqueers.

My barriers have been binary gendered school uniforms, and the need to present as either one gender or the other in formal/many work situations. Consequently I have a fear of going to formal things such as funerals and business dinners because firstly I reject the need for formal dress because it's pretentious and classist, and secondly because I don't feel that a dress or a dinner suit is 'me'. I'm not transsexual, I'm not disgusted by my genitalia (though I'd like a sexier ass!) or think I should be 'the other one'. I'm not 'confused' because I know who and what I am. Society 'rules' that I must choose and be one OR the other gender frustrate me. I feel like neither and both at the same time to a differing degree on different days. Can I not just be taken as a person, as an appearance or a brain? There's nothing wrong with me, I'm a functional and useful human. My barrier is growing up into an adult world where gender matters, and I'm just looking for a box that I fit in to make the adult world happy, and I've not found it yet. My parents, partners and friends, schools and social groups haven't had a major problem with me, though some of them are also aware that I'll have to 'grow up' and identify with a gender, for my own good in the adult world.



I consider myself a newly 'discovered' transboy as I only came out in February of this year. I am pretty new to everything, all the new terms and information makes my head hurt. Most of my research has been through various TG sites on the internet. Different websites say different things, but nothing beats meeting a transperson in person and talking to them. I got to do that this weekend and I very happy I met the guys here, as it helps me divert text and websites into real life experience.

I am out to all my friends and my mum, but am struggling to tell my dad. I haven't had many difficulties as I am new to most things and have only been actually binding and trying to pass for a few months. So far my experiences have been okay, I have passed a lot, but also been called 'miss' and 'her' a lot which annoys me. However my experiences are growing and life is defiantly so much better since I realised I was trans.

I guess you could call this coming out related...

I'm about to leave for college, and I know when I go there I'll have to answer to a name I don't identify with and a pronoun I feel is wrong. It's funny, when I'm around people who understand, the idea of telling the world who I really am seems so simple, and yet for the thousandth time I'm preparing myself mentally to go out in to the world as a girl again. Will they ever know I'm a boy? I hope so. It isn't simple, though. Most people can't get their heads round a name and pronoun change like I can, or my trans friends can. Most people don't even understand what it is to be trans. How am I ever going to tell them without confusing them, without making them think I'm a freak? What's worse, being wrongly thought of as a girl or as a freak? What if they never understand...when will I ever be normal again?

### **Coming out**

The first time I went out in boy mode, I hadn't even accepted that I was a boy but I had cut off over a foot and a half of hair, and I had resolutely decided that I wasn't going to wear things I didn't feel comfortable in anymore. I was exhilarated to be coming back to myself after too long trying to be something I wasn't. I wore a stiff undershirt to flatten my chest, put on some jeans and a t-shirt and headed off to the party. My friends didn't recognise me with short hair, most of them walked past me or ignored me before they realised it was me! 'I thought you were one of my brothers friends' she exclaimed pointing at the table of boys. The others gave her a stern look, but I couldn't have been more pleased. Something was definitely different and I was walking on air, the shyness and anxiety I usually had around new people was gone, and soon enough I was laughing and joking with her brother's friends. A conversation started up about the differences between boys and girls, the boys didn't think there was that much difference, but when the girls insisted one guy turned to me and said 'Whatever, but you're one of us really' I grinned as my friends agreed that I was defiantly a kind of my own. I had the best time that night; and I realised how much richer life could be when you were being yourself.

I was first outed as being a 'man beast' when I was about 8-9yrs old. It all started because I was in the girls toilets and realised for the first time boys and girls were actually different! (I was very sheltered and naive!) I had turned around really shocked and asked my mate why I was using the "wrong" toilets. I was a boy. Why did I keep getting told to use the girl's room? She laughed at me and took the piss out of me ages after. Then she was just ok with me, I assumed she'd just forgotten about it so I pretended I knew I was a girl. She invited me over to her house for tea so I agreed. I was playing on her brothers computer, he came in and asked me if I really thought I was a man, I couldn't say anything, so he attacked me saying I was a "dyke" and I was a girl. That set me back a lot, I was

scared if I ever told anyone how I felt they'd do the same as him, I tried dressing and acting more like a girl. But the rumours carried on into 6th form college.

### **Coming Out**

I didn't come out to my mum until about 3 months ago. I had drawn loads of pictures of semi men, semi women, and I had written loads of letters to my family trying to explain, and I'd locked them in a box. I spent most of my time locked in my room in the dark, without talking to anyone, my mum decided to raid my room to see if she could find out what was up, and obviously found out about everything, including her finding my penis, which was amusing to explain! She's generally fine with me but worried I'm going to damage myself, get gay bashed or have the operation. She outed me to the rest of my family, who just think it's a phase. I told my uncle myself though, he's fine with it as he is also trans! He's a great help and comfort to me.

It's like me and him are kindred spirits - my mum found out about me exactly a year after she found out about him. His birth name was the same as my chosen name, and I never knew his real name before all this.

Ever since my family knew I pretty much told anyone who used my birth name excessively. I have two mates who are really good about it, and generally everyone else has been fine with it!

### **Coming Out**

I've never really been 'IN' the closet! I've just always felt ok with expressing who I am, because it's such hard work to try to be anything but yourself. I wasn't forced into having a gender identity until I was in my final year of primary school and my class teacher told me off for wearing shorts for playing football with the boys at lunchtime. I mean come on, wearing a skirt for playing football is just insane! Anyway, at high school, I wore football shorts under my skirt every day because they're just more comfy, and I was verbally and physically bullied and assumed to be a lesbian and/or transsexual from the age of 12, called a lezza, tranny, boygirl, shemale, he-she, shim...all sorts of stuff. I never tried to fit in with their idea of a girl, because I'm just...not. I never really had to disclose to my parents or friends that I don't really have a binary gender identity, and some people get annoyed that I won't just choose to either be transsexual or lesbian but I can't, because I'm just me. I out myself every time I walk into a room, meet a new person, speak on the phone even, because I don't fit into their binary. I've even been asked by a transsexual 'which way' I was - either MtF or FtM - and he seemed rather puzzled by my response of 'neither'. I'm fine as I am, however the thing most on my mind currently is the fact that I will have to present as either one gender or the other when I finish Uni next month and have to look for a proper job. Why is my gender so important to everyone else?

### **Passing Experience**

Once, before I had even started binding, I was walking along the street with my friend John and we were arm in arm. A group of girls goes past and one of them shouted, "Faggots!" at us. John was so angry but I couldn't help but laugh: it was a nasty homophobic slur, but it meant they saw me as a guy. Something similar happened another time when I had chin-length shaggy hair: some guy took it upon himself to shout at me "Faggot, cut your hair!" My reaction was the same: these things can be pretty funny, when you look at the irony of it.

### **Passing**

I arrive at a sprint, the barrier is open and my train leaves in a minute, the £2 I need to get home sits in my pocket, but unwilling to risk waiting 45mins for the next one I take a chance, and dash to the platform without a ticket. I soon forget I don't have a ticket, there are never inspectors anyway, so I relax... until I see a luminous jacket approaching. Damn I sink into my seat. 'Tickets' he calls. I sink further, camouflage not being my strong point, but it might work, I hope. 'You got a ticket mate?' Inwardly I groan. I passed, he thinks I'm a boy, usually a cause for celebration, but sooner or later he's going to realise. 'No' I mutter. He asked me why not. He still hasn't had that little look of surprise... So when he asked me my name I tell him the one that isn't on my ID cards, the one that just my friends use. I can't bear to let him think I'm a girl. He starts to fill out a ticket, asking me questions and my hearts' hammering like anything at the possibility that he'll realise and I'll have to explain to him. But he doesn't realise and neither does his colleague, he fills out the report with Mr and He and describes me as a young man, age 19, 5ft 4. I get off the train in a bit of a daze, I pause and grin, and I practically dance home. It was the first time I had firm proof that I passed as a young man, they even knew my age and I passed. It was a bit of a landmark for me, not nine months before I had honestly believed that I would never pass, even after hormones. It gives you some ease with your body, to be able to be socially present how you want.

JACK Since I have been passing as a guy I have come across the problem of not being able to get served lottery let alone alcohol. Well I finally got my ID card!! New name and everything.. I am so going out tomorrow evening on the piss!

### **Passing**

I found it really easy to pass. I only recently started hiding my pecs under a binder, before then I used cling film. It was really uncomfortable and sweaty, but worth it. Every time I went out clubbing, I could easily attract gay men and straight women.

### **Passing**

Last month I was at my local pub and they had a drag queen in. He came over and talked to me and my mates. He said that he was just a gay man, cross dressed for a living. He identified all my mates correctly as gay, lesbian, or bi. So, impressed, I asked him what I was and he said a young sexy bi man. I was so hyped by that!!! my mates left, so me and him kept chatting. He was trying to score with me so bad, even though I was trying to explain about my 'situation'! I was amused!!! I set off to get in my taxi and he said 'wait!', turned around to his manager, and said 'get my number I need this young man in my life!'. I had to tell him I wasn't physically what he was looking for but we still chat and text loads. I was just so amazed I passed that well!

### **Passing**

A while ago I arranged a trip with some other trans people to a club near Milton Keynes called Pink Punters. I had a test for college that day and even though it was really important as I was so excited I left the test earlier to get to Milton Keynes early. Me and my friend got a room in a hotel opposite the Club for convenience. Anyway while at the club a bi-sexual girl came up to me telling me how hot n cute I looked (I was wearing 6" white stilettos', a short white mini skirt, white top with devil written on as well as angel wings :D which got me a lot off attention). She came onto me strong, so we started snogging. She was really into it so she put her hand up my top. She

stopped and pulled away. She looked at me and said “I thought u was a girl”, she was really shocked and surprised by it all but was really cool with it. That’s an experience I’ve hand with passing.

### **Passing**

Basically I can pass as whatever I want to pass as. I’ll be a straight guy, a straight girl, a butch lesbian or a camp gay, and I do drag both ways. Or I’ll just mix and match, get chatted up by a variety of people who have different perceptions of my gender and sexuality. I find it amusing when friends of friends have to ask our mutual friend about my gender and sexuality, and I often get double-takes in public toilets. I used to have a real fear of public toilets when I was younger because I just wanted to go to the loo in peace without being stared at, just like everyone else, but now I’m older, (taller at 5’9”ish) and more confident with myself so I just go into whichever toilet is nearest/has the shortest queue and wait to see if anyone comments. If I’m asked for ID for beer or tobacco or even for my railcard, often the person who asks for it looks confused because my picture is definitely me, but it has my sex and birth name not as what they were expecting. I get a kick out of confusing people and making them feel awkward, because it’s my revenge on a society that isn’t comfortable with me.

### **Passing**

Regarding passing, I do. I’m alright with most people not knowing (I’m trans) but need to figure out how and when to come out for relationship issues....at what point in a new (potential) relationship do you disclose that your genitalia is not as it seems under clothes? When I go to the toilet I go for one reason – to answer nature’s call. So why is there so much grief and just stupid and beyond hurtful comments spat at people like us?

I personally have just come out as a transsexual so I am quite new to all of this malarkey. I say that because it’s all a load of crap what we and others have been through and what we are going through and what we will go through; especially in toilets.

I have yet to go to the ‘gents’ but now that I am ‘going over to the other side’ I find it hard when I am in the ‘ladies’. It’s true that I don’t really fit into one category and one box so therefore I get looks and whispers. I have had remarks but even when there is no one in the toilets I can still hear them

As I haven’t experienced antagonism in lavatories for a few years now, the experience I will share happened in my early teens. I had not yet really started to ‘transition’ and did not have the confidence or the knowledge to express the feelings I was having. However I had started to experiment with clothing and dress as feminine as I could within the boundaries of the boys clothing that I had to wear at the time. This unfortunately gave me a rather eccentric androgynous appearance that is not socially accepted. Not having the confidence to assert myself or make proper decisions about my life as I previously mentioned, I was still using the men’s toilets. In one place on a couple of occasions I had men coming in to the toilets as I was leaving. Comments I remember were such as “What are you doing here? I think you’ve got the wrong toilet love” and “The ladies’ is down the hall”. They could be quite intimidating to encounter and often shared in their bemused reactions and laughter. This would feel upsetting and sometimes a little scary to have happen.

## **Toilet Stories**

“There’s a boy in the girls’ toilet...”

“Yes, that must be my daughter.”

“Mummy, is that a boy or a girl?”

“Is he a girl?”

Women looking at me disgusted. Others confused. But all of them, ALL of them looking, thinking. If not saying something to me with words, it all comes out in their eyes. Their body language... Wouldn't you think twice about which toilet to go into?

Sometimes I hold it in for hours until I get home. Or until I can find toilets that aren't separated to male/ female.

## **Toilet Story**

The first time I used the men's toilets was in my local pub. I knew the bar guys really well and my mate got drunk and outed me to them. They were both gay so they were absolutely fine with it and called me “James” “he” and “dude” loads. I was out on a serious drinking session and obviously I ended up needing a piss, except every time I went into the ladies- these girls kept coming up to me, chatting me up and asking what I was doing in the wrong toilets- so I couldn't use them! After about half an hour, I was really desperate so I asked the bar guys if they were cool with me using the men's and they were fine with it so I used them. It was so cool! I was FINALLY using the right toilets! It was weird because even though the toilets stank and were broken and were covered in graffiti I really loved being in there!

A few drinks later, I was hopping about again. I didn't want to go into the men's because a gay man went in and I was worried he'd realise (I hadn't got a binder at that point) and he'd be disgusted at me. The bar guy literally pushed me through the door saying it'd be fine, and if it wasn't he'd beat them up (which was a joke because he's not like that!). the guy turned round and looked at me and smiled and winked at me, but he never suggested that he knew I wasn't bio!

## **Toilet Story**

When I'm out and I need the toilet, I always used to accidentally go into the men's. Once I was in pizza hut, and this woman came out of the women's toilets as I was going into the men's and she called out to me that I was meant to go in the women's, I was a bit slow-thinking 'I'm a guy why would I go in the women's?!'- and I carried on walking into the men's, unzipped my pants and realised what she meant. Unfortunately there was a guy stood there, staring at me, which made it pretty damn embarrassing!

I went to a gay bar in Huddersfield, west Yorkshire, and went straight into the men's. I glanced at the other guys on my way in, and I felt something about me wasn't quite right, and sort of stopped and looked around really confused and this lesbian saw me came into the toilets dragged me out into the women's, patted my hand and said “are you alright love? You had a bit to drink? You looked confused”. I just replied “yeah, cos I'm a man in girls toilets”. She just looked at me, and then at my over-sized pecs. I remembered what had been up then and I just turned and left very quickly

### **Toilet Story**

“You’re in the wrong toilet, the men’s is the next one...”

“Are you sure you’re meant to be in here?”

“This is the ladies...”

“Scuse me...? Oh...umm...sorry, I didn’t realise at first glance!”

“You’re not allowed in here!”

Once I was in a club (mainly straight punk/rock/goth/fetish club in Manchester) and security grabbed me by the shirt and wouldn’t let me in the women’s toilet because they were convinced I was a dude. Which was flattering in a way, but I really needed a piss and there’s only one cubicle in the men’s room so it made more sense to go to the women’s. So I flashed him (I’d had a few beers) and he was all apologetic and embarrassed.

I went to the women’s loo at a music festival because I was chatting to my female friend at the time and when we’d both gone into cubicles we heard a load of girls saying “Ewww there’s a boy in here!”

It’s embarrassing at that time of the month to go in the men’s loo.

### **Toilet Story**

I remember quite clearly the first time someone actually called the manager when I was in the girls toilets. I’d had the looks before, the double-takes, the walking out to check the sign... but never had it reached this sort of peak. I’d come out as FtM about 3 months previously and my hair was shaggy, I had no means of binding and the men’s toilets in my mind were out of the question.

The woman who objected to my presence was loud and aggressive. She didn’t say anything to my face because I’d got in the toilet cubicle before she had the chance to open her mouth, but I could hear her storming outside the toilets in to the restaurant. The sound of her shouting carried through the walls... and when I heard her get the manager I froze. What was I supposed to do? I couldn’t prove I was a girl, because I’m not a girl, but I didn’t think I looked enough like a boy either to be anywhere else. Where was I supposed to go if both options got me in trouble?

Using public toilets has become a covert operation. Outside I waver. Choose the mens? Surely the safer option, yet an unfamiliar, foreign domain. Bodies tower over me, they move in a primal language that has yet to come naturally to me. Or the women’s? No longer appropriate... but at least I know what to expect. The sharp, appraising looks are new though. Mission impossible style, I duck into the nearest stall. Hope for the best. Aware that at any moment... I may be apprehended. I hurry, but as I wash my hands the surprised look on that nice old lady’s face makes me flush with embarrassment. I reach neutral territory with no small sense of relief, and next time, I think, next time I won’t drink quite so much.

## 8. Appendix 2 Individual Impact Matrix

Educational Impacts	Indicators
<p>Enhanced critical understanding of the science of sex and transsexuality, specifically:  emerging understandings of sex differences in the brain  hormones and their effect on behaviour  chromosomes and their function  hormonal and surgical sex reassignment  the consequential range of moral &amp; ethical issues that are raised</p>	<p>Participants express /discuss scientific concepts of sex and gender</p> <p>Participants create artistic work which communicates their understandings of the science of sex &amp; gender</p>
<p>Awareness of the various and multiple models of thinking around sex, gender and identity and the ways medicine and science can and do connect to the individual and society</p>	<p>Participants express /discuss scientific concepts of sex and gender in relation to the individual and society</p> <p>Participants create artistic work which communicates their understandings of the science of sex &amp; gender and how it related to the individual and society</p>
<p>Improvement in own learning and creative production</p>	<p>Participants take on responsibility and autonomy for their role within the workshops</p> <p>Responsiveness to each stage of the process within individual sessions, and the project as a whole, for those who participate fully.</p>
<p>Ability to engage in the planning aspects of the project, negotiating with staff and peers and taking initiative</p>	<p>Participants take on responsibility and autonomy for their role within the workshops</p>
<p>Communication skills: presentation of ideas</p>	<p>Selection of a mode of artistic medium and form.  Decision-making in workshop sessions  Listening  Participation in discussion  Exhibition</p>
<p>Workshop spaces as spaces of learning</p>	<p>(Qual:) Participants express different concepts and theories  Participants challenge, question concepts and theories</p>
<p><b>Suggested Creative Impacts</b></p>	<p><b>Indicators</b></p>

<i>Scientific creativity</i> : not passive recipients of scientific information – science and arts as something you do	(Quant/qual:) Participants engage in creative activity in project ( including documentary video)
Workshop spaces as spaces of dialogue and risk	(Qual:) Participants express different views and creative approaches to engaging with the science of sex Participants express different views and creative approaches to engaging with concepts of sex. and gender
Enhancing creativity: 1 Developing creative talent and performance skill (i.e. creativity for creativity's sake)	(Quant:) Numbers of participants developing visual and performing arts skills (e.g. learning to make video, paint, improving ability to paint, record , sing etc) and using these for expression
Enhancing creativity: 2 Enterprising behaviour: capacity to take risk (i.e. creativity as transferable skill)	Examples of enterprising/risk-taking activity after project
<b>Personal and Social Impacts</b>	<b>Indicators</b>
Increased understanding of the science of sex amongst family/friends	Families/friends share as audiences in the cultural activities produced by participants/project
Develop understanding and between participants (bonding capital)	(Quant/qual:) Participants communicate with each other within and outside the project
Increase social capital /reduced social isolation	Participants accessing new groups/ support mechanisms new/enhanced social activities
Participants recognising, increasing and investing in their own cultural capital (including expectations about what is possible and desirable, and values, meanings and dreams) (This feeds into positive risk-taking behaviour)	(Qual.) Increased mobility Wider cultural horizons Crossing thresholds (Cultural geography as indicator of social and cultural capital) (Examples: Participants go to spaces they haven't been to before. Participants express more confidence in themselves. Participants consider wider range of options.)
Increased Health and wellbeing	Higher self-regard New communication skills Being happier Being more creative and confident



Reduced isolation

Making new friends

Better able to adapt to group and community situations

## 9. Appendix 3 Monitoring Information

Project Participant	Gender	Age	Area of Residence	Sessions attended (out of 9)
A	Gender queer	21	Manchester	9
B	Male	20	London	9
C	Male	18	London	9
D	Female	21	London	9
E	Female	?	London	3
F	Female	18	London	3
G	Male	15	South West	3
H	Male	19	North	2
I	Male	18	Leeds?	9
J	Genderqueer	17	Essex	9
K	Male	16	London	4
L	Female	17	Belfast	5
M	Female	22	South	5
N	Male	22	London	9
O	Male	18	Leeds?	9
P	Male	15	South West	9
Q	Female	22	Leeds	2
R	Male	15	County Down	5

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