BISHOP GROSSETESTE UNIVERSITY

ISSN 2755-0540 (Print)
ISSN 2755-0559 (Online)

Issue #003
WINTER 2022/23

SOLERTIA

'The ability to understand, in perception, the archetypal and intelligible forms that define perception itself'
– Robert Grosseteste

Published in partnership with:

The Centre for Enhancement in Learning and Teaching

Bishop Grosseteste University Library Services

Foreword

Editors

Dr Adam Hounslow-Eyre, Dr Sacha Mason, Dr Sunny Dhillon

Peer Reviewers

Dr Sunny Dhillon, Dr Hannah Genham, Angela Hancock, Dr Adam Hounslow-Eyre, Sean Ingoldsby, Dr Sacha Mason, Dr Steve McNichols, Dr Nyree Nicholson, Dr Daniel Tough, Dr Amy Webster

Guest reviewer: Dr Helen Hendry – Open University

Contributors

Kathryn Holbrook, Victoria Myres, Alexandra Clarke, Katharyn Bradford, Ashlea Russell, Michael Taylor

Credits

Particular thanks go to: James Duke and Dr Claire Thomson from the Centre for Enhancement in Learning and Teaching; Head of Research, Dr Andrew Jackson; and Stephen Macdonald from BGU Library Services, for their support in the production of this publication.

Welcome to the third edition of Solertia, BGU's academic journal, which publishes a range of work submitted from postgraduate and undergraduate degree students from across the Faculty. This winter edition foregrounds the colour yellow from the prism in the Solertia logo. The multiple colours in the prism are a visual representation of the heteroglossial approach of the journal that seeks to capture different disciplinary approaches to research and ways of thinking across the University.

This edition includes six undergraduate pieces, from a diverse range of programmes. From Education, Health and Lifelong Learning there are contributions from Kathryn Holbrook and Alexandra Clarke in Professional Studies, Victoria Myers in Health and Social Care, Katherine Bradford in Sport, and Ashlea Russell in Psychology. From the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, there is a contribution from Michael Taylor in English. Many of the contributors have gone on to further postgraduate research, including at BGU. The articles will appeal to a wide readership, covering topics ranging from deaf pedagogy, safeguarding, adult adoptee experiences, wellbeing, and Gothic fiction via Queer theory.

As editors, we would like to thank the students and Faculty for their support with submitting articles for publication and to the reviewers in assisting us with the selection process. Thank you also to Stephen Macdonald in the Library for his guidance regarding publishing protocols, and to James Duke in Digital Learning within the Centre for Enhancement for Learning and Teaching (CELT) for his ongoing publishing skills and support.

D S Dhillon

Dr Sunny Dhillon
Lecturer in Education Studies

January 2023

Editorial Policy

Articles Submitted for consideration in *Solertia* originated as research projects undertaken by honours graduates in their final year of study at Bishop Grosseteste University. The original submissions achieved a first class honours award. Enquiries relating to submissions in future editions of *Solertia* should be directed to a member of the editorial team.

Copyright

All articles appearing in *Solertia* are published under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License. Works may be downloaded and shared with others, provided the original author is credited. Works may not be changed nor used in any way for commercial gain.

ISSN 2755-0540 (Print)
ISSN 2755-0559 (Online)

Published on 31 January 2023 by Bishop Grosseteste University
Shared, with the consent of the contributors, under a CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 Creative Commons Licence

Issue #003
WINTER 2022/23

Contents

6 Developing deaf pedagogy: Teachers of the Deaf perspectives on missed incidental learning

Authors
Kathryn Holbrook

It has been identified that children and young people who are deaf and hard of hearing (CYPDHH) have poor vocabulary outcomes, however the causation of this is multifaceted. Previous research has recognised that CYPDHH have missed opportunities for incidental learning, which has impacted upon their word and world knowledge, fast-mapping, foundational knowledge, novel-words, vocabulary, function -words, and language, however, these terms are non-specific, uncategorised and open to interpretation. This study was able to highlight that all CYP are unique, and language development depends upon each individual's life experiences and exposures. The thematic approach regarding the analysis identified four common missed incidentally learnt language themes and a variety of methods used to support vocabulary retention for CYPDHH. A key recommendation following this research project includes a Tripartite 3C - Model of Best Practice whereby educationalists/professionals, guardians/parents, and individuals within the immediate societal community, all collaborate to synchronise interventions.

17 An exploration of adult adoptee experiences of adoption through implementation of a storytelling approach

Author
Victoria Myers

As an adult adoptee it was often found that my voice, thoughts and experiences were clouded by others; be it concerns for my adoptive family, or frustration at a perceived lack of support from a 'post-adoption support team' designed, in part, to meet my service needs. It felt necessary owing to this experience to conduct a research project which allowed adoptees this 'voice', and as such aim to uncover what adoptees themselves perceived to be the most pertinent aspects of their experience. Through a method of storytelling, findings revealed aspects such as: relation to adoptive families, significance of partnerships, perceptions in parenthood, access to health and medical information and elements of career. As raised through the accounts of the adoptees, a significant array of information became available which has the potential for grounding future research into this area, with significant implications for future policy and practice should this be explored further.

31 Staff perspectives on safeguarding training in further education: Putting theory into practice

Author
Alexandra Clarke

Statutory guidance states safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. This study explores how the designated safeguarding team at a further education college (Setting A) may support and develop knowledge and skills amongst all staff to encourage a culture of listening to learners by ensuring their approach is child centred. A survey was undertaken with ten members of staff at Setting A that provided rich data of a positive culture of staff engagement ensuring safeguarding facilitates institutional empathy. Analysis of the survey data and a literature review has informed recommendations suggesting safeguarding training could identify staff with less than six years' experience working with children to level up their vigilance and interpersonal skills. Training may also identify staff with considerable work and training experience to receive training that upskills and challenges their experiences. Training that offers an understanding of adverse childhood experiences may offer insights into the behaviours of learners experiencing abuse or neglect and shape the use of interpersonal skills for improved disclosure. A further understanding of contextual safeguarding may allow experienced staff opportunities to analyse critical information and engage with multiagency stakeholders more effectively to address the impact of abuse, oppression, and exploitation.

40 Psychological, environmental and social factors which influence and impact upon health, fitness and wellbeing

Author
Katharine Bradford

It is well established that physical activity can play a major role in improving an individual's health, fitness, and wellbeing. The aim of this report was to investigate the psychological, environmental, and social factors which influence the health, fitness and wellbeing of 18-year-old university student 'Hannah' (see demographic overview). The case study investigates different factors that may impact her health, fitness and wellbeing, whilst exploring how physical activity could improve these. Bioelectrical impedance analysis, the beep test and Beck's depression inventory were used to assess Hannah's health, fitness and wellbeing. The report highlights how and why psychological, environmental and social factors negatively impact Hannah's life, whilst explaining the role that exercise can have in public health improvement. The report concludes that physical activity is valuable in improving measures of health, fitness, and wellbeing. Future research should continue to explore the benefits of physical activity, and the impact which psychological, environmental and social factors have upon health, fitness and wellbeing, helping to improve public health.

48 Stress in Non-profit Advancement of Health Organisations

Author
Ashlea Russell

Stress is a prominent area within Occupational Psychology which is known to have negative impacts on an individual and workplace when it is not managed effectively, with it being the main cause of absence across organisations. Much literature focuses on health and wellbeing strategies of paid staff, whereas less is known about how psychology is implemented into the third sector. Investigating stress in advancement of health charity organisations highlighted issues surrounding leadership, motivations, conflicting psychological contracts and support. Proposals for organisational change and improvement to overcoming identified issues are analysed, recommending employee-led approaches, recognising motivators and on-going training. The report then concludes with a reflective discussion on how knowledge of organisational psychology could be applied to one's personal working life

56 Coming Out of the Coffin: Queer Vampires in Late 20th Century Gothic Fiction

Author
Michael Taylor

This article critically explores the relationship between queerness and vampirism in three novels from the late twentieth century: Interview with the Vampire (1976) by Anne Rice, The Gilda Stories (1991) by Jewelle Gomez, and Lost Souls (1992) by Poppy Z. Brite. It is argued that each text presents a different depiction of queerness: negative, positive and neutral, respectively. The piece explores wider socio-political themes from when the novels were written, most notably the pre and post AIDS epidemic, as well as geographical setting – different cities within the USA. It is argued that the framing of queerness as analogous to vampirism is complex, with potential pitfalls, as well as progressive and transgressive possibilities. Recommendations for future research are critical investigations of representations of the queer vampire in twenty-first century Gothic fiction, as well as to perhaps explore the late nineteenth century texts that were the genesis that inspired those explored herein

Developing deaf pedagogy: Teachers of the Deaf perspectives on missed incidental learning

Abstract:

It has been identified that children and young people who are deaf and hard of hearing (CYPDHH) have poor vocabulary outcomes, however the causation of this is multifaceted. Previous research has recognised that CYPDHH have missed opportunities for incidental learning, which has impacted upon their word and world knowledge, fast-mapping, foundational knowledge, novel-words, vocabulary, function -words, and language, however, these terms are non-specific, uncategorised and open to interpretation. This study was able to highlight that all CYP are unique, and language development depends upon each individual's life experiences and exposures. Nevertheless, this research project was also able to document previous findings and expand upon these terms, through Teachers of the Deaf (TOD) within the current field, to identify language deficit commonalities in CYPDHH.

The thematic approach regarding the analysis of the qualitative questionnaire responses identified four common missed incidentally learnt language themes and a variety of methods used to support vocabulary retention for CYPDHH. Furthermore, a recommendation following this research project includes a Tripartite 3C - Model of Best Practice, whereby educationalists/professionals, guardians/parents, and individuals within the immediate societal community, all collaborate to synchronise interventions. In addition, the study also called for further research regarding the development of incidental learning skills for CYPDHH, to support in the reduction of their own language deficits, not just in education, but throughout their lifetime.

Authors

Kathryn Holbrook

BA (Hons) Professional Studies in Childhood and Youth

Introduction

England's current educational system has 8,890,357 CYP on role (National Statistics, 2021), and of those 37,340 are CYPDHH (CRIDE, 2020). Despite the 0.42% of CYPDHH attending a variety of educational settings, their academic attainment levels across all subjects are on average 11.3 marks, 24%, or a full grade below CYP without special educational needs and disabilities (Department for Education (DfE), 2020), however ascertaining the causation of this can be perplexing (Mathews, 2017). Lund and Douglas (2016, p. 26) suggest a contributing factor among CYPDHH is low vocabulary levels, to which Dalton (2013) believes is due to the impact hearing loss has on communication development.

Convertino et al. (2014, p. 472) state that research tends to focus on vocabulary understanding and language progression of CYPDHH, rather than their knowledge and comprehension of the world. An aspect of developing and acquiring both vocabulary and world knowledge is through incidental learning (Convertino et al., 2014). Raeve (2015) and Stelmachowicz et al. (2004) state that CYP standardly learn full or partial meanings to new words incidentally through natural exposures to language without formal instructions or delivery. There are subtle differences between, word and world knowledge (Lund & Douglas, 2016), fast-mapping (Heibeck & Markman, 1987), novel-words (Stelmachowicz et al., 2004), and incidental learning (Raeve, 2015), nevertheless the terms suggest a concept of learning, which supports CYP to acquire full or partial meanings for new vocabulary through natural everyday exposures (Dorn, 2019). In spite of this, Brackenbury et al. (2005) and Dorn (2019) highlight research gaps regarding incidental learning for CYPDHH, due to the challenges of identifying and ascertaining how and when new words were gained. Nonetheless, ethically there is a responsibility for TOD to challenge practice and develop new ways of working to address any inequalities (Equality Act, 2010). In addition, the research community also has a role in progressing knowledge regarding CYPDHH, as Edwards (2018) and Salter et al. (2017) state there are currently gaps within the literature regarding teachers' perceptions of CYPDHH, therefore this literature review has had to rely on some less contemporary data. Nevertheless, this research project explored current perceptions from TOD, regarding their views on missed incidental learning opportunities and the interventions used for CYPDHH.

Literature Review

Incidental learning

Luckner et al. (2012) and Wrigley (2016) state that we live in a sound-orientated world, whereby language is shared intentionally or incidentally throughout an individual's life. Social researchers (Hartman, 2020; Raeve, 2015; Reimer, 2019; Trussell & Easterbrooks, 2013) suggest that CYP continue to learn new vocabulary incidentally through indirect and unplanned everyday experiences, for example by unavoidably overhearing conversations or through informal interactions with others. In addition, Meek (2020, p. 1685) states that CYP may also develop world knowledge and language through the transmission of local to international media, which is shared through televisions, radios, and the internet.

Rogers (2014, p. 9) estimates that CYP's informal interactions and experiences may contribute to 70-90% of their learning. To gain incidental learning data, studies tend to focus on fast-mapping, which refers to the psychological process whereby CYP pair new spoken language regarding an item, object, or concept through minimal indirect exposures (Carey & Bartlett, 1987) thus acquiring, applying, and retaining incidentally learnt words to build upon their vocabulary (Brackenbury et al., 2005, p. 77). Through the immersion of language, incidental learning experiences may support CYP's social and communication skills, as well as their development and acquisition of new world knowledge and vocabulary (Convertino et al., 2014; Freeman King, 2017; Golinkoff et al., 1992; Hartman, 2020; Hopper, 2011; Luckner et al., 2012; Reimer, 2019).

CYPDHH within a hearing society (Freeman King, 2017) do not have the same opportunities to access incidentally learnt vocabulary (Hindley, 2003; Shirin & Christina, 2021), as they do not gain the same amount of spoken dialogue as other individuals with normal hearing (Meek, 2020). Additionally, Meek (2020, p. 1690) also states that CYP within normal hearing levels, tend to incidentally learn, understand, and grasp the concepts of well-known terms, phrases, and vocabulary, however this is not always the case for CYPDHH. Dorn (2019, p. 240) states that CYPDHH find unstructured/informal situations problematic, due to the lack of access to direct or indirect language. Researchers (Dorn, 2019; Hartman, 2020; Shirin & Christina, 2021) suggest that during these informal situations, most CYP experience natural interactions with others. However, even with amplification equipment, CYPDHH may not overhear or access communication through daily conversations or the media (Luckner et al., 2012; Meek, 2020; Stith & Drasgow, 2005). The lack of access to incidental learning is a regular occurrence for CYPDHH (Hauser et al., 2010), to which Hopper (2011, p. vi) states that CYPDHH do not realise the importance of incidental learning until much later in their life. Despite this, it is important to acknowledge that each individual is unique, within their own ecological system, which influences their social environment and development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Therefore, research regarding incidental learning and the development of function words (small words that give meaning to a sentence but have little meaning on their own) within natural informal situations are lacking, as it is challenging to ascertain and distinguish what language CYPDHH have gained and when this may have occurred (Alegria et al., 2020; Brackenbury et al., 2005).

The impact of missed incidental learning

To enable individuals to communicate effectively relies upon knowing and using vocabulary (Hermans & Spencer, 2015). Consequently, some educational settings may assume that CYP transition to each stage with the required competence (Wrigley, 2016), however this may not be the case for CYPDHH, as they tend to have gaps and delays within their language throughout their life (Convertino et al., 2014; Reimer, 2019). Brackenbury et al. (2005); Convertino et al. (2014); Easterbrooks and Baker (2001); Luckner and Muir (2002); Meek (2020); Pittman (2011); Reimer (2019); Trussell and Easterbrooks (2013) state that CYPDHH may have limited expressive and receptive vocabulary acquisition and multi-meaning word comprehension, due to reduced access to incidental learning. Hart and Risley (1995) suggest that if CYP are immersed within qualitative and quantitative incidental learning experiences it may increase their vocabulary. However, Meek (2020, p. 1677) states that missing parts of conversations may limit the possibility of incidental learning, to which Coyne et al. (2004), Lund and Douglas (2016) and Reimer (2019) suggest further impacts upon CYPDHH limited vocabulary, as they are less likely to gain and develop their language further through incidental exposures.

As a result of limited vocabulary and world knowledge for CYPDHH, their learning and academic performance tends to lag behind their hearing peers in a variety of areas (Bull, 2013; Calderon & Greenberg, 2011; Convertino et al., 2014; Dalton, 2013; Freeman King, 2017). For example, CYPDHH literacy and reading development tends to be significantly impacted upon, due to world knowledge and vocabulary deficits (Berndsen & Luckner, 2012; Convertino et al., 2014; Hopper, 2019; Jozwiak, 2019; Luckner et al., 2012; Marschark & Knoors, 2012; Trussell & Easterbrooks, 2013; Wauters et al., 2006). Incidental learning also contributes to social and emotional language acquisition and development (Meek, 2020). Therefore, CYPDHH tend to be delayed in their social and emotional development, as they struggle to grasp and/or understand some conversations, due to the pace and complexity of language (Bull, 2013; Calderon & Greenberg, 2011; Dalton, 2013; Luckner et al., 2012; Stith & Drasgow, 2005). This may also lead to CYPDHH struggling to control their own and/or understand others' behaviours and emotions (Dorn, 2019), therefore impacting upon their mental health (Dammeyer & Chapman, 2017; Fellinger et al., 2012).

Many researchers (Brackenbury et al., 2005; Covertino et al., 2014; Luckner & Muir, 2002; Meek, 2020; Pittman, 2011; Reimer, 2019; Shirin & Christina, 2021) acknowledge that missed incidental learning is a contributing factor for vocabulary deficits in CYPDHH, which in turn may impact upon their development. CYPDHH gaps (Education Wales, 2019), in word and world knowledge (Convertino et al., 2014), novel-words (Stelmacowicz et al., 2004), foundational knowledge (McLachlan & Elks, 2012), vocabulary (Shirin & Christina, 2021) function-words (Alegria et al., 2020), language (Dorn, 2019), are not specified or categorised, therefore the terms are nonspecific, ambiguous and open to interpretation. The undefined nature of incidental learning and its varied terminology makes planning interventions challenging; therefore, the key aspects of incidental learning are difficult to specify and target. As a result, further research is required to possibly discover and ascertain any specific common topics and/or vocabulary deficits for CYPDHH.

Retention of language

The causations behind vocabulary gaps of CYPDHH are multi-faceted. Hopper (2011, p. vii) suggests that CYPDHH tend to observe others, rather than interact, as many educational settings do not provide adequate support or provisions for informal incidental learning, which may further hinder CYPDHH. Berndsen and Luckner (2012) and Trussell and Easterbrooks (2013) suggest that support and interventions should be tailored to meet CYPDHH individual needs when identifying missed incidental foundational vocabulary. As a consequence, Education Wales (2019) identified that missed incidental learning impacts upon vocabulary for CYPDHH, and therefore distributed a report to educational settings, suggesting varying optional support and interventions for CYPDHH to improve their academic achievements.

When supporting CYPDHH during intervention sessions, informal situations, or incidental learning opportunities, the question arises as to what strategies professionals can use to support in the retention of new vocabulary, which may have previously been missed. Convertino et al. (2014, p. 481) suggests that improved hearing equipment and increased incidental learning are not linked. In contrast, Berndsen and Luckner (2012) and Oticon (2020) suggest that the improvement of quality and quantity of sound through technology may provide better access to vocabulary for CYPDHH. This is further supported by Stith and Drasgow (2005, p. 6) who suggest professionals should use a normal level of voice to prevent any speech distortion, while also considering and using an acoustic-friendly environment.

Once professionals have ensured the ideal access to sound through equipment and the best possible listening environment for CYPDHH, researchers (Berndsen & Luckner, 2012; Brackenbury et al., 2005; Convertino et al, 2014; Easterbrooks & Baker, 2001) suggest pre-teaching key vocabulary and world knowledge. Pre-teaching of keyword vocabulary prior to the subject lesson may allow CYPDHH to clearly hear and gain new vocabulary, which may prepare them for future events thus enabling CYPDHH to focus on the detailed information, which may accompany the new language and assist with further participation (Stith & Drasgow, 2005). In addition, regular short pre-teaching sessions, (Lund & Douglas, 2016) combined with actions, visuals, routines, and gaining the attention of CYPDHH before speaking may support in the retention of vocabulary (Stith & Drasgow, 2005; Watson & Parsons, 1998).

Furthermore, Lund and Douglas (2016, p. 35) state that explicit and direct instructions with multiple contextual and definitional exposures to information may increase word knowledge and retention by an additional 5.02 new words. Coyne et al. (2004; 2007) also state that direct and focused teaching of words during literacy activities may increase vocabulary development. Lund and Douglas (2016, p. 29) suggest that direct and focused teaching requires additional time and effort in order to increase incidental exposure. Meek (2020) and Reimer (2019) therefore suggest that observing conversations and modelling new vocabulary may improve language retention for CYP. In addition, it may be possible to improve vocabulary for CYPDHH by increasing the quantity of words they are likely to hear each day (Leffel & Suskind, 2013; Stelmacowicz et al., 2004) as well as providing alternative word options with the same meaning (Stith & Drasgow, 2005). As a consequence, all these interventions require repetition of any targeted words or incidental learning vocabulary, which is key for language retention (Bobzien et al., 2015; Lund & Douglas, 2016)

Research Method

The sources within the literature review acknowledge the language gaps and delays for CYPDHH and the impact this may have on their future development. It also identifies the possible resources and interventions which may support CYPDHH with the retention of new vocabulary. As a result of the literature findings, further questions arise regarding missed incidental learning for CYPDHH, with the aim of developing deaf pedagogies through the perspectives of current practising TOD.

Participants

To ascertain the perspectives of TOD, regarding CYPDHH and the possible missed incidental learning vocabulary, a nonprobability sample group was selected, therefore as a consequence, this does not allow all individuals to partake in this research project (Dornyei, 2007; Etikan et al, 2015). In addition, due to the COVID-19 international pandemic (WHO, 2020), the recruitment of the convenience and expert sample group, were easily accessible via email (Etikan et al, 2015) and consisted of 10 qualified TOD. To gain a broader sampling spectrum (Etikan et al., 2015) the participants were from three different counties, this included a deaf school and two counties providing peripatetic support for CYPDHH. Despite the participants having a range of experience of working with CYPDHH and the nature of their employment (peripatetic or within a specialist educational setting), the convenience sample group may increase the chance of biased results (Mackey & Gass, 2015) and cannot fully represent the whole professional population (Etikan et al., 2015; Wellington, 2015). Despite this limitation, research exploring the perspectives of TOD provides important insight and is crucial for developing deaf pedagogy and gaining a deeper understanding of professional practice when supporting CYPDHH (Bernard, 2002).

Research tools and procedures

Smith (2010, p. 160) suggests a range of techniques should be used within any research, however due to the scale of this research project and the current COVID-19 pandemic (WHO, 2020) causing limited social contact, focus groups and interviews were disregarded and a single qualitative questionnaire method was used (Wellington, 2015). Nonetheless, further research, possibly through quantitatively controlled randomised trials (Goldacre, 2013), may be required, in order to ascertain confirmation of the gaps within CYPDHH language suggested by the TOD.

Questionnaires are traditionally known for gaining quantitative responses, however researchers (Goldacre, 2013; Saldana, 2015) state that textual qualitative questionnaires are also advantageous in gaining information on a specific social experience or pattern, which enables different perspectives to be considered. In addition, qualitative research also tends to look at approaches and methods used within the social world (Saldana, 2015; Wellington, 2015), by considering either individuals' visual and/or textual experiences and processes. Therefore, a qualitative questionnaire was appropriate for hearing the TOD perceptions within the current field, to establish and gain professional's perspectives on any commonalities in missed incidentally learnt vocabulary for CYPDHH. Salmons (2016, p. 3) states that for most individuals online activities have become a normal reoccurring experience within everyday life, which is also a time and cost-effective process for collecting data (Selwyn & Robson, 1998), therefore a qualitative questionnaire was developed through the BGU's approved generic online surveying website. As a consequence, of the research method regarding TOD's perceptions on incidental learning, approval and consent was sought through the Bishop Grosseteste University's (BGU) Research Ethics Clearance Form, which is in-line with the BGU's Research Ethics Policy (2019).

In addition, BERA (2018, p. 9) states that voluntary consent from the participants must also be gained before any research can take place. As a consequence, the participants themselves and a gatekeeper – who was used to cascade information to other participants (Shenuka & Douglas, 2016) – were emailed the information sheet, which explained this research project and their right to withdraw. This was then followed by a link to the online questionnaire, which also included a confirmation question ensuring the participants' voluntary consent. The online qualitative questionnaire consisted of six clear and accessible (BERA, 2018) open-ended questions, which were to be completed within two weeks. The questionnaire was designed to produce non-statistical and multiple open responses, which incorporated the participants' opinions, experiences, and feelings (Denzin, 2001). Van Maanen (1979, p. 520) states that analysis of qualitative research responses can lead to an amalgamation of data, thus providing an overarching perspective and interpretation. Anonymity is a key practice within research (BERA, 2018), therefore during the completion of the online questionnaire itself and within the findings of this research report, pseudonyms were provided for the TOD and were referred to as participant 1 to 10, which was then further abbreviated to P1, P2 and so on. The anonymity of some of the participants through a gatekeeper is key to reducing biased responses, as the Hawthorne effect (McCambridge et al., 2014) may cause known participants to respond with what they feel is socially acceptable, and/or social desirability reporting (Nederhof, 1985) may elucidate responses that maintain the participants' professional status.

Once all 10 participants had completed the questionnaire and the time frame deadline had been met, the responses were downloaded and stored on a password protected One Drive and the originals were deleted. These One Drive responses will also be permanently destroyed upon the BGU's final grading, thus reducing any further protentional risks of a data breach (Data Protection Act, 2018). Furthermore, to ensure all the research planning and procedures were ethically sound, BGU's (2019, pp. 4-5) Research Ethics Policy was followed, in-line with the key principles – integrity, rigour, truthful, respect, and quality. Therefore, all participants' responses were analysed, explored, and reflected upon, while acknowledging any personal bias and removing any judgement (BERA, 2018; Saldana, 2015). Wellington (2015, pp. 41-43) states that any social world research cannot gain total reliability and validity, as the participants and/or researcher may have varying daily factors, which could impact upon the responses and findings at the time of completion. The research method used within this project can lay some validity claims, as it followed standardised documentation guidance (BERA, 2018; BGU, 2019; The National Youth Agency, 2004) to support in the implementation, planning, and analysis of this research.

Throughout a research project, theorists (Etikan, 2016; Rahman, 2016; Smith, 2010) state that the professional researcher plays a significant role in qualitative research. Christians et al., (2002, p. 229) states the researcher requires an epistemological position in order to use personal professional knowledge and experiences of CYPDHH, to understand, organise, and filter the participants' responses in-depth (Saldana, 2011) through a thematic analysis approach (Guest et al., 2012) to identify any specific themes or patterns (Salmons, 2016). In

addition, Salmons (2016, p. 112) states that the researcher needs to continually reflect upon the responses to develop a more impartial stance is maintained throughout the data analysis. The aim of the data analysis is to identify and improve deaf pedagogy by gaining professional TOD knowledge, opinions, and experiences within different localities and fields. As a result, the findings could potentially align, enhance, develop and/or improve professional practice regarding incidental learning vocabulary for CYPDHH (Etikan et al., 2015; Noffke, 2013; Salmons, 2016; Snape & Spencer, 2014). Therefore, the next section of this study offers concluding points and makes recommendations for the future.

Research Outcomes

This research project set out to gain professionals' perceptions on incidental learning for CYPDHH and as a consequence quotes verbatim will be presented in italics, to strengthen the voice of participants. As a result, 100% of the TOD from the three localities completed the online qualitative questionnaire regarding their knowledge, opinions, and experiences of missed incidental learning for CYPDHH and the possible ways to support in the retention of new vocabulary. The response data was analysed using a standardised comparison method – immersion, reflecting, analysing data, and recombing/synthesizing data (Wellington, 2015, pp. 261-262). Consequently, a table has been used to capture the key, but descriptive data evident within the response analysis (Table A).

Incidental learning

Through detailed analysis of the participant's responses, commonalities were evident with Hindley (2003), Meek (2020), and Shirin and Christina (2021) regarding reduced access to incidentally learnt vocabulary for CYPDHH. Researchers (Hartman, 2020; Luckner et al., 2012; Raeve, 2015; Reimer, 2019; Rogers, 2014; Trussell & Easterbrooks, 2013) suggest the key concepts of incidental learning are unplanned, undirected, informal experiences, which is in-line with all 10 participants who also state that incidental learning occurs by overhearing and listening to others. P2 suggests that CYPDHH need to have their 'ears and eyes alert to all that is going on and spoken about' within informal situations, to gain knowledge and vocabulary which is 'caught not taught'. In addition, similarly to Meek (2020), P3, P4, and P9 also considered the advantages of media, through the radio or television, which may support in the attainment and development of world knowledge and vocabulary. These minimal exposures to incidental words may support CYPDHH to be able to build on their vocabulary (Brackenbury et al., 2005; Carey & Bartlett, 1987), as they '*absorb learning*' (P2) and then apply this knowledge on '*recall*' (P1) when required. Contrastingly, Luckner et al. (2012), Meek, (2020), and Stith and Drasgow (2005) suggest that CYPDHH are unable to access world knowledge, for example on the news through media platforms, in the same way that CYP with normal hearing may do, therefore CYPDHH 'knowledge and understanding of the world can suffer' (P2). Furthermore, Dorn (2019, p. 240) states that CYPDHH may find informal and unstructured environments challenging, which is further expanded by Luckner et al. (2012), Meek (2020), and Stith and Drasgow (2005) who state that CYPDHH may not overhear or access direct or indirect language through conversations or the media. In addition, all 10 participants, along with evidence in the literature (Hauser et al., 2010; Hindley, 2003; Meek, 2020; Shirin & Christina, 2021), stated that CYPDHH do not have the same opportunities to access incidental learning, therefore may not have the same language levels as their hearing peers.

Impact of missed incidental learning

Meek (2020, p. 1690) states that some CYP who have normal hearing may incidentally learn and understand well-known terms, phrases, and vocabulary, which seem to link to their past experiences. However, in-line with Convertino et al. (2014), Meek (2020) and Reimer (2019), the analysis of all 10 participants suggest that CYPDHH have gaps and delays within their vocabulary and knowledge, which Reimer (2019) expresses may also continue throughout their lifetime. In addition, researchers (Brackenbury et al., 2005; Convertino et al., 2014; Luckner & Muir, 2020; Meek, 2020; Pittman, 2011; Reimer, 2019; Shirin & Christina, 2021) acknowledge that missed incidental learning is a contributing factor of vocabulary deficits for CYPDHH, which in turn may impact upon their development as 'they do not have sufficient language to access the curriculum' (P5). Similarly, Bull (2013), Calderon and Greenberg (2011), Convertino et al. (2014), Dalton (2013), King (2017), and P1, P2, P3, P5, P7, P8, and P10 state that CYPDHH tend to have lower attainment levels, as their 'vocabulary deficits significantly affects academic outcomes' (P5). For example, it is harder for CYPDHH to decode words unbeknown to them in spoken language (P1), which in turn may impact upon their literacy and reading development (Berndsen & Luckner, 2012; Convertino et al., 2014; Hopper, 2019; Jozwiak, 2019; Luckner et al., 2012; Marschark & Knoors, 2012; Wauters et al., 2006).

In addition, CYPDHH may also 'struggle to access written text' (P5) and 'will skip over an unfamiliar word rather than ask what it means' (P1), which is consistent with previously mentioned researchers (Brackenbury et al., 2005; Convertino et al., 2014; Easterbrooks & Baker, 2001; Luckner & Muir, 2020; Meek, 2020; Pittman, 2011; Reimer, 2019; Trussell & Easterbrooks, 2013) who believe that CYPDHH may have limited expressive and receptive vocabulary acquisition, and can find multi-meaning words and comprehension challenging. As a consequence of language deficits, CYPDHH tend to be 'less curious and inquisitive' (P3) and have gaps in areas of less interest (P4). Therefore, as a result CYPDHH are often 'taught and less self-motivated to find their own solutions to problems' (P3) to which Hopper (2011) states that CYPDHH do not realise the importance of incidental learning until much later in life.

The literature (Bull, 2013; Calderon & Greenberg, 2011; Dalton, 2013; Luckner et al., 2012; Stith & Drasgow, 2005) also suggests that CYPDHH struggle to grasp and/or understand some conversations with their peers, due to the pace and complexity of language. This is also evident within the current professional field as P3, P5, P7 and P10 acknowledged the impact this has on the social and emotional development of CYPDHH, to which P8 identifies some primary key challenging concepts during peer relationships, that can lead to secondary effects 'not knowing what's trending, being as streetwise, aware of what's happened between peers has a knock-on effect on popularity in the primary years which in time erodes self-confidence and self-esteem'. This is comparable with Dorn (2019) who suggests that CYPDHH struggle to control their own and/or understand others' behaviours and emotions, which further impacts upon their social development and mental health (Dammeyer & Chapman, 2017; Fellinger et al., 2012).

All the participants identified that there are gaps and delays in vocabulary for CYPDHH, which aligns with the literature (Alegria et al., 2020; Brackenbury et al., 2005; Bull, 2013; Calderon & Greenberg, 2011; Convertino et al., 2014; Coyne et al., 2004; Dorn, 2019; Freeman King, 2017; Herman et al, 2019; Jozwiak, 2019; Luckner & Muir, 2002; Lund & Douglas, 2016; Marschark & Knoors, 2012; McLachlan & Elks, 2012; Pitman, 2011; QI & Mitchell, 2012; Reimer, 2019; Shirin & Christina, 2021; Stelmacowicz et al., 2004; Trussell & Easterbrooks, 2013).

These identified vocabulary gaps and delays are not specified or categorised, and therefore are ambiguous and open to interpretation. Furthermore, Alegria et al. (2020) and Brackenbury et al. (2005) state that it is challenging to distinguish and ascertain what vocabulary CYPDHH gain and when this occurs, especially when research suggests they are less likely to gain and develop their language further through increased opportunities to incidental exposures (Coyne et al., 2004; Lund & Douglas, 2016; Reimer, 2019). Therefore, questions arise regarding any possible patterns or similarities within CYPDHH vocabulary deficits, and what can be done to support the development of language.

Through the qualitative questionnaire, participants were asked if any topic areas or keywords were commonly identified to be missing within vocabulary for CYPDHH. Firstly, however, it is key to highlight and acknowledge that upon analysis of the response data, the term 'topic' used in question three, may have channelled some participants to respond with specific curriculum subjects rather than everyday incidental learning, as some participants may have associated that term 'topic' with education. In spite of this, the topic vocabulary suggested (For example - he, she, above, below, huge, enormous, add, subtract, seasons) are still relevant to everyday incidental learning, therefore the term 'topic' could have been unclear and may or may not have impacted upon some responses. Any future research may benefit from a pilot scheme first, which would identify any ambiguous questions. Furthermore, it is also noteworthy to state that every child is unique and 'it is based on their individual life experiences' and 'what they have been exposed to' (P6) as it 'differs from child to child' (P3), to which P7 and P9 did not think it was possible to list any specific keywords. Nevertheless, from the participants who responded to questions three and four, a thematic analysis approach was used to identify any patterns or themes, regarding commonly unknown topic areas and/or keywords (Guest et al., 2012).

Topic Area	Sub-topic Areas	Keywords/Areas highlighted by participants
People	Feelings and emotions	Theirs and other's emotions - Proud, disappointed. Social language. Words needed to compromise, negotiate, empathise, discuss, opinions
	Body parts	All body parts x2 - Eyebrows, eyelashes, elbow, wrist, ankle, arms, ribs, brain
	Clothing	Parts of clothing - collar, cuff, sleeve etc, jacket (variations), hoodie (variations), swimsuit, waistcoat, bracelet, apron.
	Family/associates	Aunt, Uncle, cousin, neighbour, male, female, age, address.
	Employment	All jobs - Chef, Joiner, Judge
Every day outside experiences	Days out / Interests Outdoor vocabulary	Canoe, bucket, and spade All outside items - bridge, roundabout, bench, fountain, factory
Household items	Items used	All household objects, - Tap, tap, sink, cushion, cushion, radiator, kettle, curtains, curtains, toothpaste, toothpaste, soap, sponge, tea towel, iron, ironing board, cooker, cooker, oven, oven, mop, stool, duvet, wardrobe, bedsheet, radio, armchair, alarm clock, door, mat, money box, jug, cup, comb, banister, gate, All parts of the home - loft area, roof, ceiling.
Current affairs	TV Programmes/News Famous people	Always changing no list supplied/stated by participants

Table A: TOD perspectives of missed incidental learning keywords/topics

Table A highlights common themes, which may have been missed within language development for CYPDHH, due to reduced incidental learning. As a result, this research project was able to expand upon the body of current literature language terms to identify potentially specific themes and keywords (see Table A), which may potentially be commonly missed incidentally learnt vocabulary for CYPDHH. Therefore, further questions arise as to how professionals may be able to support in the retention of any newly exposed words for CYPDHH.

Retention of language

When gaps and delays in language are identified for CYPDHH, P1, P4, P5, P6, and P10 corrolate with previously mentioned literature (Berndsen & Luckner, 2012; Brackenbury et al., 2005; Convertino et al, 2014; Easterbrooks & Baker, 2001) by suggesting that pre-tutoring of vocabulary and word knowledge may support in the retention of any new language. Pre-tutoring of keywords may provide CYPDHH with the foundational knowledge, to support them in fully accessing and understanding curriculum information (Stith & Drasgow, 2005). Similarly, P1, P4, and P10 also

suggested that post-tutoring should be considered, as this enables CYPDHH to revisit vocabulary to 'ensure the learning is embedded' (P10). This correlates with Bobzien et al., (2015); Leffel and Suskind (2013); Lund and Douglas (2016) Stelmacowicz et al., (2004) and Stith and Drasgow, (2005), who suggest repetition is an important aspect of retention, as this can target incidental learning vocabulary by increasing the quantity of words CYPDHH hear each day. Therefore, the 'overuse of everyday vocabulary in conversations and pulling in alternative words that have a similar meaning' (P3) may support CYPDHH in 'over learning' (P1) key vocabulary, thus aiding language retention.

Lund and Douglas (2016, p. 35) and Coyne et al. (2004; 2007) state that explicit and direct instructions with multiple contextual and definitional exposures to information may increase word knowledge and retention by an additional 5.02 new words. This is reinforced within current practice, whereby P4, P5, and P7 state that they explicitly teach words through a range of contexts, rather than in isolation, while also linking learning to other experiences (P2). P1, P2, and P7 also support Reimer's (2019) concept of improving vocabulary retention for CYPDHH by professionals elaborating word meaning, extending language, and modelling new vocabulary during any meaningful conversations. In addition, Watson and Parsons (1998, pp. 135-142) suggest actions and visuals may also support in the retention of language for CYPDHH, which is further supported by P4, P5, P7, P8, and P10 who suggest a variety of activities - reading, vocabulary books, picture dictionaries, visual thesaurus, picture books, Osborne 100/1000 Word books, vocabulary games, drawings, word maps, films, and visual cues - to aid in the retention of new vocabulary.

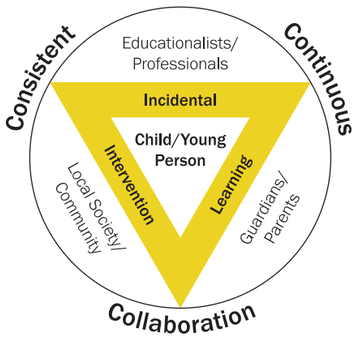

Figure 1: (Holbrook, 2021)

To reinforce and provide these activities and interventions throughout CYPDHH everyday lives to prevent or reduce any gaps and delays within incidentally learnt vocabulary a consistent, continuous, and collaborative approach is required.

Tripartite 3C - Model of Best Practice

Similar to Bronfenbrenner (1979), the Tripartite 3C - Model of Best Practice, has the child/young person at the centre of the intervention, as it is their unique journey. However, the 'Tripartite 3C' individuals (educationalists/professionals, guardians/parents, and people within the immediate societal community - for example sports clubs and neighbours) who surround the CYPDHH, are within their everyday spectrum and even though the intensity of input from these individuals may vary, CYPDHH will still be able to access some forms of incidental learning, therefore adding to their mains source of language. The Tripartite 3C individuals all need to be consistent, continuous, and collaborate together to synchronise any interventions, thus enabling CYPDHH to access as much vocabulary as possible, which may support and aid in their language retention. In spite of this, there are some limitations surrounding the Tripartite 3C model, as some individuals surrounding CYPDHH may not acknowledge and/or prioritise incidental learning, until vocabulary gaps have been identified much later in their lives. As a consequence, to encourage best practice, a possible suggestion would be for TOD to deliver training, provide leaflets or annotated PowerPoints to the whole spectrum, to encourage and promote incidental learning throughout CYPDHH development.

In addition, this research project has highlighted an area lacking within the literature, which is the concept of supporting CYPDHH to develop their own listening skills with regards to identifying and overhearing conversations within an incidental learning environment. P2 suggests professionals should 'Encourage them to question what they see and hear' during incidental experiences as this is not a natural occurrence for CYPDHH (Hartman, 2020; Raeve, 2015; Reimer, 2019; Trussell & Easterbrooks, 2013). P2 also states that professionals should not 'take for granted that they know things happen e.g., Halloween and, Easter'. Therefore, professionals should encourage CYPDHH to ask questions and be more inquisitive, to gain and develop upon their own listening and overhearing skills and thereby independently build on their incidental learning.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Despite living in a sound orientated world (Luckner et al., 2012) this research project has identified that the primary impact of missed incidental learning for CYPDHH is limited access to vocabulary and world knowledge, which can then lead to secondary effects regarding their academic performance (Bull, 2013; Calderon & Greenberg, 2011; Convertino et al., 2014; Dalton, 2013; Freeman King, 2017) and social and emotional development (Bull, 2013; Calderon & Greenberg, 2011; Dalton, 2013; Luckner et al., 2012; Stith & Drasgow, 2005). It is important to acknowledge that every child is unique and 'it is based on their individual life experiences' and 'what they have been exposed to' (P6) as environmental factors 'differ from child to child' (P3). Nevertheless, this research project has begun to address and expand upon ambiguous terms, to identify some potentially common themes and keywords (see Table A), which may be missed during incidental learning experiences.

There are limitations associated with this study, primarily related to the qualitative nature of the design, the generalisation which is based on a small number of respondents and the fact that every individual and their context is unique. This research study has identified some commonalities regarding themes of missed incidental learnt vocabulary for CYPDHH. As a consequence, further research projects would benefit from a pilot study to reduce possible ambiguity of questions and an additional quantitatively controlled randomised trial (Goldacre, 2013), may help to ascertain confirmation of the gaps within CYPDHH language.

This research project does, however, highlight possible commonalities within missed incidental learning for CYPDHH. Therefore, this study may provide professionals with areas of particular focus, not only by preventing gaps from developing within the early years for CYPDHH, but also to support with future targeted retention interventions. The interventions - pre-tutoring (Berndsen & Luckner, 2012; Brackenbury et al., 2005; Convertino et al, 2014; Easterbrooks & Baker, 2001; P1, P4, P5, P6, and P10), post-tutoring (P1, P4, & P10), repetition (Bobzien et al., 2015; Leffel & Suskind, 2013; Lund & Douglas, 2016; P1; Stelmacowicz et al., 2004), modelling language and using alternative words with similar meanings (P3, Stith & Drasgow, 2005), explicit and direct instructions (Lund & Douglas, 2016; Coyne et al., 2004, 2007; P4, P5 & P7), linking language to experiences (P2) - may aid with the retention of new vocabulary. Nonetheless, further resources and research is required regarding intervention for specific themes and keywords identified within this research project (see Table A).

In addition, to enable a consistent, continuous, and collaborative approach, TOD may want to raise awareness of missed incidental learning for CYPDHH by delivering training, providing leaflets and/or an annotated PowerPoint, to enable knowledge to be cascaded throughout the everyday spectrum, as demonstrated within the Tripartite 3C model. The personally developed Tripartite 3C - Model of Best Practice may highlight the main sources of incidentally learnt vocabulary, that is 'caught not taught' (P2), which can then be combined with a variety of interventions and support, thus meeting some of the ethical obligations to address inequalities (Equality Act, 2010). Furthermore, the findings also suggest that professionals should encourage CYPDHH to be 'curious, interested, self-motivated and inquisitive' as keeping their 'ears and eyes alert to all that is going on and spoken about' (P2, P3 & P4). This in turn may support in the development of self-awareness and overhearing skills for CYPDHH, thus emphasising the importance of incidental learning (Hopper, 2011), so they are able to take control of their own destiny and independently reduce any incidental learning deficits throughout their lifetime.

References

Alegria, J., Carrillo, M. S., Rueda, M. I., & Dominguez, A. B. (2020). Reading sentences in spanish: Some similarities and differences between children with dyslexia and those with deafness. *Annals of Psychology, 36*(2), 295-303.

BERA. (2018). *Ethical guidelines for educational research.* British Educational Research Association.

Bernard, H. R. (2002). *Research methods in anthropology: Qualitative and quantiative approaches* (3rd ed.). Alta Mira Press.

Berndsen, M., & Luckner, J. (2012). Supporting students who are deaf or hard of hearing in general education classrooms: A Washington state case study. *Hammill Institute on Disabilities: Communication Disorders Quarterly, 33*(2), 111-118.

Bishop Grosseteste University. (2019). *Research ethics policy*. Bishop Grosseteste University. https://www.bishopg.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Research-Ethics-Policy-2019-1.pdf

Bobzien, J. L., Richels, C., Schwartz, K., Raver, S. A., Hester, P., & Morin, L. (2015). Using repeated reading and explicit instruction to teach vocabulary to preschoolers with hearing loss. *Infants and Young Children, 3*(1), 262-280.

Brackenbury, T., Ryan, T., & Messenheimer, T. (2005). Incidental word learning in hearing child of deaf adults. *Deaf Studies and Deaf Education, 11*(1), 76-93. https://doi:10.1093/deafed/enj018

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The ecology of human development.* Harvard University Press.

Bull, R. (2013). Deafness, numerical cognition, and mathematics. In D. A. Moore, & P. Hauser (Eds.), *Assessing literacy of deaf individuals* (pp. 21-36). Springer.

Calderon, R., & Greenberg, M. (2011). Social and emotional development of deaf children: Family, school, and program effects. In M. Marschark, & P. E. Spencer (Eds.), *Oxford handbook of deaf studies, language and education* (2nd ed.), (pp. 188-199). Oxford University Press.

Carey, S., & Bartlett, E. (1978). Acquiring a single new word. *Papers and Reports on Child Language Development, 15*(1), 17-29.

Christians, C., Collins, P. H., & Downing, D. B. (2002). Assessing the text. In N. K. Denzin, & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The qualitative inquiry reader* (pp. 229-233). SAGE.

Convertino, C., Borgna, G., Marschark, M., & Durkin, A. (2014). Word and world knowledge among deaf learners with and without cochlear implants. *Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education, 19*(4), 471-483.

Coyne, M. D., McCoach, D. B., & Kapp, S. (2007). Vocabulary intervention for kindergarten students: Comparing extended instruction to embedded instruction and incidental exposure. *Learning Disability Quarterly, 30*(1), 74-88.

Coyne, M. D., Simmons, D. C., Kame'enui, E. J., & Stoolmiller, M. (2004). Teaching vocabulary during shared storybook readings: An examination of differential effects. *Exceptionality, 12*(1), 145-162.

References continued

CRIDE. (2020). *Consortium for research in deaf education: 202 report for England*. NDCS. https://www.ndcs.org.uk/media/6604/cride-2020-england-report-final.pdf

Dalton, C. J. (2013). Lessons for inclusion: Classroom experiences of students with mild and moderate hearing loss. *Canadian Journal of Education, 36*(1), 125-152.

Dammeyer, J., & Chapman, M. (2017). Prevalence and characteristics of self-reported physical and mental disorders amoung adults with hearing loss in Denmark. A national survey. *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology, 52*(7), 807-813.

Data Protection Act. (2018). HMSO.

Denzin, N. K. (2001). *Interpretive interactionism.* SAGE.

Department for Education. (2020). *Revised statistics on the achievements of pupils at the end of key stage 4 in schools, including pupils characteristics*. Gov.UK. https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/key-stage-4-performance-2019-revised

Dorn, B. (2019). The changing role of teachers of students who are deaf or hard of hearing: Consultation as an increasing part of the job. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation, 29*(2), 237-254.

Dornyei, Z. (2007). *Research methods in applied linguistics: Quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methodologies.* Oxford University Press.

Easterbrooks, S., & Baker, S. (2001). *Language learning in children who are deaf and hard of hearing Multiple Pathways.* Pearson.

Education Wales. (2019). *Support for children and young people with hearing impairment in educational settings.* Welsh Government.

Edwards, E. (2018). *Mainstream teacher perceptions of working with deaf children in primary school.* Mary Hare & University of Hertford.

Etikan, I. (2016). Comparison of convenience sampling and purposive sampling. *American Journal of Theoretical and Applied Statistics, 5*(1), 1-4.

Etikan, I., Musa, S. A., & Alkassim, R. S. (2015). Comparison of convenience sampling and purposive sampling. *American Journal of Theoretical and Applied Statistics, 5*(1), 1-4.

Equality Act. (2010). HMSO.

Fellinger, J., Holzinger, D., & Pollard, R. (2012). Mental health of deaf people. *The Lancet, 379*(9820), 1037-1044. https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2010.523905

Freeman King, J. (2017). *Incidental learning & the deaf child*. Eparent. https://www.eparent.com/features-3/incidental-learning-deaf-child/

Goldacre, B. (2013). *Building evidence into education. Bad science*. 1-20. https://doi:10.13140/RG.2.1.5101.8967

Golinkoff, R., Hirsh-Pasek, K., Bailey, L., & Wenger, N. (1992). Young children and adults use lexical principles to learn new nouns. *Developmental Psychology, 28*(1), 99-108. doi:10.1037//0012-1649.28.1.99

Guest, G., MacQueen, K. M., & Namey, E. E. (2012). *Applied thematic analysis.* SAGE.

Hart, B., & Risley, T. R. (1995). *Meaningful difference in everyday experiences of young American children.* Brookes Publishing Co.

Hartman, L. (2020). *Thesis: Incidental exposure*. [Scholar works, Rochester Institute of Technology]. Rochester Institute of Technology Repository.

Hauser, P. C., O'Hearn, A., McKee, M., Steider, A., & Thew, D. (2010). Deaf epistemology: Deafhood and deafness. *American Annals of the Deaf, 154*(5), 486-492.

Heibeck, T. H., & Markman, E. M. (1987). Word learning in children: An examination of fast mapping. *Child Development, 58*(4), 1021-1034.

Herman, R., Kyle, F., & Roy, P. (2019). Literacy and phonological skills in oral deaf children and hearing children with a history of dyslexia. *Reading Research Quarterly, 54*(4), 553-575.

Hermans, M., & Spencer, P. E. (2015). *The Oxford handbook of deaf studies in language.* Oxford University Press.

Hindley, P. (2003). Promoting social and emotional development in deaf children: linking theory and practice. In C. Gallaway, & A. Young (Eds.), *Deafness and Education in the UK: Research Perspectives* (pp. 136-152). Whurr Publishers.

Hopper, M. J. (2011). *Positioned as bystander: Deaf students' experiences and perceptions of informal learning phenomena.* Margaret Warner Graduate School of Education and Human Development.

Jozwiak, G. (2019). *Government 'failing deaf children' as grades fall behind hearing classmates.* Children & Young People Now. https://www.cypnow.co.uk/News/article/ government-failing-deaf-children-as-grades-fall-behind-hearing-classmates

Leffel, K., & Suskind, D. (2013). Parent-directed approaches to enrich the early language environments of children living in poverty. *Seminars in Speech and Language, 34*(4), 267-278.

Luckner, J. L., & Muir, S. (2002). Suggestions for helping students who are deaf succeed in general education settings. *Communication Disorders Quarterly, 24*(1), 23-30.

Luckner, J. L., Slike, S. B., & Johnson, H. (2012). Helping students who are deaf or hard of hearing succeed. *Teaching Exceptional Children, 44*(4), 58-67.

Lund, E., & Douglas, W. (2016). Teaching vocabulary to preschool children with hearing loss. *Exceptional Children, 83*(1), 26-41.

Mackey, A., & Gass, S. M. (2015). *Second language research: Methodology and design.* Routledge.

Marschark, M., & Knoors, H. (2012). Educating deaf children: Language, cognition, and learning. *Deafness & Education International, 14*(3), 136-160.

Mathews, E. (2017). *Language, power, and resistance: Mainstreaming deaf education.* Gallaudet University Press.

McCambridge, J., Witton, J., & Elbourne, D. (2014). Systematic review of the hawthorne effect: New concepts are needed to study research participation effects. *Journal of Clinical Epidemiology, 67*(3), 267-277.

McLachlan, H., & Elks, L. (2012). *Language builders: Advice and activities to encourage children's communication skills.* Elklan.

Meek, D. R. (2020). Dinner table syndrome: A phenomenological study of deaf individuals' experiences with inaccessible communication. *The Qualitative Report, 6*(15), 1676-1694.

National Statistics. (2021). *Schools, pupils and their characteristics*. Gov.uk. https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-pupils-and-their-characteristics

Nederhof, A. (1985). Methods of coping with social desirability bias: A review. *European Journal of Social Psychology, 15*(1), 263-280.

Noffke, S. E. (2013). Revisiting the professional, personal, and political dimensions of action research. In S. Noffke, & B. Somekh (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of educational action research* (pp. 6-23). SAGE Publication.

Oticon. (2020). *Why children's hearing is important*. Oticon. https://www.oticon.co.uk /hearing-aid-users/hearing-loss/children-with-hearing-loss/why-childrens-hearing-is-important

Pittman, A. (2011). Age-related benefits of digital noise reduction for short-term word learning in children with hearing loss. *Journal of Speech and Language and Hearing Research, 54*(1), 1448-1463.

Qi, S., & Mitchell, R. E. (2012). Large-scale academic achievement testing of deaf and hard-of-hearing students: Past present, and future. *Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education, 17*(1), 1-18.

Raeve, L. D. (2015). Classroom adaptations for effective learning by deaf students. In Knoors, & Marschark (Eds.), *Educating deaf learners: Creating a global evidence base* (pp. 547-572). Oxford University Press.

Rahman, S. (2016). The advantages and disadvantages of using qualitative and quantitative approaches and methods in language "Testing and Assessment" Research: A literature review. *Journal of Education and Learning,* 6(1), 102-112.

Reimer, C. K. (2019). *The effect of retrieval practice on vocabulary learning for children who are deaf or hard of hearing.* Washington University.

Rogers, A. (2014). *The base of the iceberg: Informal learning and its impact on formal and non-formal learning.* Barbara Budrich Publishers.

Saldana, J. (2011). *Fundamentals of qualitative research.* Oxford University Press.

Saldana, J. (2015). *Thinking qualitatively: Methods of mind.* SAGE.

Salmons, J. (2016). *Doing Qualitative research online.* SAGE.

Salter, J. M., Swanwick, R., & Pearson, S. E. (2017). Collaborative working practices in inclusive mainstream deaf education settings: Teaching assistant perspectives. *Deafness & Education International, 19*(1), 40-49.

Selwyn, N., & Robson, K. (1998). Using e-mail as a research tool. *Social Research Update, 21*(Summer), 1-5.

Shenuka, S., & Douglas, W. (2016). Contextualising the role of the gatekeeper in social science research. *South African Journal of Bioethics and Law,* 9(1), 42-46.

Shirin, D., & Christina, R. (2021). Vocabulary acquisition and literacy in deaf and hard-of-hearing learners. In S. Easterbrooks, & H. M. Dostal (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of deaf studies in literacy* (pp. 95-111). Oxford University Press.

Smith, C. (2010). Research with children, young people and families. In G. Brotherton, H. Davies, & G. McGillivray (Eds.), *Working with Children, Young People and Families* (pp. 149-163). SAGE.

Snape, D., & Spencer, L. (2014). The foundations of qualitative research. In J. Ritchie, J. Lewis, C. McNaughton Nicholls, & R. Ormston (Eds.), *Qualitative research practice: A guide for social science students and researchers* (pp. 1-26). SAGE.

References continued

Stelmachowicz, P., Pittman, A., Hoover, B., & Lewis, D. (2004). Novel-word learning in children with normal hearing and hearing loss. *Ear & Hearing*, 25(1), 47-56.

Stith, J., & Drasgow, E. (2005). Including children with cochlear implants in general education elementary classrooms. *TEACHING Exceptional Children Plus, 2*(1), 1-13.

The National Youth Agency. (2004). *Ethical conduct in youth work: A statement of values and principles from the national youth agency.* NYA. https://www.nya. org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Ethical_conduct_in_Youth-Work.pdf

Trussell, J., & Easterbrooks, S. (2013). The effect of enhanced storybook interaction on signing deaf children's vocabulary. *Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education, 19*(3), 319-332.

Van Maanen, J. (1979). Reclaiming qualitative methods for organizational research: A preface. *Administrative Science Quarterly, 24*(4), 520-526.

Watson, L., & Parsons, J. (1998). Supporting deaf pupils in mainstream settings. In S. Gregory, P. Knight, W. McCracken, S. Powers, & L. Watson (Eds.), *Issues In DEAF EDUCATION* (pp. 135-142). David Fulton Publishers.

Wauters, L., Van Bon, W., & Tellings, A. (2006). Reading comprehension of Dutch deaf children. *Reading and Writing, 19*(1), 49-76.

Wellington, J. (2015). *Educational research: Contemporary issues and practical approaches.* Bloomsbury.

WHO. (2020). *Coronavirus*. World Health Organisation. https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus#tab=tab_1

Wrigley, T. (2016). Opening up pedagogies: Making a space for children. *Forum, 58*(3), 331-338.

Issue #003
WINTER 2022/23

An exploration of adult adoptee experiences of adoption through implementation of a storytelling approach

Abstract:

As an adult adoptee it was often found that my voice, thoughts and experiences were clouded by others; be it concerns for my adoptive family, or frustration at a perceived lack of support from a 'post-adoption support team' designed, in part, to meet my service needs. It felt necessary owing to this experience to conduct a research project which allowed adoptees this 'voice', and as such aim to uncover what adoptees themselves perceived to be the most pertinent aspects of their experience.
In order to achieve this, a systematic approach to a literature review was undertaken which revealed most prominently the degree to which current knowledge in this field is dominated by 'paradigm-driven' literature which has the disadvantage of speaking 'for' the adoptee by constructing narratives built to fulfil a researcher's own theory or lens. Therefore, it felt necessary to conduct a research project through which the underlying methodology allowed an open exploration into the subjective sense-making exercises as presented by a sample of seven adoptees. Through this, a chosen method of storytelling was implemented, which revealed a depth of information not otherwise identifiable through current literature.
In particular, findings revealed aspects such as: relation to adoptive families, significance of partnerships, perceptions in parenthood, access to health and medical information and elements of career. As raised through the accounts of the adoptees, a significant array of information became available which has the potential for grounding future research into this area, with significant implications for future policy and practice should this be explored further.

Introduction

Practice and policy in the field of adoption, despite many fluctuations in priority interests, has long been focused foremost on children and families; with recent movements towards centring provision around meeting the best interests of the child (DfE, 2016). Whilst important and necessary, the debates informing these decisions arguably exclude a key narrative from what is consequently painted as the portrait of adoption: those of the adult adoptee. As eloquently and succinctly expressed by one adoptee in an interview for the 'Red Table Talk': 'unfortunately we rarely hear from adopted people themselves… because we often think about adoption as babies, and I'm an adult… the reality is, is that we grow up' (Red Table Talk, 2019). This perspective has key implications not only for the adult adoptee themselves, but also amongst the broader socio-political landscape and provision of post-adoption support services geared in response to this (Kalb & Tucker, 2019). Recent research in particular has begun to explore a growing interest in adoptee experiences of microaggressions (Baden, 2016; Garber & Grotevant, 2015); further indicating that there is a large social gap in understanding about what it means for an adopted person to be adopted, particularly when approaching and in adulthood.

Author

Victoria Myers

BA (Hons) Health & Social Care

Social perceptions of adoption, informed by its fluctuating need within society, have developed significantly in recent decades; most particularly from one which was once shrouded in concerns of illegitimacy, secrecy and shame, towards a practice which encourages openness and continued contact with birth family where possible (Pepper, 2018). Alongside popular television programmes such as 'Long Lost Family' depicting the positive outcomes of reunion, and technological advancements which have opened a portal through which adoptees are now readily able to trace their roots and heritage, the provisions by which adoptees are now able to connect with their adoptions has shifted dramatically; however, as uncovered, there remains a particular misconception surrounding what it means for an adopted person to be adopted; and without understandings of this perspective, practice can only remain restricted by such conceptions.

As an adult adoptee, there is much anecdotal evidence to suggest that the above is true, in particular, experiences of feeling misheard, misunderstood or misrepresented in both social and practice settings. It therefore felt necessary to conduct an openly explorative research project into the experiences and perspectives of a sample of adult adoptees; with a particular interest in whether these experiences highlight any significant gaps in understanding than what is currently available, and as such open the potential to influence future practice.

Aim and Objectives

This research project aims to explore adult adoptee experiences of their adoption through utilisation of a storytelling method of enquiry. It is intended that this research will fulfil a significant gap in current academic literature by enabling adoptees an open platform in which they may freely consider their experiences of adoption, without questioning, constraint, probing or direction from the researcher.

In order to achieve this, the research will:

1. Utilise a storytelling method for sessions of approximately thirty minutes to allow a sample of adult adoptees an opportunity to reflect on their experiences of adoption
2. Utilise these data to obtain an in-depth exploration into what aspects of their adoption adoptees perceive to be most relevant to their experience of adoption
3. Identify and highlight any similarities, differences and the emergence of any common themes across the accounts of the adoptees
4. Consider the extent to which adult adoptees' own accounts of their adoption are similar to, or differ from, what is presently available in current academic literature
5. Utilise the subsequent research data and findings to help inform future academic research into this area, with potential implications for local and national post-adoption support practice

Literature Review

A systematic approach to the literature review was undertaken in order to ensure the broadest range of relevant literature could be acquired for the purposes of this section. Foremost, it was found that all but one of the identified pieces of literature were written directly from the perspective of the adoptee themselves, suggesting that predominant methods employed have the disadvantage of speaking 'for' the adoptee, despite findings to suggest that ownership of one's voice was an integral part of an adoptee's positive sense of self and identity (Patel, 2007). Despite this, a number of co-occurring themes did emerge most particularly through chosen topics of exploration, which will be considered further. Nonetheless, it is clear from the attained literature that there is a distinct lack of research available, namely through methods employed, that offer a holistic view into adoptee experience, without being 'pigeon-holed', to effect, by the researcher's own paradigm.

A literature review offers an in-depth exploration into existing knowledge on a research topic, and can be used to inform and justify the chosen research topic and design. In particular, the literature review seeks to place the research 'in context'; that is, illuminating the degree to which the proposed research may embed itself within an existing array of academic literature, thus indicating where the research intends to fit amongst the literature already available, or to fulfil a gap in knowledge which may become apparent through the chosen search process (Denscombe, 2017, p. 370; Aveyard, 2019). By employing a search strategy to this process, academic literature can be systematically found and narrowed to only that which is most relevant to the chosen field of interest, similarly ensuring replicability and reliability of the findings, and avoiding the presentation of misleading or inaccurate conclusions as may emerge through an unstructured and undefined methodological approach to the literature search process (Aveyard, 2019). For this search in particular, it was found that the term 'adoption' alone was unreliable, prompting results which related to the 'adoption of' a certain element or principle, as opposed to the practice which this search was focused on.

What emerged most significantly through the systematic search was a distinct lack of literature originating from England, with only four of the fourteen identified papers presenting findings from this region, two of which were written by the same author (Hughes, 2015; McKail, Hodge, Daiches & Misca, 2017; Patel, 2005; Patel, 2007). Whilst universal aspects of the adoption experience may be considered owing to the broad array of literature obtained globally, and the themes and commonalities which emerged amongst these, it is necessary to recognise the country-specific context in which these pieces were conducted, and the specific topics of exploration they sought to consider, which may not be culturally relevant to the experience of UK-based adoptees. For example, Cherot's (2009) study focused its explorations on the experiences of Vietnamese adoptees in light of Operation Babylift, and two of the fourteen pieces explored how the passing of the Adoption Act 1955 affected adoptees in New Zealand (Blake & Coombes, 2016; Haenga-Collins & Gibbs, 2015). Whilst these experiences may not as such resonate directly with adoptees subject to adoption practice in the UK, similarities in other aspects, such as an expectation for adoptees to be 'grateful' for their adoption, emerged in findings from both Australia (Fronek & Briggs, 2018) and Finland (Lindblad & Signell, 2008), indicating the importance of not excluding literature from other countries despite societal and cultural differences, and arguably introducing a conceptual universality to some aspects of the adoption experience which may be explored further.

Themes, chosen according to the regularity of their appearance, which emerged most prominently included: issues surrounding identity, self, belonging and 'voice'; race or cultural heritage; relationships in reunion and social factors, including some discussion on policy, legislation and links to practice. In particular, it was found that by organising the array of literature in this manner, a central discourse surrounding notions of identity, not belonging and taking ownership of one's voice and history underpinned much of the literature obtained, which shall as such form the basis of this review.

A sense of 'not belonging' was related to a number of adoptees' experiences of 'self' and 'identity', which was found to be compounded by wider factors such as social influence and stigma (Blake & Coombes, 2016) and a particular sensation amongst transracial or intercountry adoptees of being 'categorised' (Patel, 2007) or 'otherised' by dominant discourses (Blake & Coombes, 2016). These sensations often led to feelings of exclusion, such as 'not fully belonging to [a particular] heritage' (Patel, 2007) in the case of transracial adoptees, or feelings of illegitimacy or of a 'no man's land' between birth and adoptive families (Blake & Coombes, 2016). This was also considered by Haenga-Collins and Gibbs (2015), whose study found that their population of Māori adoptees often struggled with a 'dual identity', or discord between their familial and cultural identities. For Koskinen and Böök (2019), this conflict may drive adoptees to search for a reunion, particularly during significant periods of their life, in seeking a sense of 'belonging and relatedness within family'; or for McKail, Hodge, Daiches and Misca (2017) the continually unfolding 'quest [for] self-discovery' which dominated the accounts of their sample of international adoptees.

As uncovered in the exploration of this theme, much of the literature obtained sought understanding through the accounts of transracial or internationally adopted adoptees, which is not fully representative of a full and varied adoptee population. This suggests that while there is a prominence of research in this field, findings relating to the experience of adult adoptees may be skewed by this context, and that more comparable research with a broader array of adoptees from various histories and backgrounds is required in order to balance, corroborate or contradict current literature findings which present, through the discussed themes, a very particular portrait of adoption experience, which is largely dominated by the conflicts of identity felt by these samples of adoptees particularly.

Nonetheless, continued explorations into racial identity in particular further raised the importance of 'voice' in an adoptees experience, highlighted by a number of researchers as integral to reclaiming aspects of their own identity. Ung, Harris O'Connor and Phillidge (2012) propose the need to move away from 'pathologizing' the adoptee experience of racial identity, and instead recognise it as an ecological construct, thus allowing adoptees the opportunity to define for themselves what race means to them in their experience. This is corroborated by Cherot (2009), whose findings showed that 'stories of self' enabled adoptees an opportunity to develop life histories vital to them reclaiming 'their history'; and through research with Vietnamese adoptees observed the ability to weave together diverse individual accounts to form a greater group narrative, with the extended opportunity to create a cohesive understanding of a group experience or history. For Fronek and Briggs (2018), this would allow navigation of the discovered 'ambiguous self' as shown to be felt by adoptees, by providing them a sense of safety and 'belonging' shared only by the presence of other adoptees.

Patel's (2005; 2007) research, whilst similarly exploring the concept through transracial adoptee experiences, explicitly denotes that whilst crucial to informing a 'positive sense of self' (Patel, 2007), adoptees are rarely provided the opportunity to 'speak for themselves about their own lives' (Patel, 2005). In a means similar to the 'pathologizing' of experience as explored by Ung, Harris O'Connor and Phillidge (2012); she considers that adoptees are only ever heard when 'the subject of psychological testing, talked about by parents or teachers… [or] when they have had particularly negative experiences' (Patel, 2007, p. 33). Whilst suggesting that current literature is 'methodologically problematic', lacking 'meaningful focus' on the life experiences of the adoptees themselves, and providing an 'oral life (hi)story' approach as one such means to combat this (Patel, 2005), she seemingly fails to apply this to her own research. For example, her later study (Patel, 2007) applies a sociological lens of symbolic interactionism to explore the constant negotiation and (re)negotiation of the categorisation adoptees place on aspects of their 'racial self', as such leading to various difficulties some experienced as 'tied to… areas associated with the transracial aspects of their adoption' (Patel, 2007). She consequently concludes that it is only through application of a social constructionist approach that research is able to 'move away from restrictive essentialist ideas about 'race'' in order to offer deeper insights into 'how adoptees negotiate and construct their sense of self' (Patel, 2007, p. 42). This conclusion however highlights the limitations of all but one of the identified pieces of literature (Largen, 2012), through which researchers impose 'lenses' of understanding in order to explore subjective experience, thus 'categorising' adoptee experience, rather than viewing it in its entirety, which will be explored further.

A final prominent theme amongst the literature explored considered elements of reunion and post-reunion relationships as a significant factor in an adoptee's journey. In particular, Hughes (2015) considers a dominant discourse surrounding reunion as a pathway to healing through the metatheoretical 'primal wound' model in which adoptees experience 'traumatic separation' and as such, a desire to return to their origins. This would also be considered by Rosengarten's (2010) conclusion that there exists a lifelong impact for adopted individuals as 'coloured' by their adoption, most particularly through their thoughts and perceptions of 'self' and others. Hughes (2015) criticises this model however as painting the ''birth mother' as a figure of wholeness', through which 'reconciliation' may substantiate a subjective sense of 'completeness, belonging, and truth', in the process dismissing the 'discursively neglected biological father', which she concluded over-essentialises the role of the biological mother in both debate and experience. Conversely, Koskinen and

Böök (2019), whilst agreeing that reunion offers a significant sensation of identity and belonging, suggest that this urge often activates in adolescence, or when establishing a family of their own, in order to seek 'missing information' in order to understand genetic ties and similarities in appearance, or upon reflections of their own 'baby hood phases compared to their own children's development' (p. 231). This offers a sense of coherence for adoptees in reunion, and relieving of questions or feelings of 'guilt over their relinquishment' (Koskinen & Böök, 2019). In their exploration of post-reunion sibling relationships however, O'Neill, Loughran and McAuley (2018) consider the fragility and ambiguity in navigating these relationships, therefore highlighting some potential difficulty in reunion as was not made as explicit within the other literature.

Despite the emergence of themes as identified, what stood out most prominently in the exploration of these literature findings was the difficulty in placing one piece of literature amongst the context of the rest (Largen, 2012). Instead of being 'imposed upon' by a researcher's own paradigm or lens, Largen (2012) authors her own account and interpretation of being adopted; in this context, by applying a Christian theological understanding to her experience. Whilst at first it was considered that this literature may be too full of bias to present any truly relevant findings, upon further reflection it became clear that this was the only piece which offered an authentic 'voice', despite several research findings as discussed which suggest that this aspect of identity is integral to the adoptee experience. Similarly, despite being presented in a journal of theology, as opposed to the social sciences journals as appeared in the other literature, this piece still came up as relevant through the applied systematic search strategy. As such, it embodies a more humanities-focused approach in its exploration; perhaps signifying a systemic gap in current literature which seeks to employ a more dialogic understanding, as opposed to a strictly social 'scientific' one.

The implications for this in current literature are that even amongst qualitatively-driven methods, such as the case studies and in-depth interviewing observed, participants are still portrayed as 'subject' to some degree of interpretation by the researcher; and are as such confined by these interpretations, as opposed to being allowed the full freedom of placing 'voice' to their own experience as Largen (2012) achieves through her account. This becomes problematic when, for example, researchers seek to explore difficulties such as those related to racial or cultural identity, as identified, however explore the accounts 'in relation to' or 'through the lens' of a particular theory, event or perspective, consequently constructing the accounts to fit their own paradigms, and as such presenting this population of adoptees as a homogenous group with similar experiences. Conversely, if a research method were to be employed whereby the adoptee was able to speak broadly about their experience, in effect constructing their own identity through narrative, in a means similar to Largen (2012), this could theoretically raise results in which the adoptee does not even acknowledge race to be a significant factor in how they construe their experience of adoption. Such an approach is therefore integral to balancing current findings, which whilst raising important arguments, may be considered to be misrepresentative of a general adoptee population, with large social, political and practice-based implications based upon this.

Consequently, it becomes necessary to employ an approach in which adoptees are able to speak broadly about their experience first, through which interpretations and understanding may then be derived, as opposed to vice versa as dominates current literature. Within a social sciences project, a dialogic and interpretive framework may allow exploration into a method which emphasises working 'with' and not 'on' a research participant, to further allow the 'voice', as found integral, to be heard, presented and understood in as authentic a means possible.

Ethical Issues

Prior to this research being conducted, ethical approval was sought and granted in line with Bishop Grosseteste University's ethical procedures and policies process (BGU, 2019). The submitted 'Research Ethics Clearance Form' and associated documents were also submitted to the Lincolnshire County Council adoption team and approved prior to their collaboration. As the research sought to explore a potentially sensitive topic, protection of participants was deemed paramount; as such, a detailed 'Research Information Sheet' was sent through the Council to all potential participants, highlighting in particular the extent of their participation, benefits and risks of taking part, and their rights throughout the research process, including ability to withdraw and how their anonymity and privacy would be protected. Time was spent prior to each interview session going through the information sheet, and ensuring participants understood and were happy to continue with their participation. Participants were subsequently invited to ask any further questions, before both researcher and participant signed an informed consent form, of which the participant received a copy. In the case of Participant G, Chad*, where a telephone session was required owing to the restrictive social measures placed by the government in light of the Covid-19 pandemic, and no access to email at that time, informed verbal consent was sought.

These measures were incorporated into the research process in order to 'minimise harm' and protect the interests and safety of the researcher, involved institutions, and participants (Denscombe, 2017). The sensitive nature of the research topic was further exasperated by the chosen research method, which intrinsically requires that a 'trust relationship' is developed, which can leave both researcher and storyteller particularly vulnerable (Bell, 2005). It was decided that in the interests of being transparent (Denscombe, 2017), the researcher's position as an adoptee would be shared, with no further details prior to the commencement of the data gathering, in order to assure participants of the researcher's genuine curiosity and interest in their own experience and story. Whilst this may have had the benefit of allowing the participant some comfort in what could be deemed an emotionally challenging process, the nature of the method and relationship required in order to effectively implement it may conversely have led to participants sharing more details about their circumstances and feelings than they would have otherwise (Bell, 2005). Maintaining integrity was central to this research project (Denscombe, 2017), and so in order to negate this, participants were sent a copy of their interview transcript prior to its inclusion for analysis in order to confirm that they were happy with the presentation of their stories, and invited to make alterations if and where they saw necessary. Narrative methods allow for this degree of flexibility, and can be inherently revealing about 'who we are' (Clandinin, 2013, p. 199), therefore it was important to the integrity of the research and protection of the interests of the participants that they were invited to be as involved as possible throughout the research process.

This had the additional benefit of navigating issues surrounding confidentiality, anonymity and privacy (Denscombe, 2017). Whilst measures such as removing all identifying information from audio recordings and transcripts were implemented, and all files kept in an encrypted folder on a password-protected laptop for issues of data protection, participants' ability to review transcripts prior to their inclusion allowed them to confirm or alter any details that they deemed to be too revealing, which might otherwise have been missed by the researcher. At this stage, participants were also invited to choose their own false name, protecting their privacy and also helping them feel further included in the research process.

Methodology and Methods

As a qualitative research project and owing to the conclusions derived from the literature review, the chosen design has been largely informed by a constructionist ontology and interpretivist epistemology (Sarantakos, 2013). Approaches to data collection in particular have therefore been formulated through an inductive, rather than deductive approach; seeking to derive understanding from the research findings, as opposed to testing against a given hypothesis or theory (Bryman, 2016). This was especially important to this research project in its aims to explore the authentic voices and perceptions of a sample of adult adoptees. As this research did not seek to place objective standards onto subjective experiences, it was important to recognise the degree to which these paradigms informed the chosen research design and processes (Clough & Nutbrown, 2012). In particular, these underpinnings highlight that the nature of reality is in a constant state of flux, and as such cannot be tested objectively, as would be considered by methods informed by a positivist standard (Walliman, 2006). It therefore becomes necessary to seek an approach in which subjective meanings, such as those in which individuals or groups are asked to make sense of their reality, or consider their response to social problems, is explored in order to contest the positivist standpoint (Creswell, 2013). An interpretivist approach conversely allows understanding of the meanings people ascribe to their own perceptions, thoughts and behaviour (Punch, 2014), and is therefore vastly more suited to the underlying aims and objectives of this study in its exploration of adoptee experiences.

The underlying philosophical approaches are as such most appropriate to the task of exploring the subjective sense-making exercises that are the foci of this research project. This is because they challenge the existing 'paradigm-driven' approach (Punch, 2014) which was found to be ubiquitous in the literature review. Namely, in the literature review it was found that all but one of the pieces of academic literature identified appeared to have been constructed to 'fit' a researcher's paradigm. Even amongst this qualitatively driven literature, prior research failed to present findings led by the adoptee, but instead aimed to correlate findings in line with existing paradigms; in effect, falling foul of the limits of a positivist methodology.

Owing to these core philosophies, a qualitative research methodology was chosen in order to fulfil the openly explorative aims and objectives of this proposal. Unlike quantitative approaches, a qualitative methodology does not seek to measure or quantify phenomena, and instead acknowledges the complexities of life, understanding and human interaction; seeking to incorporate these into the research process, rather than hide or disregard them (Flick, 2014). In particular, it was deemed integral to the approach of presenting adoptee accounts that participants, people, were not reduced to 'single variables', and were instead more realistically situated within the context of everyday life and interaction (Flick, 2014, p. 15). Where quantitative approaches may be considered to impose 'pre-determined formats on the social world', a qualitative methodology allows for the flexibility of structure necessary to exploring the subjective perspectives and experiences of people, and is therefore often considered more suitable to research within the social sciences (Bryman, 2016, p. 397; Creswell, 2013).

Qualitative approaches are especially useful for research which seeks to 'empower individuals to share their stories [and] hear their voices', most particularly by de-emphasising the power relationship which often occurs between researcher and participant (Creswell, 2013, p. 48). Whilst this closeness in proximity may be argued to influence or bias findings, a qualitative approach may instead have the effect of producing more authentic findings (James, 2008), as participants are invited to collaborate throughout the research process, most particularly in data analysis and interpretation phases (Creswell, 2013). As this research seeks to explore individual's stories, it is integral to the authenticity of the project that accounts are presented as transparently as possible. This transparency is only achievable through continued collaboration between researcher and participants; for example, by inviting participants to review session transcripts prior to their inclusion for analysis, as already discussed. Such an approach would not be so readily implemented if undertaken from a quantitative perspective, which instead emphasises objectivity and distance (Bryman, 2016).

A qualitative approach also accounts for the degree of reflexivity in the researcher's position necessary for understanding the motivations behind the research, and interpretations and conclusions derived from it (Creswell, 2013). As an adult adoptee, it may be argued that objectivity cannot be achieved in the implementation of the research design and data analysis. Therefore, it becomes crucial to implement an approach that incorporates the subjectivity of both researcher and participants into the research process (Flick, 2014). Whilst quantitative studies may mark such subjective findings as less credible due to potential biases (Bryman, 2016; Denscombe, 2017), from a qualitative paradigm, reflexive accounts on the part of the researcher may serve to enhance findings, whereby inclusion of the researcher's own reflections, as informed by the influence of personal experiences and values, 'become data in their own right' (Flick, 2014, p. 17; Denscombe, 2017). The latter is crucial in this project, which aims to explore adult adoptee experiences, and will be undertaken from the perspective of an adult adoptee; it is necessary to incorporate a methodology that

allows for this degree of transparency, thus establishing to the reader a base upon which they are able to inform their own judgements of the validity of the research (Denscombe, 2017). It is a presumption of this research that all experiences and interpretations are valid in their own right, and qualitative analysis allows the potential for 'more than one explanation being valid' and is therefore vastly more suitable for the intentions of this research (Denscombe, 2017, p. 331).
Qualitative research is often criticised as being difficult to replicate, and therefore findings are considered to be non-reliable, owing to its focus upon subjectivity and interpretation (Bryman, 2016). However, it has been suggested above that filtering data in accordance with traditional quantitative paradigms is not suitable for this research project. This is because one of the explicit aims of the research is to not simply reduce participant accounts with pre-existing variables (Flick, 2014). Whilst rendering the task of thematising and organising findings into a repeatable framework problematic as per a quantitative paradigm, this research valued instead 'trustworthiness' of the data as desirable in terms of the validity and reliability of results (Bryman, 2016, p. 384; Denscombe, 2017, p. 326).

Owing to the above, it is apparent that a methodology and method that does not speak 'for' the adoptee, as observed through the predominant, 'paradigm-driven' (Punch, 2014) literature, is required in order to fulfil a hitherto insufficiently explored gap in academic knowledge on this subject (barring, as mentioned, Largen (2012)). As such, a pragmatic approach was undertaken whereby research questions were first identified and appropriate methods then chosen for answering them, as opposed to the development of questions and methods suited to the identification of any pre-existing paradigm (Punch, 2014).

Method:

In consideration of this, a narrative line of inquiry was deemed most appropriate for fulfilling the intended aims and objectives of this research project. Whilst at first it was considered that a focus group method may be suitable for obtaining the qualitative data required, it was decided that due to the 'public nature of the process' some individuals may be deterred from delving as deeply into their experiences, thus limiting findings (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006, p. 315). Narrative research, by contrast, offers a unique opportunity to gather rich, multi-faceted and in-depth understandings of people's lives and 'how they experience their inner self' (Larsson & Sjöblom, 2010, p. 275; Bell, 2005), as such leading to a high quality of findings, with complex, diverse and intense results (Sarantakos, 2013) appropriate to navigating some of the methodological concerns identified.

Pratt and Fiese (2004) identify that there are two distinct ways 'of knowing or thinking in human experience': the paradigmatic mode, and the narrative mode (p. 8). The narrative mode in particular opposes paradigmatic thinking which encompasses the categorisation of objects or events in order to form ideas about their properties; instead allowing individual experiences to be treated as 'unique historical events [and therefore] categorically distinct' (Pratt & Fiese, 2004, pp. 8-9). This approach offers an opportunity to 'escape' the paradigmatic prison of previous research as discussed. Narrative research, whilst sharing common assumptions, is considered to have 'splintered' into a number of different approaches, therefore it is intrinsic that the researcher be familiar with 'what kind of narrative analysis' they will be conducting prior to the research taking place (Bryman, 2016, p. 593).

Due to the limitations of the study at this level of research, it was considered to be most practical to engage with the data by way of thematic analysis, focusing primarily on the content of the adoptee accounts (Sarantakos, 2013, p. 380). Whilst analysis could include structural, interactional and performative aspects, due to the volume of data obtained through this method it was not deemed feasible to incorporate these into the research findings at this stage of research. Thematic, or content, analysis is an appropriate means of gathering a broad understanding of a phenomenon, as shared by a group of individuals, as opposed to a holistic understanding of a single person within narrative research (Larsson & Sjöblom, 2010). As this project aims to explore multiple perspectives, content analysis was consequently considered most appropriate at this level of research.

The narrative approach in particular offers a creative opportunity to access the 'identity constructions' of individuals and is therefore often recognised as an opportunity to 'give voice' to underrepresented groups, as was identified to be the case for adult adoptees through the conducted literature review (Larsson & Sjöblom, 2010). Similarly, participants are empowered through this process, as they are required to reflect on personal experiences which may validate their position and enhance learning for both parties (McCall et al., 2019). Unlike objective methods, storytelling, as used synonymously here with the 'narrative approach', proactively encourages engagement 'with, not on, people' and is therefore inherently subjective; identifying in particular that 'stories do not reveal one, single discoverable truth because truth is a matter of… perspective' (McCall et al., 2019). As such, it is similarly important to recognise that in implementing this approach, it is not the researcher's position to 'give voice' to the populations that the research seeks to represent or empower, instead simply to 'hear voices' that are recorded and interpreted (Larsson & Sjöblom, 2010). This was found to be problematic in the pre-existing, paradigm-driven literature as identified, and as such felt important to recognise and highlight in the implementation of this approach and subsequent analysis and presentation of the findings.

In conducting this approach, participants were at first informed of the purpose and intent of the research, and it was revealed the researcher's position as an adoptee. This was intended to create comfort and familiarity; integral to building the rapport necessary to conducting this method effectively (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). Following this, participants were asked to recount the 'story' of their adoption, detailing any experiences they felt important or necessary. This prompting question was chosen to be both broad enough to allow participants flexibility in their response, and also 'sufficiently focused' so that the group may reveal shared experiences about the chosen topic (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). It was found that some participants took more readily to this approach, as circumstantially, 'a longer turn at talk' than is usually customary in ordinary conversation is felt more comfortably by some than others (Kohler-Riessman & Quinney, 2005). This became evident during participant sessions where some felt more at ease during follow-up questions than when given space to speak freely on their experience. In particular, Participant G: Chad*, whose session had to be completed over the phone owing to the Covid-19 crisis and imposed government lockdown, expressed tentativeness in his narration perhaps owing to the lack of signalling cues such as body language and active listening techniques that would ordinarily be employed in-person. These experiences as such reveal the 'systemic violation of… usual role expectations surrounding an 'interview'', or 'everyday narrative' in this approach alone (Flick, 2014), and may indicate a perhaps more beneficial mixed-methods approach of storytelling and unstructured interviewing, to combat these seemingly 'unnatural' experiences of social interaction and understanding than would otherwise have been observed (Punch, 2014).

The approach was however successful in allowing the opportunity to gather 'a large amount of thick descriptions of storied data' as was authentic to the perceptions of the adoptees interviewed, therefore fulfilling the intended aims and objectives of this research project (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). Whilst this degree of data may then be considered difficult and time-consuming 'to make sense of' (Larsson & Sjöblom, 2010, p. 278), the chosen method of thematic analysis and application of the 'Matrix Table' made navigating the information gathered more manageable at this early stage of research. Sessions of approximately thirty minutes each were audio-recorded and transcribed, and so in order to aid in the initial transcription process it was chosen to utilise the software 'Otter' (Otter, 2020) which was free and accessible at the time of use. Whilst at first it was considered that such software may prevent an important opportunity to get 'close to the data' (Denscombe, 2017, p. 307), it was quickly discovered that utilisation of such was vastly useful in transcribing the majority of the information. The software was however unable to detect nuances of expression, or misinterpreted certain words or phrases due to an individual's accent, therefore it was necessary to revisit and edit the transcripts alongside the original audio-recordings, as such not dismissing any familiarity with the individual accounts, and saving large amounts of time in such a time-bound project simultaneously.

Predominantly, the storytelling approach offered an opportunity to negate some of the methodological concerns as identified in previous literature, thus obtaining data and information authentic to the perceptions of the adoptees, as intended through the aims and objectives of this research, as such fulfilling a distinct gap in current data and knowledge available. This approach also renders 'interpretation' as central to the uncovering of such knowledge, both of the participants, whose narratives cannot reveal the past 'as it actually was'; only the truth of their experience as is 'neither open to proof nor self-evident' (Larsson & Sjöblom, 2010, p. 277), and of the researcher, particularly in analysis stages, whose position cannot be 'neutral and objective'; as with 'no direct access to the personal experiences that they are studying' must simply report on what people relate (Larsson & Sjöblom, 2010, p. 276). This research as such does not rely on 'truth' as an objective reality to be seen as valid, instead meaningful through the rich and varied understandings of lived and personal experience; thus this approach is wholly suitable to the methodological underpinnings identified.

Sample:

As previously highlighted, this research was undertaken in close collaboration with the local County Council, in order to ensure primarily the protection and safety of all involved participants owing to the sensitive nature of the research topic at this level of study. Owing to this, there were some potential limitations to the sampling method chosen, however these were necessary to negating the barriers of undergraduate study. Whilst this may potentially bias some of the findings obtained, as will be discussed further, it is hoped that this will provide a foundational opportunity for further exploration and study. Similarly, whilst the sample size and type may be limited, there remained significant variation across the accounts obtained to warrant further exploration into this field, namely through the research method employed and authenticity of what remain true adoptee voices and accounts despite the identifiable sampling limitations, most particularly the demographic of adoptees available in the area of which this research was undertaken, and the already expressed interest and action taken into their adoption through contact made with the Council, as will be further explored.

Due to the limitations of the study, and access to potential participants necessary through the County Council, sampling took a non-probably approach, and was one of convenience with the potential for snowball (Bryman, 2016). This was largely chosen to navigate the confines of a time and resource constrained research project, which whilst argued to affect the generalisability of the findings (Punch, 2014), ensured an in-depth and relevant exploration into what may be considered an otherwise hard-to-access participant group, necessary to fulfilling the intentions and methodological process of this research as detailed (Flick, 2015).

A minimum quota of three participants was set and a maximum of eight, as it was hoped and intended at the beginning of this research project for a variety of comparable findings at this initial stage of research and was felt to be achievable within the constraints of the research at that time. Participants were contacted through the County Council and provided the 'Research Information Sheet' and 'Consent Form' along with contact details and had to have expressed their interest in joining the project by a set date, due to time limitations attached to this study. No other limitations were imposed at this stage of research, only that the participant had to be aged eighteen or above in order to consent as an 'adult', and it is at this age that adoptees may contact the Council for further information about their birth records. This was again chosen in the hopes of obtaining a broad array of comparable findings.

A total of seven adoptees had made contact by the chosen deadline. However, a difficulty in employing the chosen method was that the exponential degree of information gathered, as observed in the full transcripts, proved challenging to narrow for purposes of analysis in later stages of the research. In particular, there were fears of missing significant elements of a participant's story and experience, thus restricting the depth of narrative that could be included than that which was initially hoped for as per the aims

and objectives. This suggests that a smaller sample size ought to be employed in future similar projects to allow for greater depth of narrative. However, given the scope of this enquiry, seven participants provided suitable data to analyse in a substantive manner.

Findings and Critical Discussion

There were a number of emergent themes which appeared through implementation of the chosen storytelling method that did not appear in the identified literature. This would suggest that the chosen storytelling approach was successful in its intentions of uncovering new information through authentic voices and accounts, through which there exists a large opportunity for further learning and exploration, and the potential for practice-based implications within the field of adoption. Whilst some similarities to the literature did emerge by way of the themes of 'Identity' and 'Reunion and post-reunion relationships', the majority of the findings revealed new areas of understanding, which shall as such form the basis of the exploration to follow.

Correlation with current literature:

Identity, self, belonging and voice:

In a means similar to that as emerged in the literature review, aspects of 'identity' arose as a common thread throughout the adoptee accounts and other drawn out themes, suggesting that this is an intrinsic aspect of the adoptee experience. However, what was uncovered amongst the research findings was the degree to which some adoptees expressed this more explicitly than others, for example, Georgina recounts at the beginning of her narrative:

> Georgina: "I think for a lot of adopted people, it's a story, it's a detective story, but it's also a story about identity"

With such an explicit recognition of her adoption as to how she self-identifies, aspects of this theme emerged frequently throughout her narrative, which whilst shared in part by the majority of other participants, was not related so explicitly.

Chad, whilst sharing this in relation to his adoption, acknowledges that this reflection only came following the receipt of further information from social services:

> Chad: The information "kind of explains why I am the way I am"; "I was not raised like that… to what's in my file"; "all of a sudden it's like, wow, I'm actually reading about myself… I am… a male version of my mum"

Unlike Georgina, Chad's perception of himself contradicts literature which would suggest that there exists a 'life-long' impact of adoption which follows adoptees from childhood into adulthood (Rosengarten, 2010). Similarly, it exposes a lack of literature identifying how the receipt of previously withheld birth records may impact adoptees, particularly aspects of their sense of self and identity, and consequent processing of this, therefore necessitating a current gap in practice to facilitate this.

Contrastingly, for other adoptees, when reflecting upon how they related to their adoptions in pre-adulthood and growing up phases, there was a general consensus of the adoptions not having had a marked effect. Peter, for example, exposed it as a "non-event", as was felt similarly by Louise, Robert, and James. This would contradict literature findings to suggest that all adoptees experience a sense of 'exclusion' and 'loss' as follows them throughout childhood (Blake & Coombes, 2016).

Nonetheless, despite James' explicit consideration otherwise:

> James: "It was never about me… I didn't need anything I didn't want anything… it was more just telling her that everything was okay"

He identifies to what Hughes (2015) would relate to as the dominating 'birth mother' narrative, whereby through this association he seeks 'healing' and 'reconciliation' to an overriding sense of exclusion and loss (Blake & Coombes, 2016). This may signify a conflicting sense of self or identity than would have otherwise been identified, thus leading to his subsequent search for information and potential reunion. Whilst not as explicit as accounts such as Georgina and Chad, it may be inferred from the reading that there is a common sense of complexity relating to 'self' as may appear in later stages, or portrayed 'themes', of adulthood, as will be explored.

Reunion and post-reunion relationships

As also raised from the literature, aspects and contemplations of 'reunion' also emerged across the accounts, however these findings may be swayed by the potential sample bias as discussed. Nonetheless, there emerged various accounts and motivations for reunion that were not covered by the literature examined, for example, Louise and James' initial desire to meet with birth siblings ahead of birth parents, most specifically the birth mother, contradicted findings by Hughes (2015) to suggest the 'intrinsic' desire adoptees feel to reconnect with this figure in particular as a pathway to 'healing'. Simultaneously, some adoptees did present this desire; as Georgina, Chad and Ranulph expressed in their accounts, suggesting most particularly that thoughts, feelings and motivations cannot be presented homogenously, as was uncovered in the literature review also.

For Ranulph, despite a desire to reunite with his birth mother, he detailed his experience of this not being returned:

> Ranulph: "she's said… I don't want any contact… I can't cope with it… Which… I can understand… I don't really sort of agree with it and I do find it a bit difficult if I'm honest"

Comparably, James has had an alternate, positive experience, in which he expresses:

> James: "I've fully embraced this new life… I talk to her every other day, I call her mum… I can't explain how natural and normal… there's no effort"

Whilst Georgina was able to reunite with her birth sister, she expresses more concern over the relationship than was experienced by James:

> Georgina: "I feel I don't want to overwhelm her, because… this is all a complete shock to her"; "I don't want things to… go wrong between us. I want us to be, you know, friends"

The results of these findings highlight further that as well as varying motivations, there can also be very different and unprecedented outcomes in reunion, of which not all are easy or positive as is often assumed or presented in modern media such as 'Long Lost Family', as was often discussed with the adoptees, and highlighted in Robert's account, furthering the indication of experiences not being presented as homogenous, and the importance of listening to and learning from individual accounts.

Adoptee-raised themes:

Adoptive families:

As related in adulthood, one emerging theme which did not appear in any of the literature identified was that of the significance of the relationship to adoptive families, which was raised to varying degrees by all of the adoptees interviewed. This had particular implications for aspects such as accessing further information or pursuing relationships with birth families. In particular, a number of adoptees felt an obligation to their adoptive families which prevented them pursuing further information:

> Peter: "With hindsight after the death of my mother I did realise that one of the reasons I hadn't pursued, getting my information was out of respect for my adoptive parents"

Ranulph relates this as "not an uncommon scenario", stating that he had not "wanted to do anything that would upset [them]". Similarly, Georgina expressed that to talk to her mother about the adoption "seemed like a betrayal", as such not following her desire to pursue further information "until after she died". Following his adoptive parents aging and illness, James also acknowledged that prior, it had not been something that had "[played] on my mind".

The participants' accounts indicate the importance of these bonds and relationships that adoptees feel, and the impact that this can have on their experiences both relating to their adoption and decisions moving forward. This is exacerbated by accounts in which, contrastingly, adoptees have felt able to include their adoptive parents and families in their journeys:

> Louise: "My parents have been really good… really open… even now they're… if you want to find them we'll help you and, they don't want to be directly involved but they will, help me as much as they can"
>
> Robert: "It has prompted more conversations… But they've always known… I've always kept them in the loop… you know, not to feel that, 'oh well he's off to find his mum and dad'"
>
> Chad: "My dad… said yes, if that's what you want to do, we'll stand by you and help you"

This perhaps further signifies the importance of openness in such relationships and subsequent implications for encouragement of such in practice, in order for adoptees to feel a positive sense of self and security in their decision-making. This was especially marked by James in how he discusses his feelings in reunion:

> James: "I was riddled with guilt, because I couldn't tell [adoptive mother], because she wouldn't have understood… I don't feel like I've been disloyal or anything because I just see it as… it's two chapters in my life. It's first part of my life was with my mum and dad. And now I've got my birth mother and all my family"

Partnerships:

In a similar regard, partnerships also played a key role in adoptees' experience of their adoption, often prompting further information, and in these accounts especially, oftentimes prior to the adoptee being interested in the information search themselves:

> Peter: "My partner… she was very much… do you want to… find out who your real parents, and my answer was no, because there was genuinely no interest from my side"

Similar sentiments were also expressed by James and Robert, whose partners showed a 'curiosity' to their backgrounds that was not at that time a "priority" for them. Georgina's partner also expressed an interest in her adoption, to which she reveals, "he wrote a sort of, project about it".

This intrigue felt by others and not the adoptee could suggest several things: foremost, that there is an experience of adoption that extends beyond only the adoptee that must also be acknowledged. There may perhaps also exist a social misconception, as carried in this case by the adoptees' partners, that adoption is a mystery to be 'solved' which is not always felt by the adoptees themselves. These perceptual misconceptions are and have been exasperated by the literature as explored (McKail et al., 2017). In a means similar to what was considered through 'Adoptive families', acknowledgment of these key relationships, as indicated to be significant by the adoptees interviewed, is inherently revealing and integral to the adoptees' experience of their adoption.

Parenthood:

For several adoptees, the process of becoming parents themselves prompted further interest in their adoption and potential for seeking out further information.

In particular, there was an interest as expressed by Koskinen and Böök (2019) in which adoptees felt a sense of needing to explore genetic ties as brought on in parenthood through consideration of their own 'baby-hood phases'. For Louise, this emerged when having no "baby photos to compare [her own children] to", and subsequently "wondering, who I look like".

This was felt also by James, who after seeing a photograph of his birth mother for the first time, expressed:

> James: "I was… fixated, it was really just because I looked like her and I hadn't looked like anybody… in my life"

Whilst this corroborates literature, in navigating an 'ambiguous self' and seeking genetic ties to sense 'belonging' (Fronek & Briggs, 2018), very little was available to observe this within the context of parenthood, apart from Koskinen & Böök (2019), as identified earlier. The adoptees furthered these contemplations beyond aspects of self, as did not emerge in the literature:

> Robert: "Now I'm a parent, you see things different… you realise… what an undertaking that can be"
>
> Louise: "Having my own children, being in that situation… I look at my own children and I think how can you… do stuff like that" [referencing her early experiences of neglect]

This would suggest further than what was offered in the literature that the significance of becoming a parent offers an opportunity for adoptees to reflect on their adoptions through an alternative perspective, and the potential implications for this.

For two of the adoptees, their children expressed an open curiosity and interest in their parents' adoptions:

> Ranulph: "I've noticed that... they're as equally curious as I am... I do feel as though I want to provide them with some information, so that they know a little bit more about, you know where their dad, came from"

Beyond curiosity, Robert's son took an active role in starting the information search:

> Robert: "My eldest was very keen on finding more information so he went down the DNA route. He was keen to find out that side of it, so he started populating a family tree"

This indicates the importance of the ties of adoption not only being significant for the adoptee, but for their children too, whose roots and access to information are as equally affected, as requires further exploration into the potential impact of such.

Health and Medical Information:

The significance of having access to medical information was raised by most of the adoptees, as a number related the common occurrence of being asked to provide medical information only to be able to reply, "I don't know because I'm adopted" (Ranulph, Robert, Louise). As acknowledged further by Robert, in a "medical scenario, it's not very helpful for them", which was a particular concern, and for Louise especially, that "it causes my own... anxiety".

These issues become exasperated in parenthood, where for Louise, concern over health anxiety prompted her initial search for further information, and in finding information, for Robert:

> Robert: "[It was] flagged up that [biological father] had coronary thrombosis... So, went to... my GP, make sure there was nothing that... I was unaware of and could have been a hidden problem... more importantly, that it wasn't handed down to my lads"

For adoptees, it is evident that this lack of important health information has a significant impact on not only the welfare of the adoptee, but for their children also, on what could be vitally important knowledge with potentially significant implications for their lives. Thus, it might be suggested from these findings that there needs to be changes in policy and practice which allow some degree of flexibility in keeping adoptees informed on what could be vitally important health information than is currently observed.

As introduced, the significance of this factor prompted many adoptees to reflect on their adoptive status, or begin their search for further information on their heritage or potential reunion with birth relatives:

> Robert: "as you get through your decades... you see life differently... you realise... you are getting older, and... that actually your biological parents are also getting older. So if you're going to do something then there's a point where you're going to say okay time, I need to look"

> Ranulph: "I would want to know if... birth parents had suffered with something that I may suffer with... But then again I suppose there might be an advantage in not knowing, personal thing"

For others, similar to Louise and her expressed anxieties, specific health experiences prompted the need for further information or reunion:

> Georgina: "I had a melanoma. And I thought, if I'm going to snuff it, I'm going to find this out. I need to know this before I go"

> James: "When I went to Afghanistan... I had a bit of a thing about well if something happened... if I didn't come back or something went wrong... that was the first time in my whole life I thought about it"

The significance of James' statement and account, and recurrence as felt by a number of the adoptees, highlights the exceptional importance of this aspect in an adoptee's life, particularly as they approach and move through adulthood, which as such warrants further research and exploration.

Career:

In a means similar to requiring access to medical information, some adoptees highlighted the necessity of having certain documents or details available for their respective careers:

> James: "I was looking to join the Royal Navy. I had to go and get these documents of joining up if you had an alias or... different name"

> Ranulph: "Vetting is... quite a big issue... in the police... just making sure that you are who you are... on forms... I've had to put the truth that I'm adopted and... haven't actually got a proper, or a genuine birth certificate"

Whilst for James, this process triggered no further thoughts of his adoption at this time, for Ranulph there was some acknowledged uncertainty:

> Ranulph: "if [managers] read the forms properly they will have seen I'd been adopted. Which I was never quite... 100% comfortable with"

He relates this somewhat to a sensation of "secrecy" as would be related to the common aspect of 'Identity', and relates this directly to aspects of his job role:

> Ranulph: "as a detective you... want to know about people and... finding out facts... but I know nothing about myself"

By contrast to Georgina, who relays elements of her adoption as intrinsic to her sense of identity; there is an experience she describes as "peculiar to adopted people" whereby she felt able to fulfil a number of job roles:

> Georgina: "I've done all sorts of different jobs... I can be whoever I want to be"

This contrast, as such, suggests a direct correlation between aspects of adulthood, such as career choices, and an adoptee's inherent or continuing sense of self or identity. Most particularly, it necessitates further research, as raised by the adoptees as significant to their experience, which has been previously neglected in literature, policy and practice.

Practice:

Whilst raised to some degree in the literature findings, and perhaps again owing to the lack of comparable UK-based literature in this field as observed through the literature review, a majority of adoptees highlighted the significance of the amount of information as held by social services as a clearly distinguishing feature of their experience. For example, many talked about the "amount" of information held, and "detail" of what was recovered (Peter, Louise, Ranulph).

For Louise in particular, what was uncovered was "completely different to what I was aware of", therefore signifying the importance of adoptees having such detailed information available should they come to require it; as probed especially by previous themes explored.

By contrast, some adoptees had less positive experiences trying to access their information:

> James: "I [tried] to get organisation to help us... I couldn't get anybody... unless they accessed records, and nobody could find the records"

> Chad: "there's roadblocks in finding stuff out, unless you want to pay a lot of money"

In navigating some of these difficulties, Robert began his own search through DNA and genealogy websites:

> Robert: "I... tried to track a few things myself, found it very complicated... In the meantime, my eldest was very keen on finding more information so he went down the DNA route... started populating a family tree"

Whilst it is an acknowledged limitation of this research that due to sampling restrictions all adoptees included in these findings had begun the process of seeking out information, as explored, which may as such sway findings to the recurrence of this theme within their accounts; what the adoptees raised in the importance of ease of access to and level of information held by services has clear implications for practice. It may be considered that, owing to the confusion and frustration felt by some in accessing their birth records and further information, and "relief" at the amount of information held by others, that this is a significant area of practice which needs refining for the wellbeing of adoptees who wish to obtain these details of their lives, without "paying money" as expressed by Chad, or the time and emotional consumption of populating information through websites, as considered by Robert. Whilst there are practical implications for generations passed, this knowledge has the potential for impacting future adoptees, on what may be considered a particularly significant aspect of their experience.

Missing literature themes:

Whilst it is clear from the findings and critical discussion above, one significantly differentiating factor of these as comparable to the literature is the lack of findings owing to the experiences of transracial or internationally adopted adoptees, as was found to dominate the literature review. Predominantly, this was due to sampling restrictions at this level of academic study, which was conducted in an area whereby the latest found consensus statistics hold the demography of the area as predominantly white-British (LRO, 2011). Simultaneously, on a more national scale, it is only in 2014 that amendments to previous legislation had removed requirements that persuaded agencies to give 'due consideration' to a child's racial or cultural heritage in placing them with an adoptive family, in order to reduce the numbers of ethnic minority children held in care (Sargent, 2015). Therefore, such literature findings may not be as statistically relevant to UK-based adoptees at this time. These presented findings, as such, may offer a broader view of adoptee experience than is presently observable through current literature.

Conclusion

It is clear from the depth and array of information obtained through implementation of this storytelling method the significance of such an approach to be considered amongst current literature. Whilst some of the research findings corroborated what was held by the initial literature findings, a vast majority introduced new ideas and concepts, or contradicted some of the existing findings. Most particularly, the data revealed the depth at which adoptees should not be presented as a homogenous group with similar experiences; instead, particular attention should be paid to the value of individual accounts, and the strides in learning which can occur from such, which in this instance has identifiably distinct implications for future practice.

As raised throughout this project, the need for 'voice' amongst a population of adult adoptees is necessary for informing such practice, as was similarly raised by the adoptees themselves. One such method for achieving this in a research context appears through implementation of a storytelling method, which as revealed, offers a level of detail and insight which would not have otherwise been obtained. Whilst restricted for purposes of analysis at this level of study, the approach offered an important introductory awareness into adoptee-raised areas such as parenthood, relation to adoptive families, and impact on career, which may probe distinct areas for further research and study necessary to fulfilling gaps in current literature.

Similarly, as underlined by explorations in 'Practice', there is a distinct need amongst the research for more UK-based findings relative to adoptees from this region, in order for research and consequent practice to be further representative to the experiences of adoptees in this area.

Recommendations

As identified, owing to the large amount of information and findings uncovered through this approach, not all that may be considered perceptually relevant could be discussed at this current stage of research: a significant limitation of conducting such a project at an undergraduate level, whilst also signifying the need for further research in this field, perhaps through means of alternate narrative analysis with further scope for exploration into the findings. Nonetheless, the findings obtained offered a suitable and detailed introduction to the potential in this field of research. Similarly, the conducted storytelling method offered an alternate means of gathering information, suitable to exploring the authentic perceptions of adoptees as was a primary aim of this

research project and its methodological underpinnings. It may be considered that there is potential for further exploration into the discussed themes as was raised by the adoptees, perhaps through implementation of a similar method, in order to substantiate the findings raised further.

A considerable limitation to this research, as already discussed, was the potential for sample bias, owing again to the restrictions at this level of undergraduate study. The adoptees included in this project had an already expressed interest in their adoptions as made evident through their contact with the local County Council for further information, which could perhaps sway findings, and may as such not be fully representative to the experiences of all adoptees; though as discussed, this research placed validity on the authenticity of the individual accounts of the adoptees, though it is acknowledged that this may be an aspect worth consideration for future research.

As an introductory study, this research did not place any restrictions on 'age' in adulthood beyond the participant being aged over eighteen. Upon reflection this may have influenced findings owing to the social and practice contexts in which the adoptees' experiences had occurred. Whilst at first considered a limitation to this study, it was later acknowledged that generational aspects and reflections, which may indeed warrant further study, have the benefit of informing not only current post-adoption support practice, but also that of present and future generations of young adoptees.

In relation to the research findings, it is evident through the adoptee-raised themes the significance of further research into aspects such as increased flexibility for access to medical information, or an ease of process in the tracing of birth records and information, which was highlighted numerously by the adoptees as significant through their accounts. Consequently, this research has the potential to form the basis for further academic research which may potentially ground change or reviews of current policy which presently influence practice, thus highlighting the significance of such research taking place. ■

If you would like further information about the research, including access to full interview transcripts, please contact me at victoria.lpmyers@outlook.com.

References

Aveyard, H. (2019). *Doing a Literature Review in Health and Social Care: a practical guide*. London: Open University Press.

Baden, A. L. (2016). *"Do You Know Your Real Parents?" and Other Adoption Microaggressions. Adoption Quarterly, 19*(1), 1-25. doi:10.1080/10926755.2015.1026012

Bell, J. (2005). *Doing your research project: A guide for first-time researchers in education, health and social science*. Berkshire: Open University Press.

BERA. (2018). *Ethical guidelines for educational research*. Retrieved from https://www.bera.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/BERA-Ethical-Guidelines-for-Educational-Research_4thEdn_2018.pdf?noredirect=1

Bishop Grosseteste University (BGU). (2017). *Research Ethics Policy*. Retrieved from https://www.bishopg.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Research-Ethics-Policy-2017.pdf

Bishop Grosseteste University. (BGU). (2019). *Research Ethics Policy.* Retrieved from https://www.bishopg.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Research-Ethics-Policy-2019-1.pdf

Blake, D., & Coombes, L. (2016). No-man's Land: Adoption Storied Through the Aotearoa/ New Zealand Adoption Act 1955. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology, 26*(1), 47-60.

Bryman, A. (2016). *Social research methods*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Cherot, N. (2009). Storytelling and Ethnographic Intersections: Vietnamese Adoptions and Rescue Narratives. *Qualitative Inquiry, 15*(1), 113-148.

City of Lincoln Council. (n.d.). *The Lincoln City Profile- 2016/2017: A collection of themed factsheets*. Retrieved from http://www.lincoln.gov.uk/lincolncityprofile/

Clandinin, D. J. (2013). *Engaging in narrative inquiry.* Oxon: Routledge.

Clandinin, D. J., & Connelly, F.M. (2000). *Narrative inquiry: experience and story in qualitative research*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Clough, P., & Nutbrown, C. (2012). *A student's guide to methodology*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

DiCicco-Bloom, B., & Crabtree, B. F. (2006). The qualitative research interview. *Medical Education*, *40*(4), 314–321.

Dickson-Swift, V., James, E. L., Kippen, S., & Liamputtong, P. (2009). Researching sensitive topics: qualitative research as emotion work. *Qualitative Research,* 9(1), 61-79.

Department for Education. (2016). *Adoption: A vision for change*. Retrieved from https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/512826/Adoption_Policy_Paper_30_March_2016.pdf

Denscombe, M. (2010). *Ground rules for social research: Guidelines for good practice*. Berkshire: Open University Press.

Denscombe, M. (2012). *Research proposals: a practical guide*. Berkshire: Open University Press.

Denscombe, M. (2017). *The good research guide: For small-scale social research projects*. London: Open University Press.

Flick, U. (2014). *An introduction to qualitative research*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Flick, U. (2015). *Introducing research methodology*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Fronek, P., & Briggs, L. (2018). A Qualitative Exploration of the Adult Intercounty Adoptee Experience in Australia. *Adoption Quarterly, 21*(3), 161-181.

Garber, K. J., & Grotevant, H. D. (2015). *"YOU Were Adopted?!": Microaggressions Toward Adolescent Adopted Individuals in Same-Race Families. The Counseling Psychologist, 43*(3), 435-462. doi:10.1177/0011000014566471

Gov.uk. (n.d.). *Adoption records*. Retrieved October 21, 2019, from https://www.gov.uk/adoption-records

Green, J., & Thorogood, N. (2014). *Qualitative methods for health research*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Haenga-Collins, M., & Gibbs, A. (2015). 'Walking between worlds': the experiences of New Zealand Māori cross-cultural adoptees. *Adoption & Fostering, 39*(1), 62-75.

Hughes, E. (2015). "There's No Such Thing as a Whole Story": The Psychosocial Implications of Adopted Women's Experiences of Finding Their Biological Fathers in Adulthood. *Studies in Gender and Sexuality, 16*(3), 151-169.

James, N. (2008). Authenticity. In L. M. Given (Ed.), *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods*. doi: https://dx-doi-org.bishopg.idm.oclc.org/10.4135/9781412963909.n26

Kalb, S., & Tucker, A. (2019). *How adoptees are shaping post-adoption support services*. Retrieved from https://www.umass.edu/ruddchair/sites/default/files/rudd.kalb.pdf

Kohler-Riessman, C., & Quinney, L. (2005). Narrative in social work: a critical review. *Qualitative Social Work*, *4*(4), 391–412.

Koskinen, M. G., & Böök, M.J. (2019). Searching for Self: Adult International Adoptees' Narratives of Their Search for and Reunion With Their Birth Families. *Adoption Quarterly, 22*(3), 219-246.

Largen, K. J. (2012). I love to tell the story: reshaping the narrative of adoption. *Dialog: A Journal of Theology, 51*(4), 284-293.

Larsson, S., & Sjöblom, Y. (2010). Perspectives on narrative methods in social work research. *International Journal of Social Welfare, 19*(3), 272–280.

Lincolnshire County Council. (2018). *Code of Conduct*. Retrieved from http://uk.sitestat.com/lincolnshire/lincolnshire/s?Home.jobs.manuals.employment-manual.managing-performance-and-conduct.code-of-conduct.58706.articleDownload.113051&ns_type=pdf&ns_url=https://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk//Download/113051

Lincolnshire Research Observatory (LRO). (2011). *Country of Birth, Ethnicity and Nationality of Lincolnshire Residents*. Retrieved from http://www.research-lincs.org.uk/UI/Documents/country-of-birth-ethnicity-and-nationality-of-lincolnshire-residents-census2011-112013.pdf

Lindblad, F., & Signell, S. (2008). Degrading attitudes related to foreign appearance: Interviews with Swedish female adoptees from Asia. *Adoption & Fostering, 32*(3), 46-59.

Lofland, J., & Lofland, J. (1995). *Analyzing social settings: A guide to qualitative observation and analysis*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing.

LSAB. (2017). *Lincolnshire Safeguarding Adults Policy, Procedure and Process 2017*. Retrieved from http://uk.sitestat.com/lincolnshire/lincolnshire/s?Home.lsab.policy-and-procedures.131094.articleDownload.109509&ns_type=pdf&ns_url=https://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk//Download/109509

McCall, B., Shallcross, L., Wilson, M., Fuller, C., & Hayward, A. (2019). Storytelling as a research tool and intervention around public health perceptions and behaviour: a protocol for a systematic narrative review. *BMJ Open*, *9*(12), 1-12.

McKail, R., Hodge, S., Daiches, A., & Misca, G. (2017). Life Stories of International Romanian Adoptees: A Narrative Study. *Adoption Quarterly, 20*(4), 309-328.

Oliver, P. (2003). *The student's guide to research ethics*. Berkshire: Open University Press.

O'Neill, D., Loughran, H., & McAuley, C. (2018). Diversity, Ambiguity and Fragility: The Experiences of Post-Adoption Sibling Relationships. *British Journal of Social Work, 48*(5), 1220-1238.

Otter. (2020). *Otter.ai*. Retrieved 02 July, 2020, from https://otter.ai/

Patel, T. (2005). The Usefulness of Oral Life (Hi)story to Understand and Empower: The Case of Trans-Racial Adoption. *Qualitative Social Work, 4*(3), 327-345.

Patel, T. (2007). Theorising the Racial Identity Development of Transracial Adoptees: A Symbolic Interactionist Perspective. *Adoption*

References continued

& Fostering, *31*(2), 32–43. doi: 10.1177/030857590703100207

Pepper, J. (2018). *Adoption: The journey to where we are now*. Retrieved from http://www.civitas.org.uk/content/files/adoptionthejourneytowherewearenow.pdf

Pratt, M. W., & Fiese, B. H. (2004). *Family stories and the life course: across time and generations*. East Sussex: Routledge.

Punch, K. F. (2014). *Introduction to social research: quantitative and qualitative approaches*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Red Table Talk. (2019, October 21). S2:E15 - Raised By White Parents: A Black Adoptee Speaks [Facebook]. Retrieved December 04, 2019, from https://www.facebook.com/redtabletalk/videos/570658477003653/

Rosengarten, S. (2010). Myra's Story: A Life Narrative as It Unfolds in the Treatment and Journey of an Adopted Woman. *Psychoanalytic Inquiry, 30*(1), 54-62.

Sarantakos, S. (2013). *Social research*. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.

Sargent, S. (2015). Transracial adoption in England: a critical race and systems theory analysis. *International Journal of Law in Context, 11*(4), 412–425. doi: 10.1017/S1744552315000270

Thomas, D. R., & Hodges, I. D. (2010). *Designing and managing your research project: core knowledge for social and health researchers*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Ung, T., Harris O'Conner, S., & Phillidge, R. (2012). The development of racial identity in transracially adopted people: an ecological approach. *Adoption & Fostering, 36*(3-4), 73-84.

Walliman, N. (2006). *Social research methods*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd

Issue #003
WINTER 2022/23

Staff perspectives on safeguarding training in further education: Putting theory into practice

Abstract:

Statutory guidance states safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. This study explores how the designated safeguarding team at a further education college (Setting A) may support and develop knowledge and skills amongst all staff to encourage a culture of listening to learners by ensuring their approach is child centred. A survey was undertaken with ten members of staff at Setting A that provided rich data of a positive culture of staff engagement ensuring safeguarding facilitates institutional empathy. Analysis of the survey data and a literature review has informed recommendations suggesting safeguarding training could identify staff with less than six years' experience working with children to level up their vigilance and interpersonal skills. Training may also identify staff with considerable work and training experience to receive training that upskills and challenges their experiences. Training that offers an understanding of adverse childhood experiences may offer insights into the behaviours of learners experiencing abuse or neglect and shape the use of interpersonal skills for improved disclosure. A further understanding of contextual safeguarding may allow experienced staff opportunities to analyse critical information and engage with multiagency stakeholders more effectively to address the impact of abuse, oppression, and exploitation.

Introduction

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) defines 54 articles that provide a common international framework for national governments, non-governmental organisations and all professionals associated with the care and education of children to work within. The United Kingdom ratified 52 articles into legislation through the Children's Act (2004) which ensures that all people and organisations working with children uphold their responsibility to help safeguard children and promote their welfare. Policy (DfE, 2018) to facilitate this responsibility, states:

> Training is necessary for people who work with children or in services affecting the safety and welfare of children. Training should cover how to identify and respond early to the needs of all vulnerable children. (DfE, 2018, p.6)

The importance of this requirement places responsibility on all further education professionals to receive safeguarding training so that their duty meets the needs of learners. However, there is very little research to offer advice on how best to train staff on the appropriate skills with which to help learners disclose abuse, neglect, or exploitation.

A small-scale research project was undertaken using a qualitative survey to seek an understanding of how safeguarding training may offer better outcomes for learners through increased vigilance and improved communication for effective disclosure. The survey provided rich data and evidence determining how case histories may be used to offer training that levels up inexperienced staff through improved vigilance and interpersonal skills to encourage learner disclosure.

Author

Alexandra Clarke

BA (Hons) Health & Social Care

Case histories may also be used to upskill more experienced staff by reflecting on appropriate use of documentation and contextual information so that barriers to learning may be identified and strategies devised to mitigate the impact on transition to higher education, employment and engaged citizenship.

Literature Review

This small-scale research project seeks to understand how safeguarding training may offer better outcomes when meeting the needs of learners in a further education setting. This literature review focuses on three key themes to achieve this aim: vigilance, communication, and disclosure.

Vigilance

Maslow (1943) established that children and young people cannot learn effectively if their basic needs for physiological safety, love, and belonging are not met due to harm, abuse or exploitation. Department for Education (2018a, p.10) states that children need adults to notice when things are troubling them, thus requiring vigilance, staff collaboration and accurate documentation. Yet the causes and symptoms of harm or abuse are varied (Department for Education, 2018b). Allnock and Miller (2013, p.50) state that recognition of harm or abuse is complex in nature as signs can be missed, hidden, misinterpreted, or dismissed as attention-seeking by troubled learners. Results of a survey by Allnock and Miller (2013, p.7) revealed young people felt their outcomes would have improved had the professional asked more questions. The authors go on to suggest that an understanding of the cause of inappropriate behaviours used as a coping strategy for abuse, and examination of wider familial issues may ensure better outcomes for young people. Baginsky et al., (2015, p.355-356) posit that existing data from parents, carers, previous educational establishments, and early help/social workers may facilitate early identification of learners requiring vigilance for disclosure of harm or exploitation. Systematic analysis of academic attendance records may identify patterns or trends that give rise to concern and could allow staff to ask the learner relevant questions to avoid issues becoming overlooked or embedded (DfE, 2022, p.6). Further vigilance by observing subtle, escalating, or changed behaviours could also be documented along with attendance analysis, learner disclosures, and peer or witness reports so that these insights may be pieced together (DfE, 2022, p.3).

Unicef (2019, p.3) state that some learners are at risk of harm from the actions of others or themselves as they are unable to protect or take care of themselves and that they may be more vulnerable to risk if they have special educational needs, disability, or a physical/mental health diagnosis. The Munro Report (1996) uses a jigsaw analogy to argue that all professionals involved in safeguarding have pieces of context information with which to share and build complex judgements (Baginsky et al., 2015, p.355). Contextual Safeguarding (CS) (Firmin, 2017. p.1) recognises that young people can form non-familial relationships in their neighbourhoods, schools and online within which they may experience violence and abuse. Firmin (2020, p.59) discusses the work of Bourdieu and his theory of social field, social capital, habitus, and symbolic violence which offer useful insights into local activity such as child sexual exploitation (CSE), youth violence, domestic abuse, bullying, gang association, and radicalisation. It is through the lens of local knowledge, social justice, and early help which utilises a signs of safety toolkit that professionals may cooperate to offer a multiagency approach to contextual safeguarding (Turnell and Edwards, 1999). This greater vigilance and collaborative approach may ensure learners feel they have been noticed and are secure in the knowledge that their needs are being met holistically and proactively (DfE, 2018a, p.10).

A comprehension of the complex issues affecting learners requiring safeguarding interventions is as essential as determining the impact of trauma from a single life event or anticipating need in a holistic and contextual approach. Learners may be subject to adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) that can impact on their quality of life, physical and mental health outcomes, and life expectancy. Felitti (1998, p.245) connects adverse childhood experiences such as neglect or witnessing domestic violence with symptoms such as depression or eating disorders which may result in poor health outcomes such as heart disease leading to early mortality. Furthermore, Felitti (2002, p.251) suggests the greater the number of ACEs a learner may encounter could also determine the increased potential impact on unhealthy coping strategies and inappropriate risk-taking such as self-harm or substance abuse. An understanding of ACEs and familial safeguarding practice may offer insights on how learner behaviours can be influenced by fear, shame, blame, and stigma. These experiences may, therefore, inform learner reluctance to communicate or create positive relationships with staff. Bronfenbrenner (1994) posits in his ecological systems theory that it is the quality of environment and context which have the most significant influence on learner development.

Reder and Duncan (2004, p.109) argue that training is a cornerstone to improving safeguarding practice. Training empowers staff to carry out their professional responsibility towards safeguarding with appropriate knowledge, skills, and confidence (Lexton et al., 2005, p.195). Training that positively engages all staff in an understanding of the complexity of familial and contextual safeguarding may convey institutional empathy which allows for greater collaborative management and better outcomes for learners requiring safeguarding intervention (Szilassy et al, 2017, p.1728). Training may allow staff at Setting A to discuss relevant queries, raise concerns and debate issues by drawing on the expertise of their trainer and experiences of colleagues (Tarr et al., 2013, p.109). This opportunity for greater reflective practice may avoid a tokenistic approach to safeguarding (Schon, 1987). Case histories that detail the complexity of social field, social capital, habitus, and symbolic violence may create an awareness of how positive community interventions and youthwork may facilitate child protection, social justice, and crime prevention as advocated by Firmin (2020, p.49). These histories may also reflect ACE (Felitti et al., 1999) cases that are specifically relevant to the demographics of Setting A in the hope of ensuring knowledgeable and informed reflexive practice that allows for improved interactions with learners for better safeguarding outcomes (Schon, 1987).

Communication

In research young people state they need to be protected from all forms of abuse, neglect, and exploitation. They go on to state they need the stability of a trusting relationship to navigate them through necessary safeguarding investigation and intervention (DfE, 2018a, p.10). Trust between learners and staff allows for advocacy and negotiation of new relationships with multi-agency stakeholders such as early help/social workers, police, and health care teams for engaged cooperation which may also determine better outcomes for the learner (Lexton et al, 2005, p.202). The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC, 2021) recognises barriers to disclosure such as concerns about confidentiality and lack of trust. Unconditional positive regard may convey warmth to learners and instil a sense of belonging, understanding, affection and acceptance regardless of their experience, as advocated by Rogers (2003). This skilled reassurance may nurture a trusting relationship between learner and staff that could allow for further positive communication of needs. Behaviour is a form of communication, therefore, understanding the manifestations of behaviour through training may allow for better awareness of the signs and symptoms (DfE, 2018b) that need to be identified and documented swiftly for analysis and investigation. Goleman (1996) suggests staff development of emotional intelligence is important to understand learner behaviours and to form trusting relationships with learners by offering empathy so they may feel reassured that their needs are the primary focus (NSPCC, 2021). Furthermore, Gardner (1999) suggests that interpersonal intelligence is the capacity to aid an understanding of the intentions, motivations, and desires of other people. Training may allow staff to recognise poor behaviour, attendance, and engagement as a sign of possible abuse, neglect, or exploitation rather than apathy, laziness and defiance (Ofsted, 2022). Spitzberg (2003) advocates for the development of interpersonal skills such as effective verbal and non-verbal communication and active listening which may allow staff to assess situations and to act accordingly by offering reassurance and critical information during safeguarding investigation (Allnock and Miller, 2013). Therefore, training that engenders an understanding of behaviour, communication and the complexity of ACEs and CS may also nurture empathy which can offer learners further experience of trust and necessary awareness that their best interests are being addressed (Rogers, 2003).

Role-play serves as a useful tool in safeguarding training as it allows for greater empathy, investment in nurturing skills, meaningful dialogue to be planned, vocabulary to be attuned with learners' developmental stages, and body language to be modified. Training may consider role-play using experienced actors who are trained to convey emotion to an audience and offer 'connections between feelings, thoughts, and behaviours' (Lexton et al, 2005, p.197). A trained counsellor may create scenario content, model, and advise on best practice whilst reflecting on common misconceptions, challenge responses, and acknowledge the need for new research to be integrated into training (Tarr et al., 2013). Role-play could allow new staff at Setting A an opportunity to pause and consult legislative, policy and procedural checklists during delivery. Collaboration with social workers, counsellors, and staff at Setting A could also allow for bespoke safeguarding training delivered by a facilitator offering feedback and reflection to improve communication (Schon, 1987).

Disclosure

Keeping Children Safe in Education (DfE, 2021a) details the statutory guidance on compulsory safeguarding training for anyone working in education so that disclosure is managed confidentially and in the best interests of the learner who should be kept safe from further negative experiences. Staff may facilitate disclosure by directly addressing the learner with circumstantial and/or data evidence to gain an understanding of specific behaviours through gentle coercion (Allnock and Miller, 2013). Alternatively, learners may wish to voluntarily disclose issues affecting themselves or others with a specific member of staff who should be available to the learner with information, advice, and guidance towards safeguarding practice (DfE, 2018a). To ensure the needs of the learner are met, discourse during disclosure should be explicit to avoid unnecessary repetition of emotive information. Consideration may be given to training staff on the use of developmentally appropriate vocabulary whist encouraging the learner to describe body parts using standardised terminology (Allnock and Miller, 2013). Staff at Setting A should be mindful that learners may not fully disclose because of mistrust in safeguarding procedures, concern they will not be believed, fear of unfavourable outcomes or retribution, victim shaming, and embarrassment when recalling sensitive or intimate actions (Allnock and Miller, 2013). Furthermore, young people have stated they need frequent reassurance that they are not to blame for the actions of the perpetrator and should be respected as a credible witness to their own experience (DfE, 2018a). A distressed or traumatised learner may need time to disclose and silences to allow them to: recall, process information chronologically or to consider the emotional impact of their experience through accurate reflections (NSPCC, 2021). Allnock and Miller (2013) reveal that learners may only partially disclose their experience or infer that there is an issue using ambiguous vocabulary. Partial disclosure may serve to minimise the experience of harm or abuse whilst offering control to the anxious learner. Young people have stated that when trust is no longer present, transparency appears impartial, bias is perceived if information is ignored or denied, or if the professional is unhelpful then they may retract the disclosure. DfE (2022) state retraction may allow the learner to regain further control of the safeguarding intervention which may become overwhelming and distressing (Allnock and Miller, 2013). Young people have stated a need to be 'involved in procedures and decisions, to be informed of the outcome of assessments' and to be provided with' reasoning when their views have not met with a positive response' (DfE, 2018a, p.10). Furthermore, young people have stated they need to be heard and understood, treated with respect, and afforded the expectation that they are competent to make decisions regarding their own outcomes (DfE, 2018a). National Safeguarding policy (DfE, 2021a) goes on to state that staff should listen, refer to social care, and press for reconsideration when investigation is slow or not taken seriously. Therefore, management of documentation is essential to ensure the learner experience is shared with multiagency stakeholders accurately and represented truthfully to avoid unnecessary repetition by the learner whilst acknowledging that prompts for further information may be necessary (DfE, 2021a).

Safeguarding training may offer staff at Setting A support with paraphrasing techniques to ensure disclosure of abuse or harm is communicated accurately (NSPCC, 2021). Training could also address how staff may positively encounter and nurture difficult conversations. Staff need to make the learner aware that other multiagency stakeholders will

be informed of their disclosure, and that they cannot keep secrets or promise favourable outcomes for the learner. Training that offers practice to avoid the desire to comfort the learner with promises may help to manage learner expectations and facilitate trust (DfE, 2018a). Staff at Setting A who are practised in the art of discourse that instils a feeling of being valued by offering praise for brave conversations may ensure learners negotiate their safeguarding journey with resilience and capacity for change. Furthermore, staff using vocabulary that reinforces appropriate behaviours, and promotes self-esteem, confidence, and self-worth, may reassure learners they are not a burden to staff or multiagency stakeholders (NSPCC, 2021). Ofsted (DfE 2021b) assess the effectiveness of safeguarding procedures, yet the tools to measure learner outcomes and the quality of safeguarding training is limited (Tarr et al 2013). A safeguarding training toolkit that offers upskilling of interpersonal intelligence, meaningful dialogue and fosters a greater understanding of ACEs and CS may ensure better outcomes for learners seeking safeguarding intervention. Kolb (1988) posits that this style of active engagement or experiential learning (EL) allows staff to relate with learners in a holistic manner that utilises experience, perception, cognition, and behaviour from an integrative perspective. Tarr et al (2013) state 'the value of knowledge should not be underestimated as every safeguarding event provides opportunity for lessons to be learned' (p.14). Furthermore, Hood, Gillespie and Davies (2016) posit that 'expertise consists of the skills, knowledge and practices that enable professionals to develop proficiency, and whose emergence is influenced by political, educational and organisational contexts' (p.6). Pan et al, (2018) suggest that staff who are 'less stressed, less neurotic, more agreeable and extroverted tend to be better at raising potential child abuse issues' (p.9). Therefore, by replacing stress and anxiety with confidence, interpersonal skills and empathy staff may build increasingly trustworthy relationships with learners for greater vigilance, communication and discourse, and better safeguarding outcomes. This literature review reveals a lack of research on the impact of interpersonal skills training for sensitive communication and disclosure during safeguarding investigation. However, the importance of acquiring interpersonal skills to reassure staff that they can make a difference to a learner's long-term wellbeing, mental health, and life expectancy is highlighted. This literature review also promotes vigilance, early identification, and training opportunities for better outcomes.

Method

This research project aimed to seek the perspectives of staff at Setting A on practical safeguarding, and how theory, gathered during training, may be practiced reflexively to meet the needs of learners. Setting A is a small further education college offering specialist courses. The setting is located within a large city and attracts learners from neighbouring counties. Much of the student cohort (85%) are 16-18 years of age. National safeguarding policy (DfE, 2021a) states all staff should be familiar with procedures dealing with learner disclosure of abuse, neglect, or exploitation. Staff should also offer reassurance that learner disclosure is 'taken seriously and understand the importance of challenging inappropriate behaviours' (DfE, 2021a, p.7). These requirements often necessitate staff acting reflexively to ensure these interactions are negotiated with sensitively. This research project sought to understand how staff at Setting A may learn, nurture, and model the skills necessary to provide learner reassurance during disclosure of harm.

Paradigm

The research project used a non-experimental design to collect primary data via an electronic online survey using Microsoft Teams™. The survey, in the form of a questionnaire was disseminated to 14 colleagues at Setting A to gain detailed responses and opinions: 10 responses were gathered. The survey posed 11 questions using both closed and open questions which sought to capture staff feedback on experience and insights into safeguarding training. The objective of the research project was to interpret participant feedback whilst acknowledging that each participant experiences safeguarding from their own unique perspective and will not, therefore, elicit one true answer to the questions posed in the survey. Another characteristic of this interpretivist approach is the researcher perspective, which filters responses to make a more informed summary and shape the participants' experiences and insights, to ensure a contextualised and consistent critical approach (Rossman and Rallis, 2017). However, interpretation of qualitative research relies on the experience of the researcher to avoid distortion of the participants' perspectives and responses (Bryman et al., 2021). Focus on the subjective experiences of staff also required interpretation offered by literature review for meaningful and critical analysis. The identification of themes and keywords in staff experiences, training and reflexive interactions are valuable resources offering new perspectives for better provision and outcomes at the setting. Data from the survey was, therefore, supported by thematic analysis which cannot be measured numerically (Thomas, 2013). The transformation of information gathered from applied research into knowledge as an active learning process may inform safeguarding training, actions and enhance reflexive decision making (Rossman and Rallis, 2017).

The research aimed to also determine whether some/considerable experience in professional practice offers staff confidence and reassurance when engaging with learners disclosing a safeguarding issue. The questionnaire used both open and closed questions to yield specific data (Sharp, 2012; Thomas, 2013). Clough and Nutbrown (2008) state that questionnaires allow researchers to seek a broad range of views yet are unlikely to reveal depth to these views. However, results can be useful when exploring a topic where participants' views are under researched, as is the case for this small-scale research project (Rae et al, 2017).

My role as Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead has required me to deliver staff training on safeguarding. The participants are aware of my research with Bishop Grosseteste University (BGU) and prominent statutory role in Setting A, and this positionality may have conferred influence on the responses to the survey or imparted bias which staff who have not participated may have identified as a good reason for withdrawing from the survey (Thomas, 2013). However, staff may recognise that they may influence future safeguarding training opportunities. This unique advantage strengthens reliability and validity as responses were anonymised whilst the survey offered consistency and impartiality through standardised questions. Furthermore, the delivery style of previous safeguarding training and reference to effectiveness and appropriateness at Setting A were not gathered by the questionnaire. It may be argued that this positionality confers accountability due to my visible presence. This insider knowledge may address a systematic yet bespoke approach to safeguarding training at Setting A so that learner needs may be met with improved outcomes (Chavez, 2008).

Sample

The staff at Setting A reflect a unique range of experiences and a variety of teaching, support, and administrative roles. When deciding the research method of data retrieval, consideration was afforded to conducting interviews or creating a focus group, however, reflection on the obligations of staff who had recently undertaken Ofsted assessment and embarking on a period of external marking determined the need to allow staff to submit data easily and swiftly (Opie, 2004). By inviting all 14 staff from Setting A to complete the survey, this purposive and convenient sample reflected a variety of different job roles and training experiences (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2005). All staff are legally obliged to undertake basic training as part of their professional responsibility towards safeguarding requirements (DfE, 2021b). A 71% return rate was achieved over a 2-week period, and this was deemed a good response rate from amongst a small work force and may reflect staff recognising the potential for better outcomes for learners from a more inclusive training programme. This positive response may also indicate that staff deemed the research to be a worthwhile undertaking.

Ethical Considerations

Compliance with Educational Guidelines for Ethical Research (BERA, 2018), Ethics Code of Practice (BGU, 2018; 2021), and Ethical Conduct in Youth Work (NYA, 2014) ensured ethical practice was adhered to throughout the project. Prior to any research being conducted, ethical consent was gained from BGU. A consent form was countersigned by the Centre Manager at Setting A (BGU, 2022). An information sheet was provided to potential participants prior to commencement of the survey, stating confidentiality and anonymity could not be assured if illegal or harmful behaviours came to light during completion of the survey, and advised that referral would be made to appropriate authorities. A covering letter attached to the survey clearly explained the reason for the questionnaire and advised that whilst there was no immediate participation benefit, it was hoped that insights might be made into safeguarding training by the research project. Participants were made aware that they had an opportunity for their views relating to safeguarding training to be heard and included to existing understanding on safeguarding training. Seeking feedback on negative experiences in safeguarding was deemed intrusive and upsetting due to the nature of this emotive subject. It was decided that this rich insight was unethical and avoided. Assurances of anonymity were used to encourage participation (Bryman, 2012; Olsen, 2012). Anonymity was important to ensure participants an opportunity to provide honest answers that may improve valid and reliable data for greater research integrity (Cohen et al., 2014). A risk assessment was undertaken and identified administration of the online questionnaire to be a risk. However, the risk of a data breach was minimised by downloading all data to One Drive, which is General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) compliant and deleted from all other devices. All data was documented digitally, and paper formats were not used, to minimise risk further. Once the report has been marked and returned by BGU, data will be deleted. Consent was assumed by voluntary participation and advice was given that it was not possible to withdraw responses once they had been submitted electronically as the individual may not be identifiable as anonymity was imparted. Bias was avoided by offering the survey to all teaching, support and administration staff as legislation places safeguarding responsibility on all staff working in education. The manager at Setting A was made aware that the findings of the project would be made available to them. However, data collected will be deleted upon completion of the project and detailed information about each participant will also be destroyed. The manager will not, therefore, be able to determine which participants made which specific responses. Research was conducted in accordance with Data Protection Act (2021). Data is GDPR compliant and collected through Microsoft Forms™ operated through BGU systems. This research project was deemed ethical by the Ethics Committee; however, it is not possible to mitigate against all eventualities.

Analysis

The data gathered was positive and offered useful feedback. Analysis of responses were compared for similarities and differences so that a better understanding of how experienced and confident staff may have become skilled in safeguarding practices at Setting A. Furthermore, these responses identified how less experienced staff might develop the necessary skills for safeguarding through reflective practice and more experienced staff might further their understanding of learner behaviours for enhanced reflexive interactions. Critical evaluation of data gathered from participants through feedback and reflective practise offered an informed justification for modifying safeguarding training delivery at Setting A (Agee, 2009).

Analysis and outcomes of findings

Analysis of raw data gathered from the survey allowed for research findings to be determined and outcomes to be considered. By seeking staff perspectives on safeguarding in further education, and reflection on how theory is put into practice it was hoped that specific skills would be identified and nurtured through training to ensure better safeguarding outcomes for learners. Analysis of research findings and outcomes identified four themes embedded in the data: staff experience, emotional availability, documentation, and safeguarding training. The influence of these four themes on safeguarding training will be discussed.

Staff safeguarding experience to date

Data revealed that five out of ten staff participating in the survey had less than seven years' experience working with children and young people in an educational setting. These participants state they are happy with the safeguarding obligation conferred by policy (DfE, 2021b) which details statutory guidance on safeguarding training for anyone working in education. However, these same participants also identify their lack of safeguarding experience. The paucity of both work and safeguarding experience demonstrates corroboration and validity in the findings. Participants that state they have some or considerable safeguarding experience have

all served more than seven years in their professional role. This data indicates the effectiveness of repetitive safeguarding training embedding essential information, the opportunity to be involved in reflexive practice and ability to reflect on these experiences through exposure and immersion for mastery (Charles, Bainbridge and Gilbert, 2010).

The questionnaire does not ascertain participants perceived strengths and weaknesses or measure participants skills or veracity of their confidence. This short coming in the questionnaire identifies a need to look at safeguarding holistically to ensure themes such as ACEs (Felitti, 2002) and CS (Firmin, 2020) are addressed frequently and updated with new information regularly. Safeguarding training may, therefore, need to focus on levelling up less experienced staff by providing opportunity for experience and greater reflexive practice. Opportunities to nurture relationships with learners, offer unconditional positive regard, and challenge absences may require senior staff to schedule opportunities for inexperienced staff to take the lead during disclosure. Debriefing by senior staff and DSLs should be encouraged as essential reflective practice (Tarr et al., 2013).

One participant who has the greatest professional experience was also the only participant to demonstrate a keen interest on updates and training. This significant finding may reflect a recognition of how safeguarding impacts on learner engagement and informs staff of the obstacles in learner knowledge acquisition. Training could ensure professionally experienced staff with significant safeguarding experience recognise the impact of identifying and dealing with safeguarding issues early and thereby removing barriers to learning. Therefore, training that upskills experienced staff and focuses on ACEs and CS may enable them to identify these often-complex issues. These enhanced skills may offer greater insights on how abuse, neglect or exploitation may impact on engagement, academic progress and transition to higher education, employment and engaged citizenship. Firmin (2020) concurs with Hood, Gillespie and Davies (2016) and argue that CS is 'an anti-oppressive approach to practice, informed by the idea that inequality is both the cause and consequence of contextual harm' (p.6). Safeguarding legislation (DfE, 2021a) asserts that the core value of contextual safeguarding is 'everybody's responsibility' and suggests that 'a wide range of agencies, communities and individuals play an active role in creating safe spaces' (p.6). This stance conforms with Bronfenbrenner's (1994) theory of ecological systems outlining the importance of the learner's biological environment as key to their development. Experienced staff may negotiate geographical borders and help facilitate the breakdown of institutional barriers.

Experienced vigilance, reflective practice, and good interpersonal skills may allow subtle, escalating or changed behaviours to be observed for learner trust and early disclosure. Five out of ten participants state they are experienced in safeguarding and further data suggests these same five participants also feel confident with this role yet state they deem their professional obligation towards safeguarding matters to be a necessity This attitude may be a short coming in the questionnaire that could have offered more options to describe the participants attitude or allowed them to articulate this using their own vocabulary to express their feelings appropriately. However, training could identify a means by which experienced staff may view safeguarding as a tool to identifying improved learner engagement by seeking context to poor behaviours, inappropriate relationships, lack of engagement and absenteeism.

One participant reveals that training was perceived as repetitive. With three years' experience this may suggest that the participant had training needs that had yet to be addressed. This participant also raised a considerable response when asked for feedback on skills/qualities they feel are necessary to support learners during disclosure. Acquisition of these important skills should be prioritised to ensure this participant, and all other staff at Setting A, recognise their needs being valued and their valuable insights and feedback being taking into consideration for bespoke training (Rae, Cowell and Field, 2017). Opportunity to engage in safeguarding training that offers more challenging concepts such as ACEs and CS may ameliorate and alter the perception of repetitiveness in training (Felitti, 2002; Firmin, 2020). When staff experience improved outcomes for their learners because of their safeguarding training, they may then recognise the importance of training and the impact they may have on the lives of learners and the purpose of their safeguarding role.

Interpersonal Skills

Data from enquiry into what skills or qualities staff felt were necessary for them to support learners and encourage disclosure of harm or abuse elicited a wide range of responses. Analysis of this data revealed a trend that participants felt approachability, reassurance, and non-judgemental qualities were the most necessary skills to support learners. Interpersonal skills, as advocated by Spitzberg (2003) that utilise 'effective verbal and non-verbal communication, and active listening skills' may convey interpersonal intelligence with which to understand the intentions, motivations, and desires of learners (Gardner, 1999). The NSPCC (2021) state that empathy reassures learners they are the primary focus. Therefore, approachability, reassurance, and non-judgemental skills may instil empathy through effective communication, and an understanding of learner behaviours for improved disclosure (Allnock and Miller, 2013). Training that offers the opportunity for staff to practice and become more skilled at interacting with learners for better outcomes should be provided. Tarr et al (2010) suggest that role-play allows for greater empathy and nurture skills. Planned dialogue, appropriate vocabulary and modified body language may also be practised by staff to connect with the feelings, thoughts, and behaviours of learners (Lexton et al, 2005). Role-play may allow staff to pause and consult legislative, policy and procedural checklists during delivery. Opportunity for reflection and feedback from the training facilitator could allow for improved communication and interpersonal skills (Schon, 1987). Ensuring all staff are practised with interpersonal skills ensures institutional empathy as posited by Szilassy et al (2017).

Documentation

Documentation was a further trend observed in the rich data gathered by the survey. Analysis of documentation may identify patterns in attendance, engagement, and attainment data with which to provide context to inappropriate learner behaviours, relationships, and motivations. DfE (2022) states that 'where persistent absence appears to be intransigent there are often complex factors at play' (p.14). The document goes on to state that 'these factors may be related to family circumstances and often involve some of the most vulnerable students' (DfE, 2022, p.14). The use of documentation held on all learners gathered from previous educational establishments, parents and local authorities may inform staff vigilance. DfE (2022) suggest that observation of subtle, escalating or changed behaviours should be documented. Patterns in data established by documentation may serve to initiate discussion with learners which may elicit disclosure of safeguarding issues. As such, the use of all relevant documentation and data is important to provide essential information on learners for better safeguarding outcomes. Accurate documentation of the conversation between learner and staff is essential to ensure the learner experience is recorded truthfully and avoids unnecessary repetition by the learner (DfE, 2021b). The Munroe Report (1996) states that comprehensive safeguarding documentation is necessary for the purpose of collaboration with multi-agency staff. Baginsky et al (2015) argue that all professionals involved in safeguarding have pieces of information with which to inform complex judgements. Inaccuracies may jeopardise the relationship established between staff and the learner, compromise interventions used subsequently to protect the learner, risk withdrawal of the disclosure, and threaten the veracity of the investigation and judicial processes. Safeguarding training that promotes this importance, identifies skills with which to record observations, systems that allow for accurate recording of documentation and allows for analysis, management and cross-referencing of data should be invested in.

Safeguarding Training

When asked to reflect on how interpersonal skills have best been demonstrated in previous safeguarding training five out of ten participants have indicated that case histories have been more successful than discussion, quizzes, tests, and questionnaires. These same five participants have more than six years' experience and most of them state that they feel their experience is considerable. This finding offers veracity to the conclusion that case histories are deemed the most appropriate method to improve the interpersonal skills of staff. Case histories detailing the impact of issues such as poverty and oppression on ACEs and CS may embed this essential knowledge and inform safeguarding practice (Felitti, 2002; Firmin, 2020). Analysis of these findings supports identification of specific themes that may influence and inform staff safeguarding training and practice which may offer better outcomes for learners.

Further Thoughts

Several questions posed in the survey did not reveal any meaningful or useful data which may reflect research inexperience. A question asking participants about their views on how interpersonal skills influence their learner interactions could have revealed insights into their knowledge and understanding of these skills thus encouraging critical analysis and greater depth as a response.

Recommendations

This small-scale research project has identified several strategies which may influence how safeguarding training at Setting A could improve the outcomes of learners:

An understanding of how systematic analysis of data through record keeping and documentation facilitates early identification abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

Awareness of how interpersonal skills may impact learner perception of being noticed and listened to so that trusting relationships may be established between learners and staff.

Level up inexperienced staff with interpersonal skill training through case histories and role play so that reflexive practice may be better established as a tool for effective communication aiding learner disclosure of abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

Upskill more experienced staff through case histories that reflect on adverse childhood experiences and contextual safeguarding.

Enhanced data analysis may also be identified as a training need to ascertain learners experiencing inequality. Anti-oppressive practices may identify barriers to learning and strategies to overcome hegemony for better outcomes for learners.

Seek feedback from staff regarding their training requirements so that bespoke training may embed local issues and gaps in staff knowledge.

Conclusion

This small-scale research project aimed to seek staff perspectives on safeguarding training in further education and how an understanding of safeguarding theory may be put into practice. To achieve the aim of this research project a literature review identified vigilance, disclosure, and communication as themes to address the skills necessary to provide learner reassurance during disclosure of harm. A survey identified useful data on participants' professional experience and training experience. Thematic analysis of participants' perspectives on interpersonal skills, documentation and preferred training methods was identified.

Staff training that focuses on accurate documentation should help inform multi-agency stakeholders' collaboration. DfE (2021a) state that the initial response to a report from a child is incredibly important and can encourage or undermine the confidence of future victims. Therefore, the need for a better understanding of the impact interpersonal skills may have on staff interactions with learners has been demonstrated. Improved interpersonal skills may also offer equanimity and empathy with which to ensure the learner feels valued and listened to. These interpersonal skills may be practised during safeguarding training using role-play within scenarios informed by case histories. Safeguarding training may extend to offering more experienced staff an understanding of how critical analysis of documentation may establish extra vigilance and context for behaviours and motivations of learners. Furthermore, an understanding of adverse childhood experiences and contextual safeguarding may help to identify the hegemonic powers that serve to oppress or exploit learners and their families so that safeguarding investigation is appropriate and multiagency stakeholders are aware of the complexity of some learner experiences.

References

Agee, J. (2009). Developing qualitative research questions: A reflective process. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 22*(4), 431-447. DOI: 10.1080/09518390902736512

Allnock, D., & Miller, D. (2013). No one noticed, no one heard: A study of disclosures of childhood abuse. NSPCC. https://uobrep.openrepository.com/bitstream/handle/10547/600875/no-one-noticed-no-one-heard-report.pdf?sequence=1

Alvarez,K. M., Donohue, B., Carpenter, A., Romero, V., Allen, D. N., & Cross, C. (2010). Development and preliminary evaluation of a training method to assist professionals in reporting suspected child maltreatment. *Child Maltreatment, 15*(3), 211-218. DOI: 10.1177/1077559510365535

Baginsky, M., Driscoll, J. and Manthorpe, J. (2015). Thinking aloud: Decentralisation and safeguarding in English schools. *Journal of Integrated Care, 23*(6), p. 352-363. Emerald Group Publishing Limited. DOI: 10.1108/JICA-09-2015-0037

Bishop Grosseteste University. (2019). *Research Ethics Policy.* BGU.

British Educational Research Association. (2018). *Ethical guidelines for educational research.* BERA.

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The ecology of human development.* Harvard University Press.

Bryman, A., Clark, T., Foster, L., and Sloan, L. (2021). *Bryman's Social Research Methods* (6th ed.). Oxford.

Charles, G., Bainbridge, L., and Gilbert, J. (2010). The University of British Columbia Model of Interprofessional Education. *Journal of Interprofessional Care, 24*(1), 9-18. DOI: 10.3109/13561820903294549

Chavez, C. (2008). Conceptualising from the inside: Advantages, complications, and demands on insider positionality. *The Qualitative Report, 13*(3), 474-494. DOI: 10.46743/2160-3715/2008.1589

Clough, P., and Nutbrown, C. (2012). *A students guide to methodology.* Sage.

Cohen, L., Manion, L., and Morrison, K. (2017). *Research Methods in Education*. Routledge. https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/bishopg/reader.action?docID=5103697

Cronin, M. & Smith, M. (2010). Safeguarding to Safeguarding. In G. Brotherton. H. Davies. & G. McGillivray (Eds.), *Working with children, young people, and families*. SAGE.

Devaney, J. (2004). Relating outcomes and objectives in child protection. *Child and Family Social Work, 9,* 27-38. DOI: 10.1111/j.1365-2206.2004.00320.

Department for Education. (2018a). Working together to safeguard children: A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. HM Government. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/942454/Working_together_to_safeguard_children_inter_agency_guidance.pdf

DfE. (2018b). Tackle Child Abuse Campaign. West Yorkshire Police. https://www.google.com/url?sa=i&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.westyorkshire.police.uk%2Fadvice%2Fchild-protection%2Fchild-abuse%2Fchild-abuse&psig=AOvVaw0GsFngEMUOXCwM_sagFZc7&ust=1649414813268000&source=images&cd=vfe&ved=0CAoQjRxqFwoTCNjfo5njgfcCFQAAAAAdAAAAABAD

DfE. (2018c). New alliance to boost confidence in reporting child abuse. GOV.UK http://www.govwire.co.uk/news/children-and-young-people/new-alliance-to-boost-confidence-in-reporting-child-abuse-15023

DfE. (2021a). *Keeping Children Safe in Education.* DfE. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education-2

DfE. (2021b). Safeguarding. Ofsted. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ofsted-safeguarding-policy/ofsted-safeguarding-policy

DfE. (2022). *Research and analysis: Securing good attendance and tackling persistent absence.* Ofsted. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/securing-good-attendance-and-tackling-persistent-absence

Drewett, O., Hann, G., Delacroix, S., & Pan, X. (2018). Can a virtual reality communication scenario be used to teach general practitioners and trainees how to recognise and manage safeguarding issues? Child Protection Special Interest Group, *British Medical Journal, 103*, G146. https://adc.bmj.com/content/103/Suppl_1/A60.1

Eisenstein, C., & Ford, A. (2017). Evaluation of the 'Me First' training on children and young people centred conversations about child sexual exploitation (CSE) and safeguarding concerns. Report to NHS England. *Child Outcomes Research Consortium.* https://www.mefirst.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Me-First-CSE-Training-Evaluation-Report-Dec.-2017-Final.pdf

Finklehor, D., Turner, H., Hamby, S., & Ormrod, R. (2011). Poly-victimisation: Children's exposure to multiple types of violence, crime, and abuse. *Juvenile Justice Bulletin.* US Department of Justice; Office of Justice Programs. www.ojp.usdoj.gov

Firmin, C. (2020). *Contextual Safeguarding and Child Protection: Rewriting the rules.* Routledge. DOI:10.4324/9780429283314

Goleman, D. (1996). *Emotional Intelligence: Why it can matter more than IQ*. Bloomsbury.

Graham, P., & Machin, A. I. (2009). Interprofessional working and the children's workforce. In R. Barker. (Ed.), *Making Sense of Every Child Matters* (pp. 33). Policy Press.

Hood, R., Gillespie, J., and Davies, J. (2016). A conceptual view of interprofessional expertise in child safeguarding. *Journal of Interprofessional Care.* DOI: 10.3109/13561820.2016.1173656

HM Government. (2021). Promoting children and young people's mental health and wellbeing: A whole school or college approach. *Children & Young People's Mental Health Coalition* https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1020249/Promoting_children_and_young_people_s_mental_health_and_wellbeing.pdf

Lexton, A., Smith, M., Olufemi, D., & Poole, G. (2005). Taking a risk and playing it safe: The use of actors in interagency child protection training. *Child Abuse Review, 14*, 195-206. DOI: 10.1002/car.895

McKee, B.E., and Dillenburger, K. (2010). Child abuse and neglect: Training needs of student teachers. *International Journal of Educational Research, 48*(5), 320-330. DOI.1016/j.ijer.2010.03.002

Morrison, N. (2014, September 26). Teachers are the front line of children's safety. *Times Educational Supplement*. www.tes.co.uk/article.aspx?storyCode¼6443937

National Youth Agency. (2014). *Ethical code of conduct in youth work*. NYA.

NSPCC. (2021). *Recognising and responding to abuse*. https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/child-abuse-and-neglect/recognising=and-responding-to-abuse

Opie, C. (2010). *Doing educational research.* Sage.

Pan, X., Collingwoode-Williams, T., Antley, A., Brenton, H., Congdon, B., Drewett, O., Gillies, M. F. P., Swapp, D., Pleasance, P., Fertleman, C., & Delacroix, S. (2018). Study of professional awareness using immersive virtual reality: The responses of general practitioners to child safeguarding concerns. *Frontiers in Robotics and AI, 5*(80). DOI: 10.3389/frobt.2018.00080.

Rae, T., Cowell, N., and Field, L. (2017). Supporting teachers' well-being in the context of schools for children with social, emotional, and behavioural difficulties. *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties, 22*(3), 200-218. DOI: 10.1080/13632752.2017.13311969

Rossato, C., & Brackenbridge, C. (2009). Child protection training in sport-related degrees and initial training for physical education: An audit. *Child Abuse Review 18*, 81-93. DOI: 10.1002/car.1052

Reder, P., & Duncan, S. (2004). Making the most of the Victoria Climbié inquiry report. *Child Abuse Review, 13,* 95-114. DOI: 10.1002/car.834

Rogers, C. (2003). Client centred therapy. Constable.

Rossman, G. B., and Rallis, S. F. (2017). *An introduction to qualitative research: Learning in the field.* 4th ed. Sage.

Maslow. (1943). A theory of human motivation. *Psychological Review, 50*, 370-96. https://www.academia.edu/9415670/A_Theory_of_Human_Motivation_Abraham_H_Maslow_Psychological_Review_Vol_50_No_4_July_1943

Sharp, J. (2012). *Success with your education research project.* Sage.

Smith, M. K. (2020). Dealing with the 'new normal.' Offering sanctuary, community and hope to children and young people in schools and local organisations. *The encyclopaedia of pedagogy and informal education.* https://infed.org/mobi/dealing-with-the-new-normal-creating-places-of-sanctuary-community-and-hope-for-children-and-young-people/. Retrieved 06/08/2021

Spitzberg, B. H. (2003). Methods of interpersonal skills assessment. In J. O. Greene & B. R. Burleson (Eds.), *Handbook of communication and social interaction skills*, 93-134. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers.

Szilassy, E., Drinkwater, J., Hester, M., Larkins, C., Stanley, N., Turner, W., & Feder, G. (2017). Making the links between domestic violence and child safeguarding: An evidence-based pilot training for general practice. *Health and Social Care in The Community, 25*(6), 1722-1732. DOI: 10.1111/hsc.12401

Tarr, J., Whittle, M., Wilson, J., & Hall, L. (2013). Safeguarding children and child protection education for UK trainee teachers in higher education. *Child Abuse Review, 22*, 108-115. DOI: 10.1002/car.2275

Thomas, G. (2013). *How to do your research project: A guide for students in education and applied social sciences*. Sage.

UK.GOV. (2018). *Data Protection Act and General Data Protection Regulation.* (GDPR).

Unicef. (2019). *Safeguarding Policy.* Unicef.

Walker, J. and Donaldson, C. (2010). Intervening to improve outcomes for vulnerable young people: A review of the evidence. *Department for Education*. https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Intervening-to-improve-outcomes-for-vulnerable-%3A-a-WalkerDonaldson/186393fe80c86df52b5d2d4bbf9fbe5535c4432c

Wong, M-K. R., (2018). Safeguarding in social work practice: a lifespan approach. *China Journal of Social Work, 11*(1), 108-110. DOI 10.1080/17525098.2018.1512444

Psychological, environmental and social factors which influence and impact upon health, fitness and wellbeing

Abstract:

It is well established that physical activity can play a major role in improving an individual's health, fitness, and wellbeing. The aim of this report was to investigate the psychological, environmental, and social factors which influence the health, fitness and wellbeing of 18-year-old university student 'Hannah' (see demographic overview). The case study investigates different factors that may impact her health, fitness and wellbeing, whilst exploring how physical activity could improve these. Bioelectrical impedance analysis, the beep test and Beck's depression inventory were used to assess Hannah's health, fitness and wellbeing. The report highlights how and why psychological, environmental and social factors negatively impact Hannah's life, whilst explaining the role that exercise can have in public health improvement. The report concludes that physical activity is valuable in improving measures of health, fitness, and wellbeing. Future research should continue to explore the benefits of physical activity, and the impact which psychological, environmental and social factors have upon health, fitness and wellbeing, helping to improve public health.

Authors

Katharine Bradford

BA (Hons) Sport, Coaching and Physical Education

Demographic overview

Hannah is an 18-year-old female who was born and raised in Rotherham, South Yorkshire. She has recently moved to student accommodation to start her first year at Hull University studying Geography. She shares her student accommodation with 2 females and 2 males. Hannah has a family history of mental health issues, low income and unemployment. Hannah's mother also passed away when she was 14 years old and has lived with her father since.

Psychological, environmental and social factors which influence and impact upon health, fitness and wellbeing

Psychological factors:

Depression

Depression is a common illness worldwide, with an estimated 3.8% of the population experiencing depression, including 5.0% of adults (World Health Organisation, 2021). The causes of depression are widely documented, and it has been found that the most consistently reported and influential predictors of depression are a major life event and a family history of depression (Monroe et al., 2014). In Hannah's case, a major life event that she experienced was her mother passing away when she was 14 years old. Because of this, some of Hannah's family members developed depression and Hannah's adolescent years were greatly affected. Now Hannah has just started university, she is experiencing symptoms of depression herself. A study by Worsley et al. (2021) found that low feelings of belonging and being uncomfortable were related to a higher prevalence of anxiety, loneliness and depression in students living in university accommodation. Furthermore, bad relationships with accommodation peers and the avoidance of communal areas were linked to higher levels of depression (Worsley et al., 2021). Hannah has spent most of her time in her room and isolates herself from her fellow residents. In terms of her wellbeing, she has lost motivation and is experiencing low self-esteem. She is also experiencing low energy levels and disturbed sleep. Due to these symptoms, Hannah is not taking part in any physical activity and her current diet is poor.

Stress

Stress is a further psychological factor that impacts an individual's health, fitness and wellbeing. Stress has been defined as a state of anxiety which is produced when responsibilities and events exceed an individual's coping capabilities (Seaward, 2017). Findings suggest that depression is cyclical in nature, and that depressive symptoms are intertwined with stress and negative thinking (Rubenstein et al., 2015). As Hannah has low motivation due to her depressive symptoms, she is struggling to complete university work, which in turn is leading her to feel stressed and overwhelmed. The effects of stress on an individual's health can have a big impact. The raised levels of blood pressure and stress hormones, as well as the consistent surge in heart rate, can take a toll on the body and increase the risks of hypertension, strokes or heart attacks (American Psychological Association, 2018). In terms of fitness, stress can have a negative effect on physical activity levels. A study by Bray & Born (2004) found that the stress of transitioning from secondary school to university is predictive of a decline in exercise. This finding correlates to Hannah's current situation, where the stress of moving away from home to new unfamiliar university accommodation may impact her motivation and willingness to partake in physical activity.

Environmental factors:

Local facilities

Lack of access to appropriate facilities has been linked to a decrease in physical activity levels among individuals (Sallis et al., 1990). Hannah's university accommodation is located in an area that is isolated from university facilities, such as libraries and the student union, as well as public facilities like parks and gyms. Due to the distance, the ease of accessibility is low which negatively impacts Hannah's motivation to visit places and engage in things. In terms of Hannah's health, her diet has been poor since moving to university due to the local fast food and takeaway facilities available near her accommodation. A study by Li et al. (2009) highlighted that a large density of fast food outlets in an area was associated with unhealthy lifestyles and an increased risk of obesity. Because Hannah does not have the motivation to cook, she seeks easier alternatives and chooses to eat a high volume of fast food. Paired with minimal exercise, Hannah is at risk of weight gain and other health implications because of this. Furthermore, Hannah's socialisation will also be affected by the lack of local facilities in her area due to the missed opportunities to meet new peers and friends at the student union or at gyms. This in turn affects her wellbeing as she will feel isolated from university events and lonely from lack of friends.

Living environments

Hannah's living environments have also impacted her health, fitness and wellbeing. Her room in her accommodation is small, compact and has no windows. Existing literature has highlighted how lighting (natural or artificial) can be associated directly and indirectly with psychological, physical and physiological health outcomes (Codinhoto et al., 2009). Due to the lack of natural light, Hannah gets feelings of claustrophobia in her room as she is unable to view her surroundings outside of the accommodation, thus a feeling of detachment from everyday life occurs. Furthermore, whilst Hannah was living at home, the space in her living room meant that she could partake and enjoy at-home workouts. Now she is confined to her small room, this is not possible to do and so her fitness levels have dropped since moving.

Social factors:

Social interactions

Regular social interactions are beneficial for an individual's mental health and wellbeing. Past studies have found that negative social interactions and relationships increase the risk of anxiety and depression (Teo et al., 2013). As Hannah has not had many social interactions since being at university, she is experiencing the negative effects this can bring on her wellbeing, such as feelings of loneliness and isolation. This can then evolve into mental health issues, which could be an explanation for Hannah's symptoms of depression. In terms of fitness and exercise, a study by VanKim & Nelson (2013) found that the positive benefits of vigorous physical activity on mental health and fitness arises through a pathway of socialising. Similarly, Sallis et al. (2007) found that being involved with active people influenced physical activity among individuals. As Hannah has not been connected to anyone that is physically active thus far at university, she cannot benefit from the positives that this can bring in terms of her fitness.

Peers

The influence of peers can further impact one's health, fitness and wellbeing. Peer pressure has been shown to be a key contributor to negative behaviours, such as serious offending and drug and alcohol use (Chassin et al., 2004). In terms of Hannah's flat mates, they engage in heavy drinking and drug use and have often tried to peer pressure Hannah into taking drugs. This makes Hannah feel uncomfortable and therefore leads her to isolate herself from them. Hannah's flat mates are also not very physically active, therefore the chances of gaining any fitness related benefits from her peers are reduced as she has no one to exercise with (Sallis et al., 2007).

Three techniques that could be used to assess Hannah's health, fitness and wellbeing

Methods of testing an individual's health, fitness and wellbeing

The three tests that were chosen to assess Hannah's health, fitness and wellbeing were Bioelectrical Impedance Analysis (BIA), the beep test and Beck's Depression Inventory (BDI-II). In terms of alternative testing methods, a Body Mass Index (BMI) calculation can be made to assess a person's health by taking height (m) and weight (kg) and using the formula kg/m^2 to work out ones BMI score (Weir & Jan, 2019). This score can then be compared to the BMI ranges to see which category a person is under in terms of being underweight, a healthy weight, overweight or obese. BMI is an inexpensive method that is easy to carry out (Hu, 2008), however, a limitation is that it does not take individual variations into account, such as high muscle mass in individuals. Therefore, BMI should not be the sole means of categorising a person as obese or underweight (Weir & Jan, 2019). For this reason, this method was not chosen to measure Hannah's health. In terms of the alternatives for fitness testing, the Timed Up and Go Test (TUG) is a test of balance that is commonly used to examine functional mobility and probability for falls among older adults (Shumway-Cook et al., 2000). Because this test is mainly aimed at the older population, it would not be a beneficial test to assess Hannah's fitness levels due to her being 18 years old. The Oxford Happiness Questionnaire (OHQ) was a test that was considered to assess Hannah's wellbeing, as it is a useful tool to measure personal happiness (Medvedev et al., 2017). However, as Hannah seems to be experiencing symptoms of depression, it was concluded that the BDI-II questionnaire was more suited towards her current personal issues.

Description	Body fat percentage
Essential fat	10-13%
Athletes	14-20%
Fitness	21-24%
Acceptable	25-31%
Obesity	>32%

Table 1: Body fat percentage norms for women (American Council on Exercise, n.d.)

Age	Poor	Average	Excellent
14-16	< 4.7	6.7	10.9
17-20	< 4.9	6.8	10.11
21-30	< 4.9	6.6	10.8
31-40	< 4.5	6.3	10.4
41-50	< 4.1	5.7	9.9

Table 2: Beep test normative data - females (Otieno & Mutwol, 2019)

Health assessment - Bioelectrical Impedance Analysis (BIA)

A Bioelectrical Impedance Device (BID) was used to assess Hannah's health by measuring her body fat percentage. BIA determines an individual's body composition by using mild electrical currents that flow through the body and pass-through muscle and fat tissues. Due to their differing water content, the electrical current passes through the tissues at different speeds, thus the BID is able to calculate the impedance of the current and estimate body composition (Walter-Kroker et al., 2011). This method is widely used by researchers and clinicians to estimate body composition in adults and children; it is known to be safe and non-invasive for the individual (Kushner, 1992). The normative values for body fat percentage in women is shown in table 1.

From completing a BIA, Hannah's body fat percentage was 28% which would put her in the acceptable category in terms of the body fat percentage norms for women. As Hannah is edging towards the obese category, it is vital that she acknowledges the health risks that a high body fat percentage can bring and how she can improve this. Implementing new lifestyle choices, such as physical activity and an improved diet, are steps she can take to minimise these risks. BIA was an appropriate testing method due to its simple, inexpensive and quick technique (Walter-Kroker et al., 2011), however when critiquing the method, Buckinx et al. (2015) found that the hydration status of the study subjects was a big factor when measuring body fat using BIA. If Hannah was dehydrated while analysis was being completed, this may have affected her percentage score and therefore reliability would have to be questioned.

Fitness assessment - Beep test

The test chosen to assess Hannah's fitness levels was the beep test, which is a multi-stage fitness test used to examine cardiovascular fitness and maximum oxygen uptake (VO2 max) (Mullineaux, 2001). The test was created by Leger et al. (1988) which consists of 21 levels, and each level contains a different number of shuttles. The test involves running between two marked areas placed 20 meters apart, at an increasing pace as directed by the beeps. The test ends when the participators can no longer keep pace, or level 21 has been completed (Otieno & Mutwol, 2019). Table 2 shows the normative data for females completing the beep test.

Scores are represented using dot notation, e.g. a score of level 11, shuttle 8 would be represented as 11.8.

Hannah's beep test score was 5.1 which suggests that her fitness levels are between poor and average when comparing it to the normative data. Poor fitness levels could have a negative effect on Hannah in terms of her physical and mental health, therefore it would be beneficial for her to partake in more exercise to improve her aerobic fitness. The beep test was an appropriate test to assess Hannah's fitness levels due to the reliability it brings for measuring VO2 max (James et al., 2005), and the simple and cheap methodology means the data collection can be a smooth process (Tomkinson et al., 2017). However, a limitation of the beep test is the dependability on participant motivation levels (James et al., 2005). If Hannah was feeling down or unmotivated before and during the test, this could have affected her results as she would not feel driven to carry on and push herself to her maximum potential. To potentially resolve this issue for future beep tests, researchers could implement a pre-test questionnaire for each participant to complete, in order to assess their motivation and mood levels.

Total score	Depression scale
0-13	Minimal
14-19	Mild
20-28	Moderate
29-63	Severe

Table 3: Depression thresholds compared to total score – BDI-II (Beck et al., 1996)

Wellbeing assessment – Beck Depression Inventory second edition (BDI-II)

BDI-II is a 21-item self-report questionnaire that is intended to assess the existence and severity of symptoms of depression, which is relevant to Hannah and her current mental health and wellbeing. The questions relate to symptoms of depression within the 'past two weeks, including today' and are rated from 0 to 3. The scores are then summed to create a total ranging from 0 to 63, with higher totals reflecting greater severity (Whisman & Richardson, 2015). Past research has shown that the measure is internally reliable and successfully distinguishes between depressed and nondepressed subjects (Dozois & Covin, 2004). Table 3 shows the depression severity which depends on the total score an individual gets on the BDI-II questionnaire.

From Hannah's total score of 26, this would put her towards the higher end of the moderate scale in terms of her depression, which is having a big impact on her mental health and wellbeing.

Why exercise could play a key part in public health improvement and wellbeing

Exercise and public health overview

The benefits of exercise have been largely documented in the research literature. The vast number of physical, psychological and social advantages one can achieve by having a physically active lifestyle are well researched and acknowledged (Haskell et al., 2009). In the UK, people are 20% less active now compared to activity levels in the 1960s. If current trends continue, people will be 35% less active by 2030 (Chief Medical Officer, 2016). In the present day, there is a greater need to partake in additional exercise due to technological advances and societal changes. The increase in car usage is a leading factor for the decrease in physical activity levels in the UK; 69% of households did not own a car in 1961, but by 2012 this had decreased to 25% (Chief Medical Officer, 2016). The question should therefore remain on how to tackle low levels of physical activity, and to further reinstate and broadcast the benefits of exercise on public health and wellbeing

Mental health

In England, 1 in 4 people will experience a mental health problem each year (Mind, 2020). Research has repeatedly suggested that exercise can significantly improve mental health conditions such as depression, anxiety and stress (DiLorenzo et al., 1999; Paluska & Schwenk, 2000; Wipfli et al., 2011). In recent years, there has been a rise in the prescription of antidepressant medication, which has had a large impact on the increase in government health spending (López-Torres Hidalgo, 2019). Individuals on antidepressant medication may also experience negative side effects, therefore it is reasonable to assume that testing alternative methods, such as exercise, for the treatment of mental health issues is of great benefit for public health and expenditure. As Hannah scored moderately on the BDI-II, physical activity may act as a possible solution for improving her mental health. As research shows, important endorphins are secreted when exercising which aid the brain in reducing pain and causing euphoria (Dishman & O'Connor, 2009). This therefore helps to reduce an individual's anxiety and depression levels. On the contrary, exercise may also have a negative impact on one's mental health. For example, individuals may become overly obsessive or addicted to exercise. This can result in serious mental illnesses, such as body dysmorphia and eating disorders (Joy et al., 2016; Raglin, 1990). However, one could argue that most things come with differing amounts of risk, therefore it may be beneficial for Hannah to individually assess her susceptibility to the risks mentioned previously.

Physical health

Physical inactivity has been shown to increase an individual's susceptibility to various diseases, such as: obesity; osteoporosis; cardiovascular disease; type 2 diabetes; respiratory disease; breast cancer; and colon cancer (Gaetano, 2016). Thus, it is important that regular physical activity is implemented in an individual's daily routine to minimise these risks. Excessive body weight that leads to being overweight or obese in individuals has been shown to be linked with numerous health-related conditions, including cardiovascular disease, some forms of cancer, diabetes and musculoskeletal disorders (Jensen et al., 2014). The issue of obesity is a significant public health concern not only in the UK but around the world, thus, the question on how to tackle this matter has been greatly discussed. Physical activity has been proven to be an important lifestyle behaviour for healthy weight maintenance and influencing both the prevention and treatment of obesity and individuals who are overweight (Jakicic et al., 2018). In terms of Hannah and her current body composition, the BIA indicated that she was in the acceptable category in terms of her body fat percentage. Therefore, it would be beneficial for Hannah to participate in some form of moderate to vigorous exercise so she does not fall into the obese category and be open to the risks that are attributed to obesity. Regular exercise has also been linked to delaying the onset of dementia and Alzheimer disease. Larson et al. (2006) investigated this theory among 1740 participants who were older than 65 years old without cognitive impairment. The results from the study found a positive correlation between physical activity and delaying the onset of these disorders amongst elderly individuals, which further supports the value of exercise among the population. However, a limitation of this study were the self-report

methods used. This could have caused recall bias among the participants where they may have exaggerated the activities carried out (Ainslie et al., 2003; Sallis & Saelens, 2000), thus potentially effecting the reliability of the results. On the other hand, the study has good supporting evidence from previous studies. Lindsay et al. (2002) also stated that regular physical activity was associated with a reduced risk of Alzheimer disease in a 5-year prospective cohort study. In terms of the biological reasoning behind these findings, the past studies have explained that regular exercise brings enhanced cerebral blood circulation and oxygen distribution to regions of the brain (Calcombe et al., 2004; Rogers et al., 1990), therefore conserving cognitive bases in later life. On the contrary, a study by Wang et al. (2002) completed a 6.4-year longitudinal study in a population of elderly individuals living in Stockholm, Sweden, and found no significant associations between exercise and risk of dementia.

Exercise and wellbeing overview

Physical activity has great potential to enhance an individual's wellbeing. Research shows that involvement in regular exercise can help in improving self-esteem and reducing stress and anxiety (Salmon, 2001). It can also have a strong impact on mood, as studied by Kanning & Schlicht (2010), who found that participants had a heightened feeling of contentedness, awareness, and calmness after partaking in physical activity compared to when they were inactive. They also stated that the effect of exercise on mood was most impactful when mood was initially low.

Increased self-esteem

Self-esteem has been defined as an individual's assessment of the self (Rosenberg, 1986). Self-esteem is particularly important for an individual to lead a successful and satisfying life, as well as constituting an essential aspect of psychological wellbeing (Rosenberg, 2015). In terms of physical activity and self-esteem, Sonstroem & Morgan (1989) outlined that exercising promotes self-esteem through physical acceptance, physical competence and perceptions of self-efficacy. Supporting this framework, physical activity has been linked with higher levels of self-esteem among middle-aged and healthy adults (Alfermann & Stoll, 2000). Moreover, two more studies have recognised substantial increases in self-esteem following completion of exercise training (Barton et al., 2012; Legrand, 2014). To critique the relationship between exercise and self-esteem, one could also argue that physical activity could have a negative impact on self-esteem. Some individuals may be susceptible to becoming dependent and obsessive with exercise and may get emotionally invested with personal goals. If these personal objectives are not met, it could have a negative impact on a person's confidence and self-esteem (Hockin-Boyers & Warin, 2021). However, in terms of Hannah and her low self-esteem, the research provided indicates that the benefits outweigh the risks, and that Hannah may benefit from taking part in a form of physical activity in order to improve her personal self-esteem issues. In doing so, she may see changes to her confidence levels, which in turn could help with her feelings of isolation and loneliness by being more involved with university peers and opportunities.

Improved cognitive functions

An individual's cognitive functions refers to multiple mental abilities such as: memory, problem solving, learning, decision making, reasoning, thinking, and attention (Fisher et al., 2019). Cognitive functions serve as an important role in everyday behaviours and social settings, such as remembering faces and voices (Nouchi & Kawashima, 2014). There have been many studies which have researched the relationship between physical exercise and cognitive functions. These studies show similar findings that demonstrate exercise affecting brain plasticity and influencing cognition and wellbeing (Weinberg & Gould, 2019). Both clinical and experimental studies have reported that physical activity encourages structural and functional changes in the brain, leading to both biological and psychological benefits (Mandolesi et al., 2018).

Increased social interactions

Physical activity has also been shown to increase social interactions. Existing literature highlights the relevance exercise has in forming social relations and encouraging prosocial behaviours (Di Bartolomeo & Papa, 2019). A study by Pawlowski et al. (2018) suggests that partaking in a sports group has a positive impact on individual health and prosocial attitudes. Furthermore, Walseth (2006) found that being involved in team sports and having face-to-face contact among fellow members created feelings of belonging and a strong sense of involvement within the community. As a result, the evolution of support between members not only inside but outside the sports context was created. Forming these social relationships can in turn help to increase individual physical activity levels. Resnick et al. (2002) found that support given by friends was statistically significant in influencing exercise indirectly. Further findings have similarly been reported with self-efficacy expectations acting as a link between social support and physical activity participation (Duncan & McAuley, 1993; O'Brien-Cousins, 1996). The behaviours that are frequently exhibited as social support (emotional, appraisal, informational or instrumental), as found by Berkman (1995), are compatible with self-efficacy expectations that were theorised by Bandura (1997). Explicitly, verbal encouragement by friends in an exercise setting may strengthen self-efficacy expectations and said friends could serve as role models to individuals to help increase participation in physical activity. To compare this to Hannah, social interaction could play a key role in improving her mental and physical health. Supportive peers would help Hannah feel less isolated and increase her involvement in university. She would also have people that she could exercise with, which diminishes her worry of walking/running alone.

Conclusion

The report has evidenced the value that exercise can have on individuals. The plethora of past literature identifying the effectiveness of physical activity on health, fitness and wellbeing has hoped to have been highlighted in the present report to further push the narrative of exercise benefits. Future research should continue to identify and study the positives of physical activity, and further investigate the psychological, environmental and social influences that impact health, fitness and wellbeing to help improve activity levels in the population.

References

Ainslie, P. N., Reilly, T., & Westerterp, K. R. (2003). *Estimating human energy expenditure. Sports medicine, 33*(9), 683-698.

Alfermann, D., & Stoll, O. (2000). Effects of physical exercise on self-concept and well-being. *International Journal of Sport Psychology,* 31(1), 47–65.

American Psychological Association. (2018). *Stress effects on the body*. https://www.apa.org/topics/stress/body

Bandura, A. (1997*). Self-efficacy: The exercise of control*. W.H. Freeman.

Barton, J., Griffin, M., & Pretty, J. (2012). Exercise-, nature-and socially interactive-based initiatives improve mood and self-esteem in the clinical population. *Perspectives in public health*, *132*(2), 89-96.

Beck, A. T., Steer, R. A., & Brown, G. K. (1996). *Beck depression inventory (BDI-II)*. Pearson.

Berkman, L. F. (1995). The role of social relations in health promotion. *Psychosomatic medicine*, *57*(3), 245-254.

Bray, S. R., & Born, H. A. (2004). Transition to university and vigorous physical activity: Implications for health and psychological well-being. *Journal of American College Health*, *52*(4), 181-188.

Buckinx, F., Reginster, J. Y., Dardenne, N., Croisiser, J. L., Kaux, J. F., Beaudart, C., ... & Bruyère, O. (2015). Concordance between muscle mass assessed by bioelectrical impedance analysis and by dual energy X-ray absorptiometry: a cross-sectional study. *BMC musculoskeletal disorders*, *16*(1), 1-7.

Chassin, L., Hussong, A., Barrera, M., Jr., Molina, B., Trim, R., & Ritter, J. (2004). Adolescent substance use. In R. Lerner & L. Steinberg (Eds.), *Handbook of adolescent psychology* (2nd ed., pp. 665– 696). Wiley.

Codinhoto, R., Tzortzopoulos, P., Kagioglou, M., Aouad, G. and Cooper, R. (2009). The impacts of the built environment on health outcomes, *Facilities*, 27(3/4), 138-151.

Cousins, S. O. B. (1996). Exercise cognition among elderly women. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, *8*(2), 131-145.

Di Bartolomeo, G., & Papa, S. (2019). The effects of physical activity on social interactions: The case of trust and trustworthiness. *Journal of Sports Economics*, *20*(1), 50-71.

DiLorenzo, T. M., Bargman, E. P., Stucky-Ropp, R., Brassington, G. S., Frensch, P. A., & LaFontaine, T. (1999). Long-term effects of aerobic exercise on psychological outcomes. *Preventive medicine*, *28*(1), 75-85.

Dishman, R. K., & O'Connor, P. J. (2009). Lessons in exercise neurobiology: the case of endorphins. *Mental Health and Physical Activity*, *2*(1), 4-9.

Dozois, D. J. A., & Covin, R. (2004). The Beck Depression Inventory-II (BDI-II), Beck Hopelessness Scale (BHS), and Beck Scale for Suicide Ideation (BSS). In M. J. Hilsenroth & D. L. Segal. *Comprehensive handbook of psychological assessment, Vol. 2: Personality assessment* (pp. 50– 69).

Duncan, T. E., & McAuley, E. (1993). Social support and efficacy cognitions in exercise adherence: A latent growth curve analysis. *Journal of behavioral medicine*, *16*(2), 199-218.

Fisher, G. G., Chacon, M., & Chaffee, D. S. (2019). Theories of cognitive aging and work. In *Work across the lifespan* (pp. 17-45). Academic press.

Gaetano, A. (2016). Relationship between physical inactivity and effects on individual health status. *Journal of Physical Education and Sport*, *16*(4), 1069-1074.

Chief Medical Officer. (2016). *Health matters: physical activity - prevention and management of long-term conditions.* https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/health-matters-physical-activity/health-matters-physical-activity-prevention-and-management-of-long-term-conditions

Haskell, W. L., Blair, S. N., & Hill, J. O. (2009). Physical activity: health outcomes and importance for public health policy. *Preventive medicine*, *49*(4), 280-282.

Hockin-Boyers, H., & Warin, M. (2021). Women, Exercise, and Eating Disorder Recovery: The Normal and the Pathological. *Qualitative Health Research*, *31*(6), 1029-1042.

Hu, F. B. (2008). Measurements of adiposity and body composition. *Obesity epidemiology*, *416*, 53-83.

Jakicic, J. M., Rogers, R. J., Davis, K. K., & Collins, K. A. (2018). Role of physical activity and exercise in treating patients with overweight and obesity. *Clinical chemistry*, *64*(1), 99-107.

James, N.W., James, R., and Thompson, G. (2005). *AS PE for AQA*. Heinemann.

Jensen, M. D., Ryan, D. H., Apovian, C. M., Ard, J. D., Comuzzie, A. G., Donato, K. A., ... & Yanovski, S. Z. (2014). 2013 AHA/ACC/TOS guideline for the management of overweight and obesity in adults: a report of the American College of Cardiology/American Heart Association Task Force on Practice Guidelines and The Obesity Society. *Journal of the American college of cardiology*, *63*(25 Part B), 2985-3023.

References continued

Joy, E., Kussman, A., & Nattiv, A. (2016). 2016 update on eating disorders in athletes: A comprehensive narrative review with a focus on clinical assessment and management. *British journal of sports medicine*, *50*(3), 154-162.

Kanning, M., & Schlicht, W. (2010). Be active and become happy: an ecological momentary assessment of physical activity and mood. *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, *32*(2), 253-261.

Larson, E. B., Wang, L. I., Bowen, J. D., McCormick, W. C., Teri, L., Crane, P., & Kukull, W. (2006). Exercise is associated with reduced risk for incident dementia among persons 65 years of age and older. *Annals of internal medicine*, *144*(2), 73-81.

Leger, L. A., Mercier, D., Gadoury, C., & Lambert, J. (1988). The multistage 20 metre shuttle run test for aerobic fitness. *Journal of sports sciences*, *6*(2), 93-101.

Legrand, F. D. (2014). Effects of exercise on physical self-concept, global self-esteem, and depression in women of low socioeconomic status with elevated depressive symptoms. *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, *36*(4), 357-365.

Li, F., Harmer, P., Cardinal, B. J., Bosworth, M., & Johnson-Shelton, D. (2009). Obesity and the built environment: does the density of neighborhood fast-food outlets matter?. *American Journal of Health Promotion*, *23*(3), 203-209.

López-Torres Hidalgo, J. (2019). Effectiveness of physical exercise in the treatment of depression in older adults as an alternative to antidepressant drugs in primary care. *BMC psychiatry*, *19*(1), 1-7.

Mandolesi, L., Polverino, A., Montuori, S., Foti, F., Ferraioli, G., Sorrentino, P., & Sorrentino, G. (2018). Effects of physical exercise on cognitive functioning and wellbeing: biological and psychological benefits. *Frontiers in psychology*, 9, 509.

Medvedev, O. N., Siegert, R. J., Mohamed, A. D., Shepherd, D., Landhuis, E., & Krägeloh, C. U. (2017). The Oxford Happiness Questionnaire: transformation from an ordinal to an interval measure using Rasch analysis. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, *18*(5), 1425-1443.

Mind. (2020). *Mental health facts and statistics*. https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/statistics-and-facts-about-mental-health/how-common-are-mental-health-problems/

Monroe, S. M., Slavich, G. M., & Gotlib, I. H. (2014). Life stress and family history for depression: The moderating role of past depressive episodes. *Journal of psychiatric research*, *49*, 90-95.

Mullineaux, M. (2001). Just a bleep test? Innovative use of the multistage fitness test. *British Journal of Teaching Physical Education*, *32*(4), 41-43.

Nouchi, R., & Kawashima, R. (2014). Improving cognitive function from children to old age: a systematic review of recent smart ageing intervention studies. *Advances in Neuroscience*, *2014*, 235479.

Otieno, P. N. O., & Mutwol, D. K. (2019). Beep test handbook the fitness test. *Fitness in sports.*

Paluska, S. A., & Schwenk, T. L. (2000). Physical activity and mental health. *Sports medicine*, *29*(3), 167-180.

Pawlowski, T., Schüttoff, U., Downward, P., & Lechner, M. (2018). Can sport really help to meet the millennium development goals? Evidence from children in Peru. *Journal of Sports Economics*, *19*(4), 498-521.

Raglin, J. S. (1990). Exercise and mental health. *Sports Medicine*, *9*(6), 323-329.

Resnick, B., Orwig, D., Magaziner, J., & Wynne, C. (2002). The effect of social support on exercise behavior in older adults. *Clinical Nursing Research*, *11*(1), 52-70.

Rogers, R. L., Meyer, J. S., & Mortel, K. F. (1990). After reaching retirement age physical activity sustains cerebral perfusion and cognition. *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society*, *38*(2), 123-128.

Rosenberg, M. (1986). *Conceiving the self*. RE Krieger.

Rosenberg, M. (2015). *Society and the adolescent self-image*. Princeton university press.

Rubenstein, L. M., Hamilton, J. L., Stange, J. P., Flynn, M., Abramson, L. Y., & Alloy, L. B. (2015). The cyclical nature of depressed mood and future risk: Depression, rumination, and deficits in emotional clarity in adolescent girls. *Journal of adolescence*, *42*, 68-76.

Sallis, J. F., & Saelens, B. E. (2000). Assessment of physical activity by self-report: status, limitations, and future directions. *Research quarterly for exercise and sport*, *71*(2), 1-14.

Sallis, J. F., Hovell, M. F., Hofstetter, C. R., Elder, J. P., Hackley, M., Caspersen, C. J., & Powell, K. E. (1990). Distance between homes and exercise facilities related to frequency of exercise among San Diego residents. *Public health reports*, *105*(2), 179.

Sallis, J. F., King, A. C., Sirard, J. R., & Albright, C. L. (2007). Perceived environmental predictors of physical activity over 6 months in adults: Activity Counseling Trial. *Health Psychology*, *26*(6), 701-709.

Salmon, P. (2001). Effects of physical exercise on anxiety, depression, and sensitivity to stress: a unifying theory. *Clinical psychology review*, *21*(1), 33-61.

Seaward, B. L. (2017). *Managing stress*. Jones & Bartlett Learning.

Shumway-Cook, A., Brauer, S., & Woollacott, M. (2000). Predicting the probability for falls in community-dwelling older adults using the Timed Up & Go Test. *Physical therapy*, *80*(9), 896-903.

Sonstroem, R. J., & Morgan, W. P. (1989). Exercise and self-esteem: Rationale and model. *Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise, 21*(3), 329–337.

Teo, A. R., Choi, H., & Valenstein, M. (2013). Social relationships and depression: ten-year follow-up from a nationally representative study. *PloS one*, *8*(4).

Tomkinson, G. R., Lang, J. J., Tremblay, M. S., Dale, M., LeBlanc, A. G., Belanger, K., ... & Léger, L. (2017). International normative 20 m shuttle run values from 1 142 026 children and youth representing 50 countries. *British journal of sports Medicine*, *51*(21), 1545-1554.

VanKim, N. A., & Nelson, T. F. (2013). Vigorous physical activity, mental health, perceived stress, and socializing among college students. *American Journal of Health Promotion*, *28*(1), 7-15.

Walseth, K. (2006). Sport and belonging. *International review for the sociology of sport*, *41*(3-4), 447-464.

Walter-Kroker, A., Kroker, A., Mattiucci-Guehlke, M., & Glaab, T. (2011). A practical guide to bioelectrical impedance analysis using the example of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. *Nutrition Journal*, *10*(1), 1-8.

Wang, H. X., Karp, A., Winblad, B., & Fratiglioni, L. (2002). Late-life engagement in social and leisure activities is associated with a decreased risk of dementia: a longitudinal study from the Kungsholmen project. *American journal of epidemiology*, *155*(12), 1081-1087.

Weinberg, R. S., & Gould, D. (2019). *Foundations of sport and exercise psychology, 7th Edition*. Human Kinetics.

Weir, C. B., & Jan, A. (2019). *BMI classification percentile and cut off points.* In: StatPearls. StatPearls Publishing.

Whisman, M. A., & Richardson, E. D. (2015). Normative data on the Beck Depression Inventory–second edition (BDI-II) in college students. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, *71*(9), 898-907.

Wipfli, B., Landers, D., Nagoshi, C., & Ringenbach, S. (2011). An examination of serotonin and psychological variables in the relationship between exercise and mental health. *Scandinavian journal of medicine & science in sports*, *21*(3), 474-481.

World Health Organisation. (2021). *Depression*. https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/depression

Worsley, J. D., Harrison, P., & Corcoran, R. (2021). Accommodation environments and student mental health in the UK: the role of relational spaces. Journal of Mental Health, 1-8.

World Health Organisation. (n.d.). *Constitution*. https://www.who.int/about/governance/constitution

Stress in Non-profit Advancement of Health Organisations

Abstract:

Stress is a prominent area within Occupational Psychology which is known to have negative impacts on an individual and workplace when it is not managed effectively, with it being the main cause of absence across organisations. Much literature focuses on health and wellbeing strategies of paid staff, whereas less is known about how psychology is implemented into the third sector. Investigating stress in advancement of health charity organisations highlighted issues surrounding leadership, motivations, conflicting psychological contracts and support. Proposals for organisational change and improvement to overcoming identified issues are analysed, recommending employee-led approaches, recognising motivators and on-going training. The report then concludes with a reflective discussion on how knowledge of organisational psychology could be applied to one's personal working life

Authors

Ashlea Russell

BA (Hons) Psychology

Introduction

Occupational Psychology concerns human behaviour in work and organisations through applying psychological theories, practice and science to working populations (BPS, 2021; Zibarras & Lewis, 2013). Occupational Psychology covers areas regarding learning and developing in the workplace, psychological assessment, motivation, training, organisational changes, leadership and health and wellbeing and usually these entwine one another (BPS, 2019). Occupational Psychology can be implemented across all organisation sector types, however, in this case study the focus will be organisations within the third sector with predominantly volunteer workforces. Non-profit organisations, also referred to as the third sector and charities, are organisations chartered for charitable purposes and have legal requirements to benefit the public (Charities Act, 2013).

There are numerous legal charitable purposes enabling organisations to become a charity and for the clarity of this case study, the focus is on charities whose purpose is the advancement of health, prevention of sickness, relief of suffering, promotion of physical and mental health, and methods of treatments (Charities Act, 2013).

The Occupational Psychology area of Wellbeing at Work concerns building and maintaining programmes for better health and wellbeing in the workplace, and ensuring all involved within an organisation recognise the importance of health and wellbeing promotion (BPS, 2021; Lewis & Zibarras, 2013). Measuring wellbeing in general at work should be a comprehensive process with components including subjective wellbeing, social wellbeing and eudaimonic wellbeing (Fisher, 2014). These cover organisational relationships, social support, job satisfaction, attitudes, engagement and motivations (Fisher, 2014; Lewis & Zibarras, 2013).

Stress can be articulated by a mix of subjective and objective wellbeing factors, encompassing both individual determinants such as satisfaction as well as socio-cultural determinants such as circumstances (Hefferon & Boniwell, 2011). Stress models usually classify within engineering models, whereby stress is assumed to be an automatic response to external stimuli (Cannon, 1932; Szabo et al., 2017), as well as physiological factors, focusing on internal responses to stress (Lewis and Zibarras 2013). Work related stress fits into a transactional model, blending both models looking into what causes workplace stress; its effects and coping mechanisms (Gross, 2020). Stress continues to be the main cause of absence across organisations (CIPD, 2022). However, 95% of individuals off work with stress gave a different reason (Time to Change, 2019), which highlights conflicts surrounding stress in the workplace and its importance within Occupational Psychology. Health and Safety Executive (HSE) recognises the importance of involving management to improve wellbeing, through their management standards that must be stringently administered to manage work-related stress involving relationships, demands, support systems, control in the workplace, roles and organisational changes (HSE, 2019). It has been identified that across all sectors, large organisations provide support in the majority of health and wellbeing areas, although public sector organisations are more likely to provide provisions for a range of health and wellbeing activities (CIPD, 2022) Similarly, it has been highlighted that public sector organisations were more likely to conduct stress audits and involve occupational health specialists (CIPD, 2022).

Much literature focuses on health and wellbeing of paid employees and employers of larger organisations which have differing workplace structures and roles compared to the third sector, therefore the research into how psychology is implemented into the health and wellbeing of non-profit organisations, unpaid workers and trustees is of growing interest (Zappalà & Lyons, 2009).

Analysis

Leadership of a predominantly volunteer workforce can cause issues to arise surrounding policies, due to volunteers not having the same rights as paid workers, meaning that volunteers do not need to give a notice period (The Charity Commission, 2013). This can cause leaders to face potential shortages, putting added pressure on providing environments to increase volunteer retention (Karl et al., 2009). Lack of retention can cause further stress for leadership roles, particularly through succession management and not having volunteers with appropriate skills to fill in gaps (Elkin, 2013). Volunteers are less amenable to methods of leadership compared to paid workers, and are more responsive to encouragement of work, pride of a charity and effectiveness of a charity, meaning when these are absent, volunteers are more likely to leave (Galindo-Kuhn & Guzley, 2001; Pearce, 1993; van Knippenberg, 2011). A main cause of stress within a healthcare environment is due to employee shortages causing more workload for others in the organisation (Mohammad Mosadeghrad, 2014). Leadership style can determine the social outcomes volunteers experience and whether there is a sense of group identity within the organisation (Haslam et al., 2011). Organisations with charitable purposes are more likely to need leaders that can provide a vision in order to engage volunteers, as financial engagement is absent (Haslam et al., 2011). A study comparing emergency services paid workers and volunteers showed support and recognition was a higher predictor of job satisfaction for volunteers, whereas for paid individuals, investment of employee development was more of a motivator (Fallon, & Rice, 2011). This highlights another factor that voluntary organisations need to consider in order to foster commitment in its volunteer workforce.

It is also key for leaders of volunteers to recognise that motivation can vary between people and time (Gopalan et al., 2017; Loh et al., 2017; Mahmoud et al., 2020; Maslow, 1943). A study of health professional student volunteers motivations amplifies the different motivational goals between volunteers and what they seek to meet. Some volunteers aimed attentions at meeting transcendence and actualisation needs at the top of Maslow's (1943) Hierarchy of Needs, whereas others focused lower on the hierarchy, concerning deficiency needs (Loh et al., 2017). Differences in needs can impact how a leader motivates their volunteers. Taking the approach that needs are not universal, but rather dependent on individual differences can help increase wellbeing within the workplace (McClelland, 1987). Another study using qualitative methods saw mental health volunteers express that reasons for volunteering revolved around impact, personal growth and altruism (Cassidy et al., 2019). Using Maslow's (1943) hierarchy, these reasons address the higher levels, indicating that health volunteers' needs can extend across the whole of the hierarchy, applying added pressure on leaders to address different needs in order for volunteers to be satisfied.

Psychological contracts are interpretations, assumptions or beliefs by a person and their employer and organisation about what they expect from one another (Conway & Briner, 2006; Hager & Renfro, 2020; Smith & Liao-Troth, 2009). The psychological contract of volunteers is impacted by different factors than typical paid workers, as the transactional contract does not involve salaried expectations (Hager & Renfro, 2020). The subjective perceptions of volunteering could see it as activism and even leisure for some (Nichols, 2012),

which could differ from what leaders see their volunteer's roles as, resulting in conflicts. It is important to understand the factors that contribute to a volunteer's psychological contract as it impacts how volunteers interpret their roles and how they are executed (Smith & Liao-Troth, 2009). Negative strains on this psychological contract towards the organisation can result in decreased motivation and wellbeing for both volunteers and leaders (Smith & Liao-Troth, 2009). Healthcare volunteers may take on characteristics of a paid professional which could impact this psychological contract causing roles and expectations to be misinterpreted (Burbeck et al., 2014; Smith & Liao-Troth, 2009). This could also explain the findings that stressors have been seen to impact newer volunteers more than more experienced peers (Claxton-Oldfield, 2015), which could be due to potential conflicting thoughts about what is expected.

Stress is heightened when individuals have little control and support from others (Rabenu & Yaniv, 2017; WHO, 2020). Unlike paid workers, volunteers do not have statutory protections when raising concerns or whistleblowing to relevant authorities (GOV.UK, 2021). This highlights a lack of control over particular issues, as well as a potential lack of professional support. Lack of control can also be amplified due to the charity sector often experiencing concealed situations regarding funding, which can impact feelings of role security for volunteers (Glazer & Liu, 2017; The Charity Commission, 2016). Role security has been seen to relate to perceived control (Tinne et al., 2014). When volunteer management does not communicate clear visions of volunteering services, tensions can arise regarding job security and expectations (Einarsdóttir & Osia, 2020). In healthcare, stress can lead to burnout; a work-related phenomenon assumed to be caused by an imbalance of fairness, control, reward, community, workload and values (Krisberg, 2018; Maslach, 2001; Maslach & Leiter, 2016). Research into wellbeing and commitment involving volunteer ambulance workers saw social support as a protective factor against burnout, with role conflict a primary factor of burnout occurring (Setti et al., 2018). Social support in these contexts has been seen to increase uses of effective stress coping strategies, highlighting the influence that social support and control has on relieving stress (Akouchekian, 2009; Rabenu & Yaniv, 2017).

In relation to contemporary issues, COVID-19 saw shifts and restructuring across all sectors (Jones, 2021). Psychological work related stress can arise with changing work roles and practices causing individuals to question whether they have the necessary abilities to still do what is expected of them (Jones, 2021; Setti et al., 2018). Findings show work demands which are imbalanced in terms of knowledge, skills and abilities increase stress within the job role (WHO, 2020). This mismatching of job requirements and skillsets can be exacerbated when using a voluntary workforce that has the pressure of relieving NHS services, such as healthcare charities, without the same skillsets required of paid NHS workers (Jones, 2021). Similarly, research conducted looking at resilience showed NHS healthcare workers reported reduced levels of psychological distress in the lockdown period, compared to the general public (Pink et al., 2021). This could potentially highlight that NHS professionals may have more development and training in preparing and coping with troublesome times. However, healthcare charity volunteers are often part of the general public and can have similar work roles as trained NHS staff, often seen taking on characteristics of paid professionals (Burbeck et al., 2014).

Proposals

Due to funding constraints experienced by the voluntary sector, effective low-cost interventions are a key goal to reduce stress. Solutions to overcome contemporary issues surrounding organisational structure changes and anxieties towards adapting to different ways of working can involve inclusive strategies such as support group conversations and reflections about self-care and the pandemic (BPS, 2020; Mind, 2020). This can be achieved through wellness action plans involving all levels within the workplace and promoting inclusion (Brimhall et al., 2016). These types of resources have been seen to be effective within healthcare organisations whereby people could be hybrid working in order to keep individuals more informed of their role requirements (BPS, 2020; Mind, 2020). Similarly, where stressors have been seen to impact newer volunteers, a self-care module during initial training periods informing volunteers of coping strategies for stress in their roles could increase health and wellbeing benefits, which has been seen to be effective for some hospice palliative care volunteers (Claxton-Oldfield, 2015). A study by Hatzipapas et al (2017) on volunteer community care workers found that laughter therapy as a self-care technique reduced stress through counterbalancing negative emotions found in emotionally taxing environments. Interviews to underpin the results observed on the scales reported better coping, healthier relationships and emotions after laughter therapy. The mixed methods approach used provides valid evidence of the benefits of the intervention (Hatzipapas et al., 2017).

Mindfulness

Similarly, mindfulness based strategies have been seen to reduce stress in healthcare professionals, who are often in ar similar environments that volunteers are in (Burton et al., 2016). However, it has been seen that for effective change, mindfulness interventions can require considerable personal investment, which has previously seen low attrition rates, potentially risking impracticality (Burton et al., 2016). Nonetheless, mindfulness based interventions can be delivered in multiple ways, including remotely, where evidence suggests they can still enhance the quality of life in clinical populations when administered online, potentially making them a more accessible option across voluntary organisations when personal investment is needed. (Sevilla-Llewellyn-Jones et al., 2018).

Employee led approach

In tackling work-related stress, a proactive employee led approach can lessen absenteeism and improve general wellbeing. NHS Hospital Trust (HSE, N/A) exercised these strategies by assessing in stages through informal chats, identifying where stress points and involving unions. They saw this preventative approach through increasing awareness to all levels of the organisation regarding work-related stress, improving workplace culture, and lessening stress, evidenced through reduced absences. Sufficient time was needed to engage all stakeholders which senior involvement helped to achieve, and having such engagement of management can sometimes be lacking in voluntary organisations (Elkin, 2013). It is important to note that programs which express the expectations within an organisation require effective implementation as it can impact the psychological contract, which some volunteer administrators may not have adequate training or professional aptitude to reform (Hager & Renfro, 2020).

Psychological testing

For leaders to cater to varied motivations of an organisation's voluntary workforce, psychological testing is a potential tool to discover what motivates them and learn more about one another (Tremblay et al., 2010; Ziegler et al., 2010). Psychological testing has been seen to be integrated into workplaces to identify what motivates employees, such as the Work Extrinsic and Intrinsic Motivation Scale (WEIMS) (Tremblay et al., 2010), to identify positive and negative work experiences and enact interventions to meet individual differences within an organisation. Applying psychological testing such as the WEIMS to a volunteer workforce could have potential issues regarding its applicability to unpaid workers, although it has been evidenced to be relevant in different work environments (Tremblay et al., 2010). Relating to motivators, providing fun can be seen as a non-monetary reward and dedication from the organisation to volunteers, such as an annual outing (Callow, 2004; Karl et al., 2009). This could be a solution to reduce organisational stress through retaining volunteers, by showing recognition whilst also satisfying personal growth needs and intrinsic motivations (Loh et al., 2017; Maslow, 1943).

Continual Professional Development

Continually improving the learning environment that a charitable organisation provides can help reduce stress and contribute to better health and wellbeing. Continuous training development opportunities that are readily available for volunteers and within leadership roles can help improve confidence, skillsets and help reduce any job ambiguity experienced for volunteers and leaders (Aguinis & Kraiger, 2009; Burbeck et al., 2014). Online training courses allow a wide range of audiences to be reached, whilst still facilitating information to be learned. For example, providing opportunities to do a range of training courses based on different voluntary sector aspects such as planning, governance, strategy and management (NCVO, 2022) allows individuals to expand their knowledge in order to effectively lead a charity and its volunteers. This is a way to tackle stress in charities, as it has been seen that appropriate leadership can help retain and create a positive workplace (Haslam et al., 2011; Fallon, & Rice, 2011). Similarly, resilience training for health volunteers could potentially help identify ways of coping with stressful situations they may encounter within their roles. Importantly, it has been identified that effective resilience training should include elements of one-to-one training and provide training based upon individual needs, which could extend from online learning, potentially making it harder to implement (Robertson et al., 2015).

Conclusion

Investigating stress in health charity organisations with predominantly voluntary workforces identified differences in leadership, motivations and varying roles, especially in regard to contemporary issues. Policies unique to charity organisations revealed issues relating to control regarding statutory protection (GOV UK, 2021) and volunteers having different rights from paid workers, potentially adding pressure for leaders, such as non-compulsory notice periods (The Charity Commission, 2013). It has been shown organisations can take steps in order to overcome these policy issues and retain volunteers through regular communication and ensuring recognition of volunteers, through non-monetary rewards (Callow, 2004; Karl et al., 2009). Volunteers often have exhaustive intrinsic and extrinsic motivators (Gopalan et al., 2017; Loh et al., 2017; Mahmoud et al., 2020; Maslow, 1943). With volunteer workforces, monetary pay is absent, therefore individuals need more from leadership in order to feel satisfied, motivated,encouraged and to feel personal growth (Malsow, 1943). Potential uses of psychological testing could help leadership foresee what motivates volunteers especially when motivation can be subjective (Tremblay et al., 2010). Unforeseen circumstances for volunteer organisations can have negative impacts upon role changes; for example, pressures and funding issues related to COVID-19 (Jones, 2021), ultimately increasing risk factors for stressors for both volunteers and their leaders. Some external circumstances cannot be foreseen or helped. However it has been identified that regular and open communication with the facilitation of one-to-one periods with health volunteers can help maintain a positive workplace and reduce stress (HSE, N/A; Robertson et al., 2015). Measuring stress as a construct is an overarching issue surrounding Occupational Psychology within all sectors, with the uniqueness and subjectivity of the way humans experience stress, as well as how stress is expressed, described and explained can differ between people, thereby resulting in a challenge of developing widespread coping strategies (Cannon, 1932; Fisher, 2014; Hefferon & Boniwell, 2011; McClelland, 1987; Szabo et al., 2017).

Reflection and Strategy Development

I have over a year and a half unpaid work experience within a Mental Health Crisis café. The café is run by a charitable religious organisation, Acts Trust, put together for the relief of poverty around Lincoln and surrounding areas. Within this organisation, I am a lead volunteer and keyholder. The trust overlooks a range of community services such as Crisis Cafes, foodbanks and youth work services.

The organisation's vision takes a very group centred approach, to achieve social outcomes, with in-group leadership, focusing on 'us' and 'we' in its visions and referring to their work as a 'mission' which also instils engagement (Acts Trust, 2020). The use of collectives within their visions creates a social identity and basis to work together, which are also mirrored within the workplace as we see ourselves as collective teams (Haslam et al., 2011). The charity was set up by church members, who all had a collective goal in mind, so they represent and embedded a shared sense of identity, as well as demonstrated they stood up for a

shared sense of identity, linked to a creative followership style (Armstrong & Huffington, 2004; Haslam, et al., 2011). Future strategies I would develop to my working life outside of the voluntary position would be identifying what leadership styles are used within organisations and whether I would be a good fit in regard to sharing the same visions and identities, as it is known that individuals are more productive when in a team with collective goals (Haslam, et al., 2011).

The organisation sets dates in advance for monthly volunteer meetings at various locations in Lincoln in evenings, in order to try and accommodate fitting into volunteers' free time. During these meetings volunteers have opportunities to discuss how their volunteering is going, what is concerning them, engage in group discussion and activities, with a Clinical Psychologist present to offer professional advice and feedback on group issues. These meetings give ample opportunity to build relationships and create a sense of social support between all volunteers and leaders, which has been seen to foster healthy workplaces (Setti et al., 2018). Hosting professional advice within the meetings provides a sense of confidence that the guidance offeredis well-informed and relevant within the field of healthcare. Even though group discussions have benefits, they could be more effective through developing a future strategy of ensuring volunteers have an opportunity for one-to-one support, which is even more inclusive insofar as it recognises individual differences (McClelland, 1987; Robertson et al., 2015)

Having volunteer responsibilities within a mental health crisis café has highlighted that having on-going training opportunities is vital to keep a confident and committed workforce, corroborating literature about the benefits of offering training and development throughout an organisation (Aguinis & Kraiger, 2009). When volunteers are given opportunities to communicate their concerns through monthly meetings,; for example, feeling unsure of duties and how to approach some situations are often commented on, the need for more training is highlighted. This relates to literature that explains how uncertainty of having an appropriate skillset can cause worry in a team, which ultimately lowers wellbeing. The organisation has initial training which is compulsory before beginning volunteering, such as safeguarding and Mental Health First Aid (MHFA, 2022). However, some skills dissipate once time has passed and responsibilities change. Future strategies could develop this learning environment by allowing training to be on-going in order to instil confidence in one's role and skillset, especially when given extra responsibly such as key holding (Aguinis & Kraiger, 2009).

Strategies that could be developed to apply to working life could include the recognition of personal motivators based on the influence they have on how well a role is delivered (Smith & Liao-Troth, 2009). It has been identified that motivators change overtime and are assumed to be dependent on individual differences (McClelland, 1987). It has been clear through volunteering, the tasks and role expectations which are usually stressful are not motivators for volunteering my time and that I consistently attend due to realising that I am satisfying needs for personal growth (Maslow, 1943). Through getting promoted my responsibilities within the organisation changed, meaning my motivators adapted in line with this, and were testament to personal growth.

Within this organisation, strategies could develop in order to introduce succession management, spreading of abilities and mindsets throughout other levels of the organisation, to ensure readiness to replace current leader roles. Often within the charity, volunteers are usually too short-term to gain appropriate skills to be considered for future roles. Similar findings have been identified in research, highlighting issues surrounding succession management in the third sector as long-term committed volunteers will need to be replaced eventually, usually without anyone with the appropriate abilities to fill the gap (Elkin, 2013). There are difficulties surrounding this due to lack of consistent long-term volunteers in certain cafes, which can increase stress and pressure on the lead volunteers (which has been personally experienced). To help mitigate against this stress, strategies could be implemented to ensure opportunities arise for volunteers to want to consistently attend and take up other responsibilities, in turn encouraging personal growth (Maslow, 1943). ■

References

Acts Trust. (2020). *Our Vision.* https://www.actstrust.org.uk/about/

Aguinis, H., & Kraiger, K. (2009). Benefits of Training and Development for Individuals and Teams, Organizations, and Society. *Annual Review Of Psychology, 60*(1), 451-474. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.60.110707.163505

Akouchekian, S., Roohafza, H., Hasan zadeh, A., Mohammad Sharifi, H. (2009). Relation between Social Support and Coping with Stress in Nurses in Psychiatric Ward. *J Guil Uni Med Sci. 18*(69), 41-46.

Armstrong, D., & Huffington, C. (2004). *Working Below the Surface*. Routledge.

Brimhall, K., Mor Barak, M., Hurlburt, M., McArdle, J., Palinkas, L., & Henwood, B. (2016). Increasing Workplace Inclusion: The Promise of Leader-Member Exchange. *Human Service Organizations: Management, Leadership & Governance, 41*(3), 222-239. https://doi.org/10.1080/23303131.2016.1251522

British Psychological Society (BPS). (2021). *Wellbeing at work - free new guide for DOP members.* https://www.bps.org.uk/news-and-policy/wellbeing-work-free-new-guide-dop-members

British Psychological Society (BPS). (2020). *Covid-related anxiety and distress in the workplace: A guide for employers and employees.* https://www.bps.org.uk/sites/www.bps.org.uk/files/Policy/Policy%20-%20Files/Covid-related%20anxiety%20and%20stress%20in%20the%20workplace.pdf

British Psychology Society (BPS). (2019). *Standards for the accreditation of Masters & Doctoral programmes in occupational psychology*. https://www.bps.org.uk/sites/www.bps.org.uk/files/Accreditation/Occupational%20Accreditation%20Handbook%202019.pdf

British Psychology Society (BPS). (2021). *Division of Occupational Psychology.* https://www.bps.org.uk/member-microsites/division-occupational-psychology

Burbeck, R., Candy, B., Low, J., & Rees, R. (2014). Understanding the role of the volunteer in specialist palliative care: a systematic review and thematic synthesis of qualitative studies. *BMC Palliative Care, 13*(1). https://doi.org/10.1186/1472-684x-13-3

Burton, A., Burgess, C., Dean, S., Koutsopoulou, G., & Hugh-Jones, S. (2016). How Effective are Mindfulness-Based Interventions for Reducing Stress Among Healthcare Professionals? A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis. *Stress And Health, 33*(1), 3-13. https://doi.org/10.1002/smi.2673

Callow, M. (2004). Identifying promotional appeals for targeting potential volunteers: an exploratory study on volunteering motives among retirees. *International Journal Of Nonprofit And Voluntary Sector Marketing, 9*(3), 261-274. https://doi.org/10.1002/nvsm.252

Cannon, W. B. (1932). The wisdom of the body. W W Norton & Co.

Cassidy, M., Thompson, R., El-Nagib, R., Hickling, L., & Priebe, S. (2019). Motivations and experiences of volunteers and patients in mental health befriending: a thematic analysis. *BMC Psychiatry, 19*(1). https://doi.org/10.1186/s12888-019-2102-y

Charities Act. (2013). *Charitable Purposes.* GOV UK. https://www.gov.uk/government/news/charities-act-2011

CIPD. (2022). Health and Wellbeing at Work Survey. *Simplyhealth.* https://www.cipd.co.uk/Images/health-wellbeing-work-report-2022_tcm18-108440.pdf

Claxton-Oldfield, S. (2015). Hospice Palliative Care Volunteers. *American Journal Of Hospice And Palliative Medicine, 33*(2), 201-204. https://doi.org/10.1177/1049909115571545

Conway, N., & Briner, R. (2006). Understanding Psychological Contracts at Work - A Critical Evaluation of Theory and Research. *British Journal of Industrial Relations, 44*(4), 815-816.

Cooper, C. & Hesketh, I. (2019). *Wellbeing at work: how to design, implement and evaluate an effective strategy.* CIPD and Kogan Page.

Einarsdóttir, A., & Osia, S. (2020). "That's My Job": Tensions Between Employees and Volunteers in the Fire Service. *Nonprofit And Voluntary Sector Quarterly, 49*(4), 871-889. https://doi.org/10.1177/0899764020908329

Elkin, G., Smith, K., & Zhang, H. (2013). Succession planning in the Third Sector in New Zealand. *New Zealand Journal of Employment Relations, 37*(3), 34–49. https://search.informit.org/doi/10.3316/informit.431914829779952

Fallon, B., & Rice, S. (2011). Investment in staff development within an emergency services organisation: comparing future intention of volunteers and paid employees. *The International Journal Of Human Resource Management, 26*(4), 485-500. https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2011.561222

Fisher, C. (2014). Conceptualizing and Measuring Wellbeing at Work. *Wellbeing*, 1-25. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118539415.wbwell018

Galindo-Kuhn, R., & Guzley, R. (2001). The Volunteer Satisfaction Index. *Journal Of Social Service Research, 28*(1), 45-68. https://doi.org/10.1300/j079v28n01_03

Glazer, S., & Liu, C. (2017). Work, Stress, Coping, and Stress Management. *Oxford Research Encyclopedia Of Psychology.* https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190236557.013.30

Gopalan, V., Bakar, J., Zulkifli, A., Alwi, A., & Mat, R. (2017). A review of the motivation theories in learning. *AIP Conference Proceedings.* https://doi.org/10.1063/1.5005376

GOV UK. (2021). *Whistleblowing disclosures made to the Charity Commission for England and Wales 2020 to 2021.* https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/whistleblowing-disclosures-made-to-the-charity-commission-for-england-and-wales-2020-to-2021/whistleblowing-disclosures-made-to-the-charity-commission-for-england-and-wales-2020-to-2021

Gross, R. (2020). *Psychology: The Science of Mind and Behaviour 8th Edition*. Hachette UK.

Hager, M., & Renfro, K. (2020). Volunteer Management and the Psychological Contract. *The Routledge Companion To Nonprofit Management*, 278-290. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315181011-22

Hall, C. L., Brooke, J., Pendlebury, S. T., Jackson, D. (2017). What is the impact of volunteers providing care and support for people with dementia in acute hospitals? A systematic review. *Dementia, 18*(4), 1410–1426. https://doi.org/10.1177/1471301217713325

Haslam, S. A., Reicher, S., & Platow, M. (2011). *The new psychology of leadership: Identity, influence, and power*. Psychology Press.

Hatzipapas, I., Visser, M., & Janse van Rensburg, E. (2017). Laughter therapy as an intervention to promote psychological well-being of volunteer community care workers working with HIV-affected families. *SAHARA-J: Journal Of Social Aspects Of HIV/AIDS, 14*(1), 202-212. https://doi.org/10.1080/17290376.2017.1402696

Health and Safety Executive (HSE). (2019). *Tackling work-related stress using the Management Standards approach. A step-by-step workbook.* https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/wbk01.htm

References continued

Health and Safety Executive (HSE). (N/A). *Stress case study – NHS Hospital Trust*. https://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/casestudies/nhs-trust-hospital.htm

Hefferon, K., & Boniwell, I. (2011). *Positive psychology*. Open University Press.

Holmes, K., & Lockstone-Binney, L. (2014). An exploratory study of volunteer stress management: the organisational story. *Third Sector Review, 20*(1).

Huelat, B., & Pochron, S. (2020). Stress in the Volunteer Caregiver: Human-Centric Technology Can Support Both Caregivers and People with Dementia. *Medicina, 56*(6), 257. https://doi.org/10.3390/medicina56060257

Hustinx, L., Cnaan, R., & Handy, F. (2010). Navigating Theories of Volunteering: A Hybrid Map for a Complex Phenomenon. *Journal For The Theory Of Social Behaviour, 40*(4), 410-434. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-5914.2010.00439.x

Jones, C. (2021). The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the third sector and carers in the UK. *International Journal Of Care And Caring, 5*(3), 529-534. https://doi.org/10.1332/239788221x16171137895838

Karl, K., Peluchette, J., & Hall, L. (2008). Give Them Something to Smile About: A Marketing Strategy for Recruiting and Retaining Volunteers. *Journal Of Nonprofit & Public Sector Marketing, 20*(1), 71-96. https://doi.org/10.1080/10495140802165360

Khalatbari, J., Ghorbanshiroudi, S., & Firouzbakhsh, M. (2013). Correlation of Job Stress, Job Satisfaction, Job Motivation and Burnout and Feeling Stress. *Procedia - Social And Behavioral Sciences, 84*, 860-863. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2013.06.662

Knapp, J., Diehl, M., & Dougan, W. (2020). Towards a social-cognitive theory of multiple psychological contracts. *European Journal Of Work And Organizational Psychology, 29*(2), 200-214. https://doi.org/10.1080/1359432x.2019.1709538

Kossek, E., & Lautsch, B. (2012). Work–family boundary management styles in organizations. *Organizational Psychology Review, 2*(2), 152-171. https://doi.org/10.1177/2041386611436264

Lee, A., Thomas, G., Martin, R., Guillaume, Y., & Marstand, A. (2019). Beyond relationship quality: The role of leader–member exchange importance in leader–follower dyads. *Journal Of Occupational And Organizational Psychology, 92*(4), 736-763. https://doi.org/10.1111/joop.12262

Lester, S. (2006). Understanding Psychological Contracts at Work ? A Critical Evaluation of Theory and Research ? Neil Conway and Rob B. Briner. *British Journal Of Industrial Relations, 44*(4), 815-816. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8543.2006.00524_7.x

Lewis, R., & Zibarras, L. (2013). *Work and occupational psychology*. SAGE

Loh, L., Evans, T., Akporuno, O., Owens, K., Lickers, B., Marlinga, J., & Lin, H. (2017). Using Maslow's hierarchy to highlight power imbalances between visiting health professional student volunteers and the host community: An applied qualitative study. *Education For Health, 30*(2), 133. https://doi.org/10.4103/efh.efh_175_16

Mahmoud, A., Fuxman, L., Mohr, I., Reisel, W., & Grigoriou, N. (2020). "We aren't your reincarnation!" workplace motivation across X, Y and Z generations. *International Journal Of Manpower, 42*(1), 193-209. https://doi.org/10.1108/ijm-09-2019-0448

Maslach, C., & Leiter, M. (2016). Burnout. *Stress: Concepts, Cognition, Emotion, And Behavior,* 351-357. https://doi.org/10.1016/b978-0-12-800951-2.00044-3

Maslach, C., Schaufeli, W., & Leiter, M. (2001). Job Burnout. *Annual Review Of Psychology, 52*(1), 397-422. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.52.1.397

Maslow, A. H. (1943). A theory of human motivation. *Psychological Review, 50*(4), 370-96.

McClelland, D. (1987). *Human motivation*. Cambridge University Press.

MHFA England. (2022). *Become a Mental Health First Aider*. https://mhfaengland.org/individuals/adult/online-mental-health-first-aid/

Mind. (2020). Wellness Action Plan Guide for people who are working remotely. https://www.mind.org.uk/media/12143/mind-wellness-action-plan-hybrid-work.pdf

Mohammad Mosadeghrad, A. (2014). Occupational stress and its consequences. *Leadership In Health Services, 27*(3), 224-239. https://doi.org/10.1108/lhs-07-2013-0032

National Championing Voluntary Action (NCVO). *Find Training*. https://booking.ncvo.org.uk/training

NCVO, Nottingham Trent University, Sheffield Hallam University. (2020). Respond, recover, reset: the voluntary sector and COVID-19. *Economic and Social Research Council.* http://cpwop.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2020/10/Respond-recover-reset-the-voluntary-sector-and-COVID-19.pdf

NCVO, Nottingham Trent University, Sheffield Hallam University. (2021). Respond, recover, reset: the voluntary sector and COVID-19. *Economic and Social Research Council.* http://cpwop.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2021/05/NTU-Covid-voluntary-sector-report-May-2021_DIGITAL.pdf

National Championing Voluntary Action (NCVO). (2014). *Final report of the Call to Action Progress Group following the Volunteer Rights Inquiry.* http://blogs.ncvo.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/mike-locke/call-to-action-progress-group-volunteer-rights-inquiry-report.pdf

Nichols, G. (2012). The Psychological Contract of Volunteers: A New Research Agenda. *VOLUNTAS: International Journal Of Voluntary And Nonprofit Organizations, 24*(4), 986-1005. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11266-012-9294-9

Pearce, J, L. (1993). *Volunteers: The Organizational Behaviour of Unpaid Workers*. Routledge.

Pink, J., Gray, N., O'Connor, C., Knowles, J., Simkiss, N., & Snowden, R. (2021). Psychological distress and resilience in first responders and health care workers during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Journal Of Occupational And Organizational Psychology, 94*(4), 789-807. https://doi.org/10.1111/joop.12364

Rabenu, E., & Yaniv, E. (2017). Psychological resources and strategies to cope with stress at work. *International Journal of Psychological Research, 10(2).* http://dx.doi.org.bishopg.idm.oclc.org/10.21500/20112084.2698

Setti, I., Zito, M., Colombo, L., Cortese, C., Ghislieri, C., & Argentero, P. (2018). Well-Being and Affective Commitment among Ambulance Volunteers: A Mediational Model of Job Burnout. *Journal Of Social Service Research, 44*(2), 236-248. https://doi.org/10.1080/01488376.2018.1442898

Sevilla-Llewellyn-Jones, J., Santesteban-Echarri, O., Pryor, I., McGorry, P., & Alvarez-Jimenez, M. (2018). Web-Based Mindfulness Interventions for Mental Health Treatment: Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis. *JMIR Mental Health, 5*(3), e10278. https://doi.org/10.2196/10278

Smith, J. T., & Liao-Troth, M. (2009). The psychological contracts of volunteers: What we do and do not yet know. *International Journal of Volunteer Administration, 16*(3), 12-20.

Steptoe-Warren, G. (2013). *Occupational psychology*. Pearson.

Szabo, S., Yoshida, M., Filakovszky, J., & Juhasz, G. (2017). "Stress" is 80 Years Old: From Hans Selye Original Paper in 1936 to Recent Advances in GI Ulceration. *Current Pharmaceutical Design, 23*(27). https://doi.org/10.2174/1381612823666170622110046

The Charity Commission. (2013). *How to manage your charity's volunteers.* GOV UK. https://www.gov.uk/guidance/how-to-manage-your-charitys-volunteers

The Charity Commission. (2016). *Managing a charity's finances (CC12).* GOV UK. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/managing-financial-difficulties-insolvency-in-charities-cc12

Time To Change. (2016). *Creating mentally healthy workplaces*. https://www.time-to-change.org.uk/news/new-report-creating-mentally-healthy-workplaces

Tinne, V. E., Anne, R., Magnus, S., Katharina, N., Nele, D. C., & Hans, D. W. (2014). Threat of losing valued job features: the role of perceived control in mediating the effect of qualitative job insecurity on job strain and psychological withdrawal. *Work & stress, 28*, 2, 143-164.

van Knippenberg, D. (2011). Embodying who we are: Leader group prototypicality and leadership effectiveness. *The Leadership Quarterly, 22*(6), 1078-1091. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2011.09.004

Wendt, S., Tuckey, M., & Prosser, B. (2011). Thriving, not just surviving, in emotionally demanding fields of practice. *Health & Social Care In The Community, 19*(3), 317-325. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2524.2010.00983.x

World Health Organisation (WHO). (2020). *Occupational health: Stress at the workplace*. https://www.who.int/news-room/questions-and-answers/item/ccupational-health-stress-at-the-workplace#:~:text=Research%20findings%20show%20that%20the%20most%20stressful%20type,and%20where%20there%20is%20little%20support%20from%20others

Zappalà, G., & Lyons, M. (2009). Recent approaches to measuring social impact in the Third sector: An overview. *The Centre for Social Impact.* https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Gianni-Zappala/publication/319632308_Recent_approaches_to_measuring_social_impact_in_the_Third_sector_an_overview/links/59b720cfa6fdcc7415beb040/Recent-approaches-to-measuring-social-impact-in-the-Third-sector-an-overview.pdf

Zibarras, L., & Lewis, R. (2013). *Work and occupational psychology: Integrating theory and practice.* Sage.

Ziegler, M., Schmukle, S., Egloff, B., & Bühner, M. (2010). Investigating Measures of Achievement Motivation(s). *Journal Of Individual Differences, 31*(1), 15-21. https://doi.org/10.1027/1614-0001/a000002

Coming Out of the Coffin: Queer Vampires in Late 20th Century Gothic Fiction

Abstract:

This article critically explores the relationship between queerness and vampirism in three novels from the late twentieth century: Interview with the Vampire (1976) by Anne Rice, The Gilda Stories (1991) by Jewelle Gomez, and Lost Souls (1992) by Poppy Z. Brite. It is argued that each text presents a different depiction of queerness: negative, positive and neutral, respectively. The piece explores wider socio-political themes from when the novels were written, most notably the pre and post AIDS epidemic, as well as geographical setting – different cities within the USA. It is argued that the framing of queerness as analogous to vampirism is complex, with potential pitfalls, as well as progressive and transgressive possibilities. Recommendations for future research are critical investigations of representations of the queer vampire in twenty-first century Gothic fiction, as well as to perhaps explore the late nineteenth century texts that were the genesis that inspired those explored herein

Authors

Michael Taylor

BA (Hons) English Literature

Warning: this piece contains particular lexicon, descriptions and literary analysis of sexual acts, violence and taboos that may be distressing for some readers.

Introduction

The queer vampire has always been an enduring staple in the Gothic fiction genre ever since its initial appearances in the 19th century with the portrayals of Ruvthen, Carmilla and Dracula in prose, which then introduced to their audiences the literary depiction of the vampire as a dark lover that allures and attracts their victims. For the writers within the Gothic fiction genre, the queer vampire acted as a vehicle to symbolise sexualities and genders that were taboo, which transgressed the boundaries between what was normative and what was alternative. What then qualified the queer vampire as a vehicle was that the vampire existence was in parallel to the queer experiences of LGBTQ people: double lives, secret identities, underground culture. From these earlier works emerged the representation of the vampire that has been updated and burgeoned into the queer vampire in Gothic fiction of the late 20th century as a mutable metaphorical figure that reflects the LGBTQ community. The queer vampire of the late 20th century is thus 'out of the coffin' rather than 'in the closet', as was the case with their counterparts in the Romantic era and the Victorian era. In the Gothic fiction this dissertation focuses on, the narratives of the chosen texts focalise the point of view of the vampire instead of the human perspective. In order of their publication and popularity, the chosen texts are *Interview with the Vampire* (1976) by Anne Rice, *The Gilda Stories* (1991) by Jewelle Gomez, and *Lost Souls* (1992) by Poppy Z. Brite. This article will investigate the chosen texts through the critical lens of queer theory to chart the line of the queer vampire over the course of the chosen texts. In the context of the late 20th century, the chosen texts were written at a time of activism and protests that pushed for LGBTQ rights, as well as when AIDS ravaged the LGBTQ community. The central thesis of this piece is that queer experiences are embodied and expressed by way of the metaphor that identifies the marker of queerness with vampirism.

Interview with the Vampire concentrates on Louis as he recounts his 200 years of immortality to a reporter, including his homoerotic relationships with the vampires Lestat and Armand, the family he formed with Lestat and the child vampire Claudia, along with the shame and self-hatred he feels for himself. *The Gilda Stories* centres on Gilda, a Black butch lesbian woman that was formed in the 1850s by a female vampire from whom she inherits her name. For 200 years she witnesses the injustice towards marginalised communities that are constitutive of her identity as a queer person of colour. *Lost Souls* follows Nothing, an adopted teenager that abandons his home to hitchhike to the hometown of his favourite band, but he then happens upon roaming vampires. It is then revealed that he too is one of them, and is accepted among them.

Interview with the Vampire

Written by Anne Rice and published in 1976, *Interview with the Vampire* was expanded into a novel from a short story of the same title as an outlet for grief, and while Rice 'did not think of the novel as a gay metaphor as she was writing it, she agreed that the parallels were there' (Ramsland, 1994, p. 169). The novel opens in 1970s San Francisco depicting an interview between 'the boy' and 'the vampire' in a room on 'Divisadero Street' (Rice, 1976, p. 3), which is partly in the gay village. Their proximity to it in a city that was a hub for LGBTQ people and the resemblance to cruising of their meeting at a bar, then at a rendezvous, lends their interaction a homoerotic subtext. For the vampire Louis, the interview is the medium of coming out as a "monster" and constructing his vampirism as an echo of queerness that reflects the queer experience through the reveal of a non-normative identity. The queer experience Louis embodies is the self-hating homosexual, since his vampirism is a source of guilt, shame and melancholy that mirrors the intricacies of internalised homophobia. This self-image is also impacted by the Catholic beliefs that he grapples with, which is often the position for queer people of faith, so the insistence of his religion on guilt, shame and melancholy thus contributes to his internalised homophobia, although seemingly far from the root of the issue. With Louis, becoming a vampire is an infliction which fulfils a 'wish for self-destruction' (Rice, 1976, p. 17), because he is sure his brother's death was his fault so he deserves to be ostracised to the fringe. While Lestat believes that becoming a vampire is freedom from the mainstream, that Louis' 'desire to be thoroughly damned' (Rice, 1976 p. 17) is externalised through vampirism (an analogy for queerness) thus evinces that he treats his identity as a transgression instead. This perception of vampirism as a transgression is compounded by the idea that Louis' interview is a "confession" and this 'confessional structure goes a long way to validate the fallacious assumption of gay guilt and melancholy' (Keller, 2015, p. 28); the interview is then a confession in the sense of a secular counterpart to penance — which corroborates the power that Catholicism has over his morality — and of a criminal admitting to violating the law, which is fitting in that homosexuality was decriminalised in California in 1976, the location of the interview as set in San Francisco, as well as the time of publication.

The interview begins in the 1790s with Louis in the midst of grief over the loss of his brother to an accident that is blamed on him, whereupon he is bitten by the vampire Lestat, who returns that night to offer the gift of vampirism, which he accepts reluctantly. When asked by the boy about becoming a vampire, Louis muses that describing this change to a human is like describing intercourse to a virgin : 'I can't tell you exactly, any more than I could tell you exactly what is the experience of sex if you have never had it' (Rice, 1976, p. 15). This conceit is relevant under the speculation that Louis had never felt attraction to men until meeting Lestat, so the vampire serves as his sexual awakening. As such, the homoeroticism that is embodied and expressed by Lestat is a threat to Louis' presumed heterosexuality, hence his panic at Lestat's advances: 'he lay down beside me now on the steps, his movement so graceful and so personal that at once it made me think of a lover. I recoiled' (Rice, 1976, p. 18). This scene continues to convey itself in terms of sexual overtones, with Louis' phrasing that, when Lestat withdrew his fangs from his neck, 'the movement of his lips raised the hair all over my body, sent a shock of sensation through my body that was not unlike the pleasure of passion' (Rice, 1976, p. 19). But this bite is of dubious consent because Lestat tries to force the carnal deed on Louis, and in his resistance he fights back, so Lestat restrains Louis and the latter then surrenders to the strength of the former, 'he held my entire body in check; and as soon as I stopped my abortive attempt at rebellion, he sank his teeth into my neck' (Rice, 1976, p. 19). Since blood drinking can represent sexual activity, Lestat's bite can be construed as a rape and him turning Louis into a vampire as perpetuating the stereotype that 'paradoxically characterise[s] one partner … as a homosexual and the other as a victim of that homosexual' (Keller, 2015, p. 27). Contradicting this stereotype is the anti-LGBTQ rhetoric that queerness is a choice and a lifestyle, which is hinted at in the novel because humans can opt for vampirism of their own volition. However, this is then challenged by the ambiguity of Louis' reasoning, and he clarifies to

the boy: 'it was not inevitable. Yet I can't say I decided. Let me say that when he'd finished speaking, no other decision was possible for me' (Rice, 1976, p. 13). Further, this rhetoric is reliant on the notion that queerness is transient in nature, as a choice and a mutable lifestyle, which thus corresponds with 'the presumption that given the opportunity for conversion, all homosexuals would prefer to be straight' (Keller, 2015 p. 27); and whilst Louis wants to be normative (i.e. human, cisgender and heterosexual), his vampirism and his queerness are permanent, the only decision he has is to accept or deny his core identity.

What is crucial to his choice is his toxic relationship with Lestat, since the latter is out in his vampire identity, whereas Louis is discreet in his, and this distance prevents them from connecting, with Lestat rushing Louis through his initiation while ignoring his concerns, fostering a power imbalance. This is evidenced when Louis reflects that, 'I did not like Lestat at all … but I was infinitely closer to him', (Rice, 1976, p. 25) and the boy then poses in response, 'when the gap was closed between you, he lost his. . . spell?' (Rice, 1976, p. 25), which Louis agrees to. This comment reveals a lot about vampire relationships because turning is the closest intimacy for a vampire and a human, but sharing this intimacy is then a singular occurrence as the human becomes a vampire in the process, which is similar to 'losing one's virginity and feeling the pleasure of ascending to a stage beyond that virginal innocence, but that also means that it is a pleasure that can never be replicated' (Haukås, 2017, p. 26). This could also serve as commentary on homosexual relationships as imitations of heterosexual relationships through projecting the gender roles of 'the aggressive-male and passive-female binaries' (Kalia, 2013, p. 17), with Lestat as the masculine partner and Louis as the feminine partner, which then implies 'that two people of the same gender cannot foster a healthy and productive relationship' (Kalia, 2013, p. 23). This pertains to the portrayal of Louis and Lestat's relationship as 'a pattern of dominance and submission, domestic abuse (physical, emotional and mental) and abandonment issues' (Kalia, 2013, p. 17), which is strained to a higher extent when Lestat coerces Louis into remaining by his side by siring the child vampire Claudia for them to raise as their daughter, because Lestat erroneously 'believes the answer to saving the relationship is by adding to the family, by having a child' (Haukås, 2017, p. 37).

With the tragic character of Claudia the text explores the homophobic stereotype that spreads the lie that all queer people are inherently sexual predators and groomers. Central to this falsity is the fear-mongering of the masses that homosexual relationships are sterile, so they recruit children because they cannot reproduce. The prejudicial belief is 'that all homosexuals are created by other homosexuals, meaning all queers are converts, ruined heterosexuals' (Keller, 2015, p. 27). This rhetoric then contributes to the queerphobic fallacy that the children who are adopted by queer families will be stunted because of 'a premature erotic awakening, usually though molestation' (Keller, 2015, p. 19-20). In the case of the text, Claudia has her child body, but possesses an adult's psyche and then literalises this lost maturation, which leads to her showcasing the sensuality of a woman. If Louis' 'immortal kiss' (Rice, 1976, p. 91) is interpreted as an erotic act, then by biting Claudia he molests her, but if interpreted as an intimate act it is still problematic, since it involves physical proximity and injury even if the sexual dimension is dissociated. This homophobic stereotype reemerges when Louis and Claudia escape from Lestat for Europe, and travel to Paris, where they are invited to the Théâtre des Vampires by the leader Armand. In an instant, Louis is attracted to Armand — provoking Claudia's possessiveness — and terribly envies the attention he has from female vampires: 'what appalled me was my own fierce jealousy. I was afraid when I saw them so close to him, afraid when he turned and kissed them' (Rice, 1976, p. 241). While Armand is chronologically five-hundred, he is seventeen in appearance, whereas Louis is twenty-five in appearance, hence for him to fall in love with a late adolescent/youth adult as a queer man is an issue – although Armand is technically the oldest – which means that the power balance is skewed, and it is Armand who desires a romantic relationship with Louis. The relationship they form is unhealthy as Armand uses manipulation tactics to attract Louis; he seeks to sever his companionship with Claudia by psychically pressuring Louis to turn bereaved mother Madeline as a replacement for Claudia's own, and makes no move to intervene when the coven captures then punishes them, only freeing Louis from captivity once Claudia and Madeline are immolated in the sun. As revenge, Louis torches the theatre and the vampires, prior to reconciling with Armand and relenting to his feelings for him. Louis deems that giving over to taboo desire '"is the crowning evil, that we can even go so far as to love each other' (Rice, 1976, p. 314),and that there is love in 'what you know to be evil, what you know to be wrong' (Rice, 1976, p. 334); which is what he hopes to articulate to the boy in the interview – that vampirism and therefore queerness are taboo

The interview ends with Louis' reflections from the 1920s, with the breakdown of this relationship, to which the boy responds in awe: 'you don't even understand the meaning of your own story, what it means to a human being like me' (Rice, 1976, pp. 337-338). As Louis cannot comprehend the appeal that his identity has, he is horrified when the boy wants to become a vampire, ergo, to become a queer; so 'to show [the boy] the meaning of what I've said' (Rice, 1976, p. 338), Louis feeds on the boy to deter him from both options and disappears, the text closing with the boy wishing to locate Lestat. Not until the next decade did Rice's vampires return in *The Vampire Lestat* (1985) and *The Queen of the Damned* (1988), which were set predominantly in the 1980s. Within these novels the content controversially included allusions to the AIDS epidemic, the first outbreak of which was June 5th, 1981. Between the publication of *Interview with the Vampire* and *The Gilda Stories* there was (seemingly) only one other novel of note on queer vampires. This was *The Hunger* (1981) by Whitely Strieber, in which the main character was the bisexual Miriam Blaylock, who covets a lesbian relationship with the (straight) human Dr. Sarah Roberts to replace her lover. Besides this, the Gothic novels of the 1980s which focused on vampires were from the perspectives of non-queer vampires (*Hôtel Transylvania*) or the perspectives of humans (*The Delicate Dependency*), hence the queer vampire was mainly represented by Rice before Gomez's bold exploration of this theme.

The Gilda Stories

Written by Jewelle Gomez and published in 1991, *The Gilda Stories* is a novel of vignettes which was imagined as 'a lesbian-feminist interpretation of vampires' (Johnson, 2016) that reframes and recasts the vampire as a positive and progressive figure from the point of view of a Black butch lesbian woman. When the narrative opens in Louisiana 1850, the titular character (referred to as the Girl for the first chapter) is introduced as a runaway slave that is taken in by a White vampire woman named Gilda at a brothel, Woodard's, that she manages. At this brothel, the Girl is put to work as a domestic by Gilda while her partner Bird — a Lakota vampire woman — is placed in charge of the Girl's chores and education. Together they raise the Girl, satisfying for them 'a need for family that matched her own' (Gomez, 1991, p. 16) along with 'a spirit and understanding of the world; that [she] were the voice lacking among [them]' (Gomez, 1991, p. 43). It is because of these emotional needs that Gilda hopes for the Girl to become a vampire at an age when she can 'make the decision' (Gomez, 1991, p. 24) and replace Gilda as Bird's companion while she succumbs to the true death. When the Girl has grown into adulthood, Gilda introduces her to vampirism and the exchange that the majority of the vampires in the novel practice (including herself and Bird), which is: 'the manner of taking the blood and leaving something in return—how to partake of life and be certain not to take life' (Gomez, 1991, p. 49). With her consent, Gilda half-turns the Girl into a vampire then departs to end her life so Bird is left to 'complete the circle' (Gomez, 1991, p. 47), and the Girl, now newly turned, then inherits the name of Gilda on the request of her predecessor.

While Rice and Brite approach blood-drinking as a substitute for, and supplement to, sex respectively, Gomez dissociates blood-drinking 'from sexual pleasure so that lesbian eroticism is foregrounded in its own right and not elided and normalised by vampirism' (Jones, 1997, p. 162). In the novel, the vampires use their nails for drawing blood from humans and other vampires, which thus eschews the phallicism that is inherent to the penetration of fangs, and the slit they cut in the skin then resembles the vagina, thereby feminising the bleeding as a natural process akin to menstruation. Ergo, the prejudice that portrays queer people as sexual predators (rapists and pedophiles) which is present in the other texts (e.g. Rice, above) is eschewed, since the intimacy of blood-drinking is symbiotic rather than parasitic, and is romantic or platonic for vampires, excluding the ones 'who kill every time they go out into the night' (Gomez, 1991, p. 45), instead of performing the exchange. However, Gomez's intention to renegotiate the problematic power dynamic between humans and vampires is compromised by the non-consent that exists in the exchange of blood. For that reason these interactions remain in favour of the vampire, but in desexualising the intimacy of drinking and sharing blood, Gomez is also deconstructing the association of queerness with infection, which is expressed within the text by the original Gilda: 'It is through our connection with life, not death, that we live' (Gomez, 1991, p. 45), hence the drinking and sharing of blood is not comparable to STDs such as AIDs. In lieu of this, the creation of a new vampire is presented overtly as an act of *nursing*, which is crucial since all scenes of turning are performed by female vampires, who feed the humans with blood from a cut beneath their breast or in a single case through mouth-to-mouth feeding — which is akin to a traditional practice that is performed by mothers to their infants — and then with blood from their breast. The prevalence of this maternal imagery might be interpreted as inverting a medical theory within a midwifery text from an anonymous writer who assumed the pseudonym 'Aristotle', which posits: 'the milk is nothing but the menstruous blood made white in the breast' (Anon, 1702, p. 98). This is not to say that breast milk is transmuted into menstruous blood, but rather that the purpose of breast milk as a source of nourishment is displaced by blood, and this allusion to menstruation evokes the vaginal imagery that was mentioned earlier. This continues to distance the depiction of their feeding from pretences of perversion, akin to Rice. That blood is genderless thus grants same-gender vampires and single vampires the volition to start their chosen family.

This concept of the chosen family is thus defined as the development of a support network that substitutes for biological family, which is particularly common in and is practically synonymous with the LGBTQ community, whose members often suffer ostracism from their families of origin on the basis of their identities. The theme of the chosen family is woven into the narrative through the efforts of Gilda to reconcile the two sides of her chosen family, the humans with whom she has temporary bonds as a "mortal" and the vampires with whom she has blood ties as an immortal. In the chapters that take place post her transformation, Gilda has to manage her relationships with the humans and vampires she meets over the course of history: her rivalry with the vampires Eleanor and Samuel, her solidarity with human activists, actors, singers and sex workers such as Aurelia, Savannah and Ayeesha, a friend to the vampires Julius, Sorel and Anthony, a lover to the vampires Bird, Effie and Ermis. For the bulk of the narrative, Gilda broods over which of her human companions to embrace into their chosen family, an ethical dilemma that is explained thusly by Sorel's partner Anthony when she asks him about the subject while sojourning with them:

> 'to choose someone for your family is a great responsibility. It must be done not simply out of your own need or desire but rather because of a mutual need. We must search ourselves and the other to know if it is really essential. To do otherwise is a grave error' (Gomez, 1991, p. 69).

Such is one of the fundamental ideas in the text; that the formation of chosen families can build intimate bonds that are as deep as biological ties when done with benevolence, a sentiment which is shared amidst the folk that cultivate their families within the LGBTQ community.

Other ideas that are also explored within the narrative are visibility and passing, since Gilda's identity as a Black butch lesbian woman is perceptible in the milieus

she inhabits and hence is susceptible to the discrimination of the mainstream over the decades; yet her vampirism means 'she has she has power to overcome these situations, but she knows that other people don't have that same privilege' (Burch, 2011). Regardless of the advantages that she thus receives via her vampirism, Gilda is still a Black lesbian woman — a triple marginalised identity — and so her lived experiences are encountered through the intersection of her blackness, her lesbianism and her womanhood. Whilst her race as a Black person is unable to pass as White unlike the 'creamy-coloured quadroons' (Gomez, 1991, p. 28), on the other hand her sexuality and her gender as a butch lesbian woman is indeed varied in its visibility in the novel. For instance, the fluidity of Gilda's gender expression is exhibited as a choice and a necessity, since she very rapidly realises that, 'even with my advantages I'd be fair game for every male passerby' (Gomez, 1991, p. 66) and so she presents as a boy for the sake of travelling safely. At the same time, Gilda is 'comfortable returning to the guise of boyhood that had cloaked her during her travels west, releasing her from the pretences and constrictions of womanhood' (Gomez, 1991, p. 66), which suggests that she prefers masculine presentation when it then entails the matter of gender expression, as befits a butch lesbian. As fashions advance, the wearing of masculine or androgynous apparel by women becomes a trend and so Gilda is able to accentuate her femininity with the garments of masculinity instead of obscuring her femininity with such apparel. This means that Gilda's identity as a Black butch lesbian woman is visible in lieu of "passing" as a Black feminine straight woman, but 'by deliberately not "passing"—by putting herself at risk by drawing attention to markers of race and sexual identity – Gilda cunningly camouflages her real secret: her vampirism' (Jones, 1997, p. 159). Although she is not "passing" as a Black feminine straight woman, she is "passing" as a human and hiding the identity markers of a vampire because 'passing as mortal is survival, a survival that resonates with the conflicted significance of "passing" to people of color, lesbians, and gay men' (Jones, 1997, p. 158). This gauging of visibility is imperative for Gilda and her vampire family because of the risks that staying in the same place can pose for them if their vampirism is discovered, which is familiar for LGBTQ people that migrate to preclude the outing of their queerness. This is then reflected in Gilda's relocations throughout the decades and the personas she assumes to avoid detection: from a farmer in Rosebud, Missouri (1931) to a hairdresser in South End, Boston (1955) to a stage manager then a nightclub singer in New York City (1971 — 1981) and lastly a romance writer in Hampton Halls, New Hampshire until 2020.

When the narrative moves from modern 2020 to the dystopian future of 2050 (as envisioned in the 90s), the existence of vampires has been publicised, so hunters are hired by the rich to pursue them for their blood, whilst the majority of the population (including both humans and vampires) have migrated Off-world due to the ecocide of the planet. Thus, vampires are treated as a further marginalised group that are persecuted much like queer people and people-of-colour were in the previous centuries, an irony that is acknowledged by Gilda as she recalls the oppression she has suffered and witnessed. During this tumultuous time, Gilda receives a telepathic message that her loved ones are bound for the refuge of Machu Picchu in South America, and so travels to join them, during which she saves a woman named Ermis from a suicide attempt by turning her into a vampire as the last member of the chosen family. Together they travel to their destination. In this chosen family of six there are five members that are queer, so for them to retreat from an intolerant society can be read as referencing the idea of separatism (which was particularly prevalent among the lesbians of the 1970s and 1980s), wherein a marginalised group makes the decision to be independent from the mainstream, whereas the idea of assimilation advocates for the incorporation of a particular minority into the majority. Ultimately, this separatism is expressed as a positive political act on the basis that, for these vampires, the queerness they embody will endure through separation from oppressive structures of society as a triumph of their autonomy and agency. Unlike the fifteen years that separates *The Gilda Stories* from the preceding text by Rice, there is only one year in-between this and the next novel *Lost Souls* (1992), so there is a dearth of milestone events in this intervening year. That notwithstanding, there was the publication of *Vampires Anonymous* (1991) by Jeffery N. McMahan, a Gothic novel that follows the homosexual vampire Andrew as his partner attends meetings at the titular organisation in order to abstain from blood thirst. Rather than the radical queerness represented by Gomez in *The Gilda Stories,* in *Lost Souls* Brite tackles the queer vampire via a nihilistic approach to queerness; the queer vampire is amoral and counter-cultural to the subjective moral standards of the humans they are distinct and disparate from, so to measure them by normative notions is mistaken.

Lost Souls

Written by Poppy Z. Brite and published in 1992, *Lost Souls* was expanded into a novel from a short story that he was working entitled *The Seed of Lost Souls*. In a 1994 interview with Nancy Kilpatrick for the magazine HORROR, he explains his motives for writing about vampires:

> 'I was interested in and involved with the Gothic/deather subculture at the time - the music, the clothes and makeup, the affinity for graveyards, the bloodletting,and vampires are an essential icon of that culture. Those kids are beautiful, alienated, at once craving wild experience and romanticizing death. Is it any wonder they identify with vampires?'

Within alternative subcultures such as the Goth scene, members that are LGTBQ or are involved in non-normative lifestyles like BDSM and polyamory are accepted, but queerness in particular has 'a high value (sub)cultural capital in Goth subculture. Indeed, the subject of androgyny seems to be attached to the affirmation/performance of divergent sexualities' (Santos, 2021, p. 228). Against a backdrop in which the non-normativity of queerness is welcomed, the narrators in the novel who belong to the Goth subculture or alternative scene are queer through the identities they perform and present. And of these narrators, it is arguably the perspective of the vampires, and particularly Nothing's, that is then focalised as the primary thread, which then frames the novel as a coming-of-age/coming out story that follows the course of his queer identity as a vampire.

In the Prologue of the novel, the newer vampires Zillah, Molochai and Twig visit the dive bar of the older vampire Christian on the last night of Mardi Gras in New Orleans, where Zillah has sex with the human Jessy. Then in the morning these newer vampires depart the city while Christian undertakes the duty of nursing Jessy during her pregnancy until her death, and to protect Nothing from the fate of vampirism he abandons him in Maryland to be adopted by humans. To begin, the text is differentiated from the previously discussed two in terms of Brite's depiction of vampires as he renders them as a separate race from humans that are 'close enough to mate but still as far away from each other as dusk and dawn' (Brite, p. 68). Thus, Brite's vampires are living beings that are born as vampires instead of turned into them and 'therefore, vampires cannot be regarded as degenerate, as they have no infection or disease to transmit to mortal humanity, no imperative to convert others to simulacra of their own state' (Hughes, 2009, p. 45). When these vampire babies are born, though, '*they manage to chew their way out*' (Brite, 1992, p. 277, original italics) of their mothers' wombs, which as a post-AIDS text is ironic for in the text it is the children of heterosexual intercourse that are the cause of death instead of AIDS, a reversal of the homophobic rhetoric that homosexual intercourse is fatal and infectious. Due to the dangers of intercourse for female vampires, they are averse to penetrative sex and are partial to abstinence, which is referenced in relation to the one female vampire that is named in the novel — Richelle — and it is only through rape that she is inseminated and then dies from an attempt to abort. With regard to these reasons, the male vampires have sex with female humans to sire the vampires 'of a newer generation' (Brite, 1992, p. 59) who 'wished they had fangs but had to make do with teeth they filed sharp, and they could walk in sunlight' (Brite, 1992, p. 5). Meanwhile the male vampires have homosexual relationships as a bisexual preference and a biological adaptation; the normalisation and necessity of homosexuality is contrary to the compulsory heterosexuality of human culture. It is through this emphasis that the analogy of 'vampirism *as* homosexuality or, more precisely, vampirism *which routinely embodies* homosexual practice' (Hughes, 2009, p. 150) is represented.

The most explicit manifestation of vampirism as homosexuality is via the similitude of blood to semen that is alluded to throughout the novel, the earliest of which is when Nothing evokes after the act of oral sex: '*come has almost exactly the same chemical makeup as human blood*' (Brite, 1992, p. 124, italics original), consequently feeding is like fellatio because they both involve ingesting a bodily fluid which is linked with life and implies that blood-drinking is intrinsically sexual. However, this instance is not the only or most graphic moment in the novel that 'grants materiality to the metaphor, or better yet, incarnates the metaphor that associates blood to life into bodily fluids' (Santos, 2021. p. 231). A case in point is when Christian feeds on a boy as he pleasures him to orgasm, and once, 'the boy's sperm flooded warm over Christian's fingers. Christian brought his hand up to his lips and sucked at that too' (Brite, 1992, p. 67). Here is the occasion in which the link 'between the sanguine and seminal' (Hughes, 2009, p. 149) is literalised for both bodily fluids appease his appetite. On account of the blood as semen analogy, the scenes that depict blood-drinking are interpretable as seminal, such as when Nothing drinks the blood beverage that Zillah offers, which serves as an indication of his inherent queerness since he does the deed 'without choking, without spitting or gagging' (Brite, 1992, p. 142). Owing to the fact that 'he swallows and does not spit, Nothing is simultaneously both a copybook vampire and a willing (and apparently instinctual) participant in gay, oral sexuality' (Hughes, 2009, p. 148); that the behaviours of vampirism and queerness feel natural for Nothing thus mirrors the consensus that LGBTQ identities are an inborn trait of LGBTQ people and accordingly does not denote a deviation in their psychology.

This positive notion of queerness as innate instead of unnatural is undermined though by the negative stereotypes that are present in Brite's vampires, which pertain to the relationships that Nothing has with Zillah and Christian – who are adults — because Nothing is fifteen, so he is underage and unable to consent to sex. Regardless of his status as a minor, Nothing has sexual relations with Zillah and Christian; which means the novel plays into the harmful implication that queer people are paedophiles that prey on youths, who are viewed as victims of "the gay agenda". Moreover, there is the reveal that Zillah is Nothing's father, therefore they have been engaging in an incestuous relationship, and yet, the novel refrains from condemning their relationship on the basis of incest, but instead via abuse. Meanwhile, the existence of this incestuous relationship is another instance of depicting the damaging stereotype that queer people are perverted towards sexual taboos such as incest, and derives from what Freud conjectured in the early 20th century wherein homosexuality is an inversion of the Oedipus complex, ergo homosexuals have an attraction to either their father or mother respectively (Roudinesco, & Pommier, 2002). Nevertheless, the portrayals of incest and pedophilia are not limited to homosexuality, and include heterosexuality, since Nothing's mother Jessy also has sex with her father as well as Zillah and Christian at the age of sixteen.

With the newer vampires in the novel, blood-drinking is another pleasure they also pursue in their hedonistic diet of drugs, sweets, sex and alcohol. With the older vampires, blood-drinking is the only need other than sex that they are able to satisfy, so Christian treats the blood he drinks with a respect that Zillah and his family (excluding Nothing) are lacking. While there is a reading that Christian 'may envy the greater freedom of modern youth, ironically scripted here as a form of biological evolution' (Hughes, 2009, p. 146), there is the sense that he is in a state of 'reflection upon the passing of a true nature, of an essential distinction that encodes vampirism' (Hughes, 2009, p. 146). This might be an allusion to the intergenerational conflict between older

and younger queers, in which the former feel jealousy and superiority towards the latter because the latter are able to exist in society as a result of *their* efforts and because they had to suffer through hardships that the latter did not. Since the newer vampires have their advantages from biological evolution, it is better and easier for them to pass as persons compared to Christian. Moreover, these newer vampires purposefully present themselves as queer, a privilege that Christian could not possess. This metaphor thus mirrors their privilege of "passing" to their biological evolution and encapsulates the idea that the younger members of a minority culture are closer to the dominant culture, which is depicted in the novel through the absence of fangs for the newer vampires, hitherto a most obvious marker of identity.

While the privilege of passing is applicable to homosexuals and bisexuals, the concept is also of importance to trans people, specifically since their capacity to pass as cisgender is contingent on the performance and presentation of gender conformity. This too is the position of the vampires, because in order to pass as human they have to embody and express the behaviour and appearance of a human, so the identity of vampire is thus analogous to a gender identity; insofar as being a gender is a matter of performing it by way of behaviour and appearance is fitting for how, 'Nothing becomes a vampire as he interacts and travels with Molochai, Twig and Zillah. It is from action, by a performative act, that he performs his gender identity' (Santos, 2021, p. 236). In the same sense that behaviour and appearance are coded as masculine or feminine, behaviour and appearance can be coded as human or vampiric too, and there are two scenes in the novel that illustrate this notion of the vampire as analogous to gender performance. The first of these is when Nothing is encouraged by Zillah, Molochai and Twig to feed on his friend Laine who had hitchhiked to find him after he ran away from home, and realises that the four of them are vampires, whereupon he performs the behaviour of vampirism by taking the life of a human for the first time. The second of these is when Nothing happens on his idols Steve and Ghost once again — the members of the eponymous band "Lost Souls" — while he and his family are living with Christian in their hometown of Missing Mile. In the midst of their meeting, Ghost (who is psychic) then notices that 'Most of Nothing's front teeth had been filed to sharp points' (Brite, 1992, p. 242) like Zillah, Molochai and Twig, thereupon presenting the appearance of vampirism. By doing these things that differentiate him from humans, Nothing is both performing the behaviour and presenting the appearance of his vampire identity, through which he is *becoming* his vampire identity.

In the climax, Zillah and Christian are dispatched by Steve and Ghost as revenge for the death of Steve's ex-girlfriend Ann from a botched abortion of 'another of Zillah's beautiful, deadly children' (Brite, 1992, p. 247). In the wake of this Nothing takes on the role of the head vampire. In the Epilogue (fifty years later), Brite closes the novel on Nothing and the twins as they lead 'a truly separatist gay life' (Hughes, 2009, p. 155) that is totally independent of the cisgender heterosexual human community. Akin to Gomez this separatism is presented as positive because, 'to stabilize and perpetuate both the physiology and the identity of the vampire thus necessitates the removal of the human from all functions other than that of feeding' (Hughes, 2012, p. 206).

Conclusion

In conclusion, the findings of this article are that these depictions of the figure of the vampire in late 20th century Gothic fiction encapsulate the lived experiences of queer people through the portrayal of vampirism as a metaphor for queerness, with each text managing to present the metaphor of vampires as queer in different and distinct ways that respectively represent their queerness as negative, positive and neutral. First is *Interview with the Vampire* (1976), which is a representation of negative queerness, wherein Louis is a vampire who lives in shame and self-hatred because he believes his vampirism is evil, thus evoking the implication that queerness is a transgression of religion. Further, the novel echoes the negative stereotypes that sees queer people as abusers with the intent of converting others into homosexuality through manipulation, molestation and grooming. These prejudices are depicted in the forcing of vampirism onto Louis by Lestat and their resulting toxic relationship, their adoption of Claudia that stunts her as a child with an adult mind, and Louis falling for a late adolescent. Second is *The Gilda Stories* (1991), which is a representation of positive queerness, wherein Gilda is a vampire who exchanges blood and emotions between herself and humans, which thus depicts them as symbiotic as opposed to parasitic by balancing the power dynamic. The novel is also then able to avoid the associations of queerness as inextricably linked to disease, as it is a post-AIDS text that, through narrating the sharing of blood as a nurturing and platonic interaction, separates feeding from sex. The novel then features the concept of the chosen family which Gilda enters and expands, as well as the notions of visibility and passing with the text thus examining the intersections of Gilda's marginalised identities as a Black butch lesbian woman. Third is *Lost Souls* (1992), which is a representation of neutral queerness, wherein Nothing and his family are vampires who are born from heterosexual fornication, which then inverts the interconnection of queer desire to death as established by the AIDS epidemic. The text does depict the immoralities of incest and paedophilia in homosexual relations, however this is the case too with heterosexual relations in the narrative. Then there is the idea of the vampire as analogous to a gender identity that is performed and presented in behaviour and appearance, which then, again, correlates to the concepts of visibility and passing because the newer vampires can pass as human, but choose not to, and the older vampires have to do much more to pass as human. The recommendation for future research is to investigate the queer vampire in 21st century Gothic fiction to follow the evolution of the texts from the late 20th century, for example *Let the Right One In* (2004) by John Ajvide Lindqvist and *Fledgling* (2005) by Octavia Butler, or to explore the queer vampire in 19th century Gothic fiction to establish the genesis for the texts of the 20th century, for example *Carmilla* (1872) by Joseph Sheridan La Fanu.

References

Anon. (1702). *Aristotle's Masterpiece*. London.

Brite, P. Z. (1992). *Lost Souls*. Delacorte Press.

Burch, S. (2011, July 12). Jewelle Gomez: The 20th Anniversary of The Gilda Stories. *Lambda Literary*. https://lambdaliterary.org/2011/07/jewelle-gomez-the-20th-anniversary-of-the-gilda-stories/

Dyer, R. (1988). Children of the Night: Vampirism as Homosexuality, Homosexuality as Vampirism. In S. Radstone (Ed.), *Sweet Dreams: Sexuality Gender and Popular Fiction* (pp. 47-72). Lawrence & Wishart Limited.

Gelder, K. (1994). Vampires in the Old (New) World: Anne Rice's Vampire Chronicles. In K. Gelder (Ed.), *Reading the Vampire* (1st ed.) (pp. 108-123). Routledge.

Gomez, J. (1997). Recasting the Mythology: Writing Vampire Fiction. In J. Gordon & V. Hollinger (Eds.), *Blood Read: The Vampire as Metaphor in Contemporary Culture* (pp. 85-92). University of Pennsylvania Press.

Gomez, J. (1991). *The Gilda Stories*. Firebrand Books.

Haukås, H. (2017). *Descending into the Swamp: An analysis of the relationship between Louis and Lestat in Anne Rice's "Interview with the vampire" and the consequences of their unspoken love.* [Master thesis, University of Bergen]. Bergen Open Research Archive. https://hdl.handle.net/1956/17092

Hughes, W. (2012). Fictional Vampires in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries. In D. Punter (Ed.), *A New Companion to the Gothic* (pp. 197-211). Wiley-Blackwell.

Hughes, W. (2009). 'The taste of blood meant the end of aloneness': vampires and gay men in Poppy Z. Brite's Lost Souls. In W. Hughes, & A Smith (Eds.), *Queering the Gothic* (pp. 142-157). Manchester University Press.

Johnson, W. (2016, May 1). Read Jewelle Gomez's New Foreword for 'The Gilda Stories: Expanded 25th Anniversary Edition'. *Lambda Literary*. https://lambdaliterary.org/2016/05/jewelle-gomezs-new-foreword-for-the-gilda-stories-expanded-25th-anniversary-edition/

Jones, M. (1997). The Gilda Stories: Revealing the Monsters at the Margins. In J. Gordon & V. Hollinger (Eds.), *Blood Read: The Vampire as Metaphor in Contemporary Culture* (pp. 151-167). University of Pennsylvania Press.

Kalia, K. K. (2013). The Dynamics of Transgressive Vampirism: A Queer Reading of Anne Rice's Interview With The Vampire. *Search: A Journal of Arts, Humanities and Management*, *7*(2), 17-25. https://ddceutkal.ac.in/Journal/SEARCH-VOL-7-ISSUE-2-JULY-2013.pdf#page=25

Keller, J. R. (2000). Interrogating the Vampire: Heterotextuality and Queen Reading. In J. R. Keller (Ed.), *Anne Rice and Sexual Politics: The Early Novels* (pp. 11-39). McFarland & Company, Inc.

Ramsland, K. M. (1992). *Prism of the night: a biography of Anne Rice*. Plume.

Rice, A. (1976). *Interview With The Vampire*. Raven Books.

Roudinesco, E. & Pommier, F. (2002, December 2). "OTHER" SEXUALITIES – I". Psychoanalysis and Homosexuality: Reflections on the Perverse Desire, Insult and the Paternal function. *European Journal of Psychoanalysis*, *15*(Fall-Winter). 1-17. https://www.journal-psychoanalysis.eu/articles/other-sexualities-i-psychoanalysis-and-homosexuality-reflections-on-the-perverse-desire-insult-and-the-paternal-function/

Santos, A. J. R. (2021). Raw as life: the Queer, the Goth and the Gothic in Lost Souls, by Poppy Z. Brite. *Whatever. A Transdisciplinary Journal of Queer Theories and Studies*, *4*(4). 219-238. https://doi.org/10.13131/2611-657X.whatever.v4i1.91

BISHOP
GROSSETESTE
UNIVERSITY

Bishop Grosseteste University
Longdales Road
Lincoln
Lincolnshire
England
LN1 3DY

+44 (0)1522 527347

SOLERTI

Issue #003 – Winter 2022/23
ISSN 2755-0540 (Print)
ISSN 2755-0559 (Online)