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Transgenderism and the Social Services

A qualitative study about transgender people and their
experiences of the Social Services in Sweden

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to investigate how transgender people may experience the services that are offered by the Social Services. To fulfill the aim, the researchers decided to focus on the transgender peoples' perspectives, and therefore chose to interview them and put them in an expert position. In this study a qualitative approach was used, and the data was gathered through two semi-structured face-to-face interviews. The main result was that the participants experienced that the Social Services sometimes might not have the right knowledge to give them proper information, sufficient support and the help they needed. Therefore, the participants often searched for information on their own, and the trust for the Social Services was unsatisfactory. One conclusion that could be drawn from this study was that the Social Services need to increase and improve their level of knowledge within this subject.

Keywords; Transgender, Social Services, Queer Theory, Social work

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1. Introduction

Being transgender means that a person does not identify with the gender that was assigned at birth, i.e. the biological gender. It can for example refer to a man who feels like a woman, a woman who feels like a man, or a person who identifies as neither. Transgender people are a vulnerable group in the society and have to face other people's ignorance and lack of knowledge on a regular basis (Grant et.al, 2011). In general, people today show more acceptance and support towards transgender people, which may be one reason to why more and more transgender people have the courage to come out and speak openly about the matter. However, the authors of this study experience that the level of knowledge about this matter has not kept the same development, which may be a reason to why transgender people all over the world are being oppressed, harassed and threatened every day (Grant et.al, 2011).

For future social workers, it is important to have knowledge about this subject, to be able to know how to meet this group of people and how to provide them with as good help and service as possible. In international social work educations, there is no obligatory education in transgender issues, either social work students have to gain knowledge on their own or get the training later on while working (Austin et.al, 2016). This applies to Sweden as well. In Sweden, gender studies are not a part of the obligatory education for becoming a professional social worker, since the authors have not and will not study it in the program. The lack of education and proper training have made the interest for the subject even larger, and the question about the competence arose.

The Government Offices of Sweden came out with a report in 2014 that contains a strategy for equal rights, regardless of peoples' sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression (Government offices of Sweden, 2015). In the report, there is a chapter about health, care and the Social Services that states that it is the health authorities' responsibility to ensure that the whole Swedish population has good health, social welfare and social support. This report further brings up that the Social Services are in need for increased competence regarding transgender matters. Within the social field it is important with proper knowledge about transgender matters and their life situation. This is important since social workers will meet all sorts of people and that includes transgender people. It is crucial that the Social Services are able to give everyone the help and support they need. Therefore, the knowledge regarding transgender matters among social workers need to be as high as possible.

In 2004, the health authorities made a survey to investigate if sexual orientation affected the treatment received from the Social Services. What they discovered were a lot of shortcomings, mostly regarding that the Social Services were not observant enough (Government offices of Sweden, 2015). However, what was most alarming was that the only group that was included in this study were homo- and bisexual, the opinions of transgender people were not even investigated and included in the study.

Both of the authors have always been very interested in questions and issues related to transgenderism, mostly because of friends who identify themselves as transgender. However, the idea of writing a Bachelor thesis grew out from a lecture on YouTube, where Kristina Olson, the associate Professor of Psychology at the University of Washington, talked about young children who identifies as transgender and what they go through in their every-day life (University of Washington, 2015). From this, the narrowing down part began and ended up in the study's aim and research questions.

Furthermore, since the authors are studying social work, there is a need for this kind of knowledge to be able to meet every potential future client in a proper and sufficient way. Hence, it is important to know how transgender people experience the Social Services; to know what needs to be improved or what is working well.

One thing that is important to keep in mind is that there is a difference between the Social Services as an institution and a professional social worker as a person. In this thesis, the social services is the institution where the social workers are employed and the professional the transgender person will have contact with.

The authors were interested in knowing how transgender people experience they are being met by the Social Services; how well they manage to support and help them, if something is not working and if there is something they feel should be handled differently. The key in the aim was the transgender status; how the transgender people may experience the provided services and support regarding them being transgender

1.1 Aim and research questions

The aim was *to investigate how transgender persons may experience the services that are offered by the Social Services.*

- How may transgender people experience the contact with the professional social workers, with regards to their transgender status?
- How may they perceive the level of knowledge among professional social workers regarding transgender issues?

2. Disposition

To make it easier for the readers to understand and follow what has been done throughout this investigation process, the report has been divided into different sections. In the first section, the earlier research that has been used for this study is presented. After this part, the authors follow up with an introduction and description of the different theories. The third section is the methodology part. This part include a presentation and description of the research model, the mode of procedure, reliability and validity, and ethical considerations. After this, the result is analyzed through the different themes that were found. The last section will be devoted to the discussion about results, method, and suggestions to further research will be stated.

3. Explanation of concepts

The concepts used in this thesis can sometimes be interpreted in different ways. For that reason, some clarifications and definitions of terms used in the report will be explained here, for an easier understanding and for the clarity of the investigation.

3.1 Transgenderism

Transgenderism is an umbrella term that refers to when someone identify beyond what the society see as ‘a real man’ or ‘a real woman’. It includes, as stated in the introduction, people who do not identify with the assigned gender at birth. Throughout this report, the term transgender has been made of great use. The definition of a transgender person, as being referred to in this thesis, is a person who do not identify as the gender that the person was assigned at birth. (Bremer, 2011)

When a baby is born, it gets assigned a gender and a personal number that shows if it is a boy or a girl. The biological gender that are assigned puts expectations on the child regarding how to behave as a girl or a boy. This to make it easier for most people to understand and see patterns within groups when it comes to the biological, political and social phenomena. And if the person feel that they want to change gender and personal number they have to meet with an expert and go through an investigation to get an approval for a gender correction. (Swedish secretariat for gender research, 2016)

3.2 Glossary

The authors have defined and explained some words and abbreviations that have been used in this report. This glossary has been inspired by one made by Lori B. Girshick (2008).

Birth gender: The gender that is assigned by birth, based on external genitals.

FtM: Female-to-Male transsexual; A person assigned as a female at birth who identifies as a man.

Gender correction: When a person undergoes surgery to make the body match the gender identity.

Gender dysphoria: When a person does not feel comfortable with the assigned gender at birth and the expectations that comes with the assignment.

Gender identity: The *internal sense* of an individual's gender.

Heteronormativity: When using heterosexuality as 'the standard' and the one to compare other sexual orientations with, and considered the natural or the norm.

MtF: Male-to-Female transsexual; A person assigned as a male at birth who identifies as a woman.

Non-binary: When a person identifies neither as a male or a female.

Passing: When a person is accepted as the gender that he or she is presented as, or being accepted as the person the individual really is.

4. Preliminary understanding and Background

The authors' own understanding before conducting this study was that the acceptance towards transgender people in general has increased during the last years, but the knowledge about transgender matters has not kept the same development.

One believes that social media have a lot to do with the increased acceptance, through bringing up the topic and discussing it in positive environments. However, the authors feel that educating about transgenderism has not been as interesting as the fight for transgender rights. This impression comes from that the authors never had any obligatory education about transgender matters, or know someone that have had. Therefore, this is an important subject to study. Furthermore, since the authors study to become professional social workers, and will very likely meet transgender people and work within this field, it makes it interesting and important to see how the Social

Services manage to meet transgender people and their needs. Moreover, it is an important subject to explore since, as stated earlier, there is no obligatory gender studies in the social work education. All information about transgender matters and the process that were known from before comes from social media and from friends that identify themselves as transgender.

Transgender people may go to the Social Services with issues related to gender dysphoria and gender correction (The National Board of Health and Welfare, n.d). The transgender people who turn to Social Services for help may risk to get met by ignorance or a lack of knowledge; for example, in cases where the social worker does not have enough knowledge to be able to be the educator, or using the wrong pronoun. How good care transgender people get differs from regional places in Sweden, in some places the knowledge are higher regarding transgender matters. (The National Board of Health and Welfare, n.d) In Sweden, all people should have the right to equally good care, but what can be seen at the Social Services is that this not always the case (The Swedish government offices, 2015).

5. Earlier research

The previous research that has been done within this area and that have been selected for this thesis are presented below. The authors found two earlier studies that have been conducted in Sweden, and to complement these, two international studies related to the subject were chosen. These four previous studies provide an understanding regarding the care system and the situation for transgender people, both in Sweden and internationally.

5.1 Bodylines – Gender, transsexualism and embodiment in narratives on gender correction

Signe Bremer's dissertation *Bodylines – Gender, transsexualism and embodiment in narratives on gender correction* (2011) discusses how the Swedish laws, regulations, diagnoses and gender norms restricts and enables transgender lives. Her dissertation tells the stories of 18 transsexual people and their experiences in undergoing gender correction. Through these life-stories Bremer investigates the embodiment of transsexualism and how it is lived through the time-lapse of a gender correction. In the

dissertation, transsexualism is referred to the experience of having a gender identity that not correspond with the gender that the person is born with (Bremer, 2011).

The aim of the dissertation is to investigate the creation and provocation of body and personhood in experiences about gender correction that are told by transsexual people, and to investigate what these stories about lived experiences tell about the conditions which bodies are being understood and recognized through (Bremer, 2011). She further describes the living conditions when the identified gender is corresponding with the juridical one. In other words, when transsexual people have passed the investigation, begun their gender correction process and has been allowed to change their juridical gender (Bremer, 2011).

The general goal that Bremer had when doing her research was to increase the knowledge about transsexualism as a dynamic embodied and state qualified status, and to highlight those perceived experiences (Bremer, 2011). Furthermore, to provide an increased knowledge about transgender people's meetings with a psychiatric field within specialized care in Sweden, and it is this part of the dissertation that the researchers have chosen to focus on.

What Bremer's dissertation and this study have in common is that both seek to create a broader understanding about the perceived experiences about the Swedish care system from transgender peoples' perspective. Although Bremer investigates the psychiatric field and this study focuses on the Social Services, the investigations aims to shed light over the same area but from different angles. Furthermore, Bremer's dissertation has been used as inspiration for this study's definition of transgenderism.

5.2 Transgender voices: Beyond Women and Men

Transgender voices: Beyond Women and Men is a book written by Lori B. Girshick (2008) and describes the different lived experiences of 150 transgender peoples' lives. In the book, Girshick (2008) presents transgender peoples' own voices when speaking about identity, coming out, passing, homophobia and bullying, among other related topics. In other words, what the participants have to face in the society as a transgender. Girshick conducted a study in the UK, with a survey that contains 32 in-depth questions. The survey includes questions about masculinity and femininity, gender role enforcements, and the participants' own journey; from the questioning of gender and the gender correction process to relationships with others (Girshick, 2008).

The result of this study show that transgender people did not feel that the biological body is the main issue, but the norms and expectations of the society. The majority of the participants said that the society's view on how to behave, depending on what biological gender one have, is the main factor to the barriers that stands in the way and says that one can only be either a woman or a man (Girshick, 2008).

What was gained from this earlier research is a broader knowledge and understanding about the challenges that transgender people have to face regarding the views and norms that is constructed by the society. To get to hear it from the perspective of transgender people gives a sense of genuineness, which is exactly what the authors wish to achieve when it comes to the experiences with the Social Services.

5.3 “They Just Don’t Have a Clue”: Transgender Aging and Implications for Social Work”

Anna Siverskog (2014) has conducted a study named “They Just Don’t Have a Clue”: Transgender Aging and Implications for Social Work”. In the study, there are six transgender persons between the ages 62 – 78 that are being interviewed. The study includes older transgender people and the Social Services in Sweden. The study contains other aspects as well, however since this study concentrates on the experiences with the Social Services, the researchers chose to concentrate on the part that focus on that and the findings that regard the subject. In Siverskog’s study, there is one paragraph named “implications for social work” and this section have been especially reviewed, but information from the whole study has been looked at.

The participants in Siverskog’s study talks a lot about the lack of knowledge and experience concerning transgender issues within the care system, and that they often had to be the one teaching the caregivers about these matters. This includes people that worked with transgender issues on a daily basis. They further state that it is important to broaden the knowledge about transgender issues to be able to provide sufficient help and to not discriminate, and to combat transphobia. The result in this study showed that the participants feared to end up in a nursing home, due to the lack of knowledge and fear of getting discriminated since they are transgender.

Even though this study is conducted in Sweden the study also brought up that there is a lack of knowledge and accurate care internationally as well. For example, in the US “This has, in turn, led to people arranging workshops for FtMs (female to male)

who get the opportunity to train on adapting an essential view of gender before they apply for transition” (Siverskog, p. 401, 2014)

This shows that an increased knowledge regarding transgender and non-binary persons are required in various circumstances. The lack of knowledge is an important theme in this study and often brought up in different contexts. The participants in Siverskog’s (2014) study experience that many people have a lack of knowledge regarding transgender matters, and that this have to do with how the media is presenting them when they bring up transgender matters. They argue that transgender people in media are often discussed as drag and in comedy. Also, the participant experienced that when telling people about their identity as transgender, many people assumed that they are homosexual, even though they are not. These are a few examples to why it is important to increase the knowledge about transgenderism.

Siverskog (2014) discusses the importance for social workers to have the right knowledge about gender and gender identity, to be able to be the educator for the client instead of the other way around. It is the social worker’s responsibility to get a greater understanding in this subject. Furthermore, to work with the transgender clients on an individual level and see to the individual's needs and not the whole community as one.

5.4 Transgendering care: Practices of care within transgender communities

Sally Hines article (2007) focus on the care and self-help groups, and the aim with the study was “to widen the focus of work into practices and meanings of care by bringing an under-researched social group to the analysis of caring practices”. This study was conducted in the UK. The similarities to Siverskog’s study is quite many, especially when they are discussing the importance of education among caregivers. As well as Siverskog, Hines discusses the importance of that the caregiver has the right education when it comes to providing transgender people the right and proper care. And in both papers the lack of knowledge the caregiver has are brought up.

In this article, one of the conclusions are that proper education in transgender matters are important, so when a transgender person needs care there will be no discrimination and no transphobia. This article also brings up that there is very little research done within the area of transgender and the care, which clearly indicates the need and importance of such research.

5.5 Summary

Bremer's dissertation has provided knowledge about transgenderism and an insight of how transgender people in Sweden perceive their meetings with professionals within the psychiatric field (Bremer, 2011). The authors of this bachelors' thesis have used her definition of transgenderism when explaining the concept, and taken inspiration from her investigation about the psychiatric field within specialized care when doing the research about the Social Services; for example, getting inspiration about what questions to ask by reviewing Bremer's interview guide.

While Bremer focuses on the psychiatric field, Girshick writes more generally about what transgender people go through in their every-day lives, and how the norms of the society affects them (Girshick, 2008). She brings up the role of the transgender peoples' biological gender, and this is one aspect of the study that has been brought in in this thesis; if the participants are able to pass as the gender they identify with or if they meet professionals that refers to them as their biological gender. Furthermore, Girshick have provided inspiration to the glossary list that has been used to explain concepts and abbreviations that are used in the thesis.

Both Hines and Siverskog are discussing the importance of proper education. The most important thing that is brought up from these studies is that the lack of knowledge among care givers is often, seen from the transgender peoples' point of view, not broad enough when it comes to transgender matters (Hines, 2007; Siverskog, 2014). In this thesis, the knowledge level regarding transgender matters of the social workers in Sweden will be a part of the investigation. Hines and Siverskog's studies were conducted a few years ago, and by writing this thesis, it can be seen if something has happened with the knowledge level and if the transgender peoples' view is different now from then.

6. Theories

Under this heading the theories the authors have chosen will be described. The theories being used are Queer theory and Empowerment theory. These two theories will help the authors analyse the collected data.

6.1 Queer theory

For this study, queer theory was chosen as the investigation's first theoretical ground. The theory is inspired by feminist theory and has its roots in post-structuralism (Herz & Johansson, 2013). The connection between normality and power is one of the theory's starting points. Queer theory seeks to investigate how norms are created, how they work and how they are questioned. Thus, queer theory is about the understanding about truth, meaning, language, identity and power. (Ambjörnsson, 2006)

Queer theory descends from feminist theory, and has been functioning as “internal criticism” towards it. Judith Butler, a famous person within the queer theory, criticized the way feminist science divided gender and sex in her break through book, *Gender Trouble* (1990). Butler argues that a division of the two tends to recreate a perception that a natural and cultural distinction between male and female exists (Ambjörnsson, 2006). Butler further states that what we perceive and experience like primal, constant and static – the physical and psychological gender – is socially constructed (Ambjörnsson, 2006). In *Gender Trouble*, Butler says:

If the immutable character of sex is contested, perhaps this construct called ‘sex’ is as culturally constructed as gender; indeed, perhaps it was always already gender, with the consequence that the distinction between sex and gender turns out to be no distinction at all. (Butler, 1990, p. 7).

Butler's ideas give a clear distinction about queer theory's connection to social constructionism. According to Vivien Burr (2004), social constructionism is about how people themselves conduct how the world is understood and perceived.

6.1.1 Criticism

One criticism against queer theory is that it is difficult to interpret and too academic to function in practice. There are scientists that even argue that queer theory should not be considered a theory at all, but a perspective on how to perceive the reality (Berg & Wickman, 2010).

Another aspect of the theory that is criticized is that for the theory to be applicable in practice, one must believe that gender is socially constructed. Some people argues if this theory would be accepted and applied in the real world, there would be no limits for

what a person could be attracted to and that they would be able to live out their sexual drifts. (Halle, 2004)

Trans studies has also been critical towards some aspects of queer theory. Transgender studies have aimed to emphasize the stability of the sexual identity, while queer theory primarily seeks to deconstruct and destabilize the concept of fixed sexual and gender identity (Lovaas, 2007). Although queer theory have grown out of LGBT studies, it is by some academics described as a more radical and inclusive approach, which is one reason to why the authors have chosen to apply the theory in this study (Lovaas, 2007).

6.1.2 Implementation

Queer theory, as stated earlier, is about the understanding about truth, meaning, language, identity and power. Furthermore, it investigates how norms are created, how they work and how they are being questioned (Ambjörnsson, 2006). What was focused on and brought into this study was the terms truth, identity and power. Through listening to and learn from the participants' stories and perceived experiences, the authors would be able to get a clearer picture about their own truths, in this case regarding the Social Services.

The transgender identity plays an important part in this study. The investigation builds on how the participants perceive the Social Services based on the fact that they themselves identify as transgender. In which ways is the quality of the meetings affected by their transgender status? Do the norms created by the society play a role, or is the service unbiased?

The connection between power and normality is a starting point in Queer theory, and something that will be implemented in this research. How much power do the transgender people feel that they have when meeting with the professionals? Are they being heard and through that being met in a sufficient way? To put the transgender people in an expert position to gain knowledge is a fundamental thought in this study, and something that will be further discussed and connected with the empowerment theory.

6.2 Empowerment theory

Empowerment theory is in the ground a theory that works to improve marginalized peoples' lives, and to help people get increased self-esteem and work towards new and positive behaviors (Turner & Maschi, 2015).

When working with marginalized groups or people, they themselves know what the problem is, what strengths they have and want to be reinforced. The theory is based on the idea that the individual knows everything about themselves and their experiences (Turner & Maschi, 2015). Furthermore, it is the social worker's job bring up and make use of the resources that the client or the community are possessing, to help and empower them. Social workers must try to understand how and why the people or the community are oppressed to be able to work towards social justice and to empower them (Turner & Maschi, 2015).

According to Hipolito-Delgado and Lee (2007) it is important for communities like LGBT, where transgender people are included, that they who are oppressed are engaged in the development towards a change. To be engaged help them, so they can appreciate their existence for their own virtues. This is not in comparison with the culture that is dominant, i.e. the heteronormativity.

6.2.1 Implementation

This theory is applicable to this study since through the theory it can be discovered if the participants in this study feel that the social worker tries to empower them in the contact with the authorities. Furthermore, to explore what is working in the contact between the social worker and the client, in this case the transgender person. A fundamental thought while conducting this study is to put transgender people in the position of the expert, and empower them to get their own voice in this subject.

7. Methodology

7.1 Research design

For this study a qualitative approach has been chosen. The qualitative approach is good to use when the researcher is exploring a subject, for example within social problems.

When using a qualitative approach, the researcher's intention is to get a deeper understanding from a small amount of cases, in this case individuals, about the subject (Grinnell, 2001). The insights one can get from using the qualitative approach is how

the participants have experiences the subject that is being studied. Moreover, when using the qualitative approach the researcher goes in with the mindset that the reality can be perceived in many ways, and that there is no absolute truth. It is only the data collected from the informants that is being analysed and studied, the empirical data (Grinnell, 2001). Therefore, the researcher can never know beforehand what the result from the study will be. When using qualitative approach, interviewing is common to gather the data, this to get a bigger understanding and as a researcher be able to do check-ups with the participant, to make sure that the researcher understands the information correctly (Grinnell, 2001).

To gather data, semi-structured face-to-face interviews were conducted. This approach was chosen since the authors wanted to hear the transgender peoples' own perspective on how they experience the Social Services. Before the interviews were conducted an interview-guide was made to fit the aim and research questions. Semi-structured interviews were made so the participants could interpret and speak about the questions freely, and express themselves in their own words. This was done to get a bigger understanding about what the participants were expressing. (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Hence, this felt like the most appropriate way to conduct the study

7.2 Mode of procedure

7.2.1 Choice of literature

The primary source of finding suitable literature to this study has been the search engine Discovery, accessed through the library at the University of Gävle. The keywords that were used are 'Transgender', 'Transgender voices', 'Transgender empowerment theory', 'Queer Theory' and 'Transgender social services'.

7.2.2 Sampling

The unit that has been studied for this research are transgender people. The authors used snowball and purposive sampling. Snowball sampling is when the researcher identifies few numbers of people in the group of interest, and ask if they can identify other members in the group. This to get individuals that are asked for from the researcher (Grinnell, 2001). Purposive sampling is used when the researcher wants to get information from individuals that can give answers to a certain topic, and have the right insights in what the researcher studies (Grinnell, 2001).

The snowball sampling was used in two ways; the first way was to talk to people that the researchers know, i.e. personal contacts, to get connections through them. Secondly, by advertising the study at RFSL, and let people that are interested in participate in the study to contact the researchers through e-mail. The purposive sampling was used to get the certain characteristics that are asked from in the participants. The characteristics that was looked for was people that are 18 years old and above who have been in contact with and have own experiences with the social services. People with these characteristics, are the ones who can answer the questions the researcher need to ask to fulfil the aim and research questions.

7.2.3 Investigation process

The authors began this investigation with writing a notice of interest to find participants for the thesis. The notice was sent out via email to RFSL in Gävle, Stockholm and Uppsala. These departments answered very positively and collaborated by printing and putting up the notice of interest in their meeting places.

From the personal contacts, there were two persons that volunteered to participate in the study, and one of these persons also recommended one friend to participate in the study. Then, the authors formulated an interview guide that would help during the interviews.

Before the interviews were held, an information letter was send out to the participants where the aim and purpose with the study where once again clarified for the participants. The information letter further stated that participation in the study was voluntary and that the participants had the right to withdraw from the study at any time. (Daly, 2007)

The first interview was held in the small town, and the interview was held in a café. The first interview was approximately 30 minutes long.

The second interview was held in a big city in Sweden, at a hotel. This interview also lasted for approximately 30 minutes. The third interview was also planned to be held in the same big city. However, the interviewee became ill on the same day as the interview was supposed to be held, and the interview had to be postponed. Instead, it was conducted through skype some days later than intended, and this interview was approximately 20 minutes long.

When conducting the interviews, the authors decided to take turns holding the interviews, to make sure that the interviews would be as structured and smoothly

conducted as possible. The one who was not the main interviewer at the time had a more observant role and focused on the things that was not being said, like gestures and body language, and asked follow-up questions when required. (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

The interviews were held in Swedish, since both the authors and the participants have Swedish as native language. The interviews were recorded with two devices, as a precaution if one of the recordings would not work properly.

According to Kvale and Brinkmann, (2009) there are no clear rules about how to transcribe, the most important thing it to be clear about how the transcriptions has been done in the report. Before transcribing, the authors made it clear between themselves in which way the transcriptions would be done, so the transcriptions would be done in the same way to make it easier when comparing the interviews (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). The transcriptions were made literally from what was said during the interviews. In other words, the authors transcribed it word for word. If someone laughed during the interview it was transcribed, however if someone made paus or was thinking for a longer time, it was not included in the transcript (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

The citations from the participants used in the results were translated and then sent to a language corrector, to make sure they were translated correctly and that they expressed the same in the original language as in English.

7.2.4 Non-response

In this study, there was one fall-off; Participant A. The fall-off, Participant A, was due to that the participant did not have the right characteristics that were asked for. An interview was held, and it was during the interview that it became clear that Participant A never had contact with the Social Services. And therefore, the authors could not use Participant A's answer to answer the aim and research question.

7.2.5 Method of analysis

When analyzing the findings, thematic analysis was used. In this research, attitudes would be studied, and since thematic analyzing is a useful method for this kind of purpose, this would be a suitable method. The authors transcribed the interviews and read through them to find themes. (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2009)

The themes that were found was marked in different colors in the transcripts, to make it easier to have an overlook over each theme when analyzing the results. Moreover, these themes that were found are answering the aim of the study; the themes are presented as the result and discussed in relation to the theories and earlier research.

8. Essay credibility

In this section, reliability and validity will be discussed and what the authors has done during the process to obtain the credibility for the study. This is a qualitative study with two participating informants, therefore this study's credibility could be questioned. To find participants to this study was difficult, and there were only two participants that had actually been in contact with the Social Services. Even though the authors tried to find participants in different ways, it was difficult to find people to interview. The reason for this may be that not many transgender people have had contact with the Social Services, or that they just do not want to be informants. The low number of participants can affect the credibility of the thesis in a negative way, but the authors chose to proceed with the study anyway, since it is an important subject and there is not much research done about this specific topic.

8.1 Reliability

The idea of reliability descends from quantitative methodology (Trost, 2005). Generally speaking, reliability pertains to how the result of a study shows consistency and solidity over time (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). In other words, to get high reliability means that situations should be standardized and easy to repeat, which is the opposite of what you wish to achieve with a qualitative study (Trost, 2005). In quantitative studies the goal is to find the uniqueness. Thus, in qualitative studies, the measuring of reliability might be difficult. However, efforts within a research, to create reliance in the interpretation of the data are more common in qualitative studies, so called internal reliability (Daly, 2007). To achieve internal reliability, it is important to make sure that the collected data is relevant and credible, i.e. that the interpretation of the data is correct.

In this study, member checking was used as a method to control the interpretation. The participants were given the opportunity to read through the quotes that was to be used in the report, to be able to provide feedback on the findings and confirm that the

interpretation of the data is correct (Daly, 2007). Furthermore, the authors took help from a person with good knowledge of the English language to control the translation. This was done to make sure that the translations of the quotes were adequate and consistent with the original Swedish ones.

8.2 Validity

Validity are a measure to see that the researchers investigate what they are supposed to investigate, also that the method is suitable to the research. In everyday language validity is referred to as “the truth”. In qualitative studies the validity is an ongoing process throughout the whole research and is not a single step in the investigation.

An important aspect of dealing with validity in qualitative research concerns the quality and the measurement of the credibility of the text. This refers to how comprehensive and diverse the content of the report is, how well it answers the aim and research questions, and the ability to connect the content to the theories and previous research in a meaningful way (Larsson et.al., 2008). Furthermore, the researchers need to be transparent with the findings and explain why and what are being done, to be able to strengthen the validity. (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009) Moreover, it is important to not ask the participants ‘leading questions’, but to ask questions that are open-ended and let the participant talk freely (Trost, 2005).

In this thesis, the authors have throughout the whole study been looking at the aim and research questions to make sure that the study are connected to and reflects them. In other words, to make sure that the aim has been fulfilled, and that what was supposed to be investigated has been studied and that focus was kept (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Quotations have been used in order to be able to strengthen and confirm the findings of the study, and to make sure that what was being discussed has been relevant to the aim and research questions (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

Moreover, the authors have been trying to keep the transparency of the text by stating and motivating everything that have been done, to clarify for the reader and to strengthen the validity. Check-ups with the supervisor has also been done, so she could question and give advice on what could be improved and so on.

9. Ethical considerations

At the essence of qualitative research practice there are several ethical values and practices that govern the conduct (Daly, 2007). First of all, informed consent is an important aspect of the study. When writing a thesis, it is the researcher's responsibility to let the participants know exactly what the study is about, to inform them how the collected data will be used and what type of information the researcher want to know from them. It is important to make sure that the participants are completely aware of the study, so they can feel comfortable taking part in it. Furthermore, to inform them that it is voluntary to participate and that they can decide to withdraw from the study whenever they want (Daly, 2007).

While writing the thesis, it is the researchers' responsibility to keep it confidential and to protect the participants' anonymity. It is of utmost importance that the researchers remove or disguise the participants' identities and keep the received information confidential. (Daly, 2007).

The ethical considerations have been carefully deliberated throughout the whole research process of this study. To make sure that the ethical considerations were followed, an information letter was sent out to the participants to inform them about the study. In the letter, the aim and research questions were stated, and the participants were informed about their rights when participating in the research. To guarantee that the participants felt comfortable and well updated about the study, the authors made sure that they knew that they were available for questions at any time.

The participants were also informed that their identities would be protected. Instead of using their names, the interviewees would be referred to as Participant A-C. All material and transcribed data would only be available for the authors, and when the report is done it would be destroyed.

10. Results

10.1 The participants

Participant A is an 18-year-old MtF. Since she began her gender correction process as a minor, she has done her investigation in Stockholm at Karolinska Institutet, which is the only institution to treat under aged people. Now when she has turned 18, she has been translocated to Linköping instead and will do her surgeries there, since Linköping is nearer to where she lives. Unfortunately, Participant A had not been in contact with social workers as the authors had been informed about before the interview was

conducted, which means that the interview could not be used as a mean to fulfill the aim and the research questions. Participant A will therefore be considered a fall-off. However, she made some general remarks that – after the other interviews were conducted – the authors discovered were applicable and in accordance with what some of the other participants had experienced or said. Therefore, Participant A was used as a way to strengthen arguments related to the study from a transgender person's perspective. Participant A knew from the age of three that her gender identity did not correspond with her assigned gender.

Participant B is a FtM transgender and is 24 years old. He knew from the age of six that his gender did not correspond with the gender he identified himself with.

Participant C is also a FtM. He is 25 years old. The interview with Participant C was supposed to be held the day before the interview with Participant B, but due to illness, the interview had to be delayed a couple of days and conducted through Skype. Participant C said that he has probably always known that his birth gender did not correspond with his gender identity, but it was not until he was 17 years old that he really found a word for it.

10.2 The themes

Throughout the investigation, four themes were found. The different themes were: 'expectations', 'knowledge', 'confidence' and 'trust and support'. All of the themes, except 'Confidence', were related to the questions that were asked during the interviews and were central parts in the participants' discussions.

When formulating the interview guide, the authors already had the first three themes in mind, which is why these themes were decided beforehand. Moreover, when analyzing the collected data it was confirmed that these themes matched what the participants were discussing, and thus were suitable to use. The fourth theme, 'Confidence', had no connection to the interview questions, but was brought up or implied by some participants during the interviews and found through analyzing. This theme was therefore the only one that was not decided by the authors beforehand.

'Expectations' is the part when the interviewees bring up what their expectations were before the meeting, and if and how these expectations have changed.

‘Knowledge’ refers to the interviewees’ perceptions on the level of knowledge within the Social Services and how the professional social workers manage to handle issues regarding transgender matters.

The ‘Confidence’-part grew out of insinuations made by some interviewees, and focuses on how transgender people feel that they have to act and present themselves to be met in a professional way.

In the last theme, ‘Trust and support’, the authors present how the participants’ feel about the Social Services and whether or not they feel that they can trust them. Furthermore, where they turn for support and perceive the support received from the Social Services.

10.3 Theme 1 – Expectations

What the authors found out from the participants’ stories was that there are a lot of prejudices regarding seeking help from the Social Services. A lot of negative rumors seem to be circulating within the transgender community; for example, that the Social Services are incapable of providing sufficient help, that they are being disrespectful and unprofessional and use the wrong pronoun and so on. Because of these rumors and prejudices, both Participant B and Participant C said that their expectations were rather low before the first meetings. Participant C even said that he had a sense of fear of seeking help, and had refused to seek help as long as he could avoid or delay it. He had been in contact with the Social Services in two different occasions; the first time through his investigation process and the second time due to psychological issues. The reason for that was that he struggled a bit with handling the psychological aspects of being transgender, and needed help coping with everything.

Participant B’s story was a bit different. He had only been in contact with the Social Services through his investigation process. Before the first meeting, he said that he did not have any expectations, due to negative rumors he had heard. Even though his first meeting went better than he anticipated, his expectations had not changed, or if it did it was towards a more negative opinion. He explained it like this:

I had no expectations since I had not heard good things about the transgender related care. Today I probably have a more negative attitude, since I am aware of how they treat transgender people. (Participant B)

Unlike participant B, in Participant C's case his personal expectations changed a bit when he met with the assigned social worker:

I have always refused to go to like, psychologists and social workers and such, because I have always been a bit terrified of it. So I thought that it would be really scary, ehm, but it felt good and turned around almost as fast as I got a 'hello', it was incredible what people that worked there. (Participant C)

Even though Participant C got a more positive view on the Social Services after his first contact with them, just like Participant B said, his general picture and expectations still remains rather unchanged even today, based on stories he hears about experiences from other transgender people. Even though he has only had good experiences with the Social Services and experienced that he had been treated well and met in a professional way, his view on the Social Services has not changed too much. This is what Participant C said under this theme:

Well, both yes and no, but that has to do quite a lot with how others are being met as well. As I have heard, there are very many transgender people that perceive that they are being met in a bad way. (Participant C)

He continued by saying that his perception of the Social Services was quite unchanged, because he could see it from both his own perspective and from the perspective of the transgender people who experienced that they had been treated in a bad way; people who had been categorized with the wrong gender or in other ways not been able to feel that the meeting had been fulfilling for them. Even though his own experiences were positive, he still hears how other transgender people perceive their contact with the Social Services, and thus his view becomes affected by other people's experiences.

10.4 Theme 2 - Knowledge

In the interviews the participants discuss the knowledge about transgender matters among social workers at the Social Services, and they both have experienced that a knowledge gap exists. They also mention that before meeting with the Social Services, they already had got a lot of knowledge on their own, since it is an important part of their lives and they wanted to know a lot beforehand. Participant C said in the interview:

Well it is many times rather insufficient. Ehm, now I have been lucky to have known this for a pretty long time and are quite well read, so I knew most of it already. (Participant C)

Moreover, participant B said:

A lot of times you get pushed down, like what you feel are not truthful. So no, there are not enough knowledge about transgender people and transgender issues over all. (Participant B)

The participants expressed that a meeting at the Social Services in some cases will not make things clearer, as their questions and their needs might not be fulfilled afterwards. According to them, this could have to do with the knowledge the social worker has; the social worker might have a general knowledge about transgender issues, but lack knowledge about deeper questions within the theme.

Participant C mentioned that it has happened that he has asked questions that the social worker have not been able to answer, even though the social worker tried. Moreover, this is related to the question regarding how easy it is to get information from the Social Services. On this topic, the participants had the same opinion; it is quite easy even though sometimes the social worker has not enough knowledge to give the information, but instead are sending the participants to someone that has that required knowledge. Both Participant B and Participant C experienced that they had received the information they needed in the end.

Participant C mentioned during the interviews that a person can never get to much knowledge about a subject and that it is important to listen to transgender people and their experiences, listen to different individuals to learn more and to see that all people have different needs.

It is like this, you can never get too much knowledge about a subject, and there are a lot of different angles that you can consider. But on the deeper questions they might not have as much knowledge. (Participant C)

The participants seem to have different experiences regarding how professionally the social worker has been acting during the meetings. Participant C expressed that the social worker sometimes acted clumsy when discussing certain subjects, such as gender and gender identity. Participant B said that when discussing these two subjects, he felt

that it was unnecessary, especially when it comes to “what he has between his legs”, he wanted to talk about what is inside is head and his gender identity. Participant C, however, explains it in this way:

People might not know what they are allowed to say about ones genitals and such things that you should be able to talk about sometimes. But it is also a very difficult question, because everyone want different things. (Participant C)

Participant B and Participant C expressed different opinions about this subject, however they both further stated that this does not have a right or wrong answer, because all individuals are different and want different things.

Participant B said that even though he is a male he has many times been called by his female name and he feel that sometimes the social workers lack knowledge and just read form a paper. Participant B also mention that the social workers see that he has a female personal number and therefore refers to him as a female.

Participant C expressed that he never had a problem with that social workers use the wrong pronoun or call him the wrong name, he feels that the social workers have the right knowledge and competences about that matter.

Participant C has done a documentary about his sex change, from the beginning. In this documentary, he shares his journey from when he got his diagnose and brings up different discussions that he felt was important. One of the social workers that he had contact with heard about it and wanted to see it. The social worker was going out to educate others about transgender matters and wanted to get see it and perhaps even use participant C’s experiences in the lectures, so more people could get basic knowledge about transgender matters. He let her see it, and he thinks that it is important that people listen to transgender people and their experiences, to get a greater understanding about transgenderism. This is how he summarized the documentary:

It is really about, like, the first half-year after I got my diagnosis and stuff, so I begin my hormonal treatment and I bring up a lot of you know, societal issues with being transgender. (Participant C)

In the documentary, Participant C brings up and discusses various subjects that he thought was important at that time and that people might not talk about that much. He

tried to get people to not only focus on the physical aspects of being transgender, but to acknowledge the mental parts as well.

10.5 Theme 3 - Confidence

As mentioned earlier, the theme confidence was brought up by the participants during the interviews and found through analyzing the data. The meaning of 'confidence' was that it felt important for some participants to walk in with the right attitude and show confidence to be perceived as the person he or she really are to be taken seriously by others and to not be categorized with the wrong gender.

Participant B said during the interview that it was important to show confidence and be determent when meeting with the professionals, otherwise the result of the meeting might not be as good. He said:

I experience that I have been taken seriously since I have been rather well informed and been able to speak for my thing, which is important to not have to do with someone that waves you off. (Participant B)

Participant A, who was considered a fall-off in this study, made a general remark about showing confidence that strengthened Participant B's argument in this matter. She said:

... You have to be confident within yourself. If you are insecure and walk around 'crook-headed' and everything you think like 'something is up', but if you do not care and you sit there like 'mind your own business' you blend in more. (Participant A)

While stating this, Participants showed through body language that it was important to take place and show of pride and confidence in order be accepted and respected by others.

Unlike Participant B, Participant C implied nothing about needing confidence and present himself in a certain way in order to receive professional treatment. However, in every medical contact, he always make sure to make his gender identity clear, to avoid uncomfortable and bad situations.

... in all medical contact I say immediately that I am a transgender person because then there is a lot more that they know about me, even though they might not read my journal they know that I am not biologically born a man. (Participant C)

He further stated that he experienced that he would get the help he need regardless, but he would probably need to have courage enough to ask for it.

10.6 Theme 4 - Trust and Support

The theme trust and support will be about how the participants experience that they can trust the social services and if they would turn to them again. The participant has different answers and experience the trust for the social services differently.

Furthermore, here will also the part of how the participant perceive the support from the social services be brought up.

Participant C says that he feels that he gets the help and most often get the support he needs from the social services. Moreover, on the question if he trusts them his answer is partially however he thinks that it might take longer time then needed to get the support and help he need. He said:

I do not know, sometimes, sometimes not. No but really, most of the times I guess I do. I feel that I can get the help that I need if I need it, even though it can sometimes takes time.
(Participant C)

Participant B, however, will not go back to the Social Services by his own will, he said that he got the information he needed but at the same time feels forgotten when they were “done” with him.

I got what I needed and that was enough for the moment, but when they believe that you are done with them they forget about you, which can be rather harmful. No, I would probably not turn to them again, not willingly. (Participant B)

Participant B continued with mentioning that meetings at the Social Services are required regularly after a gender correction, first after one year and then more seldom. But what his quote are showing, he will go on these meetings if he must but he would rather skip them. Participant B would rather turn to friends and other transgender people for support and help, this have to do with that he feels that they understand him better, he feels that to be understood is really important. He was quite short in his answer, but to the question about where he would choose to turn he said “Friends and other transgender people. People who understand how it can be, which is important”.

11. Analysis

In the analysis, the four different themes are first being analysed separately with the help of the theories, and connected to the aim and research questions. Then, the authors made a general conclusion based on all themes combined.

The theme ‘expectations’ is related to the aim of this study in the way that before transgender people have their first meeting, they go in with a certain mind-set about what they can expect of the Social Services, or they have chosen to not build up any expectations at all. They hear rumors and stories about transgender people having bad experiences of the Social Services, and therefore have a rather negative image about the Social Services beforehand. This means that the person seeking help in most cases already think that they know what to expect from the Social Services, and this study have shown that other transgender people’s experiences with the Social Services have had an impact on these interviewees own experiences and perception. These rumours that goes around can be a consequence to that the social worker is not empowering the clients and fail to make transgender people feel heard when telling their own stories (Ambjörnsson, 2006; Turner & Maschi, 2015). Moreover, even though Participant C had positive first meeting, the expectations on the services provided by the Social Services had not changed the second time he turned to them for help. Participant B said something similar to Participant C, and even got a more negative view on the Social Services afterwards. Both participants give the impression that it does not matter that they got a good first impression, since they know that everyone do not get treated as well as they did. It seems like the transgender community are very supportive towards each other and affect each other a lot regarding their opinions in the transgender care. This can be seen in Siverskog’s study (2014), where the participants talked about how the transgender community are supportive towards each other, and that they felt more trust towards each other than towards care takers.

The conclusion that could be drawn from these few interviews is that the Social Services needs to improve and update their knowledge regarding transgender matters, so the client does not have to “jump” around to different professional workers to get information and answers to their questions. Furthermore, the experiences differ on how the participants feel that they have been treated. It is important as a social worker to be aware of and using the right pronouns to make the transgender individuals comfortable in meetings. This also has to do with how the social worker is able to empower the client, and the ability to understand the importance of respecting the transgender

person's true identity. Queer theory states that the person's identity is important to acknowledge, therefore the social worker needs to empower the client and have the ability to understand the importance of respecting the transgender person's true identity (Ambjörnsson, 2006). How transgender people experience the Social Services is part of the aim and to be called by the wrong pronoun makes the experience for the participants more negative. As a professional, it is important to make the meetings comfortable and listen to the individuals and what their needs are. Additionally, it is important that people, especially professional social workers who meet transgender people, are trying to gain more knowledge regarding transgender topics to be able to give sufficient help and support.

The theme 'knowledge' helped the researchers to answer the second research question, which is *how do they perceive the level of knowledge among professional social workers regarding transgender issues?* Here, the participant answered that they experienced that social workers do not always have sufficient knowledge when it comes to answer their questions, especially not when talking about deeper issues within the subject. Furthermore, one part of the first research question could also be answered here, which was how they perceived the information they got from the Social Services. This is connected to the knowledge level, and the participants described that they needed to find some information by themselves in other places than at the Social Services.

What the participants said about their own confidence was that the way they presented themselves was an important factor to being respected and taken seriously. Being confident would also make it easier for others to perceive and accept them for who they really are, without making mistakes like calling them by the wrong name or categorize them with the wrong gender. What this shows is that it happens that transgender people feel that they need to act in a certain way to get the help and support that is required. This affects how the participants experience the Social Services. The queer theory talks about the identity and power, and here the participants spoke about a need to be in a certain way to be accepted for who they are. There the power relationship between the client and the social worker gets affected by that the clients are transgender.

The theme 'trust and support' helps answering the first research question, when it comes to how transgender people experience support provided by the Social Services. Here the answers from the participants differs once again. Participant C is satisfied with

the support and the help he has been given and would turn to the Social Services again. Participant B, however, said that he got what he needed and then felt forgotten, therefore, would not turn to the Social Services again. Both participants expressed that they in most cases got the support they needed for the moment but they might feel there is something missing and still not completely trust the Social Services. This could also be related to whether or not the social worker is able to empower the client, and if the social worker fails, the transgender people feel that they do not get enough support and help and would next time rather turn somewhere else.

The main reflection that can be made through these four themes is that how a person experience the Social Services may differ a lot, even though both participants think that the Social Services does not have enough knowledge and competence when it comes to transgender matters. Moreover, these themes brought up here have helped to fulfil the aim and answer the research questions, since these themes functions as smaller parts and different aspects of the whole experience a people can have about the Social Services. It is important as a social worker to listen and try to understand the transgender person own truths, and to make an effort to understand what the client is saying to be able to provide sufficient help.

12. Discussion

Under this section, the authors discuss the result, the analysis and the chosen method. Furthermore, the earlier research is brought in to the discussion.

The result showed that it differs how the participants experience the Social Services, when it comes to support, information and knowledge. The participants felt that the Social Services sometimes might not have the right knowledge to give them sufficient support and the help they need. Therefore, the participants often needed to find information on their own beforehand, and the trust for the Social Services were not as high as one could hope. This lack of trust had the effect that one of the participants would not turn to the Social Services when in need, but rather turn to other transgender people for support. Sometimes, one of the participant even felt that he had to assert himself to be treated with respect and called by the right pronoun. Furthermore, participant drop out will also be discussed under the non-response section.

12.1 Discussions of Results

Based on the two interviews, the view on the Social Services seems to be rooted in prejudices and based mainly on stories and rumors that comes from the transgender community. According to the interviewees, it is important that every transgender person get the right and sufficient help, otherwise there are rumors and stories being spread, and an unsatisfactory within the transgender community will appear. What can be seen from the result in this thesis it that, it seems like the transgender community is very supportive towards its members and affects them a lot regarding their opinions in the transgender care.

According to the queer theory, a power relationship exists between the heteronormative and transgenderism (Ambjörnsson, 2006). In other words, transgender people are a minority in the society and goes against the norms that are constructed by the society. This power relationship exists between the client and the professional as well, and therefore these expectations on the Social Services might exist. Moreover, these rumors that, according to the interviewees, are circulating in the transgender community about the Social Services might give the impression that the professionals at the Social Services have this power over the client.

What became clear from these interviews was that both of them described a fear for the first meeting at the Social Services, and this fear come from these rumours and biases that exists within the community. In Anna Siverskog's study (2014), the participants mention a fear of ending up in a nursing home. Even though there are different types of professionals the participants in Siverskog's and in this thesis, both studies show that there seems to be a fear of meeting professionals. This is an issue and something that needs to change. On the other hand, the result in this thesis indicates that the social worker often displays a good first impression, and a reflection on this could be that the social worker put the transgender person in expert position, and successfully empowers the client (Turner & Maschi, 2015).

The similarities that exist within this study and the previous research that are presented are first of all that in both Sally Hines article (2007) and in Anna Siverskog's (2014) the participants mention the lack of knowledge among the care givers. This lack of knowledge is also reflected in the result of this thesis. The conclusion is that the Social Services might need to improve and update their knowledge regarding transgender matters, so the client does not have to "jump" around to different professional social workers to get information and answers to their questions.

Furthermore, the experiences differ on how the Social Services are handling and meeting transgender people. Therefore, it is important as a social worker to be aware of and use the right pronouns to make the transgender individual feel comfortable in meetings. As a professional it is important to make the meetings comfortable and listen to the individuals and what their needs are, to be able to meet and address them in a sufficient way. Furthermore, it is important that people and professional social workers who meet transgender people, are trying to gain more knowledge regarding transgender topics to be able to give sufficient help and support. To analyse this from a queer theory perspective one could say that it is important for the professional to understand and respect what the transgender people see as the truth about themselves, and respect the fact the transgender peoples' own identities (Ambjörnsson, 2006).

Something that became clear from writing this thesis was that transgender people sometimes might feel that it is important to show confidence, otherwise people might not take the transgender people seriously. In some ways, transgender people need to present themselves in a certain manner to be respected and taken seriously. Then it is also easier for others to perceive and accept them for who they really are, without making mistakes, such as calling them by the wrong name or categorize them with the wrong gender. What the queer theory says is that society constructs these different norms, and if a person does not fit in this norm they might have to act in a way to be accepted as who they are (Ambjörnsson, 2006).

According to the empowerment theory, the professional should be able to support the client, and from the results of this study, this is may not always be the case. According to the interviewees, the professionals are not always acting professional when a transgender person comes to them, for example when they are using the wrong pronoun. Here could the social worker instead be supportive and accept the client and empower them, to increase the confidence (Turner & Maschi, 2015). Moreover, it is important to support and to be trustworthy as a social worker, so the transgender people would be willing to turn to the social services again. According to, the empowerment theory the professional should build trust trough listening to the client, because the client is the expert on his or her life, and try to be helpful from the information given (Turner & Maschi, 2015). What can be seen from the results of this study is that this is not always the case. The trust for the Social Services differ from individual to individual, it is hard to know why it is in this way but it has of course to do with how they experience the meetings with the professionals. It is important for the transgender

community that they have a feeling of being able to turn to the Social Services if needed, but for the moment the trust for the Social Services are low and with this in mind, one can draw the conclusion that the Social Services need to work for building up the trust among all individuals to be able to help and support transgender people.

The main conclusion that can be drawn from the four themes and the analysis is that how a person experience the Social Services differs a lot, even though it seems that the Social Services does not have enough knowledge and competence when it comes to transgender matters.

There are differences that can be seen from the previous research and this study. Many of the participants in Lori B. Girshick's study (2008) talk about how the society sees women and men, and that a person can only be either or. In this thesis, there were no mentioning about the society's views on what makes you a man or woman. Even though confidence is important to be accepted, there is no outspoken opinion about confidence being related to how the society perceive a man or a woman. This difference can be dependent on the fact that this thesis has different focus than Girshick (2008) had in her study.

There are also some similarities between earlier research and this thesis. For example, the knowledge among professionals seem to not have been increasing. Siverskog's study is done in 2014 and then the participants felt that professionals were lacking knowledge, and in this thesis, conducted in 2016, transgender people still feel that that professionals need to increase their knowledge.

The authors found there were not many differences in results from previous research. One hypothesis to why there are more similarities could be that not much has happened in the education regarding transgender issues among social workers the past years. As stated earlier in this study there are no gender education obligatory in the social work programme, so education within this subject is missing. This lack of education could very much likely be a factor to why this knowledge gap that the participants discuss in both this study and in the previous research exists. The knowledge among social workers might need to increase to create a more positive view and so the social workers can give transgender people proper and sufficient help. These themes brought up here have helped the researchers to fulfil the aim and answer the research questions, since these themes functions as smaller parts and different aspects of the whole experience a people can have about the Social Services.

12.2 Discussion of Methods

This part contains a discussion about advantages and disadvantages with using a qualitative approach in a study. Furthermore, a presentation about which aspects of the research process in this study that have been good and which have been a bit of a struggle.

12.2.1 Advantages and Disadvantages

There are both advantages and disadvantages with conducting semi structured face-to-face interviews and in this part of the report both will be discussed. First will the advantages be discussed and then the disadvantages.

The advantages with doing face-to-face interviews is that follow up questions can be asked to clarify or to develop the answers given, or if the participants do not understand some of the questions they can be explained by the researcher. Another advantage with having face-to-face interviews is that the researcher can ask questions and go in depth with what the participants answer and get to know how and why certain things are the way they are; like feelings and different occurrences that have happened (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

The disadvantages with this method could be that even though the interviews had open questions the participants did not develop their answers enough. And since the authors did not have any earlier experience in conducting interviews, the follow up questions may not have been formulated as wished, or the opportunity for a follow-up question could have been completely missed (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

The chosen method has had its advantages and disadvantages. The authors feel that they have gained a lot of insight and new knowledge about the subject. However, it has been really time consuming and expensive to travel to different cities in the country; which has been necessary to be able to conduct the interviews. Furthermore, the authors fear that all the efforts and work that has been put into this project might not be reflected in the result due to set-backs, such as fall-offs. These fall-offs in their turn could possibly threaten the credibility of the study, since the number of participants are very low.

A lot of effort had to be put in when searching for participants, that part of the research process was easier said than done. To find transgender people for a study might have been one thing, but to find people who specifically have been in contact with the Social Services is a completely different story and not an easy task. Thankfully, the

authors had connections with transgender people that had been in contact with the social services, without them this study would probably not have been possible within the given time limit.

With that in mind, it might have been easier to choose a different approach, but as stated earlier, the researchers have gained a lot of knowledge by doing it and do not wish to have done it differently.

12.3 Non-response

To get two fall-off in a small study like this is a disappointment for the researchers, since the study is already small and to get a valid result with just two persons feel difficult. Furthermore, to have more voices in this study would have been interesting and to get a clearer result of what transgender persons have for experiences with the Social Services. However, the fall-offs could not have been predicted by the researchers and occurred in a very late stage of the investigation, which due to the time limit made it impossible for the researchers to find other participants instead.

12.4 Further research

In this study the focus was on transgender people's experiences with the social services, and for further research the researchers give as suggestion to keep exploring transgender people's experiences with the social services. This to get more knowledge among social workers to get a bigger picture of how they experience the social services. Moreover, to change angle and explore how social workers at the social services experiences the meetings with transgender people, and how they experience their own knowledge, if improvements are needed within this field. Also, to explore how social workers work with empowerment and keeping their level of knowledge about transgender matters as high as possible. To change angle gives this research field, which is quite unexplored, a more holistic picture of how the social services work with transgender people.

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Appendix

Notice of interest

Intresseanmälan!

Identifierar du dig som transperson och vill delta i en studie?

Vi söker dig som har varit i kontakt med en socionom, exempelvis kurator eller via socialtjänsten.

Vi är två tjejer som studerar tredje året på Högskolan i Gävle. Vi läser till socionomer och ska nu skriva vår C-uppsats som kommer att handla om transpersoners erfarenheter med socionomer. Vi behöver din hjälp!

Vill du veta mer eller är du intresserad att ställa upp på en intervju? Kontakta oss, vi uppskattar verkligen ditt engagemang.

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Information letter

Informationsbrev

En kvalitativ studie om transpersoners upplevelser med socialtjänsten i Sverige

Hej, du har blivit tillfrågad att delta i en studie om transpersoners upplevelser med socialtjänsten och hur du upplever att du blivit bemött.

Syftet med uppsatsen är att undersöka hur transpersoner upplever de olika tjänster som socialtjänsten erbjuder. Studiens frågeställningar är;

- Hur upplever transpersoner kontakten med professionella socialarbetare angående; stöd, information och andra tjänster som erbjuds med fokus på transfrågor?
- Hur upplever transpersoner kunskapsnivån hos professionella socialarbetare avseende transfrågor?

Vi kommer intervjua fyra personer som definierar sig som transperson, de här fyra personerna har blivit kontaktade genom personliga kontakter och även genom RFSL. Att delta i studien är frivilligt och anonymt. Eftersom det är frivilligt kan du när som helst välja att inte längre delta i studien. Uppsatsen ska vara klar i början av januari 2017 och efter det går det inte längre att dra sig ur studien.

Transkriberingen kommer endast vara tillgängligt för oss. Vi kommer skicka citaten till er innan så att ni får godkänna dem och kontrollera att vi har förstått er rätt. Uppsatsen kommer att skrivas på engelska men intervjuerna kommer ske på svenska, därför kommer citat vi använder oss av att översättas till engelska.

Uppsatsen kommer att publiceras som en kandidatuppsats vid Högskolan i Gävle. Om ni vill ta del av den färdiga studien så skickar vi den till er.

Har ni några frågor under tiden går det bra att höra av sig till oss;

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Tack för din medverkan!

Interview guide

Intervjuguide

Inledning

1. I vilket sammanhang har du haft kontakt med socialtjänsten?

Första möte & Förväntningar

2. Berätta om din första kontakt; Hur upplevde du den kontakten?
3. Vilka förväntningar hade du när du först tog kontakt? Har de förväntningarna förändrats? Om ja varför? Om nej varför inte?
4. Har din första kontakt påverkats av att du är transperson? Om ja, ge exempel.

Kunskap & Tillgänglighet

5. Hur upplever du den information om transfrågor som socialtjänsten erbjuder?
Känner du att du fått den information som du behövt? Har den varit lätt tillgänglig? Förklara/ge exempel.
6. Tycker du att socialtjänsten har tillräckligt med kunskap om transfrågor? Kan du ge något exempel? Om nej, hur kan kunskapen förbättras?

Bemötande

7. Upplever du att du som transperson har blivit bemött på ett tillfredsställande sätt? Fick du det stöd du behövde? Känner du att du blivit tagen på allvar? Varför? Varför inte?
8. Känner du att du blivit hörd? Har de lyssnat på dig och dina erfarenheter och kunnat möta dina behov på ett bra sätt? Förklara/ge exempel.

Tillit

9. Känner du som transperson tillit till socialtjänsten? Skulle du vända dig dit igen? Varför? Varför inte?
10. Om nej på fråga 7 vart skulle du vända dig för hjälp och stöd? Varför?