



CRUSH CARDS

What are the Crush Cards?

The cards have an image on one side and some researcher observations on the other. Sometimes this is presented as a series of quotes, sometimes as reflections from the researcher or research team. At the bottom of the card is a link to the research project. Drawing on research evidence helps develop our understanding of children and young people experiences of relationships, gender and sexuality, without having to rely on media stereotypes, our own experiences or those of our friends and family.

Why use the Crush Cards?

The cards invite you to explore and potentially **CRUSH** your assumptions about how young people are learning about RSE in three key ways. They might...

- **enable** you to identify the diverse elements and forces that children and young people often have to navigate (e.g. social, cultural, technological, economic, environmental, emotional, historical etc.)
- **offer** new ways of noticing what matters to children and young people.
- **invite** you to explore what else might count as RSE.
- **encourage** you to reflect upon how your school's RSE provision is meeting the needs of all young people.

This suite of cards have been designed to support educators to connect and critically engage with how children and young people (age 3-18) experience gender and sexuality in their everyday lives .

How to use the Crush Cards

You can use and adapt the cards in any number of ways.

Here is one starter activity of how the cards can be used with educators:

- Print out the Crush Cards
- Spread them out with the image facing up.
- Pick one image and guess what the story might be behind the image
- Are you surprised when you turn over the card?
- What norms or expectations are over-turned when you explore what or how young people are learning about RSE?
- How do you feel about what you have read?
- What more do you want to know?

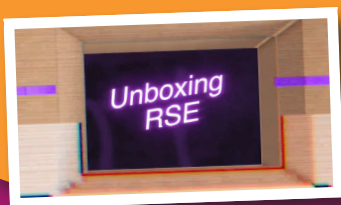


If you want to use the cards without the young people's quotes, you can download a set of image-only cards at agendaonline.co.uk/crush-cards

Here is one starter activity of how the cards can be used in small group work with young people:



- Select some of the images from the blank set of Crush Cards.
- Spread them out with the image facing up.
- Discuss how each image might connect to RSE.
- Guess what the story might be behind an image.
- Turn the card over to write your ideas down.
- Create your own story using some of the images.



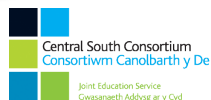
Go to the film **Unboxing RSE** to see the Crush Cards being used in this way: vimeo.com/667900095



Please read the Safety and Support section from the AGENDA resource before using the Crush Cards
agendaonline.co.uk/safety-and-support



Economic
and Social
Research Council



Crush Card print files available at: agendaonline.co.uk/crush-cards



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Nazera (Arabic) is 13 and lives with her mum and dad in a flat in London. She began wearing the hijab a few years ago, “not for religious reasons” but because it carries the memories of her cousin who died when she was younger.

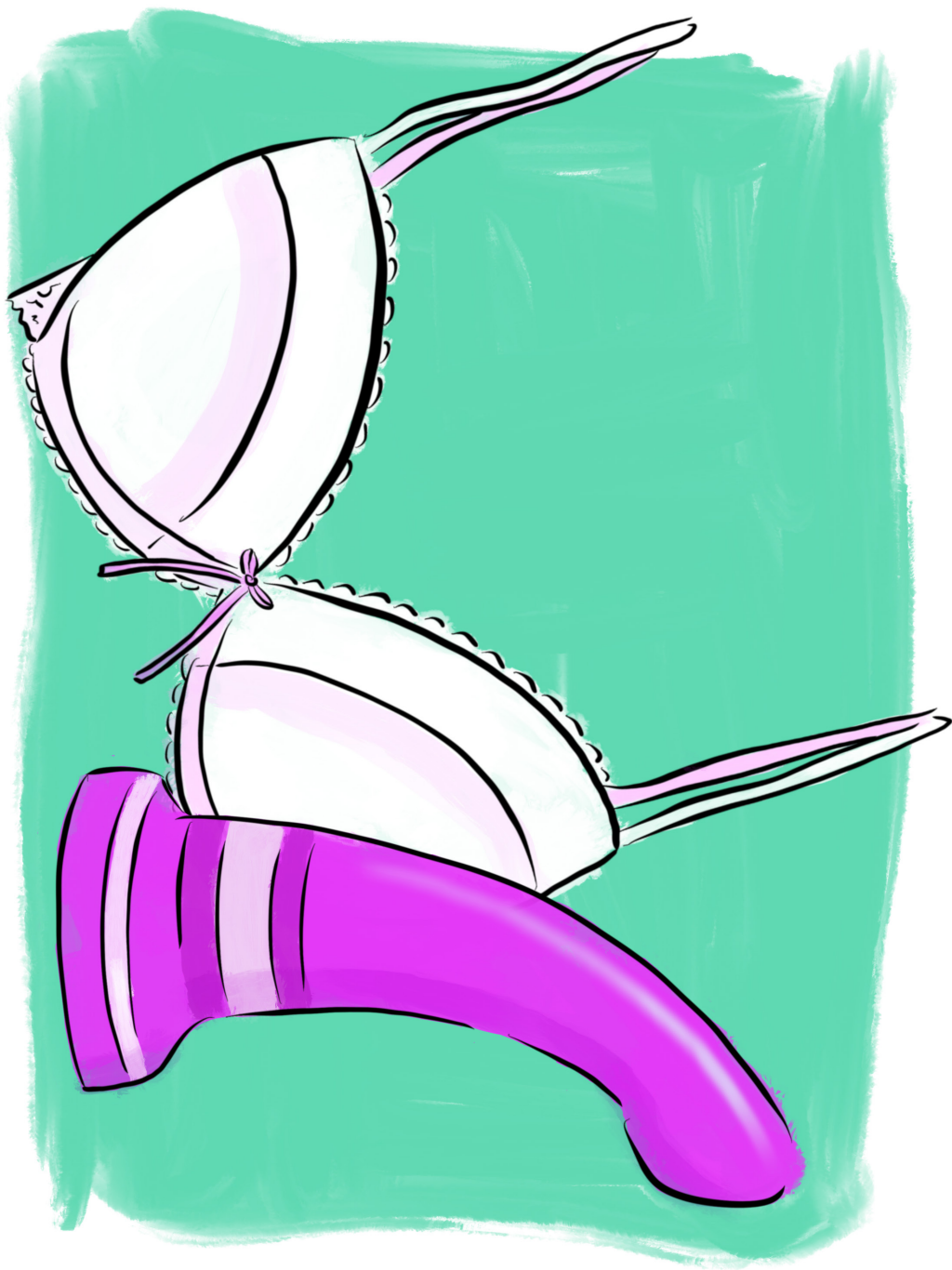
Nazera thinks the hijab shouldn't hold girls back and she likes how “I can choose who gets to see me”. Unlike most of her Muslim peers, she wears ‘lots of make-up’ especially on weekends. She thinks you should be able to date before marriage – views that her ‘strict Muslim’ peers don't share and sometimes judge her on. She likes the tradition that “the boy has to ask permission from the parents to go out with the girl” but also feels that “girls should have a right to do what they want”. She dislikes how “a girl can't talk to a boy without people assuming things”. While she would love to wear more dresses, she has been teased by others for wearing a “wedding dress”. She loves Sam Smith because “he's really positive about gay marriage and stuff ... and I feel like he's using his fame in a positive way, rather than starting fights”. She thinks there should be more positive gay and transgender role models but is “not sure if a boy should wear a hijab” because “he would get beaten up, and perhaps boys might wear it to mock girls”.

Nazera hates the stereotypes around ‘Muslims’ in the media and while usually “I'm like a really calm person, when I see stuff that's happening ... the Muslims and stuff, I lose it”. She learns “what's happening in other countries” via a Muslim youtuber who reports on wars and injustices that don't always make mainstream news. Stating that “religion shouldn't be a hurdle” or constrain girls' lives, Nazera has “big dreams” of becoming a lawyer or psychologist.

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Renold, E., Bragg, S., Jackson, C. and Ringrose, J. (2018) *How gender matters to children and young people*. Cardiff University.



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Izzy, Ria, Karina and Cassy talk about padded bras as they dress up a fictional body outline in party clothing.

Izzy says, that her body ‘needs a padded bra so people look at her boobs’.

Ria swiftly interjects, ‘she needs a padded bra to hide them!’.

Karina says that padded bras help protect her nipples which are sometimes sore now they are growing.

Later, Cassy draws a big dildo onto the body.
“She needs one of those”.

They all fall about laughing.

Researcher: Why does she need one?

Izzy: Because she’s a girl!

(age 11)

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Renold, E. (2013) *Boys and girls speak out: a qualitative study exploring children's gender and sexual cultures (age 10-12)*. www.nspcc.org.uk/services-and-resources/research-and-resources/2013/boys-girls-speak-out/



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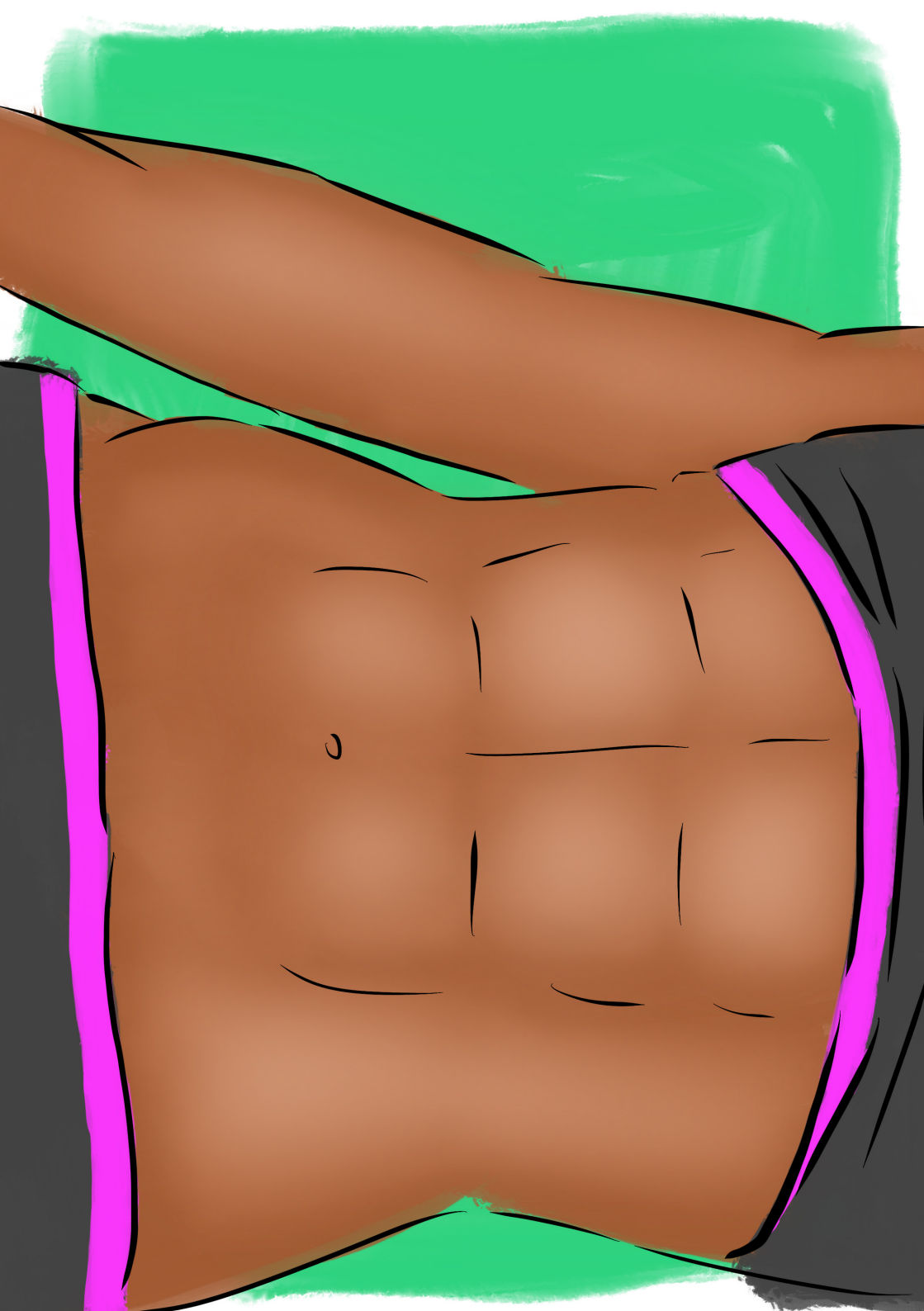
Four 10 year old girls talk about their love for high heels. They started wearing them at age 7 not to 'look sexy' but to 'look older' because, 'people treat you with respect I think because like when you are older, people no longer treat you like dirt, like rubbish'.

The girls explain how 'looking young' is harmful because they are 'made fun of' and bullied by older teenagers.

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Renold, E. (2013) Boys and girls speak out: a qualitative study exploring children's gender and sexual cultures (age 10-12). www.nspcc.org.uk/services-and-resources/research-and-resources/2013/boys-girls-speak-out/



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Zainab (age 12) enjoys athletics. She speaks proudly about her fitness regimes and likes having a ‘muscly body’ as long as it’s not ‘too muscly’. “My coach said she wants me to get a six-pack ... so she keeps me an extra half hour and then she gives me like exercises ... but my mum, she really isn’t happy about it”. Zainab’s friend, Hanna (age 12), also enjoys athletics and loves running: “I started running when I was six ... it’s part of my life now and I’m really competitive, I love competing, but I like, I think I’m really fat ... so when I’m going running, I like wear like my knee highs ...and I like take ages to do my hair it takes two hours, an hour and a half ... I’m really self conscious when I go, because I think about everywhere, I know my mam says this is ridiculous but I think everywhere I go I think everybody’s looking at me ... and everybody’s saying I’m fat ... it’s cos I got bullied for being fat [...] by Drew and James [...] my mum had to like force me to put my dress on to go to prom, I didn’t really want to because I felt like the boys looking at me.

Zainab and Hanna’s classmates, Mahmud, Gerry and Jahmir love boxing and want to become cage fighters. Jahmir says, “I like going on the weights ... it feels good afterwards because your arms feel really light after”.

Rhydian (age 11) talks at length about going to the gym and what he does there. He later talks about how he “doesn’t feel safe” where he lives, and is often scared walking home from the gym on his own. Sometimes he gets into fights: “I ended up fighting when this boy kept calling my ex-girlfriend fat and ugly and all that ... like he was bullying her. He explains, “that is why I really go to the gym”.

Tessa: This boy called Caden, his profile pictures him like?

Myra: Oh yeah, with a massive six-pack

Researcher: Is he your age?

Tessa: Yeah ... boys are like called gay if they do that

(age 12)

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Renold, E. (2013) *Boys and girls speak out: a qualitative study exploring children's gender and sexual cultures (age 10-12)*. www.nspcc.org.uk/services-and-resources/research-and-resources/2013/boys-girls-speak-out/

Happy Birthday
COUSIN



“

I got called strange, by boys in the old school. Me and this girl named Alice used to always hang out ... so in the end ... we made up a lie that we were cousins, and that lasted for like a year before we told anyone. And then to make it even more obvious, when it was her birthday, I'd get like Happy Birthday Cousin, and then I'd give it to her in school.

(Jared, age 11)

In primary school some people have forced each other to 'go out'

(Cal, age 12)

Boys will say, "well go out with me or I will hate you" and the girl will get scared and they will go out with them

(Maisy, age 10)

You end up giving in

(Karina, age 10)

The (playground monitors) go, 'the more the boys hit you and chase you the more they love you'

(Kayley, age 10)

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Renold, E. (2013) *Boys and girls speak out: a qualitative study exploring children's gender and sexual cultures (age 10-12)*. www.nspcc.org.uk/services-and-resources/research-and-resources/2013/boys-girls-speak-out/



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Jodi is 13 years old and she is asked repeatedly to send a nude photo. Jodi says she can't win because just by being known to be asked for images some people will call her a 'slut', and if she does send an image she doesn't know what will happen. Responding, Jodi sends an image of a cat.

Another girl, Taneisha (age 13) used the same tactic and sent an alien when she was asked for a nude.

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Ringrose, J. Gill, R., Livingstone, S. and Harvey, L. (2012) *A Qualitative Study of Children, Young People and 'Sexting'*. London: NSPCC.



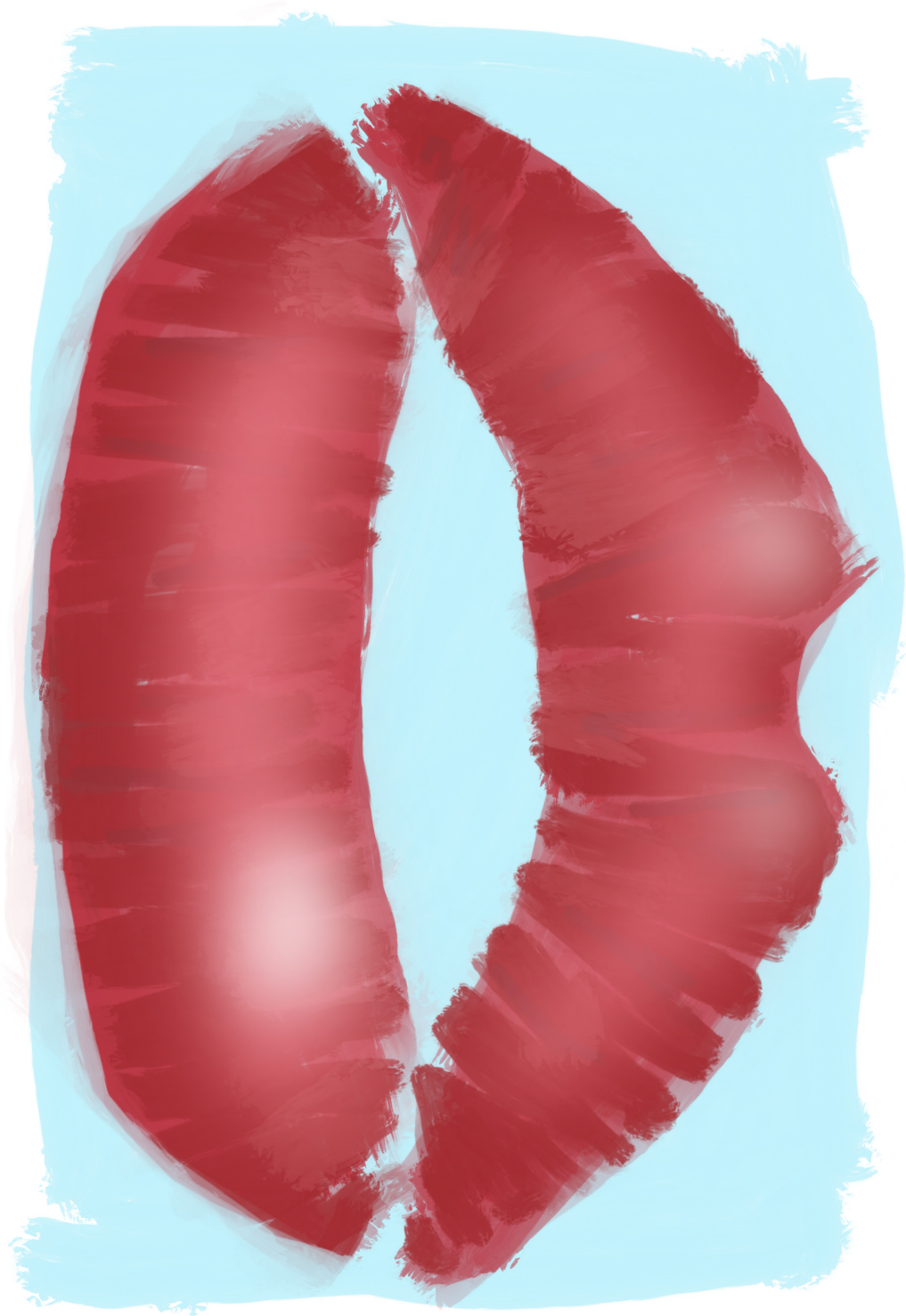
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Tonia (age 12) lives in a community with strongly demarcated and traditional gender roles. She has given up on 'wearing loads of make-up' and now wears dark 'goth' clothes and 'just eyeliner'. She says she 'doesn't care what others think' but her refusal to take part in cosmetic culture and fashion of her peer culture makes her highly visible in her local community where she is routinely subject to gender-based harassment. She says: "they pick on me because of my voice ... because it is too deep. Some of them are my friends and they take the mick out of me constantly. They call me Batman. And when I have my hood up, they shove my hood down over my face and when I speak they say I am Batman because I talk too deep. I take it to heart sometimes and I just stand there like, you know. And then sometimes they ask me what is the matter and I tell them that, like what they said offended me and they say sorry, but they continue to do it".

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Renold, E. (2013) *Boys and girls speak out: a qualitative study exploring children's gender and sexual cultures (age 10-12)*. www.nspcc.org.uk/services-and-resources/research-and-resources/2013/boys-girls-speak-out/



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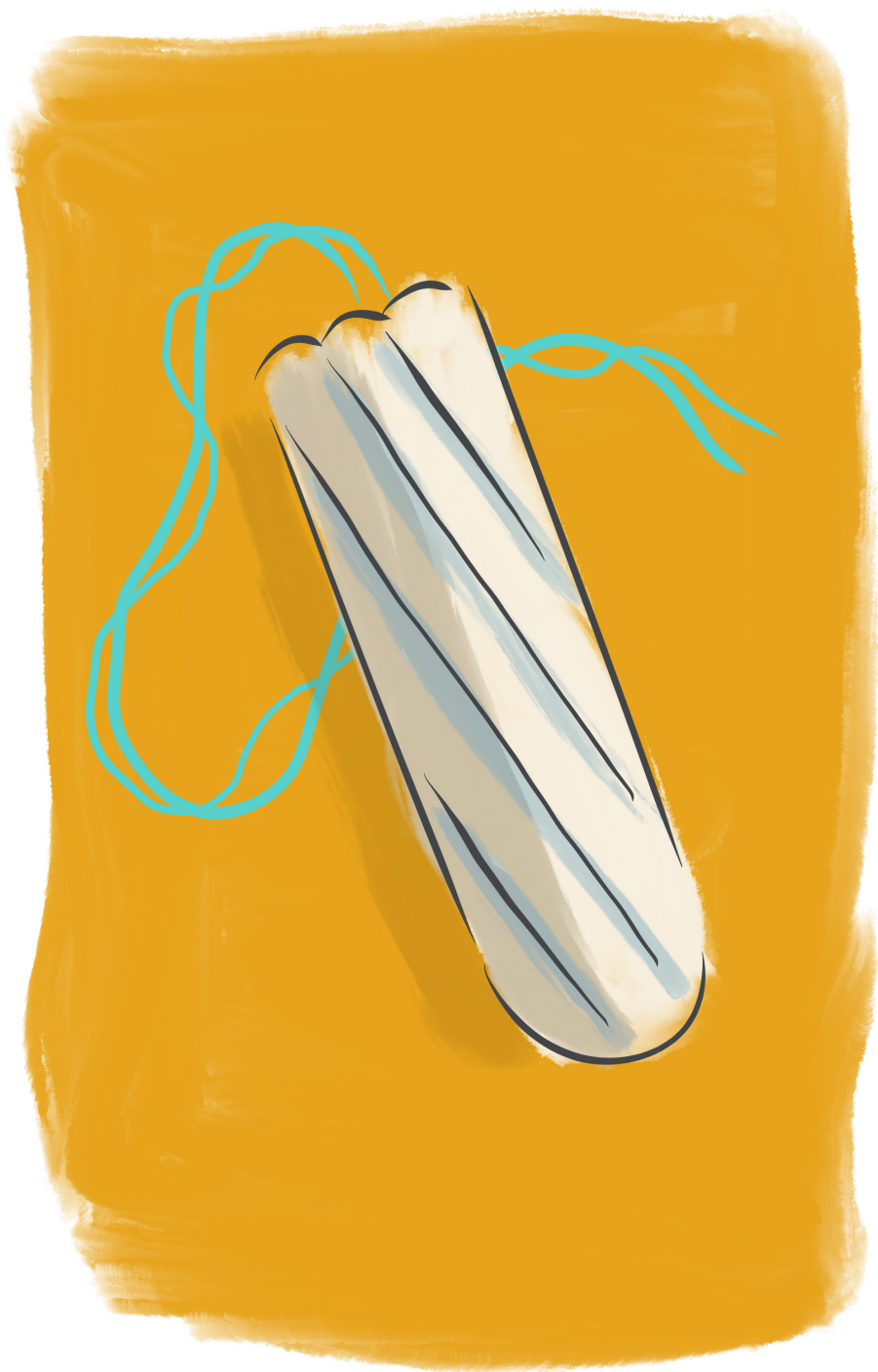
“Matilda (age 5, white Welsh) talks about how boys ‘annoy me and Isabel all the time... they always get us and they try to kiss us and, and, they’re just trying to chase us and get a kiss and then they annoy us’. She continues: “It’s OK, ‘cause sometimes they chase us really funny, sometimes they don’t’ and ‘sometimes we chase them ... sometimes we scare them ... we just use superpowers!’ Matilda laughs and shows off her superpower, stretching out her arms”

“ It is the end of playtime. The whistle has been blown and the children (age 5-6) are coming to stand in their class lines. They stand close together, in a messy single file, some facing forwards, some backwards, some interacting with other children and some not. Thomas and Jon are standing near the back of the line, where it is more disordered in form. Thomas leans forward and kisses Jon on the cheek. Jon recoils, moving his head away, and they both laugh. Both boys are wearing hooded sweatshirts and start playing with them. They face each other in line and one boy pulls his hood forward and puts it over the other boy’s head, so both their heads are covered by the hood and their faces are close inside it. Mia returns to the line, after reporting to the playground supervisor that a boy from Reception has been hurting her, and stands behind Jon. She is crying and keeps to herself for a short time. Then she stops crying, and kisses Jon on the cheek three times, making exaggerated ‘Mwah! Mwah! Mwah!’ noises. Jon says ‘Euugh!’ Then he says to Thomas, who is standing beside him, ‘I’m kissing you!’ He kisses Thomas on the cheek. The teacher calls for the class to start walking inside. On the way to the classroom, Mia starts crying again. ”

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Holford, N., Renold, E. and Huuki, T., 2013. What (else) can a kiss do? *Theorizing the power plays in young children's sexual cultures. Sexualities*, 16: 5-6, pp.710-729.



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Three bi-sexual young women talk about their sexual experiences with cis-gender men and women: 17 year old Indiah and Rochelle who were friends from school and 19 year old Chanelle. The conversation turns to humour and fun during 'sex':

Indiah: I hate it when people can't laugh during sex.

Chanelle: You need to be able to laugh during sex

Indiah: Ah-ha that's true

Rochelle: And talk during sex and be like, do you know what, can you go deeper, or whatever like. (I and C: mmmm (in agreement)) Like you need, communication in the sex, like have fun with it like (I: innit!) do be all serious like. alright fair enough if you are loosing your virginity its a bit different, but have fun! ... I swear, just like have fun!

Rochelle: Yeah

Indiah: Being adventurous. Spontaneous.

Rochelle: Yeah, yeah spontaneous.

[...]

Indiah: Like one time yeah like, I was on my period, but like I had a tampon in yeah.

Rochelle: Ugh, I don't wanna hear this

Indiah: Shut up. Go outside then.

Chanelle: [laughs]

Indiah: I was on my period so I wasn't expecting to have sex but then um this boy that I was with, he went down on me, and I was just like, obviously I still had the tampon in, don't worry there weren't blood on his tongue and shit.

Rochelle: Ugh, you was on your period - oh my god!

Chanelle:

Indiah: I weren't expecting that, so I was like, wow, check you out!

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McGeeney, E. (2013) *What is good sex? Young people, sexual pleasure and sexual health services*, Unpublished PhD Dissertation. Open University.



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Zoe and May (age 10, white Welsh) talk a lot about feeling ‘over-protected’ by their parents, especially their dads, who are keen to ‘keep us young’ and would try to control their behavior in ways which ensured ‘not acting like I am older than I am’. They wished for lives that were not so ‘childish, sad and boring’. For them, SIMS is ‘the best game ever’ because they can try on identities and engage in behaviours that were unavailable or too risky in their own lives:

Zoe: I like, I love Sims 3

May: Yeah we love the Sims. The Sims is the best game ever ... because it is like real life

Zoe: But you can do what you want

May: It is just so cool

[...]

May: Well, you just play life

Zoe: Yeah you can be married ... you can be from as small as newborn to as old as May: Like 80

Zoe: We go in as teens

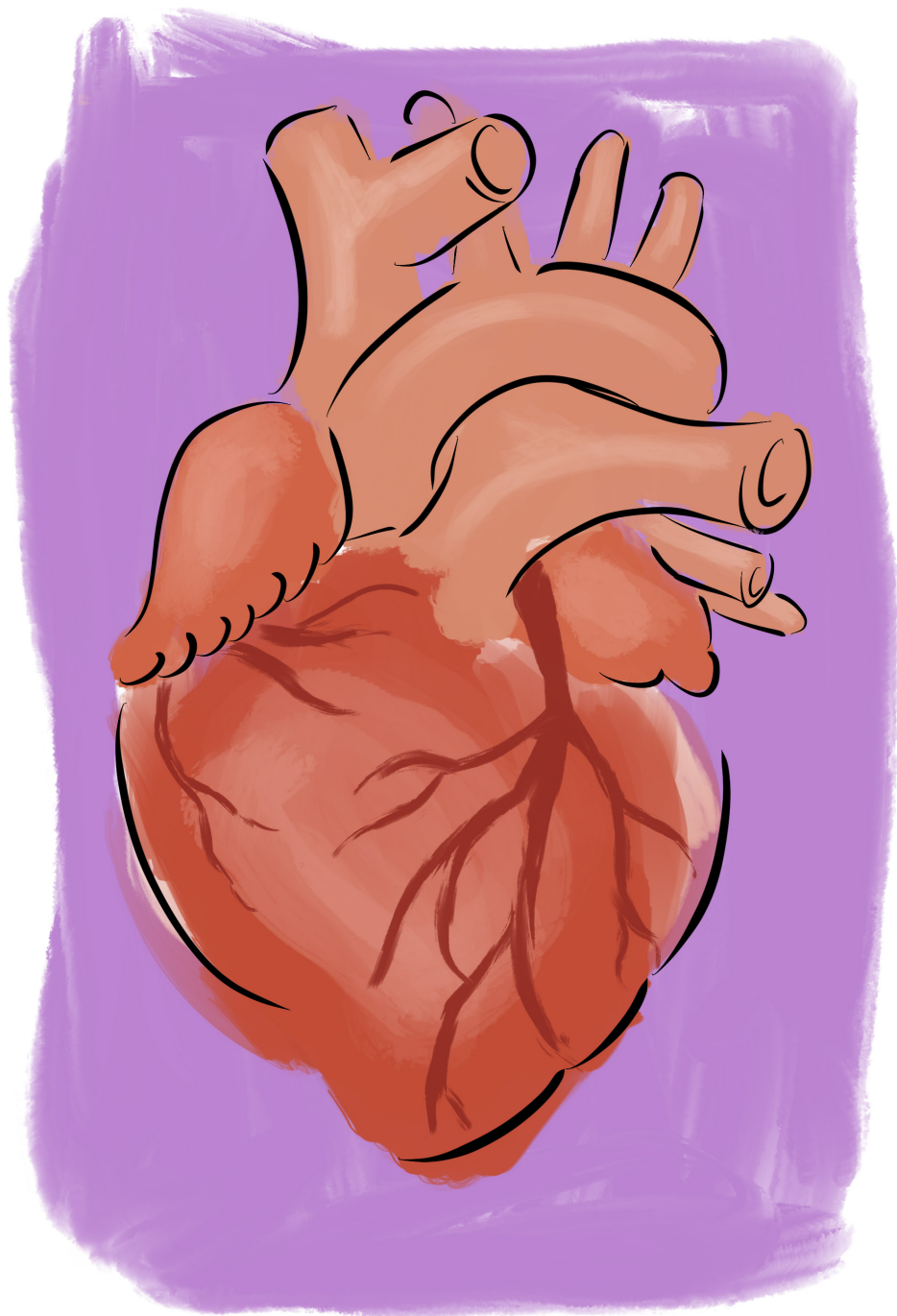
May: Because I would like to be older ... and when you get those [special powers on zombie SIMS] you can make yourself naked in the middle of town where people are watching or you could just do as little as make it rain

In SIMS, they can be boys or girls, or zombies. They can be a baby or 80 years old. For May and Zoe, this seems to be the one space where they feel they ‘can do what you want’. They ‘could be naked’ and ‘definitely’ enjoy ‘kissing’ their virtual boyfriends, which Zoe said she was ‘too scared’ and ‘embarrassed’ to initiate in real life with real boys. It was also one space where May didn’t feel ‘pushed to be a girl’ in her ‘real life’. In SIMS she could ‘do stuff that makes you happy’.

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Renold, E. (2013) Boys and girls speak out: a qualitative study exploring children's gender and sexual cultures (age 10-12). www.nspcc.org.uk/services-and-resources/research-and-resources/2013/boys-girls-speak-out/



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Dave is 16 (white Welsh). He strongly believes in the supernatural and that it is possible for things to exist which science cannot explain. Unlike some of his peers, his body is not slim or toned, and he speaks eloquently and in depth about how his body feels in different situations. In the following excerpt, he talks about his “first time” having sex with a young woman who he was seeing for a while and who he “liked”:

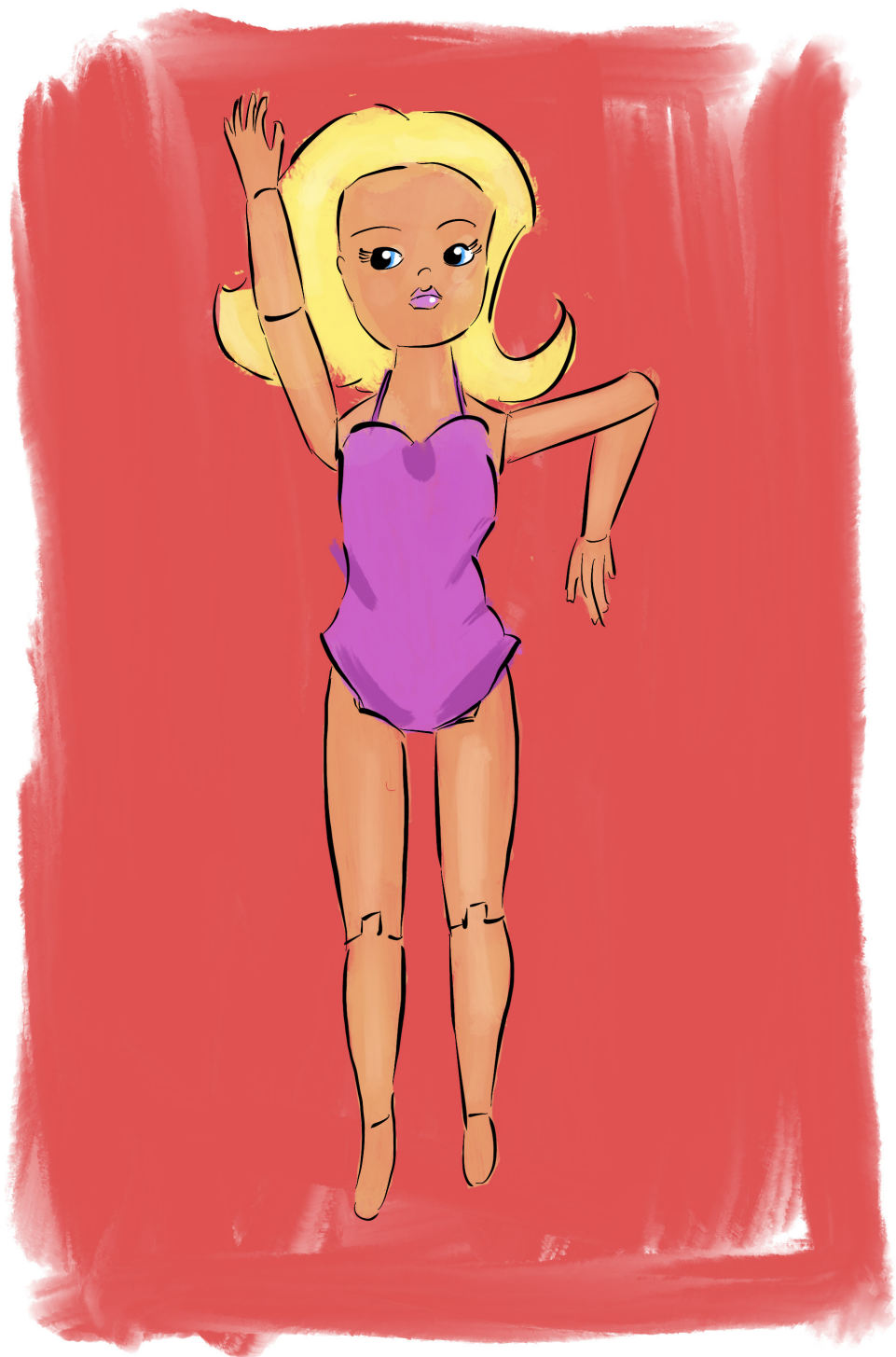
‘The one thing which I’ll try and remember forever, is I could feel her heartbeat, if that makes any sense. That’s gotta be like one of the most intense things I’ve felt. I could feel it everywhere. Boom, and then it went all the way through, and it’s almost as if my heartbeat matched hers. This is exactly what I felt, it went boomph and then through my body as well and that’s one thing I’ll always remember.

It was really intense as it, when it got faster and faster, cos then mine started beating faster and faster and faster, and I was just getting more and more into it, but that’s the one thing about the whole experience, that blew my mind was I could feel every single heartbeat ... and she could feel the same cos she felt my heartbeat ... she’d never had that before [...] she was more surprised than I was cos obviously it was my first time [not her first time] ... afterwards I expected it to happen every time, but it didn’t, that was like the only time’

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Austin, J. (2017) *(Un)doing Youth Sexualities: Mapping young people’s bodies and pleasures beyond ‘sex’*, Unpublished PhD Dissertation. Cardiff University.



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Ceri (age 15, white Welsh) is gender fluid and a lesbian. They have been in a lesbian relationship with a girl in their school for a year but the relationship is kept a secret from all the other students. Ceri is a young carer for their parents, and their mother is registered blind. Ceri has physical impairments and cannot walk without the aid of crutches, and an ongoing wrist problem makes some writing and mobility issues even more difficult. Ceri also has Dyslexia. Ceri struggles to control their anger and has had anger management counselling in the past and has previously suffered with mental health problems, depression and anxiety in particular. Ceri attributes many of these emotional difficulties to extensive periods of relentless bullying in their life. For all of these reasons, Ceri makes regular use of the nurture room - a space in school for young people with extra learning, behavioural or emotional needs.

Creativity is an important and central facet of Ceri's life. As part of a research project Ceri identified doll modification as an enjoyable way to express the thoughts and feelings they have about living their life: "For me stripping it back to nothing, getting rid of everything is a big thing." The dolls are stripped of their standard, factory applied hair, make-up and clothing and remodelled in a way that is more reflective of Ceri's aesthetic and interests. Ceri likes to create "uncertainty about the doll's gender and sexuality". Although they feel progressively more accepted by their peers and teachers, engaging in online communities with other young people who enjoy playing around with identity categories is vital for their emotional wellbeing and sense of community or belonging. Also, taking dolls that symbolize normative and stereotypical gender identities and transforming them in to something else feels creative and affirmative for Ceri who engages with other young people posting videos of their dolls in online forums. "I know it's a doll but the lips are just too pouty for me. And I don't like the message it sends to girls about how they should look.... This one time I soaked my dolls head in Acetone, I dunked her face in Acetone just to try and help me." Modifying the dolls is a cathartic and transformative experience for Ceri when they are living at the nexus of so many contradictory and exclusionary categories and for whom expressing themselves in creative ways is crucial to their emotional well-being.

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Edwards, V. (2016-19) *Gender, resistance and gaming: mapping the material, digital and embodied becomings of teen gamers*. Unpublished PhD Dissertation. Cardiff University.



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Nicky is “obsessed” with online gaming, ‘The Walking Dead’ in particular. He plays every day from the time he gets home from school until around 4-5 am. He plays more at the weekend. Nicky is 13 (white Welsh, cis-gender boy) and for the last 3 years he has been a student in a special school. Nicky’s statement describes him as having Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD) and Emotional Behavioural Disorder. Nicky recalls being “wild” when he arrived at the school, “swinging from the staircases, feeling out of control”. A lot has changed for Nicky in the last 3 years, increasingly high doses of medication for his ADHD have made his feelings more manageable and he is considered one of the most promising students in his class and one of the easiest to manage. A side-effect of this medication is that he never feels tired and struggles to sleep for more than an hour or two at night. After he changed schools his old friends didn’t want to hang around with him anymore, the stigma of attending a special school cost him his entire friendship group. Nicky says that he can’t go out and make friends where he lives as it’s a “really rough area and it’s dangerous to be out at night”. So, Nicky’s gaming friends and the games themselves are the only company he has during his long wakeful nights.

Nicky’s family think he is “different” (gay) and although he has a good relationship with his mum her health is poor and she is often too ill to look after him, and “my dad doesn’t talk to me”. At school his form tutor and his classmates all think he is gay too, because he likes musicals and has a high-pitched voice. Nicky talks about feeling “different” but not about being gay. In Nicky’s online social world he doesn’t have to account for any of these categories. Nicky says he “hates children and kids, they’re so annoying because of their imagination and their imaginary games. I lost my imagination when I came to this school and started taking medication... ever since then I have loved violent video games.”

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Edwards, V. (2016-19) *Gender, resistance and gaming: mapping the material, digital and embodied becomings of teen gamers*. Unpublished PhD Dissertation. Cardiff University.



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Mo (age 13, white Welsh) lives with her dad, her 9 month old baby sister, her 22 year old step-sister, whom she shares a bedroom with, and a large collection of reptiles. Mo spends most of her time and every weekend with her best friend Alys and her family: “I basically live there ... she's got a better lifestyle than me”. She tells us that Alys has never met her family and she likes to keep it that way: “I don't really want her to meet them. I mean if I had a choice, I wouldn't either”. She talks about her battle with long-term bullying for a physical disability that becomes visible to others when she runs fast; her uncle who crashed his motorbike and died in his early 30's; and her mum's ex-husband who suffered from severe depression, and eventually took his own life.

Mo carries a journal in her school bag that she takes with her ‘everywhere’. It contains thought bubbles and scribbles, poems she has written, song lyrics she has copied or made up, all of which are illustrated with decorative and elaborate swirls:

“Don't look at a couple or boy and girl and think that is what I want too”

“For all you know they could be in the middle of a break up or even a divorce”

“If love seems so happy why does it always end in tears”

“Some people say that you can't live without love. I think that Oxygen is more important”

“Friends are like balloons. Once you let them go you can't get them back, so I am going to tie you to my heart so I never lose you”

Mo talks at length about her “lighthouse crib” in one of her favourite computer games, Saints Row. She talks about how she was “swimming for hours” in the game because she “didn't have a boat to get into”. The water theme continues as she shares how she dreams about being a mermaid: ‘I still do actually, I dream that I am a mermaid’. Mo continues to talk about a mermaid in the computer game ‘Dead or Alive 4’ and how she ‘loves being in the water being in water is probably the best really ... I don't know why’. Perhaps the water, and its feeling of freedom, is restoring movement and speed to legs that become dis-abled on land (like a mermaid), and where her water-body can move and flow like the swirls in her journal.

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Renold, E. and Ivinston, G. (2015) Chapter 15. *Mud, Mermaids and Burnt Wedding Dresses: Mapping Queer Becomings in Teen Girls' Talk on Living with Gender and Sexual Violence*, in E. Renold, J. Ringrose and D. Egan (eds.) *Children, Sexuality and Sexualisation*, Palgrave.



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Rees (age 15, white Welsh) loves the cadets. He has extensive military knowledge, especially in field-craft techniques and weaponry skills. Rifles are his absolute ‘favourite’ weapon of choice, and he talks at length about how to assemble different rifles and how to deploy them in the field, “shooting blank rounds, when doing patrols and live rounds on ranges”.

He describes himself as a very “structured sort of person” and finds the rigid routines in the cadets comforting and the ‘banter’ fun and supportive of ‘being a bit different’. He talks about how he has been ‘attracted’ to many different people over the years, and how he has “dated guys, girls, and also trans people, and people that fall under every gender category’. ‘Coming out’ to his parents or gay uncle about being pansexual has been impossible, however, because ‘they are in denial about the whole fact that pansexuals exist’. When he ‘discovered’ he was ‘pan’, it was his friends in the cadets who were the ‘most supportive’. He says he ‘didn’t need to’ come out to them because ‘they already knew’.

Painfully shy outside of the cadets, he has recently joined the local choir to help with his ‘confidence’ and an LGBTQ youth group to learn more about different genders and sexualities. He struggles quite a bit at times because there is so little structure in these sessions, but he continues to go because he likes to hear about other people’s experiences”

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Ringrose, J. (2017-8) *Gender and Sexual Equity in Secondary Schools: Research Project*, Institute of Education, University College London.



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Sharman (age 13, white Welsh) describes her life as ‘weird’, ‘not normal’, explaining how “many things have happened to me and it’s just not safe for me”. She talks about how she and her mum had to move away from her violent father when she was 6 and stay off the internet so he couldn’t “track her down” and when she was physically attacked by a group of boys from her primary school, who ‘came onto’ her in a car-park, leaving her badly shaken, with scars on her shoulder and elbow.

While ‘not feeling safe’ is part and parcel of daily life, Sharman is a survivor, and it is in her visceral descriptions of seeking out, and playing in mud that she seems to carve out a space for experiencing moments of pure delight and pleasure:

Me and the boys try and go down the skate-park at least once a week. It’s fun ... when it’s wet it’s the BEST. You slip ... you slip and slide down the bottom into the puddles ... Yeah ... I get my hoodie on, get my tracksuit, old trainers, not my new ones and go out in the mud. Don’t bother about my hair and makeup.... we go up the park, or anywhere where it’s muddy [...] we go like, ‘I feel like rolling in mud’, and then we go rolling! [...] We make mud slides and slide down them, get mud all down our backs and we sort of throw mud at each other, its FUN!. We are like, ‘where can I find MUD’.

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Renold, E, and Ivanson, G. (2015) Chapter 15. Mud, Mermaids and Burnt Wedding Dresses: Mapping Queer Becomings in Teen Girls’ Talk on Living with Gender and Sexual Violence, in E. Renold, J. Ringrose and D. Egan (eds.) *Children, Sexuality and Sexualisation*, Palgrave.

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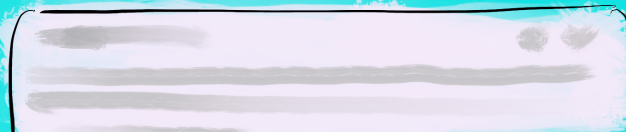
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ASK ME ANYTHING



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Kye (mixed heritage West Africa and English) and Pjeter (Eastern Europe heritage) are best friends. They support each other in their dislike of “the whole machismo thing”, and the expectation for boys to be aggressive and misogynistic. They are highly critical about how fixed ideas of gender, heteronormativity and the gender binary “can lead to boxing people in”. They question why people think there are “only two genders” because of the ways “the genders have been really rigidly defined. If you’re a man you must do this and if you’re a woman you must do this”. Pjeter particularly disliked the widely-held view that “all people from South-East Europe are naturally angry or aggressive, which I’m not”.

For over a year, Kye and Pjeter have been sharing feminist quotes, memes and tumblr sites (e.g. “I write about feminism”) to learn more about gender inequalities. They also like that particular site’s writing on police brutality and race in the US. They routinely “check themselves” since they came to realise that much of what they were watching and sharing on social media was sexist. For both boys, their interest in feminism and gender inequalities remains underground. The research interview was the first time they had shared this with anyone else, and as far as they know they are alone in their school as boys interested in feminism. Kye warns against “teaching gender” in schools without proper training for staff.

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Renold, E., Bragg, S., Jackson, C. and Ringrose, J. (2018) *How gender matters to young people*. Cardiff University.



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Mia, Isabella, Safa and Imogen (all aged 12) are a newly formed group of Year 7 friends, who call themselves 'The Weirdos!'. The group take part in a number of extra-curricular school activities, giving them a reputation for being 'superstars' by their teacher. With their peers however, being so helpful earns them the derisive title of the 'Sparkle Committee', due to their love of glitter.

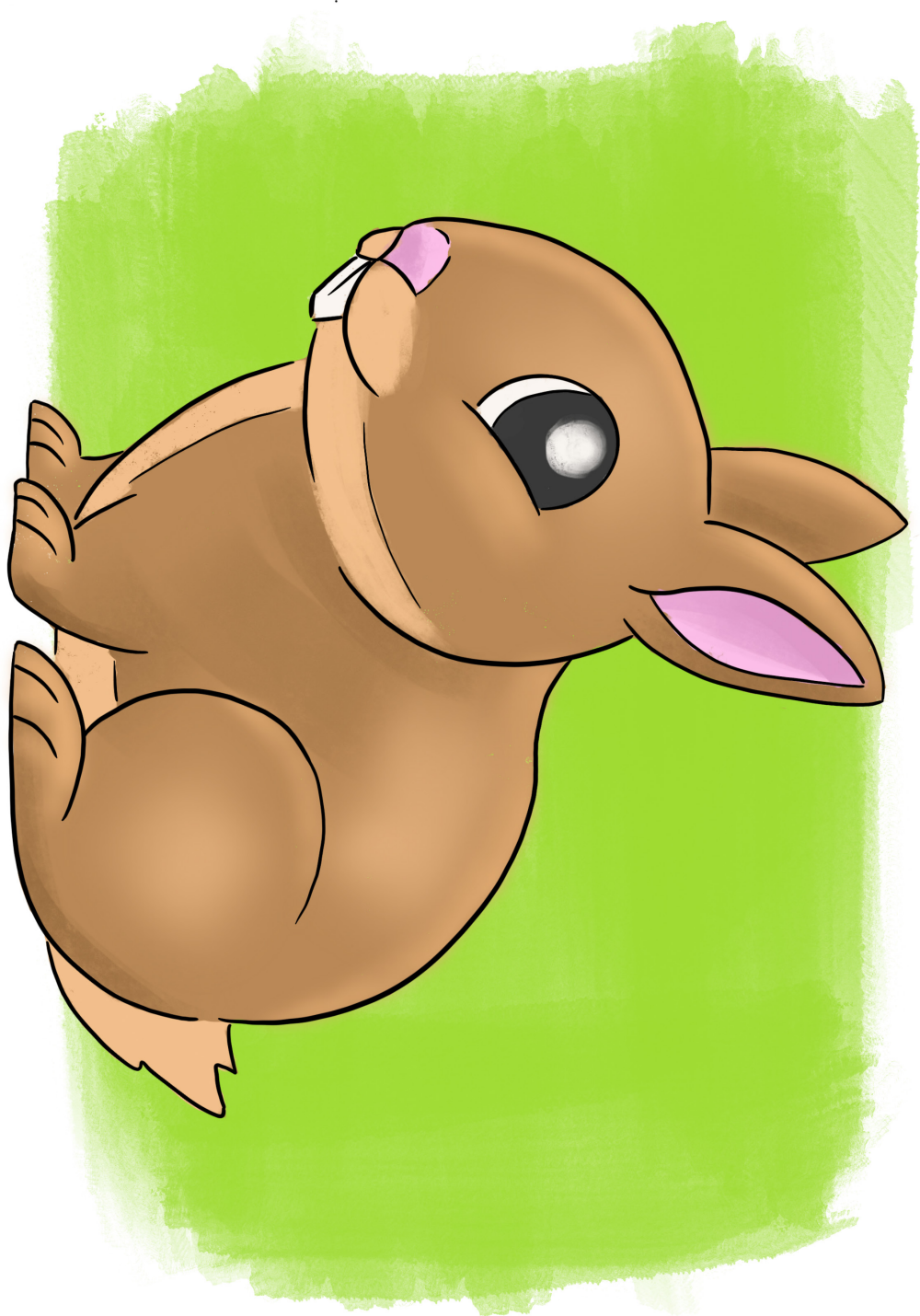
Describing themselves as 'weird people through and through', they often assert that there is 'no such thing as a normal person, because every person is different!'. They speak animatedly in favour of gender equality, race equality and LGBT rights, and critique the everyday sexist practices they witness at school around gendered uniform policies and gender segregated P.E lessons.

Dating and talking about crushes is associated with popularity at their school, but they routinely dismiss and trivialise the topic. Safa once sent a YouTube video on 'How to Talk to Your Crush' to 'The Weirdos' WhatsApp group chat but said that she thought it would 'just be really funny just to laugh at!' and whispered 'I don't have crushes'. Nevertheless, they reveal that they asked the Amazon virtual assistant Alexa 'who she had a crush on' and Safa shared how the Apple virtual assistant Siri had told her 'a love story'.

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Marston, K. (2020) *Exploring young people's digital sexual cultures through creative, visual and arts-based methods*.
Phd Thesis: Cardiff University.



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Lucy (white Welsh) is 16 years old and a lesbian who attends a newly formed LGBTQ+ youth group in a small post-industrial town in South Wales. Lucy is passionate about animal care and hopes to run her own farm one day. She uses Instagram to ‘pet-work’, that is to connect with other animals through her own pet rabbit. Despite only following ‘rabbits’ and ‘horses’ on Instagram, Lucy observes that Instagram continually plugs her back into a gallery of images of toned and beautified human bodies. A screenshot of her Instagram Explore page shows how the application divides bodies along familiar gender lines. It featured a selection of images focusing on the boobs, bums, waists and legs of women and muscular torsos of men. Lucy is critical of Instagram for suggesting this content to her and making it look like ‘everyday normal stuff’.

Lucy and her friends are aware of the airbrush filters, financial sponsorship, professional photography, diets, drugs, work out routines and algorithmic cultures that are at play in creating this gallery of images. They also note however that looking at these images still materialises into a horrible ‘pressure to change how you look’. This is compounded by the difficulty of finding clothes that fit them in shops and the frequency of hateful comments when a ‘bigger girl’ tries to ‘show off their body’ online.

When asked to share an image of Instagram content that made her feel good in her body, Lucy shared an image of a large Netherland Dwarf rabbit. The image elicited a lot of laughter amongst the LGBTQ+ youth group and Lucy observed ‘that is literally me reincarnated as a rabbit’. Lucy’s joke not only perhaps reveals an identification with the animal but suggests a desire to be ‘reincarnated’ in its body. Perhaps because this is a body whose roundness, softness and squishiness is cute rather than detested like the ‘bigger girls’ who display their bodies on Instagram.

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Marston, K. (2020) *Exploring young people’s digital sexual cultures through creative, visual and arts-based methods*. Phd Thesis: Cardiff University.



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There is a commotion in the home corner. Jack and Ethan, who are dressed up in the wolf and lion costumes, are growling and roaring with hands raised up like claws. The cupboards in the home corner have been lined up a short distance from the back wall and behind these, the targets of the boys' performance, are Maya, Daisy, Caitlin and Chloe, crouching, peering over the top at Jack and Ethan, laughing and shouting hysterically.

The boys stalk around the cupboards, coming closer and closer, while the girls become increasingly hysterical until eventually they begin to fight back. The sofa near to where they are hiding and is filled with baby-dolls which the girls start to throw at Jack and Ethan like missiles. Daisy starts grabbing the nearby plastic kitchenware and utensils, hurling first some cutlery and then a cup. She finds a red teapot and moves to the front of the group to threaten the boys away, brandishing the teapot fiercely. Jack and Ethan back away in mock fear but Daisy soon throws the teapot at them. Caitlin grabs a wooden spatula and replaces Daisy at the front of the group, while Maya continues to throw the baby-dolls and Chloe puts her hands to her face, screaming in terror and laughing with delight in equal measures.

Just as potential weapons are running low, and the boys are closer than ever to the group, still growling intently and reaching out to scam the girls, a teacher shouts across the classroom to announce it is time to go outside to play.

(age 3-4)

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Lyttleton-Smith, J. (2015) Becoming gendered bodies: a posthuman analysis of how gender is produced in an early childhood classroom. PhD Thesis, Cardiff University.



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Maya, Alexa and Chloe are all dressed up as princesses. Seeing this, Zadie hurries over to look for a princess dress as well but there isn't one left for her. She looks despondent and the teacher who has been helping the girls put their dresses on, offers her a racing car costume instead. Zadie looks at it suspiciously and refuses to put it on, insisting that she wants a dress. After much rummaging in the dress-up corner, the teacher manages to find a gold cloak and Zadie seems satisfied. She puts it on and joins the other girls who are beginning to cook dinner in the home corner kitchen.

(age 3-4)

Sasha, Carla and Aisha walk proudly in a line around the nursery in their princess costumes. Their princess line snakes in and out of the different zones; the wendy house, the shop, the red truck, the reading corner. One boy, Tommy, reaches into the dress-up box and slips on a princess dress. He then proceeds to chase the princesses, roaring loudly, "I'm a homo". The girls are all screaming with laughter as they are chased around the nursery floor.

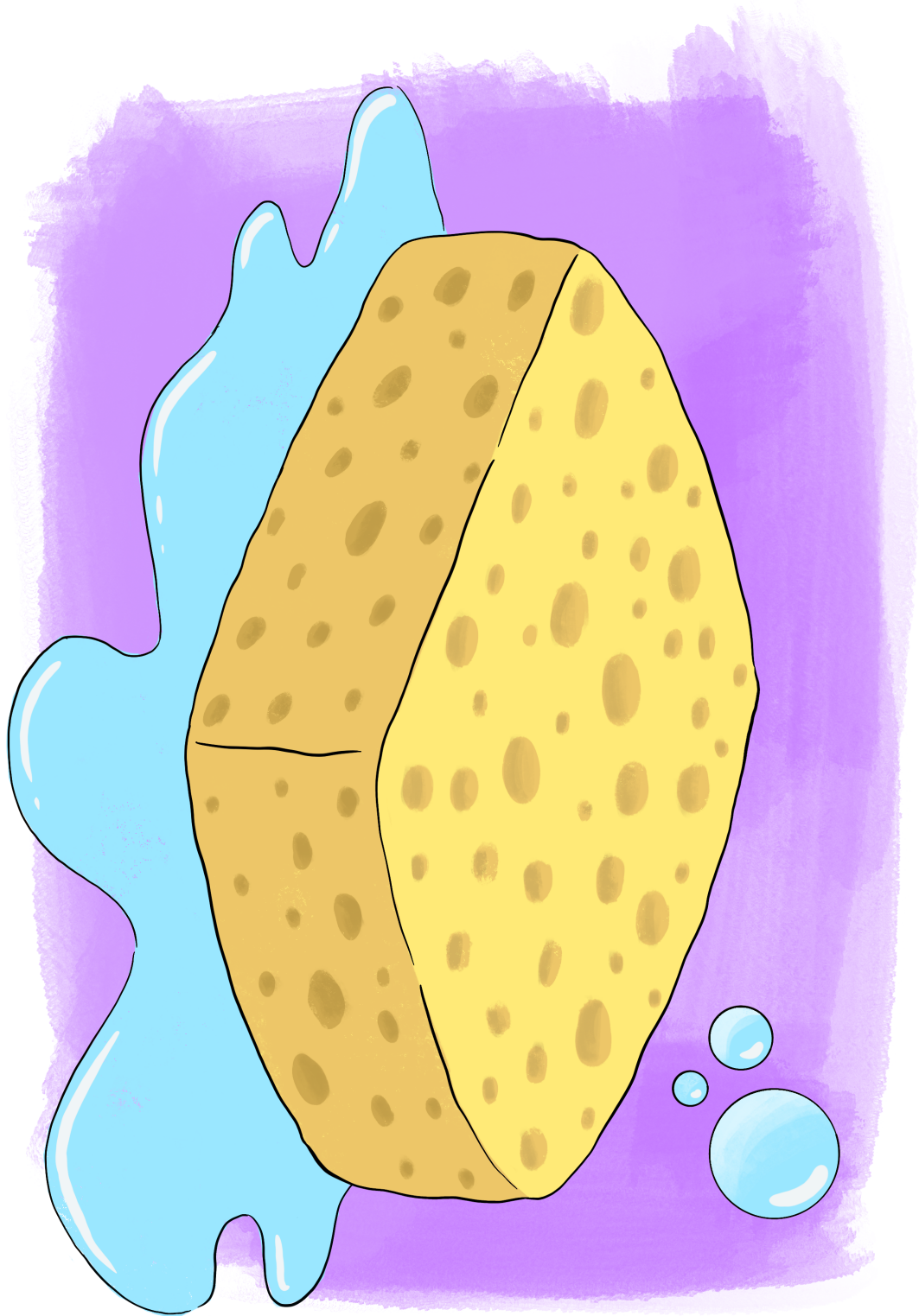
(age 3-4)

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Lyttleton-Smith, J. (2015) *Becoming gendered bodies: a posthuman analysis of how gender is produced in an early childhood classroom*. PhD Thesis, Cardiff University.

Renold, E. and Mellor, D. (2013) *Towards an ethnographic multi-sensory mapping of gendered bodies and becomings*. In J. Ringrose and R. Coleman (editors) *Deleuze and Research Methodologies*. Edinburgh University Press (pp.23-41).



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Outside in the playground all the baby-dolls have been undressed and are lying jumbled on the water table. The table has been filled with soapy water, a number of shaped and coloured sponges have been thrown in with them, and the waterproof tabards are stationed nearby. Katie (age 4) heads straight for the bath of dolls, grabs a tabard, and gets stuck into the cleaning task. She selects her sponge carefully, scanning the options before selecting a purple one in the shape of a flower. She picks up a doll and examines it, before throwing it to the other side of the table. She picks up another doll and starts cleaning. The researcher asks her why she wouldn't sponge clean one she has discarded, and she replies, without hesitation, "Because it's a boy and this sponge is for girls".

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Lyttleton-Smith, J. (2015) Becoming gendered bodies: a posthuman analysis of how gender is produced in an early childhood classroom. PhD Thesis, Cardiff University.



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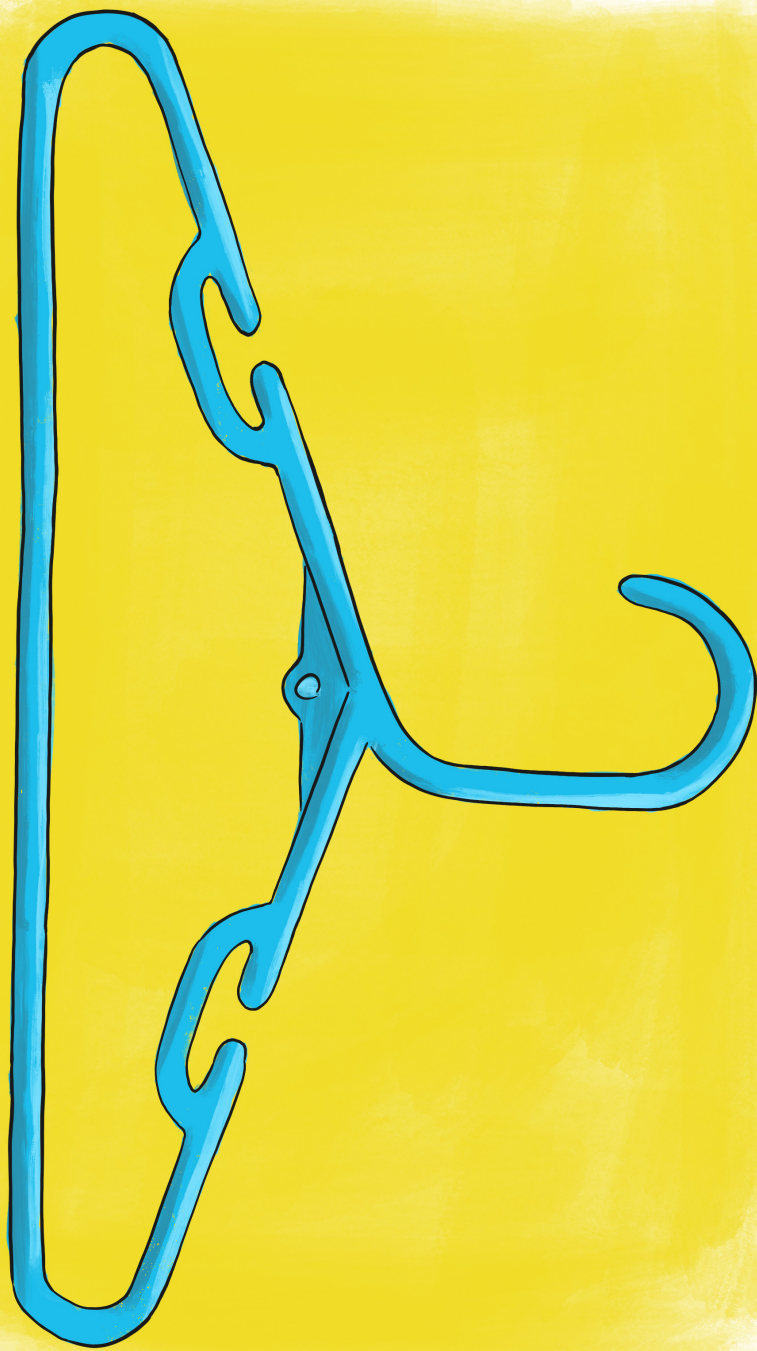
Ethan is lying on the sofa in the home corner and Megan is sitting next to him on the floor. Thomas approaches them with the crocodile puppet that the children often use to scare/ attack other children in monster games. Megan pushes Thomas away saying that Ethan is sick and is waiting for the doctor. Over the next ten minutes many children move in and around the home corner pursuing various activities, but Ethan remains on the sofa the whole time, passive, silent and smiling. Later, Caitlin takes Ethan's place and he nurses her, calling the doctor and pretending to give her medicine. This part of the game goes on for a full half hour, with several other children contributing to her care by giving her blankets, bringing her food, and calling the doctor again

(age 3-4)

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Lyttleton-Smith, J. (2015) Becoming gendered bodies: a posthuman analysis of how gender is produced in an early childhood classroom. PhD Thesis, Cardiff University.



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Tyler is wearing a wizard cloak and enters the 'Giant's Castle' which is a space under the coats in the nursery cloak room. Sophie, carrying a wand with a butterfly on the end of it, follows him. Tyler doesn't acknowledge Sophie and she sits on the bench. Tyler sits next to Sophie and gives her a blue coat-hanger to hold.

Tyler: (Sophie begins to get up) You stay here.

Sophie gets up.

Tyler: (pointing to where Sophie was sitting) No. You stay there.

Sophie sits back down.

Tyler leaves the Giant's Castle. Sophie sits on the bench and looks in the direction in which Tyler has gone. She is still holding on to the blue coat hanger that Tyler gave her. She stays here for a few minutes. Meanwhile, Tyler is sitting at the snack table eating with Jon and some other children. Sophie is still looking at Tyler. She hasn't moved. She stays there, puts the wand on the floor and continues to look at Tyler until he returns. 5 minutes later Tyler runs across the nursery and into the giant's castle. He picks up the wand, gives it to Sophie and says, "Hold that." Sophie stands up and takes the wand from Tyler. He then stands still for a couple of seconds, swaying his cloak around him, then walks around the walls of the giant's castle. Sophie stands still and watches him. He then walks over towards the exit of the Giant's Castle and looks at the pictures on the wall. Sophie continues to look at the wand.

(age 4-5)

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Renold, E. and Mellor, D. (2013) Towards an ethnographic multi-sensory mapping of gendered bodies and becomings. In J. Ringrose and R. Coleman (editors) *Deleuze and Research Methodologies*. Edinburgh University Press (pp.23-41).



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Sophie and Tyler are sat opposite each other on a soft mat, in the outside play area. Sophie is sat with legs tucked under her. Tyler is squatting. Tyler is turning an Action Man doll over and over. Sophie clutches her Action Man under the arms so that he is standing upright.

The Action Man dolls face each other. ‘Fight again yeah’, says Tyler to Sophie. ‘Yeah’, says Sophie. She pushes her Action Man into Tyler’s action man and he spins the action man again.

‘Fight again, fight again, yeah ... fight again’ says Tyler. Sophie looks over at Becky who is holding princess Barbie, and pulls her Action Man away. ‘What you doin?’ says Tyler, ‘it’s better have a fighting man, eh?’ Sophie puts her Action Man down by her side.

Tyler picks up another Barbie. He pushes the two dolls together, their faces touching, and then throws the Barbie into the doll box. Gesturing with the Action Man he says again, ‘Get the man ... get the man’. Sophie shakes her head. ‘You have to ... you have to’ says Tyler. Sophie shakes her head again.

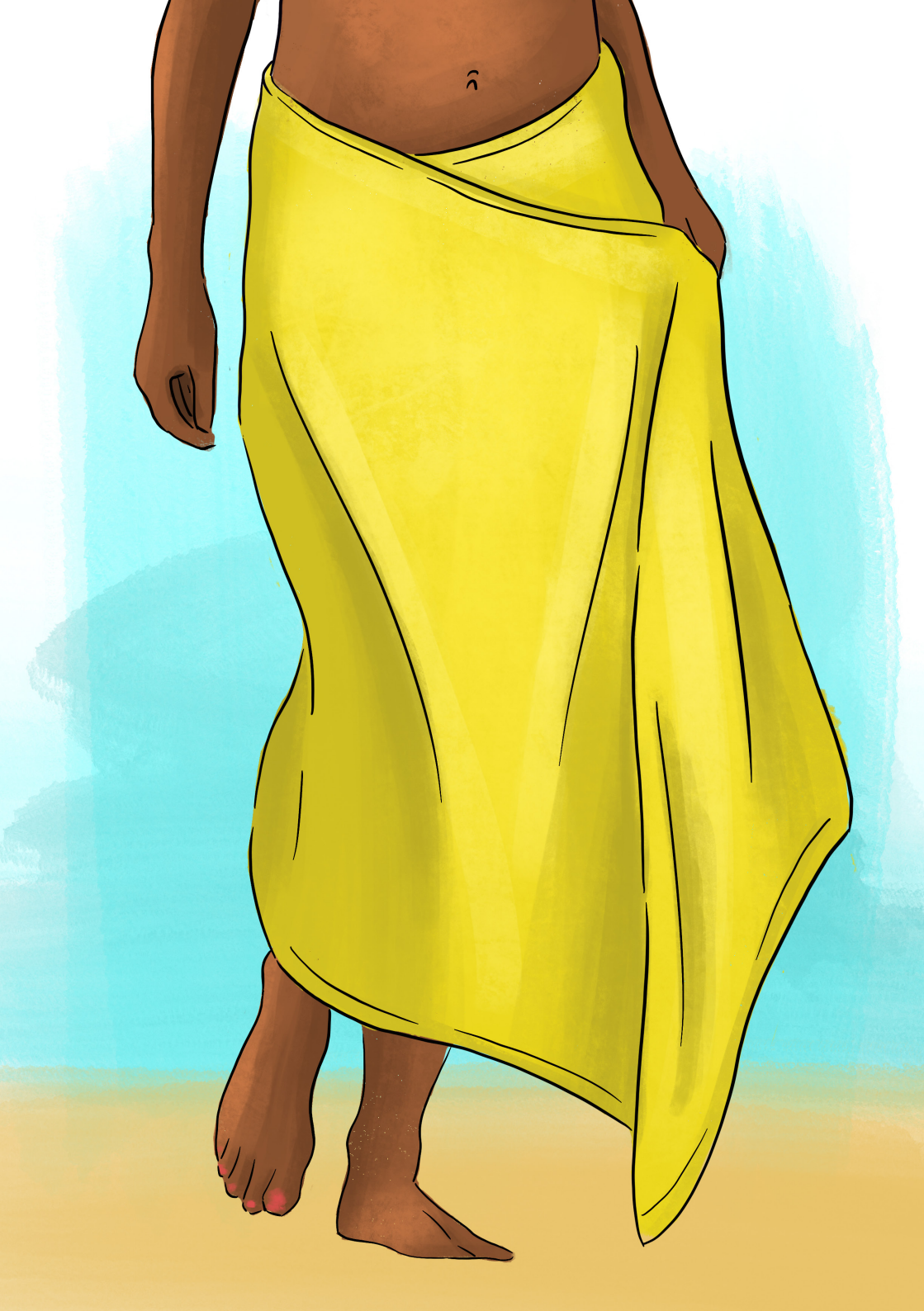
Tyler picks up her Action Man and thrusts it into her hands, saying ‘get it, get .. it’. Sophie doesn’t move. ‘You have to ... you have to’ says Tyler. He is now holding and gesturing with two action men and shouts, ‘YOU HAVE TO, YOU HAVE TO’. Sophie shakes her head, and raises her shoulders up and down. He reaches into the doll box, ‘you want this? you want a girl?’. ‘Yeah’, says Sophie, smiling. She takes the princess Barbie. She looks at the doll, they face each other, and she turns the doll around to face Tyler’s Action Man.

‘Let’s have a fight’, Tyler says, as Action Man does a somersault. ‘Yes’ says Sophie. She holds Princess Barbie’s legs with two hands and Barbie head-butts Action Man, sending him spinning to the ground. She hits him again, and again and again. By the end of this episode of play, the two Action Men are killed many times over.

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Renold, E. and Mellor, D. (2013) *Towards an ethnographic multi-sensory mapping of gendered bodies and becomings*. In J. Ringrose and R. Coleman (editors) *Deleuze and Research Methodologies*. Edinburgh University Press (pp.23-41).



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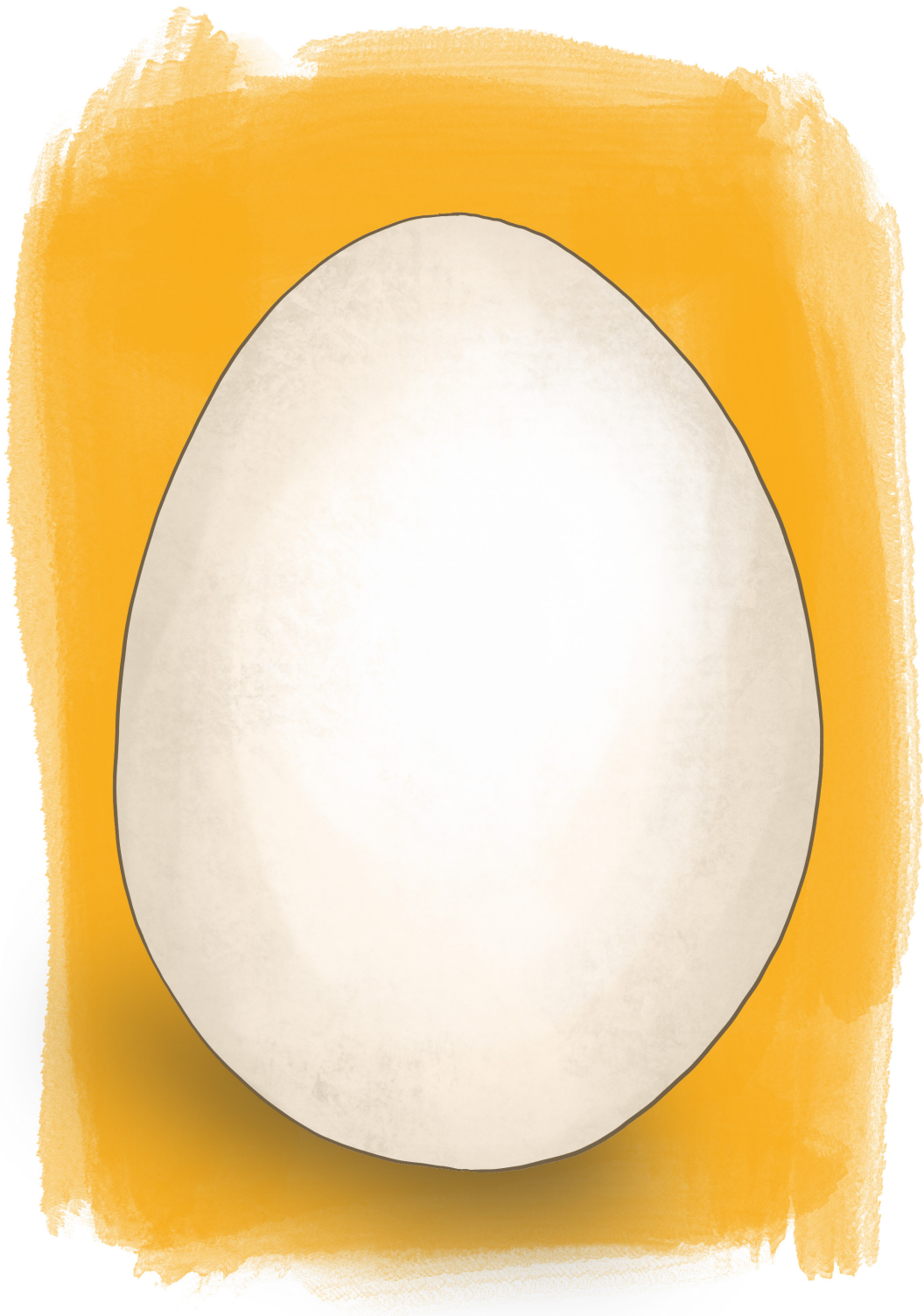
“My cousin the one that does ballroom dancing with me, is obsessed with makeup and he loves me doing it. So, he would come over and he would be like, “do my make-up” and I would be like, “this isn’t your match”, and he would be like “I don’t care, do it as if, you know drag queens”. He wants to be like one of them and try out as one of them so I would put like a dress on him, I would do his hair, and I have extensions for dancing and I would put them in like here because it’s like his colour and then I would like style the front of his hair so it would go with the back and he’d be like “hmm girl get me”, and like I would have to take pictures and I would have to make a cat walk where I’d get him a towel and wrap it round his legs and have like a long gown”

(Kylie, age 10)

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Renold, E. (2019) *All of Us: how gender equality matters to primary school aged children: research-engagement project*. Cardiff University (see <https://bit.ly/35t4jgG>)



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Katie: Me and Bella wanna go around the world. But not to help people, to help animals. Now you know David Attenborough, he goes around, in like Planet Earth. I saw one (episode) and it was about penguins and everything and I don't know how to say it but they were endangered by a snow storm and they were all huddling up and the men were looking after the eggs because the women were getting food for the babies and themselves. So they went, they came back and some dads didn't have their babies. Their babies either got froze or lost. So then the women wouldn't be angry at them (fathers), but they would be angry at the other people who would want to steal their child.

Bella: Their eggs are huge though

Katie: Yeah their eggs are huge, they are massive. They are like 'this big' (gestures with her hands) and this man was holding one, and the baby hatched and then they were both sat like this, both looking at the baby. Then the women who didn't have a baby came round and took it. She bit its ear and took it. They were all like 'oh my god', cause you know like they all have a place to hatch the egg.

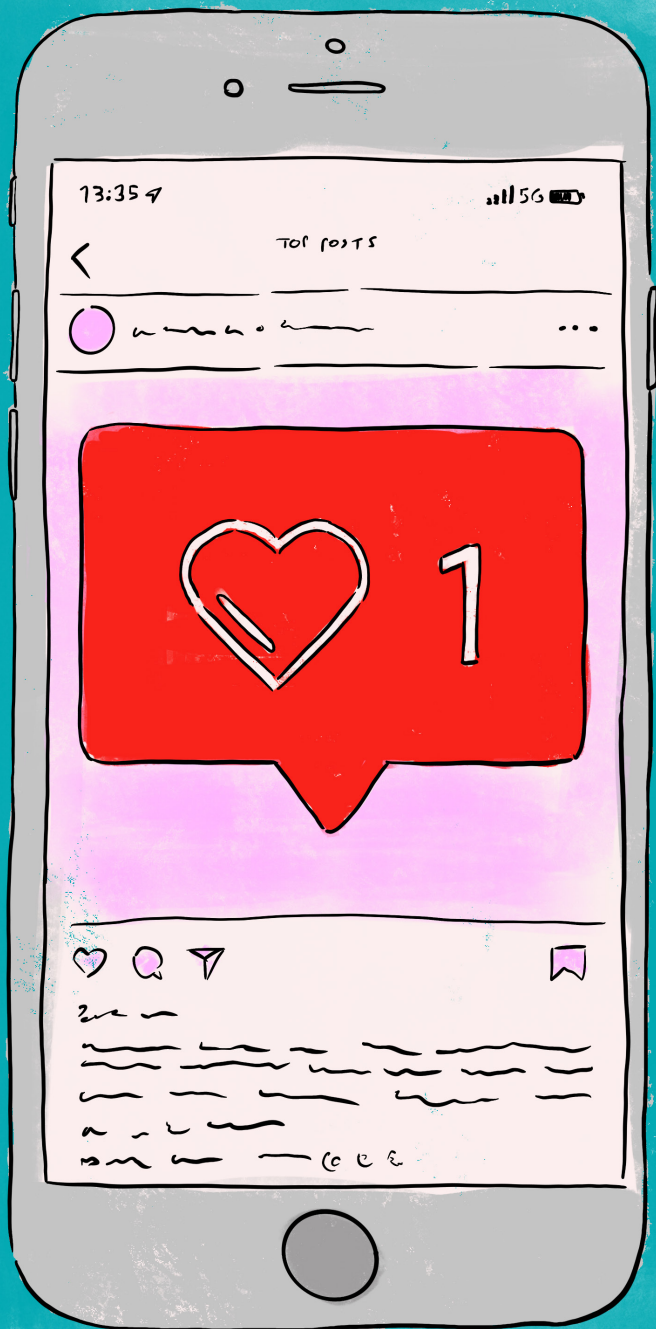
Yeah, and they have like a carrier thing where they hold the baby, like a pouch. The mum and dad were looking at each other's pouch and the baby wasn't there and they were like, 'oh my god where's my child gone' and they saw another women who they didn't think had a child before, so they went at her, but she was the wrong one, so she lost her child and all their children. And there's a massive hill and this child was walking up a massive hill and there was a platform where they fall down another one so they have to stay together to stay stable. And the child went down and was just left there, so he died.

(age 11)

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Renold, E. (2019) *All of Us: how gender equality matters to primary school aged children: research-engagement project*. Cardiff University (see <https://bit.ly/35t4jgG>)



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Tomos: Loads of the time I have my birthday on holiday. So last year I had like, since we always have a pool, I had like a mermaid tail ... I was bothering my mum and dad about it for ages. My dad was like, “No! Why do you want that”, but... but then my mum was like, “um yeah ok”. So then she asked me, “do you want like just the mono fin or the actual thing that goes over”?. I went, ‘the actual thing that goes over it and things (up to the waist). So she went and asked my aunty and my aunty has no problem with what I want, and she got it for me (....) and my mum posted a picture of me with it on Instagram

Researcher: Was that alright for you?

Tomos: Yeah! and my friend seen it and he said that, that’s the same one he has!

Researcher: So ... what draws you to the mermaid tail?

Tomos: I don’t know it’s just I really like, I really like animal stuff and one of my favourite, my favourite habitats is like under the water and in the air.

Researcher: So your dad wasn’t that keen to start with?

Tomos: He wasn’t that keen to start with, but um when I went on holiday with my nan and grandad, and my mum and dad and my brother, they bought me like leggings with all the scales!

(age 11)

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Renold, E. (2019) *All of Us: how gender equality matters to primary school aged children: research-engagement project*. Cardiff University (see <https://bit.ly/35t4jgG>)



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“Mine’s called Dave, she’s a girl” says Alys, one girl, in a group of Year 6 (age 10-11) girls who call themselves ‘the misfits’. They are all drawing avatars to explore the pressures of body image. As they do so, they share experiences of what it feels like to look, move, act and desire in non-normative ways. They talk about supporting each other to “be themselves” in a world that both punishes and celebrates “being different”. Alys is particularly vocal about this double-bind.

Alys has “short hair”, “loves to wear all things black”, and “go out to the forest to climb trees and play with the hay bales and dogs”. While most family members encourage her “freedom of expression”, there are compromises and judgements. Her “short hair” isn’t as short as she would like, “because dad doesn’t like it”, so she wears it a little longer but “short enough not to have to brush it”. She enjoys experimenting with what her body can do. “Sometimes, coz I can contort (my body), when I put my leg over my head my Nan goes, “Start sitting like a lady”.

In Year 5 (age 9) Alys “realised” she could “love both sexes”. She “came out as bisexual” to her friends, and then to her mum and her family: “I feel like I’ve made a difference in my family cause I’m the first at being in the LGBT plus community”. At school, however, her peers are not so accepting.

Alys compares how “people used to make fun of my disability” but since coming out as bisexual, it is her sexuality that is now targeted. She talks about being pressured not to ‘like’ or ‘date’ one of the girls in their class:

Zofia: Yeah. So erm the girl um Maya who used to go out with Alys. Her (friendship) group weren’t happy...

Alys: Yeah they weren’t very happy about us going out.

Zofia: So me and Megan were trying to like tell the girls ... just let them do

what they want to do. In the end the popular girls got their way ... they got their way and convinced Maya to stop going out with Alys.

Alys: Yeah. But Megan!

Megan: What happened with me?

Alys: You went EEEEEEEEEK (shrieks)

Megan: Oh yeah. I screamed when I found out. I, I’m very positive towards, like, girls being with girls.

Alys: She made me this banner

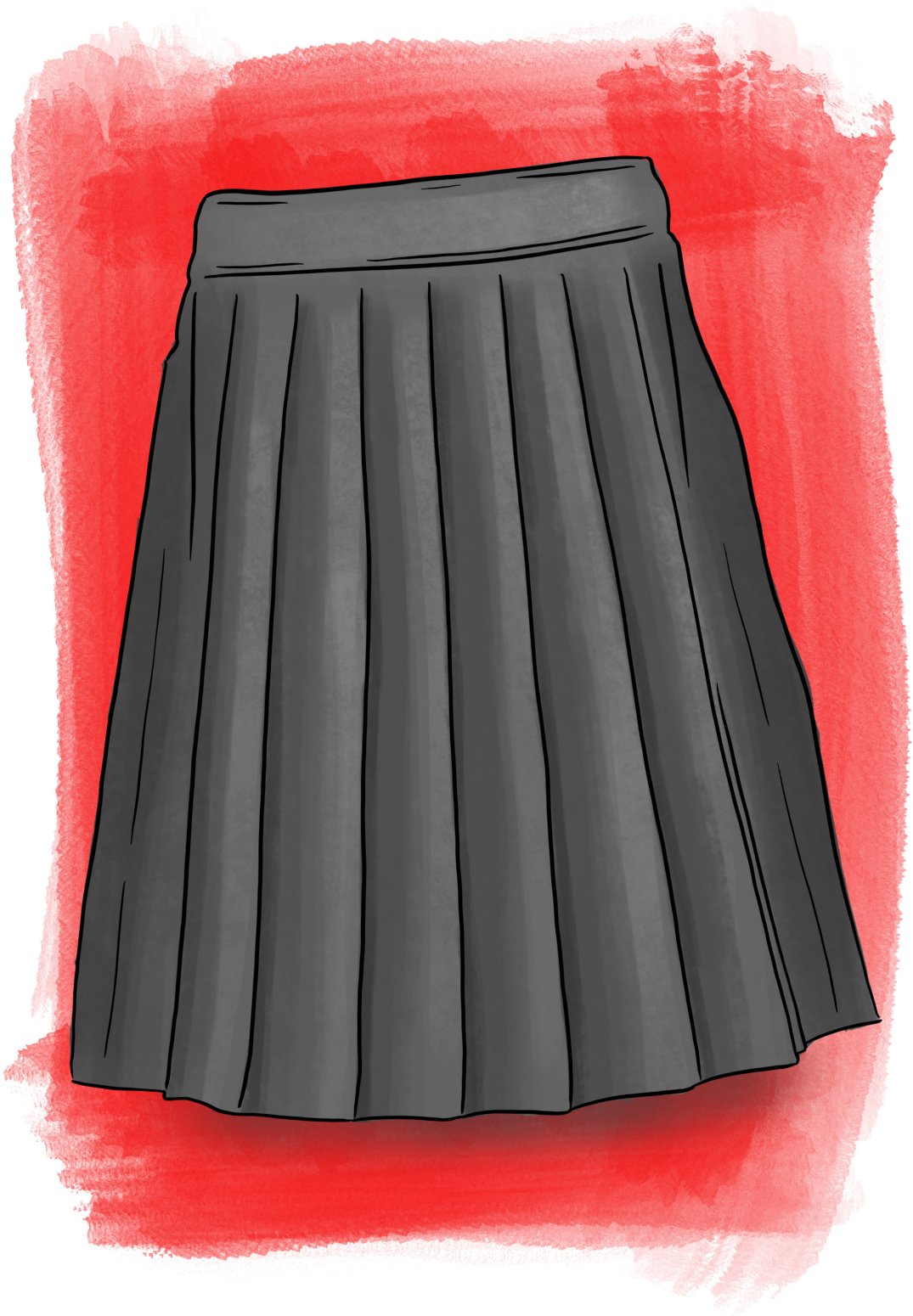
Megan: Yeah I made this banner ... I made her a little banner saying what she’s like and why she, why she’s different and it was just a really colourful rainbow and she really liked it.

Meanwhile, back in the land of avatars, Dave meets Daisy and Alys decides they are going to wear party clothes to school. Megan leans over and says to Alys, “It’s great you’re breaking the rules”.

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Renold, E. (2019) *All of Us: how gender equality matters to primary school aged children: research-engagement project*. Cardiff University (see <https://bit.ly/35t4jgG>)



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Carys: there was this boy in school, and he started to pick up this girl's skirt.

Tia: That really insulted her so she started wearing trousers as like...

Carys: Protection.

Rhi: Um protection.

Tia: I, I just wear shorts under my skirt so there's no chance of that happening.

Rhi: Um, I remember, I remember hearing something on the news about um that teachers say to boys that they couldn't wear shorts at school.

Tia: Yes and then / they started wearing skirts.

Carys: Yeah it was boiling hot so they started wearing skirts.

Researcher: What did you think about that?

Rhi: I am proud.

Tia: Yeah.

(age 10)

Aamina: We are Muslims so we can't show our legs

Alani: She is allowed to wear dresses like up to here (below the knee) not here (above the knee)

Aamina: And this one came up to my knees ... but not really short

Researcher: So that one was a little bit shorter than you would normally be allowed to wear?

Aamina: Yeah (...) but when I go to university I am allowed to wear dresses like up to here (above the knee).

Ayesha: Our friend Nabila yeah she brings it [skirt] up to here, and she is a Muslim and we told her ... she should be taking more care

Alani: Yeah, on the school trip she wore a skirt that was up to here [above the knee]... and then she kept her hair out and wore such see-through tights and it was creepy and then all the boys started calling her for her sexy dress ... she used to smile and didn't try to hide from them.

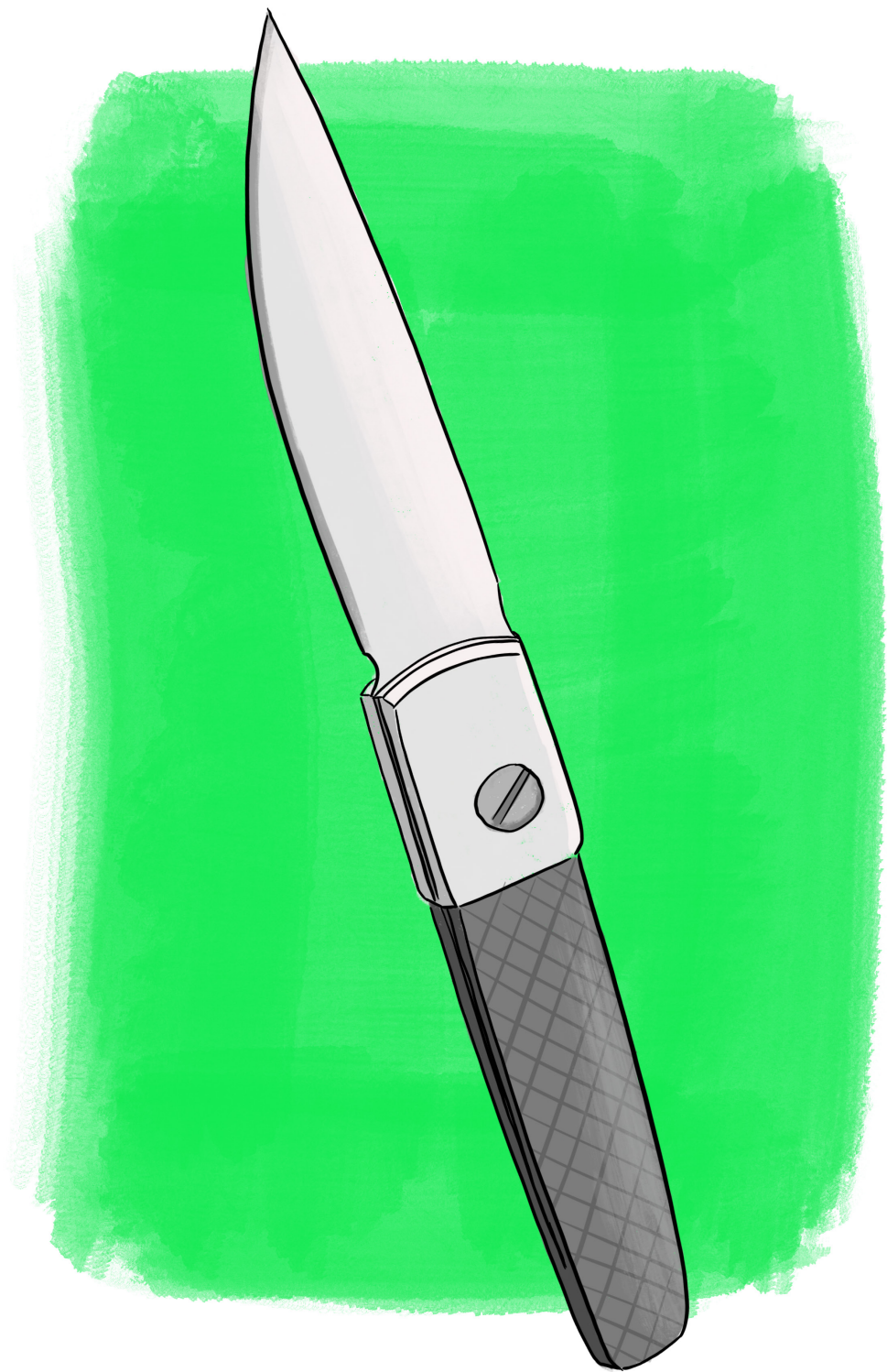
(age 11)

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Renold, E. (2013) *Boys and girls speak out: a qualitative study exploring children's gender and sexual cultures (age 10-12)*. www.nspcc.org.uk/services-and-resources/research-and-resources/2013/boys-girls-speak-out/

Renold, E. (2019) *All of Us: how gender equality matters to primary school aged children: research-engagement project*. Cardiff University (see <https://bit.ly/35t4jgG>)



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Marek (Polish) and Lyndal (Jamaican) are 13, and best friends. They describe living in an area of high violent crime, including knife crime, where “there are lots of gangs”. Both share similar tastes in rap music, hair style (including their lengthy grooming practices) and they enjoy playing football together and online gaming.

Both are in heterosexual relationships. Their status as a ‘boyfriend’ is very important to them and how they contrast their ‘mature’ self as Year 9 teenage boys with their ‘immature’ self as 10 and 11 year olds. What it means to be a boyfriend and be in a relationship has changed for them over the years. “Grown up now”, they both emphasise the value and status accrued to boyfriends who “treat girls with respect” by “not cheating”.

They look up to older boys in their school who have long-term heterosexual relationships, which they aspire to. Lyndal is in a 12 month relationship, but keeps it on the ‘down low’ to protect the relationship from gossip and girls who interfere. Both young men contrast their “more mature” “respectful” outlook with how they used to “have girls to show off” in Year 7 and call them names like “slut and sket”. Defending against gendered racial stereotypes of “cheating” and “womanizing” men from their respective communities, and “famous men and rappers having loads of girls”, the boys invest heavily in their identities as ‘loyal’ boyfriends.

Acutely aware of the sexual double standards that girls face, they also describe how difficult it is enjoy “looking” at and desiring girls “without making them feel uncomfortable”. They fluctuate between wanting to end all discriminations in society, including homophobia and transphobia with their own feelings of uncomfortableness about the increasing visibility of transgender identities and expressions and the knowledge that “you boys would get bullied in this school if you were gay” or “wore a skirt”. Lyndal also worries about not knowing which gender he might be flirting with, while Marek argues that increased visibility might decrease people’s fear of the unknown “just like with gay people”. They both look forward to a world where “you can just walk and feel, um, calm and relaxed about everything that’s going around”.

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Renold, E. Bragg, S. Jackson, C. and Ringrose, J. (2017) *How Gender Matters to Children and Young People Living in England*. Cardiff University, University of Brighton, University of Lancaster, and University College London, Institute of Education.



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Ariel (age 14) lives with her mother (currently working as a cleaner) and father (an Occupational Therapist), younger brother, and student lodgers. She and her friend Millie both object to the way they perceive boys talk about and treat girls: ‘I know it sounds weird but I think boys sometimes see girls as sexual objects? They think that girls are just something to look at instead of real people... and we have feelings okay?’. She herself feels she has ‘boy true friends’ who are ‘really nice and respect me and my friends, and girls’. She presents herself as ‘one of those people that doesn’t care what people think about me’, although admits to using concealer to hide dark circles under her eyes.

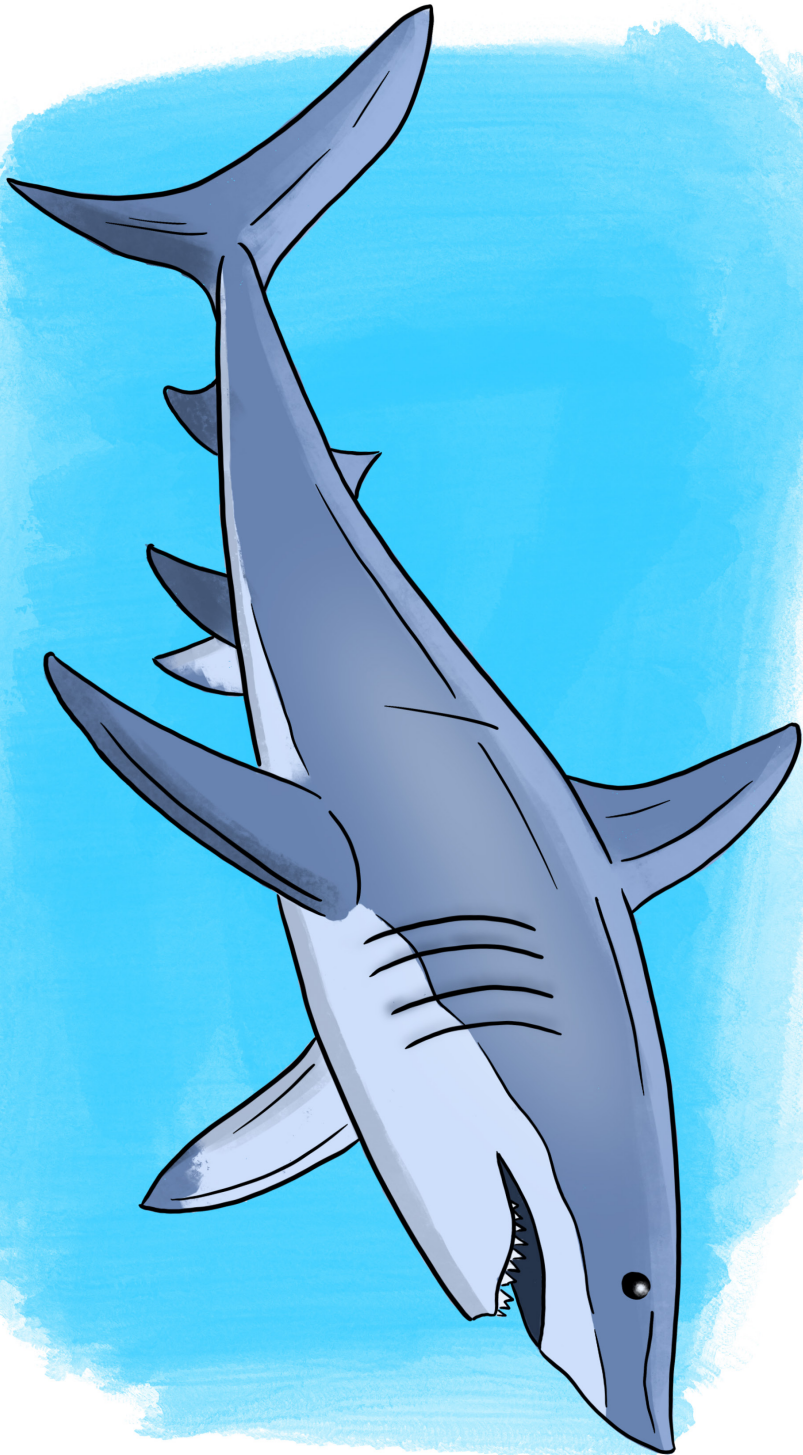
She belongs to an evangelical Christian church and attends their annual camp with 7,000 other young people. ‘It’s like concerts every night? And you get so tired!’ The youth group offers her a space that she describes as being like another family: ‘I’m friends with people I probably wouldn’t have been without it, like I’m friends with people that are eighteen, um, and like I feel as if they’re the same age as me because we get on so well. Because ... it’s nice to have something in common with them - the fact that we all go to Youth Club, we all go to Church and we’re Christians’. The Church Youth group enables her to engage in the sports she loves: ‘I love sports like. When I go to my youth club, the first thing I always do is play with ... my best boy friend, and my friend Megan, and we literally ALL just play football or rugby or hockey or something together and it’s really good fun because they always have like sporty stuff there?.... without sports, I think I wouldn’t be the person I am today’.

However, she is critical of sexism in sport: ‘people pay attention SO much more to boy football...I don’t think I’ve even seen a girls football, like, match, because my dad is still watching the men one, and I feel like it’s a bit sexist’. She and Millie appreciate the support and encouragement their woman PE teacher gives them. She watches youtubers like Zoella and Alfie, and the Netflix series ‘Orange is the new black’ although she claims to ‘skip all the sex scenes’ and says ‘I hope I don’t get told off for watching that’.

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Renold, E. Bragg, S. Jackson, C. and Ringrose, J. (2017) *How Gender Matters to Children and Young People Living in England*. Cardiff University, University of Brighton, University of Lancaster, and University College London, Institute of Education.



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Maha is a tall white Algerian-British girl in year 12, who wears a hijab ‘on and off’; ‘on’ when she is in her mother’s house and ‘off’ when in her father’s house. She doesn’t like make-up, abaya or skirts, and enjoys hanging out with boys. She says she is in an ongoing battle with her mother to not wear a hijab.

For Maha it’s not just the religiosity of the hijab that she feels prevents her from being herself, but its feminine associations. When Maha shares the photos and drawings that she has taken to capture feelings and moments in her life, they include pictures of London Gay Pride, rainbow smoke, Lady Gaga, a blue sky, snowy mountains, and the sea. She talks about how she “wants to live her life” and “be unapologetically myself”.

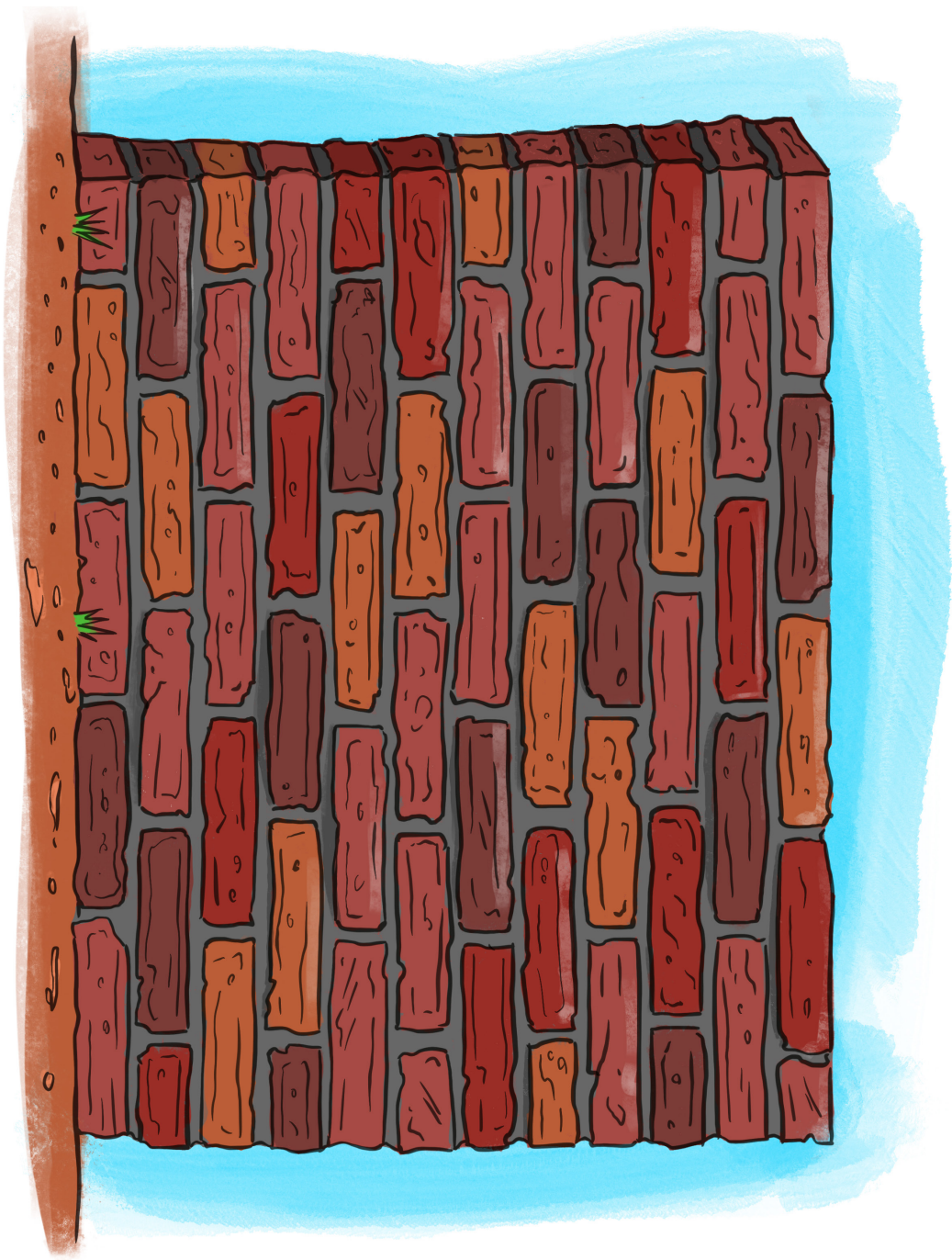
Maha reflects on the photo of the sea and talks about her love for sharks:

“I like sea, but we explore only one percent of the sea. No one knows what’s in there. I am just that one person that goes really far out to the point that I am a dot in a distance ... let’s draw a shark (she draws a shark coming out of the waves). I love shark. The sea is not shark-infected or anything, they scared of sharks. Instead, give the sharks the respect they deserve”.

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Zarabadi, S. (2020) *Post-threat becomings: British-Muslim schoolgirls’ affective experiences of counter-terrorism and the Prevent Policy*. Phd Thesis. UCL Institute of Education.



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Farah (year 12) describes being racially harassed by ‘a couple of white men’ during a trip into the city with her aunt.

‘There were few people said few nasty things. They were shouting. I really don’t want to repeat what they said, I felt so scared that they might physically attack me. Sometimes I think, not go out, but you have to get over it eventually.

When I got home that day, I just felt really insecure about me wearing hijab and me being Muslim and me being Asian and looking different ... I felt really restricted like there was a wall against me. There is nothing I can do to stop that. It made me feel like being myself was a bad thing and I didn’t know what to do, because there is nothing I can do to change myself. Being Asian is nothing I can change, nothing I can do to change being a Muslim, so I felt I was being limited into this box where I was only this person. As much as I wanted to be, to become a bigger person, I couldn’t do that because I was being limited by comments about my race and stuff”

Muna (year 12) has also encountered negative feelings of ‘people staring’ and ‘looking weirdly’ at her since choosing to wear abaya:

‘Before it was like I’m wearing the same things as you, as everybody else, so nobody really would look at me in a way, but when I have the abaya on, I think more people look and especially when I’m getting on the bus everyone just look at me. That’s what always comes in my head ‘are they thinking bad of me? ‘did I do anything wrong, am I not supposed to be here?’. And I think I’m not in a place that I’m supposed to be, I just feel different from others, I don’t know how to say it I guess I just feel different, on the streets or if I go into a bus, a packed bus and if there’s nobody else wearing the same thing as me, that’s how it feels. You think what do we do? Do we do anything wrong?’

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Zarabadi, S. (2020) *Post-threat becomings: British-Muslim schoolgirls’ affective experiences of counter-terrorism and the Prevent Policy*. Phd Thesis. UCL Institute of Education.



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Allan (14) and Liam (age 13) live in a predominantly white, working class ex-steel mining community which they describe as ‘a shady area’, ‘rough’ and ‘laddy’, ‘where people walk like kings’. When the researcher asks what is ‘rough’ about the area they talk about burnt down houses, drug abuse and men with sledgehammers ‘knocking down parking meters’. While ‘usually’ they say they feel ‘safe’ by not ‘talking to anyone’, they describe sexualised street harassment as commonplace and something that gets worse in school.

‘People touch me a lot ... because I’m quite developed’, says Allan, covering his breasts. “And I’m like, don’t touch me!”. Allan shares a memory in Year 8 after he had already ‘come out’ as gender fluid and ‘gay’ in school:

‘This guy, Shane, um, he actually just started stroking my thigh, like literally, by here (points to upper inner thigh and crotch) and he, he told me to take off my shirt ... he was like, are they fake? and I was like, they are not fake’ and he was like, all right, prove it then, take off your shirt and show me, and I was like, no and I slapped his hand away’.

Allan and Liam both describe themselves as having ‘real bad anger issues’ in school because of how they sometimes ‘respond’, ‘violently’ to the gender and sexual harassment they experience. Allan in particular talks about ‘getting in a lot of trouble’ and ‘kicked someone once’. For Allan, home life is also hostile: ‘my parents are really homophobic, like hate all that, so i can’t be like hey guys im gender fluid’. In contrast, Liam’s mum has always been supportive of his ‘coming out’ at 11 as ‘agender’, and then ‘gender-fluid’ and ‘gay’.

Both Allan and Liam talk about one space in school that has become a safe haven. The Pride Cwtch, is a physical space facilitated by a teacher ‘who understands’. Allan and Liam talk about it as a space where they can be with ‘their people’: ‘we like go there to talk ... sometimes we talk about issues, sometimes we are just there ... it’s not a group where you have to be, yes, im gay, im bi, it’s just like we’re here, hello’. Given the choice, they would both ‘rather be on youtube than in school We LOVE the LGBTQ youtube chanel’. And when things get really tough, they have their ‘stress toy’ squishies. Liam has a ‘stress pig’ and Allan has a ‘stress cat’ whose face has rubbed away over time. ‘They calm me down at home’, says Allan, who has just started bring his stress cat to school with him. ‘it’s calming” he says, looking down at his cat, ‘it’s just calming to squish it ... just squish his belly’.

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Ringrose, J. (2017-8) *Gender and Sexual Equity in Secondary Schools: Research Project*, Institute of Education, University College London.



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A group of girls are talking with a youth worker and each other about their parents and what rules they have about going out and staying away from home. The group are different ages, from 14 – 17 and from different religious and ethnic backgrounds.

Grace and Honour – both Black African – explain that their parents never let them go to sleepovers unless it is with a family friend or a cousin. Jenny, the White British girl, is shocked and exclaims - ‘I love sleep overs! You missed out! I feel sorry for you! Girls!’ The girls all laugh at her theatrical sadness for them.

The youth worker asks the other girls if they are allowed to go to sleepovers. Mariam, one of the younger Muslim girls, says that her parents wouldn’t let her because ‘Anything might happen - they might even have a brother!’ The youth worker tries to explore whether it is potential exposure to boys and sex or sexual violence that might be the real issue of parental concern here but Mariam has moved on explaining: ‘but also the person could have like nits and stuff like that. They could pass it to us.’ The rest of the group are grossed out at the mention of nits. Mariam continues, ‘so that’s why they didn’t let me go, because anything could happen. And like, they could even kidnap me’. Jenny is shocked again – ‘that’s extreme’ she says.

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The Reanimating data project (2019).

<https://archives.reanimatingdata.co.uk/s/fays/>



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Mark is 16 and in a long term relationship with an ‘American girl’ he met online. They send each other presents, sleep together at night (using video calling) and sometimes do their homework together. The relationship doesn’t always make Mark feel good about himself. He explains that he ‘make[s] up assumptions, cos she’s Caribbean’. He explains that he feels bad, ‘whenever we talk about my culture ... you know, we kind of, like, still technically own their country, and whenever I say something, like, about the Caribbean, then she’s, like, “Yeah, but you own our country.”’

Mark is White British and lives in a rural area where most of the population are White. He describes his family as ‘a little bit racist’. He defends them a little saying that they wouldn’t openly abuse anyone. Instead he says his nan and mum are like ‘drunk Christmas party racists’. He has talked with his girlfriend about her coming to see him one day. She ‘doesn’t feel scared’ he explains, ‘cos she knows I’m gonna be with her and I’m gonna protect her. But, like, she just feels worried that everyone’s white down here’.

Mark says he wouldn’t describe their relationship as a ‘sexual relationship’, explaining, ‘we don’t really think about that kind of stuff.’ He says he doesn’t want ‘do that’ with someone until he’s married and that she’s ‘a big Christian’. He does think about their future together. ‘Like, if I ever do settle down with her’ he says laughing at himself for, ‘Talking like this at, like, the age of 16’, he thinks that they would ‘have kids’ and would ‘share cultures’ and teach their children ‘about their heritage and, like, all the things that have happened’. He explains, ‘We’ve said, like, if we ever do have kids, we will never discriminate on any choices they make, because they’re from two different cultures of white and black. It’s massively important. It’s something that, like, we say, like, whatever you choose, if you choose to date an Asian, if you choose to date...someone of a different heritage, or if you choose to be gay or straight or bi or...whatever, it’s something that you can be, like, “There.”’

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McGeeney, E. and Hanson, E. (2017) *Digital Romance: A research project exploring young people’s use of technology in their romantic relationships and love lives*. London: National Crime Agency and Brook.