EXPLORING THE LIVED EXPERIENCE EXPERIENCES OF COMING OUT AS TRANSGENDER

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Section A: How do transgender people experience coming out

A systematic review and thematic synthesis of qualitative studies

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Thank you to my family for their support, my dad for his tireless proof reading and India for giving me a reason to leave my desk. Thank you to my friends for their laughter and helping me to persist. Thank you to my supervisor and consultants for their time and generosity and finally I would like to express my gratitude to my contributors for sharing their stories, I hope I have done you all justice.

Summary of MRP Portfolio

Section A: Coming out as transgender is a step in developing a transgender identity. This thematic synthesis of eleven studies investigated the experiences of transgender people coming out. Findings indicated that multiple factors affect one's ability to come out successfully. These included timing, choice and support of family and friends. Barriers included negotiating bureaucratic systems, social stigma and gendered expectations. Implications for future research and clinical practice are presented.

Section B: Managing an intersectional identity can lead to cumulative stressors, as well as intersectional invisibility due to not fitting the archetype of any particular minority group. This study investigated the experiences of minoritised transgender young adults reflecting on their experience of coming out as adolescents. Findings illustrated three superordinate themes and eleven subthemes. Results indicated the impact of cultural differences when managing coming out due to fear of rejection. They also indicated the use of coping mechanisms such as cultural artefacts to maintain a connection to a heritage culture. Finally, that families typically adjusted to the young person's coming out while young people became more comfortable expressing gender fluidly. These findings were discussed in relation to recommendations for future research and clinical practice.

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Section A

How do transgender people experience coming out?

A systematic review and thematic synthesis of qualitative studies

Abstract

Background: Coming out is used as a metaphor for sharing one's minority sexual or gender identity. Studies on transgender people have previously concentrated on experiences of their social relationships, gender dysphoria, mental health and social support. Due to limited studies on the transgender coming out experience this review aimed to synthesise and analyse research focussed on this event.

Method: A systematic literature search was carried out across three databases (PsycInfo, ASSIA and Taylor and Francis) on 31 July 2023. Papers were quality assessed using the Critical Skills Appraisal Tool for qualitative studies and a thematic analysis was undertaken to generate results.

Results: Five papers were identified from database searches and six from hand searching. Five overarching themes were developed: *'Power and privilege', 'Managing stigma', 'Weathering family and social reactions',' The role of support systems' and 'Cultural context and attitudes'.*

Conclusion: Coming out is negotiated through the reactions of those disclosed to and based on the societal and cultural narratives they consider acceptable. While some transgender people may choose to disclose their gender identity and experience this as liberating, the majority of transgender people approach coming out with caution and feel at risk if obligated to disclose. This indicates that professionals working with transgender people should maintain an awareness of interpersonal and structural stigma and work to reduce this through improving resources and education within services. Limitations of the review's applicability to transgender people and future directions for research are discussed.

Introduction

Gender identity: Context

Gender is a multidimensional construct referring to particular roles and experiences available to individuals, which are understood to be socially produced, shaped and reinforced leading to deeply entrenched and often unquestioned, structures of social norms and power (Johnson & Repta, 2012). Gender was traditionally understood to proceed from biological and physiological sexual characteristics (Johnson & Repta, 2012; Lindqvist et al., 2021). Arguably this is a limited categorisation based on "ideal types" ignoring variation and overlaps in the binary concept of the sexes (Štrkalj & Pather, 2021). Furthermore, feminist theorists argue that gender precedes sex, with the social division of labour leading to biological sex being used to differentiate between the powerful and the subordinated in society (Wittig, 2005; Delphy, 1993). Gender is now recognised to vary between periods and cultures and to include individuals whose sex assigned at birth aligns with neither their gender identity nor gender expression (Turban, 2022).

Transgender identity: Defined

Transgender is an umbrella term referring to individuals whose gender identity or expression does not conform to that typically associated with their sex assigned at birth, who may choose to transition to a different gender or enact changes in gender expression in particular social arenas (See Table 1 for detailed definitions) (American Psychological Society, 2015, 2023). Although terms are often in flux, the term 'transgender' will be used throughout the review, with other defined terms used where relevant. Transgender people (TP) experience poorer mental health and greater risk of violence than cisgender people. Research suggests this indicates the impact of minority status which can result in experiencing and managing stigma on

individual, political and structural levels (Levitt & Ippolito, 2013; Carmel & Erickson-Schroth, 2016; Crissman et al., 2019; Flores et al., 2021; Ellis et al., 2016).

Table 1

Definitions of Gender terms

Term	Definition
Transgender	An umbrella term for individuals whose gender identity is different from that assigned to them at birth (National Centre for Transgender Equality, 2023)
Non-binary	An umbrella term that may include individuals whose identity falls between or outside of male and female; those who experience being male or female at different times; those who do not experience a gender identity or reject having a gender identity (Matsuno & Budge, 2017)
Gender diverse	Often used as an analogous term to non-binary
Genderqueer	A term describing individuals whose identity falls outside of male and female and who may also reject the concept of gender as an identifier of behaviour, or aesthetic (Dembroff, 2020)
Gender variant	An umbrella term used to describe gender identity, expression, or behaviour falling outside culturally defined norms associated with a specific gender (Simons et al., (2014)

'Coming out' as a developmental process

Coming out is a metaphor for sharing one's sexual or gender identity and has been theorised as a necessary developmental task in the development of a transgender identity. Gagne et al.'s identity development model (1997) is based on interviews with TP and defined coming out in four stages; (1) early transgender experiences; (2) coming out to one's self; (3) coming out to others and (4) resolution of identity. Alternatively, Bockting and Coleman's model (2016), which is based on models of homosexual identity development, posits five stages; (1) pre-coming out, (2) coming out, (3) exploration, (4) intimacy and (5) identity integration.

These models of identity development suggest that individuals may cycle through tasks and stages dependent on available emotional and social resources, thus coming out may be particularly challenging to or for those with less social capital, e.g. young adults with limited resources (Bockting & Coleman, 2016; Singh et al., 2012). Notably these models may have limited applicability to all TP due to their creation within a Western cultural context (Bockting & Coleman, 2016).

Coming out and identity management

Choosing to disclose one's gender identity may create opportunities for greater intimacy and self-authenticity as well as positively impacting on mental health and well-being; however, it may also risk stigma, prejudice or violence (Hughto et al., 2020; Legate & Ryan, 2014; Chaudoir & Fisher, 2010). As such, TP need to assess each new social situation to decide if, when and to what extent they want to disclose their gender identity (Doyle, 2022). The disclosure process model (DPM) posits that either approach or avoidance goals shape the likelihood of disclosing a concealable identity, with this process mediated by social support, alleviation of inhibition and

changes in social information (Chaudoir & Fisher, 2010). This takes places within a feedback loop, with individuals becoming more secretive or more open with their identities dependent on previous experiences. These factors demonstrate the role of stigma in disclosure management. However, as not all TP are able to conceal their identities, this may indicate that some TP may have greater experiences of discrimination and violence due to being less able to choose to evaluate situations and manage self-disclosure (Anderson et al., 2020).

Rationale for review

While several syntheses have been completed regarding the experiences of TP, these studies have concentrated on experiences of social relationships, gender dysphoria, mental health and social support rather than on the experience of coming out (Lewis et al., 2021; Jessen et al., 2021; Scott & Cornelius-White, 2021). Hence, the aim of the review is to explore transgender people's experiences of sharing their identity or coming out to others.

Methods

Literature Search

A systematic search of PsycInfo, ASSIA and Taylor and Francis databases was conducted on 31 July 2023. These databases were chosen to capture articles relevant to the review question; PsycInfo and ASSIA was chosen due to access to articles from the psychological and caring professions and Taylor and Francis due to its collection of articles from gender studies and other relevant social sciences. A search was undertaken of abstracts and search terms were created by reviewing commonly used terminology and considering terms that may have been previously used, or which are more commonly used in other countries (See Table 2). Search domains were combined using Boolean operator 'AND'.

Table 2
Search terms

Domain	Search terms
Gender	"gender expansive" or "gender diverse" or "trans*" or "transgender" or "AFAB" or "AMAB" or "assigned-female-at-birth" or "assigned-male-at-birth"
Gender transition	"coming out" or "identity disclosure" or "gender validation" or "transgender identity affirmation" or "identity support" or "gender affirmation" or "gender identity affirmation" or "gender construction"
Research type	"experience*" or "qualitative"

Eligibility Criteria

Article titles were screened to check for relevancy, followed by abstracts, and finally full texts to ensure that they met inclusion criteria (See Table 3). A flowchart of the systematic search procedure is represented in Figure 1.

Table 3

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Domain	Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
Methodology	Qualitative research on primary or secondary data.	Quantitative studies
Data source	Peer reviewed journal articles	Reviews, book chapters, unpublished work and abstracts
Population	Individuals who no longer identified with the gender designated to them at birth, this could include transgender or non-binary.	Participants broadly defined as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) and not further specified
Topic of research	Exclusive focus on the experience of disclosing one's gender identity/coming out to others	Disclosure included as part of the study rather than main area of investigation
	Focus was on the coming out experience of transgender people	The focus was on gay or lesbian individuals
	First-person perspective	Included or focused on the perspective of others to gender disclosure
Accessibility		Not in English

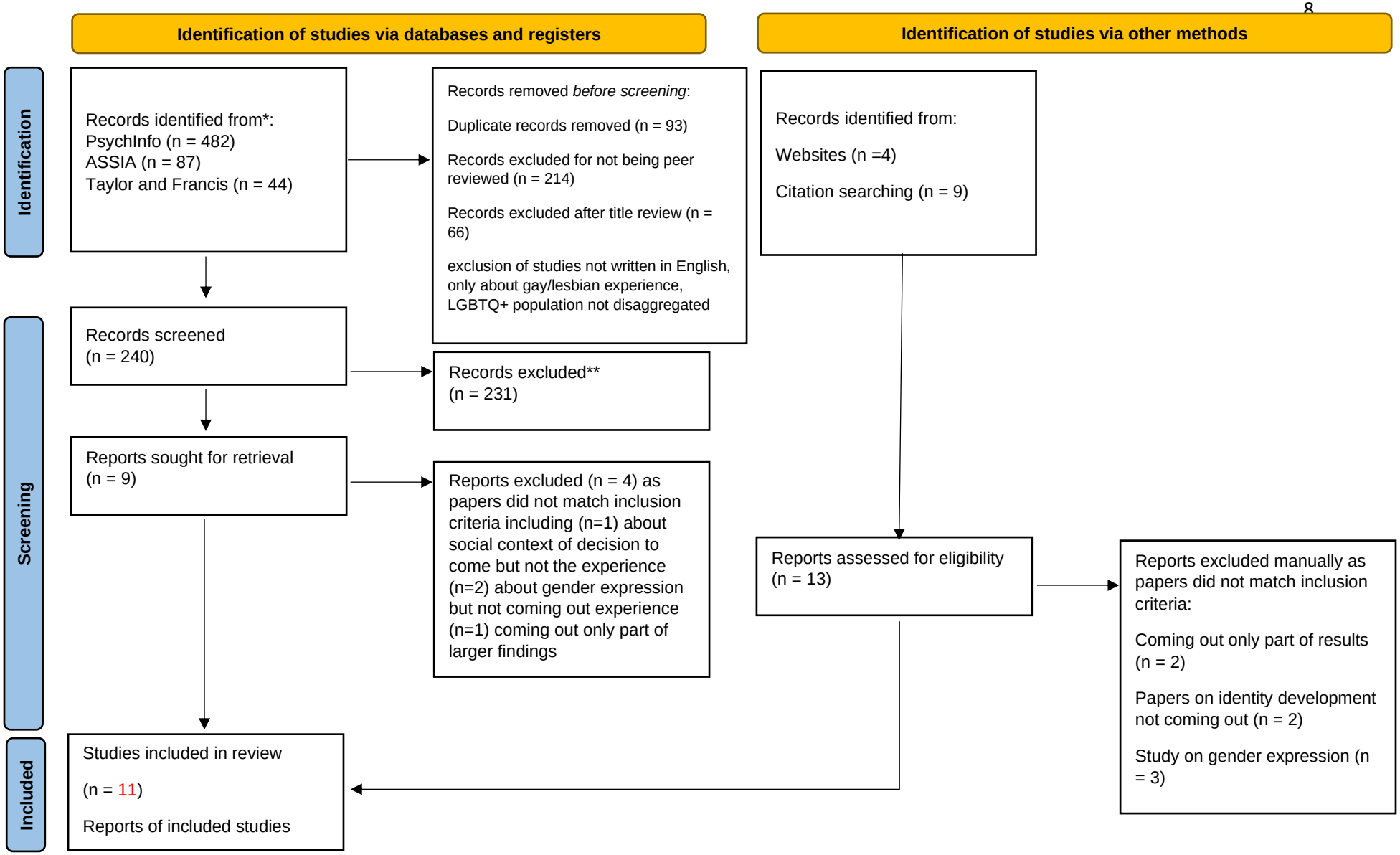


Figure 1

Flow chart of systematic search

Quality Appraisal

The quality of included studies was assessed using the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP; 2018) checklist. The CASP tool is commonly used for quality appraisal of qualitative studies and is endorsed by the Cochrane Qualitative and Implementation Methods Group (Long et al., 2020). An overview of the appraisal of each paper against the CASP criteria is provided in Appendix A. While the CASP tool allows for a formal review of a potentially broad range of epistemologies and ontologies, it also relies on the subjective appraisal of the researcher and researcher reflexivity (Long et al., 2020). To address this potential issue, the author discussed any uncertain ratings with a colleague to increase the validity of appraisals.

Approach to synthesis

A thematic synthesis was undertaken to integrate the findings of the selected studies and develop themes across the topic of interest. This was conducted in three stages; line-by-line coding of the findings of the studies; organising the codes into descriptive themes and subsequently the development of analytic themes (Thomas & Harden, 2008). Data from the studies was imported into coding software NVivo and initial codes were created. These codes were created inductively to capture the content of the sentence, for example, “not accepted as transwoman”. Following this process, initial notes of potential themes were created and codes grouped together to make descriptive themes such as “support systems”. Finally, descriptive themes were developed into analytic themes that related to the review question for example, “The privilege of passing”.

Research reflexivity

Recognising researcher reflexivity was a constituent of undertaking this thematic synthesis (Booth et al., 2012). The researcher’s views as a psychology practitioner were

influenced by theoretical frameworks and methodological approaches inherent to clinical training and their personal experiences as an able-bodied, cisgender, mixed-race woman contributed to the way they interpreted and engaged with the data. To mitigate potential bias during the thematic synthesis, supervision was used and feedback gained on draft submissions while reflecting on their assumptions and preconceptions during data extraction, coding, and synthesis. Supervision was a particularly useful space to consider biases related to analysing study data. For example, due to the researcher's youth perspective, the initial clustering of codes and themes favoured a theme based primarily on the experiences of young transgender people. Reflecting on this bias facilitated an integration of youth subthemes into alternative overarching themes and the consideration of youth experiences as part of a wider transgender experience of coming out.

Results

Selected studies and quality assessment

The initial database search identified 613 studies. After screening for duplicates and peer review status 307 were excluded. The remaining papers were screened by title and abstract resulting in nine papers being retrieved. The reference sections of these papers were searched for relevant studies, producing nine further articles and four studies were identified from wider reading around the subject matter. After full text screening of these 22 papers, 11 remained for quality appraisal. Using the CASP checklist, the study by Fahs (2021) was scored as lower quality than the other included papers. The inclusion of this paper was discussed during supervision and while some systematic reviews may exclude lower quality studies, it was felt that this paper should remain part of the systematic review to help prevent the loss of important insights due to the richness of data presented in the results (Hannes, 2011). Furthermore, the studies included the experience of transgender individuals across the lifespan (ages 15-73).

While this may introduce a cohort effect with different age groups displaying unique characteristics due to age and contextual effects such as greater visibility of transgender people and changes to transgender legal rights, all papers were included due to the scarcity of research on the transgender coming out experience (Keyes et al., 2010). Table 4 provides an outline of each study.

Table 4

Summary of reviewed papers

Paper	Country	Number of participants	Age	Gender	Ethnicity	Research Aims	Research design
Bethea, McCollum (2013) The Disclosure Experiences of Male-to-Female Transgender Individuals: A Systems Theory Perspective	USA	7	30-65	Male to Female transgender	White	To explore the disclosure experiences of transgender individuals with a focus on the changes that occur in relationships	Thematic analysis guided by Parental Acceptance-Rejection Theory
Brumbaugh-Johnson, Hull (2019) Coming Out as Transgender: Navigating the Social Implications of a Transgender Identity	USA	20	25-58	Transgender	Majority white (17), American Indian (2), Mixed (1)	To investigate the distinctive features of transgender coming-out experiences	Influenced by grounded theory
Fahs (2021) The Coming Out Process for Assigned-Female-at-Birth Transgender and Non-Binary Teenagers: Negotiating Multiple Identities, Parental Responses, and Early Transitions in Three Case Studies	USA	3	15-17	Assigned-female-at-birth transgender or non-binary	Biracial (2), white (1)	To focus on the coming out experiences of transgender and non-binary people during psychotherapy	Drawing on case studies
Galupo, Krum, Hagen, Gonzalez & Bauerband (2014) Disclosure of Transgender Identity and Status in the Context of Friendship	Majority USA, International countries (2.5%)	536	Range 18-73, Mean 36.69	Transgender or gender variant	White (83.61%), other/biracial (7.16%), African American/Black (3.95%), Latino/a (2.64%), Asian/Asian American (1.51%), Native American (1.13%)	To qualitatively assess the friendship experiences of transgender individuals, specifically regarding identity disclosure	Thematic analysis

Kade (2021) “Hey, by the Way, I’m Transgender”: Transgender Disclosures as Coming Out Stories in Social Contexts among Trans Men”	USA	20	18-57	Transmen	Majority white non-Hispanic (15), black (2), multiracial (2), Hispanic (1)	To analyse how contextual factors influence the availability and efficiency of gender disclosure strategies across social settings	Modified open coding grounded theory approach
Koken, Bimbi, Parsons (2009) Experiences of Familial Acceptance-Rejection Among Transwomen of Color	USA	20	Mean age 32, Range 18-55	Transwomen	Latina and African American	To explore transwomen's experiences with parents and close family members to their transgender identity	Thematic analysis guided by Parental Acceptance-Rejection Theory
Marques (2020) Telling stories; telling transgender coming out stories from the UK and Portugal	Portugal and UK	58 (30 Portugal, 28 UK)	18-73	Diversity of gender classifications	Not mentioned	To contribute to existing literature on transgender and gender-diverse coming out stories	Narrative analysis
Morgan, Raab, Lin, Strauss, Perry (2022) Knowledge is Power: Trans Young People’s Perceptions of Parental Reactions to Their Gender Identity, and Perceived Barriers and Facilitators to Parental Support	Australia	14	Range 14-24, Mean 19.3	Male or trans male (8), female or trans female (3), non-binary (2) and genderqueer (1)	Not mentioned	To better understand how youth perceive parental reactions to their gender identity disclosure and what they consider to be barriers/facilitators of support	General inductive approach allied with grounded theory and phenomenological approaches
Pusch (2005) Objects of Curiosity: Transgender College Students' Perceptions of the Reactions of Others	Majority USA, Canada (2)	8	19-25	Male-to-female (5) female-to-male (3) transgender people	Not mentioned	To examine the perspectives of male-to-female (MTF) and female-to-male (FTM) transgender students on the reactions of family and friends to coming out	Grounded theory
Tan & Weisbart (2023) "‘I’m me, and I’m Chinese and also transgender’: coming out complexities of Asian-	Canada	8	Range 15–26 years; mean age	Self-described gender identities: Transgender	At least one parent of Asian heritage	To examining the coming out experiences of eight Asian-Canadian transgender youth	Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

Canadian transgender youth"			19.6 years	guy, Male, Non-binary trans-masculine boy, Trans-man, Trans-girl, Female-leaning-toward-neutral She/her/hers, Sensitive-and-emotional-for the-average-guy, Demi-guy			
Zimman (2009) 'The other kind of coming out': Transgender people and the coming out narrative genre	USA	9	18+	Transgender	European-American	To analyse transgender coming out narratives apart from the LGBT community	Narrative analysis

Research Aims and Design

The selected studies investigated the experience of disclosing one's gender identity while two papers (Marques, 2020; Zimman, 2009) specifically examined the narrative of coming out. Several qualitative methods were used which appeared appropriate to their research question(s). Thematic analysis, utilised by Bethea and McCollum (2013); Galupo et al. (2014) and Kokem et al. (2009), is a flexible approach which can summarise important features of a large data set, however, it may have limited interpretative power if not anchored within a theoretical framework (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.97). Pusch (2005) used grounded theory, with Brumbaugh-Johnson and Hull (2019) and Kade (2021) using adapted grounded theory and Morgan et al. (2022) utilising an approach allied with grounded theory and phenomenological approaches. Grounded theory could be particularly useful when researching participants with stigmatised identities due to the process of constructing new theories through the iterative collaboration of researchers and participants (Charmaz & Thornberg, 2020). Marques (2020) and Zimman (2009) applied a narrative approach, aligning with their investigation of coming out stories and an investigation of shared cultural language and metaphors (McAlpine, 2016). Lastly, Tan and Weisbart's (2023) use of Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) facilitated an exploration of how individuals made meaning of their lived experiences (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). Fahs (2021) did not outline a methodological approach but reported that the data collected was based on case studies framed by cognitive behaviour therapy and family systems work.

Recruitment and Participants

Most studies recruited participants solely from the USA (Bethea & McCollum, 2013; Brumbaugh-Johnson & Hull; 2019; Fahs, 2021; Koken et al., 2009; Zimman, 2009) or a majority

US population; (Galupo et al., 2014; Kade, 2021; Pusch, 2005). The remaining studies recruited from Canada, (Tan & Weisbart, 2023), Australia (Morgan et al., 2022) and Portugal and the UK (Marques, 2020).

Four studies did not report ethnicity of participants. Two papers recruited white or European American (Beathea & McCollum, 2013; Zimman, 2009) and three recruited majority white participants (Brumbaugh-Johnson & Hull, 2019; Kade, 2021; Galupo et al., 2014). Two papers recruited only ethnic minority participants (Kokem et al., 2009; Tan & Weisbart, 2023) and Fahs (2021) included case studies from two biracial and one white participant.

Seven studies reported recruiting transgender participants, (Brumbaugh-Johnson & Hull, 2019; Galupo et al., 2014; Marques, 2020; Morgan et al., 2022; Pusch, 2005; Zimman, 2009; Tan & Weisbart, 2023), while Fahs (2021) and Kade (2021) recruited transmen or assigned-female-at-birth participants and Bethea and McCollum (2013) and Koken et al. (2009) obtained data from transwomen or assigned-male-at-birth individuals. Galupo et al. (2014), Marques (2020) and Morgan et al. (2022) also included gender variant or diverse participants, however they did not include a definition of these terms. Four papers recruited teenagers (Fahs, 2021) or young adults up to 25 (Morgan et al., 2022; Pusch, 2005; Tan & Weisbart, 2023), with the remaining studies recruiting individuals over the age of 18.

From this analysis of participants, studies drew predominantly on the experiences of white adults from the USA or Canada. This focus could minimise the experiences of those with less social power such as individuals with minoritised ethnicities, young people (YP) and TP from countries where being transgender is currently illegal or risky (Pratto & Espinoza, 2002; Singh et al., 2014; Graham, 2014; Tereškinas et al., 2022). Additionally, as a majority of the

studies either collated TP as a group or included gender variant people without definition, risking collating groups with disparate experiences of gender.

Data Collection

Ten papers included questions used for data collection, this excluded Fahs (2021) who reported findings based on therapeutic case studies. Most studies included broad interview areas covered while Brumbaugh et al. (2019) included example interview questions, Galupo et al. (2014) included one open-ended and Tan and Weisbart (2023) included the interview schedule in the appendix. The inclusion of interview areas and questions was helpful in the assessment of studies' credibility.

Given the minoritised experience of TP, it would have been helpful to include their views in the shaping of studies, however none of the studies reported stakeholder involvement in the framing of research aims or interview questions (Beresford, 2013). Koken et al. (2009) reported using community feedback regarding recruitment materials and peer outreach workers (mainly transwomen of colour) to raise awareness and recruit potential participants. Two studies were conducted by declared transgender researchers (Kade, 2021; Zimman, 2009) while Tan and Weisbart (2023) included one researcher who described themselves as an ethnic Chinese queer person.

Data Analysis and Findings

Nine papers presented sufficient supportive data relevant to their research question, referenced their analytic process in detail and explained how an appropriate sample supported their findings. Fahs (2021) and Zimman (2009) did not outline their analytic process nor how their sample size supported the study's findings.

Most papers described credibility assurance methods such as journalling, producing field notes and writing analytic memos (Bethea & McCollum, 2013; Brumbaugh-Johnson & Hull, 2009; Galupo et al., 2014; Kade, 2021; Koken et al., 2009; Morgan et al., 2022; Tan & Weisbart, 2023). Bethea and McCollum (2013), Galupo et al. (2014), Morgan et al. (2022) and Tan and Weisbart (2023) also reported creating codes and themes in consultation between study authors, with Bethea and McCollum (2013) checking preliminary themes with transgender individuals and Tan and Weisbart (2023) undertaking separate member checking interviews with participants. Fahs (2021), Pusch (2005) and Zimman (2009) did not discuss methods used to increase the credibility of their findings and Marques (2020) included a reference to rigour but did not disclose how this was achieved.

Fahs (2021) solely discussed research findings in relation to relevant literature, with the remaining papers also including implications related to the research question. Pusch (2005) excluded recommended areas for future research and three papers considered recommendations for clinical or counselling practice (Fahs, 2014; Galupo et al., 2014; Morgan et al., 2022).

Reflexivity

Reflexivity is considered an essential component of qualitative research, improving trustworthiness and rigor by considering the researcher's role as part of the work under study (Jootun et al., 2009). Two of the papers mentioned the potential impact of researcher's shared transgender identity as community insiders (Kade, 2021; Zimman, 2009). Tan and Weisbart (2023) reported undertaking procedures to reduce bias, such as member-checking by participants and author journaling to minimise any potential influence posed by their identities. Bethea and McCollum (2013) reported using field notes to capture initial reflections and consultation between authors to manage reliability and Koken et al. (2009) reported interviewing participants

using a culturally-competent trained interviewer. Many of the studies did not include information regarding reflexivity which could indicate problems regarding rigor as well as impacting on research topic and procedure if not critically negotiated (Palagnas et al., 2017). Additionally, a failure to examine and understand one's own social assumptions may inadvertently shut down avenues of research, particularly if researchers hold outsider status (Ademolu, 2023; Adeagbo, 2020).

Ethics

Ethical approval was reported in five papers reviewed (Fahs, 2021; Morgan et al., 2022; Tan & Weisbart, 2023; Bethea & McCollum, 2013; Koken et al., 2009). While most papers discussed anonymising participants and obtained informed consent, none of the papers discussed participants' right to withdraw or how they managed potential impacts on participant well-being during or after the study.

Summary

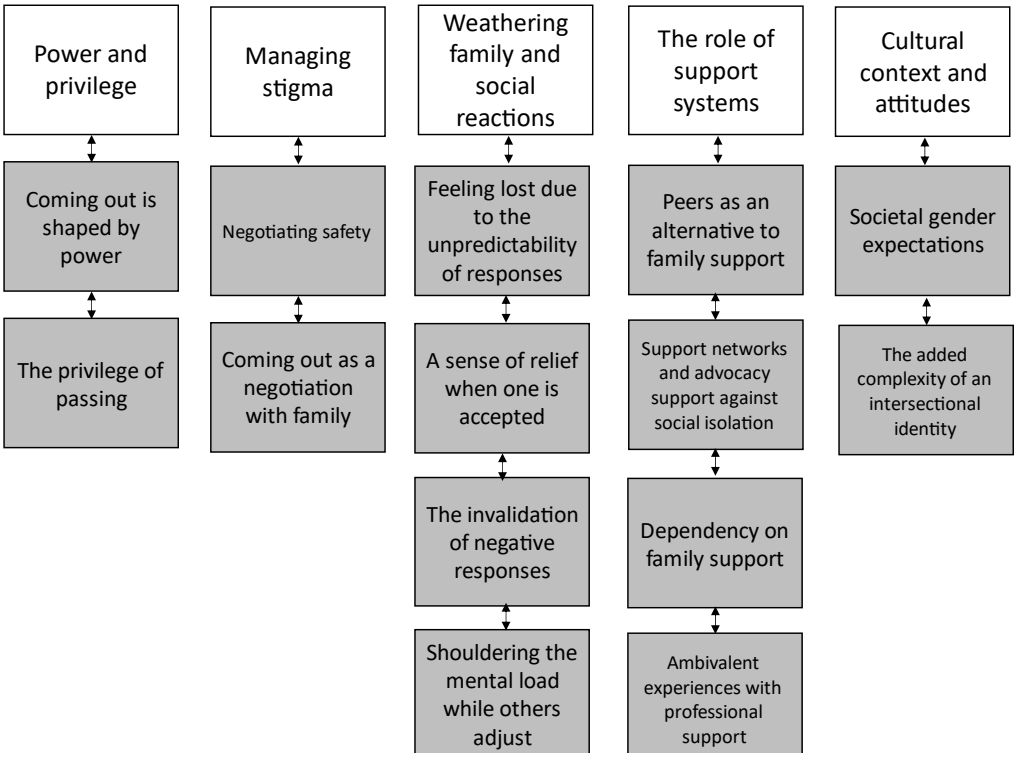
All assessed studies were included as part of the thematic synthesis to capture the literature on the transgender coming out experience. None of the studies were of a particularly poor quality, however Fahs (2021) did not outline an analytic methodology, Zimman (2009) did not describe the analytic process and three papers did not describe attempts to increase credibility of findings (Fahs, 2021; Pusch, 2005; Zimman 2009). Notably the studies examined the experiences of majority USA, white, adult participants, potentially limiting the applicability of findings to non-US based minoritised young individuals.

Thematic Synthesis

The thematic synthesis resulted in the creation of five themes, all of which contained subthemes. See Figure 2 for a thematic map, Appendix B for a representation of coding in NVivo

and Appendix C for the distribution of themes throughout the included studies. It is important to note that the distribution of themes varied across papers due to differences in research questions and populations.

Figure 2
Thematic map



Power and privilege

The ability to choose to come out and the impact on participants was explored in most papers. Some participants expressed feeling empowered to come out by their ability to pass as their preferred gender, negating the need to come out. By contrast others were obligated to come out due to societal pressures leaving TP with little agency to exercise choice.

1.1 Coming out is shaped by power

Having control or agency on how and when to disclose, had an impact on TP's feeling of personal and social safety, with eight papers exploring the importance of being able to live in one's true gender and the positive impact this could have on relationships:

> *"For me it is liberating because you … worry about what the other person may think ... the more you start cracking down the walls … the more light comes in …and it is just a healthy thing." (Bethea & McCollum, 2013, p.99)*

> *"It gifts my relationships with a deeper integrity if I am my whole self with people I care deeply about." (Galupo et al., 2014, p.35)*

For other TP, coming out was linked to the desire to manage their transition to a different gender:

> *"I was never going to get away with nobody noticing [the name change] or anything like that . . . I immediately email[ed] the whole staff … who I had varying relationships to" (Kade, 2021, p.7)*

> *"I wanted to tell everybody before I presented to them as Debra, and so, it added to the stress of transitioning." (Brumbaugh-Johnson & Hull, 2019, p.1163)*

As illustrated by Brumbaugh-Johnson and Hull (2019), while coming out was often reported as stressful, participants felt more secure when they were better able to control where and when they shared their gender identity.

> *"Indeed, when the trans men routinely recognized as men in this sample were first transitioning, they described disclosing … especially to strangers that would become*

> *acquaintances, to exert more control over their own gender recognition" (Kade, 2021, pp. 6-7)*

Coming out could also be experienced as an obligation reflecting lack of power within larger systems:

> *"I just got a new job, and ...they wanted to do a background check. And I said, ...you need to know I'm transgendered and here's my other name." ... you have to do it, because otherwise you're gonna be looked at as fraudulent. You know . . . that's my livelihood, that's my safety." (Kade, 2021, p.6)*

> *"Because of the standards of care ... transgender individuals usually have little choice in coming out in these systems.... participants reported that office staff called them from the waiting room by their previous names, thus outing them to everyone." (Bethea & McCollum, 2013, pp.104-105)*

As explored in these quotes, feelings of comfort and integrity seem to be evoked when participants could exercise choice, in contrast to feeling powerless and exposed by systems that do not cater to the needs of TP.

1.2 The privilege of passing

The ability to pass in their new gender was investigated by Bethea and McCollum (2013), Kade (2021), Marques (2020) and Zimman (2009) and typically gifted TP safety from potential threats by creating an opportunity to choose to disclose:

> *"Henry, who is regularly recognized as a man, said that he chooses not to disclose ... because "... I feel like, somebody else might feel like it's the most important thing about*

> *me. But to me it's just not the most important thing about me anymore." (Kade, 2021, p. 5)*

While passing was highlighted by Brumbaugh-Johnson and Hull (2019) as a "privilege" more commonly available to transmen, it indicated a societal acceptance of one's gender and an identity outside of being transgender which was experienced as liberating for participants:

> *"That first time when you feel comfortable going out in public and you pass and, it's phenomenal it's the most powerful thing in the world." (Bethea & McCollum, 2013, p. 99)*

> *"Heck, someone I met...just told me she keeps on forgetting that I'm trans. That has made my week." (Pusch, 2005, p. 58)*

2. Managing stigma when coming out

By contrast several studies investigated TP's lack of power and the impact of relational and institutional stigma on coming out.

2.1 Negotiating safety

Eight papers (Bethea &McCollum, 2013; Brumbaugh-Johnson & Hull, 2019; Fahs, 2021; Kade, 2021; Koken et al., 2009; Marques, 2020; Tan & Weisbart, 2023; Zimman, 2009) examined management of the coming out process and suggested that TP need to negotiate social and physical safety. Stigma affected whether individuals chose to come out and the responses they received. Stigma had an impact on all areas of participants' lives and negative impacts on self-concept:

> *"I'm not out at work at all. And in some ways it's nice, because nobody asks me horrible invasive questions. But … I feel like there is this wall between me and my coworkers. So, at a certain level they just don't get to know me . . ." (Kade, 2021, pp.6-7)*

The avoidance of economic threat was also explored:

> *"As long as I lived as a man, I always had work. Since I came out as a woman, I never worked even one day again. I think this says it all." (Marques, 2019, p. 1302)*

Particularly in the area of relationships, coming out may not have felt like an option to participants:

> *"Having surgery and living as Sandy … wasn't worth it ... it isn't all about you. Especially if you are married and have children.... that didn't work for me." (Bethea & McCollum, 2013, p.104)*

> *"This is the case of George who is out as a transgender man at his work and with his family and friends but not in … cis-heteronormative public spaces … At home, we look really heterosexual and live in a semi-detached house. We have got kids. …and we say hello to the neighbours, and nobody knows." (Marques, 2020, p. 1301)*

Pusch (2005) and Kade (2021) also examined transgender fetishisation which is the objectification or dehumanising of a group and can be seen as "two sides of the same coin" as stigma (Anzani et al., 2021; Austin et al., 2022, p.164). Fears of fetishisation made some TP wary of coming out:

> *"I talked to one girl who ended up being a total chaser and that was like a not feel good [interaction] .. She was with me because she wanted to date a trans person, not because she was interested" (Kade, 2021, p. 10).*

By contrast some coming out maintained their safety:

> *"Wyatt divulges his trans identity immediately to potential cis men partners because of "horror stories" he has heard about …cis men harming trans women they view as "deceiving" them into "gay" sexual acts...Specifically, Wyatt discloses his identity because of fears of being perceived to threaten gay/bi cis men's self-identity." (Kade, 2021, p.9)*

These studies indicated the complexity of the coming out process and how commonly this may involve postponing or not disclosing to maintain social and physical safety. It also indicated the different strategies TP may have to employ in different social arenas.

2.2 Coming out as a negotiation with family

The studies concentrating on the experiences of YP also indicated further strategies that may need to be employed. Due to a societal lack of power as minors who require parental consent to transition, coming out was framed as a negotiation:

> *the "coming out" process feels less declarative and is instead more of a negotiation in order to gain approval of their identities and their transitional processes. (Fahs, 2021, p.158)*

This could also lead to postponement of coming out to protect family relationships and cultural norms:

> *"Daniel showed consideration by not pushing his preferred name on his parents: I respond to the name they call me." (Tan & Weisbart, 2023, p. 335)*

As explored in this theme TP YP are doubly impacted by a lack of power in society and within their families.

3.Weathering family and social reactions

This theme was investigated by all the reviewed studies supporting the construction of coming out as a social interaction, whose successful completion is defined by others' reactions (Brumbaugh-Johnson & Hull, 2019).

3.1 Feeling lost due to the unpredictability of responses

All papers examined the unpredictability of reactions of others, indicating a difficulty in gauging risk:

> *"Michael reported that due to … the number of times others' reactions were different than what he anticipated, he has stopped trying to guess how people will respond" (Brumbaugh-Johnson & Hull, 2019, p.1165)*

This was illustrated by mixed impacts on relationships:

> *"An important finding of this study was that the experiences of identity and status disclosure for transgender individuals varied in numerous ways…. There was no unilateral experience of identity or status disclosure for participants and often the experience they expected to have was different than the outcome they received." (Galupo et al., 2014, p. 33)*

This is important to note due to TP's desire to manage coming out safely and the impact relational uncertainty may have on one's well-being (Clark et al., 2020, Miklincer & Shaver, 2016).

3.2 A sense of relief when one is accepted

A positive response to coming out was reported in all papers excepting Tan and Weisbart (2023), which may indicate the differential impact of Asian cultural beliefs on coming out. Participants who reported a positive experience often initially came out to significant others and reported that acceptance had a positive impact on their well-being:

> *"The participants found the process of identifying themselves as transgender, as well as disclosing to others, an experience initially full of apprehension but eventually one of relief, freedom, and liberation." (Bethea & McCollum, 2013, p. 99)*

Coming out could also have a positive impact on an individual's relationships:

> *"A few participants found that ... they gained friends and/or strengthened current relationships" (Galupo et al., 2014, p.35)*

This seems to indicate that coming out can foster more intimate relationships through the sharing of intimate information (Kade, 2021).

3.3 The invalidation of negative responses

Negative experiences to disclosure varied from invalidation, '*this [is] "just a phase*"' to ignoring the disclosure, homelessness and violence (Fahs, 2021, p. 153; Koken et al., 2009). Invalidation was frequently experienced by YP, whose parents may insist on the expertise of a professional to corroborate their child's disclosure (Fahs, 2021; Tan & Weisbart, 2023; Morgan et al., 2022).

Negative reactions impacted directly on the mental health of study participants, with Fahs (2021) and Morgan et al (2022) highlighting that significant others may only consider supporting TP in the case of a crisis:

> *"Notably, many parents only became aware and accessed education ... once the child reached a crisis point and the consequences of negative reactions and unsupportive stances were starkly evident." (Morgan et al., 2022, p. 47).*

Participants spoke about impacts such as alienation and suicidality in response to negative reactions, highlighting the impact of stigma and rejection on their mental health:

> *"The only person who freaked out ...was my dad...I just wish it weren't such a struggle for him to accept it emotionally. Well, if I keep typing about that I'll start crying" (Pusch, 2005, p.52)*

> *"Most of my memory from around that time I just blanked out because of the stress that I was experiencing from mum's reaction. Those first months had a huge impact on my mental health." (Morgan et al., 2022)*

3.4 Shouldering the mental load while others adjust

Eight of the papers highlighted that despite an initial negative reaction, many significant others became more accepting after a period of time. Some studies conceptualised this as part of a grief cycle (Galupo et al., 2014; Morgan et al., Pusch, 2005) with family and friends needing time to adjust:

> *"She was, "why the fuck are you doing this, you have no respect for yourself, how could you do that to your body"...She flipped out... it took about a year for us to go through*

> *everything, and now … she'll go "what's up beba"—that's her nickname for me, it means baby girl in Spanish." (Koken et al., 2009, p. 7)*

Although this was a painful experience, the change in reaction over time indicated that there was hope that relationships could improve. For transgender YP, it appeared they felt the need to shoulder a heavier mental burden while waiting for their families to adjust due to their relative lack of power. As reported in seven studies, YP acted either acted to educate their families or felt they needed to be considerate of the difficulties their parents had in accepting them:

> *"I've basically been educating my parents on what this is at every point of the way and that's so tiring on top of everything else you're dealing with. (Morgan et al., 2022, p. 43)*

> *"N similarly excused his mother's behavior by rationalizing, '[she] just needs some time' and 'she's just being a mom.' (Tan & Weisbart, 2023, p. 335)*

YP were particularly impacted by a fear of their family withdrawing support due to their "need for parental approval, love and affection" (Fahs, 2021, p. 160); with this potentially impacting on their ability to come out at all:

> *"She also decided, during the summer before she started community college, that she "was no longer trans." …Whether this decision was the consequence of her mother's intense disapproval, or whether this reflected her genuine belief that she did not want to transition with hormones, remained unclear." (Fahs, 2021, p. 156)*

4.The role of support systems

The importance of support was mentioned in all papers. TP searched for social, emotional and economic support while transitioning. It appeared that TP commonly looked outside of their family when they experienced mixed or hostile reactions to coming out.

4.1 Peers as an alternative to family support

While some participants described families as supportive "My mother's my best friend. She buys me panties and bras… my aunt, nephews and niece … they accept me to the fullest." (Koken et al., 2021, p6), most studies found that friends "tended to be more understanding … than parents" with a lot of "primary support for participants [coming] from friends" (Pusch, 2005), pp. 55,58). This support could vary from expressing happiness with the disclosure, using correct pronouns and socialising them into their new gender:

> *"They can sort of show me the ropes of being a guy. I'm some kind of boy apprentice" (Pusch, 2005, p. 57)*

Due to the relative lack of social, familial and societal support for TP, friendships often fulfilled multiple roles such as role modelling, acting as a chosen family or providing counselling and information not available in traditional health care systems (Galupo, et al., 2014).

4.2 Support networks and advocacy support against social isolation

The impact of support networks and advocacy was reported in six papers. Support networks were seen as decreasing isolation and helping support participants to feel more comfortable with themselves:

> *"Just to have friendships with people who knew and accepted and stuff like that and it was really the first time in my life that I didn't have to wonder 'what would they think if they knew.' (Bethea & McCollum, 2013, p. 102)*

However, Tan and Weisbart (2023), also highlighted that those with intersectional identities may feel isolated within a supportive group due to their lack of representation:

"The support group I went to was mainly White people...so I felt like I really couldn't connect with them." (Tan & Weisbart, 2023, p. 339)

4.3 Dependency on family support

YP also encountered the unique position of needing to rely on monetary and practical help to come out and transition in contrast to adult participants:

"Parents advocated for their child across settings such as school and health services, or proactively corrected others to ensure the child's correct pronouns and chosen name were used." (Morgan et al., 2022, p. 42)

This could also create additional anxiety if this was withheld:

Ian, a first-year college student, explained that he did not want to tell his parents because given his age … and being a fulltime traditional college student, he depended on them financially and fearfully anticipated losing their financial support." (Kade, 2021, p. 9)

This feature of coming out for YP could further increase disclosure stress leading to negative impacts on their mental health (Taube & Mussap, 2022).

4.4 Ambivalent experiences with professional support

Six papers spoke about how professional support could facilitate and improve family reactions and facilitate family acceptance by improving education about gender diversity, reducing feelings of isolation and fear for the future (Morgan et al., 2022). Therapy was reported as helpful for participants to understand themselves and create a safe space to discuss family disputes:

"I was completely opposed to therapy ... It turned out to be an enormous benefit." (Bethea & McCollum, p.102)

> *"*[The family] *had sought therapy to get more information about transgender identities and to help them lessen their intensifying conflicts with each other." (Fahs, 2021, p.153)*

Tan and Weisbart (2023) and Pusch (2005) also highlighted how YP may experience professionals with ambivalence:

> *"On the one hand, the doctor's confirmation of my gender identity is helpful to my parents as they don't really trust ... I'm old enough or smart enough to be making these kind of big decisions... After they meet the second doctor my mom… had a whole new arsenal of obstacles to get in my way, lots of stuff about hormone risks and varying surgical results." (Pusch, 2005, p.51)*

Thus, YP may experience professionals either as societal and parental facilitators or obstructors by supporting or invalidating their gender identity.

5. Cultural context and attitudes

This theme was examined by all studies excepting Zimman (2009) and Galupo et al. (2014) and highlighted the impact of cultural discourses on coming out.

5.1 Societal gender expectations

Societal gender expectations affected TP at all stages of coming out. This was described in the regulating of acceptable gender presentations pre- and post-transition and as reinforced by the transgender community. It also covered societal beliefs fusing sexual and gender identities:

> *"Oberon's story demonstrates how even the transgender community encourages traditional gender roles" (Pusch, 2005, p. 55)*

> *"You're sort of automatically assumed to be lesbian ... I think sometimes I identified as being a lesbian because I appear so, in some ways so masculine… my sexual orientation*

> *got defined by my gender presentation more than anything else." (Brumbaugh-Johnson & Hull, 2019, p. 1161)*

Only Marques (2020) and Pusch (2005) explored challenging traditional gender narratives:

> *"'It was about seeing a very, very diverse set of trans masculine people and realising … I can do it in the way that suits me.' (Marques, 2020, p. 1297)*

Thus, many studies explored the potential drawback that the very exploration of alternative narratives of gender may again encourage some TP to conform.

5.2 The added complexity of an intersectional identity

Age, class, ethnicity, religion and sexuality were areas mentioned in most studies, as creating additional layers of consideration when coming out. The intersection of age and gender were highlighted by several studies. Brumbaugh-Johnson and Hull (2019), Marques (2020) and Zimman (2009) highlighted an age-cohort effect, where older generations may have navigated coming out by suppressing their gender expression and only coming out once they had more information about alternative gender identities and society appeared more accepting:

> *"It was a little bit of a challenge growing up . . . I tried to be this guy that people wanted me to be… I wasn't going to join the Army or the Air Force, because those . . . weren't macho enough. I had to be a Marine." (Brumbaugh-Johnson & Hull, 2019, p.1159)*

> *"I didn't feel that I was different. But I know what I am since I was a child. At the time, there was no Internet, there was no … place to search for information. I left it like that; I kept it to myself until I started seeing things in the Internet and reading and understanding what was happening with me; and it got to the time when I said: "OK. From now on it is enough!" (Marquez, 2019, p.1298)*

Studies also reported participants expressing different sexual identities prior to coming out as transgender, creating an added layer of complexity when considering disclosing:

> *"Michael, a 36-year-old transgender man, who came out as bisexual at age 19 and then as transgender in his early 30s." (Brumbaugh-Johnson & Hull, 2019, p.1160-1161)*

Marques (2020) also linked sexual identity to a cohort effect, reporting that due to a lack of information about gender identity and it being intertwined with sexuality, participants may have explored the only option available at the time.

The intersection of culture and ethnicity was described as particularly challenging for participants, when families employed cultural norms to invalidate or disprove of their gender identity. Often this difference was named in studies explicitly but it was also indicated implicitly:

> *"Emily stated: Asian parents … the typical reaction … it's more of a dismissal where they don't treat you seriously … so it kind of just really demotivates you and makes you wonder, 'Oh maybe I'm just wrong'" (Tan & Weisbart, 2023, p. 337)*

> *"In Portugal, there were some younger research participants whose parents were not understanding of their children's coming out processes... "My family is very transphobic and homophobic… I was kicked out by my father around 8 months ago. I stayed with friends" (Marques, 2020, p. 1300)*

Thus, it appears that TP encounter additional complexities to coming out when attempting to challenge societal and group norms and the narratives attached to them while at the same time trying to explore their own identity (de Vries, 2012).

Discussion

The review aimed to answer the question "What are transgender people's experiences of sharing their identity or 'coming out' to others?" by thematically synthesising qualitative research selected through a systematic literature search. The thematic synthesis resulted in five themes which will be discussed in relation to wider empirical literature.

The theme *Power and privilege* was explored in relation to the two sub-themes *Coming out is shaped by power and The privilege of passing.* The first subtheme aligns with ideas that greater choice enables individuals to express their identity and increase well-being, and that those forced to disclose may experience greater threat and exposure (Schwartz & Cheek, 2017; Wirtz et al., 2020). This theme also illustrated the need to navigate societal cis-genderism; TP who conform to societal expectations of gender are granted the privilege of non-disclosure, whereas those negotiating bureaucracies may have to disclose due to transgressing cisgender norms with potentially negative impacts on safety (Shelton, 2015).

The theme of *Managing stigma* emphasised that coming out was a risky process impacting work, relationships and physical safety and captured by the subthemes of *Negotiating safety and Coming out as a negotiation with family.* These subthemes indicate the applicability of the DPM, with TP choosing when, where and to whom to be out. Particularly, YP's experience of coming out as a negotiation further underlines the importance of their relative lack of power and the mediating impact of social or family support to enable their disclosure and successful transition (Chaudoir & Fisher, 2010). In the case of personal relationships, disclosing acts to protect safety as for example, TP are legally required in the UK to disclose their gender history prior to marriage (Sharpe, 2012). Thus, this theme highlights the social knowledge and resources TP may require to come out safely.

The theme *Weathering family and social reactions* illustrated the social nature of coming out through which TP must negotiate others' expectations and ideologies of gendered identity. The themes *Feeling lost due to the unpredictability of responses, A sense of relief when one is accepted, The invalidation of negative responses and, Shouldering the mental load while others adjust* reflect the negative impact rejection may have on TP and a desire to avoid this by gauging social support and safety; thus how challenging the unpredictability of responses would be when attempting to assess the safety of further disclosure (Chaudoir & Fisher, 2010). In examining the experiences of YP, it could also be seen that they are further impacted by their lack of power and the potential need to inhibit their feelings of sadness and rejection in order to remain acceptable to their families (Hochschild, 1979).

The theme, *The role of Support systems* included the subthemes *Peers as an alternative to family support, Support networks and advocacy support against social isolation; Dependency on family support and Ambivalent experiences with professional support*. Sharing experiences where TP can feel accepted was described as valuable and aligns with literature regarding other marginalised groups, particularly when this cannot be gained within close relationships (Tracy & Wallace, 2016; Cain et al., 1986). As examined, while greater education can facilitate greater support for TP, this may place a burden on those providing it (Hejinders & Van Der Meij, 2007; Tan & Weisbart, 2023). This links the last two subthemes which particularly illustrate YP's experiences of adultism and their legal, financial and emotional reliance on adults who may expect unconditional obedience and punish deviation (Hall, 2021). Thus, dependency on family support may require YP to postpone coming out and act as a threat to their resilience, requiring additional coping strategies such as connecting to trans-affirming friends and communities

(Singh et al., 2014). Furthermore, professional support may be experienced as another reminder of YP's lack of agency or power if used to impede coming out as transgender.

The theme of *Cultural contexts and attitudes* explored how sharing one's transgender identity could be constrained by *Societal gendered expectations* and *The added complexity of an intersectional identity*. As suggested by the identity development models (Gagne et al., 1997, Bockting & Coleman, 2016) the act of informing others of their transgender identity is an important developmental step. As indicated by this theme, internalised and societal stigma may negatively impact on one's ability so to do (Hughto et al., 2015). Further, a cohort effect seems apparent where a lack of role models for trans-identities was highlighted as impacting on individuals' knowledge and ability to explore a transgender identity. As discussed, older participants tended to come out later in life, whereas younger TP may find more possibilities open to them due to more dynamic conceptualisations of sexual and gendered identities (Miller, 2017). Intersectionality further complicates the experience of TP as this can act as an additional form of social marginalisation and stress, impacting on mental and physical health (de Vries, 2012). This seems to underline the need for supportive spaces for those with stigmatised identities which reflect differences within the transgender community (Gronholm et al., 2017).

The findings of this review align with transgender identity development models where coming out is a necessary task within this process (Gagne et al., 1997, Bockting & Coleman, 2016). It also highlighted the barriers that YP may experience if families oppose movement to their new gender. In part the review reflected the DPM, with transgender individuals seeking positive interactions to coming out, and potentially feeding sexual identity disclosure into a positive feedback loop for their transgender identity. However, as a transgender identity is not concealable to significant others, one may argue that the DPM is less applicable. Additionally,

two of the reviewed studies discussed declaration versus disclosure, with Zimman (2009), explicating the differences between sharing one's identity pre or post-transition. Brumbaugh-Johnson and Hull (2019) however did not support this conceptualisation of discrete types of coming out, instead aligning with Guittar and Rayburn's (2016) notion of coming out as a career to be managed.

Limitations

A thematic synthesis was undertaken to integrate the findings of multiple papers on the experience of transgender individuals disclosing the gender identity to others. While it is acknowledged that this method may obscure heterogeneity and quality appraisal it is viewed as a method that maintains a link between conclusions and the text of primary studies (Lucas et al., 2007; Thomas & Harden, 2008). To maintain the quality of the synthesis, researcher rigor and reflexivity were considered in supervision. Additionally, although several papers included gender variant or diverse people, they did not include a definition of these terms, which may confound groups with different experiences of gender.

The findings of the thematic synthesis may have been affected by a relative lack of diversity of participants. Most studies represented the experiences of a majority white, Northern American, adult population which could limit the transferability of the results. Experiences in locations where being transgender is treated with hostility or classed illegal were not found in the coming out literature. This should be noted when considering the presented results, particularly in reference to the DPM.

Clinical Implications

The experiences highlighted in this review demonstrate that transgender individuals may have unique needs and challenges in navigating a multitude of social areas such as employment,

healthcare and relationships. It also demonstrates how the inclusion of TP in the LGBT without considering differences in experiences could create further difficulties. Healthcare professionals may wish to consider the importance of becoming culturally competent with transgender issues, working to improve knowledge and education to counter transphobia and negative impacts on transgender health and well-being (Hancock, 2015; Hope et al., 2016; Hana et al., 2021). It is important to note the impact of the assumption of cisnormativity and how structural issues such as lack of knowledge about genderqueer experiences and pronouns, poor access to legal and medical resources, and systemic discrimination may negatively impact on mental health outcomes (Lefevor et al., 2019).

Professionals may be able to ameliorate some fears by carefully and purposefully exploring these social arenas for disclosure with gender questioning or gender transitioning individuals while utilising the DPM as a framework to understand the impact of stigma on further disclosure of one's gender identity. It would also be useful to consider the intersectionality of other identities that transgender individuals may hold and how this may further impact on their ability to present as their true gender.

As discussed in several of the research papers, increased knowledge and visibility improves the care that TP may receive from their networks, with social support particularly from family, related to better mental health outcomes for TP (Puckett et al., 2019). This review suggests that increased peer support for TP and family of transgender individuals could help improve mental health outcomes and minimise feelings of stigma. Services may wish to provide this themselves or become knowledgeable about appropriate services they could signpost to individuals.

Future research

Further research on the experiences of TP from minoritised backgrounds including ethnicity, religion and region could clarify the impact of intersectionality on the experience of coming out. Particularly the experience in countries with free healthcare systems would be of interest as the majority of papers reviewed were from a North American perspective. It also appears that transgender YP have a discretely different experience from that of the transgender community at large and further qualitative research of this group could clarify how better to support them through this experience. Additionally, studies on the coming out experiences of older TP could be helpful to understand the impact of temporality on the experience of coming out.

Conclusion

This review aimed to provide a current understanding of the coming out experience of TP by undertaking a systematic search and synthesis of the literature. Five overarching themes were created with corresponding subthemes. These themes explored the risk and stigma of coming out, the intrinsically social nature of this disclosure and the management strategies used for support and the impact of the wider socio-political context on this experience. Studies utilised for the review appeared credible although a large number did not fully explicate their ethical processes or examine the relationship between researcher and participants. Due to the limited diversity of location and ethnicity these findings may have limited applicability to transgender populations in non-white areas or populations. Future research directions and clinical implications were also explored.

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Section B: Empirical Paper

"Going back into my original culture really helped": The coming out experience of transgender ethnic minority young people

Abstract

Introduction: Individuals with intersectional minority identities are understood to experience external and internal stressors in relation to their minority status, experiencing cumulative discrimination due to managing their status in multiple minority groups. While coming out is a seen as an important phase in exploring one's gender identity, limited studies have explored transgender minority ethnic young people's (TMEYP) perspectives on this experience and there is no existing research in this area from a UK perspective.

Aim: To explore how TMEYP in the UK, experience coming out to their families and heritage communities, the impact on their identities and how they managed.

Methods: Six minority ethnic (Mixed (n=2), Black (n=1), central Asian (n=2), Jewish (n=1)) participants took part in the study and their coming out experiences were explored through photo elicitation and individual semi-structured interviews. The data was analysed using interpretative phenomenological analysis.

Results: Three overarching themes were generated: 'The high stakes of coming out', 'Managing the aftermath of coming out', and 'It's a learning curve' and eleven subthemes. The findings indicated that coming out was an anxiety-provoking experience for participants and necessitated creating safety plans and engaging in a variety of coping mechanisms to deal with parental invalidation and rejection. Several participants found a coping mechanism in their cultural heritage and an ability to express themselves authentically and contrary to Western gender concepts.

Discussion: Results were considered using models from minority stress, intersectional identity formation and assimilation theory. Recommendations were made for increased support for TMEYP and their families while considering cultural differences.

Key words: Coming out as transgender, intersectional identity formation, supportive cultural artefacts, intersectional invisibility, adjustment

Introduction

Coming out as transgender

Coming out is an important step in transgender identity development involving sharing one's sexual or gender identity with others (Bockting & Coleman, 2016). Transgender is an umbrella term for persons whose gender identity is different from that assigned at birth and will be used throughout this study. A thematic synthesis of the existing literature on the coming out experience of transgender people (section A) suggested that the success of coming out is predicated on familial and societal acceptance and may be complicated by societal and cultural narratives, particularly if transgender people (TP) are also part of societally minoritised groups.

Minority Stress Theory

Minority stress theory (Brooks, 1981; Meyer, 1995, 2003) suggests that minority social status creates a unique set of chronic pressures resulting in greater risk of negative health outcomes when compared to the general population (Frost & Meyer, 2023). Meyer (2003) conceives of these as distal and proximal stressors. The former are imposed by societal processes or institutions which enact discrimination, victimisation, stigma and prejudice. Proximal stressors (the consequences of distal stressors) result in high interactional vigilance due to expectations of being rejected, concealment of one's identity to reduce potential threats and internalisation of stigma about being a member of a minority group (Meyer, 2003; Frost & Meyer, 2023). Those identifying themselves as transgender in a culturally cisgender society experience high levels of discrimination and prejudice with negative impacts on mental and physical health (Drabish & Theeke, 2021). Despite these pressures, research suggests that participating in minority group norms may also act as a protective buffer against societal stigma (Everett et al., 2019).

Intersectionality and Intersectional invisibility

Intersectionality examines "the ways that multiple forms of inequality or disadvantage sometimes compound themselves and create obstacles that often are not understood among conventional ways of thinking" and having multiple minority status may result in interlinked and overlapping forms of discrimination and negatively impact on myriad social markers such as health and economic outcomes (Crenshaw, 1989, p.149; Seng et al., 2012; Potter, 2013). Furthermore, those with intersectional minoritised identities may experience intersectional invisibility due to not fitting the model of a particular minority group, leading their needs and difficulties to be overlooked (Al-Faham, Davis & Ernst, 2019; Tan & Weisbart, 2021; Cyrus, 2017; Settles & Buchanan, Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008). Studies have shown that TP from ethnic minorities may experience harmful stereotypes while navigating racism, cis-genderism and other potential discrimination entailing unique difficulties in comparison to white TP.

Intersectional identity development

Identity development increasingly considers the way individuals may manage intersecting identities. Rocca's and Brewer's theory of social identity complexity (2002) suggests four strategies may be used dynamically to manage multiple social identities (see Table 1). Considering acculturation theory, they suggest that ethnic minority groups may overlap with, but hold distinct identities from the majority culture and as such, competing cultural norms and values may cause individuals to move between forms of identity management (Berry, 1997; Roccas & Brewer, 2002). In examining the intersectional identity development of Latinx and African American gender expansive and sexual minority women, Cerezo et al. (2020) identified four critical themes; family and cultural expectations, freedom to explore one's identity, constant management of insider/outsider status and identity integration as a form of resistance. Both

models indicate the complex and ongoing negotiations that intersectional individuals must manage.

Table 1

Social identity complexity categories

Category	Definition
Intersection	Simultaneous recognition of more than one social identity by the formation of a unique compound group e.g. Female lawyer
Dominance	The subordination of other identities to a primary group identification – other aspects are aspects of the self as a member of the primary identity e.g. Lawyer
Compartmentalization	If multiple identities are important for social identity, social identities are activated according to appropriate social context e.g. at work lawyer may be a more relevant identity whereas at home woman may be activated
Merger	Social identity is combined in an additive way e.g. Female and lawyer as multiple identities are significant

Transgender young people

Transgender minority ethnic young people (TMEYP) may therefore experience cumulative difficulties when coming out. Research regarding the experiences of TMEYP suggests that adultism, the systemic power of adults over YP, complicates the exploration of their intersectional identities by impacting on TMEYP's ability to express themselves, invalidating their experiences and impacting their access to services and financial security (Singh et al., 2014).

Study Rationale and Aims

While some literature has investigated aspects of the coming out experience for TP, relatively little research has incorporated the experience of intersectional identity development for TMEYP. Tan and Weisbart (2023) explored the coming out experience of Asian YP and identified themes such as the importance of maintaining family ties, experiences of adultism and the creation of new supportive communities, although it is important to note this was within a North American context.

TMEYP are underrepresented in referrals to a UK national gender identity development service, as they may experience interconnected discrimination due to their intersectional identities in comparison to their white peers (de Graaf et al., 2018; Crenshaw,1991; Singh, 2013). Due to their doubly minoritised identities, TMEYP may feel greater uncertainty about coming out for fear of judgement and the inability to take back a disclosure that may result in stigma from others, particularly if acceptance within one of their minority groups was protective (Mackie et al, 2021).

This study aimed to represent the experiences of this under-researched group within a UK context and address the following research questions;

How do TMEYP:

a. Experience coming out within their family and heritage communities as adolescents?

b. Make sense of their coming out experiences during adolescence?

c. Perceive their coming out experience during adolescence shaped their identity?

d. Manage if their identities pose challenges for them?

Method

Design

Data collection was carried out through photo elicitation and semi-structured individual interviews. Data was analysed using interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) to access a detailed, reflective, first-person understanding of participants' lived experiences (Smith et al., 2022; Larkin & Thompson, 2012). IPA was considered appropriate due to the orientation of the research question on the coming out experience and how participants made sense of this (Smith et al., 2022).

IPA is informed by phenomenology, hermeneutics, and ideography (Smith et al., 2022). Phenomenology establishes the focus on experience and how this is understood from an individual's situational perspective. IPA also recognises the double hermeneutic; that the researcher is trying to make sense of the participant making sense of their own experience and that this is necessarily shaped by the researcher's own experience and biases (Smith & Osborn, 2008). Lastly, IPA's idiographic approach entails a focus on a specific instance of a participant's lived experience. Due to IPA's ability to explore ambiguous, complex and emotionally transformative experiences, this was felt to be applicable to TMEYP's coming out journeys (Smith & Osborn, 2015).

This research also considered the impact of power on the research process and the researcher's position within the research (Dinçer, 2019). As such, optional participant photo-elicitation was used in combination with IPA to open-up new dimensions in the data as demonstrated by Papaloukas et al. (2017) and Quincey et al. (2021). As photo elicitation can help to facilitate an inclusive methodology by using nonverbal methods, it may be experienced as empowering and making space for an alternative representation of experiences, thus aiding

TMEYP to engage in potentially emotionally sensitive discussions (Holtby et al., 2015; Gabb et al., 2019, Christensen et al., 2020).

Recruitment and Participants

Advertisements for the study (Appendix D) were placed on social media (Instagram, Reddit) and in Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) bars/social clubs. Unfortunately, these attempts did not elicit participants and so recruitment was undertaken through a consultant from the transgender community according to the inclusion criteria in Table 2. The consultant placed the advert for the study on their personal social media accounts and individuals contacted the researcher to express their interest in participating. Through this method, six participants were recruited to the study (see Table 3). Participant's names and any identifying demographic details have been anonymised and aggregated for confidentiality. Due to the studies' focus on coming out as a minor, it was felt appropriate to recruit YA over the age of 18 to allow some time to have passed since coming out and enable participants to reflect on disclosing their gender identity. Furthermore, recruiting YA enabled the researcher to recruit those who may have not wanted their parents to be informed about their participation widening the sample to include those with potentially less supportive experiences. YP up to the age of 25 were recruited to incorporate an expanded definition of adolescence framed by changes to society and research on brain development (Sawyer et al., 2018; Kawroska & MacQueen, 2015).

Table 2

Inclusion and exclusion criteria for study participants

Inclusion	Exclusion
Age 18-25	Experiencing high levels of emotional distress
Identify as minoritised ethnicity	
Came out to family or heritage communities before the age of 18	
Came out as transgender in the UK (including gender diverse, gender queer etc)	
Fluent in English	

Table 3

Participant demographics

Demographic category	Aggregate data
Age:	mean age = 21, range 20-23
Gender identity	trans masculine (n=2), trans man (n=2), male (n=1), gender fluid (n=1),
Ethnicity:	mixed (n=2), Black (n=1), central Asian (n=2), Jewish (n=1)
Sexuality:	gay man (n=2), queer (n=2), panromantic (n=1), bi-sexual (n=1)
Transition	social (n=3), medical (n=2), social and starting medical (n=1)

Interview design and procedure

Support was provided by a consultant associated with a national gender identity service who matched study criteria. The consultant provided feedback on interview procedure and elicited some changes such as simplifying interview questions (Appendix E). Eligible

participants who returned signed consent forms were invited to take part in an interview and invited to send the researcher up to five photographs in advance. Interviews took place via video call to facilitate discussion of photographs. Two interviewees requested a second interview to discuss their photographs separately. All participants opted to provide photographs, with interviews lasting an average of 63 minutes.

Ethics

Ethical approval was granted by Salomons Institute for Applied Psychology (Appendix F) and the study was conducted in line with NHS values of commitment to quality of care, respect and dignity, improving lives and 'everyone counts' (NHS, 2021). This was reflected in the choice of research methodology and exploring an area which could have clinical implications for improving the support provided to TMEYP.

Information sheets regarding the study and photographic element were provided. The photograph information sheet was created after consulting an expert in optional photo elicitation and IPA; they recommended detailed guidance to maintain confidentiality for participants (Appendix G).

Forms granting consent to publish copies of photographs and detailing the right to withdraw consent and data were sent after information sheets (Appendix H). Participants were invited to create pseudonyms, with one pseudonym being assigned by the researcher at the participant's request. Due to the nature of the topic, participants were asked to identify a supportive person they could check in with post-interview and a signposting document was provided following participation (Appendix I).

Data Analysis

Data was analysed in accordance with IPA procedures as outlined in Smith et al. (2022). Interviews were transcribed and subsequently reviewed to engage actively with the data. Initial exploratory notes were made concerning language used, context and identifying abstract concepts, informing the creation of experiential statements reflecting a "synergistic process of description and interpretation" (Smith et al., 2022, p.87). Personal experiential themes were generated from experiential statements for each participant. Thereafter, the data of all interviews were considered to create group experiential themes across all participants. Initial themes were discussed in supervision and this resulted in the reconceptualising of some themes.

Images were also interpreted using IPA, considering aesthetic qualities and non-linguistic metaphors that may be indicated via images, in combination with the verbal data as proposed by Boden and Eatough (2014). Photographs were embedded within the transcripts and researcher interpretations were bracketed to foreground the participants as experiential experts. Subsequently photos were analysed using an IPA framework to construct an account between their narratives and the photographs produced (Papaloukas et al., 2017).

Quality Assurance

To maintain the quality of IPA the researcher aimed to construct a coherent narrative, focus on the experiential accounts of participants, thoroughly analyse participants' words and attend to patterns of similarity and dissimilarity between participants (Nizza et al., 2021). This is particularly important when conducting IPA as the researcher is understood to be embedded within the research process due to the co-construction of meaning making between the participants and researcher (Shaw, 2010). Thus, due to the researcher holding both insider and outsider status as a mixed-race cisgender woman, it was important to take note of any

experiences and beliefs which may have impacted on the analysis (Berger, 2015). As a mixed-race woman, I may have related to some participant experiences however as a cis-gender person with no experience of coming out, my alternative experiences may have affected my interpretations of their sense making. Additionally, the researcher's training in clinical psychology may have influenced the interview process due to their experience assisting people in psychological distress.

To reflect on these influences a bracketing interview was undertaken prior to interviewing and during the data collection period (Rolls & Relf, 2006). This assisted in raising the researcher's self-awareness of bias to achieve a better understanding of the study phenomena (Thomas & Sohn, 2023). A research diary was also kept recording progress, perceptions and feelings throughout the process and to notice assumptions and biases that may have impacted on data collection or interpretation (Appendix J) (Nadin & Cassell, 2006).

Results

Three overarching themes and 11 subthemes were developed through the analysis (see Table 4) and are discussed below.

Table 4

Summary of Themes and Subthemes

Group Experiential Theme	Subtheme
The high stakes of coming out	"At first I soft launched it" How to broach the subject
	"I always had a get out of jail plan"
	"It's not safe" vs "it's cool, whatever": The impact of cultural norms
Navigating the aftermath of coming out	"I've found my people"
	"I'm very glad that I have this culture that has my back": Culture as a point of strength
	"I don't know what degree of understanding she had about that": Cultural assumptions and obstacles
	That's why I'm glad I came out because … I can be my true self"' Authenticity and self-acceptance
	"A lot of queer spaces are not accepting of that kind of thing": Navigating intersectional invisibility
"It's a learning curve"	"And then she kind of slowly started coming around to it": Families adjusting to a new gender identity
	Reparation and forgiveness
	"I'm more comfortable within myself now": Expressing oneself outside of gender binaries

The high stakes of coming out

Coming out was described as anxiety-provoking, with participants highlighting safety and relational fears. This theme explored identity disclosure over time, including prior identity exploration as a sexual minority and attempting to gauge the best way to come out to families. It also explored the universal fear among participants that they would encounter negative reactions from their families; for some this entailed concealment of their transgender identity within certain spaces.

"At first I soft launched it": how to broach the subject

All participants spoke about the considerable care they took when coming out. While some participants gauged parental reactions by sharing LGBT media and having conversations about LGBT rights, all participants reported using mechanisms to share their identity, from broaching the subject by requesting a binder or coming out indirectly via letters, WhatsApp messages and a PowerPoint presentation. These processes appear to highlight the anxieties surrounding coming out and participants' attempts to manage this:

> "It was around my mum's birthday and I'd asked her if we can go to pride together … and she was like, "well, why would you wanna go?" And I said, "Well, it's for like, LGBT people". She's like, "Well, why do you want to go?" … So I used it to kinda be like. "Well, I'm, gay and I'm trans". And she was like, "Never mind about the gay, like you're trans?!" (Jin)

As highlighted by Jin's quote TMEYP wanted to include their parents on their journey despite their fear of rejection, which was often realised.

As part of the coming out process, four participants spoke about presenting or coming out as a sexual minority prior to or concurrently with coming out as transgender. This may indicate identity exploration, or act as another form of testing the waters as indicated by Rupert:

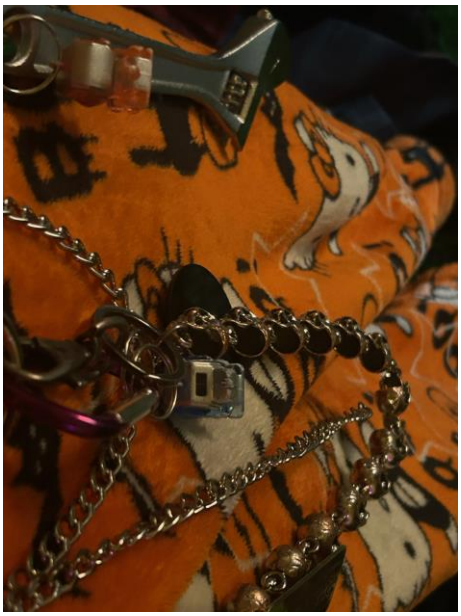
> “They were kind of judgmental about it. Like not in the sense of they were … outright homophobic, but they kind of were … they were like, "Oh, you're not going to be invited to sleepovers" like, "no one's gonna want to be your friend if you're gay". .... And for a couple years after that, I was genuinely scared to come out to them because… I thought they'd have that same reaction” (Rupert)

Here Rupert indicates the struggle TMEYP faced in managing anxiety about potential parental attitudes while exploring their gender identity. It also illustrates the importance of maintaining family bonds; by downplaying his parents’ homophobia Rupert is able to speak to his discomfort at his parent’s reaction, but concurrently maintain their emotional bond.

“I always had a get out of jail plan”

Figure 1

Rupert’s representation of clothing as armour



Rupert explained “It’s almost like my, like armour … And like, I have felt like threatened. Like, I've been hate crimed in the past. And when I wear this, it's almost like it makes me feel safer.”

The need to plan coming out was linked to universal concerns regarding societal and parental reactions, whereas those with a British parent seemed to have lesser concerns about being disowned, “*I wasn’t worried in the same way as some of my mates”* (Sonic), TMEYP tended to prepare for estrangement, perhaps due to experiencing transphobia in wider society or from prior experiences with family:

> “I thought I was gonna get kicked out. I thought I was gonna get sent to Iran. My friends made a plan of like, OK, like you can stay at ours. It wasn't even like, ohh, what if, like, like they bug out or what if they, get angry or kick you out? It was under the assumption that it was going to happen cause my mum had never spoken about like LGBT people or LGBT anything before.” (Jin)

Perhaps this lack of discussion could indicate how being LGBT felt entirely outside of Jin's familial culture, but also illustrates how testing the waters helped participants feel less vulnerable.

Participants with stronger familial links to heritage cultures demonstrated that these fears of estrangement may be justified:

> "Genuinely, when I first came out to my parents, they spoke about sending me to an all-girls boarding school in Ghana. They spoke about sending me to places that would make me understand to be a girl, which to me as a kid sounded straight up just like conversion therapy" (Isaac)

As reported by Isaac, it appeared a "*get out of jail plan*" was a necessary component when coming out. Furthermore, this indicated, as seen in the next theme, that for some participants the need to maintain family relationships, reputations and personal safety may prohibit coming out.

“It’s not safe” vs “It’s cool, whatever”: The impact of cultural norms

Figure 2

Jin’s photo representing cultural superstition against the ‘evil eye’

“So, that [photo], because it was kind of like a cultural superstition pretty much and, I’ve had some people kind of think that it’s to do with like “ohh, there’s like a bad energy attached to you.” (Jin)

Respondents’ ability to come out appeared greatly influenced by cultural familiarity with the idea of being transgender, with half responding they felt unable to be out in all areas of their life due to fears for safety, relationships or family reputation. Some understood this as postponing rather than concealing, which was considered in combination with testing the waters:

> “I have dropped hints towards [my dad]… when I was younger. I did say, well I didn't explicitly say I am dating a woman and he just kind of aired that … And … when I was younger I did like contemplate my gender identity. I … wanted to see how he would feel about that. And he was like “Ohh yes. Like people get confused, neurodivergent people get confused really easily about that.”” (North)

Isaac expressed the pain of being cut off from a part of his identity by living in his new gender explaining that he has never officially come out in Ghana, since even presenting in a non-gender conforming way raised safety concerns:

> "My dad has told me that … he doesn't think it's safe for me at the moment with how Ghana feels towards trans people, which is very sad because I do recently wanna go back, you know, like I wanna show my boyfriend like my culture … I wanna go back and do all the things that I did when I was a child while my parents are still around to do it with me. But I don't think, you know, if my dad saying it's not safe, it's not safe."

By contrast, Jin expressed supressing his identity as manageable:

> "My mum had to reintroduce me as like my dead name and like … a woman, basically. And it kind of was awkward. But like, now I feel confident enough where I see it's kind of like putting on a mask almost. But I know that will change like when I start medically transitioning, it's kind of like because I still look how I looked when I was little" (Jin)

While Jin reported that this concealment currently felt manageable, he feared future difficulties when he transitioned fully. Thus, for some participants, to maintain family reputations, relationships and safety it may not be possible to be out in all social arenas.

By contrast, those whose parents and communities were most comfortable with TMEYP's coming out had experience of queerness, "*because my mum's queer … the whole gender being queer as well didn't seem that surprising"* (North) or were part of the family that identified as white or British *"my mum … was basically just like, cool, whatever"* (Orlando). Rupert also identified that by coming out, he had opened up possibilities for his sister. Rupert

explained: *"She didn't even need to come out. She just like sort of was herself. And like gradually changed pronouns. Whereas with me, it was more like I felt like it was more like a realisation."*

Figure 3

North's representation of graffiti as a representation for being trans

"[the graffiti] has the moon in the background … in Greek mythology, I always liked the goddess Artemis … because I was like "Ohh. You don't have to get married to a man, that's crazy…I never knew that people could be that different." (North)

Some TMEYP indicated the impact of visibility and cultural acceptance on coming out in their multiple cultures. North's story particularly highlighted how participants could be juggling myriad cultural narratives, opinions and coming out strategies within a separated family unit, with his mother's acceptance contrasted to his father's implications of discomfort.

Navigating the aftermath of coming out

TMEYP managed a variety of cultural influences and impacts, ranging from a desire to adopt typically Western values of self-authenticity, potentially navigating heritage cultures of difference, to their experience of erasure in supportive spaces for TP. As such TMEYP searched for support in alternative planes.

“I found my people”

All TMEYP reported the importance of supportive friendships, particularly describing the *“unconditional support*” they received from those that shared transgender and or racialised identities due to experiencing “*the same hardships…the same exclusions*” (Isaac).

Figure 4

Representations of symbolic tokens of friendship

Jin’s binder was a gift from a friend and Sonic’s friend drew a Xmas card symbolising their friendship.

As explained by Jin:

> “So one of the photos was a photo of my binder. And it's like specifically the one that one of my friends gave me because … my family…they weren't too happy, basically... So

> that binder was the first one that I got following my mum not getting me one from my friend."

As highlighted previously, friends could provide safety plans as well as offering support simply by sharing an identity, so TMEYP felt less isolated:

> "Even knowing that a person is existing as a queer Iranian is still really helpful" (Orlando)

This theme seemed to highlight the importance of alternative communities in the face of imagined or real hostilities from heritage and mainstream British culture.

"I'm very glad that I have this culture that has my back"

Figure 5

Representation of the comfort found from aspects of culture for Orlando (literature about LGBT people in Iran) and Zoroastrian religion (Jin)

In searching for support, interviewees commonly found that aspects of their cultural heritage could provide a bedrock from which they could gain strength and self-confidence. As described by Jin:

> "The necklace is the symbol of … Zoroastrianism …and that's kind of like what I'm going forward facing a lot of like my principles on …So, the [wing] that's facing forward is done specifically to show that you need to be moving forward … [and] tied into what my mum was also telling me, and … the staff from my high school where when, I was getting bullied and like when I was like facing like some discrimination ... One of the biggest things that was told to me was that, like, get used to it and also I can't keep being hung up on every small thing."

Many participants utilised literature and cultural objects to research their cultures, finding solace in their identities as TMEYP:

> "Queer Jewish history is so important. So, I sort of discovered that on my own terms in like, Leslie Feinberg and Stone Butch Blues… it helps me like feel less confined about expressing my gender… you're allowed to be a grey area, you're allowed to not label yourself." (Rupert)

Orlando also highlighted that by doing his own learning he could build his own bridge back to his culture, without the need for family relationships:

> "I knew from my mum that my dad's ancestor were Bedouin … and usually I kind of I had this understanding that the only way that I would be able to learn about that was if I

> played along with my dad for a bit and got answers out of him. Whereas I've just been able to learn about it myself being at university"

This extract echoed Jin's use of cultural artefacts in the face of unsupportive relationships.

By contrast North pointed to how culture could provide an ambivalent support:

> "I am like assigned female at birth black person. And there's certain like messaging, so like being like a strong black woman and kind of trying not to be angry and stuff like that…It's given me quite, I'd say diplomatic skills." (North)

While North highlighted how this helped him manage in the face of anger, he also demonstrated a double bind whereby he may have felt unable to express himself for fear of transgressing socially acceptable norms and thus continued conforming to female gendered expectations. Therefore, using culture as a comfort may also necessitate conforming to discomforting norms.

"I don't know what degree of understanding she had about that": Cultural assumptions and obstacles

Remoteness from heritage cultures could lead TMEYP to make assumptions regarding family acceptance due to language barriers and geographical distance, resulting in confusion when TMEYP came out:

> "I expected the Italian side to be more annoyed they're Roman Catholic … I was so surprised they didn't care" (Isaac)

> "I was told … don't … tell [your grandparents] they're very old fashioned, they're very strict, … but … it was like they just kind of like didn't care.… But that's what had me really concerned as well … because I hear a lot of things about Iran, but … when I speak

> to a lot of the people from there or from my own family… it's a lot different as well, basically. (Jin)

Language difficulties were noted by some participants when experiencing misgendering and the difficulty of communicating one's gender identity to others:

> "My mum she can barely do pronouns anyway… I think it's cause of how words are gendered in Italian…even to this day, she doesn't use my pronounces perfectly … I used to care… and then I stopped caring because I realised that that wasn't the issue" (Isaac)

> "The only other person I've come out to directly was my sister.... And her English is fantastic, but not enough to explain what transgender means really. So, I was just like, I'm your brother now. My name is Orlando. She was like, okay. So, I don't know, like, what degree of understanding she had or has about that." (Orlando)

While TMEYP expressed hope that they would be accepted, language barriers could leave these hopes unrealised. Particularly when misgendered, TMEYP may have felt invalidated, stigmatised and reminded of transphobia.

"That's why I'm glad I came out because … I can be my true self"': Authenticity and self-acceptance

All interviewees spoke about the importance of living authentically. This included presenting in their preferred gender and being honest with others as to their reasons for coming out. As individuality and authenticity are arguably Western cultural values, this may indicate TMEYP's connections to British culture:

> "It's an important part of me…And… I don't want to…lie to people" (Rupert)

> "Yeah, it sort of felt like … I was lying to people because, like some of my sort of closest friends knew when I was sort of trying to express myself a bit more like masculinely and stuff …but I still haven't told like my mum who's supposed to be like the person you go to about things like that." (Sonic)

This desire to live authentically seemed an incredibly powerful driver for participants, as they were willing to come out despite their concerns for familial and cultural rejection and disconnection.

For others, the values of authenticity and individuality were used to manage their gender identity and coming out:

> "I've always been… I was always quite an independent child, so I feel like just being as like headstrong as I was sort of helped me, like yeah realise sooner" (Sonic)

Figure 6:

Isaac's photo representing his resilience

"What about me has helped me to do this? Honestly, just my strength and perseverance. And also I'm very stubborn. I wasn't allowed to have binders. I chose to get them … for the first, like couple years, I was just doing it on my own … like no matter what, I just found a way cause my mum found them and took them away. I just got more." (Isaac)

Living authentically also appeared to be subject to change depending on the principal concerns of participants' lives. At the time of coming out gender predominated, but subsequently culture and ethnicity may have come to the forefront:

Figure 7

Representations of Orlando's intersectional identities

Orlando highlighted how family members could be at different stages of understanding, so although "*in the photo I've kind of chosen one over the other because you can't see the lion in the Iranian flag*", this may indicate that actually Orlando's focus was now on his Iranian identity, particularly when considering his frustration at his father's focus on his transgender identity:

> "In the last few years … gender isn't something that I do like all day, every day, I then thought more about like, my racial identity and everything. And I want to talk to [my dad] about like, the history of our family, or like, what he believes in terms of like Islam.... But I can't talk to him about any of that. Because it's always like, why has your mum tricked you into thinking you're a man or, like, stuff like that?"

“A lot of queer spaces are not accepting of that kind of thing”: Navigating intersectional invisibility

Interviewees reported difficult experiences with intersectional identities. Some participants evaluated familial beliefs about ethnicity to gauge the safety of coming out as transgender:

> “I'd draw myself with a brown crayon. And [my grandmother would] be like, "No, you're white". So, I've always had that like, kind of racist influence… my mum told her for me, because we both knew that … I was quite vulnerable emotionally and was not like, yeah, gonna deal with that. From what my mom told me, her response was, “Why can't she just be a lesbian?”” (Orlando)

A lack of understanding and safety was also experienced from within the transgender community, engendering feelings of sadness and disappointment; some reported there was no place they felt accepted:

> “Being trans and being mixed … no matter which community I go to, there's something there that doesn't like me. I can go to the black community - half of them think I'm confused. I can go to the gay community… and half of them are transphobic as hell, and the other half of them are racist as hell. You go to the trans community and you get the same thing. Half of them are still somehow transphobic, and the other half of them are still somehow racist” (Isaac)

A lack of understanding and representation was seen by some participants to imply that being transgender was not for ethnically minoritised people, diminishing the purpose of safe spaces:

> "I didn't have a thought like that coming out might be different for me … I've seen resources now about, like, LGBT identity and Islam... So rather than the whole narrative of like, you have to completely agree to everything and drive me to top surgery maybe just not understanding but accepting you is good enough … and not have to completely sacrifice your family for that. Like, I think I would have benefited from that kind of discussion where it's like, do you want to burn the one bridge that you have to your culture?" (Orlando)

Figure 8

Isaac's representation of *the erasure of brown people*

"[The Queer community] very much did not understand ... which …is why in that photo I tucked away the bit that has like the brown and the black stripe. It's just the idea that like, it's a very whitewashed community."

Isaac's use of a carved monkey depicting 'see no evil' seems to indicate a double meaning; by turning a blind eye they are ignoring the different needs of ethnically minoritised transgender people and further ignoring the harm that they are causing to a minority within a minority. Both extracts emphasise the pain and difficulty of not being understood or accepted in their intersectional identities or the feeling that TMEYP may need to minimise or erase parts of their identities to gain acceptance.

“It’s a learning curve”

Participants described change in family relationships; from families coming to terms with TMEYP’s new gender identities and their coming to terms with difficult family experiences. Additionally, participants described changes in gender fluidity where they felt able to embrace their birth gender without feeling this invalidated their gender presentation.

“And then she kind of slowly started coming around to it”: Families adjusting to a new gender identity

Participants described familial adjustment to their gender, ranging from mourning, “*They were mourning me before I even did anything that was a real change*” (Isaac), to treating their identity as a phase:

> “She sort of like questioned whether or not it might just be a sort of like phase that I'm going through. But yeah, but she never suggested that she wouldn't, like, support me throughout anything” (Sonic)

As experienced by participants, this period could feel invalidating and unsupportive, with TMEYP continuously needing to navigate parental reactions:

> “And she kind of, like, went on like a whole tangent about like, it's a phase… she just kind of was trying to say anything to get me to reconsider or something and then … sometimes … it would be like I was telling her again for the first time. She'd like, conveniently forget that I ever did come out to her.” (Jin)

North and Rupert also reported the effort required to manage transphobic media that could have influenced their parents:

> "People would say like TERF[1] stuff to [my mum]. And she'd be like, yeah, I agree with that. And I had to educate her on it... But it's like, there were points where I could see, the media and what her friends thought, sort of getting to her?" (Rupert)

This theme indicated that families could gradually adjust to a change in a TMEYP's gender identity. However, it also demonstrates the pain of transphobic messages and the recurrent need to manage the education of their families.

Coming to terms: reparation and forgiveness

Figure 9

Rupert's representation of family

Rupert's description of his photo seems to indicate the difficulties he has experienced with his family but also his forgiveness "[the jelly snakes] are like, dusty, they're on the ground. But they're still … stuck together. And that reminds me of like, my family and my community. Like in the sense of like, we've been through a lot. But like we have each other at the end of the day"

1 TERF – Trans-exclusionary radical feminist, is a term for cisgender women who do not accept transgender women as women (Worthen, 2022)

Participants recognised that changing gender could be very challenging for parents to process, and seemed to have come to accept their parents' experiences:

> "I think it's a learning curve when it's someone you're close to…but … it was very polarising from the start" (Rupert)

It appeared that some TMEYP had forgiven difficult family reactions:

> "I actually thought my brothers were probably going to have my back …They thought it was funny to make fun of me. I mean, it, kind of was funny. Like in hindsight it was kind of funny. But like at the time it wasn't cause like, that's like when I needed the most support" (Jin)

Jin appears to be trying to minimise the pain he experienced in laughing off the implication of bullying by his brothers, in order to retain their relationship.

For those with intersectional identities, their family may be the only place they feel seen and represented:

> "My community quite literally is my family. No one else understands what it is like to be mixed race the way that me and my siblings do… Only we know - it's so specific to us" (Isaac)

This coming to terms seemed predicated on receiving attempted familial reparation, thus Orlando was unable to forgive his father, who had not tried to repair their relationship:

> "[Dad's] response is not because he's a Muslim, or because he's an Arab or whatever. It's just because he's an arsehole"

“I’m more comfortable within myself now”: Expressing oneself outside of gender binaries

Figure 10

Images indicating comfort in gender flexibility

Sonic indicated no longer feeling a need to bind as illustrated by the difference in wear between his binders as well as the celebratory pride colours of his newer binder. Rupert felt comfortable expressing masculinity and femininity by contrasting lipstick with a sailor hat “[it’s] masculine but like gay and not ashamed of it” and Orlando embraced jewellery that he had packed away when he started to transition.

Five participants indicated an ability to express their gender more fluidly after an initial suppression of their birth gender. Some also expressed how this was facilitated by an exploration of their heritage cultures:

> “For the first few years after I came out, I kind of was like I cannot show any sort of femininity at all... I… just completely like suppressing all of that and then just being, as masculine as possible because I feel like that's the only way that I will be validated, but, reverting and like going back into like my original culture really helped me to kind of be like … If I like other stuff, it doesn't mean that I'm not a man, and that really kind of like helped me move forward”. (Jin)

Through these descriptions, participants seemed to express joy and excitement regarding their ability and desire to present their gender more fluidly:

> “It's like the freedom to express … unconventional, in a conventional way. I'm really into this idea of like, fucking with traditions, like doing the traditional things, but like, in gender bent ways, more queer ways.” (Rupert)

It appeared that by exploring their cultural histories and finding alternative resources, TMEYP were free to explore gender in a way that felt comfortable for them, rather than as dictated by Western society.

> “In a lot of places in Africa gender did not exist. That's one thing I do know… I started viewing gender as less binary when I realised that I was never going to be this English culture’s idea of what's a male or a female should be, and at that point I was like ohh, but if I'm gonna be no one's ideal of what it should be … I should just be my own thing.” (Isaac)

Discussion

This research aimed to explore how TMEYP experienced coming out within their families and heritage communities, the impact of these experiences on their identities and the strategies they used to manage.

Summary of key findings

These findings highlighted coming out as a crucial step in identity development and the social nature of disclosure (Gagne et al., 1997; Bockting & Coleman, 2016). TMEYP evaluated their ability to come out based on the wider socio-political landscape and family interactions, incorporating this information into feedback loops regarding the safety in disclosing to immediate and extended family (Chaudoir & Fisher, 2010). TMEYP also indicated the importance of close social relationships through their reliance on friends and supportive communities when coming out, and their reappraisal of family negative reactions after repair attempts (Cooper, 2002; Lewis, 2000). As seen in the data, identity formation appears uniquely complicated for those negotiating intersectional identities. Finally, while managing cultural difference could create unique challenges it was also viewed as a source of strength.

Coming Out Safely

TMEYP were cognisant of the potential dangers of coming out as transgender, referencing stigmatising political, social and religious narratives. This appeared to influence their belief that coming out needed to be managed carefully and their concern that their identity would not be accepted. This finding aligns with the disclosure process model (Chaudoir & Fisher, 2010), with TMEYP avoiding disclosure to maintain emotional or physical safety by presenting

as their birth gender with cultural groups (Jin), cutting off contact with their community (Isaac) or not disclosing to maintain a paternal relationship (North).

Initial parental invalidation of TMEYP's transgender identity could also impact on well-being by increasing psychological distress. This may indicate an additional risk factor for TP in comparison to cisgender people (Krause et al., 2003; Shenk & Fruzetti, 2011; Warren et al., 2016). By contrast DeWall et al (2011) found that "social rejection produces strong positive emotional responses at an implicit level, possibly as a means of warding off later distress" (p. 258). This may be demonstrated by TMEYP's ability to reflect kindly on their parents' initial negative reactions and take pleasure in their current gender expression.

Coping mechanisms

TMEYP's expectation of rejection influenced their coming out journey. This can be understood as a particular proximal stressor for transgender people, impacting on their health and well-being (Rood et al., 2016). To manage the challenge of social (distal) and proximal stress, TMEYP reported coping mechanisms including heightened self-reliance, searching for people with common experiences and looking for support within heritage cultures. In seeking supportive communities, participants highlighted a human need for connection and the positive well-being they experienced by being understood by others with similar experiences (Carvallo & Gabriel, 2006). Furthermore, all participants spoke about the importance of having friends in- and outside of the transgender community, which appears to correspond with findings associating greater social support with lower depression and anxiety (Budge et al., 2014).

While becoming more independent is a normal process in the transition to adulthood, half the respondents reported feeling they had always been this way, with independence supporting these TMEYP to manage being transgender and coming out. TMEYP's independence or self-

reliance in the face of stigma and their openness to support from those with similar characteristics to them could be interpreted as a coping mechanism related to their previous negative experiences (Bry et al., 2017; Lenkens et al., 2019). These mechanisms align with research indicating the particular importance of family and peer support and identity pride as protective factors for transgender people (Bockting, 2014).

The Cultural Context of Coming Out

Findings highlighted the challenges of coming out while balancing competing cultural norms, and appeared to align with research and models regarding intersectional identity development. As per Cerezo et al.'s (2019) model, participants negotiated family and cultural expectations, found space to explore their identities (even if this included taking time away from family), spoke about the need to negotiate their insider and outsider status and finally coming to a place of comfort with their identity even in the face of resistance. The data also indicated some family members themselves negotiating social identity complexity as TMEYP's coming out appeared to introduce a stressor which caused some family members to move to another form of identity management, such as coping by retreating to their heritage culture (Roccas and Brewer, 2002). This could privilege transphobic social norms with potentially negative consequences for TMEYP.

Additional challenges were encountered by TMEYP who needed to negotiate cultural differences, as their remoteness from cultural values and traditions and their feeling like outsiders, may lead them to experience these cultures as a stereotypical monolith (Moftizadeh et al., 2022; Hernandez-Ramdwar, 2016). Thus, their attempts to embrace their heritage cultures through literature and artefacts may act as coping mechanisms for damaged relationships and create an indelible link to their cultures.

It is also important to highlight that intersectional invisibility within the transgender community could lead some TMEYP to describe feeling excluded (Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008). TMEYP may feel unable to follow the normative Western model of coming out and feel misunderstood in purportedly supportive spaces. This seemed to be reflected in TMEYP's search for those who shared their intersectional identities (Hennekam & Dumazert, 2023).

Coming out and embracing gender flexibly

While much literature on coming out as transgender focusses on gender binaries, (Brumbaugh-Johnson & Hull, 2019; Pusch, 2005; Kade, 2021), the majority of TMEYP in this study reported feeling able to present gender fluidly. As explored by Marques (2019), coming out is "highly contextualised according to the individual's social positionings in time and space" (p. 1288). Thus, these stories may reflect changes to how gender identity or gender presentation are understood and wider society's greater understanding of gender fluidity.

Strengths and limitations

IPA and photo elicitation allowed for the collection of rich data and so appeared an appropriate method for exploring the research. However, while all participants spoke English as their first language, the data may have included culturally embedded meanings outside of the researcher's understandings (Boden & Eatough, 2014).

The study could also have been improved by a larger sample size. Unfortunately, given the current social climate, TMEYP may have found it challenging to trust an unknown person outside of their community. As all participants were recruited through a research consultant with several respondents reporting neurodivergence, this may have resulted in the study focussing on the experiences of a particular subset of transgender young people.

Clinical implications

The study findings suggest that TMEYP report a coming out experience highly influenced by their heritage cultures, which may create barriers as well as provide strength. Consideration of the idea that being transgender may be conceptualised differently in different cultures could be helpful in providing appropriate support, as staff using a Western lens may make unhelpful assumptions. Thus, increased training for staff working with TMEYP on impacts of intersectionality and experiences of minority stress could be helpful and has been noted to improve positive treatment outcomes (Depauw et al., 2022).

Findings seem to suggest that while it is positive for TMEYP to live authentically, it can leave them uncertain of emotional, financial and physical safety. Social services may need to consider further safety planning and resources for these young people and be sensitive regarding communications with unsupportive families. Further, upcoming guidance regarding schools sharing a YP's transgender identity may be particularly risky for TMEYP (Department for Education, 2023). To maintain safety therefore, this conversation should be considered in collaboration with the TMEYP.

Lastly, increased support for families regarding adjusting to their child transitioning appears crucial. While the focus is rightly on the TMEYP, this seems to ignore the traumatic impact of familial rejection (Fahs, 2021). Family therapy and additional educational resources for families could be considered within schools and services to educate families on gender minorities as well as enable both families and YP to manage change (Morgan et al., 2022).

Future research

The findings suggested that coming out may be characteristically unique for TMEYP. Further research could investigate challenges TMEYP experience when accessing services, for example they have lower rates of referral to gender identity services in comparison to their white peers (de Graaf, 2018; Bradby, 2010). Further studies could also explore the experiences of non-binary individuals from ethnic minorities as they may encounter systems and information biased to binary understandings of gender diversity (Morgan et al., 2023).

As participants in the current study represented a wide range of cultural backgrounds, research concentrating on participants from one cultural background or religion may be helpful to understand the experiences of specific groups. Additionally, half the participants had a British or Commonwealth parent. Concentrating on the experiences of those who feel less assimilated may uncover different results. Furthermore, as all respondents were assigned-female-at-birth, the findings may not be transferable to people assigned-male-at-birth and further studies exploring their experiences are needed. Finally, as noted, many participants reported being neurodivergent as part of their initial introduction; studies unpacking differences between neurodivergent and neurotypical TP from minoritised groups could be helpful to consider potential support mechanisms.

Conclusion

This study explored the coming out experience of TMEYP. Findings were consistent with literature regarding disclosure processes and the impact of positive and negative feedback on further disclosure. Results also aligned with studies investigating the complexity of intersectional identity formation. Findings indicated that coming out was an anxiety-provoking process, negatively impacted by cultural ruptures but supported by heritage artefacts standing in for

losses. Research incorporating male-to-female TP, neurodivergent and selected groupings of transgender YP is recommended, and recommendations are made to increase cultural sensitivity for services.

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Section C

Appendices and Supporting Information

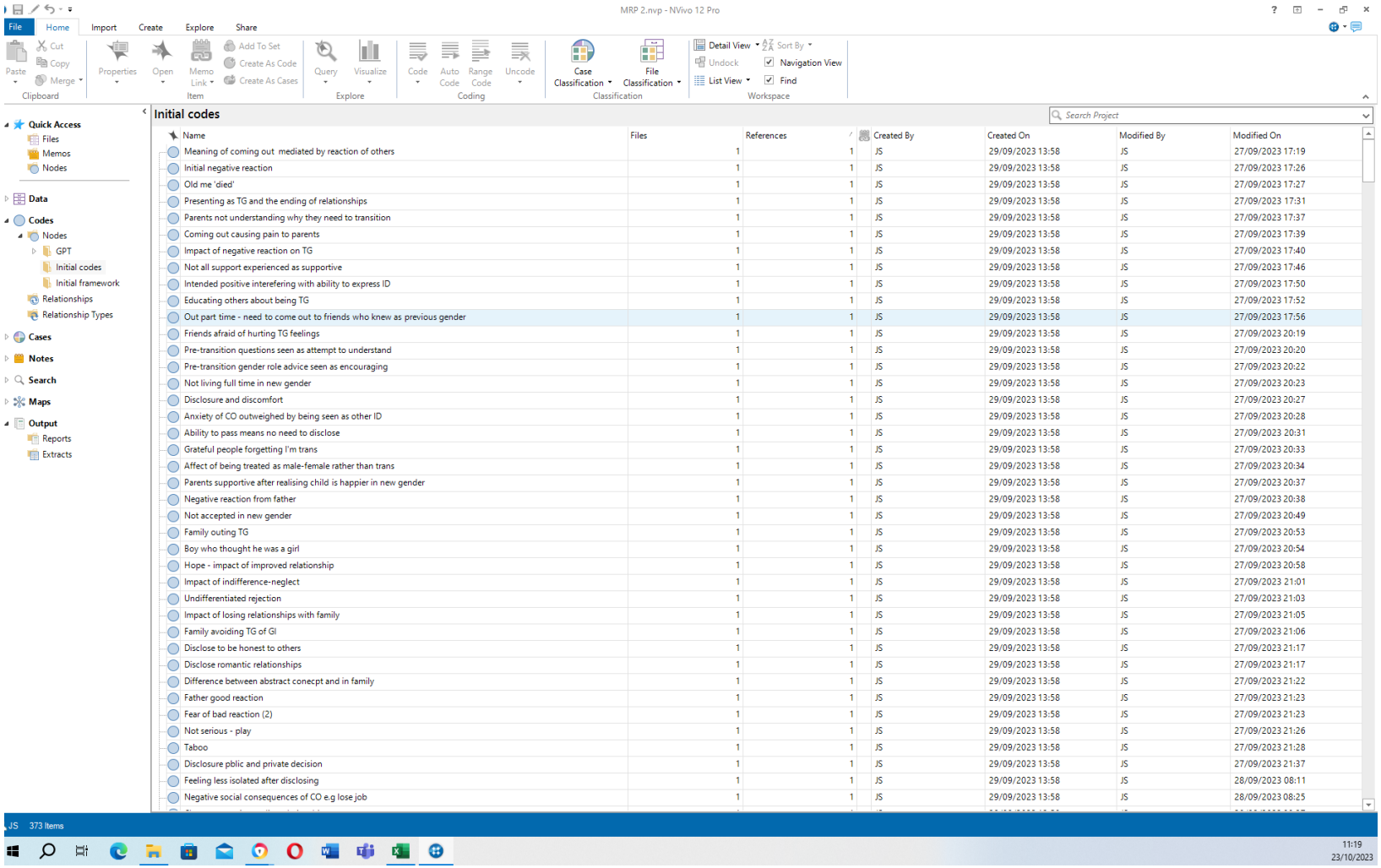
Appendix A – CASP rankings for included research papers

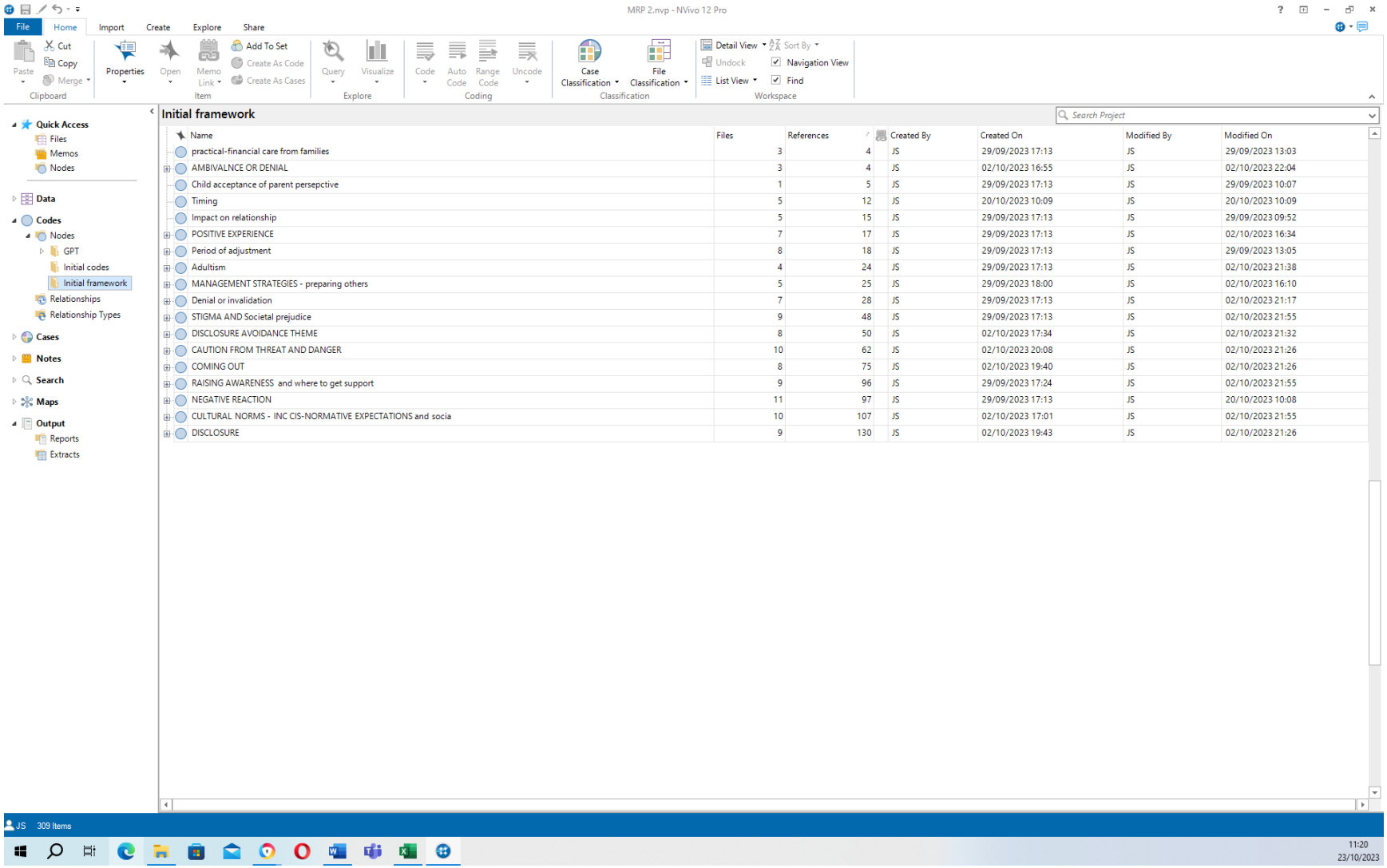
	Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research?	Is a qualitative methodology appropriate?	Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research?	Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?	Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue?	Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately considered?	Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?	Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?	Is there a clear statement of findings?	How valuable is the research?
Bethea, McCollum (2013) The Disclosure Experiences of Male-to-Female Transgender Individuals: A Systems Theory Perspective	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Brumbaugh-Johnson, Hull (2019) Coming Out as Transgender: Navigating the Social Implications of a Transgender Identity	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Can't tell	Yes	Yes	Yes
Fahs (2021) The Coming Out Process for Assigned-Female-at-Birth Transgender and Non-Binary Teenagers: Negotiating Multiple Identities, Parental Responses, and Early Transitions in Three Case Studies	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Can't tell	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Galupo, Krum, Hagen, Gonzalez & Bauerband (2014) Disclosure of Transgender Identity and Status in the Context of Friendship	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Can't tell	Yes	Yes	Yes

Kade (2021) “Hey, by the Way, I’m Transgender”: Transgender Disclosures as Coming Out Stories in Social Contexts among Trans Men"	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Koken, Bimbi, Parsons (2009) Experiences of Familial Acceptance-Rejection Among Transwomen of Color	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Marques (2020) Telling stories; telling transgender coming out stories from the UK and Portugal	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Can't tell	Yes	Yes	Yes
Morgan, Raab, Lin, Strauss, Perry (2022) Knowledge is Power: Trans Young People’s Perceptions of Parental Reactions to Their Gender Identity, and Perceived Barriers and Facilitators to Parental Support	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Pusch (2005) Objects of Curiosity: Transgender College Students' Perceptions of the Reactions of Others	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Can't tell	Yes	Yes	No
Tan & Weisbart (2023) "‘I’m me, and I’m Chinese and also transgender’: coming out complexities of Asian-Canadian transgender youth"	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Zimman (2009) "'The other kind of coming out': Transgender people and the coming out narrative genre"	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Can't tell	Yes	Yes	Yes

Appendix B – Nvivo coding

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File
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Clipboard
Properties
Open
Memo Link
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Query
Visualize
Explore
Code
Auto Code
Range Code
Uncode
Coding
Case Classification
File Classification
Classification
Detail View
Undock
List View
Sort By
Navigation View
Find
Workspace
Quick Access
Files
Memos
Nodes
Data
Codes
Nodes
GPT
Initial codes
Initial framework
Relationships
Relationship Types
Cases
Notes
Search
Maps
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Reports
Extracts
Initial framework
Search Project
Name
Files
References
Created By
Created On
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Modified On
practical-financial care from families 3 4 JS 29/09/2023 17:13 JS 29/09/2023 13:03
AMBIVALNCE OR DENIAL 3 4 JS 02/10/2023 16:55 JS 02/10/2023 22:04
Child acceptance of parent persepctive 1 5 JS 29/09/2023 17:13 JS 29/09/2023 10:07
Timing 5 12 JS 20/10/2023 10:09 JS 20/10/2023 10:09
Impact on relationship 5 15 JS 29/09/2023 17:13 JS 29/09/2023 09:52
POSITIVE EXPERIENCE 7 17 JS 29/09/2023 17:13 JS 02/10/2023 16:34
Period of adjustment 8 18 JS 29/09/2023 17:13 JS 29/09/2023 13:05
Adultism 4 24 JS 29/09/2023 17:13 JS 02/10/2023 21:38
MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES - preparing others 5 25 JS 29/09/2023 18:00 JS 02/10/2023 16:10
Denial or invalidation 7 28 JS 29/09/2023 17:13 JS 02/10/2023 21:17
STIGMA AND Societal prejudice 9 48 JS 29/09/2023 17:13 JS 02/10/2023 21:55
DISCLOSURE AVOIDANCE THEME 8 50 JS 02/10/2023 17:34 JS 02/10/2023 21:32
CAUTION FROM THREAT AND DANGER 10 62 JS 02/10/2023 20:08 JS 02/10/2023 21:26
COMING OUT 8 75 JS 02/10/2023 19:40 JS 02/10/2023 21:26
RAISING AWARENESS and where to get support 9 96 JS 29/09/2023 17:24 JS 02/10/2023 21:55
NEGATIVE REACTION 11 97 JS 29/09/2023 17:13 JS 20/10/2023 10:08
CULTURAL NORMS - INC CIS-NORMATIVE EXPECTATIONS and socia 10 107 JS 02/10/2023 17:01 JS 02/10/2023 21:55
DISCLOSURE 9 130 JS 02/10/2023 19:43 JS 02/10/2023 21:26
JS 309 Items
11:20
23/10/2023

Appendix C – Representation of analytic themes in papers

	Power and privilege		Managing stigma		Weathering family and social reactions				The role of support systems				Cultural context and attitudes	
	Coming out is shaped by power	The privilege of passing	Negotiating safety	Coming out as a negotiation with family	Feeling lost due to the unpredictability of responses	A sense of relief when one is accepted	The invalidation of negative responses	Shouldering the mental load while others adjust	Peers as an alternative to family support	Support networks and advocacy support against social isolation	Dependency on family support	Ambivalent experiences with professional support	Societal gender expectations	The added complexity of an intersectional identity
Bethea & McCollum, (2013)	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Brumbaugh-Johnson & Hull, (2019)	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No
Fahs, (2021)	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Galupo et al., (2014)	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No
Kade, (2021)	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No
Koken et al., (2009)	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No

Marques, (2020)	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Morgan et al., (2022)	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Pusch, (2005)	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Tan & Weisbart , (2023)	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Zimman, (2009)	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No

Appendix D: Recruitment poster

Appendix E: Interview schedule

SEMI STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE –

Intro: My name is Jenna and my pronouns are she/her. We're here today to talk about your coming out experience to your family and communities of origin during adolescence. I want to let you know that if you don't want to answer a question, please let me know, equally if you like to skip a question and come back it later we can also do that. Before we start, I want to check how you're feeling and if you have a person to check in with if this interview brings up any difficult feelings.

I'm going to start by asking you some questions to understand a bit more about you to help me understand your story. If you don't feel comfortable answering any of them, please let me know.

Please let me know if there is any language you would prefer me to use.

Demographics

- How old are you?
- How do you define your gender identity – what words do you use?
- What was your sex assigned at birth?
- What are your pronouns and have they changed over time?
- Have you socially transitioned and what has the involved for you so far?
- Have you medically transitioned and what has the involved for you so far?
- How do you define your ethnicity – what words are important to you?
- How do you define your sexuality - what words do you use?
- What is your living situation?
- Name for the study

Interview questions

1. Could you please tell me about the photographs you have provided and explain why you chose to take them?

   Prompt: Why did you take these pictures, what do they show, did anyone else influence the pictures you took, why is x (shown in picture) an important aspect of your experience?

2. How would you describe your community of origin or background?

   Prompt: What religion, tribe, area? generation are you/your parents, how long have they lived in the UK, where you born in the UK?

3. Do you feel connected to your background or communities of origin?

   Prompt: Are there other communities you feel connected to?

4. Can you tell me about coming out in different communities of origin you belong to?

   Prompt: How did this make you feel? Has this changed over time?

5. How and why did you decide to come out to someone in your community of origin?

Prompt: How did you make this choice? Were there differences in your approach to some groups over others?

6. What did you expect to happen when you came out to your communities of origin?

How are you doing – would you like a little break?

7. How and why did you decide to come out to someone in your family?

8. Can you describe your experience of coming out to your family?
Prompt: How did this make you feel? Has this changed over time?

9. What did you expect to happen when you came out to your family?

10. How do you think your identity has impacted on your ability to come out?
Prompt: Do you get resources from aspects of your identity/background

11. How has you think your identity has been shaped by your experience of coming out to your family and communities of origin?
Has anything changed in how you see yourself?

12. What has helped you to manage challenges when coming out to your family and you community of origin?

13. Is there anything else you would like to share with me about your experience of coming out during adolescence?

Debrief – do you have any reflections on the research, interview or process of taking part, I have a list of relevant organisations that you may want to have a look at

What are you doing for the rest of the day if you need to take care of yourself

Appendix F: Salomons Ethical Approval

Ethics ETH2223-0061: Ms Jenna Sichel

Date Created	20 Oct 2022
Date Submitted	04 Jan 2023
Researcher	Ms Jenna Sichel
Student ID	100040028
Category	Postgraduate Research Student
Project	Doctoral Research Project
Faculty	Faculty of Science, Engineering and Social Sciences
School	Salomons Institute of Applied Psychology
Current status	Approved

Ethics application

Personal details

Applicant name
Ms Jenna Sichel

Status
Postgraduate Researcher

Faculty
Faculty of Science, Engineering and Social Sciences

School/Team
Salomons Institute of Applied Psychology

CCCU email address
j.sichel1461@canterbury.ac.uk

Are you the principal researcher?
Yes

Course Type
Doctorate In Clinical Psychology

Study level
Doctorate In Clinical Psychology

Name of CCCU academic supervisor/tutor

Email address of CCCU supervisor/tutor

Professional position
Tamara Leeuwerik; tamara.leeuwerik@canterbury.ac.uk; Senior Lecturer - Research

Appendix G: Participant and photography information sheets

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Project Title: How do ethnic minority transgender young adults of experience 'coming out' during adolescence?

Lead Researcher: Jenna Sichel (Trainee Clinical Psychologist; js1461@canterbury.ac.uk)
Co-researchers: Dr Kate Whitaker (Clinical Psychologist, GIDS; kwhitaker@tavi-port.nhs.uk) and Patience Akande (Highly Specialist Family Therapist, GIDS; pakande@tavi-port.nhs.uk)
Academic supervisor: Dr Tamara Leeuwerik (Senior Research Lecturer at Canterbury Christ Church University; tamara.leeuwerik@canterbury.ac.uk)

My name is Jenna and I would like to invite you to take part in a research study being conducted at Canterbury Christ Church University. I am being supervised by Kate and Patience from the Gender Identity Development Service (GIDS) which is part of the Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust and Tamara from Canterbury Christ Church University (contact details above). This research is being undertaken as part of a doctoral training programme and is sponsored by Canterbury Christ Church University. Before you decide you need to understand why the research is being done and what it would involve for you. Please take time to read the following information carefully. Talk to others about the study if you wish. If anything is not clear or if you would like more information, please contact us (details above).

What is the purpose of the study?
The purpose of this study is to explore how transgender young adults from ethnic minorities have experienced coming out within their families and communities of origin during adolescence. This is an important topic to consider due to a societal context of racism, transphobia and identity formation and safety.

I plan to carry this out with an optional photo element as research has shown that photographs can help you explore your experiences. We will also have an interview which will be a conversation between you and me (Jenna), where you will be invited to talk about your photos and speak about your experiences of coming out during adolescence.

Who are you looking for to take part?
I am looking for around 10 young adults aged 18-25, who came out before age 18.

Do I have to take part?
Your participation is entirely voluntary, and you do not have to take part. If you decide to take part, you will be asked to sign a consent form. If you change your mind about taking part, you are free to do so at any time without giving a reason. You can also withdraw your data (for up to two weeks after it has been collected) by contacting the lead researcher (Jenna) or co-researcher (contact details above).

What will happen if I agree to take part?
You will be invited to a meeting to find out more about the optional photographic element of the study. I would like to invite you to take up to 5 photographs about your coming out experience. I would ask that you don't take photos of anyone's faces as this could identify them and breach their confidentiality. If you do not have a device to take photos you will be supplied one by the study. Once you have taken your photos you will be asked to email them/return the device to the lead researcher (Jenna). I will make contact with you to offer support and to also offer potential ideas if you find coming up with ideas difficult.

After you have taken your photos, a time for an interview session will be arranged with you. The interview will take place via a secure video platform.

On the interview day, I will invite you to complete a demographic questionnaire (e.g. age, ethnicity, gender identity). You will then meet with me for up to an hour for a conversation which will be recorded. This conversation will cover topics such as your photographs and your experience of coming out as a transgender person of colour. The recordings will be used to make a written transcript of the conversation, which will then be used to build an understanding of your and other participants' experiences. The recording of the interview will be kept for the duration of the study. Once the study has been completed the recording will be destroyed.

How will I use information about you?
The information used about you in the study will be your photographs, the information you give on the demographic information and your interview data. Your information will be kept securely on an encrypted device. If you consent to this, I may use photos you have taken or quotes from the interview in the write up of the report, or later in publications, however I will ensure that you could not be identified by this. You will have the opportunity to choose a different name for these quotes to be attached to if you would like.

Only involved researchers will be able to see your name or contact details. Your data will have a code number instead. I will keep all information about you safe and secure.

More detail is given about this in the section below titled "Will my data be kept confidential?".

Where can I find out more about how my information is used?
You can find out more about how I use your information

- at www.hra.nhs.uk/information-about-patients/
- by asking one of the research team (details above)

What are my choices about how my information is used?
Before and whilst the interview is ongoing, you can stop being part of the study at any time. You do not have to give any reason for this. Once the interview is completed, you are able to withdraw your data up to two weeks after the date of the interview. As this study involves looking at the interview transcript in detail, you will not be able to withdraw your data after this point.

What are the risks and disadvantages of taking part?
As the study involves being asked to think about a potentially emotional experience there is a chance that this may cause you some distress or upset.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?
I hope that the study will give a better understanding of how young people experience coming out and the support that professionals could provide to young people in the future.

While taking part in this study may not benefit you directly, it is possible that you will find it helpful to talk about your experiences.

What if I am unhappy or if there is a problem?

Complaints:
If you have a concern about any aspect of this study, you should speak with me (Jenna Sichel) or one of the other researchers (details given at the start of this information). If you are still unhappy or have a complaint which you feel you cannot come to us about then you should contact the Salomons Institute for Applied Psychology at Canterbury Christ Church University (Research Director: fergal.jones@canterbury.ac.uk).

Distress:
If you experience distress at any time throughout the interview, you can take a break or end the interview if needed. You may wish to make a supportive person aware of the interview so that they can offer you extra support on that day if you need it. If needed I can signpost you to help or recommend you contact your local NHS mental health service, LGBTQ+ groups, GP or attend A&E in an emergency.

Will my data be kept confidential?
All information obtained during the study will be kept confidential and if quotes or themes from the interviews are published, care will be taken to ensure it will not be identifiable as yours. All data will be anonymous.

Can I see the information you hold?
Under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 2018 you are entitled to request access to the personal data I hold. Data collected in this study may be held for up to 10 years.

Will the use of my data meet GDPR rules?
In the UK we follow the GDPR rules and have a law called the Data Protection Act. All research using patient data must follow UK laws and rules.

What will happen to my data at the end of the study?
The anonymised data taken for the study will be stored and may be used in further research studies that have been approved by the appropriate Ethics Committee. The data will be kept for a period of 10 years after which it will be destroyed.

Has this study been approved?
This study has been reviewed and approved by The Salomons Ethics Panel, Salomons Institute for Applied Psychology, Canterbury Christ Church University.

What if I want to ask questions not included in this information sheet?
Please raise any further questions you may have with the lead researcher or co-worker(s) on this study, they will be happy to answer any additional questions you may have (contact details on the first page).

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet and considering taking part in this study.

Photography Guidance Sheet

The following information is designed to help you when thinking about what photographs you wish to produce and share when taking part in this study, exploring your experience of coming out to your family and community during adolescence.

What am I being asked to do?

You are invited to take up to 5 photographs representing the following aspects of your experience:

- Your experience of coming out to members of your family
- Your experience of coming out to your communities of origin
- What about you has helped you to come out to your family and communities of origin?
- How you feel your coming out experience has shaped your identity?

We ask that these photos are ones you take for this project rather than ones you already have. You may take these photographs any time before the interview, using your own preferred device to do so (e.g., smartphone, tablet, digital camera etc.). A disposable camera will be provided if you do not have access to a device. You will then be invited to share the photographs you have taken electronically with the researchers before the interview via email or a secure online folder or return the disposable device 2 weeks before your interview. You will then be asked to discuss them as part of the interview.

What kinds of photographs can I take?

This process is led by you and is meant to help you share your perceptions of your experience of coming out using a visual method. You are therefore invited to take pictures of whatever you feel helps capture or is representative of your experiences. This could include (but is not limited to) the emotional aspects of coming out or inanimate objects which were meaningful during this time, etc. Most photographs that depict some part of your individual experience would therefore be welcome. However, please ensure that you are comfortable to talk about and share these photographs with me, and for them to be included in future publications. If you think an image or topic might make you feel uncomfortable it would be better to not photograph it. Please note that you will not be required to take photographs of yourself, and for ethical reasons we ask that you do not take photographs of other persons, especially minors and those identified as vulnerable. Photographs shared with me should not contain any identifiable information such as people's faces, names and addresses, and/or explicit or graphic material.

Some tips

• Try not to over think this task
• Take a picture of whatever comes to mind as being representative of your experiences.
• Be creative or keep it simple – you do not need to be a photographer, creative or artistic, unless you are and want to be! Simple photographs will suffice, express yourself as you see fit.
• There is no such thing as a 'rubbish' photograph – if it's meaningful to you, it can be included and discussed as part of the interview.

How many photographs should I take?

We ask that you take 5 photos, at least one for each of the prompts above.

What would my photographs be used for?

Once you have taken your photos, you will be invited to share and talk about them with me during an audio-recorded discussion. These photographs, together with the verbal interview data, will then be analysed by me and the findings written up. Providing a visual representation alongside the verbal discussion will enable me to gain

deeper insight and a fuller understanding of your experience, affording me the opportunity to 'see' the experience that you 'voice' as you do, from your perspective.

Can I keep and share my photographs with others?

Yes you can, but you should know that all photographs you submit for this project will be co-owned by yourself and myself although you will retain the intellectual property for the photographs, I will have permission to use them in specific cases, for example, in publications linked to the research study and conference presentations.

Any other questions? If there is anything else you would like to ask, please contact the researchers who will be happy to answer any questions or concerns you may have:

Lead Researcher: Jenna Sichel (Trainee Clinical Psychologist; js1461@canterbury.ac.uk)
Co-researchers: Dr Kate Whitaker (Clinical Psychologist, GIDS; kwhitaker@tavi-port.nhs.uk) and Patience Akande (Highly Specialist Family Therapist, GIDS; pakande@tavi-port.nhs.uk)
Academic supervisor: Dr Tamara Leeuwerik (Senior Research Lecturer at Canterbury Christ Church University; tamara.leeuwerik@canterbury.ac.uk)

Appendix H – Consent form

CONSENT FORM

How do ethnic minority transgender young adults of experience 'coming out' during adolescence?

Project Research Ethics Number:
Name of Lead Investigator: Jenna Sichel

Participant ID:

- □ I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.
- □ I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.
- □ I understand that I can withdraw my data from the study, up to two weeks after the date of the interview session.
- □ (OPTIONAL) I give permission for the photographs I submit to be used in the write up, exhibitions and in publications. I understand that care will be taken to ensure I cannot be identified from them
- □ I give permission for quotes from the written transcript to be used in the write up and in publications. I understand that these quotes will be made anonymous, and that care will be taken to ensure I could not be identified from them.
- □ I understand that my data will be kept confidentially.
- □ (OPTIONAL) I give consent for my anonymous data to be used in similar studies in the future.

If you would like to be sent a summary of the study's findings and to be contacted to provide your feedback on the findings, please provide your email address:

_____
(please note, this is not mandatory)

Name of Participant (Please print) _____

Signature_____Date_____

Name of Research Team Member _____

Signature_____Date_____

2 copies required: one original copy for researcher; one original copy for volunteer

Lead Researcher
Name: Jenna Sichel
Address: Salomons Institute for Applied Psychology, 1 Meadow Road, Tunbridge Wells TN1 2YG

Email: js1461@canterbury.ac.uk

Co-Workers
Name: Dr Kate Whitaker
Address: Gender Identity Development Service, The Tavistock Centre, 120 Belsize Lane, London, NW3 5BA
Email: kwhitaker@tavi-port.nhs.uk
Telephone: 020 8938 2030

Name: Patience Akande
Address: Gender Identity Development Service, The Tavistock Centre, 120 Belsize Lane, London, NW3 5BA
Email: PAkande@tavi-port.nhs.uk
Telephone: 020 8938 2030,

Academic Supervisor
Name: Dr Tamara Leeuwerik
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Email: tamara.leeuwerik@canterbury.ac.uk

Care givers consent form

Appendix I – Signposting document

Signposting to relevant organisations – DRAFT

If you feel you would like any more information about trans and gender diverse people including support groups

Tranzwiki: https://www.gires.org.uk/tranzwiki/

TranzWiki is a comprehensive directory of non-commercial groups and organisations supporting or assisting trans and gender diverse individuals, their families and friends across the UK.

Mermaids: https://mermaidsuk.org.uk/

Mermaids supports transgender, nonbinary and gender-diverse children and young people until their 20th birthday, as well as their families and professionals involved in their care.

Stonewall: https://www.stonewall.org.uk/

Stonewall supports LGBTQ+ people, allies, families and friends.

Gendered Intelligence: https://genderedintelligence.co.uk/

Gendered Intelligence is a trans-led and trans-involving grassroots organisation. They run regular groups in Leeds and London for various ages between 8–25-year-olds.

TPOCalypse: https://genderedintelligence.co.uk/trans-youth/BAME.html

TPOCalypse is a group for 18–30-year-old trans and gender diverse people of colour in London.

Fusion: https://www.gires.org.uk/tranzwiki/groups/fusion-bame-lgbt-young-people/

Fusion is an LGBT+ group for young people of colour who are aged 13 – 21 to get support and socialise.

House of Rainbow: https://www.houseofrainbow.org/

House of Rainbow provides support for LGBTQ+ people of faith from Black African Caribbean communities.

Imaan: https://imaanlondon.wordpress.com/

Imaan is a LGBTQ+ Muslim charity

Naz and Matt Foundation: https://www.nazandmattfoundation.org/

Naz and Matt Foundation supports LGBTQI+ people, their friends and family to work towards resolving challenges linked to sexuality or gender identity, particularly where religion is heavily influencing the situation.

Purple Rain: https://purpleraincollective.com/

Purple Rain is a collective for queer, trans and intersex people of colour in the UK to organise and mobilise.

If you would like some support following our interview – please contact any of the following support groups

Galop: https://galop.org.uk/

Galop works directly with LGBT+ people who have experienced abuse and violence. They run four national support helplines for LGBT+ victims and survivors of: domestic abuse; hate crime; rape and sexual abuse; and so-called "conversion therapy".

Pink Therapy: https://pinktherapy.com/

Pink Therapy offers a directory of qualified LGBTQIA+ friendly therapists and counsellors.

Spectra: https://spectra-london.org.uk/trans-services/trans-counselling/

Free and confidential counselling for people who identify as trans, non-binary or are questioning their gender identity.

Mindline Trans+: https://wellbeinginfo.org/mindline-trans/

Mindline Trans+ is an emotional and mental health support helpline for anyone identifying as transgender, non-binary or genderfluid. They also support family members, friends, colleagues and carers.

The Mix: https://www.themix.org.uk/about-us

The Mix is a digital charity for under 25s, via their website, over the phone or via social media. Their support is free, confidential and anonymous and can be accessed wherever young people are.

MindOut: https://mindout.org.uk/

MindOut is a Brighton based mental health service run by and for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, and queer (LGBTQ) people. Online support service is available for individuals outside of Brighton.

Kooth: https://www.kooth.com/

Kooth is an online mental wellbeing community for young people

<u>If you feel distressed after our interview – please contact any of the following</u>

Contact your GP

Samaritans: https://www.samaritans.org/

Samaritans provide confidential emotional support. You can call 116 123 for free or email jo@samaritans.org

Shout:

24/7 text service, free on all major mobile networks, for anyone in crisis anytime, anywhere. Text 85258.

Call 999 if you need urgent medical support

Appendix J: Extracts from research diary

Research diary extracts

22 September 2022
I have submitted a new proposal for my MRP due to the announcement of the closure of the GIDS clinic. This was quite a stressful process but I think I have managed to pivot to a subject I find interesting also taking into account my experience as a mixed race woman living in the UK.

Tamara has suggested using adults to make ethics approval easier. This sees like a helpful suggestion and also may be easier to talk about potentially difficult experiences after some distance from the experience.

10 May 2023
Emailed my EBE/consultant a couple of times as I am slightly worried I haven't heard anything back re recruitment. I decided to dig out emails from some charities I contacted last year and speak to Patience and Kate re any help they can give me. I also emailed Kamisha. Reaching out has made me feel a bit more comfortable. I spoke to my university manager and she said that different people may struggle at different times. I didn't have any issues with ethics like a lot of people and so maybe it's fair I struggle with recruitment. I guess I feel a bit out of control with recruitment as I don't have direct links into the group I hope to recruit.

15 June
Meeting with consultant to discuss recruitment. He seems confident about recruitment, but wants to change some of the wording on my poster to explain why I'm interested in the photography element and to emphasise payment for participation. Recently I listened to a podcast on Mad radio and I think in part I like the idea of using g photography to decolonise the work or study and not only privilege the written/academic word. Talking to my EBE always makes me feel reassured and I hope to try and hold onto some of this confidence for myself.

11 July
Meeting with trainee to do bracketing interview. Interesting to see how my knowledge of the area has shifted and grown since the start of the project and also useful to have an outside perspective on my questions and how these might be received

20 July
Date of my 2 first interviews. I feel quite nervous but also excited. My first interview happens during the day. Unfortunately they haven't had time to do the photography part of the study but want to come back for another interview for this. It's interesting to see how in answering one question they may go on to answer a different one and I need to bear this in mind to try and complete the interview schedule. Some of the interview reveals painful, difficult memories which I try and validate without becoming a therapist in the moment which feels tricky as I would like to do more. The participant thanked me though and said they felt that it was cathartic for them. The interview made me feel emotional and made me think about being insider and outsider positions as the researcher. My participant was talking about his mixed background and how the only people who have the same experience are his family. Due to my mixed background I often feel the same, and it made me feel like I'm not alone in that experience.

23 August
I completed my 3rd interview on Monday. I feel relieved I'm almost half-way through data collection. From the interview on Monday I have started to have thoughts about themes that seem to have come up in at least 2 interviews. One is the help of friends in supporting the YP come out. Another is that sometimes the reaction from family is negative and it takes time for them to come round. Also that there may be a perception that some cultures may struggle with the concept of being transgender and the YP may be surprised to be supported. 2 of the interviewees also spoke about researching the communities of origin more after coming out as transgender and finding non-western conceptions of gender in their cultures which helped them feel supported through difficulties they were going through. I've noticed that so far I've only interviews trans-men and I wonder if there is a different experience for trans-women and if I will reach that demographic.

10 October
I've sent another email out to my consultant about recruitment. I got a couple of emails from Jewish people and after sending out emails with consent forms they haven't got back to me. Potentially this is too stressful a time to think about another stressful event for them.

27 October
I couldn't sleep and had the thought that maybe Reddit would be a good way of recruiting people for the study. I created an advert on a LGBTQ+ studies page and by that evening I already had 10 emails and by the next day 15. I've emailed Tamara for some guidance, as potentially I could be more selective now and try to get the voice of trans-women which I'm lacking at the moment, or perhaps it's better to stick with trans-men. I also am aware that not all of the emails will turn into interviews so perhaps I should just be happy with the responses I get!

10 November
I was very excited about the idea of recruiting people from reddit. However I have now found that all the responses were from people who were not trans. This has wasted my time and felt so disappointing.

19 December
I have spoken to my supervisors and they have suggested widening my criteria to under 45s and not only coming out in the UK. My internal supervisor took this back to the research director and he is concerned about the lack of homogeneity this could bring into the sample. However he has also said that potentially 6 interviews may suffice especially with the photographic element so I will cross my fingers I can achieve this. I have emailed around lots of charities and some places have offered to put my poster in their newsletters but I haven't heard anything back.

January 2 2024
2nd bracketing meeting with Salomon's trainee. This was actually very helpful a felt like a mix between supervision and a reflective space. We spoke about our projects and I was able to reflect on the shared experiences between myself and participants and how I would have ideally liked to have gained the experience of MTF transgender people too. It also made me think about what I have learnt from doing part A and the literature I read. It's made me think about differences in the interviews that I have read so far. For example some of the participants have spoken about embracing both sides of their gender and not complying with gender binaries as trans people which seems different to the literature. I wonder if this also reflects time in your new gender and feeling more comfortable experimenting - almost like going through a new

adolescence/ testing phase. I also thought how issues of race and culture are more salient to me than transphobia even though both have been mentioned. Reflecting on this I wonder if this is because the transphobia seems cultural - related to the parents' home cultures. I also want to think about the number of mixed-one parent families and how the 2 different sides may have different perspectives and how the participant had to balance this while trying to live the way they wanted to.

Jan 5
Started analysing my initial interview. This was my longest, and potentially richest interview so although I am sure it will be helpful it also feels like it may be hard work. Themes of sadness and real loss of connection and rejection appear throughout. It's also interesting as due to the participants mixed race status there is more than one belief system within the family as is captured with the interview with one side being more accepting in some ways than the other. I wonder if this may come through in a number of the interviews as many of my participants are mixed race.

Jan 17
Meeting with my supervisor re progress. I have sent her my initial notes and experiential statements for my first interview. She recommended having a look at some papers and others' thesis on the repository. She seemed to think I was going in the right direction. We are still hopeful for another participant.

Jan 30
Printed out my experiential statements for my first interview and have tried to arrange them into themes. It looks a bit like a police investigation. At the moment I have 6 main themes but I could probably play with these and arrange them in different ways. I think I'll come back to them after having a break.

Feb 1
Started notes and experiential statements for 2nd interview. This one is not as rich however, I think the photos are particularly useful and it points to acceptance or at least not outright rejection of being transgender.

Appendix K – Coded Transcript

This has been removed from the electronic copy

Appendix L: Demonstration of Theme Development

Isaac themes	North themes	Jin Themes
Support is sought and shared through shared experiences	Management of coming out shaped by diplomacy and educating others	The coming out process - why and when
Support and hurt	Coming out - an opportunity to be more comfortable in my life	Coming to terms with rejection - trying to Understand factors that may make it harder for people to understand
Being validated as being trans	Support mechanisms provide comfort seen in friendships and representation	A shift in my identity over time
Managing difficulties about coming out	Coming out challenged by family fears, invalidation and political discourse and social resources	Difficult experiences when coming out and the impact on mental health
Threat	How communities manage and function together also impacts on their wellbeing	Fear and threat to coming out and how they responded
Being trans is problematic	Coming out eased by family histories and a supportive, liberal environment	Family and Iranians supporting despite cultural differences
Inability to come out due to negative impact	The important work of advocating for trans rights is draining	History and culture as supportive
coping mechanisms - inner strength	Cultural beliefs illustrating challenges of interactional identity	Teachers and therapy as supportive
Practical support		Religion as supportive
Culture as empowering - gives sense of strength		
Losing community	Sonic themes	
not fitting in multiple spaces	Understanding self and being independent helped them understand their identity and tribulations	Rupert
Being trans is conceived as white	Importance of prepping to Come out - trying to avoid threat and find safety	coming out to others

Child adjusting/justifying after parent reaction - attempting to reclaim family bond?	Why come out	identity as strength
Adjustment after family rupture	Coming out is anxiety provoking even if one feels relatively safe	Flexibility within trans/bi identity
Adjustment in self-identity	Negative experiences involving invalidation and transphobia	Educating others - learning curve - how well are family bought in
Adjustment in family understanding	Transitioning is a process where you can move from discomfort to comfort in presentation	coping mechanisms
Impact of family on being trans	SUPPORTIVE EXPERIENCE WITH FAMILY OF COMING OUT	independence or finding new communities
rejection	Supportive but with caveats - is this a phase?	Why not come out - safety and presentation outing you
Cultural norms making it harder to be trans	Lack of relationship with dad impacts on cultural exploration and self identity	Symbols of minority culture in presentation
Lack of power as a child	The coming out process is indirect due to anxiety about not being accepted	change in ID
Cultural ideas - gender		barriers to coming out
Change in presentation over time		Being authentic
		difficulties with family
Orlando themes		experiences of race
Coming out with a mixed ethnicity identity involves more layers of coming out, confusion and lack of understanding in a number of communities		reflecting on family's reaction
COMING OUT SHAPED BY RELATIONSHIPS - who to, how and why		trans micro-aggressions
Experience of living an intersectional Identity where one		Facilitators to coming out

has limited connection to parts of ID creates tensions and hostility
Educating self about Iranian culture has been supportive and helps to feel less cut off - building my own bridge
Coming to terms with negative reactions - no longer needing recognition once you become comfortable with yourself
Supportive experiences - respected even if not understood

Connecting with those with shared experiences is comforting
Negative experiences for example the west has brainwashed you
Negative experiences highlighting threat are painful
Uncertainty about how coming out would be received or understood due to barriers of culture and language and distance

- After initial coding, personal experiential themes were created for each interview. These were then collated in a spreadsheet to look for general experiential themes

family as supportive

culture facilitating other views of gender

Relational and temporal and social dimensions of coming out

Difficulties when coming out

Intersectionality

COMING OUT SHAPED BY RELATIONSHIPS - who to, how and why

The coming out process - why and when

Impact of family on being trans

Management of coming out shaped by diplomacy and educating others

Coming out eased by family histories and a supportive, liberal environment

Lack of relationship with dad impacts on cultural exploration and self-identity

The coming out process is indirect due to anxiety about not being accepted

Facilitators to coming out

Finding strength in one's cultural heritage

Culture as empowering - gives sense of strength

Managing difficulties about coming out

Coming out challenged by family fears, invalidation and political discourse and social resources

Fear and threat to coming out and how they responded

Threat

Coming out challenged by family fears, invalidation and political discourse and social resources

Lack of power as a child

The important work of advocating for trans rights is draining

A period of adjustment – Families coming to terms with gender and YP making allowances for rejection

Child adjusting/justifying after parent reaction - attempting to reclaim family bond ?

Adjustment after family rupture

not fitting in multiple spaces

Being trans is conceived as white

Coming out with a mixed ethnicity identity involves more layers of coming out, confusion and lack of understanding in a number of communities

Experience of living an intersectional Identity where one has limited connection to parts of ID creates tensions and hostility
Uncertainty about how coming out would be received or understood due to barriers of culture and language and distance

experiences of race

coping mechanisms

Connecting with those with shared experiences is comforting

independence or finding new communities

Support is sought and shared through shared experiences

Cultural ideas - gender

History and culture as supportive

identity as strength

Educating self about Iranian culture has been supportive and helps to feel less cut off - building my own bridge

How communities manage and function together also impacts on their wellbeing

Positive reactions

Support and hurt

Practical support

Supportive experiences - respected even if not understood

Being validated as being trans

Supportive EXPERIENCE WITH FAMILY OF COMING OUT

Supportive but with caveats - is this a phase?

Adjustment in family understanding

Coming to terms with negative reactions - no longer needing recognition once you become comfortable with yourself

Coming to terms with rejection - trying to understand factors that may make it harder for people to understand

Educating others - learning curve - how well are family bought in

reflecting on family's reaction

"It's not safe": difficulties when coming out

Inability to come out due to negative impact
Cultural norms making it harder to be trans

Importance of prepping to Come out - trying to avoid threat and find safety

Coming out is anxiety provoking even if one feels relatively safe

Fear and threat to coming out and how they responded

barriers to coming out

coping mechanisms - inner strength

Support mechanisms provide comfort seen in friendships and representation

Cultural beliefs illustrating challenges of interactional identity

coping mechanisms

Understanding self and being independent helped them understand their identity and tribulations

Teachers and therapy as supportive

Religion as supportive

Flexible gender presentation

culture facilitating other views of gender

Symbols of minority culture in presentation

change in ID

Change in presentation over time

Family and Iranians supporting despite cultural differences

family as supportive

Why come out?

Coming out - an opportunity to be more comfortable in my life

coming out to others

Why come out

Why not come out - safety and presentation outing you

Being authentic

trans micro-aggressions

Negative reactions

rejection

Negative experiences for example the west has brainwashed you

Difficult experiences when coming out and the impact on mental health

difficulties with family

Negative experiences highlighting threat are painful

Being trans is problematic

Negative experiences involving invalidation and transphobia

Adjustment in self-identity

Transitioning is a process where you can move from discomfort to comfort in presentation

A shift in my identity over time

Flexibility within trans/bi identity

General experiential themes were created by trying to group similar themes together

Relational and temporal and social dimensions of coming out

COMING OUT SHAPED BY RELATIONSHIPS - who to, how and why

The coming out process - why and when

Impact of family on being trans

Management of coming out shaped by diplomacy and educating others

Coming out eased by family histories and a supportive, liberal environment

Lack of relationship with dad impacts on cultural exploration and self-identity

The coming out process is indirect due to anxiety about not being accepted

Facilitators to coming out

Difficulties when coming out

Managing difficulties about coming out

Coming out challenged by family fears, invalidation and political discourse and social resources

Fear and threat to coming out and how they responded

Threat

Coming out challenged by family fears, invalidation and political discourse and social resources

Lack of power as a child

The important work of advocating for trans rights is draining

A period of adjustment – Families coming to terms with gender and YP making allowances for rejection

Child adjusting/justifying after parent reaction - attempting to reclaim family bond ?

Intersectionality

not fitting in multiple spaces

Being trans is conceived as white

Coming out with a mixed ethnicity identity involves more layers of coming out, confusion and lack of understanding in a number of communities

Experience of living an intersectional Identity where one has limited connection to parts of ID creates tensions and hostility

Uncertainty about how coming out would be received or understood due to barriers of culture and language and distance

experiences of race

coping mechanisms

Connecting with those with shared experiences is comforting

independence or finding new communities

Finding strength in one's cultural heritage

Culture as empowering - gives sense of strength

Cultural ideas - gender

History and culture as supportive

identity as strength

Educating self about Iranian culture has been supportive and helps to feel less cut off - building my own bridge

How communities manage and function together also impacts on their wellbeing

Positive reactions

Support and hurt

Practical support

Supportive experiences - respected even if not understood

Being validated as being trans

Adjustment after family rupture

Adjustment in family understanding

Coming to terms with negative reactions - no longer needing recognition once you become comfortable with yourself

Coming to terms with rejection - trying to understand factors that may make it harder for people to understand

Educating others - learning curve - how well are family bought in

reflecting on family's reaction

"It's not safe": difficulties when coming out

Inability to come out due to negative impact

Cultural norms making it harder to be trans

Importance of prepping to Come out - trying to avoid threat and find safety

Coming out is anxiety provoking even if one feels relatively safe

Support is sought and shared through shared experiences coping mechanisms - inner strength

Support mechanisms provide comfort seen in friendships and representation

Cultural beliefs illustrating challenges of interactional identity

coping mechanisms

Understanding self and being independent helped them understand their identity and tribulations

Teachers and therapy as supportive

Religion as supportive

Flexible gender presentation

culture facilitating other views of gender

Symbols of minority culture in presentation

Supportive EXPERIENCE WITH FAMILY OF COMING OUT

Supportive but with caveats - is this a phase?

Family and Iranians supporting despite cultural differences

family as supportive

Why come out?

Coming out - an opportunity to be more comfortable in my life

coming out to others

Why come out

Why not come out - safety and presentation outing you

Being authentic

Fear and threat to coming out and how they responded

barriers to coming out

trans micro-aggressions

Negative reactions

rejection

Negative experiences for example the west has brainwashed you

Difficult experiences when coming out and the impact on mental health

difficulties with family

Negative experiences highlighting threat are painful

Being trans is problematic

Negative experiences involving invalidation and transphobia

change in ID

Change in presentation over time

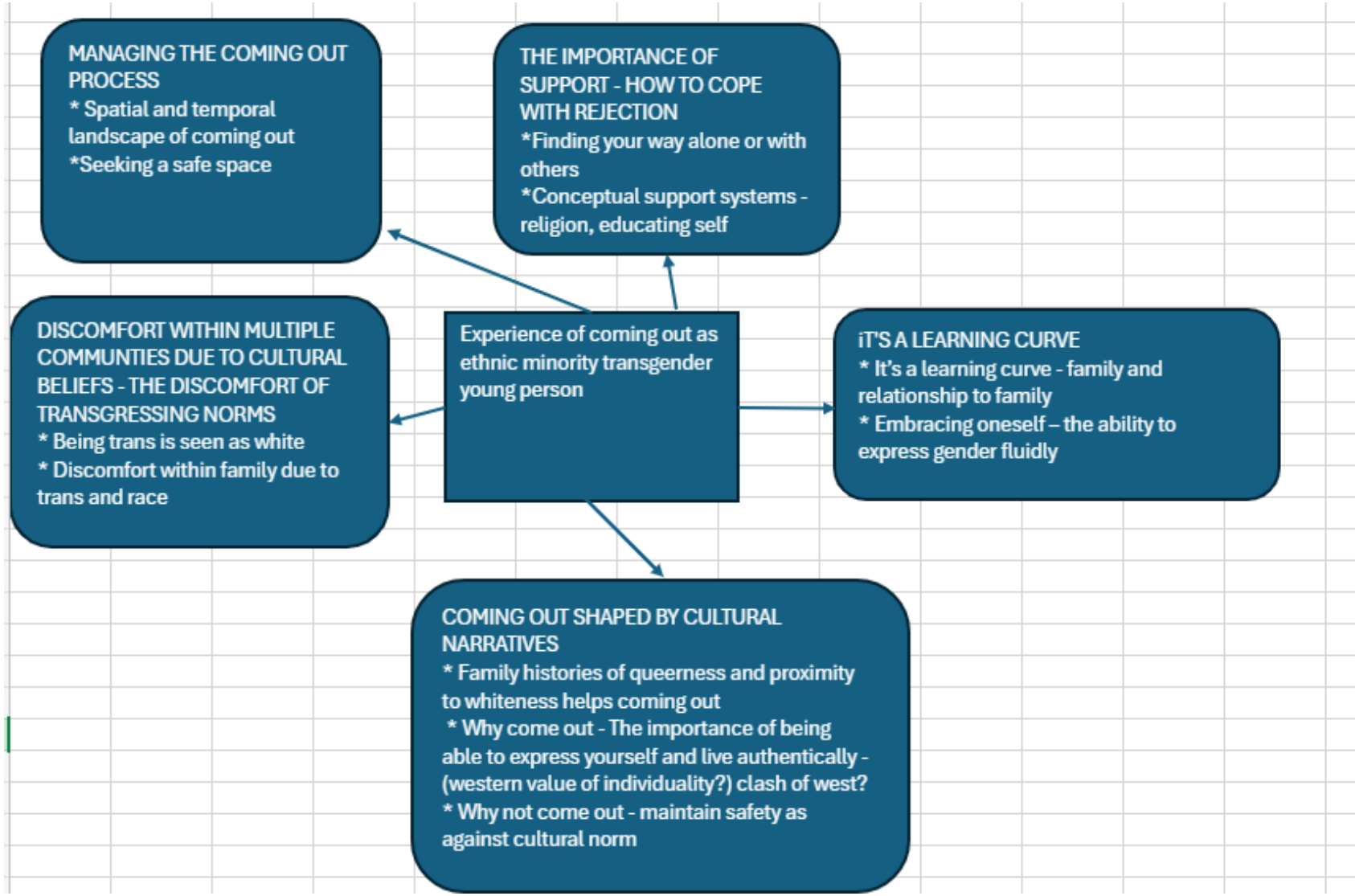
Adjustment in self identity

Transitioning is a process where you can move from discomfort to comfort in presentation

A shift in my identity over time

Flexibility within trans/bi identity

General experiential themes went through a process of iterative change. My supervisor advised bearing in mind my original research questions, and the need for themes to be more experiential than catch all titles



Initial subordinate and superordinate themes were created. These themes were discussed in supervision and resulted in further iterative change until final themes were created

Appendix M: End of study notification letter

Dear Ethics Panel,

Thank you for proving feedback on and ethical approval of my project on the coming out experience of transgender ethnic minority young people. I have now completed my research and below is a summary of my project.

Considering limited research on the coming out experience for transgender minority ethnic young people (TMEYP), and a current lack of research on this experience from a UK perspective this project aimed to address how:

a. TMEYP experience coming out within their family and communities of origin as adolescents
b. How do they make sense of their coming out experiences during adolescence?
c. How do they perceive their coming out experience during adolescence shaped their identity?
d. How do they manage when their identities may pose challenges for them?

Six participants were recruited via a research consultant. Data was collected via optional photo elicitation and semi-structured interviews. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was sued to analyse both photo and interview data.

The results indicated that coming out is a crucial step in identity development and how YP gauged their ability to come out based on the wider socio-political landscape and family interactions. Thus, YP typically avoided disclosure to maintain emotional or physical safety by presenting as their birth gender when necessary. YP's expectation of rejection influenced their coming out journey. These fears could be seen as an indication of the stress of living in a cisgender society and suggest the use of minority stress theory with minority groups.

Findings also indicated the challenges of managing intersectional identity development with participants needing to negotiate family and cultural expectations, exploring their identities, negotiating their insider and outsider status and finally coming to a place of comfort with their identity even in the face of resistance. Some YP also described feeling like outsiders within the transgender community culture seeming to indicate intersectional invisibility due to not being seen as a typical transgender person.

Finally, the results seemed to indicate YP becoming more comfortable presenting their gender fluidly, which in part was supported by investigating their origin cultures and finding alternative conceptions of gender.

The project highlighted implications for both future research and clinical practice. In terms of research studies investigating the experiences of non-binary, trans-female or unpacking differences between neuro typical and neurodivergent YP could be helpful. Clinical implications include increased training for professionals on intersectionality and minority stress and additional educational and therapeutic services to support families with YP from gender minorities.

Yours faithfully

Jenna Sichel